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A Survey of the Factors Influencing Parents in Michigan To Select Full-time Cyber Learning for Their Children in Grades K-6

John A. Chandler
Seton Hall University, john.chandler@student.shu.edu

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To Select Full-time Cyber Learning for Their Children in Grades K-6

John A. Chandler

Dissertation Committee

Barbara Strobert, Ed.D., Mentor
Luke J. Stedrak, Ed.D.
Anthony Colella, Ph.D.

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APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

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DISSERTATION COMMITTEE
(please sign and date beside your name)

Mentor:
Dr. Barbara Strobert Barbara Strobert

Committee Member:
Dr. Luke Stedrak Luke J. Stedrak

Committee Member:
Dr. Anthony Colella

The mentor and any other committee members who wish to review revisions will sign and date this document only when revisions have been completed. Please return this form to the Office of Graduate Studies, where it will be placed in the candidate's file and submit a copy with your final dissertation to be bound as page number two.

ABSTRACT

School choice is a long-standing tradition in the United States. New to the options available to K-12 parents are full-time virtual schools, and this option is an even more recent development for Grades K-6 parents. Very little research exists on why parents are choosing full-time virtual education for their school-aged children, and almost no research exists on why parents of younger children (Grades K-6) are choosing this option. This descriptive, exploratory study sought to answer the following research questions: (1) What factors led parents to enroll their elementary students in a full-time cyber school? (2) Were these factors attributable to positive ("pull" factor) characteristics of the cyber school in which the child was enrolling, or were the factors attributable to negative ("push" factor) characteristics of the school the child was leaving? (3) Do the factors identified by parents vary by parents' race/ethnicity, educational levels, or income levels? An online survey was used to collect data from parents of the Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy in 2015. This study suggests that parents of Grades K-6 students chose full-time cyber learning for children due to pull factors related to MGLVA (Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy). Specifically, parents seemed most interested in being able to individualize education for their children and being able to instill their values in their children by educating them at home. Emphases on teaching the basics and on teacher quality were also important factors for parents. Attention should also be given to the several factors (bullying, Special Education/504 Plans, teacher attributes, and quality curriculum) that parents took extra effort to mention in the open-ended response items. Implications for practice, future research, and policy are discussed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

> Why, anybody can have a brain. That's a very mediocre commodity. Every pusillanimous creature that crawls on the Earth or slinks through slimy seas has a brain. Back where I come from, we have universities, seats of great learning, where men go to become great thinkers. And when they come out, they think deep thoughts and with no more brains than you have. But they have one thing you haven't got: a diploma.
>
> — L. Frank Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

But in order for that diploma/degree to mean anything that all, there have to be outstanding professors along the way. My special thanks to my mentor, Dr. Barbara Strobert. Dr. Strobert was always calm, encouraging, and full of concise, sage advice. To my readers, Dr. Luke Stedrak and Dr. Anthony Colella, thank you for your suggestions and positive comments!

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My loving wife of 25 years, Elizabeth, and our seven awesome children—Sarah, Ben, Grace, Anna, Olivia, Isaac, and Eli—also sacrificed significantly so that I could complete this program. What an amazing family I have!

I am indebted beyond description to my parents, Henry and Edna Chandler, both deceased. I would not have earned a bachelor's degree if it were not for their sacrifices and encouragement to do so. Obviously, without that BA degree, I would not be earning my doctorate.

Last, I want to acknowledge and thank Joe Rogers, former Hillsdale College Track Coach. Coach Rogers called me in late spring of 1983, after I had decided to drop out of college in January 1983. Coach Rogers said that I was welcome back at Hillsdale College and that he had my track scholarship available if I came back. Without his call—and his saving that scholarship for me—I might have continued working on the third shift at the factory where I was employed.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Research has shown that parent involvement is a key factor leading to increased student achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001). There are many ways for parents to be involved in their child's education, and one of these ways is through a deliberate choice of which school the child will attend versus the more common de facto method of sending their child to the school district of residence. Publicly-funded choice options for parents have expanded significantly in the past 20 years or so, and many parents are able to explicitly choose their child's school from among the following choice options: charter schools, magnet schools, inter-district choice, intra-district choice, tax credits, and vouchers. Fundamental to any choice program is the ability of parents to choose where to send their child to a school outside the parents' resident district boundary. However, some areas of the country have given parents little or no opportunity to choose. That is, until now. Added in just the past few years to the list of choice options above are cyber schools. With very few limitations, cyber schools provide a choice option to literally all parents regardless of where they live.

Cyber education continues to grow in popularity at all education levels, from kindergarten through graduate school. As of May 2013, there were 311 virtual schools in the United States that enrolled Grades K-12 students in full-time cyber learning. As of November 2013, the District of Columbia and 39 states had 310,000 students in Grades K-12 enrolled in full-time cyber learning (Cavanagh, 2013). These numbers include only publicly funded students; however, many of these virtual schools are operated or managed by private for-profit corporations. K12 Inc. has the most schools in operation and the most students enrolled. In

2011-2012, K12 Inc. operated 58 full-time virtual schools, with an enrollment of almost 77,000 students. The second largest for-profit corporation, Pearson-owned Connections Academies had 21 schools and more than 27,000 students enrolled in the 2010-2011 school year. Less than one-half of the full-time cyber K-12 public school students are enrolled in Grades K-6 (Molnar et al., 2013).

There are various types of publicly funded, full-time cyber schools. One type is charter schools as in the case of K12 Inc. and Pearson. These cyber charters have their own separate boards of education, and these boards hire management companies like K12 Inc. or Pearson to run and operate the schools. There are also traditional public schools that operate a separate program, school, or building code through which they offer full-time cyber learning opportunities in addition to the traditional brick-and-mortar opportunities. Furthermore, some of these virtual schools can enroll students statewide, while some are limited geographically by various laws, rules, and regulations.

In Michigan at the close of the 2012-2013 school year, there were only two cyber schools that could enroll students in all Grades K-12 from anywhere in the state. These schools began operation in the fall of 2010 for the 2010-2011 school year. Both of these statewide cyber charter schools were operated by the two aforementioned for-profit corporations: K12, Inc. and Pearson. These two schools each had a statutory enrollment limit of 1,000 students. Additionally, by the 2011-2012 school year there were six other known virtual schools that could enroll students in all Grades K-12, but these schools had geographical limits within which they could enroll students. These virtual schools could not enroll statewide. Five of these six virtual schools were operated by local public school districts, and one was operated by a public regional educational service agency. Combined, these virtual schools could enroll no more than 1,000

elementary students according to Michigan Department of Education regulations.

In 2012, a new law was passed that raised the number of statewide cyber charter schools to 15 over three years, and it increased the enrollment cap to 10,000 students per school. However, the combined number of students enrolled in all of these statewide cyber charter schools cannot exceed 2% of the public school student population or about 35,000 students. All cyber charter schools of this type are allowed to enroll students statewide in all Grades K-12. As of the 2013-2014 school year, there were five new statewide cyber charters in addition to the original two as a result of the aforementioned legislation, and with the existing six (five local districts and one regional service agency) regional virtual schools, Michigan had a total of 13 publicly-funded cyber schools that could enroll elementary students (Michigan Department of Education, 2015).

A key element in the cyber school laws affecting all cyber schools in Michigan is that computer and Internet access must be provided to every student who needs one. As a result, access is truly universal to all Michigan students regardless of geography, socioeconomic status (SES), or other factors that normally limit school choice. As such, the demographics of the parents, the demographics of the students who are enrolled, as well as the reasons for choosing full-time online learning were interesting to compare to extant research.

Statement of the Problem

School choice in general, and specifically parental factors in determining school choice, has been quite widely researched over the past several decades. However, the differing types of research methods have generally led to differing results. "Response" researchers (Armor & Peiser, 1998; Jochim, DeArmond, Gross, & Lake, 2014; Kleitz, Weiher, Tedin, & Matland, 2000; Schneider, Marschall, Teske, & Roch, 1998; Smrekar, 2009; Vanourek, Manno, & Finn,

1998) have collected new data directly from parent responses and have generally found that academic factors and school quality are the top factors that parents state for school choice. Meanwhile, researchers who have used an "observed" methodology that looks to existing data to deduce the factors influencing parent choice have generally found that school demographics are the number one factor (Glazerman, 1998; Hastings, Kane, & Staiger, 2006; Henig, 1990; Saporito, 2003; Saporito & Lareau, 1999; Schneider & Buckley, 2002; Weiher & Tedin, 2002)

When it comes to full-time asynchronous cyber education at any K-12 grade level, parental choice factors has limited research. Adding to this newness—just a few years old—is the availability of full-time cyber learning for elementary-aged students. Given the growth in asynchronous cyber learning in general, and the fact that it has moved down to include the kindergarten level, educators would do well to ask why parents are selecting this form of education for their elementary-aged children. As such, to this researcher's knowledge, there are only two existing studies (Klein & Poplin, 2008; Marsh, Carr-Chellman, & Sockman, 2009) of parental choice as it relates to full-time elementary cyber education. However, one of these studies was a qualitative study (Marsh et al., 2009) with just seven mothers, which greatly limits the generalizability of the results. The other study (Klein & Poplin, 2008) was a quantitative design utilizing surveys; and while its results may be more generalizable, the study is nonetheless seven years old. Clearly, a distinct gap exists in the research for parental choice factors relating to elementary cyber schools.

Purpose

The purpose of this quantitative survey research was to explore the factors that parents consider when choosing full time cyber learning for their children's elementary school experience.

Research Questions

Specifically, this study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What factors led parents to enroll their elementary students in a full-time cyber school?
2. Were these factors attributable to positive ("pull" factor) characteristics of the cyber school in which the child was enrolling , or were the factors attributable to negative ("push" factor) characteristics of the school the child was leaving?
3. Do the factors identified by parents vary by parents' race/ethnicity, educational levels, or income levels?

Significance

Why is finding the answers to these questions important? First, public school officials should be interested in the reasons parents are leaving traditional public schools and more established choice options and choosing cyber education. Is there a deficiency, or "push" (See Definition of Terms) in the existing public school options that administrators can cost-effectively address in order to retain these students? Is there something positive, or a "pull" (See Definition of Terms) about the cyber schools that is causing parents to leave existing public school models that administrators can cost-effectively incorporate into their schools in order to retain these students? Second, those interested in operating cyber schools and recruiting students should find the results of this study informative in guiding their marketing and recruiting efforts. Third, policy makers (federal, state, and local), as well as leaders of traditional and cyber schools, can utilize this information to help predict future demand for cyber learning.

A final caveat that makes this study unique and of value is that one of the schools from

which the parent population of this study is drawn is a statewide cyber school. Literally any and every parent in the entire state of Michigan has this option available to them. As a result, the demographics of the parents who chose this option and the factors they considered are all noteworthy additions to the education literature knowledge base.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This research project was guided by theory, specifically market theory. Bast and Walberg (2004) go into considerable depth to explain that "markets harmonize the interests of people with different expectations and knowledge . . . . Plainly, there is no uniform right answer for all children" (p. 433). Bast and Walberg's (2004) market theory sentiments seem to explain the harmonizing of technology with the varied interests of conservative, moderate, and liberal legislators, with the interests of public school officials and bureaucrats, with the interests of corporations like K12, Inc. and Pearson, and with the interests of a wide variety of parents who wish to educate their children at home in a cyber school. Though there may be no uniform right answer for all children, this research project explored common factors that parents surveyed shares to see where the harmonizing of parents' differing interests and expectations materialize.

This research project was further guided by Stein, Goldring, and Cravens (2009) who identified "pull" versus "push" constructs that proved useful for understanding the factors influencing parents in making school choice. A pull factor is a positive attribute of the parents' school of choice that strongly influenced their decision. An example of a pull factor might be low pupil-to-teacher ratios in core academic subjects. A push factor is something undesirable in the school the parent/child left. An example of a push factor is an unsafe or undisciplined environment in the child's classroom or school. At the outset of this research, it was theorized that both push and pull factors are important determining factors in parental choice. The push

versus pull concept guided the literature review, was instrumental in conducting the survey instrument, and was an important distinction in analyzing the data.

Design and Methodology

The purpose of this research was to explore the factors that parents consider when choosing a full time cyber learning experience for their children's elementary school experience. After reviewing research designs (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Bryant, 2004; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012), a determination was made that a quantitative design would yield a rich information base for this exploratory study into the factors that influence parents' decisions to enroll their Grades K-6 students in full-time virtual learning from home. It was further determined this study would be a descriptive study that utilized an online questionnaire containing both forced-choice and open-ended response items.

The development of the online questionnaire began with an extensive review of the literature on parental factors relating to school choice. Next, guidelines for constructing a questionnaire were obtained from two books (Harris, 2014; Saris & Gallhofer, 2007). Both of these survey experts stressed the need for a valid and reliable instrument. A preliminary version of the questionnaire was shared with Dr. Barbara Strobert, Faculty Associate, Seton Hall University, Department of Education Leadership, Management, and Policy, who provided feedback on the questionnaire. Based on feedback from Dr. Strobert, a more specific forced-choice item was added that addressed location as a factor. The questionnaire was then field tested with 10 parents in the Manistee, Michigan, community who were not part of the population or involved in the study. No changes were made after the field test.

The online questionnaire, titled "Survey of Choice Factors Influencing Parents' Decisions to Enroll Their Child in an Online Program" (Appendix A), in the form of a hyperlink, along

with directions and the required information per the SHU Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research, was written by the researcher and emailed (Appendix B) to the MGLVA (Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy) administrative assistant. The MGLVA administrative assistant then emailed the questionnaire hyperlink and accompanying information to all parents of all Grades K-6 students who were enrolled in the MGLVA for the 2014-2015 school year. Parents were specifically instructed to fill out the questionnaire for the youngest child enrolled in the MGLVA if the parent had more than one child enrolled in the MGLVA.

The primary statistical procedures used in analyzing the quantitative data collected were descriptive in nature. The analyses of the data involved the creation of tables and graphic portrayals of the data using descriptive statistics. Tables and graphs were created to summarize the sample characteristics in terms of race/ethnicity, educational levels, and income levels. Subsequently, tables and graphs were created showing the factors identified as most important by the total sample population, as well as tables and graphs showing disaggregated results by the respondents' race/ethnicity, educational levels, and income levels.

Because open-ended response items were utilized, an inductive open-coding approach to data analysis was used on these data. The data were analyzed for trends, patterns, categories, and/or themes as they related to the research questions.

Limitations and Delimitations

As was discussed previously in Chapter 1 and further expounded upon in Chapter 2, there were distinct differences in the findings of response research versus observed research. This study was limited in that it utilized a survey, which is a type of response research. More specifically, it may have been limited by "social desirability" (See Definition of Terms.), which is a concern of most response research.

This research project was also limited in that only parents of Grades K-6 students from one school (Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy) in one state (Michigan) were surveyed.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined as such.

Cyber Learning, Cyber Education, Virtual Learning, Virtual Education. Asynchronous education that relies heavily or solely on technology, where the student works from home and does not attend a public school building. However, the student is assigned to a highly qualified, certified elementary teacher(s), and regular communication takes place between teacher and student.

Parent. The parent, guardian, or any other adult who is responsible for the well-being of the child and was the adult responsible for making the school choice decision for the child.

Post Hoc Data. Factors in the open-ended response items that parents stated were important to them prior to making a choice decision; however, the information the parents stated could only have come after they had made the decision and the child was enrolled and attending MGLVA.

Pull Factor. A positive characteristic about a school that strongly influences a parent to select that particular school. This factor "pulls" the parent toward selecting the school.

Push Factor. A negative or undesirable characteristic that strongly influences a parent to leave a particular school for another school. This factor "pushes" the parent out of the current school.

Observed Research. This category of research refers to quantitative designs and methodologies that are used to analyze existing data to deduce the factors that parents find important in choosing a school. In observed research, the data already exists in the form of

school choice applications, district or state databases, or other types of existing data. In an observed choice study, a parent would have no reason to suspect the choice of a school for their child would at some point in the future provide data to a school choice researcher.

Response Research. This category of research refers to methodologies through which new information is gathered directly from parents via surveys, interviews, etc., and it includes both quantitative and qualitative designs and methods. It would be well-understood by the parent that information is being gathered about what the parent believes to be important factors in selecting a school for his or her child.

Social Desirability. A threat to validity in response research caused by survey or interview respondents answering (i.e., representing themselves) in ways that shed a more favorable light on the respondent but are not necessarily true or the most true response.

Summary

This chapter began with an overview of cyber schools, a review of their recent growth and current status in Michigan, and a discussion about parents of children in grades as early as kindergarten choosing this experience for their child's education. Next, facts regarding the minimal amount of extant research into choice factors of parents choosing cyber learning, and in particular elementary cyber learning, were discussed. The research questions were posed next, along with a discussion of the significance of the research. A brief explanation of the theoretical and conceptual framework that guided the study was given. The chapter then concluded with a discussion of the methods utilized, the limitations and delimitations, and definition of terms.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Organization of Chapter 2

This literature review builds the framework for understanding factors that parents consider when choosing an elementary, public, full-time cyber school for their child. This review is organized into four sections. The first part of the chapter presents a brief overview of the mechanics of the literature review search process. The next section deepens the discussion begun in Chapter 1 on the theoretical and conceptual framework of school choice utilized in this study. The third section is an extensive review of the empirical studies of various parent factors influencing school choice. The final section is a discussion of the limitations and delimitations of the empirical findings.

Mechanics of the Literature Review Search Process

The following search engines were used to identify and access relevant studies: Google Scholar (including "cited by" and "related articles" features), Google, and the multiple and varied database search engines available through Seton Hall University. Additionally, the reference lists contained in published studies were used to identify relevant articles.

The following is a list of the key words and phrases used in the aforementioned search engines to identify possible studies to be included in Chapter 2: parent(al) choice, parent(al) choice factors, parent(al) choice reasons, school choice determinants, school choice parent attitudes, school choice preferences, home school(ing) motivations, home school(ing) parent, and home school(ing) choice. To clarify, "parent" and "parental" were both searched separately in the list above as was "home school" and "home schooling." Furthermore, both "home school" and "homeschool" and their derivatives were searched.

The literature review was narrowed to studies that were published in 1995 or later. The data for some of the included studies were collected prior to 1995; however, the publication date of 1995 was used as the cutoff point for the oldest study cited. This 20-year period, 1995-2015, roughly coincides with the beginning of the charter school movement in 1992 (Huffington Post, 2012) and the founding of the first statewide virtual school, Florida Virtual School, in 1997 (Florida Virtual School, 2015). This same 20-year period also encompasses the three generations (baby boomers, Generation X, and millennials) who might currently have children enrolled in the Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy and be part of this current research project.

The research is further narrowed in that only studies based in the United States were reviewed. While there are, no doubt, similarities between parents and educational systems in different countries, there are also differences.

The final parameter applied was that the literature review included only choice studies in public school settings and homeschools. Some of the included studies did include private school parents as part of an overall choice study, but the large majority of subjects in these studies were public school parents. These public school settings included traditional public schools, magnet schools, charter schools, and cyber schools. As attending a full-time cyber school from home in many ways resembles homeschooling in general, it was determined to include homeschool choice research. This review specifically excluded studies that focused solely on the various types of private school choice, except as mentioned above when private school parents were a minority in a large school choice study. The reasoning behind this is that private school choice is unlike all of the aforementioned school choice options in that attending a private school (1) generally requires the outlay of significant tuition and (2) many private schools are parochial

schools. While there are, no doubt, similarities between parents in private schools and the aforementioned school choice options, there are also differences.

In the end, applying the aforementioned parameters provided a plethora of quality, peer-reviewed studies for this project.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Market Theory

This research project was guided by theory, specifically market theory and even more specifically three phenomena related to market theory. First, parents are the best choosers of their children's education, and the school choice option parents believe to be best for their children varies from child to child and parent to parent. Bast and Walberg (2004), regarding the multitude of educational options available to parents for their children, state, "There is no uniform right answer for all children" (p. 433). Because there is no uniform "right" school option for all children, Bast and Walberg (2004) contend that parents have the most knowledge of their own child, love their own child the most, want what is best for him or her, and in the end are the best choosers of schools for their own child.

Second, parents often face obstacles to participating in school choice. For example, the closest public school option for a parent who lives on the shores of Lake Superior in Grand Marais, Michigan (resident district is Burt Township Schools), is in Newberry, Michigan. This drive would be over one hour in each direction, and a much, much longer drive in one of the Upper Peninsula's legendary snowstorms that can occur anytime from October to May. Or take, for example, a low-socioeconomic status (SES) parent in a distressed City of Detroit neighborhood. The zoned neighborhood public school may be unacceptable, yet it may be too far for the child to walk or too unsafe for the child to take public transportation to the nearest

charter school. Given the parent's low SES, a private school is not a feasible option. The parent simply may not possess the resources to get the child to a different and more acceptable school in a safe manner. This is why some school choice critics have argued that school choice will result in social fragmentation and in a two-tiered education system (Gewirtz, Ball, & Bowe, 1995; Fuller, Elmore, & Orfield, 1996). It is further asserted that such a two-tiered system favors the middle class with more economic, social, and cultural capital to capitalize on choice (Ball, 2003).

Third, in contrast to the school choice critics above, market theory suggests that a robust school choice system will create competition among public schools for student enrollment. This competition will in turn make schools more responsive to the needs and wants of students and parents, and it will lead to a higher quality education (Belfield & Levin, 2002). According to Bast and Walberg (2004):

> Markets harmonize the interests of people with different expectations and knowledge, not mythical and identical rational utility maximizers. The subjectivity of values means markets not only allocate scarce resources among competing purposes, but also enable their participants to discover and create values, a process integral to other freedoms to act, form judgments, make choices, and think (p. 433).

It is market theory that explains how these three phenomena converge to lead to the creation of a statewide cyber charter school that is literally universally accessible to every child in the entire state of Michigan. It was the open education market created by the Michigan Legislature and governor that allowed for the creation of the Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy and other statewide cyber charter schools. It is market theory that explains how schools like MGLVA can "harmonize the interests" of, and address the obstacles faced by, parents from the remote, rural areas of Michigan's Upper Peninsula to a distressed urban

neighborhood in inner-city Detroit. It is market theory that presumes that schools like the MGLVA will make existing schools more responsive to students' and parents' needs and, if schools do not respond, give these parents a quality option for their children. It is through the market theory lens, in conjunction with the push and pull constructs described immediately below, that the factors that lead parents to choose this option for their elementary-aged children were reviewed.

Push Versus Pull Factors

Stein et al. (2009) identified "pull" versus "push" constructs that prove useful for understanding the factors influencing parents in making school choice decisions. A pull factor is a positive characteristic about a school that strongly influences a parent to select that particular school. Examples of pull factors might be low pupil-to-teacher ratios in core academic subjects or a foreign language immersion program that enticed the parent to enroll his or her child in that particular school. A push factor is something undesirable in the school the parent and child left. Examples of push factors are an unsafe or undisciplined environment in the child's classroom or school or poor teacher quality. It was theorized in this research project that both push and pull factors are important determining factors in parental choice. The literature review provided numerous examples of both push and pull factors that were measured in this project's survey.

From a policy perspective, this push versus pull distinction was an important one to tease from the data in this research project. Specifically, are parents choosing cyber education for their elementary-aged children due to real or perceived shortcomings at the school their child previously attended or in their zoned school if a kindergartener? Are these shortcomings something that these exited schools can address? Or, is there something about the pull of cyber education that is so strong it is pulling parents away from other quality options? Again, from a

policy perspective the answers to these questions are important.

Empirical Research

Table 1 provides a comprehensive analysis of extant research in summary form. In reading the extant research for this project, this researcher found nothing similar to Table 1; therefore, it is believed that Table 1 makes a significant contribution to the existing literature base. The following pages of Chapter 2 are based on what is contained in Table 1.

Table 1

Literature Review Summary

Author(s)	Major Findings	Method	School Type	Grade	Demographics	Academic-related factor defined	Theory
Adzima (2014)	Higher academic performance, higher per pupil expenditures, and higher student attendance rates all lead to longer waitlists.	Observed; waitlist data	C	K-12	86 charter schools; cyber charter data not included	Pennsylvania System of School Assessment in Reading & Math	ND*
Armor & Peiser (1998)	High standards (80%+), Curriculum (75%+), Facilities (60%+), Safety (55%+). Percentage of parents citing as major reason.	Response; structured interview	TP	K-12	Massachusetts interdistrict choice; 309 parents in 10 districts	10th-grade standardized Reading & Math scores	Market
Bell (2009a)	Holistic (69%), Academic (58%), Social (33%). The preceding 3 constructs are synthesized by Bell from 102 different reasons given by parents.	Response; 3 interviews over 9 mos	TP, C, M, P, HS	6th & 9th	Urban & suburban; 48 families; 45 mothers, 3 fathers, 67% Black, 27% White, 4% Hispanic	NCLB AYP or if private whether "accredited"	Rational choice, Bounded rationality theory
Bell (2009b)	Parents preferred convenient schools but also strongly considered school and neighborhood factors.	Response; 3 interviews over 9 mos	TP, C, M, P	6th or 9th	City of Detroit; 36 families, 30 female, 4 male, 2 couples; subset of Bell (2009a)	NCLB AYP or if private whether "accredited"	ND*
Bielick (2008)	Concern about school environment (88%), Desire to provide religious or moral instruction (83%), Dissatisfied with academics at previous/other schools (73%) - percentage stating whether particular reasons for homeschooling applied to them. Desire to provide religious or moral instruction (36%), Concern about school environment (21%); Dissatisfied with academics at previous/other schools (17%) - percentage indicating this was the most important reason.	Response; interviews	HS	K-12	Nationwide; 290 parents of homeschool students	ND*	ND*
Bielick et al. (2001)	Can give better education at home (49%), Religious reasons (38%), and Poor learning environment at school (25%). Coded from open-ended responses.	Response; open-ended responses	HS	K-12	275 parents of homeschool students; 75% White, 10% Black, 9% Hispanic	ND*	ND*
Butler et al. (2013)	Race and Academics are not factors, and Distance is a factor.	Observed; NCES ECLS-K	TP, C, M, P	5th	Nationally representative of 10,100 students' data	State standardized test scores for Reading & Math	Utility-maximizing household
Cowen Institute (2011)	Parents stated school's academic performance (95%), Faculty and staff (94%), Safety and discipline policies (92%), and Availability of special academic programs (71%) were "very important" or extremely important to them in choosing a school. 72% of Black parents and 91% of low-income parents said transportation was very important or extremely important.	Response; telephone survey	TP, C	ND*	New Orleans; 349 parents, 28% White, 70% Black, 2% Other	ND*	ND*
Cowen Institute	Reputation was most important. Proximity was important as	Response;	TP, C,	PK-12	New Orleans; 9 different	ND*	**Rational choice

(2013)	were other factors that varied by individual circumstance, including many who cited "academics." Parents defined quality schools as more than high test scores.	focus groups	R, P		focus groups, 81 parents, 5% White, 86% Black, 2% Hispanic		
Dahlquist et al. (2006)	Religious reasons (26% + 46% = 72%), Desire for family closeness (8% + 64% = 72%), Unhappy with socialization in schools (13% + 58% = 71%), Hands-on teaching/learning (11% + 60% = 71%). First % listed is "primary" reason and second % is "secondary" reason.	Response; forced-choice survey	HS	ND*	600 Minnesota home educators; no ethnicity provided	ND*	ND*
Fields-Smith et al. (2009)	Do a better job at home (no % given), Religious reasons (88%), Inequities, prejudice, discrimination, or racism in public and private schools (79%).	Response; qualitative; phenomenological; surveys, interviews, focus groups	HS	ND*	Southeastern city; 24 Black home educators, 17 had BA degree or higher	ND*	Family Involvement Research, socioecological, parental role construction
Garcia (2008)	Students of all races at elementary and high school, other than Hispanics, enroll in charters with a high percentage of similar race. This is more pronounced at elementary level. Factors other than race not studied.	Observed; statewide database	C	2 - 9	14,676 Arizona charter choosers; 55% White, 7% Black, 23% Hispanic, 9% Native	SAT9 & Aprenda2	ND*
Glazerman (1998)	Parents preferred schools that were racially similarity and were closer to home. Specifically concluded that academics were not a factor. Only 1st of 3 possible parent choice schools was analyzed.	Observed; kindergarten preference forms	TP	K	Minneapolis Public Schools; 881 families, 50 elementary schools, "on-time" choosers	CAT composite scores	**Utility maximizing
Green, & Hoover-Dempsey (2007)	Parents chose to homeschool not because of "push" factors, but because they believe they should play an active role in their children's education, believe they have the ability to help their child succeed in school learning, and perceive that contextual factors in their lives make involvement or homeschooling possible.	Response; 6-pt Likert scale	HS	ND*	Southeastern state; 136 parents of homeschool students 95% White	ND*	ND*
Hanushek et al. (2007)	A lower AEIS rating means more parents exit a given school, charter or public. As value-added measure goes up the probability of exiting a charter goes down, and a traditional public school with a lower value-added score does not see an exit effect.	Observed; Texas Schools Project database	TP, C	4 - 8	Texas; 4 cohorts of students each representing 200,000 students, 3,000 public schools, & 200 charter schools	TAAS Reading & Math, AEIS rating	Market
Harris & Larsen (2015)	Increasing the SPS by the equivalent of one letter grade on the A-F scale increases the odds of a school being top-ranked by about 30 percent. Increasing driving distance by one mile reduces the odds of ranking a school highest by about 40 percent. The lowest-income families with elementary-age children have weaker preferences for SPS. The indirect costs also affect their choices more: they rank higher those schools with free after-school care and extended days, and they rank the nearest school higher than the highest income groups.	Observed; OneApp ranking data	ND*	K-12	New Orleans	School Performance Score	**Utility maximizing
Hastings et al. (2005)	Parents valued proximity to school. As income increases so does	Observed;	TP, M	4 - 8	Charlotte-Mecklenburg	North Carolina End of	**Utility

	preference for higher school test scores. Higher achieving students prefer schools with higher test scores.	parent choice request forms			Public School District; 36,816 parent forms; 43% White, 43% Black	Grade Exams in math and reading	maximizing
Hastings & Weinstein (2008)	Providing school test scores resulted in more parents choosing higher scoring school. Parents needed to have a high achieving school nearby to choose it.	Observed; parent choice forms, natural & field experiment	TP	ND*	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public School District; more likely to be Black and low-SES	North Carolina End of Grade Exams in math and reading	**Utility maximizing
Hausman & Goldring (2000)	Academics (mean = .40), Values (mean = .39), Discipline/Safety (mean = .31). Scale 0 to 1. Items received a binary code 1 - relevant, 0 - not relevant. Reported values are means. There were 4 constructs with 4 variables each.	Response; Anon Surveys	M	5th	Two urban districts; 1220 parents, 18 elementary schools, equal representation of 4 income brackets, no ethnic info provided	ND*	ND*
Haynes et al. (2010)	Academic Factors (W=2.75/B=2.60/L=2.83), Safety (W=2.52/B=2.70/L=2.57), School Environment Factors (W=1.99/B=1.94), Convenience (L=2.12). Ranked factors 1 to 4. Score by White (W), Black (B), & Latino (L).	Response; Phone survey w/ open-ended items	M	PS, K, 5, 7, 9	Nashville; 95 White, 40 Black, 15 Latino	ND*	ND*
Henig (1996)	Whites (Younger staff = .65; Foreign language = .58; % Minority = -.57) whereas Minorities (Foreign language = .64; Teacher/aide ratio = .60; Younger staff = .58). Bivariate correlation coefficients. Race mattered for both Whites and Minorities - Whites avoid minorities and Minorities seek schools with more minorities.	Observed; choice applications	M, TP	Elem.	Montgomery County, MD; 450 parent request forms; 1,000+ parent surveys	CAT score	Market
Jacobs (2013)	Parents prefer their neighborhood charter school (proximity), academics are not significant factors, and parents specifically do not choose based on racial make-up, but on proximity.	Observed; public info from D. C. Charter School BOE	C	ND*	Washington, D. C.; 11,343 students, 74 different charter schools, 90% Black, 2% White, 8% Latino	DC-CAS Reading & Math	Utility maximizing theory, Proximity theory
Jochim et al. (2014)	Depending on the city, 64-80% of all parents said "Quality of Academics" was most important, as did 46-65% of parents w/ HS diploma or less and 72-88% of parents with BA or higher. Based on a ranking of only three factors: academics, location, and safety.	Response; phone interview	TP, M, C	K-12	8 major US cities; 500 parents in each city, large variance in demographics between parents by city, choosers and non-choosers	ND*	ND*
Klein & Poplin (2008)	Reasons for homeschooling included increased academic opportunities (4.54), embrace high expectations/excellence in learning (4.52), safe environment (4.50), instill moral values (4.48), individualization (4.41), strengthen family bonds (4.34), flexible scheduling (4.15). Reasons for CAVA included tuition free materials/resources (4.55), home instruction w/ more control (4.42), individualization (4.41). On a 5-point Likert scale. Based on open-ended questions: Quality curriculum (61%), Structured program (50%), Negative public school experiences (47%).	Response; online survey, open-ended items	VS	K-7	California: 6 California Virtual Academies, 146 surveys, 30% color, 70% white, 94% had some college w/ almost 60% having a college degree, 143 mothers, 3 fathers, 90% married	"increased academic opportunities"	ND*

Kleitz et al. (2000)	Education quality (W=94%, B=96%, L=95%), Class size (W=88%, B=86%, L=86%), Safety (W=62%, B=74%, L=80%), Location (W=52%, B=70%, L=78%). Percentage ranking it "important" or "very important" by White (W), Black (B), & Latino (L). Similar rankings based on income levels.	Response; phone interview	C	ND*	1,100 White, Black, Hispanic, L/M/H-Income. Results weighted to reflect actual enrollment.	"Education quality"	ND*
Lee et al. (1996)	Safety (5.11), Supports my values (4.80), Academic reputation (4.79), Wide variety of courses (4.36). Scale 1 to 7.	Response; interview	ND*	ND*	Metro Detroit; 710 respondents in 45 public districts, 77% White, 20% Black, 4% Other	MEAP Reading & Math, graduation rates	**Market
Marsh et al. (2009)	1 - "Online charters can customize for my child's needs"; 2 - "I can try this without financial risk and with some possible rewards"; 3 - "I have hope and with it I can change the world"	Response; semi-structured interview	VS	K-5	Pennsylvania; 7 female parents, all previous home-schooling parents, no other demographic info	ND*	ND*
Noel et al. (2013)	Concern about school environment (91%), Provide moral instruction (77%), Dissatisfied with academics at previous/other schools (74%), Provide religious instruction (64%) - percentage stating "whether particular reasons for homeschooling their children applied to them." Concern about school environment (25%), Provide religious or moral instruction (21%), Dissatisfied with academics at previous/other schools (19%) - percent stating factor was "most important."	Response; mailed questionnaire	HS	K-12	Nationwide; 68% White, 8% Black, 15% Hispanic	ND*	ND*
Princiotta et al. (2004)	Concern about school environment (85%), Provide religious or moral instruction (72%), Dissatisfied with academics at previous/other schools (68%) - percentage stating "whether particular reasons for homeschooling their children applied to them." Concern about school environment (31%), Provide religious or moral instruction (30%), Dissatisfied with academics at previous/other schools (16%) - percentage stating factor was "most important."	Response; telephone survey	HS	K-12	Nationwide; 239 parents of homeschool students, 77% White, 9% Black, 5% Hispanic	ND*	ND*
Saporito (2003)	Whites avoid schools with non-whites, All students avoid schools with low achievement, and Race is not a factor for minorities, As standardized scores rise, fewer students exit neighborhood schools.	Observed; magnet school applications	M	8	Philadelphia; 10,922 records	Students' percentile rankings from a customized standardized test	Out-group avoidance
Saporito & Lareau (1999)	White families make decisions based on race (adjusted R-sq = .92), No tendency for Blacks to leave schools with higher percentages of Blacks or Whites, For Whites introducing other factors (academics, school safety, etc.) actually reduces adjusted R-sq to .90. Interview data supported aforementioned observed data.	Both. Observed; school choice applications. Response; semi-structured interviews.	TP	9	Northeastern urban district; approximately 2,400 8th-graders selecting one of 22 comp. high schools	SAT Math & Verbal	First- & Second-order decision process

Schneider & Buckley (2002)	Student body make-up (29%), Location (23%), Test scores (18%). Percentage of "hits" on website. Researchers admit that percents could be affected by parents' prior knowledge of schools.	Observed; Internet search data	TP, C	K - 12	Washington, D. C.; approximately 1,250 parents, parents not representative of D. C. as they were more highly educated	SAT-9	Tversky's elimination-by-aspects model, lexicographic decision rule, satisficing
Schneider et al. (1998)	Blacks & H.S. grads rank test scores higher. Whites & higher education levels rank values higher. Minority and lower education levels rank discipline higher than do Whites and high education levels. Less than 1% rank race important. Rank scale of 11 factors.	Response; telephone interview	TP, M	K-8	Inner NYC and suburban NJ; 1,582 parents, choice and non-choice, public and private school families	Standardized Math & Reading tests	ND*
Smrekar (2009)	Teacher quality, safety, and school location - specifically termed "pull" factors. Magnet school parents applied due to pull of magnet school and the push of cross-town busing,.	Response; semi-structured interview	TP, M	3, 4, 6, 7	Nashville, TN	ND*	ND*
Smrekar & Goldring (1999)	Academic Reputation (72%/62%), Teaching Style (65%/54%), Transportation (51%/43%), Racial/Ethnic Mix (44%/36%). Percentage of parents in Cincinnati/St. Louis who reported one of 21 factor as important in their choice. Large SES and demographic differences. Strong push factor from TP school in both cities.	Response; anon questionnaire	TP, M	5	St. Louis; 10 magnet schools, 953 parents. Cincinnati; 9 magnet schools, 730 parents.	ND*	Rational choice, Institutional, Market
Stein et al. (2009)	Academics (63%) cited as #1 factor in surveys; however, observed data show equal number of students moving to higher and lower performing schools.	Both. Response; survey. Observed; NWEA & AYP data.	C	ND*	Indianapolis, 2,493 parents, 15 charters	NWEA tests and AYP	**Rational choice
Tedin & Weiher (2004)	Test scores first priority for all three race groups, Test scores first even when same race is only 10% of school population, and Racial diversity is actually a plus. Did not find that Whites chose white schools.	Observed; experimental, hypothetical choices	TP, C	K-12	Dallas Independent School District; 1,920 families, fairly equal percent White, Hispanic, and Black	"Test scores" were fictitious as this was an experiment	ND*
Teske et al. (2007)	Survey: Academic quality (45%), Curriculum or thematic focus (19%) and Location/convenience (11%). Percentage selecting #1 of 10 ranked factors. 40% of parents were trying to Match school to child's giftedness. Denver focus group results: Choices were not driven by test scores. Safety, Matching school to child's strengths, Transportation, and Teacher quality were most important.	Response; telephone interviews, Denver focus groups	TP, PA, P, C	K-12	800 low to moderate income in Milwaukee (300), Washington, D.C. (300), Denver (200), all parents were choosers, all had income below $50k; 90% women; 19% Private, 14% Charter, 11% Public Alternative, 56% Public	ND*	ND*

VanderHoff (2008)	Academic effectiveness is primary determining factor, Schools that stress academics in mission statement have 75% longer waitlists, and Increases in a school's percentage of poor or minority students has no significant effect	Observed; waitlist data from New Jersey School Report Card	C	K-12	New Jersey; 42 charter schools, 80% Black & Hispanic, 60% free/reduced lunch	Average of all 4th & 8th grade standardized test scores	ND*
Vanourek et al. (1998)	Small size of charter school (53/54/58/53), higher standards at charter school (44/48/51/46), program closer to my educational philosophy (37/48/60/44), parent involvement (46/46/38/46), better teachers (45/39/40/42, and location (42/21/13/30). Percent low, middle, upper income citing factor as a reason for choosing school for oldest child.	Response; survey	C	ND*	9 states; 2,978 parents, 30 schools, 6% - 54% White, 12% - 80% Black, 4% - 46% Hispanic	ND*	ND*
Villavicencio (2013)	Chosen school meets academic and non-academic needs of my child, 11 of 12 parents (grades 6-12) from one charter identified push factors as most important, 10 of 12 parents (K-6) from the other charter school identified pull factors. Push and pull factors not identified and/or ranked.	Response; semi-structured interview	C	K-12	NYC; total of 24 parents; 2 charter schools, mainly Black, Hispanic, and Asian, with less than 2% White	ND*	Bounded rationality, choice sets
Wanzer et al. (2008)	Small pull factor for chosen school's academics (R-sq. = .042), Quite small push factor for exited school's academics (R-sq. = .019), Distance to the magnet school mattered little, but farthest school was only 3.2 miles away, and Race was not a factor	Both. Observed; interdistrict magnet school application data. Response; open-ended questions.	M	Elem.	Hartford, Conn; 6 magnet schools, 73% - 96% minority, mainly Black & Hispanic, 2,573 applicants totaling 4,187 applications, 36 parent interviews for qualitative	"school quality" defined as scores on Connecticut Mastery Test	ND*
Weiher & Tedin (2002)	60.6% of the sample pick high test scores as one of the three most important factors in choosing a charter school, yet the vast majority transfer their children into charter schools with demonstrably worse performance on the state achievement test than the traditional public schools they had attended previously. It was not stated in surveys, but it was revealed that the racial make-up of the school is an important factor. From the interviews, the top-rated factors by White, Black, Hispanic, All, respectively are: Moral values (23/34/23/26%), Discipline (23/21/3026%), Test scores (28/22/17/22%), and Safety (13/9/17/14%). Most important from 1 of 6 factors. Only study to compare school left to charter chosen.	Both: Response; interviews. Observed; school data.	C	K-12	Texas; 1,006 charter school households.	"academic quality" defined as test scores.	ND*
Wolf & Stewart (2012)	Academic performance (55%), Safety and discipline (53%), Academic program (44%) - percentage naming factor among "Top 3." Academic performance (35%), Safety and discipline (17%), Academic program (16%) -percentage naming factor most important. Large differences among four shopper types. Study was grades K-12, but aforementioned results are PK-5.	Response; doorstep survey	TP, C, M, HS, P	K-12	City of Detroit; 1,073 households, 2% White, 83% Black, 11% Hispanic	ND*	ND*

Zeehander & Winkler (2013)	Strong core curriculum in reading and mathematics (222), Emphasizes STEM (203), Strong education in life skills (173), Extremely high academic standards (167). Utility score with 100 being average. "...the critical difference is that nonacademic school characteristics and diversity are drastically LESS IMPORTANT TO ALL RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS than are core and STEM subjects." (p. 18). No overall change in top 3 factors by race, income (until $125K+), school type (Private school the exception), political ideology, school location, or church attendance. Scores for the aforementioned changed, but the top 3 factors did not. Rankings for 6 niche categories did change.	Response; "interactive innovative" online survey. Maximum-difference scaling of 30 factors	TP, C, M, P	K-12	Nationwide sample; 2,007 parents, 65% White, 9% Black, 17% Hispanic, 6% Asian	ND*	ND*
		School Types: C - charter, HS - homeschool, M - magnet, P - either non-religious or not specified private, PA - public alternative, R - religious/parochial private, TP - traditional public, VS - virtual school				"ND*" appearing anywhere in the chart means this item was "not defined" in the study.	** - Indicates theory was not clearly stated in study, but deduced from a careful reading of study.

Response Research: Academic Findings

Market theory suggests that the academic quality of a school should be a highly rated factor by parents. Therefore, this literature review will first look at findings related to academics, and then it will discuss other top findings found by response researchers.

Numerous response researchers have found that academic-related factors are in parents' top reasons for what parents say is important in their children's school. As was noted by Stein, Goldring, and Cravens (2010), the "academic" construct has different meanings for different researchers; thus, it is a complex process to compare results across studies. Furthermore, as with many of the factors, academics can be a push factor, a pull factor, or both.

Regarding academics as a pull factor, some researchers (Armor & Peiser, 1998; Bell, 2009a; Lee, Croninger, & Smith, 1996; Schneider et al., 1998; Stein et. al., 2010; Weiher & Tedin, 2002) have found "academics," as specifically defined in their respective studies as various standardized test scores, to be identified as one of parents' top three stated factors for choosing a school for their children. These studies included traditional public, charter, magnet, private, and homeschool options encompassing all Grades K-12. The settings, designs, and methods varied considerably. Armor and Peiser (1998) studied interdistrict choice in Massachusetts using structured telephone interviews. Bell (2009a) used a qualitative design with longitudinal interviews with 48 families from both urban and suburban areas. Lee et al. (1996) surveyed 710 parents in the three-county Metro Detroit area. Schneider et al. (1998) used a telephone interview rank scale with 1,582 parents in New York City and suburban New Jersey. The study conducted by Stein et al. (2010) utilized data from surveys of 2,493 charter school parents in Indianapolis. Last, Weiher and Tedin (2002) surveyed 1,006 charter school households in Texas. Despite the great variety in these studies, academics as defined by test

scores were nonetheless found to be a top three pull factor as stated by parents.

Other researchers have left the academic construct relatively undefined in their studies, yet it has still been shown to be in parents' top three stated pull factors when choosing a school for their children. In a telephone survey of 349 parents in New Orleans, the Cowen Institute (2011) found that 95% of the parents stated the academic performance of their chosen school was either an "extremely important" or a "very important" pull factor in their decisions. In an anonymous survey of magnet school parents of fifth-graders in two urban districts, Hausman and Goldring (2000) found academics to be the highest-rated factor. In a telephone interview, Haynes, Phillips, and Goldring (2010) found that parents of children in Nashville rated academic factors as most important. This was consistent across White, Black, and Latino ethnicities. In a survey of 500 parents in each of eight different major U.S. cities, researchers (Jochim et al., 2014) found "quality of academics" to be the most important factor.

In a very relevant response study (Klein & Poplin, 2008) of Grades K-7 students enrolled in the six California virtual academies (CAVA), parents who responded to a Zoomerang forced-choice survey cited "increased academic opportunities" as their number one pull factor for choosing a CAVA. These parents, though their children were enrolled in a public statewide cyber charter school, were considered homeschoolers by the researchers and the parents themselves. When asked what their reason for homeschooling was, the parents' second most cited reason was academic-related and was termed "high expectations." Klein and Poplin (2008) also utilized open-ended questions and coded "quality curriculum" as the number one factor cited by parents.

In a study of 1,100 charter school parents in Texas, Kleitz et al. (2000) found that "education quality" was cited as the top pull factor of parents regardless of ethnicity (White,

Black, or Hispanic). In a study of 1,683 parents of fifth-grade magnet school students in St. Louis and Cincinnati, Smrekar and Goldring (1999) found that "academic reputation" was the number one factor cited by parents who responded to an anonymous survey. A study by the Cowen Institute (2013) utilizing nine focus groups with a total of 81 New Orleans parents from traditional public, charter, parochial, and private schools, found that parents cited "reputation" as the second most important factor and "academics" as one of the several other most highly-rated factors. Since "reputation" and "academics" were not defined, it is possible that both constructs were academic-related in the minds of the focus group participants. In a mixed-methods study whereby telephone interviews with a total of 800 moderate-to-low-income parents in Milwaukee, Washington, DC, and Denver were utilized for the quantitative portion of the study, "academics" was cited as the number one factor by 45% of parents (Teske, Fitzpatrick, & Kaplan, 2007). The qualitative portion of the study had different findings and is reported later in Chapter 2.

In another multi-state study, Vanourek et al. (1998) surveyed 2,978 charter school parents in nine different states. These researchers found that "higher standards" at the charter school was the second most cited factor of parents. The researchers did not define this "higher standards" pull factor.

In a qualitative study utilizing semi-structured interviews of 24 mainly minority parents from two New York City charter schools, Villavicencio (2013) found a common theme among parents to be that it was important to them "how that particular school would help fulfill their own child's academic and nonacademic development" (p. 12). It is plausible to consider this to be similar to the individualization theme that is discussed later in this chapter and throughout Chapter 4 and Chapter 5; however, without a clear definition it is discussed as a separate theme

here.

In a doorstep survey of City of Detroit parents with traditional public, charter, magnet, private, and homeschool students in Grades PK-5, Wolf and Stewart (2012) found "academic performance" to be the factor rated as most important (35.2%) and "academic program" to be the third factor rated as most important (16.3%). Both terms were not defined. This was a Grades K-12 study, but the preceding results were the ones reported for Grades PK-5, as they more closely align with the grade levels being surveyed in this research project.

In a nationwide "interactive" online survey of 2,007 parents in a variety of public and private schools, Zeehandelaar and Winkler (2013) found that "Strong core curriculum in reading and mathematics," "Emphasizes science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education," and "Extremely high academic standards" were the number one, two, and four most cited factors of parents from 30 school characteristics listed in a maximum-difference scaling model.

The studies cited above discussed findings as they related to academics being a pull factor. The following response studies have identified academics as a push factor, meaning low academic quality at the child's previous school was a major factor in the parent choosing a different school. Three different nationwide surveys (Bielick, 2008; Noel, Stark, & Redford, 2013; and Princiotta, Bielick, & Chapman, 2004) of homeschoolers by the United States Department of Education (USDOE) showed parents (68-74% depending on the year) citing dissatisfaction with the academics at their previous or other schools as a factor that applied to them. All three of these studies used forced-choice response items. An earlier study (Bielick, Chandler, & Broughman, 2001) by the USDOE using open-ended questions found that 49% of parents indicated they could provide a better education at home. Given the consistency and strength of the findings of the three later studies regarding the push factor of academics, it is

plausible to postulate that "can provide a better education at home" is a proxy for the explicit dissatisfaction found in the later three studies.

In a survey of 600 Minnesota home educators, "more hands-on teaching and learning" was cited as the one primary reason by 11% of parents and/or selected by 60% of parents as one of as many secondary reasons as they wished to identify as being a significant motivating factor (Dahlquist, York-Barr, & Hendel, 2006). More hands-on teaching and learning implies that this desire of parents was not being sufficiently met at the child's previous school or by other available options, meaning it is a push factor. Finally, a homeschool study by Fields-Smith and Williams (2009) used a qualitative design and phenomenological methods (surveys, interviews, and focus groups). These research participants were 24 Black home educators. The researchers concluded that one of the top three motivating factors for parents was that they could do a better job at home. This implies a certain amount of "push" from the child's previous school or available school choices.

Not all response researchers have found academics, as either a push or pull factor, to be a top three rated factor by parents. In a qualitative study of 36 parents in Detroit, Bell (2009b) conducted three interviews over nine months with parents of enrolled sixth- or ninth-graders attending traditional public, charter, magnet, and private schools. Bell (2009b) concluded that parents selected schools based on convenience but also strongly considered neighborhood and school factors. In a survey of 136 homeschool parents, researchers' (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007) conclusions did not indicate that academics were a primary motivator for parents. In a qualitative design study utilizing a semi-structured interview of seven parents of students enrolled in the Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School, researchers (Marsh et al., 2009) did not find academics as a factor cited by parents. (Their findings are discussed later in Chapter 2 and are

displayed in Table 1). Last, in the qualitative portion of their mixed-method study, Teske et al. (2007) specifically concluded that focus group respondents' choices were not driven by test scores.

As the preceding narrative explained, and as can be observed in Table 1, clear patterns emerged. With few exceptions, in the response research parents indicated that academics was a major motivating factor in what they were searching for when choosing a school for their children. This was regardless of how clearly defined, or not defined at all, the construct of "academics" was in a particular study. Three of four exceptions (Bell, 2009b; Marsh et al., 2009; Teske et al., 2007) that did not find academics as an important factor for parents were all qualitative design studies, thereby forming another clear pattern. When further analyzing whether academics turned out to be a push or pull factor, another consistent pattern emerges. All of these cited studies (Bielick, 2008; Bielick et al., 2001; Dahlquist et al., 2006; Noel et al., 2013; Princiotta et al., 2004; and Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009) that found academics to be a push factor were studies of homeschool parents. Academics as a push factor remained consistent in these studies even though the design and methods varied. Klein and Poplin (2008) provided the only exception in which academics were found to be a pull factor with homeschool parents. Interestingly, while both the researchers (Klein & Poplin, 2008) and parent-participants viewed themselves as homeschoolers, the children were enrolled in a publicly funded virtual school—they were public school students!

Response Research: Other Relevant Findings

Numerous other findings by the aforementioned researchers are pertinent to this study. Multiple researchers have found the safety, discipline, and/or school environment to be an important factor, as stated by parents. Most of these researchers (Armor & Peiser, 1998; Bielick,

2008; Bielick et al., 2001; Noel et al., 2013; Princiotta et al., 2004; Hausman & Goldring, 2000; Haynes et al., 2010; Klein & Poplin, 2008; Kleitz, Weiher, & Tedin, 2000; Schneider et al., 1998; Teske et al., 2007; Weiher & Tedin, 2002; Wolf & Stewart, 2012) have in effect categorized safety, discipline, and the school environment as a push factor, or they have not clearly categorized it, with three exceptions. The Cowen Institute (2011) found it to be a strong pull factor by 92% of parents who rated it to be an "extremely important" or "very important" factor. Wolf and Stewart (2012) designed a survey that tested this factor from both a push and pull perspective. Lee et al. (1996) tested it as a pull factor only.

Perhaps related to the factors in the preceding paragraph are three additional findings. "Social" was one of six constructs coded from 102 different responses given by parents in a qualitative study conducted by Bell (2009a). The social factor was both a push ("students are 'too rough' at that school") and pull ("friends are going there") factor for parents (Bell, 2009a, p. 15). "Dissatisfaction with school socialization" was an important finding for why parents chose to homeschool in another study (Dahlquist et al., p. 366), and this was obviously a push factor. Last, and very importantly, Fields-Smith and Williams (2009) in their study of why Black families chose to homeschool found that "of the 24 Black home educators interviewed, 19 attributed their decisions to homeschool on perceptions of, or experiences with, inequities, prejudice, discrimination, or racism in public and private schools" (p. 376).

Multiple researchers have found religious reasons, moral reasons, or values to be an important factor as stated by parents. Most researchers (Bielick, 2008; Bielick et al., 2001; Dahlquist et al., 2006; Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Noel et al., 2013; Princiotta et al., 2004) have either categorized religious reasons, moral reasons, or values as a push factor, or they have not clearly categorized it. Other researchers (Hausman & Goldring, 2000; Lee et al., 1996;

Schneider et al., 1998; Weiher & Tedin, 2002) have been more clear in categorizing religious reasons, moral reasons, or values as a pull factor.

Location, proximity, convenience, and transportation are important factors as stated by parents. In all of the response research studies reviewed for this project that found these as important factors the researchers (Bell, 2009b; Haynes et al., 2010; Smrekar & Goldring, 1999; Cowen Institute, 2011, 2013; Teske et al., 2007; Vanourek et al., 1998) have in effect categorized location, proximity, convenience, and transportation as pull factors.

The curriculum or academic program was found to be a pull factor in five studies (Armor & Peiser, 1998; Cowen Institute, 2011; Klein & Poplin, 2008; Teske et al., 2007; Wolf & Stewart, 2012). Armor and Peiser (1998) defined this as "the availability of specific courses" (p. 180), and it was similarly defined by the Cowen Institute (2011). Klein and Poplin (2008) coded "quality of the curriculum" (p. 383) from open-ended response items that referred to various aspects of the proprietary K12, Inc. curriculum used at CAVA. The two other studies (Teske et al., 2007; Wolf & Stewart, 2012) did not define the construct.

Several studies found that qualities relating to teachers were an important pull factor stated by parents. The Cowen Institute (2011) found that "faculty and staff" were important determining factors for 94% of parents. Dahlquist et al. (2006) found "more hands-on teaching and learning" to be important for the parents they studied. Schneider et al. (1998) found that the "quality of teachers" was important. Smrekar & Goldring (1999) found that "teaching style" was important to parents. In a study of a variety of public and private choice types, researchers (Teske et al., 2007) found the quality of teachers to be an extremely important factor gleaned from focus groups. Additionally, one study (Vanourek et al., 1998) found that "Better teachers at charter school" was a matter of importance for parents. No definition or explanation was

provided by these researchers that clarified what these terms meant.

Several studies also found that factors relating to family relationships were important factors in the response literature. Dahlquist et al. (2006) found that "desire for family closeness" was a factor highly rated by parents who chose to home educate their children. In another study by Green and Hoover-Dempsey (2007), parents stated they believed they should play an active role in their children's education and that the ability to help their child succeed in school learning was an important determining factor to homeschool. Meanwhile, in a study of charter school choosers, Vanourek et al. (1998) found a top factor for parents to be "greater opportunity for parent involvement." All three of these studies categorized their respective factors as pull factors.

A theme of customization and individualization controlled by parents also emerged from the literature. Klein and Poplin (2008) found that parental control and individualized pacing were important pull factors for homeschool parents. In a phenomenological methodology, researchers (Marsh et al., 2009) coded the number one reason cited by parents to be "'Online charters can customize for my child's needs'" (p. 34). Both of the two aforementioned studies were of parents who schooled their children at home through the cyber charter schools in California and Pennsylvania, respectively.

A unique finding in one study (Villavicencio, 2013) of two different charter schools was that parents identified very distinct push and pull factors relating to their decisions, though the push and pull constructs were not specifically defined. Eleven of 12 parents from a Grades 6-12 charter school "repeatedly described their choices in terms of intensely negative experiences in or negative perceptions of their local public schools rather than about specific characteristics of the charter school they had selected" (p. 13). Additionally, in the same study, 10 of 12 parents

from a K-6 charter school described their choice "as a move towards a particular set of school characteristics" (p. 13).

The final response literature factor to be discussed was related only to findings discussed in virtual charter school studies. Both Klein and Poplin (2008) and Marsh et al. (2009) cited the free curriculum, resources, or materials provided by the respective virtual schools as a motivating factor for parents to enroll their children.

Observed Research: Academic Findings

Just as with response research, market theory suggests that the academic quality of a school should be found to be a highly rated factor by parents when the observed research is reviewed. Therefore, this section first looks at findings related to academics, and then discusses other top findings of observed researchers.

Numerous observed researchers have found that academic-related factors were among the top reasons for what parents demonstrated was important in choosing their children's school. While in the response research the "academic" construct has different meanings for different researchers, it was quite consistent in the observed literature. In all of the observed studies cited, the academic construct referred to standardized test scores and related data. Just as with the response research, as with many of the factors, academics was found be a push factor, a pull factor, or both in the observed research.

Regarding academics as a pull factor, multiple researchers (Harris & Larsen, 2015; Hastings et al., 2005; Schneider & Buckley, 2002; Tedin & Weiher, 2004; VanderHoff, 2008) have found it to be in parents' top cited factors for choosing a school for their children. These studies include traditional public, charter, and magnet school options encompassing all grades K-12. The settings, design, and methods varied considerably. Harris and Larsen (2015) used

OneApp data from New Orleans choice parents. While academics was an important factor for all parents, Harris and Larsen (2015) did find that it was considerably less important to low-income parents. Hastings et al. (2005) utilized data from 38,816 parent choice request forms from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public School District. This study was very racially balanced, with 43% of the forms having been completed by White parents and 43% having been completed by Black parents. Schneider & Buckley (2002) utilized Internet search data from approximately 1,250 parents in Washington, DC. Tedin and Weiher (2004) utilized an experimental design in the Dallas Independent School District. The subjects in this experiment were 1,920 families with fairly equal percentages of White, Black, and Hispanic subjects. Last, VanderHoff (2008) utilized waitlist data for 42 charter schools in New Jersey, in which the enrollments were overwhelmingly minority.

In a somewhat unique design, Hastings and Weinstein (2008) conducted both a natural experiment and field experiment involving over 36,800 parents in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District who chose traditional public or magnet schools. The researchers found that providing academic-related information to parents had a practical and significant effect on the number of parents choosing higher-scoring schools.

Despite the great variety in these studies, academics as defined by test scores was nonetheless found to be a strong pull factor as demonstrated by parents.

The studies cited above discussed findings as they related to academics being a pull factor. No reviewed observed studies found academics to be solely a push factor; however, four observed studies (Adzima, 2014; Hanushek, Kain, Rivkin, & Branch, 2007; Saporito, 2003; Wanzer, Moore, & Dougherty, 2008) have identified academics as both a push and pull factor.

These studies included traditional public, charter, and magnet school options

encompassing all Grades K-12. The settings, design, and methods varied considerably. Adzima (2014) utilized waitlist data from 86 different charter schools in Pennsylvania. It is important to note that data for cyber charter schools were not included. Hanushek et al. (2007) utilized the Texas Schools Project database to analyze data for over 200 charter and public schools. Saporito (2003) used data from almost 11,000 magnet school applications in Philadelphia. Last, Wanzer et al. (2008) obtained their results from analyzing data from almost 4,200 magnet school applications from an interdistrict choice program in Hartford, Connecticut. The racial composition in the six magnet schools ranged from 73-96% minority, mainly Black and Hispanic.

Not all observed researchers have found academics, as either a push or pull factor or both, to be a top-three-rated factor by parents. Butler, Carr, Toma, and Zimmer (2013) used restricted-access data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study. This was a nationally representative sample of approximately 10,100 parents, and the researchers specifically concluded that test scores were not a significant factor demonstrated by parents' actual school choices. In a study (Glazerman, 1998) involving 881 Minneapolis Public Schools families representing 50 elementary schools, an analysis of kindergarten preference forms found that academics was not a factor. Jacobs (2011) analyzed public information from the District of Columbia Charter School Board of Education on 11,343 students from 74 different charter schools and also concluded that academics was not a significant factor for parents when selecting a school. Finally, Saporito and Lareau (1999) utilized school choice applications from approximately 2,400 parents of eighth-graders in a northeastern urban school district who were selecting one of 22 comprehensive high schools for the following school year.

Observed Research: Other Relevant Findings

Perhaps because of the social desirability phenomenon discussed previously in Chapter 2, race or the racial composition of a school has not been found to be a major determining push or pull factor for parents in the response research, with the exception noted above of Fields-Smith and Williams (2009). However, race or the racial composition of a school has been a factor that has received much attention in the observed research. Glazerman (1998) found that both White and minority parents chose schools where their children were more similar to the school's ethnic and racial composition. Henig (1996) analyzed choice application data from 450 parents participating in an elementary magnet program in Montgomery County, Maryland. Henig (1996) found race to be a pull factor for both White and minority parents. Both groups of parents "seem to direct their choices toward schools in which their children will be less likely to be racially or socioeconomically isolated" (p. 109). Garcia (2008) studied a statewide database of 14,676 charter school choosers in Arizona and concluded that other than Hispanics, all other races enroll in charter schools with a higher percentage of similar race. This pull factor was even more pronounced at the elementary level. This was also a push factor in that students exited schools to enroll in the charter schools. Saporito (2003) found that race was a strong push and pull factor for Whites, but not for minorities, when selecting a magnet school in Philadelphia. Saporito and Lareau (1999) similarly found that race was a strong pull factor (adjusted R^2 = .92) for Whites in selecting a school. Furthermore, introducing other variables (academics, school safety, etc.) into the model actually reduced the adjusted R^2 value for Whites (.92 to .90). The researchers also found the absence of a racial push factor for Blacks. Schneider and Buckley (2002) found that parents utilizing the Internet searched the demographic composition of schools frequently, indicating this was both a push and pull factor. Finally, Wanzer et al. (2008), in their elementary

magnet school study, found the following:

> Applications are not occurring proportionately by race. In nearly half of the neighborhoods, Black and Latino families were more likely to apply if they were the racial minority in their elementary school attendance area. (p. 21)

The observed research is fairly balanced regarding whether race has been found to be a factor in parents' decision making. Butler et al. (2013) found that race was not a pull factor when controlling for other school and student characteristics. Jacobs (2013) introduced "proximity theory" to the research and combined it with utility maximizing theory. Based on this large and recent study, Jacobs (2013) specifically concluded that parents preferred their neighborhood charter school that was close in proximity, that parents do not choose based on race but on proximity, and that any segregation of charter schools was based on proximity, not on racial preferences. Similarly, Tedin and Weiher (2004) and VanderHoff (2008) also concluded that race was not a factor in parents' decision-making.

Regarding the observed findings for location or proximity, the findings are as follows. Butler et al. (2013) found for traditional public school parents that "distance from home is a significant and negative factor in choosing a school" (p. 801). Harris and Larsen (2015) found a 40% decrease in the chance of parents selecting a school for each mile increase in distance from home. Glazerman (1998) found a strong pull factor for Minneapolis parents choosing traditional public schools. Hastings et al. (2005) similarly found a pull factor for traditional public school and magnet school parents, as did Hastings and Weinstein (2008) for traditional public school parents. As was discussed previously, Jacobs (2013) concluded that parents preferred their neighborhood charter school. Finally, Schneider and Buckley (2002) found that school location was the second most searched factor for parents conducting Internet searches of Washington,

DC, public schools.

The relevant observed findings for other factors are much more limited in scope than are the findings for response research. The other relevant observed factors are limited to Henig (1996). In his study of elementary magnet school parents, Henig (1996) observed that the presence of a foreign language program was a strong pull factor for both Whites and minorities. The presence of a younger staff was also a strong pull factor for both groups. Last, Henig (1996) found for minority parents that a lower student-to-teacher ratio was a pull factor. This last factor could plausibly be considered an academic factor; however, it was not so defined by Henig (1996) and is thus considered a separate factor here.

Limitations of the Empirical Research

The studies in this literature review provide insights into the many factors that influence one of the most important decisions parents make—where to send their children to school. Great care and considerable effort was put into the creation of Table 1. As Table 1 clearly demonstrates, and as is discussed in the following paragraphs, because of the uniqueness of each of these studies, considerable care should be taken in making any generalizations.

As market theory suggests, academics and/or school quality should be a major determining factor—both push and pull—for parents when choosing to exit a school or when choosing a school for their children. A major concern in the extant choice research centers on different meanings for academics and/or school quality, and some studies left the construct totally undefined. Stein et al. (2010) stated the following:

> In terms of construct validity, it is not clear what the research is measuring when referring to academics as a preference for school choice because researchers tend to ask different questions, and the ways in which questions are worded varied from study to

study, leaving open to interpretation what is meant by "academics." (p. 2)

The methods also varied considerably among the studies. As previously discussed, there is the response versus observed dichotomy. Dissecting these categories further, we see both qualitative and quantitative designs in the response literature. There were studies that utilized surveys varying from open-ended responses to rankings of factors to studies where participants selected the one most important factor.

With all of these differences, it is not surprising that the reporting of the results varied greatly, making across-study comparisons sometimes quite difficult. The qualitative studies provided invaluable insight into the decisions of choice parents, though the reporting of the results run the gamut from resembling descriptive quantitative designs as in Teske et al. (2007) to the Marsh et al. (2009) finding that one of the vaguely coded factors was, "I have hope and with it I can change the world" (p. 35). A perusal of Column B of Table 1 shows that results are reported as percentages, means, R^2, rank, and a host of other ways.

As one further studies Table 1, the type of choice setting studied in the various literature included traditional public schools, public charter schools, public magnet schools, homeschools, and some of the aforementioned also included private and/or parochial school parents. Two of the studies (Klein & Poplin, 2008; Marsh et al., 2009) included virtual school parents, though the design and methodologies, and not surprisingly the results, varied greatly between the two. The grade levels covered also varied considerably. Some studies were of Grades K-12 (Adzima, 2014; Noel et al., 2013; Schneider & Buckley, 2002), some studies chose one grade level to study (Butler et al., 2013; Glazerman, 1998; Saporito, 2003), others were of multiple grades (Haynes et al., 2005; Marsh et al., 2009), and some studies were unclear as to which grades were studied (Kleitz, et al, 2000; Lee et al., 1996; Stein, et al., 2010).

Last, regarding response studies, one has to consider social desirability. Because parents in a response research study know they are being studied, as other researchers (Teske et al., 2007; Stein et al., 2010) have noted, it is possible that "social desirability" may come into play. Regarding social desirability, Stein et al. (2010) state the following:

> Survey research must always consider the threat posed by social desirability—the propensity for respondents to answer in self-serving or socially desirable ways. Social desirability suggests that respondents will want to represent themselves in a favorable way through their survey responses. What parent will readily indicate that the first, most important reason for choosing a school is race or social status? Or what parent would not indicate that some type of academic consideration was a factor in choosing a school? (p. 2).

Teske et al. (2007) describe social desirability as a parent wanting to impress the surveyor and let the surveyor know the parent cares about his or her child and about the child's education.

Social desirability does not devalue response research, but it is a phenomenon to be considered when interpreting the results of this current study or the extant response research.

Summary

The review of the literature presented in this chapter provides a framework for addressing the research questions:

1. What factors led parents to enroll their elementary students in a full-time cyber school?
2. Were these factors attributable to positive ("pull" factor) characteristics of the cyber school in which the child was enrolling, or were the factors attributable to negative ("push" factor) characteristics of the school the child was leaving.

3. Do the factors identified by parents vary by parents' race/ethnicity, educational levels, or income levels?

Although not a primary focus of the literature review, an overview of market theory and of the differences between push and pull factors was provided to help the reader better understand the review of literature and better understand the theoretical and conceptual basis that underpinned this study.

The study found a very small amount of empirical literature on cyber school choice factors influencing parents' decision making. However, the extant literature on public school choice in its various settings and the extant literature on homeschool choice provided invaluable insight into the methodology described in Chapter 3. It is with this well-grounded understanding of the factors parents found important when choosing a school for their child that we move on to Chapter 3, Methodology.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Organization of Chapter 3

Chapter 3 begins with an overview of the setting of this study: Michigan, school choice in Michigan, and a fairly detailed discussion of the Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy. Next, the population and sample are discussed. Then, the instrument and its construction, data collection methods, and data analysis are discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations, delimitations, and assumptions.

Setting

This section presents the setting of the research project. This section includes information about Michigan characteristics, school choice in Michigan, virtual school choice in Michigan, and the characteristics of the Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy.

Michigan Characteristics

The population studied was parents of Grades K-6 students enrolled in the MGLVA, a statewide cyber charter school. The MGLVA can enroll students from remote, rural Ironwood to over 600 miles away in metropolitan, urban Detroit, and anywhere in between. Therefore, a general overview of Michigan is in order. According to the United States Census Bureau (2015), approximately 9.9 million people live in Michigan. Approximately 80% are White, a little over 14% are Black, Hispanics comprise a little under 5%, and Asian and mixed-race persons comprise about 3% and 2% of the population, respectively. Those with at least a high school diploma are 88.9% of the population, and those with a bachelor's degree or higher comprise 25.9% of the population. The median household income is $48,411, and 16.8% of the population live below the federal poverty level.

Regarding school-aged children in Michigan, according to the Kids Count (2015) website data for 2013, there are approximately two million (1,975,845) school-aged (5-19) children, with 866,788 of those being aged 5-11, which is the approximate age of the students whose parents were surveyed for this study. Sixty-eight percent of children aged 5-11 are White, 16% are Black, 8% are Hispanic, 3% are Asian, and 5% are multi-racial. The Median Family Income Among Households with Children is $58,600 for families with children under 18 years of age. Ten percent of Michigan children had no parent in the workforce. A little less than 14% of children are special needs. Sixty-four percent of children live in married couple households, 8% live in father-only households, and 27% live in mother-only households. According to this website, of the adult population in Michigan, 8.92% selected "less than a high school degree," 52.71% selected "high school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)," 0% selected "some college but no degree" (as this was not an option for the Kids Count 2015 website data for 2013), 9.93% selected "associate degree," 17.89% selected "bachelor's degree," and 10.55% selected "graduate degree."

School Choice in Michigan

All of Michigan operates under an option-demand school choice process. Schneider and Buckley (2002) explain an option-demand choice system as follows:

> The characteristic feature of option-demand choice is a two-stage choice process. The first stage involves the decision to leave their zoned neighborhood school (a parent or student "chooses to choose"). At the second stage of option-demand choice, parents and students choose their preferred school from the set of possible alternatives. Option-demand choice plans place considerable responsibility on individual parents and students to make schooling decisions. Biases in who exercises choice may emerge as a result of

disparities within the population (p. 137).

School choice in various forms has existed in Michigan for decades. The type of choice options available to Michigan students and parents include the following: traditional public schools (both intra-district and inter-district), public charter schools, public magnet schools, private non-religious schools, private religious schools, homeschooling, and now, public cyber schools.

Virtual School Choice in Michigan

In 2007, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) invited all Michigan public schools to be innovative in the ways they serve students. The MDE wrote to all public schools informing them that they could "expand opportunities for high school students by seeking waivers from the administrative rules and pupil accounting rules that cause[d] barriers to innovation and student academic success" (Michigan Department of Education, 2007). Prior to this, regulations required that students be in a school building with required daily attendance, and virtual courses were restricted to two per semester. The seat time waiver allowed schools to create flexible online options outside traditional brick-and-mortar settings. It is important to note that these district-level options were available only to students in Grades 6-12.

Following these district-level options, the Michigan Legislature allowed for the creation of two publicly funded, statewide cyber charter schools, which enrolled students for the first time for the 2010-2011 school year. Important distinctions between the district-level options at that time and the two statewide cyber charter schools were that the statewide cyber charter schools could enroll students statewide while the district-level options were restricted to regional boundaries; furthermore, the statewide cyber charters could enroll all Grades K-12 while the district-level options were restricted to Grades 6-12.

In 2012, a new law was passed that raised the number of statewide cyber charter schools to 15 over three years. All statewide cyber charter schools of this type are allowed to enroll students statewide in all grades K-12. A key element in the cyber school laws affecting all cyber schools in Michigan is that a computer and Internet access must be provided to every student who needs one. As a result, access is truly universal to all Michigan students regardless of geography, socioeconomic status (SES), or other factors that normally limit school choice.

Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy Characteristics

The MGLVA was authorized as the third statewide cyber charter school in Michigan in 2013. MGLVA enrolled its first students in September of that year for the 2013-2014 school year. The MGLVA is a tuition-free public school; specifically, it is a statewide cyber charter school. The MGLVA has a publicly appointed board of directors. The MGLVA Board of Directors has contracted with K12, Inc. to hire all employees, provide the curriculum, and to run all operations below the board of director level.

Curriculum and materials. The MGLVA uses the K12, Inc. proprietary curriculum. Lessons are delivered through a software platform called the Online School, as well as through more traditional methods. Traditional materials like books, CDs, and science lab supplies are delivered right to the student and parent's doorstep. According to the MGLVA website:

> While attendance, planning, and assessment are all recorded online, only about 30 percent of the K–8 lessons are taught online, with a higher percentage for high school as students work at more of a collective pace online in conjunction with the teacher. The rest of the K[12] curriculum relies on printed and/or hands-on materials, including beautifully crafted textbooks, paint, rocks, and telescopes (MGLVA, 2015).

Potential students. The MGLVA can enroll any student in the state of Michigan in all

Grades K-12. Students are expected to work on the curriculum (i.e., "go to school") approximately six hours per day, not unlike a traditional public school or charter school. Additionally, all MGLVA students are required to take the same state standardized tests as are other public school students. The state standardized tests must be taken at approved, proxied sites.

Learning coach. Every enrolled student is expected to have a "Learning Coach" (LC) in the home. The LC is an adult, and it is usually the parent, though it does not have to be. The LC works with the child at home, helps keep the child on-pace, and serves many functions similar to a teacher in a more traditional setting. The amount of time that an LC has to spend with the student is inversely proportional to the child's age, according to the MGLVA website. Parents are clearly informed about the necessity of the LC, and it is a major family commitment. There are, however, supports to the LC from MGLVA. Speaking to the parent/LC, MGLVA states the following on their website:

> MGLVA will also provide extensive support for both you and your child—a collaboration between teachers, counselors, school community, and you. In Grades K–8, you serve as a "Learning Coach," working closely with the student team to help facilitate your child's progress and working to modify the pace and schedule as needed.

Teachers. Every MGLVA teacher is No Child Left Behind highly qualified and certified in the appropriate subject and grade level by the State of Michigan.

Student and teacher communication. Students and teachers communicate frequently with one another, sometimes multiple times per day. This communication can take place through email, telephone, online meetings, and even face-to-face. Teachers host frequent in-person events around Michigan so that teachers and students can meet each other face-to-face.

Socialization. Students at MGLVA have the opportunity to participate in many academic and social outings. These outings may include trips to museums, skate parks, zoos, and other community destinations. MGLVA also encourages students to participate in clubs, as well as student-to-student interaction.

Attendance policy and procedures. The MGLVA requires that attendance be logged daily in the Online School by the parent/LC. Students may focus more time on one or two classes in a given time period, versus "attending" all classes each day. However, attendance in each course needs to be logged each week. Students and parents/LC's are required to check their k-mail, e-mail, and phone messages daily. Last, students must attend all required Blackboard Collaborate Live sessions for direct instruction as directed by their teachers.

Current student enrollment. As of February 2015, there were approximately 2,900 students enrolled in MGLVA in Grades K-12, of which 1,048 were in Grades K-6.

Population Included in This Study

The purpose of this research was to collect and analyze data related to the factors influencing parents' decisions to enroll their Grades K-6 children in a full-time online school. The population for this study included all parents of all Grades K-6 students who were enrolled in the MGLVA for the 2014-2015 school year. As defined here, "parent" means the parent, guardian, or any other adult who is responsible for the well-being of the child and who was the adult responsible for making the school choice decision for the child. A total of 846 parents of Grades K-6 students enrolled in the MGLVA were sent emails as described below.

To solicit parent participation, this researcher provided the MGLVA with an email containing a hyperlink to the questionnaire, along with all of the information that must be communicated to parents per the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human

Subjects Research (See Appendix A for the questionnaire and Appendix B for the email.). It was made extremely clear to the parents in this email that participation in the survey was voluntary and that this was a strictly anonymous survey. The anonymity of parents was maintained in the following manner. The researcher did not have access to parents' email addresses. All email correspondence was sent out by MGLVA, including the one reminder email. Additionally, there was no personally identifying information solicited through the survey or any other means.

MGLVA teachers or staff sent/forwarded the email to all 846 parents of students enrolled in Grades K-6. In order to increase the response rate of participants, about half way through the data collection period one "reminder" and "encouragement" email was sent to parents directly from the MGLVA.

Parents were specifically and clearly instructed that only one parent per household was to respond to the questionnaire, that being the parent who had the most influence in the decision to choose MGLVA for the youngest child enrolled. This was done for two reasons. First, this research project sought to understand why parents are choosing cyber learning for younger children. Furthermore, it was surmised that the younger the child the more recently the child would have been enrolled in MGLVA and the fresher the parent's memory. However, there was no way to know if more than one person per household responded or if parents did indeed fill out the survey for the youngest child.

Sample Characteristics

The parent population for the questionnaire was surveyed for 20 days, from May 20 to June 9, 2015. Of the 846 parents who were sent a recruitment email, 144 (17%) completed and submitted the electronic questionnaire to form the sample of parents for this study. This response rate is considerably higher than the response rate of Klein and Poplin (2008) who

emailed 1,422 parents of cyber school students and had 149 parents (10.47%) voluntarily respond to their questionnaire. Accordingly, the sample for this study is an acceptable size from which to analyze results and draw conclusions.

Race/Ethnicity

Respondents to this study's questionnaire were asked to indicate their race/ethnicity from one of six forced-choice categories. This was not a required item, and seven of the 144 respondents chose not to answer. Table 2 presents a summary of this data for the 137 parents who completed this particular item.

Table 2

Percentage of Sample Parents' Race/Ethnicity

Answer Choices	**Percent**	**Number**
White	71.53%	98
Black or African-American	16.79%	23
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2.19%	3
Asian	0.00%	0
Hispanic or Latino	2.19%	3
From multiple races	7.30%	10
Total	100.00%	137

The sample percentages in Table 2 differ from the adult population of the State of Michigan, according to the Kids Count (2015) website data for 2013. The sample for this study had a slightly higher minority population (27.74% for sample versus 21.58% for the Michigan adult population). According to this website, of the adult population in Michigan, 78.42% identified themselves as White, 13.32% as Black or African-American, 0.55% as American Indian or Alaskan Native, 2.60% as Asian, 3.79% as Hispanic or Latino, and 1.29% as "from multiple races." The categories from the Kids Count (2015) website data for 2013 are named

slightly differently than are the categories for this study; however, what is being measured by the categories matches identically. For example, this study used the category term "from multiple races," while the Kids Count (2015) website data for 2013 used the category term "Non-Hispanic, two or more race groups." It is also important to note that the Kids Count (2015) website data for 2013 are not demographic statistics for the population of parents of public school children in Michigan but rather the entire adult population. A MGLVA Grades K-6 parent is likely in his or her early twenties to early fifties in age, whereas the adult population as represented in the Kids Count (2015) website data for 2013 for Michigan includes 18-year-olds to likely 100+ year olds.

Educational Levels

Respondents to the questionnaire were asked to indicate their educational attainment level from one of six forced-choice categories. This was not a required item, and two of the 144 respondents chose not to answer. Table 3 presents a summary of this data.

Table 3

Percentage and Number of Sample Parents' Educational Levels

Answer Choices	**Percent**	**Number**
Less than high school degree	4.23%	6
High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)	23.24%	33
Some college but no degree	35.92%	51
Associate degree	21.13%	30
Bachelor's degree	10.56%	15
Graduate degree	4.93%	7
Total	100%	142

The sample percentages in Table 3 differ only slightly from the population of 25-64-year-

olds in the State of Michigan, according to the Kids Count (2015) website data for 2013. According to this website, of the adult population in Michigan, 8.92% selected "less than a high school degree," 52.71% selected "high school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)," 0% selected "some college but no degree" (as this was not an option for the Kids Count 2015 website data for 2013), 9.93% selected "associate degree," 17.89% selected "bachelor's degree," and 10.55% selected "graduate degree."

Therefore, the sample appears to be about as educated as Michigan's population of 25-64-year-olds. Looking at associate, bachelor's, and graduate degree attainment, 36.61% of the sample had obtained a degree compared to 38.37% of the adult population. The sample had a lower dropout rate, with 4.23% of the sample not possessing a high school diploma compared to 8.92% of the adult population. Also, it is important to recall, as previously stated, that the Kids Count 2015 website data for 2013 are not specifically for the population of parents of public school children in Michigan; however, the age (25-64) for educational attainment level does more closely match the sample than does the data from the Kids Count (2015) website for 2013 for race/ethnicity data.

Income Levels

Respondents to the questionnaire were asked to indicate their annual income level from one of seven forced-choice categories. This was not a required item, and 5 of the 144 respondents chose not to answer. See Figure 1 for a summary of this data.

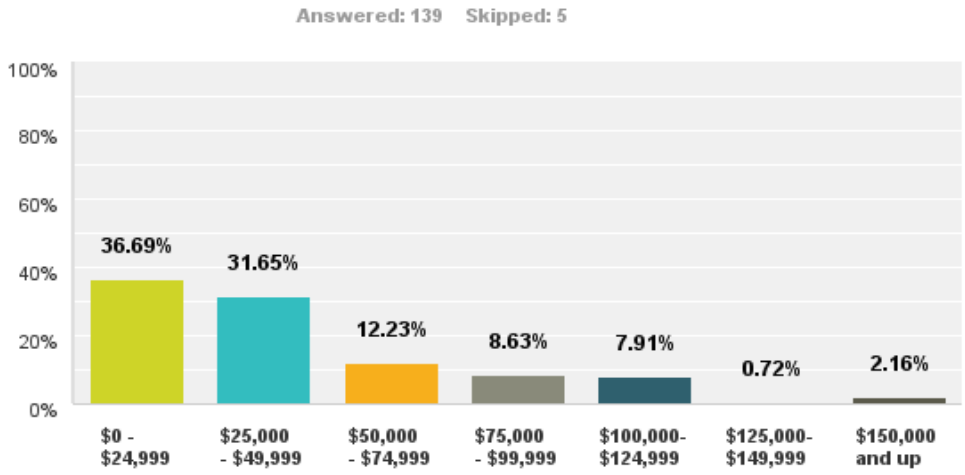

Figure 1. Percentage of sample parents' income levels.

Per the Kids Count (2015) website for 2013, the Median Family Income Among Households with Children was $58,600 in 2013. An exact median for our sample cannot be calculated, but the median income would fall somewhere in the $25,000-$49,999 category. Therefore, the sample in Figure 1 had a considerably lower median income than the Median Family Income Among Households with Children from the Kids Count (2015) website for 2013.

Grade Levels of Children in Sample

Respondents were also asked to complete the survey for their youngest child enrolled in MGLVA, and parents were asked to indicate the grade level for this child. Of the 144 total respondents, 140 chose to answer this item. Figure 2 gives a summary of the responses to the optional grade level item.

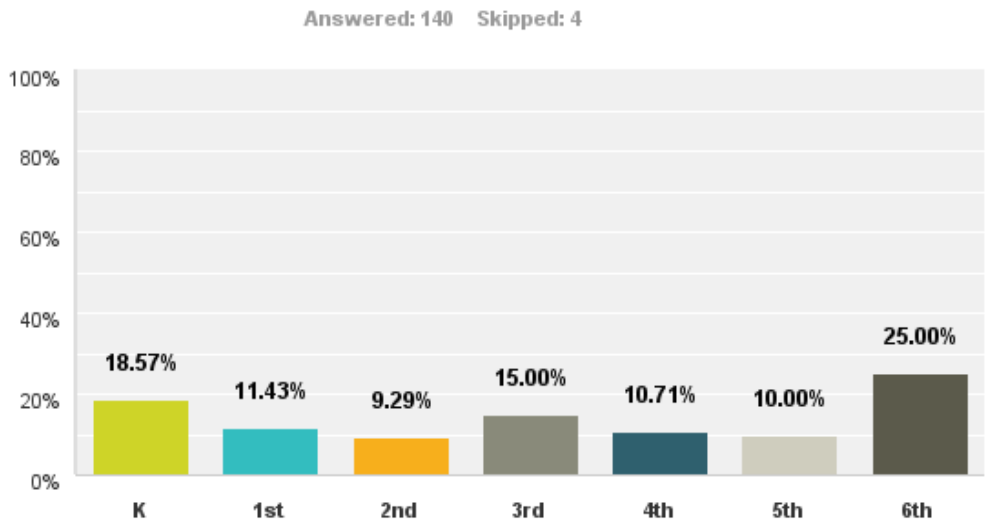

Figure 2. Percentage of sample parents who completed the questionnaire for a child in a given grade.

The data in Figure 2 represents a balanced sample from which to draw conclusions about the factors that influenced parents of Grades K-6 students to choose a cyber charter school.

Gender of Children in Sample

Parents were also asked to indicate the gender of this youngest child. Of the 144 total respondents, 141 elected to respond to this optional item. Of the 141 responses, 62 (43.97%) were filled out for "female" students and 79 (56.03%) were completed for "male" students.

Prior School Type of Children in Sample

When asked what type of school their youngest child had attended prior to attending MGLVA, 141 of 144 respondents answered this item. The majority (70.92%) of parents responded that their child had previously attended a traditional public school. This item was optional. See Figure 3 for a summary of this data.

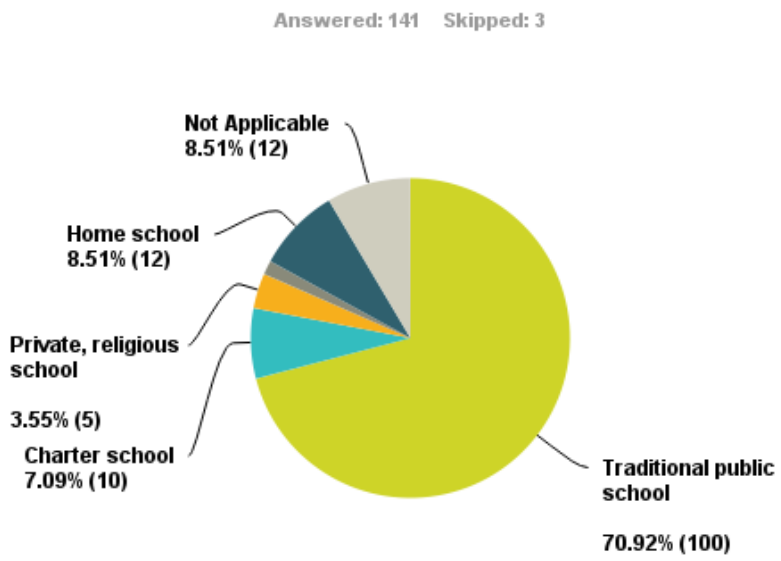

Figure 3. Child's prior school type.

Special Education Status of Children in Sample

Another optional item asked parents if their child was eligible for any special education services. Of the 144 respondents, 22 chose to skip the question or selected "prefer not to answer." Of the 122 who did respond, 21.31% indicated their child did receive special education services. The sample has a much higher percentage of special education students than is reported on the MI School Data (2015) website for the 2014-15 school year for the State of Michigan, which reports a statewide special education population of 12.9%.

Instrument

This study's purpose was to acquire information about parental decision-making regarding school choice for their children. This study sought to answer the following research questions.

1. What factors led parents to enroll their elementary students in a full-time cyber school?

2. Were these factors attributable to positive ("pull" factor) characteristics of the cyber school in which the child was enrolling, or were the factors attributable to negative ("push" factor) characteristics of the school the child was leaving.
3. Do the factors identified by parents vary by parents' race/ethnicity, educational levels, or income levels?

After reviewing research designs (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Bryant, 2004; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012), a determination was made that a quantitative design would yield a rich knowledge base for this exploratory study into the factors that influence parents' decisions to enroll their Grades K-6 students in full-time virtual learning from home. It was further determined this would be a descriptive study that utilized an online questionnaire containing both forced-choice and open-ended response items.

The development of the online questionnaire began with an extensive review of the literature on parental factors relating to school choice. This review identified various factors studied by other researchers as well as in some cases the actual instruments used by those researchers.

Next, guidelines for constructing a questionnaire were obtained from two books (Harris, 2014; Saris & Gallhofer, 2007). Both of these survey experts stressed the need for a valid and reliable instrument. Both books provide many useful tips, strategies, and methods for designing a survey, pretesting it, and ultimately using it to collect quality data.

Care was taken in the construction of the questionnaire to ensure the following:

1. Items were related to the concepts being measured
2. Directions were clear and concise
3. The questionnaire could be completed in 15 minutes or less

4. The instrument looked professional (aided by the online format)
5. Both forced-choice and open-ended items were properly worded and formatted

A preliminary version of the questionnaire was shared with Dr. Barbara Strobert, Faculty Associate, Seton Hall University, Department of Education Leadership, Management, and Policy, who provided feedback on the questionnaire. Based on feedback from Dr. Strobert, a more specific forced-choice item was added that addressed location as a factor. The questionnaire was then field tested with 10 parents in the Manistee, Michigan, community who were not part of the population or involved in the study. No changes were made after the field test. The pilot parents were timed, and the range of time to complete the survey was from seven to 14 minutes, with a mean time of completion of nine minutes.

Data Collection

An online questionnaire, containing both forced-choice and open-ended response items, was chosen as the method of data collection. This method allowed the researcher to solicit survey responses from the 846 parents of the 1,048 Grades K-6 students enrolled in the MGLVA. This method was efficient, and it yielded quality results.

The online questionnaire, titled "Survey of Choice Factors Influencing Parents' Decisions to Enroll Their Child in an Online Program," in the form of a hyperlink, along with directions and the required information per the SHU Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research, was written by the researcher and emailed to the MGLVA administrative assistant. The MGLVA administrative assistant then emailed the questionnaire hyperlink and accompanying information to all 846 parents of the 1,048 grades K-6 students who were enrolled in the MGLVA for the 2014-2015 school year. This email was sent to parents on May 20, 2015, and it remained open/active for parent responses until June 9, 2015. Based on the questionnaire

pilot, the survey should have taken approximately nine minutes to complete.

To increase the questionnaire response rate, the MGLVA administrative assistant sent out one reminder/encouragement email to parents on May 28, 2015 (Appendix C).

Parents were specifically instructed to fill out the questionnaire for the youngest child enrolled in the MGLVA if the parent had more than one child enrolled in the MGLVA.

All data that were collected were stored on a USB memory key and kept locked in the researcher's personal safe when not being used. At no time were any data stored on the researcher's personal computer or anyone else's computer.

Data Analysis

The primary statistical procedures used in analyzing the quantitative data collected were descriptive in nature. The analyses included both written narrative and visual formats, including tables and graphs showing the following:

1. Characteristics of the survey sample. Information includes categorizing the data by parents' race/ethnicity, educational levels, and income levels.
2. Factors that influenced parents to enroll their elementary-aged children in an online school. These factors were analyzed by push and pull factors and compared to parents' race/ethnicity, educational levels, and income levels.

The analyses of the data involved the creation of a graphic portrayal of the data using descriptive statistics. Tables and graphs were created to summarize the sample characteristics in terms of race/ethnicity, educational levels, and income levels. Subsequently, tables and graphs were created showing the factors identified as most important by the total sample population, as well as tables and graphs showing disaggregated results by the respondents' race/ethnicity, educational levels, and income levels. The tables and graphs served the purpose to provide a

concise visual summary of the descriptive data.

Because open-ended response items were utilized, an inductive open-coding approach to data analysis was used on this data. The data were analyzed for trends, patterns, categories, and/or themes as they relate to the research questions:

1. What factors led parents to enroll their elementary students in a full-time cyber school?
2. Were these factors attributable to positive ("pull" factor) characteristics of the cyber school in which the child was enrolling, or were the factors attributable to negative ("push" factor) characteristics of the school the child was leaving.
3. Do the factors identified by parents vary by parents' race/ethnicity, educational levels, or income levels?

As was previously stated in this chapter, the questionnaire was open/active for 20 days in May and June of 2015.

SHU Institutional Review Board Approval

Approval for this research project, including the survey instrument and data collection methods, was obtained from the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research to ensure that the safety, rights, and well-being of those participating in the research are protected (See Appendix D).

Limitations

This research study could have been limited by more than one parent per student responding to the questionnaire. Many of the students enrolled in the MGLVA have two parents, either two parents in the one household or two or more parents in two households. Each of these parents was entered into the student management software and each would have been sent the

email containing the questionnaire that requested their participation in this study. The email specifically contained instructions requesting that only one parent per child fill out the survey—the parent who was most responsible for making the decision to enroll the child into the MGLVA. However, despite these instructions, it is possible that more than one parent per child responded. If two or more parents/guardians for one child responded to the survey, the results would be impacted.

This study may have been limited by social desirability. Social desirability is a threat to validity in response research caused by survey or interview respondents answering (i.e., representing themselves) in ways that shed a more favorable light on the respondent, but are not necessarily true or the most true response.

Last, this study may have been limited by a "halo" or "rose-colored glasses" effect as described by Teske et al. (2007):

> Parents who have made a choice about a school might want to justify the time and energy going into that choice, both to themselves and to the surveyor, by noting their satisfaction with choice. (p. 23)

Delimitations

Delimitations for this study included the selected sample being from one school, the time lag of the data collection, and the lack of collecting or disaggregating the data for special education students. The researcher chose to study only parents who had Grades K-6 students enrolled in the MGLVA for the 2014-2015 school year. The time frame for the data collection was in May 2015, which may have resulted in a considerable time lag from when parents decided to enroll their child in the MGLVA and when they responded to the online questionnaire. The sample population could have made the decision to enroll their children in

MGLVA any time from May 2013 (first month enrollment was open at MGLVA), up until February 2015 (last month to enroll for the current school year). Last, special education parents may have different or unique factors that lead them to enroll their child in the MGLVA. No attempt was made to differentiate the special education parents from general education parents.

Assumptions

The research study was based on two important assumptions. The researcher assumed that parents would remember and accurately respond to the factors that influenced them to enroll their Grades K-6 students in a full-time online school. Additionally, it was assumed that parents make a conscious and well reasoned choice regarding their children's educational experience.

Summary

This chapter described the setting in which the research data were obtained: Michigan characteristics, school choice in Michigan, virtual school choice in Michigan, and the characteristics of the MGLVA.

This chapter then described the population and sample that was surveyed, and the methods used for conducting the survey. This included a discussion of the instrument and how it was designed, and a discussion of how the data were collected, protected, and analyzed.

This chapter concluded with a discussion of the limitations, delimitations, and assumptions of the research study.

With this background information, it is possible in Chapter 4 to examine from varying perspectives the factors that influence parents to enroll their Grades K-6 students in a full-time online school.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Organization of Chapter 4

The option for school choice parents to select full-time cyber learning for their elementary-aged children is quite new. To begin to understand parents' decisions to select this schooling option for their children, this exploratory, descriptive study collected information about the factors that led parents to enroll their elementary students in a full-time cyber school, about whether these factors were attributable to positive ("pull" factor) characteristics of the cyber school in which the child was enrolling or attributable to negative ("push" factor) characteristics of the school the child was leaving, and about whether the factors identified vary by parents' race/ethnicity, educational levels, or income levels.

This chapter presents data showing what factors parents identified as most important in their choice decisions and whether push or pull factors were more important to parents. The data were then compared to the parents' self-identified race/ethnicity, educational levels, and income levels.

This study used one major source of data. This was an electronically delivered SurveyMonkey® questionnaire that was emailed to all parents (n = 846) of Grades K-6 students enrolled for the 2014-2015 school year in the Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy (MGLVA), a statewide cyber charter school in Michigan. The questionnaire utilized both forced-choice and open-ended response items. The forced-choice items provided a structured approach to collecting data based mainly on the extant research, whereas the open-ended responses provided the opportunity for parents to state reasons the existing literature had not yet

identified, reasons that may be peculiar to full-time online learning, and/or reasons that were not readily apparent to this researcher.

Framework for Analyzing the Factors Influencing Parent Choice

This exploratory, descriptive study sought to provide information regarding the decisions that parents made to enroll their elementary-aged children in a full-time cyber learning experience in Michigan. The research questions for the study focused on the factors that are important to parents in making this crucial decision, about whether these factors were attributable to positive ("pull" factor) characteristics of the cyber school in which the child was enrolling or attributable to negative ("push" factor) characteristics of the school the child was leaving, and about whether the factors identified by parents vary by parents' race/ethnicity, educational levels, or income levels.

When the questionnaire was constructed, it was assumed that parents make a conscious and well reasoned choice regarding their children's educational experience. Questions were developed after a thorough review of extant research and based on the researcher's personal knowledge gained from having administered a similar Grades K-12 full-time cyber school. These questions were designed to provide information on the factors and type of factor (push versus pull) that influenced parents the most in choosing their children's school. Respondents were requested to provide information about their race/ethnicity, educational level, and income level to ascertain if these demographic characteristics were related to the parents' school choice decisions.

Factors Influencing Parents' Decisions

Two main types of literature were reviewed in Chapter 2: response and observed. This research identified numerous push and pull academic and non-academic factors that ultimately

led parents to select a particular school for their children. The overwhelming majority of this research focused on non-virtual schools: traditional public, public charter, public magnet, public alternative, religious/parochial private, non-religious private, and homeschool. Only two of the studies (Klein & Poplin, 2008; Marsh et al., 2009) included virtual school parents. These two studies are now six to seven years old. This study sought to determine whether the same factors that in the past have influenced parents to select non-virtual schools were similar to the factors that influence parents to select a full-time cyber charter school experience for their elementary-aged children. This study also sought to determine whether the factors that were identified as influencing parents to select virtual schools six to seven years ago are still the ones that influence parents to select a full-time cyber charter school experience for their elementary-aged children today, as virtual schooling has become much more widely known and accepted for elementary-aged children.

On the questionnaire, parents were given a list of push and pull factors that had been identified in previous studies as influencing parents' school choice decisions. Utilizing their own criteria, parents were asked to determine if each factor was "extremely important," "very important," "important," "somewhat important," or "not important." In designing the electronic SurveyMonkey® survey, the researcher assigned a value of 5 for "extremely important," a value of 4 for "very important," a value of 3 for "important," a value of 2 for "somewhat important," and a value of 1 for "not important." The SurveyMonkey® survey mechanism then automatically calculated and assigned a mean score to each factor.

"Schooling from home allows me to individualize for my child" received the highest mean score (4.60). This highest-ranked factor was followed closely by "I believed that MGLVA would do a very good job of teaching the basics: reading, writing, & math" (4.49), "Schooling

from home allows me to instill my values in my child" (4.46), "MGLVA provides free curriculum and technology" (4.42), "High academic quality/expectations at MGLVA" (4.40), "Good teacher quality at MGLVA" (4.40), "The MGLVA model allows flexibility to schedule school around family activities" (4.35) and "Modern teaching methods and use of technology at MGLVA" (4.15). These top eight ranked factors are consistent with the extant research that was reviewed in Chapter 2, whether those studies were conducted in virtual or non-virtual schools. A more detailed comparison occurs in Chapter 5.

It is also important to note that the aforementioned eight top ranked factors are all pull factors, as are 9 of the top 11 factors.

The top ranking push factor, and the 9th-highest ranked factor overall, was "Child's previous school did not meet my child's individual needs" with a mean of 4.03. It makes sense this was the highest-ranked push factor, as it is the corollary to the number one ranked pull factor, "Schooling from home allows me to individualize for my child." This push factor being ranked somewhat lower than its corollary pull factor may partially be explained in that 38 respondents indicated their child was previously homeschooled (n = 12) or they indicated that the child for whom they are completing the questionnaire is in kindergarten (n = 26). This means that "Child's previous school did not meet my child's individual needs" would not have been applicable to them. If these 38 parents, or a meaningful number of them, responded "not important" with a value of 1 or "somewhat important" with a value of 2, then a lowering of the mean score for the push factors would have occurred.

The next highest-ranked push factor and the 11th-ranked factor overall, "Dissatisfied with discipline, safety, or bullying at my child's previous school," had a mean of 4.00. No other push factors had a mean above 4.00.

"There was not another conveniently located option for our family other than MGLVA" was the last-ranked of the 20 factors with a mean of 2.86. "Schedule at my child's previous school did not fit my child's or our family's needs" was the 19th-lowest ranked of the 20 factors with a mean of 3.18. These two lowest-ranked factors are in contrast to much of the response research and observed research cited in Chapter 2 and are discussed in more depth in Chapter 5.

"The student body make-up at previous school was not what my child or I wanted" was the 18th-lowest ranked of the 20 factors with a mean of 3.19. Perhaps because of the social desirability phenomenon discussed previously in Chapter 2, race or the racial composition of a school has not been found to be a major determining push or pull factor for parents in the response research, with the exception noted in Chapter 2 of Fields-Smith and Williams (2009).

Table 4 presents the full wording of all 20 factors that were ranked by parents. It is presented to help the reader better understand Figure 4, which follows. The 20 factors were randomized when presented to parents to rank. Table 4 presents the factors in order from highest mean to lowest mean as ranked by parents.

Table 4

Full Wording of All 20 Factors

Schooling from home allows me to individualize for my child
I believed that MGLVA would do a very good job of teaching the basics: reading, writing, & math
Schooling from home allows me to instill my values in my child
MGLVA provides free curriculum and technology
High academic quality/expectations at MGLVA
Good teacher quality at MGLVA
The MGLVA model allows flexibility to schedule school around family activities
Modern teaching methods and use of technology at MGLVA
Child's previous school did not meet my child's individual needs
Dissatisfied with discipline, safety, or bullying at my child's previous school
MGLVA will provide a free computer if I need it
Dissatisfied with academic quality/expectations at my child's previous school
Child's previous school did not support my values
Dissatisfied with teacher quality at my child's previous school
The class size was too large at my child's previous school
Dissatisfied with "old school" teaching methods at my child's previous school
My child's previous school did not do a good job teaching the basics: reading, writing, & math
The student body make-up at previous school was not what my child or I wanted
Schedule at my child's previous school did not fit my child's or our family's needs
There was not another conveniently located option for our family other than MGLVA

Figure 4 below presents all 20 factors as ranked by parents.

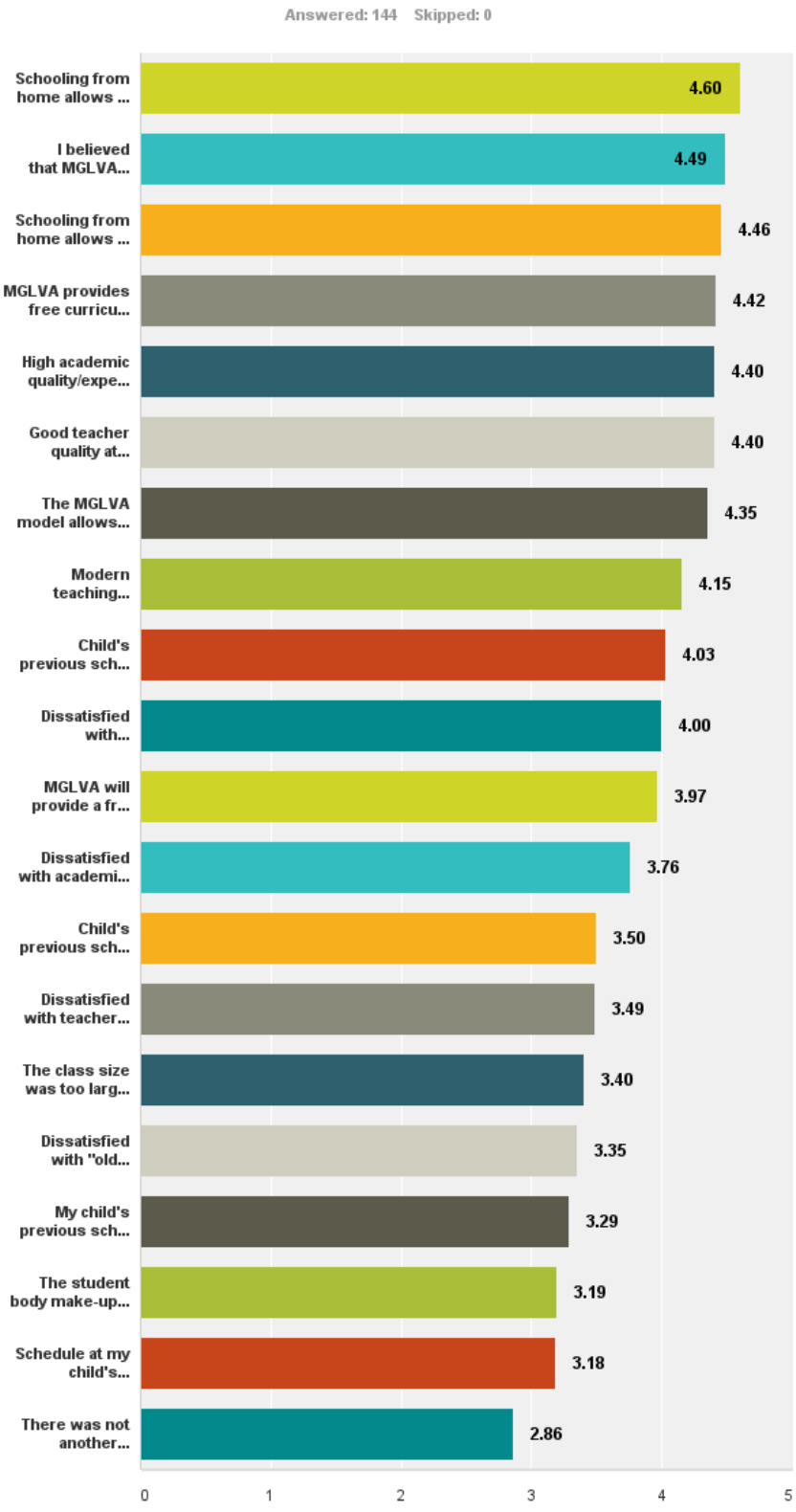

Figure 4. Parents' ranking of all 20 factors.

Push Versus Pull Factors

One of the research questions was whether the positive ("pull" factor) characteristics of the cyber school in which the child was enrolling or the negative ("push" factor) characteristics of the school the child was leaving were more important to parents in their decision-making processes. One of the questionnaire items (Q9) asked parents, "In general, was your decision to enroll your child at MGLVA based more on the positive factors of MGLVA or the negative factors of your child's previous school?" Of the 144 total respondents, 142 chose to answer this question. Of the 142, 12 selected "Not applicable." Presumably, these 12 parents were homeschool parents or parents of kindergarten students; hence, their children were not enrolled in a school the previous year. As such, there would have been no applicable push factors for them to consider. Of the 130 parents for which this was an applicable question, 58 (44.62%) indicated their decision was based more on the positive factors of MGLVA. Meanwhile, 72 parents (55.38%) indicated their decision was based more on the push factors of their children's previous school.

The responses to this item seem to conflict with the overall ranking of the 20 factors, as the top 8 and 9 of the top 11 most highly rated factors by parents were all pull factors.

However, there may be a mathematical phenomenon happening with the data as was briefly discussed earlier in this chapter. In analyzing the push versus pull data, this researcher believes it is important to consider the 26 parents who indicated they were completing the questionnaire for a kindergarten student and the 12 parents who indicated their child was homeschooled the previous year. In applying logical reasoning, it does not seem likely that parents of kindergarten students would have also identified themselves as homeschool students or vice versa. Thus, there are potentially 38 respondents for whom push factors might not have

been applicable. It is also possible that some of these parents used proxy information (from friends, family, etc.) and did rate push factors as if they were based on the parents' personal information. The way the questionnaire is designed, it is not possible to analyze the data at this level of specificity. Regardless, if even one-half of these 38 parents responding ranked an item as "not important" with a value of 1 or "somewhat important" with a value of 2 because they did not believe that push factors were applicable/important to them, this would have the mathematical effect of lowering the mean scores for all push factors considerably.

Presumably, these 38 parents would still be making their decisions on pull factors; therefore, there would be no lowering of pull factor means based on the responses of these 38 parents. However, and it is beyond the scope of this study or the analysis of its data, this poses the question, "Do these 38 parents then rank pull factors more highly than parents for whom both push and pull factors were applicable (i.e., Do the 38 parents have the effect of increasing the means of the pull factors?)?" The answer to this question cannot be determined from the available data.

To test this supposition that the 38 parents may have lowered push factor means, this researcher recalculated the means of the push factors. This was done by taking one-half of the 38 (19 parents) parents who possibly did not have a child enrolled in a school system the prior year. Assuming these parents would have ranked most push factors as "not important" with a value of 1 or "somewhat important" with a value of 2, a value of 1.5 was assigned to these 19 parents (19 x 1.5 = 28.5). This value was subtracted from the total points calculated for each particular factor, and the mean was recalculated using 19 fewer respondents. For example, the original 9th-highest ranked overall factor and the original top-ranked push factor was "Child's previous school did not meet my child's individual needs." This push factor had 144 respondents

and a mean of 4.03. The recalculation formula went as follows: {(144 x 4.03) – 28.5}/(144-19) = 4.41. The recalculated mean of 4.41 moved this push factor from 9th overall to 5th overall. While some of the other factors changed places with the recalculated mean, most factors did not move more than one or two rank levels (See Table 6). With this recalculation, only three of the top 11 highest ranked factors were push factors. Arguably, this is a very conservative recalculation formula.

A more aggressive way to recalculate the means of the push factors would be to adjust the means based on removing the "not important" responses from the factors. The number of "not important" respondents for the push factors ranged from 19 to 37 for a given factor. Given there were 38 possible respondents who might not have found push factors applicable, removing the lowest category seems plausible to this researcher. Recalculating the means on the remaining four categories yields some interesting results. "Dissatisfied with discipline, safety, or bullying at my child's previous school" catapults from the original 10th-highest ranked factor overall to the 2nd- highest ranked factor. As was discussed earlier in Chapter 2, this is very consistent with the research across a wide variety of school types. "Child's previous school did not meet my child's individual needs" moved from 9th-highest overall in the original to the 4th-highest ranked factor in this recalculation. However, 8 of the top 11 ranked factors still remain pull factors.

Table 5 presents the mean and ranking for the original data, the first recalculation, and the second recalculation as described above.

Table 5

Means and Rank for Original Data and 1st and 2nd Recalculations

Factor	Orig. Mean	Orig. Rank	1st Rec Mean	1st Rec Rank	2nd Rec Mean	2nd Rec Rank
Schooling from home allows me to individualize for my child	4.60	1	4.60	1	4.60	1
I believed that MGLVA would do a very good job of teaching the basics: reading, writing, & math	4.49	2	4.49	2	4.49	3
Schooling from home allows me to instill my values in my child	4.46	3	4.46	3	4.46	5
MGLVA provides free curriculum and technology	4.42	4	4.42	4	4.42	6
The MGLVA model allows flexibility to schedule school around family activities	4.40	5	4.40	6	4.40	7
Good teacher quality at MGLVA	4.40	6	4.40	7	4.40	8
High academic quality/expectations at MGLVA	4.35	7	4.35	9	4.35	9
Modern teaching methods and use of technology at MGLVA	4.15	8	4.15	10	4.15	11
Child's previous school did not meet my child's individual needs	4.03	9	4.41	5	4.49	4
Dissatisfied with discipline, safety, or bullying at my child's previous school	4.00	10	4.38	8	4.54	2
MGLVA will provide a free computer if I need it	3.97	11	3.97	12	3.97	16
Dissatisfied with academic quality/expectations at my child's previous school	3.76	12	4.10	11	4.18	10
Child's previous school did not support my values	3.50	13	3.80	13	4.10	14
Dissatisfied with teacher quality at my child's previous school	3.49	14	3.80	14	4.12	12
The class size was too large at my child's previous school	3.40	15	3.68	15	4.11	13
Dissatisfied with "old school" teaching methods at my child's previous school	3.35	16	3.64	16	4.03	15
My child's previous school did not do a good job teaching the basics: reading, writing, & math	3.29	17	3.56	17	3.89	19
The student body make-up at previous school was not what my child or I wanted	3.19	18	3.44	18	3.94	17
Schedule at my child's previous school did not fit my child's or our family's needs	3.18	19	3.44	19	3.93	18
There was not another conveniently located option for our family other than MGLVA	2.86	20	2.86	20	2.86	20

It appears from Table 4 that pull factors were considered more important by parents when selecting a cyber charter school for their Grades K-6 students. Therefore, it seems clear to this researcher that a discrepancy exists between the self-reported thoughts or feelings that parents had about the overarching reasons for selecting a school for their child (Q9) and the means for the parents' responses to individual factor items on questionnaire item Q7.

Factors by Race/Ethnicity

The top ranked factor for the 98 White parents was "Schooling from home allows me to individualize for my child" with a mean of 4.55. The 2nd- and 3rd-highest ranked factors by White parents were "I believed that MGLVA would do a very good job of teaching the basics: reading, writing, & math," and "Schooling from home allows me to instill my values in my child" with means of 4.42 and 4.39, respectively. The lowest-ranked factor by White parents was "There was not another conveniently located option for our family other than MGLVA" with a mean of 2.58.

The top two ranked factors for the 23 Black/African American parents were "Schooling from home allows me to individualize for my child" and "Schooling from home allows me to instill my values in my child," both with means of 4.83. The 3rd-highest ranked factor by Black/African American parents was "Good teacher quality at MGLVA," with a mean of 4.70. The lowest-ranked factor for 23 Black/African American parents was "The student body make-up at previous school was not what my child or I wanted," with a mean of 3.17.

There were only three American Indian/Alaskan Native parents who responded. Their highest-ranked factor was "Good teacher quality at MGLVA," with a mean of 5.00. The next three factors were "Schooling from home allows me to instill my values in my child," "High academic quality/expectations at MGLVA," and "Dissatisfied with discipline, safety, or bullying

at my child's previous school," with all three having a mean of 4.67. The lowest-ranked factor for American Indian/Alaskan Native parents was "My child's previous school did not do a good job teaching the basics: reading, writing, & math," with a mean of 2.67. The subset is so small that no conclusions for this group can be reached.

There were also only three Hispanic/Latino parents who responded. The top three ranked factors were "Good teacher quality at MGLVA," "Schooling from home allows me to instill my values in my child," and "Schooling from home allows me to individualize for my child" each with a mean of 5.00. The lowest-ranked factor was "Dissatisfied with teacher quality at my child's previous school," with a mean of 3.00. The subset is so small that no conclusions for this group can be reached.

There were 10 "from multiple races" parents who responded. Their top-three ranked factors were "I believed that MGLVA would do a very good job of teaching the basics: reading, writing, & math," "Schooling from home allows me to individualize for my child," and "High academic quality/expectations at MGLVA," with means of 4.60, 4.50, and 4.40, respectively. Furthermore, eight out of 10 "from multiple races" parents selected "I believed that MGLVA would do a very good job of teaching the basics: reading, writing, & math" as "extremely important," as did seven of 10 parents for "Schooling from home allows me to individualize for my child" and six of 10 parents for "High academic quality/expectations at MGLVA"; therefore, there was a lot of consistency in their responses. The lowest-ranked factor was "Child's previous school did not support my values," with a mean of 2.30.

The similarities among the different racial/ethnic backgrounds were that White, Black/African American, and "from multiple races" identified individualization to be a top-ranking pull factor. White, Black/African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and

Hispanic/Latino all identified the ability to instill their values in their children to be an important pull factor. Last, Black/African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Hispanic/Latino identified teacher quality as an important pull factor.

Table 6 provides the mean and rank for all 20 factors as ranked by this study's race/ethnic groups.

Table 6

All 20 Factors as Ranked by Parents' Self-reported Race/Ethnic Status

	White	White	Black/ African American	Black/ African American	Am. Indian/ Alaskan Native	Am. Indian/ Alaskan Native	Hisp./ Latino	Hisp/ Latino	From multiple races	From multiple races
Factor	**Rank**	***n* = 98**	**Rank**	***n* = 23**	**Rank**	***n* = 3**	**Rank**	***n* = 3**	**Rank**	***n* = 10**
Schooling from home allows me to individualize for my child	1	4.55	1	4.83	9	4.00	3	5.00	2	4.50
I believed that MGLVA would do a very good job of teaching the basics: reading, writing, & math	2	4.42	5	4.65	5	4.33	5	4.67	1	4.60
Schooling from home allows me to instill my values in my child	3	4.39	2	4.83	2	4.67	2	5.00	8	3.80
MGLVA provides free curriculum and technology	4	4.37	7	4.61	7	4.33	7	4.33	4	4.40
The MGLVA model allows flexibility to schedule school around family activities	5	4.37	8	4.61	10	4.00	8	4.33	9	3.80
Good teacher quality at MGLVA	6	4.32	3	4.70	1	5.00	1	5.00	5	4.30
High academic quality/expectations at MGLVA	7	4.30	4	4.70	3	4.67	4	4.67	3	4.40
Modern teaching methods and use of technology at MGLVA	8	3.99	6	4.65	6	4.33	6	4.37	7	4.20
MGLVA will provide a free computer if I need it	9	3.95	11	4.13	14	3.67	15	3.67	6	4.30
Child's previous school did not meet my child's individual needs	10	3.94	9	4.35	13	3.67	10	4.00	10	3.80
Dissatisfied with discipline, safety, or bullying at my child's previous school	11	3.94	10	4.26	4	4.67	12	3.67	12	3.60
Dissatisfied with academic quality/expectations at my child's previous school	12	3.68	13	3.83	8	4.33	9	4.00	11	3.60
Child's previous school did not support my values	13	3.58	19	3.43	12	4.00	14	3.67	20	2.30
Dissatisfied with teacher quality at my child's previous school	14	3.44	14	3.78	17	3.33	20	3.00	15	3.20
The class size was too large at my child's previous school	15	3.31	17	3.48	16	3.67	16	3.67	14	3.50
Dissatisfied with "old school" teaching methods at my child's previous school	16	3.24	12	3.87	15	3.67	19	3.00	19	2.80
My child's previous school did not do a good job teaching the basics: reading, writing, & math	17	3.19	18	3.48	20	2.67	11	4.00	16	3.10
The student body make-up at previous school was not what my child or I wanted	18	3.15	20	3.17	18	3.33	18	3.33	18	3.00
Schedule at my child's previous school did not fit my child's or our family's needs	19	3.01	16	3.57	19	3.00	17	3.67	13	3.60
There was not another conveniently located option for our family other than MGLVA	20	2.58	15	3.61	11	4.00	13	3.67	17	3.00

Factors by Educational Levels

The highest-ranked factor overall was "Schooling from home allows me to individualize for my child," and this was also the highest-ranked factor for the first three educational levels: "less than high school degree," "high school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)," and "some college but no degree." This was the 2nd-highest ranked factor for "associate" and "bachelor's" respondents, but it fell to the 6th-highest factor for the seven "graduate" respondents.

There were no other consistent findings across all categories of educational levels, except for the lowest-ranked factor.

The lowest-ranked factor overall was "There was not another conveniently located option for our family other than MGLVA," and this was the 20th-ranked factor for all educational levels except the lowest category (less than a high school degree) respondents. "Less than a high school degree" respondents ranked this factor 13th, with a mean of 3.83. For comparison purposes, the other educational level respondents' categories had means ranging from 2.50 to 2.96 for this factor. Thus, while lower-income parents did not identify convenience and location of another choice option as an important factor, less educated parents did rank this factor considerably higher than all other groups.

Table 7 provides the mean and rank of all 20 factors by income levels.

Table 7

All 20 Factors as Ranked by Parents' Self-reported Educational Level

	< High School	< High School	HS/ GED	HS/ GED	Some College	Some College	Assoc.	Assoc.	Bach.	Bach.	Grad.	Grad.
Factor	**Rank**	***n* = 6**	**Rank**	***n* = 33**	**Rank**	***n* = 51**	**Rank**	***n* = 30**	**Rank**	***n* = 15**	**Rank**	***n* = 7**
Schooling from home allows me to individualize for my child	1	4.83	1	4.70	1	4.59	2	4.57	2	4.53	6	4.14
High academic quality/expectations at MGLVA	2	4.67	4	4.36	6	4.43	4	4.40	7	4.20	4	4.43
Good teacher quality at MGLVA	3	4.67	5	4.36	5	4.45	6	4.27	6	4.27	2	4.57
MGLVA provides free curriculum and technology	4	4.67	3	4.42	2	4.55	5	4.37	9	3.93	5	4.29
Child's previous school did not meet my child's individual needs	5	4.67	10	3.79	10	3.98	9	4.07	5	4.40	11	3.71
Modern teaching methods and use of technology at MGLVA	6	4.67	9	4.06	8	4.25	11	3.97	8	4.00	7	4.14
The MGLVA model allows flexibility to schedule school around family activities	7	4.67	2	4.45	7	4.41	7	4.13	4	4.40	10	3.71
I believed that MGLVA would do a very good job of teaching the basics: reading, writing, & math	8	4.67	6	4.36	3	4.55	3	4.47	3	4.40	1	4.57
Dissatisfied with discipline, safety, or bullying at my child's previous school	9	4.50	11	3.79	9	4.08	10	4.03	10	3.80	8	4.00
Schooling from home allows me to instill my values in my child	10	4.33	7	4.30	4	4.51	1	4.70	1	4.53	12	3.57
MGLVA will provide a free computer if I need it	11	4.33	8	4.21	11	3.82	8	4.10	19	3.07	3	4.57
Child's previous school did not support my values	12	4.17	13	3.76	16	3.14	15	3.53	12	3.80	13	3.14
There was not another conveniently located option for our family other than MGLVA	13	3.83	20	2.82	20	2.96	20	2.50	20	2.73	20	2.71
Dissatisfied with academic quality/expectations at my child's previous school	14	3.50	14	3.76	12	3.61	12	3.93	11	3.80	9	3.86
The class size was too large at my child's previous school	15	3.17	17	3.42	13	3.47	17	3.23	15	3.40	16	3.14
Dissatisfied with teacher quality at my child's previous school	16	3.00	12	3.79	15	3.24	13	3.57	13	3.73	14	3.14
My child's previous school did not do a good job teaching the basics: reading, writing, & math	17	3.00	18	3.30	18	3.12	14	3.57	18	3.27	17	3.14
Schedule at my child's previous school did not fit my child's or our family's needs	18	2.83	19	3.03	19	2.98	16	3.47	14	3.53	15	3.14
The student body make-up at previous school was not what my child or I wanted	19	2.83	16	3.48	17	3.12	19	2.97	17	3.33	19	2.71
Dissatisfied with "old school" teaching methods at my child's previous school	20	2.50	15	3.67	14	3.41	18	3.10	16	3.33	18	2.86

Factors by Income Levels

The highest-ranked factor overall was "Schooling from home allows me to individualize for my child," and this was also the highest-ranked factor for all income levels $0 to $124,999. There was a total of only four respondents in the two highest-income categories. Three of these respondents were in the highest category ($150,000 and above), and their collective responses had a mean of 4.33 for the individualization factor. Therefore, it is apparent that individualization is highly important to all parents, regardless of income level.

The 2nd-highest ranked factor overall was "I believed that MGLVA would do a very good job of teaching the basics: reading, writing, & math," and this was the only other factor that was consistently ranked high by all income levels. It ranked in the top six for all income levels.

The lowest-ranked factor overall was "There was not another conveniently located option for our family other than MGLVA," and this was also the lowest-ranked factor for all income levels $0 to $124,999. If convenience or location had been an important factor for any parents, based on the extant literature, it would have been anticipated to be important to parents of lower-income levels who had less discretionary resources to allocate to various choice options. However, this was not the finding in this study.

Table 8 provides the mean and rank of all 20 factors by income levels.

Table 8

All 20 Factors as Ranked by Parents' Self-reported Income Level

	$0-$24,999	$0-$24,999	$25k-$49,999	$25k-$49,999	$50k-$74,999	$50k-$74,999	$75k-$99,999	$75k-$99,999	$100k-$124,999	$100k-$124,999	$125k-$149,999	$125k-$149,999	$150k+	$150k+
Factor	**Rank**	***n* = 51**	**Rank**	***n* = 44**	**Rank**	***n* = 17**	**Rank**	***n* = 12**	**Rank**	***n* = 11**	**Rank**	***n* = 1**	**Rank**	***n* = 3**
Schooling from home allows me to individualize for my child	1	4.61	1	4.64	1	4.82	1	4.08	1	4.91	13	1.00	8	4.33
MGLVA provides free curriculum and technology	2	4.61	4	4.32	3	4.65	10	3.50	6	4.64	14	1.00	9	4.33
I believed that MGLVA would do a very good job of teaching the basics: reading, writing, & math	3	4.57	3	4.43	6	4.47	3	4	3	4.73	1	4.00	4	4.33
High academic quality/expectations at MGLVA	4	4.57	7	4.23	4	4.53	6	3.83	5	4.64	3	4.00	11	4.00
Good teacher quality at MGLVA	5	4.49	6	4.25	7	4.47	5	3.92	4	4.73	2	4.00	5	4.33
Schooling from home allows me to instill my values in my child	6	4.43	2	4.59	2	4.76	4	3.92	7	4.55	15	1.00	1	4.67
The MGLVA model allows flexibility to schedule school around family activities	7	4.39	5	4.32	8	4.29	2	4.08	2	4.82	11	2.00	7	4.33
MGLVA will provide a free computer if I need it	8	4.25	11	3.8	10	4.24	19	2.42	9	4.09	10	3.00	6	4.33
Dissatisfied with discipline, safety, or bullying at my child's previous school	9	4.24	9	3.84	12	4.06	11	3.50	10	3.91	16	1.00	2	4.67
Modern teaching methods and use of technology at MGLVA	10	4.24	8	3.93	5	4.53	9	3.58	8	4.55	4	4.00	16	3.00
Child's previous school did not meet my child's individual needs	11	4.20	10	3.82	9	4.29	7	3.75	11	3.82	5	4.00	15	3.33
Dissatisfied with academic quality/expectations at my child's previous school	12	3.90	12	3.43	11	4.18	8	3.67	14	3.55	6	4.00	12	3.67
Dissatisfied with teacher quality at my child's previous school	13	3.86	15	3.20	17	3.53	14	3.08	17	3.18	8	4.00	20	2.33
Dissatisfied with "old school" teaching methods at my child's previous school	14	3.51	17	3.07	16	3.59	15	2.92	13	3.64	18	1.00	19	3.00
Child's previous school did not support my values	15	3.43	14	3.36	13	3.88	12	3.42	12	3.64	17	1.00	3	4.67
The class size was too large at my child's previous school	17	3.41	13	3.39	15	3.59	16	2.83	19	3.09	20	1.00	10	4.33
The student body make-up at previous school was not what my child or I wanted	16	3.41	18	2.86	18	3.35	17	2.75	16	3.45	7	4.00	13	3.67
My child's previous school did not do a good job teaching the basics: reading, writing, & math	18	3.39	16	3.09	14	3.76	18	2.67	18	3.18	9	4.00	17	3.00
Schedule at my child's previous school did not fit my child's or our family's needs	19	3.33	19	2.83	19	2.88	13	3.25	15	3.55	19	1.00	14	3.67
There was not another conveniently located option for our family other than MGLVA	20	3.24	20	2.75	20	2.41	20	2.17	20	2.64	12	2.00	18	3.00

Open-Ended Response Items

Several open-ended response items were included in the questionnaire. Other than the question (Q4) analysis immediately following about the child's previous school location, which was analyzed using a frequency distribution, the other two open-ended items (Q8 and Q13) were analyzed utilizing an inductive open-coding process. The data were analyzed for trends, patterns, categories, and/or themes as they relate to the research questions. See Appendix E for all responses to open-ended items.

Previous School Location

One of the optional open-ended questionnaire items (Q4) asked parents, "Please provide the city in which the school is located that your child attended prior to MGLVA." Of the 144 respondents to the questionnaire, 92 chose to respond to this item. The most frequently cited city was Lansing, Michigan, with five notations. Detroit, Grand Rapids, and Kalamazoo (all in Michigan) were noted three times each. No other cities were noted more than two times. It was an unanticipated finding that the students were so well dispersed across Michigan.

Other Relevant Factors

Another optional open-ended questionnaire item (Q8) was worded as follows, "(Optional) Please use the spaces below to indicate any other factors that were 'extremely important' or 'very important' in your decision to enroll your child into MGLVA." Parents were prompted to type their responses into one of two categories. Sixty parents responded to "Positive factor(s) of MGLVA," and 62 parents responded to "Negative factor(s) from my child's previous school." It can be assumed there was crossover in these two categories, meaning one parent could be counted in both categories. However, it is also possible that a parent could have responded in one category but not the other. As a result, the total number of parents responding to this item is

not known, and this is a shortcoming of the design of the questionnaire.

The last item (Q13) of the questionnaire was the following optional, open-ended response item: "Your thoughts and experiences are important to us. Please use the space below to provide any other additional factors related to your choosing this educational option for your child. THANK YOU!" Sixty-four parents responded. It can be assumed there was crossover between items Q8 and Q13, meaning one parent could be counted in both questionnaire items. However, it is also possible that a parent could have responded to one item but not the other. Therefore, it is possible that a parent duplicated responses in these two items and those responses would have been counted twice. There is no way to know if this happened or how many times it happened, and this is a shortcoming of the design of the questionnaire. This researcher coded all items as if they were from different parents.

This researcher was looking for other previously unidentified push or pull factors, or any other theme(s) related to parents' decision-making processes in the analysis of items Q8 and Q13. An inductive open-coding of the response items led this researcher to the following observations.

Bullying

"Dissatisfied with discipline, safety, or bullying at my child's previous school" was the wording of a specific forced-choice item (Q7). However, bullying still came up 24 times in the open-ended response items. The parent's child being bullied by another student came up 15 times as a push factor. Awareness that schooling from home would mean lack of being bullied came up two times as a pull factor. In one of the most surprising findings of this study, students being bullied by teachers/staff came up seven times as a push factor. In retrospect, bullying is a push and pull factor that should have been studied separately from discipline and safety.

Special Education/504 Plans

Special Education/504 Plans were mentioned 14 times by parents in the open-ended response items, three times as a pull factor, and 11 times as a push factor. Special Education/504 Plans were not studied in the forced-choice item (Q7) on the questionnaire. This factor did not come up in the initial review of literature. See Chapter 5 for more discussion on this.

Teacher Quality

"Teacher quality" was a factor that was studied in the forced-choice portion (Q7) of the questionnaire. However, in the open-ended response items, parents were more specific in describing specific teacher behaviors/attributes that were pull or push factors. A caring MGLVA teacher was cited nine times as a pull factor, and an uncaring teacher at the child's previous school was cited two times as a push factor. Teacher availability/communication was cited five times; and non-specific qualities about MGLVA teachers were also cited five times, both of these being pull factors. It should be noted, however, that as the parent responses were worded, it appeared that the pull factor information was gained after the child was enrolled in, and attending, MGLVA. As such, it was not part of the decision of the parent to initially choose MGLVA. This is being termed "post hoc data."

Curriculum

There was not a forced-choice item that specifically studied the quality of the curriculum as a push and/or pull factor. In the open-ended response items, the idea of a quality curriculum came up eight times as a pull factor and three times as a push factor. As the parents worded the responses, it appears that curriculum as a pull factor was sometimes post hoc data and sometimes not.

Homeschool Assistance

Getting assistance with homeschooling was another pull factor that parents identified in the open-ended response items. This factor was not studied in the forced-choice item. It was also a factor that did not appear in the two existing virtual school choice studies.

Table 9 presents the factors discussed above along with a summary of the analysis of all coded responses for items Q8 and Q13.

Table 9

Distribution of Inductive Open-coding of Open-ended Response Items Q8 and Q13

Factor	Pull	Push
Bullying, students	2	15
Special Ed/504	3	11
Bullying, staff		7
Challenging work/boredom	3	5
Teacher, availability/communication	5	4
Curriculum	8	3
Teacher, caring/uncaring	9	2
Health - pull	1	2
Common Core & standardized testing		2
Religious	2	1
Government control	1	1
Homeschool assistance	8	
Family	6	
Teachers, not specified	5	
Positive environment	3	
Reading program	2	
Reputation	2	
Ability to travel	1	
Peer pressure/transparency	1	

Conclusions

This study sought to answer the following research questions.

1. What factors led parents to enroll their elementary students in a full-time cyber school?
2. Were these factors attributable to positive ("pull" factor) characteristics of the cyber school in which the child was enrolling, or were the factors attributable to negative ("push" factor) characteristics of the school the child was leaving?
3. Do the factors identified by parents vary by parents' race/ethnicity, educational levels, or income levels?

Regarding the factors that led parents to enroll their elementary students in a full-time cyber school, this study found the following as the top six factors that influence parents. All of the following top six factors were pull factors, as were nine of the top 11 ranked factors.

1. Schooling from home allows me to individualize for my child (4.60).
2. I believed that MGLVA would do a very good job of teaching the basics: reading, writing, & math (4.49).
3. Schooling from home allows me to instill my values in my child (4.46).
4. MGLVA provides free curriculum and technology (4.42).
5. (Tie) High academic quality/expectations at MGLVA (4.40); Good teacher quality at MGLVA (4.40).

Regarding whether parents were more influenced by the positive ("pull" factor) characteristics of the cyber school in which the child was enrolling or the negative ("push" factor) characteristics of the school the child was leaving, there were two contradictory findings.

1. In response to item Q9, parents indicated by a 55.38% to 44.62% margin that they were more influenced by the push characteristics of their child's previous school than they were by the pull characteristics of the MGLVA.
2. The top eight factors as ranked by parents were all pull factors, as were nine of the top 11 ranked factors, as ranked by their original mean calculation. This suggests that parents were more influenced by pull factors, contradicting their responses to item Q9. For reasons previously stated in Chapter 4, two separate recalculations of the push factor means were performed. In the first recalculation, the highest five ranked factors were still pull factors, as were eight of the top 11 ranked factors. In the second more aggressive recalculation, the top factor was still a pull factor, as were three of the top five and eight of the top 11 ranked factors all pull factors.

Regarding whether the factors identified by parents vary by parents' race/ethnicity, educational levels, or income levels the following were the findings.

1. White, Black/African American, and "from multiple races" identified individualization to be an important pull factor. White, Black/African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Hispanic/Latino all identified the ability to instill their values into their children to be an important pull factor. Last, Black/African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Hispanic/Latino identified teacher quality as an important pull factor.
2. There was one similarity for the individualization pull factor among the various educational levels. Otherwise, there were predominantly differences in how parents from varying educational levels ranked the factors most and least important to them.

3. There were two similarities for the individualization and teaching the basics pull factors among the various income levels. Otherwise, there were mainly differences in how parents from varying income levels ranked the factors most and least important to them.

Regarding the open-ended responses, bullying from students and staff, Special Education/504 Plan concerns, teacher attributes, and a quality curriculum at MGLVA were frequently noted factors by parents.

This study suggests that parents of Grades K-6 students chose full-time cyber learning for their children due to pull factors related to MGLVA. Specifically, parents seemed most interested in being able to individualize education for their children and being able to instill their values in their children by educating them at home. An emphasis on teaching the basics and teacher quality were also important factors for parents. Attention should also be given to the several factors (bullying, Special Education/504 Plans, teacher attributes, and quality curriculum) that parents took extra effort to mention in the open-ended response items.

Summary

The chapter presented data showing those factors parents identified as most important in their choice decisions and whether push or pull factors were more important to parents. The data were then compared to the parents' self-identified race/ethnicity, educational levels, and income levels. It is from this chapter that we move to Chapter 5 to discuss the significance of these findings and recommendations for practice and future research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Organization of Chapter 5

Chapter 5 begins with a brief review of the purpose of this study and the specific research questions it addresses. Next is a discussion of the key results/findings from the SurveyMonkey® questionnaire. Following the results/findings is a discussion of the relevance of these key results/findings to the extant research. Last, the chapter concludes with a list of recommendations for practice, future research, and policy.

Discussion

School choice is a long-standing tradition in the United States. New to the options available to K-12 parents are full-time virtual schools, and this option is an even more recent development for Grades K-6 parents. Very little research exists on why parents are choosing full-time virtual education for their school-aged children, and almost no research exists on why parents of younger children (Grades K-6) are choosing this option. This descriptive, exploratory study sought to answer the following research questions: (1) What factors led parents to enroll their elementary students in a full-time cyber school? (2) Were these factors attributable to positive ("pull" factor) characteristics of the cyber school in which the child was enrolling, or were the factors attributable to negative ("push" factor) characteristics of the school the child was leaving? and (3) Do the factors identified by parents vary by parents' self-reported race/ethnicity, educational levels, or income levels?

From the literature review of parent choice in a variety of settings, the factors that parents found important to them in selecting a school for their child were identified. A clear pattern in the response literature emerges with few exceptions that, when asked, parents indicate that

academics is a major pull factor in what they are searching for when choosing a school for their children. This is regardless of how clearly defined, or not defined at all, the construct of "academics" is in a particular study. Academics has also been found to be a strong push factor, especially for parents who school from home. Another consistent finding in the literature is that safety, discipline, and the school environment were found to be a strong push factors in the response literature. Religious reasons, moral reasons, and values were also important to parents. The same can be said of location, proximity, and convenience, as well as the curriculum and teacher quality. Last, themes related to family and customization/individualization emerged from the response literature.

While in the response research, the "academic" construct has different meanings for different researchers, it is quite consistent in the observed literature. In all of the observed studies cited, the academic construct refers to standardized test scores and related data. Just as with the response research, as with many of the factors, academics is found be a push factor, a pull factor, or both in the observed research. However, academics as an important factor to parents was not as consistent a finding in the observed research as it was in the response research. Race or the racial composition of a school has been a factor that has received much attention in the observed research and was found to be a motivating factor for parents. Findings for location and proximity in the observed research were mixed, with some finding it was important and some finding that it was not important to parents.

A SurveyMonkey® questionnaire was used to collect data from parents of Grades K-6 students enrolled in the Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy for the 2014-2015 school year. The questionnaire was emailed to 846 parents. One reminder email was sent. The survey was

active/open for responses for 20 days, from May 20 to June 9, 2015. During this time, 144 parents (17%) completed and submitted the questionnaire.

Findings: Influencing Factors

This study concludes that parents of Grades K-6 students chose full-time cyber learning for children due to pull factors related to MGLVA. Parents responded in one item (Q9) that push factors were more important to them than were pull factors in their decision to select MGLVA for their children. However, this study concludes, based on questionnaire items Q7 and Q8 and the two researcher-produced push factor mean recalculations, that pull factors influenced parents more than push factors.

Regarding the pull factors, parents seemed most influenced by the ability to individualize education for their children and the ability to instill their own values in their children by educating them at home. Academic reasons—an emphasis on teaching the basics and teacher attributes—were also important pull factors that parents identified in the forced-choice section of the questionnaire.

It is, however, the top-ranking push factor that may be the most significant finding of this study. The top ranking push factor, and the 9th-highest ranked factor overall, was "Child's previous school did not meet my child's individual needs" with a mean of 4.03. There is no other identified extant research that identified individualization as a push factor. As such, this may be considered one of the most significant findings of this study. It is clear from this study that parents want an individualized education for their children; specifically, if they cannot get it from their current school (push factor) they have learned there are schools like MGLVA where it can be found (pull factor).

From the open-ended response items, several factors (bullying, Special Education/504 Plans, teacher attributes, and quality curriculum) that parents took extra effort to mention should be recognized as factors that were important to them in choosing a school for their children. Regarding the bullying question, it was disturbing to this researcher that seven parents identified bullying by teachers or staff as a push factor for them.

Comparisons to Extant Research

The finding of the individualization theme as the top-ranked factor in this study is consistent with the top findings of the only two identified virtual school studies (Klein & Poplin, 2008; Marsh et al., 2009) that were included in Chapter 2. However, it is dissimilar to the findings of the several homeschool-only studies (Bielick, 2008; Bielick et al., 2001; Dahlquist et al., 2006; Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007; Noel et al., 2013; Princiotta et al., 2004) that did not identify the individualization factor among the top findings.

The instill-values factor was also a top finding of Klein and Poplin (2008) but not of Marsh et al. (2009), the two virtual school-only studies. The instill-values factor was a top finding of several of the homeschool-only studies (Bielick, 2008; Bielick et al., 2001; Dahlquist et al., 2006; Noel et al., 2013; Princiotta et al., 2004). In order to reach this conclusion for the homeschool-only studies, "religious or moral reasons" and the "desire to provide religious or moral instruction" in the immediately aforementioned homeschool studies were equated with "instill my values in my child" in this study, which seems very reasonable to this researcher.

The academic related factors in this study ("I believed that MGLVA would do a very good job of teaching the basics: reading, writing, & math," "High academic quality/expectations at MGLVA," "Good teacher quality at MGLVA," and "Modern teaching methods and use of technology at MGLVA") were all highly ranked factors by parents. These top-ranked academic

factors are consistent with much of the existing response research (Armor & Peiser, 1998; Cowen Institute, 2011; Dahlquist et al., 2006; Jochim et al., 2014; Klein & Poplin, 2008; Schneider et al., 1998; Smrekar & Goldring, 1999; Teske et al., 2007; Vanourek et al., 1998; Wolf & Stewart, 2012) as well as much of the observed research (Adzima, 2014; Hanushek et al., 2007; Hastings et al., 2005; Hastings & Weinstein, 2008; Saporito, 2003; Schneider & Buckley, 2002; Tedin & Weiher, 2004; VanderHoff, 2008; Wanzer et al., 2008).

The top eight ranked factors—all pull factors—are consistent with much of the extant research that was reviewed in Chapter 2, whether those studies were conducted in virtual or non-virtual schools or whether the methodology of those studies was response or observed.

As was mentioned previously, the top ranking push factor was “Child’s previous school did not meet my child’s individual needs,” with a mean of 4.03. There is no other identified extant research that identified individualization as a push factor. The next highest-ranked push factor, “Dissatisfied with discipline, safety, or bullying at my child’s previous school," had a mean of 4.00. This finding is consistent with the homeschool literature (Bielick, 2008; Bielick et al., 2001; Noel et al., 2013; Princiotta et al., 2004), one of the virtual school studies (Klein & Poplin, 2008), and several studies of non-homeschool and non-virtual school studies (Armor & Peiser, 1998; Cowen Institute, 2011; Hausman & Goldring, 2000; Haynes et al., 2010; Kleitz et al., 2000; Lee et al., 1996; Smrekar, 2009; Weiher & Tedin, 2002; Wolf & Stewart, 2012) that found safety of the school environment to be a highly rated factor. This finding does conflict with Green and Hoover-Dempsey (2011), who found that parents did not choose to homeschool for push factors but for the positive factors of homeschooling.

“There was not another conveniently located option for our family other than MGLVA” was the last-ranked of the 20 factors, with a mean of 2.86. “Schedule at my child's previous

school did not fit my child's or our family's needs" was the 19th-lowest ranked of the 20 factors, with a mean of 3.18. These two lowest-ranked factors are in contrast to much of the response research and observed research cited in Chapter 2. In response research studies, Bell, (2009b), Cowen Institute (2011), Cowen Institute (2013), Haynes et al. (2010), Smrekar and Goldring (1999), Teske et al. (2007), and Vanourek et al. (1998) all found location, proximity, convenience, or transportation as one of the top three pull factors. Regarding the observed findings, Butler et al. (2013), Glazerman (1998), Harris and Larsen (2015), Hastings et al. (2005), Hastings and Weinstein (2008), Jacobs (2013), and Schneider and Buckley (2002) all found location, proximity, convenience, or transportation as a top three pull or push factor for parents in their studies.

"The student body make-up at previous school was not what my child or I wanted" was the 18th-lowest ranked of the 20 factors with a mean of 3.19. Perhaps because of the social desirability phenomenon discussed previously in Chapter 2, race or the racial composition of a school has not been found to be a major determining push or pull factor for parents in the response research, with the exception noted in Chapter 2 of Fields-Smith and Williams (2009). However, race or the racial composition of a school has been a factor that has received much attention in the observed research. The findings in this study are in contrast with Garcia (2008), Glazerman (1998), Henig (1996), Saporito (2003), Saporito and Lareau (1999), Schneider & Buckley (2002), and Wanzer et al. (2008) who all found race to be an important factor for parents. However, the findings in this study are similar to Butler et al. (2013), Jacobs (2013), Tedin & Weiher (2004), and VanderHoff (2008) who all concluded that race was not a factor in parents' decision-making.

Importance of Bullying and Special Education/504 Plans

"Dissatisfied with discipline, safety, or bullying at my child's previous school" was the wording of a specific forced-choice item in this study. However, bullying still came up 24 times in the open-ended response items. The parent's child being bullied by another student came up 15 times as a push factor. Awareness that schooling from home would mean their child would not be bullied came up two times as a pull factor.

In one of the most surprising findings of this study, students being bullied by teachers/staff came up seven times as a push factor.

In retrospect, bullying is a push and pull factor that should have been studied separately from discipline and safety.

Special Education/504 Plans were mentioned 14 times by parents in the open-ended response items, three times as a pull factor and 11 times as a push factor. Special Education/504 Plans were not studied in the forced-choice item on the questionnaire. This factor did not come up in the initial review of literature. A subsequent search of the choice literature for Chapter 5 did identify two studies regarding the factors that were important to special education choice parents. One study (Beck, Egalite, & Maranto, 2014) found a push factor for parents of students with special needs. This factor was ranked eighth of 12 factors studied, so it was not highly ranked by parents in that study. The second study (Ysseldyke, Lange, & Gorney, 1994) found special education to be both a push and a pull factor for parents, and it was one of the top three ranked factors by parents.

Academics-Related Factors in Open-Ended Response Items

Teacher quality was a factor that was studied in the forced-choice portion of the questionnaire. However, in the open-ended response items, parents were more specific in

describing teacher behaviors/attributes that were pull or push factors. A caring MGLVA teacher was cited nine times as a pull factor, and an uncaring teacher at the child's previous school was cited two times as a push factor. Teacher availability/communication was cited five times and non-specific qualities about MGLVA teachers were also cited five times, both of these being pull factors. Parents' responses were consistent with previous research (Smrekar, 2009; Vanourek et al., 1998) that found teacher quality to be an important factor for parents.

There was not a forced-choice item that specifically studied the quality of the curriculum as a push and/or pull factor. The fact that parents specifically mentioned the curriculum as an important factor in their choice decision is consistent with some previous researchers (Armor & Peiser, 1998; Klein & Poplin, 2008; Teske et al., 2007; Zeehander & Winkler, 2013).

Recommendations

The recommendations for this study are divided into three sections. First, the study results are utilized to inform public school officials of the reasons parents are leaving traditional public schools and more established choice options and choosing cyber education. Furthermore, these same recommendations can be used by those who already are, or who in the future are interested in, operating cyber schools and recruiting students and parents. Second, a section is written to suggest methodological changes and possible implications and/or topics for future research. Third and finally, recommendations are made to policy makers (federal, state, and local).

Recommendations for Practice

The results of this study suggest that parents of Grades K-6 students chose full-time cyber learning for children due to pull factors related to MGLVA. Specifically, parents seemed most interested in being able to individualize education for their children and being able to instill their

values in their children by educating them at home. Individualization frequently proves to be a challenging task to accomplish in a brick-and-mortar setting. However, if the findings of this study are generalizable to a significant percentage of parents' thoughts and feelings, school officials who operate traditional-type schools must address this issue. Technology is not a panacea; however, combined with differentiated learning, it may well be the tool that allows for individualization in traditional settings. Examples that could prove useful to greatly enhance individualization in more traditional school settings include various one-to-one computing programs, flipped classrooms, and interim assessments that provide consistent and timely feedback to students, parents, teachers, and administrators.

Teacher quality was tied for the 5th-highest ranking, with a mean of 4.40 in the forced-choice item. Given that it was mentioned by parents 25 times in the open-ended response items, it is not a far stretch to link teacher quality to individualization. Parents want their child to be treated and educated as an individual. Furthermore, they want communication from their child's teacher about their child. Technology can assist teachers both in individualizing education for a child and in communicating meaningfully with the child's parents.

Based on the open-ended responses, the last recommendation for officials in traditional settings is to remain vigilant regarding bullying. Officials must recognize and address staff who bully students. Implementing with fidelity research-based programs for identifying bullying by students and staff and research-based programs for addressing such must be prioritized.

The recommendation for current or future cyber school operators is to continue emphasizing, both in practice and recruitment efforts, those factors that parents found to be most important.

Recommendations for Future Study

First, and likely most obviously, there is a dearth of choice research as it relates to cyber schools, particularly parents of elementary-aged children. Therefore, the first recommendation is simply to do more research of various designs and methodologies of choice as it relates to cyber schools.

Next, if this study were to be replicated, several recommendations should be incorporated. First, this researcher is still troubled by the discrepancy between parents' responses to items Q7 and Q9 regarding the importance of push versus pull factors in making their decisions. One recommendation is that a future survey be set up in a flow chart format, such that a parent who responded their child was previously homeschooled and/or the child was in kindergarten would be presented only with pull factor options. Another option would be that the flow chart format would at least ask parents questions about what information they were basing their responses on, given their child had not been enrolled the prior year in a school setting.

In a similar future study, given the frequency with which bullying was mentioned in the open-ended response items, bullying should be its own item/factor separate from discipline and safety. Items should address bullying by students and by staff.

Similarly, the percentage of the special education population represented by this study's parent sample is approximately 155% (over 1.5 times) of the special education population for Michigan. Special Education/504 Plan issues were mentioned 14 times in the open-ended response items. It is appropriate that a study similar to this one be conducted for special-education-only students' parents.

In retrospect, items Q8 and Q13 seem to be redundant. Also, it is not possible the way this survey was designed to determine if the same parent responded with basically the same

information in both items. Item Q8 had two different categories, one for positive/pull factors and one for negative/push factors. It was not possible to determine how many different parents responded in each category. The recommendation would be to eliminate item Q13 and to design the survey in a manner that allows for a tally of the total number of different parents who responded to item Q8.

Last, this study was of a quantitative design. Another recommendation would be to conduct a qualitatively designed study utilizing the same research questions as used in this study. Or, as was recommended by this researcher's dissertation chairperson, Dr. Barbara Strobert, a future study would be greatly enhanced by a mixed-methods design and the semi-structured interview of a manageable number of parents. Regardless, the point is that qualitative results would likely add to the richness of the existing data and/or contribute entirely new knowledge on the choice topic.

Recommendations for Policy Makers

Individualization emerged as the predominant theme for all parents, regardless of race, education level, or income level. The education establishment, despite its rhetoric, has tepidly embraced individualization. State and federal policy makers should encourage the expansion of quality statewide cyber charter schools for two reasons. First, in the short-term, statewide cyber charter schools will provide parents with immediate options for educational programs with a strong individualization emphasis. Second, in the long-term, an increase in statewide cyber charter schools will increase competition and pressure on local schools and the education establishment to fully embrace individualization. This second reason rests squarely within market theory, the theoretical framework that underpinned this study.

The inordinately high percentage of special education students represented by the parents who responded also presents a challenge to federal, state, and local policy makers. On one hand, it is praiseworthy that cyber charter schools are serving the needs of such a high percentage of special needs students and their families. On the other hand, it is a criticism against traditional-type schools that most parents who responded identified the Special Education/504 Plan theme as a push factor away from these schools. In Michigan, most districts do not receive full reimbursement for special education costs. Special education students' services frequently cost much more than a district receives in funding for that particular student. While a meaningful portion of those costs are recouped, statewide cyber charter schools do not receive the benefits in services or funding that are afforded students who attend traditional public schools, public charter schools, and even private and parochial schools. Statewide cyber charter schools must fully provide FAPE by fully implementing a student's IEP based on that student's disabilities and identified needs.

If, for example, a traditional public school in effect pushes a parent to a statewide cyber charter school, then two things happen. First, the traditional public school in this example would lose a student who costs them more to educate than that district receives in funding—a net financial gain for the district. Second, if the student transfers to a statewide cyber charter school, the opposite financial effect occurs for them. The statewide cyber charter school gains a student who costs them more to educate then it receives in funding—a net financial loss for the statewide cyber charter.

Strong anecdotal evidence exists that the education establishment is not in favor of statewide cyber charter schools. Would it be beyond the scope of imagination that special education students would be encouraged—either directly, subtly, or by providing less than

adequate services—to enroll in statewide cyber charters? This would be a financial benefit to traditional-setting schools and could cause serious financial and regulatory concerns for statewide cyber charter schools.

This Special Education/504 Plan issue may be the most serious, pressing, and complicated issue for policy makers to address. As such, it is one that needs to be addressed.

Last, and perhaps the most important recommendation as it directly impacts children on a daily basis, school administrators and teacher colleagues need to be vigilant in preventing, detecting, and addressing the bullying of children.

Final Remarks

This study sought to add meaningful knowledge to the limited cyber school choice research, especially regarding choice as it relates to younger elementary students. It is hoped that the efforts contained herein will in some way help improve education; by improving education it will help a child, and by helping a child it will have made the world a slightly better place.

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Appendix A

Survey of Choice Factors Influencing Parents' Decisions to Enroll Their Child in an Online Program.

Survey of Choice Factors Influencing Parents' Decisions to Enroll Their Child in an Online Program

* 1. **ELECTRONIC CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE**. Participation in this survey is voluntary, anonymous, and confidential. This survey is for parents of grades K-6 students at Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy (MGLVA). The information you provide will never be associated with you or your child personally.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below. Clicking on the "agree" button below indicates that:

*you have read the information in the attached letter;

*you voluntarily agree to participate;

*you are a parent of an enrolled grades K-6 MGLVA student.

If you choose to participate in the research study, please accept participation by clicking on the "agree" button.

- ○ Agree

2. You are asked to fill out this entire survey keeping in mind the YOUNGEST child that you have enrolled at MGLVA. What grade level is your YOUNGEST child who is enrolled at MGLVA.

- ○ Kindergarten
- ○ 1st Grade
- ○ 2nd Grade
- ○ 3rd Grade
- ○ 4th Grade
- ○ 5th Grade
- ○ 6th Grade

3. What is your child's gender?

- ○ Female
- ○ Male

4. What type of school did your child attend prior to MGLVA?

- ○ Traditional public school
- ○ Charter school
- ○ Private, religious school
- ○ Private, not a religious school
- ○ Home school
- ○ Not Applicable

5. (Optional) Please provide the city where the school is located that your child attended prior to MGLVA

6. (Optional) Is your child eligible for any Special Education services?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Prefer not to answer

* 7. Please indicate how important each of the following factors was in your decision to choose MGLVA.

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Dissatisfied with academic quality/expectations at my child's previous school	○	○	○	○	○
High academic quality/expectations at MGLVA	○	○	○	○	○
Dissatisfied with discipline, safety, or bullying at my child's previous school	○	○	○	○	○
Dissatisfied with teacher quality at my child's previous school	○	○	○	○	○
Good teacher quality at MGLVA	○	○	○	○	○
Child's previous school did not support my values	○	○	○	○	○
Schooling from home allows me to instill my values in my child	○	○	○	○	○

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
MGLVA provides free curriculum and technology	○	○	○	○	○
Child's previous school did not meet my child's individual needs	○	○	○	○	○
Schooling from home allows me to individualize for my child	○	○	○	○	○
Dissatisfied with "old school" teaching methods at my child's previous school	○	○	○	○	○
Modern teaching methods and use of technology at MGLVA	○	○	○	○	○
Schedule at my child's previous school did not fit my child's or our family's needs	○	○	○	○	○
The MGLVA model allows flexibility to schedule school around family activities	○	○	○	○	○
There was not another conveniently located option for our family other than MGLVA	○	○	○	○	○
The student body make-up at previous school was not what my child or I wanted	○	○	○	○	○
My child's previous school did not do a good job teaching the basics: reading, writing, & math	○	○	○	○	○
I believed that MGLVA would do a very good job of teaching the basics: reading, writing, & math	○	○	○	○	○
The class size was too large at my child's previous school	○	○	○	○	○
MGLVA will provide a free computer if I need it	○	○	○	○	○

8. (Optional) Please use the spaces below to indicate any other factors that were "extremely important" or "very important" in your decision to enroll your child into MGLVA.

Positive factor(s) of MGLVA

Negative factor(s) from my child's previous school

9. In general, was your decision to enroll your child at MGLVA based more on the positive factors of MGLVA or the negative factors of your child's previous school?

- ○ Positive factors at MGLVA
- ○ Negative factors at my child's previous school
- ○ Not Applicable

10. All responses are anonymous. For classification purposes, please indicate your race/ethnicity.

- ○ White
- ○ Black or African-American
- ○ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ○ Asian
- ○ Hispanic or Latino
- ○ From multiple races

Some other race (please specify)

11. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- ○ Less than high school degree
- ○ High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
- ○ Some college but no degree
- ○ Associate degree
- ○ Bachelor degree
- ○ Graduate degree

12. All responses are anonymous. What is your approximate average household income?

- ○ $0-$24,999
- ○ $25,000-$49,999
- ○ $50,000-$74,999
- ○ $75,000-$99,999
- ○ $100,000-$124,999
- ○ $125,000-$149,999
- ○ $150,000 and up

13. Your thoughts and experiences are important to us. Please use the space below to provide any other additional factors related to your choosing this educational option for your child. THANK YOU!

Appendix B

The first recruitment email that was sent to parents on May 15, 2015 from the administrative assistant at MGLVA.

Dear Parents:

The purpose of this email is to invite and encourage you to participate in a voluntary and anonymous survey regarding the factors influencing parents' decisions to enroll their grades K-6 children in a full-time online program.

To participate in the survey please open and read the attached PDF document found at the bottom of this email that is entitled "Letter of Solicitation." This letter contains important information.

After reading the "Letter of Solicitation," if you choose to participate in the survey then please click the following link to be taken directly to the online survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/QVWZ2DR.

Parents who choose to participate will have up to 20 days from the date of this email to respond to the survey.

Sincerely,

[redacted]
Secretary
Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY
1856

Dear Parent:

This letter is to request participation in a strictly voluntary and anonymous online survey of parents of the Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy (MGLVA) grades K-6 students. "Parent" means parent, guardian, or other adult who is responsible for the student/child. The following is important information.

Researcher's Affiliation: The survey is part of this researcher's dissertation, which is in partial fulfillment for the requirements of a Doctor of Education Degree (Ed.D.) in K-12 School Administration through Seton Hall University's College of Education and Human Services.

Purpose and Duration: The research will collect and analyze information related to the factors influencing parents' decisions to enroll their grades K-6 children in a full-time online program. This information will be of benefit to local school officials to better meet parents' needs and to state level policy makers as they set future cyber school policy. The survey will also collect basic demographic information to see if parents of varying backgrounds respond similarly or differently. The survey should take approximately 10-12 minutes for parents to complete. The survey will remain active for 20 days from the date on the accompanying email.

Procedures: After reading this letter, parents who choose to participate will close out this letter, open the link to the survey (link is in body of the email), and select "Agree" for Question #1 of the survey indicating their informed consent to participate. Parents will then be guided through the completion and submission of the electronic online questionnaire.

Instruments: The survey is titled, "Survey of Choice Factors Influencing Parents' Decisions to Enroll Their Child in an Online Program." This survey will ask parents to indicate which factors were important to them in choosing MGLVA for their child. The following are samples of questions taken directly from the survey:

- *What is your child's gender?*
- *Please indicate how important each of the following factors was in your decision to choose MGLVA.* (Items and a rating scale follow.)
- *All responses are anonymous. For classification purposes, please indicate your race/ethnicity.* (Standard race/ethnicity options follow.)

The survey will also ask basic information about race, income, and education levels of parents.

College of Education and Human Services
Executive Ed.D. Program
Tel: 973.275.2728 • Fax: 973.275.2484
400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079-2685

Voluntary Nature: Parent participation in this survey is voluntary. If a parent chooses not to participate, or if a parent starts but does not complete the survey, there shall be no adverse consequences.

Anonymity: The parents' responses are anonymous. There are no questions that can be used to identify individual parents or their students or to link data to individual parents or their students.

Confidentiality: As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, there are no questions that can be used to identify individual parents or their students or to link data to individual parents or their students. The data that is collected will be stored on a USB memory key and kept locked in a safe when not being used. It will not be stored at any time on anyone's computer.

Records: The only people who will have access to the data collected will be this researcher and the Dissertation Chair, Dr. Barbara Strobert (contact information below).

Risks or Discomforts: There is always a remote possibility that the data can be hacked as the subject is taking the survey.

Direct Benefits: There are no direct benefits to parents who choose to participate in this survey. The knowledge learned from this study will be of benefit to local school officials to better meet parents' needs and to state level policy makers as they set future cyber school policy.

Remuneration: Parents who choose to participate will not be paid or compensated.

Contact Information: Parents or persons who have questions or would like more information pertaining to the survey or research project may contact any of the following sources:

John A. Chandler, Primary Researcher & Doctoral Candidate
Seton Hall University, Department of Education Leadership Management and Policy
400 South Orange Avenue, Jubilee Hall
South Orange, NJ 07079
(973) 761-9397
john.chandler@student.shu.edu

Dr. Barbara Strobert, Dissertation Chair
Seton Hall University, Department of Education Leadership Management and Policy
400 South Orange Avenue, Jubilee Hall
South Orange, NJ 07079
(973) 275-2324
Barbara.strobert@shu.edu

Dr. Mary Ruzicka, Director
Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board
for Human Subject Research
400 South Orange Avenue, Presidents Hall, Rm. 325
South Orange, NJ 07079
(973) 313-6314
(973) 275-2361 (fax)
irb@shu.edu

Thank you for your time in reading this letter and for considering participating in the study.

Sincerely,

John A. Chandler
Primary Researcher & Doctoral Candidate

Appendix C

The second recruitment email that was sent to parents on May 28, 2015, from the administrative assistant at MGLVA.

Dear Parents:

The purpose of this email is to invite and encourage you to participate in a voluntary and anonymous survey regarding the factors influencing parents' decisions to enroll their grades K-6 children in a full-time online program. **If you have already responded - Thank you! Please do not respond again.**

If you have not responded, please consider participating in this important study.

To participate in the survey please open and read the attached PDF document found at the bottom of this email that is entitled "Letter of Solicitation." This letter contains important information.
After reading the "Letter of Solicitation," if you choose to participate in the survey then please click the following link to be taken directly to the online survey:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/QVWZ2DR.

Parents who choose to participate will have until June, 9, 2015, to respond to the survey.

Sincerely,

Secretary
Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy

Appendix D

Approval document from Seton Hall University's Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH, DEMONSTRATION OR RELATED ACTIVITIES INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

All material must be typed.

PROJECT TITLE: **A survey of the factors influencing parents in Michigan to select full-time cyber learning for their children in grades K-6**

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT:

In making **this application,** I(we) certify that I(we) have read and understand the University's policies and procedures governing research, development, and related activities involving human subjects. I (we) shall comply with the letter and spirit of those policies. I(we) further acknowledge my(our) obligation to (1) obtain written approval of significant deviations from the originally-approved protocol BEFORE making those deviations, and (2) report immediately all adverse effects of the study on the subjects to the Director of the Institutional Review Board, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ 07079.

John A Chandler John A. Chandler 2-7-15
RESEARCHER(S) DATE

Please print or type out names of **all researchers below signature.
Use separate sheet of paper, if necessary.**

My signature indicates that I have reviewed the attached materials of my student advisee and consider them to meet IRB standards.

Dr. Barbara Strobert Barbara Strobert 3/29/15
RESEARCHER'S FACULTY ADVISOR [for student researchers only] DATE

Please print or type out name below signature

The request for approval submitted by the above researcher(s) was considered by the IRB for Research Involving Human Subjects Research at the April 2015 meeting.

The application was approved ✓ not approved ___ by the Committee. Special conditions were ____ were not ✓ set by the IRB. (Any special conditions are described on the reverse side.)

Nancy J. Ruzicka, Ph.D. 5/11/15
DIRECTOR, DATE
SETON HALL UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL
REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

Seton Hall University
3/2005

Appendix E

Open-ended Responses from Items Q7 and Q13 and the Inductive Open-coding

Open-ended Pull Factor Responses from Item Q7 and the Inductive Open-coding

He did not have to be in that atmospher where he was constantly bullied.	Bullying, students			
I wouldn't have to worry about him being bullied.	Bullying, students			
the ability to let my children work freely and independently, challenging work	Challenging work/boredom			
Good Curriculum and very Comprehensive Material	Curriculum			
this allowed me to become one on one with mu son	Family			
Being able to teach my child one on one was the most important so that I know he's getting the attention he needs to be successful	Family			
I like how the schedule is flexible and we can work around his activities, my work schedule, and any dr appointments.	Flexibility			
I hope this will work with us and the schedule I have caring for my grandmother who has Dementia/Alzheimers	Flexibility			
I love working around our schedules and at our pace	Flexibility			
Able to keep her safe and in a controlled enviroment and do our own schedule	Flexibility			
Flexability	Flexibility			
scheduling, individual help and suggestions.	Flexibility			
allow students to enter mid year	Flexibility			
Our children are learning in a safe, moral, peaceful environment; they can progress thru lessons quickly if understood; no outside influence on the children; no government control; we can work around our own schedule; more time spent with our children on a one-on-one basis	Government control	Positive Environment	Flexibility	Family
less foreign pathogens and stress	Health - pull			
Cost/Free option, Flexibility allowed in learning pace, Complete education from the comfort of our home,	Home school assistance	Flexibility		
it gives me the resources needed to teach my child at home	Home school assistance			
They provided necessary tools and curriculum as well as being personally available to assist my child as needed	Home school assistance			
providing the material for us	Home school assistance			
I can see who is being an influence on my child, and they aren't being hearded around like cattle.	Peer pressure/transparency			
safe environment, nicely paced, great support system	Positive Environment			
Allows my son to learn in a positive environment	Positive Environment			
Excellent reading program-my daughter's reading has improved with MGLVA's program from poor to great reading skills and word pronuciation. The curriculum is excellent and you need to try it to see the results. Students have face time with teachers and contact with other students. I am very impressed by MGLVA and we are enrolled for next year.	Reading program	Teacher, availability/communication	Curriculum	
I could help my child with his reading.	Reading program			
I am able to teach my child about Jesus and with that comes love, respect, kindness, manners, happiness and family values. Along with the history of OUR COUNTRY and why people came here in the first place.	Religious	Family		
Individualized love ability to add religion to our schedule	Religious			
MGLVA came recommended	Reputation			
Individualized!!!! MGLVA allows my son to have a personal tutor (LC) environment which fits great for his mental health dispositions. He was also able to get off all of his 4 mental health meds since his Aspergers is not triggered by people the classroom anymore, and his ADHD is under control because the curriculum visually shows him the start and end of each lesson.	Special Ed needs			
My daughter loves it. And still meets other children.	Student			
Schedule can be more specified to fit my child's needs, there is always a way to communicate with teachers at MGLVA, I can see what work needs to be completed instead of just waiting for a teacher to tell me what work he didn't get completed over the last 3 months, positive work environment	Teacher, availability/communication	Flexibility		
teacher is always available	Teacher, availability/communication			
Accessibility	Teacher, availability/communication			
increase communication with teacher	Teacher, availability/communication			
Everyone is very nice also if you have need something or have a problem it is quickly resolve	Teacher, caring			
individualized learning, caring and encouraging certified teachers,flex schedule,the curriculum is awesome.	Teachers, caring	Curriculum		
The caring and understanding of the staff. Everyone wants these children to succeed.	Teachers, caring			
Teachers are amazing, curriculum is AWESOME, EXCEPTIONAL and exceeds my expectations.	Teachers, not specified	Curriculum		
Excellent teaching, great curriculum, terrifiic teaching aids	Teachers, not specified	Curriculum		
Teachers	Teachers, not specified			
Continual support from teachers and other staff	Teachers, not specified			
Teachers are great.	Teachers, not specified			

We can teach him at his ability to learn	x			
they can work at their own pace, and if they don't understand something they have time to get help on it, not just be pushed through the system	x			
Extremely important	x			
individual learning plan	x			
the education plan is individualized and meets my child's needs and is challenging for her.	x			
Easy to follow	x			
she learns on her own pace. She can take breaks if she get to tire.	x			
He is able to go at his pace	x			
Individualized learning for each student	x			
My child can move while she works, which helps her focus. We can go slower on subjects she struggles with, and cruise through the subjects she excels in.	x			
Time to take as long as needed for my son to understand the information presented.	x			
My son can get the extra help he needs!! He also can work at his own pace!!	x			
At my child's individual speed	x			
Will see my child as an individual and take time to help with his specific needs	x			
He needed one-on-one.	x			
Free curriculum	x			
My child can work at their own pace.	x			
Free	x			
extremely important	x			
"x" indicated it was a tested item or was not a factor-type response.				

Open-ended Push Factor Responses from Item Q7 and the Inductive Open-coding

Bullying children and bullying staff	Bullying, students	Bullying, staff
bullying from other students, faculty and teachers and no one did a thing about it.	Bullying, students	Bullying, staff
Our children were very unhappy with the behavior of the students; teaching was on only one level....no room for advancement; our children were not challenged; government involvement is getting stronger.	Government control - push	Challenging work/boredom - push
The curriculum was not challenging enough for my child. Location was a challenge for my family needs.	Challenging work/boredom - push	Curriculum
There were not a lot of English speaking students, so the kids that could speak English did not get as much attention. I also disagreed with how much they focused on common core and government assessment tests. Even with MGLVA the last few months have been used to prep students for the MSTEP, which is a disservice for students and teachers.	Common Core & Standardized Testing	x
They weren't interested in meeting our child's advanced needs. Bullying and chronic sickness. Education was basic.	Bullying, students	Health - push
lots of bullying that was ignored, my child could not focus in class, uncaring teachers, my child need one-on-one. Not bashing them, because it was just getting established.	Bullying, students	Teachers, uncaring
my sons spirit and confidence were broken by bullying teachers ADULTS	Bullying, staff	
Horrible,children sexually active,and the teachers bully children.its unsafe	Bullying, staff	
even teachers can be bullys	Bullying, staff	
My child was unhappy each day because the people at the school was very disrespectful and mean to her	Bullying, staff	
Completely mistreated by a previous teacher	Bullying, staff	
He was bullied so hard that he had a suicide attempt at age 9.	Bullying, student	
he was bullied a lot	Bullying, student	
I was tired of her not being happy there due to some kids being mean	Bullying, students	
kids brought weapons/drugs in, they always fought, bulling	Bullying, students	
Bullying and my child being afraid to stand up for herself or speak to an adult/authority for fear of being bullied worse because no action is taken	Bullying, students	
Bullying in large classrooms	Bullying, students	
teachers never had time to help the students and the bullying . We had two bully related suicides. my son was being bullied for years school wouldn't help	Bullying, students	
my children were not being challenged, behavior of other students got in the way of my children learning	Challenging work/boredom - push	
Student was becoming bored and disinterested, not being challenged enough	Challenging work/boredom - push	
No program for my son, he was advanced he had to stay with the group	Challenging work/boredom - push	
Not a fan of common core or multiple standardized testing	Common Core & Standardized Testing	
Poor Quality Curriculum	Curriculum - push	
unhealthy foods	Health - push	
The kinds of non academic things they were being taught	Curriculum - push	
todays schools are taking core family values out of learning and teaching atheism	Religion	
they could not help her with her slow learning problem	Special Ed/504	
getting what I needed in a 504 plan for my child's diabetes. denied an IEP when my child only scored 18 points above learning disabled.	Special Ed/504	
Unable to care for her diabetes and special needs	Special ed/504	
My daughter was born with Turner syndrome. And so she is delay in learning. She gets help with speech	Special Ed/504	
Did not follow his IEP, but rather used suggested tools in a negative manner	Special Ed/504	

My son' has ADHD/Aspergers/high anxiety. The previous school was unable to make him feel comfortable in the classroom, or offer flexibility with his curriculum load, and was unable to help him individually on his reading and writing delays. He was also on mental health meds to help him relax in the classroom environment.	Special Ed/504	
refused to acknowledge my child's disabilities	Special Ed/504	
My daughter was on ADHD medication and still had trouble, so the pediatrician suspected a learning disability possibility, so I requested an IEP and was refused and told that it problems were most likely side effects of medication. (By law, since I requested an IEP, they were supposed to accomedate me.) I sought a 504 with a dcotor's letter and was ignored until I tried to change schools since I have "school of choice". Finally, I got a 504, but they didn't address and disipline of my duaghter at school for not doing her work; they sent an email to me (without telling me what my daughter did wrong) that I was to give her a consequence at home. I didn't like how no problems were addressed at school. My daudghter was confused as to why I was giving her consequences for things she did or didn't do in school. There were a lot of parents who either switched schools from this particular public school or pulled their kids out of this same school; there were too many instances similar to mine that I heard about and too many kids being pulled out of this particular school for it to be a coincidence, and every fiber in by body and every instinct in me told me that I just couldn't send my daughter back to a school where she had no success in her most important learing years,	Special Ed/504	
no communication from staff on childs progress	Teacher, no communication	
Assembly line type teaching, no communication from his teachers	Teacher, no communication	
lack of teacher invovlement and personalization	Teacher, no communication	
Was told my child was behind in everything and he isn't. No teacher/parent communication.	Teacher, no communication	
Did not take he time to help my Child in the way he needed it, too many other students and my Child was not given support he needed	Teachers, uncaring	
My son has only attended K12, this was his first year in school	x	
Nothing	x	
He was left behind.	x	
They keep adapting new rules with just lumping all parent situations into one	x	
Very important	x	
Teacher didn't teach anything, over crowed classes, not enough individual attention to my child's needs. They were more focused on getting through the day then taking time with the kids to do activities. she was always rushed.	x	
no individual help	x	
GUM	x	
None	x	
My son did not fit in the "box" and was not learning as well as he could have	x	
No other school	x	
Students were out of control	x	
my computer keeps having issues	x	
Everything moved way to fast	x	
My child rode the bus 4 hours a day.	x	
N/A	x	
My son needed one-on-one.	x	
The children need the same breaks as traditional public schools.	x	
She didn't attend any other school.	x	
schedule too demanding	x	
Not flexible or convenient	x	
extremely important	x	

"x" indicated it was a tested item or was not a factor-type response.		

Open-ended Responses from Item Q13 and the Inductive Open-coding

I didn't like my children's school would call weekly about my children's behaviors. I would have to leave work or drop what I was doing to check on them at school. When I arrived at school, both classes had children not listening, screaming, running around, etc yet I had to come to the school for my kids. Their school only contacted the parents that would come to check on their kids and let the other children cause chaos because their parents didn't come or answer the calls from the teacher. It came to a point where I sat in their classes to observe and noticed that my kids finished their work and had to wait until the other misbehaving kids either finished their work or the teacher finally moved on to the next topic. They would wait 20+ minutes and eventually they started to act like the other kids because they weren't being told to stop and behave but my kids wound get in trouble. They weren't being challenged, they were bored and they were almost getting picked on when they misbehaved because no other kids were getting notes home and phone calls like my boys were. So I decided to look into K12. A school district locally closed and spaces at the other schools were limited and I didn't like their curriculum. Since I work at home, I will be able to keep an eye on my kids and let them work and not be distracted by others. I love the fact that they will get help in the areas they need it and challenged where needed as well. I can't wait for the school year to start.	Bullying, students	Challenging work/boredom	
My child was being bullied about his type one diabetes. The school was not adhering to his 504 plan. Putting him in danger daily. MGLVA made it possible for me to take matters into my own hands. Now we can schedule our day around diabetes and meal times. My child's grades have improved because of this. I also have the ability to give him the one on one time he needs in subjects he struggles in. I. can't imagine having to go back to brick and mortar schools.	Bullying, students	Special ed/504	Flexibility
Where my initial reasoning for MGLVA was based on my urge to better protect my child from harm, I have many subsequent reasons to feel that it was a great decision too; because of the quality of the curriculum and my son's success within it.	Bullying, students	Curriculum	
Schedule flexibility, individualized attention, strong program for math and reading is a major plus. No pressure, stress-free environment	Flexibility	Curriculum	
I really enjoy the one on one time helping my son with his school work and watching him learn.	Family	Home school assistance	
Flexibility in daily schedule; teachers and principals are approachable, friendly, and knowledgeable; All courses are covered, leaving me without questions on my child's education as a whole (with MGLVA, I know nothing is missing from a Home School type of education)	Flexibility	Teachers, caring	
It's all positive and the help we get is great. My child is never forgotten like he was in public school in Ohio. I love to homeschool and I have the freedom to teach my children right from wrong. Bullying is wrong and the public school didn't care that my child was hurt by that, they did not care, but I do!	Bullying, students		
I look forward to challenge my son to learn new things.	Challenging work/boredom		
Love the way the curriculum is set up!	Curriculum		
We like being able to have input and control over our child's social activities as well.	Family		
We basically needed different scheduling. public schools are not as they use to be. We are extremely satisfied with our decision. And we would recommend this to everyone.	Flexibility		
I thought it is a very good way to teach our children.	Home school assistance		
This was the best decision I've made for my children being able to homeschool an teach them at a steady pace an knowing they are safe at home	Home school assistance		
Excellent option to public schools. I do not want my child attending public schools. He will always be schooled at home.	Home school assistance		
I was told about the K12 program from a friend. I am VERY excited and nervous about this experience we are about to embark on next school season. Thanks for this program being available to those who seek it:-)	Reputation		
this option allowed my oldest child whom had learning disabilities reach her potential where as my younger child who is very advanced and gifted be challenged more. It is nice to have both their needs met at the same school. Teachers are happy and motivated to work with learning coaches and parents where as before we were often told by teachers in the past to not worry they will take of things.	Special ed/504		
I appreciate that MGLVA is willing to provide my special needs child with therapies, however, I have found that virtual therapy is not really helpful. I think the way in which therapy is provided should be made on an individual basis to meed the needs of THAT child. I have voiced my concern and the time in which it takes to make a change is too long.	Special ed/504		
We made the choice to choose MGLVA because of many reasons, brick and mortar was not working for our special needs child anymore and we needed a school that would help meet our child's specific needs AND give him an exceptional education. We have found that with MGLVA, since our Son was enrolled in FEB. of this YEAR our Son has made many strides in the right direction! We have seen many improvements and less "meltdowns" from school stress. We are able to cater to his sensory needs at home and have also found he is receiving the special education help he needs. We have so much support and feel like we have made the best choice we could have ever made for our Child. Thank you MGLVA for all you do for our Family, you have given our Son a fighting chance in life, education and in his future! Thank you to all of our teachers this year for helping find what we always knew was there! We are so proud to be a part of this School!	Special ed/504		
with my son extreme adhd the b&m Scholls was pushing my son away from the rest of the class putting him in the hallway unable to ask questions when he didn't understand something and so he got behind and failed most of his classes and now that we home school he is now able to ask questions and deal with his adhd with out being pushed away	Special ed/504		

Being unhappy with my child's progress at her previous traditional, pubic school, and with my daughter unhappy where she was and frustrated and confused with her subject matter, I had contacted K12 6 months prior and I talked to my husband over this time, and the next school year, I just couldn't in good faith, for the sake of my daughter send her back to little success at her old school. Right before school started last August, we made the decision to go with homeschooling and we chose MGLVA. It is a huge decision and commitment to be a learning coach, but my daughter is catching up and she is so much happier than last year, and I do believe that she is learning more responsibility and accountability for getting her work done. My daughter had lots of trouble last year and it feels good for me to be able, along with her teacher to give her the individualized attention she needs to be successful in her education and to ensure that she doesn't fall through the cracks. I am so very happy with K12, MGLVA. and my daughter's 3rd grade teacher! I really recommend online school for those who are unsatisfied with the status quo and who are able to fully commit to ensuring that their child receives a good education. MGLVA was what was needed in our situation, and I do not regret the decision of my child's schooling at home with MGLVA!	Teacher, caring		
She love her teacher here at mglva	Teachers, caring		
I thank mgvla for existing for any child that needs one on one shelter "home" TLC from good educators ????	Teachers, caring		
Great experience and wonderful teachers!	Teachers, caring		
Great school love it and the teachers helped my son out alot	Teachers, caring		
We would like the freedom to travel and learn by being hands on in the world :)	Travel		
I'm glad I chose MGLA, my child has really learned alot. Being apart of MGLVA, he has advanced alot, than if he would have stayed in the charter school.Thanks for having this option available!Please, No School All Year Round! Teachers and children need a break, we are not robots!	x		
I do think some of the Kindergarten material was overwhelming for my son, we were able to push through it all and get caught back up before the end of the year.	x		
ONE on one learning	x		
There were several changes of teachers this year which made the transition hard. Our transcripts where also not got from the public school. Which made her have to do extra work and testing out. Which was not fair to her.	x		
i would like to have the option to speak to someone other than the computer or email.	x		
GLVA is allot better then I expected! The only thing I did not like is at times the class connects would change last minute resulting to us missing a few or being late.	x		
This is a wonderful program!	x		
I am very happy that I had chosen this program for my child. She has succeed in many subjects and has learned so much through this program. Thank you!	x		
The programs are designed specifically for my child's needs. For my oldest, this may not be the best option.	x		
Due to family and personal issues it has been more challenging than expected to keep up with Mglva curriculum schedules. However overall I am very pleased and satisfied with Mglva efforts to assist my child in the learning process. I am pleased with the way Mglva has personalized my child's curriculum so he can be challenged properly as he learns. They have provided an excellent educational opportunity for my family which I greatly appreciate.	x		
We have seen a vast improvement in our kids learning skills since MGLVA. I do feel at times it is extremely intense and maybe needs to be a little lest rigorous. We love the on line learning and are grateful for the computer, as we wouldn't be able to do it without the free computer offered. The kids are interactive/visual learners and MGLVA provides that.	x		
Individualized and paced instruction--mastery based program.	x		
Ok	x		
Michigan Great Lakes online school has helped my daughter with all the needs she needs. She gets all the service she needs.	x		
Love the school	x		
We started MGLVA in December 2014 and are very happy with the program on a whole. The one thing that I do not like is the class connect set up. The class connect should be that days lesson for what they are teaching. We have 3 children grades 2-6 this year, and their class connects a lot of the time were scheduled at the same time. We did not have enough computers to handle 3 connects at the same time. The class connect scheduling was not good. Also, our daughters 6th grade teacher would have a class connect from 10-11:30, but the first 30 minutes she didn't show up, but the kids HAD to be there. A total waste of time for us! Our children would get started on their day, get really going, then have to stop for an hour or more for a class connect that didn't even count as one of their lessons on their schedule. When they finished with their class connects, it was very close to lunch time, and by then they had a hard time getting back into their schedule. The class connects were an intrusion, not a helpful part of our daily schedule. If the daily class connect was math (for example), why not make it that days scheduled math lesson? Otherwise, they spend an hour on a math class connect, then they still have to spend an hour doing their regular math lesson. The class connects were a waste of our time and a frustration for us. That is the only thing I did not like about MGVLA.	x		
I am very glad that mglva was an option my daughter. Is doing better than ever	x		
I love MGLVA!	x		
My niece is of mixed race. I am not.	x		
I really hope in the future MGLVA focuses on getting some more mainstream teachers who have an understanding of special needs children. I have the same issue here that I had in home school. Luckily as I take the majority of the teaching into my own hands my children have done well. However, as teachers are provided, they should be familiar with special needs children and how to handle them. Not just assume they are lazy kids who don't want to do anything. My son had two teachers this year as one left halfway through and neither of them at all had any concept of children with Aspergers.	x		

When I chose this program for our daughter I wasn't sure that I would like it but you have changed my mind. I love it. I love the freedom of it and the educational aspect of it. I don't know any 6 year old that is public school that knows as much as my 6 year old does. Not only does she know the 7 continents but she knows about how the United States came to be and who was the 1st president of the United States and she is learning Spanish. I am blown away by education aspect and love the interaction on the computer with the class connect. This is a Wonderful Program and I thank you for giving me the opportunity to help my little girl blossom and I have been such a huge part of that and I am so grateful for that. Thank You All so Much and God Bless You All for the wonderful job you are all doing.	x		
The traditional public school was unable/unwilling to work with my child's way of learning	x		
While I like teaching from home I believe MGLVA still has too much work. There are many days we were dragging just to get through the busy work. With two kids in the program we ended up being prisoners to our home due to so many class connects. There were days we have four in one day between two kids. It's simp too much time on a computer.	x		
Best school year this year... thanks	x		
Once my children were able to demonstrate they could manage their schedule and be responsible for their school work, an online academy is a viable option. I still believe younger students benefit from a traditional school setting.	x		
My main reason foe home schooling my son was that I was having transportation issues. This option gave me a chance to experience online learning.	x		
It seems like this survey is not intended to find out anything in particular, just to pump up MGLVA's ego. How does my income or education have anything to do with the education my child is receiving? You are wasting my time on things that could be easily spent educating my child. Stop sending us this nonsense just to get a better feeling about your school. Extremely important didn't even apply to half of the responses. To ensure I was completing this to stroke the ego as much as I could, I answered Extremely Important on everything. From now on, only send me surveys that are important and are pertinent to my child's education.	x		
This is a great program, especially with all the chaos and trouble schools and students are facing these days. I don't have to worry about my child while she is at school now. We had a little trouble adjusting to homeschool but we are getting on track and look forward to the next school year. Thank you k12.	x		
There seem to be a few discrepancies with the levels of the kindergarten lessons. The vocabulary unit is more suited for my three year old, and yet the history unit is quite a bit more advanced.	x		
Great job	x		
She started her education in K12 school and seemed to do so much better in that educational forum.	x		
My daughter really enjoyed going to school online	x		
So that I could make sure that He was indeed doing his school work	x		
I love the freedom my child has with the online school.	x		
I wish education is free.	x		
I have been mostly pleased with our first year of homeschooling with the K12 program. It has been trial and error, but everyone was always helpful.	x		
My son is enrolled in MGLVA so it followed that my daughter would also be enrolled for kindergarten.	x		
I love the individual plans, the class connects and that I can ask teacher anything and they are able to give a number of ideas to solve problems or coach more effectively.	x		
While we are new to virtual schooling our expeirience has been nothing but positive and beyond our expectations. We would recommend this process to anyone that doesn't like traditional schooling system.	x		
"x" indicated it was a tested item or was not a factor-type response.			