NEWSPAPER PORTRAYAL OF SELECTIVE SCHOOLS DILUTES COVERAGE OF DISTRICT IN NEED OF REFORM

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By:

Maxwell Brown

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ABSTRACT

Nearly thirty years after *A Nation at Risk* informed Americans of their failing education system, it is still rife with inequality. Two decades of policy makers and school administrators across the country have placed faith in "schools of choice" as a core education reform to secure equal opportunity and systemic education improvement. Called the worst district in the nation in 1987, Chicago is one example of a district that pushed schools of choice reform. Since then, Chicago has established nine "Selective Enrollment" choice high schools with admissions criteria that ensure they enroll Chicago's brightest students, and their success stories are often covered by Chicago's newspapers. This study analyzes whether there is biased media coverage of specific types of schools. I conduct a content analysis of articles mentioning different types of Chicago Public High Schools in Chicago's *Tribune* and *Sun Times* newspapers. The results suggest that Selective Enrollment schools receive disproportionate coverage given the small percentage they make up of the actual district. These findings may indicate that the portrayal of the overall district in the media is diluted, which could mislead the public regarding the need for reform.

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INTRODUCTION

"I think by far the most important bill in our whole code is that for the diffusion of knowledge among the people. No other sure foundation can be devised for the preservation of freedom and happiness"
– Thomas Jefferson

From the words of the founders of our nation to the award-winning narrative *Savage Inequalities* published by Jonathan Kozol in 1991 there lies the belief that sound public education is a necessity. While in theory the average American policy-maker may agree that education should be provided equally to everyone, in practice academic studies have consistently found that the public education system is anything but equal across different types of schools (Kozol 1991; Condron & Roscigno 2003). Having interviewed students and teachers from a range of the richest and poorest schools in the nation, Kozol offers the stories of those whom the public education system has failed. He shares examples of schools with far too many students per teacher, that do not have books, clean bathrooms, or equipment for anything from science to sports. One of the earliest modern academic whistleblowers was Christopher Jencks, who made clear that "different individuals and groups get quite unequal shares of the nation's educational resources." (Jencks 1973:22). At the time, Jencks estimated that America spent about two times as much on the children of the rich as on the children of the poor (27).

Inequalities in education, specifically as seen in the achievement gap (i.e. stark differences in test scores and graduation rates between groups), have occasionally been brought to the public eye through journalism as well as academic research. Research indicates that the achievement gaps have in fact decreased by many measures over the past thirty years (Kao & Thompson 2003), but inequalities still persist and remain central to greater issues of social stratification. Because public school resource allocation and decision making often works in the context of zero-sum systems, gain for one school is regularly at the expense of another. Those

with power (elected officials and those who influence them) tend to make the decisions that result in some schools failing while others succeed, and they are elected and influenced by the public. Reform efforts are critical, and are often shaped by public awareness and opinion.

Media has an important role to play in affecting the public. Research has shown that media has a "marked and substantively important" influence on public opinion and agendas (Perry 1996:147-150). As the gatekeepers of this influence, the decisions newspapers make about what to publish directly impact the public's awareness and motivation to reform.

In cities like Chicago, it may be that the more recent political regimes have maintained inequalities and failed to appropriately support a mostly deteriorating urban public school system. "'It took an extraordinary combination of greed, racism, political cowardice, and public apathy,' writes James D. Squires, the former editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, 'to let the public schools in Chicago get so bad.'" (Kozol 1991:72). It does not appear, however, that the entire system is failing – media and press releases from Chicago newspapers and the school district itself indicate that some schools have flourished in the existing political environment. "Selective Enrollment" schools – magnet schools with admissions criteria including test scores and grades - are particularly lauded for their success.

"Schools of choice" have been created and supported throughout the United States only in the past two decades, and they have been acclaimed as prized examples of the American education system (Medina 2009). Choice is often seen as a reform measure for the disadvantaged lower class, allowing them the option to choose better schools than their neighborhood traditionally provides. Upper and middle class Americans already exercise choice by paying for their children to attend private schools and moving to expensive neighborhoods

that have better local schools, options that lower class citizens do not have (Gill et al. 2007:129-130). Schools of choice, then, theoretically serve as an equalizer that will improve equal opportunity and improve the system as a whole via the market competition they instill.

If one was to observe the system with a larger lens, however, one might begin to ask – does the media's positive portrayal of Selective Enrollment schools properly reflect the realities of the school district and mean that the system as a whole is improving? Could their success and the way in which they are portrayed in the media in fact be obscuring persisting or even growing educational inequalities in school districts such as Chicago's? This research addresses these questions and explores their significance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is an abundance of research on education reform and effectiveness. Past studies have covered many of the quantitative and the qualitative aspects of the variety of reform efforts around education. Separately, there are a number of studies that have analyzed newspapers for their impact on public opinion about topics such as political campaign financing and the economy. This literature review examines educational achievement gaps, educational inequalities, the roles of schools of choice in educational reform policy, and the possible effects of incomplete media coverage on public opinion regarding societal issues.

Education and Reform

Educational Achievement Gaps in the United States

Kao and Thompson (2003) review empirical research to look at contemporary research on education achievement gaps. Education achievement gaps are striking, quantitatively visible

differences in the academic achievement of more advantaged groups compared with less advantaged groups by class, race, and ethnicity. Kao and Thompson find "signs of optimism" in that achievement gaps "have narrowed over the past 3 decades by every measure available to social scientists," but also that there is still a strong educational achievement hierarchy by race which is partially tied to parental SES (Kao and Thompson 2003:418). This indicates that educational funding inequalities are likely related to race and class-based stratification by means of residential segregation. Students are essentially forced to attend the public school in their local district unless they can afford an alternative (based on parental SES) or have the option of a public alternative such as a "school of choice." Residential segregation by class and race provides a potential explanatory factor underlying the achievement gaps.

Cook and Evans (2000) use data from the 1970-1990 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to separate the effects of family and school quality in a narrowing performance gap between whites and blacks. Defining school quality as the effect a school has on student performance, they find that the relative quality of schools with mostly minority students and schools in poor, inner-city areas has decreased over time.

Lee and Wong (2004) provide an update on "racial and socioeconomic disparities in school resources." They argue that the performance gap – which Cook and Evans found to have narrowed from 1970-1990 – did not continue to narrow in the 1990s. To examine the 1990s performance gap, they used a combination of state policy surveys, F-33 (School District Finance Survey), SASS (Schools and Staffing Survey), and NAEP data. With indicators such as per-pupil expenditures, class size, and mathematics achievements, Lee and Wong (2004:797,821) chose specifically to look at the effects, primarily on the achievement gap, of "accountability policy" designed around "rais[ing] performance standards" and "high stakes testing." In acknowledging

both that there is still an "unacceptably large" achievement gap and that there is, admittedly, "no discernable negative effect of accountability on minority or low income students' achievement," they argue for the need to challenge the status quo policies in order to continue *reducing* achievement gaps.

Failing Schools and Policy Responses

Possibly the most significant call-to-action in contemporary national education reform was *A Nation at Risk*, a 1983 report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. The report admonished Americans for a failing education system, basing this assessment on declining test scores and negative comparisons to other industrialized nations. The report references analyst Paul Copperman as saying that "for the first time in the history of our country, the educational skills of one generation will not surpass, will not equal, will not even approach, those of their parents" (ed.gov).

No Child Left Behind

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was undoubtedly one of the largest attempts at federal-level reform. The legislation sets up performance goals and testing standards (Dworkin 2005) that direct macro level reform efforts. The intention is to provide accountability and increase test scores, although it also provides funding to those districts that improve while, some would say, punishing those that do not meet the standards. While the intention of NCLB is to reduce the gaps in test scores, critics maintain that NCLB discriminates against poor and minority group members because of its emphasis on multiple-choice testing, and could actually increase the dropout rate (Heubert and Hauser 1999; McNeil 2000). The merits and weaknesses of the NCLB are highly debated in education and the sociology of education. NCLB interacts

with another reform measure that was implemented before and alongside it – the push towards market systems and schools of choice.

Market Systems and Schools of Choice as Reform Methods

Renzulli and Roscigno (2005) state that it was *A Nation at Risk* that "opened the door" for market-based systems (Renzulli and Roscigno 2005:345). Twenty years after *A Nation at Risk* was published, Guthrie and Springer (2004) suggest that while in retrospect it was wrong in most of its findings, "the report motivated more significant changes in the manner in which American K-12 public schools conduct business than virtually any event or condition preceding it" (Guthrie and Springer 2004:8). It spurred a considerable review of the education system and ultimately a number of reform opportunities. It may be the context of the Reagan administration during which the report was published that led to the focus on market system reforms.

In an article on market-based education reform strategies, Henry Levin (1992) outlines three proposals for reform – restructuring, public choice and market choice (Levin 1992:279). Restructuring is a strategy which involves decentralizing decision-making and adding systems of accountability. Public choice "attempt[s] to provide options to parents and students" by giving them a choice between different public sector schools, with the goal of increasing inter-school competition. Market choice strategies typically involve vouchers or tuition tax credits that would make available more private and public school options, also attempting to increase competition. Levin's 1992 overview describes the debate on market approaches to education reform as considerably active at the time it was published. My research focuses most directly on public choice as a reform measure.

Alongside the accountability systems and testing standards laid out in NCLB, the last two decades have seen the adoption of public schools of choice more and more as an education reform measure. Levin mentions competition as an important factor for public choice and in fact competition often appears as the main reason for its selection as a reform method. When students have options for which school to attend, schools have to compete for their attendance and, proponents of the strategy argue, they will improve in competing with each other.

Entrance and Influence of Schools of Choice

Public charter and magnet schools are two types of "schools of choice" typically available to students residing anywhere in the district they serve. Charter schools in particular are commonly run by private organizations that are "usually freed from many state and district laws and regulations" but are in turn held to stringent achievement goals (Rofes 1998:3). While advocates of schools of choice tend to argue that traditional public schools will react to the increased competition schools of choice provide by innovating and quickly working to improve themselves, research shows that this is not the case. Rofes (1998) notes that "the majority of districts had gone about business-as-usual and responded to charter schools slowly and in small ways" (Rofes 1998:12), suggesting that there has been limited changes as a result of the "competition" imposed by their presence.

While charter schools were first developed as an idea in the 1970s and 1980s and not implemented legally until the early 1990s, publicly supported charter schools are now responsible for educating "a significant portion of many of the major urban school districts' students" (Zimmer 2006:307). Renzulli and Roscigno provide a particularly elucidating graphic on the adoption of charter school legislation over the 1990s.

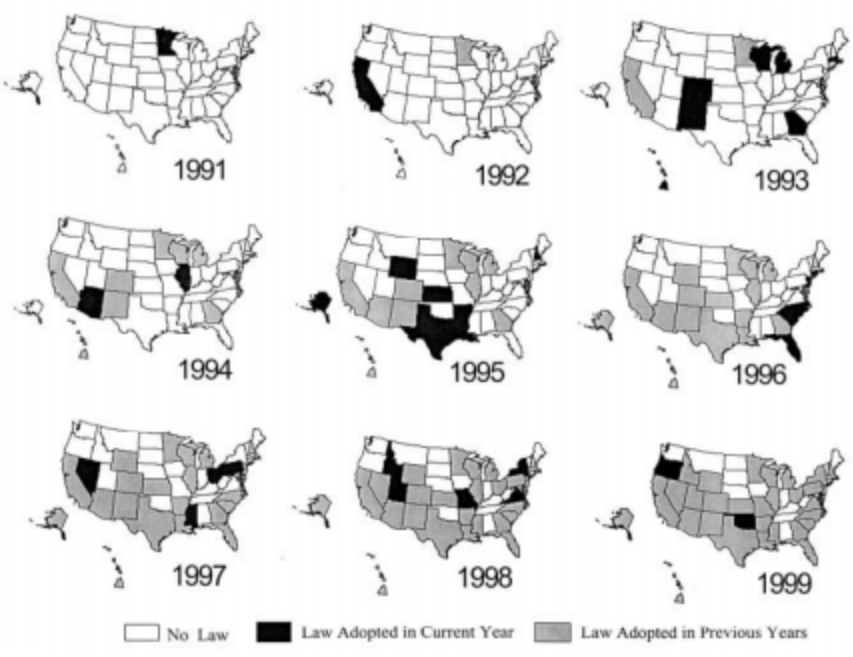

Figure 1: States' Adoption of Charter School Legislation, by year
Source: Renzulli and Roscigno (2005)

It is evident from the figure that charter school legislation had little difficulty being adopted by a majority of US states over the course of the decade.

Schools of choice are regularly assessed for their effectiveness as compared to neighborhood schools. There are mixed conclusions. Some studies have found that public school choice does not necessarily benefit participants (Cullen 2005) while others show higher achievement levels to various degrees (Rasell 1993: 131). Research around equity issues with charter schools has typically focused on issues in "admissions and recruitment practices, potential for increased segregation, and provision of special education services" (Bulkley 2003:338), but equity research in particular (as opposed to effectiveness research) rarely compares non-traditional schools to traditional neighborhood schools.

Schools of Choice in Chicago

While both magnet and charter schools are significant in the national context of schools of choice, the situation of Chicago's non-traditional high schools requires specific explanation. Chicago has multiple types of non-traditional public high schools including a significant number of charter schools, a number of magnet schools, and some others such as career and military academies. The typical non-traditional school in Chicago, however, likely resembles neither the typical non-traditional school in other urban school districts nor the school of choice that was originally planned as the savior of the Chicago Public Schools system. For example, a recent study by Brown and Gutstein (2009) comparing traditional high schools and Chicago charter high schools found no significant difference in ACT test score results, but did find an under-enrollment of low-income and special needs students in charter schools. This is an indication that there may not be a strong difference between the *typical* traditional and non-traditional high school.

However, while schools of choice are typically allowed to decide how many (and which) students to accept and enroll, neighborhood schools are often overenrolled and overcrowded because they have to accept all students in their area. For one example, Chicago's neighborhood Amundsen High School in the 1992 school year enrolled seventeen hundred students though their building was built for thirteen hundred (Weele 1994:139).

Selective Enrollment High Schools

Like some other urban school districts, Chicago also has what are labeled "Selective Enrollment" high schools. These schools share the quality of being open to students anywhere in the district, but typically carry added barriers to entry. In the case of Chicago, Selective Enrollment schools require a formal application that takes into consideration test scores, grades

and attendance from primary school. While intuition might suggest that Chicago's Selective Enrollment schools' admissions policies are an uncommon exception, research shows that it is fairly common for schools of choice to control admissions. A national survey found that 59 percent of charter schools report having "primary control over their student admissions policies" (Gill et al. 2007:11). Gill et al. provide one example of academics who question admissions criteria at schools of choice, suggesting the possibility and ensuing implications of "creaming" or "skimming" the top students off of the pool if schools are allowed to admit selectively (231). He suggests the particularly provocative implication that with the case of selective admittance, schools are in fact choosing students rather than students choosing schools.

"Selective Enrollment" high schools are Chicago's version of what Douglas A. Archbald (2004) calls "highly selective 'elite' magnet schools" (Archbald 2004:303). They are Chicago's "flagship" schools – touted as the best of the bunch. He discusses how the media is specifically prone to spotlighting these schools, and how the media would lead one to think that elite magnets were common even though they are fairly rare relative to the larger district. Though he does not elaborate on this "spotlighting", and his mention is almost an aside that comes and goes in the matter of a paragraph, he seems to be the only scholar to mention this issue explicitly in academic research. My research follows directly from his line of thought regarding the media and the elite magnet schools.

Who Exercises "Choice"?

Research has shown in Chicago in particular that disadvantaged students are less likely to attend Selective Enrollment schools and affluent students are more likely to attend Selective Enrollment schools, suggesting that "choice" may in fact perpetuate issues of academic

segregation by race and class. Douglas Lee Lauen (2007) studied a cohort of Chicago Public Schools eighth graders as they applied to and enrolled in high schools. He states:

> "Attending a predominantly black elementary school, living in a predominantly black neighborhood, or living in a neighborhood with a high degree of concentrated disadvantage decreases the chances of attending a selective-enrollment school. Affluence [measured by family income greater than $75k, college degree, and job type] has the opposite effect, enhancing students' chances of attending a selective school" (Lauen: 196).

A number of difficulties arise around implementing a choice program that truly works to equalize school systems. The main issue is one of access to information. Bierlein notes that some parents are quite prepared – by their life experience, education and access to information - to make a favorable decision for their children. Others – and "especially those from groups already most disadvantaged by society" – often lack the information and wherewithal to make the right choice for their children (Bierlein 1993:106). The result of this is that it may be more likely for students from advantaged families to find, decide on and attend schools of choice. Cincinnati's magnet schools provide one example of this, where Smrekar and Goldring (1999) found that over one-third of magnet school parents had annual incomes greater than $50,000, while this figure was only 18% for parents of students at traditional schools (Smrekar 1999:27). They also find education levels to be higher for parents of magnet school students.

The concentration in selective schools of students with higher family income and higher parent education levels removes these positive student models from the traditional public schools, perhaps making it even more difficult to maintain positive learning atmospheres. Choice typically removes both the best performing students and the students with the most active

parents, which could well be further exacerbating the inequality of education between the privileged and less privileged students.

Chicago Public Schools: A Brief History

An understanding of the recent history of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) may provide better context on the education system with which this research is concerned. Maribeth Vander Weele, a long-time education writer for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, provides an abundance of information about the district in her book "Reclaiming Our Schools" (Weele 1994). For example, she tells us that three quarters of CPS principals changed between 1989 and 1994 (xxii), which is the period of time directly before the onset of schools of choice in Chicago. In 1994, half of Chicago public school children never graduated (3). In 1992, Chicago schools had the highest four-year dropout rates and lowest achievement test scores for all large public school systems in the country (7). As for safety, a common issue in urban school districts, Weele offers that in the 1991-92 school year, there were over 10,000 arrests made inside Chicago public schools, including the seizure of 589 weapons (107). But is the Chicago school district really *that* bad? Weele notes that many school veterans generalize the system as not bad. But they then make an important clarification that changes that message – the system is not bad especially for "middle-class and wealthy children who attend magnet schools" (xxi). Weele suggests that the system has always been inadequate for the majority of the poor.

The city has a track record of supporting schools of choice, specifically the Selective Enrolment schools. A 2004 study asserted that "the district still focuses more of its efforts and resources on elite and magnet schools rather than on troubled neighborhood schools" (Russo 2004: 11). One article on school reform in Chicago by Dorothy Shipps, a Professor of Public

Policy and published educational policy researcher, suggested that "the repeated application of managerial, vocational, and efficiency [i.e. schools of choice] reforms… will actually make it easier to accept a sustained underachieving class of urban students" (Shipps 83).

Figure 2 provides an abridged timeline of Chicago Public High Schools over the last twenty years. The figure provides a visual representation of the openings and closings of various schools. It is worth noting the openings of Selective Enrollment and Charter schools around 2000 and 2005, as well as the more recent closings of neighborhood schools in the last 5-6 years.

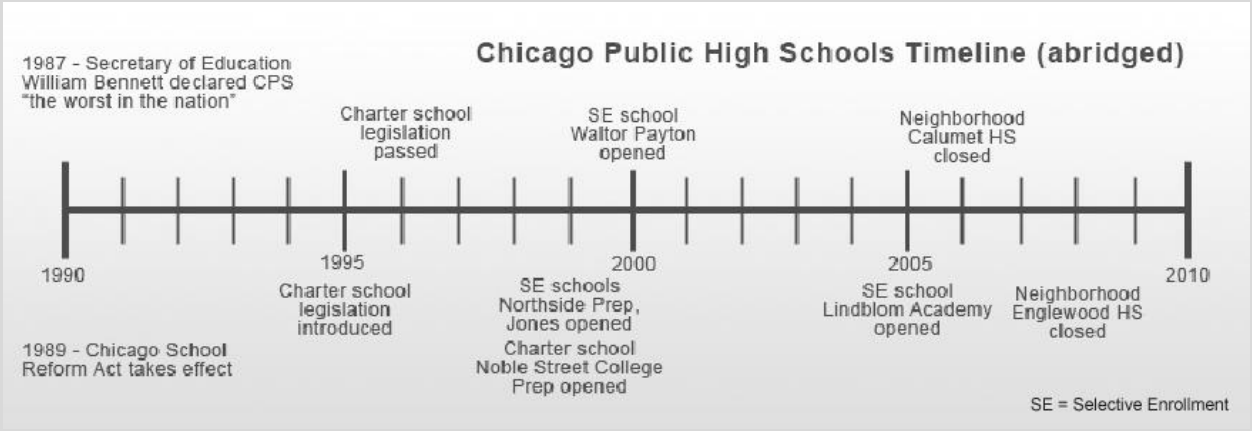

Figure 2: Chicago Public High Schools Timeline

Media Studies of Social Issues

Mass Media Research

There is considerable precedent for how and why to study newspaper articles – mass media research has a presence in sociology and is particularly covered in fields such as communications. The "How" of mass media research is covered below when I describe this study's methodology, but the why is grounded in the literature. Graham Murdock, a scholar of the sociology of culture and communications, provides insight on the ways in which social

science media research has been significant. Murdock says that "modern communications were central to the ways in which governments and business corporations secured public support" (Murdock 2002:40-41,44). He continues to discuss its importance in upholding democracy, where "citizens required comprehensive and disinterested information on developments that affected their personal and political choices." If it is the case that the mass media is inaccurate, un-comprehensive or biased in their spreading of information about non-traditional versus traditional schools, this implies that there may be ramifications for the health of our school reforms and attempts to deliver equitable education quality for all students.

There is some research on the ways in which citizens find information about schools of choice in particular. John Witte found in a study of the Milwaukee Choice Program that while a majority of "choice parents" found out about the program from friends or relatives, as many as 37% listed television or radio as a source and 33% listed newspapers as a source of information, showing that mass media is a considerable source of information about choice programs (Rasell 1993:76). The study may underestimate the influence of the media in Chicago in particular, as Chicago is a larger community where citizens may rely more on the media and less on their friends or relatives. Additionally, it focused specifically on a "Private" school choice program, which may be more information-exclusive and less reported in the media.

<u>What's in the Newspapers and Why Does It Matter?</u>

It is worthwhile to analyze newspaper coverage as an indicator of public awareness and the public agenda. "By drawing attention to movements' issues, claims, and supporters," claim sociologists Andrews and Caren (2010), "the news media can shape the public agenda by influencing public opinion, authorities, and elites." Their research has shown that newspapers

cover more status quo and economically positive stories, especially those involving large, influential interest groups. Importantly, they also find that newspapers tend not to cover smaller interest groups or issues that are more novel or confrontational in nature (Andrews and Caren 2010:841). This suggests that citizens are significantly limited in what information they receive, with the implication that an issue such as the need for education reform – one that is inherently confrontational – may fail to receive coverage. Journalists and the public often provide oversight to administrative decisions. A lack of this coverage and oversight can result in scenarios like Chicago's 1991 budget cuts, where the Board of Education cut school's supplies by 90 percent but the central administration's by only 25 percent, resulting in some schools having to ration toilet paper (Weele 18).

On the other hand, Andrews and Caren's findings also imply that success stories (likely, Selective Enrollment success), which are both economically positive and in the interests of the influential city and school district politicians, are more likely to receive coverage. These findings provide the groundwork for the possibility that newspapers provide incomplete coverage of the need for school reform while overemphasizing the coverage of elite selective schools. In a book on education reform, Joe Williams, an education reporter himself, offers perspectives on why the press covers some stories but not others. "It's easy to cover meetings and elections," he says, "but since policymakers seldom deal with the kind of structural issues that emerge as obstacles to good schools, reporters too often don't write about them" (Williams 2005: 154). Similarly, selective enrollment schools' press releases on having the best test scores in the state makes the news, while neighborhood schools failing to meet test standards for yet another year is left without coverage.

It may still be in question whether or not an informed public always motivates educational reform, because there seems to be limited quantitative research on the topic. Many studies consider this link an assumption. For example, Sexton's (2004) book studying Kentucky school reform offered that "all of [their] work stemmed from the notion that people will act if they have knowledge and understand the problem" (Sexton 2004:83).

There are, however, studies that focus on whether or not public opinion affects public policy, without looking at education reform in particular. Burstein (1998) reviews a variety of studies that use both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze the relationship between public opinion and public policy. He finds that a large majority of the studies do indicate that public opinion influences public policy. Further, he finds that "responsiveness is especially likely when issues are important to the public" (Burstein 1998:41). This affirms a vital relationship in my research - that when newspapers influence public opinion (as shown by Andrews and Caren), the public opinion then has influence on actual policy reforms.

Newspaper Content Analysis and Major Social Issues

Scholars have studied discrepancies between media portrayal and reality with other large, social topic areas. Ansolabehere, Snowberg and Snyder (2005) provide a recent example of this in a study of newspaper reporting on campaign finance. Their data set encompassed all articles mentioning campaign spending and contributions in the five largest U.S. newspapers. Their comparison of newspaper reporting on campaign expenditures to actual campaign expenditures justifies my own comparison of newspaper reporting on Chicago Public School by type to the actual breakdown of Chicago Public Schools by type. They find strong support for the claim that the press overstates U.S. campaign finances. They consider sampling and anchor bias in the

implications of this finding, saying that if people read and process this non-representative data, they will develop a bias towards it. If their source of information about campaign finance is the newspaper, and that information is incorrect, they will use the incorrect information to form an opinion about campaign finance in general. In turn, it may affect the way in which they choose to vote. Similarly, disproportionate reporting on Chicago's public high schools might affect individual's opinions about the schools and the district, and, as a result, affect reform agenda-setting. Interestingly enough, they also find that people with higher levels of education are the most misinformed by the skewed newspaper reporting. If this parallels to the case of reporting on schools, it may be that the educated and affluent – often those most able to affect change in the district – are the most misinformed by media overrepresentation of Selective Enrollment schools.

Kollmeyer (2004) provides another precedent for addressing sociological questions about disproportionate media coverage and the relation to large social issues. Researching newspaper coverage of the economy, Kollmeyer conducted a content analysis of the *Los Angeles Times*, California's largest newspaper. He found, from a data set of 201 articles that made mention of economy keywords, that the news media "privilege[s] the interests of corporations and investors over the interests of the general workforce" (Kollmeyer 2004:21). He further suggests that there are powerful social forces at play that align journalistic norms with corporate interests. My research is not far off from Kollmeyer's, conducting a similar newspaper content analysis on a different topic, but one that also involves large, institutional forces – specifically, educational systems and how a skewed portrayal of them may benefit the interests of privileged students over the interests of the underprivileged majority.

In conclusion, there is an abundance of research on education reform and effectiveness. Past studies have substantially covered many of the quantitative and the qualitative aspects of a variety of reform efforts around education. Separately, there are a number of studies that have analyzed newspapers for their impact on public opinion about topics such as political campaign financing and the economy. The lack of research at the intersection of educational reform and media coverage highlights the opportunity for further research.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Inequalities in education and educational opportunity are embedded in our education system, and school choice reform aimed at combating inequalities has often perpetuated them. The apparent lack of contemporary research on mass media portrayal of non-traditional schools warrants further research. Therefore, this study analyzes the possibility that the success of specific non-traditional schools (in Chicago, "Selective Enrollment" schools) is over-represented in the media as compared to coverage of traditional, neighborhood schools.

SOCIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

I believe this work to be the first analysis focusing on non-traditional high schools (specifically, Selective Enrollment schools) and media portrayal together. The intersection likely has not been covered before because while education inequality and non-traditional schools are often hot topics, they were largely researched in the early 90s, which coincides with the general time period when charter schools and market systems were just beginning to be implemented. The model of schools that students could "choose" themselves or be selected into was still being developed in 1988 and not implemented with written law and actual school creation until 1992.

While research has been conducted on charter and magnet schools in general, we seem to accept them being publically regarded as very positive and beneficial without intentioned concern for their effect on our view of the district as a whole. The excess positive attention may leave them less scrutinized than they otherwise would be with regard to their impact on greater education inequality, at the expense of the attention to and quality of other schools.

EMPIRICAL QUESTIONS

Is there a significant difference in the frequency of media coverage of traditional public schools in comparison to Selective Enrollment schools, in relation to the actual proportions of these types of schools in the district? Second, is there a significant difference in the positive versus negative slant of coverage by school type? More specifically, do certain types of schools get more positive portrayal in the media while other types of schools (or the district as a whole) are portrayed more negatively by the media?

HYPOTHESIS

I hypothesize that there will be a significant difference in both the frequency and slant (positive, negative, neither, or both) of media coverage by school type. Specifically, I hypothesize that there will be significantly more positive articles about Selective Enrollment schools and more negative articles about traditional neighborhood schools, as well as an overrepresentation of coverage of Selective Enrollment schools with respect to the actual percentage of schools they make up in the district.

METHODS

Overview

In order to assess whether traditional schools are portrayed differently than non-traditional schools, I chose to conduct a content analysis of Chicago media, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the resulting data. Content analysis is the appropriate method to answer my research questions because it may allow me to make predictions about both the source and the recipient of the message (Budd 1967) – in this case, primarily about the recipient. A media content analysis is justified by the fact that I am interested in how the schools are portrayed, which is most readily available in a source where they are regularly presented – the media. As suggested in the literature review, the media is a significant source of student's and parent's information regarding schools of choice.

The decision to conduct a media content analysis enters my research into the realm of *media sociology*, an area considerably influenced by David Manning White's 1950 analysis of the journalist as a "gatekeeper" of mass communication, deciding what types of articles to print (White 1950). The journalists and editors behind the media are those who filter the messages received by the public, and this makes it relevant to look to media to understand the differences in post-filtration content about traditional vs. non-traditional schools. For reasons of both accessibility and historical continuity, I chose to limit my content analysis to print media. Further, I limit my data set only to newspaper articles, while I could have included transcribed speeches or television news transcripts. These decisions stem from having limited time and resources, which would not have allowed me to have a complete sampling of such transcriptions as they are not accessible like are newspaper articles. A data set of newspaper articles allows me the most complete data set – nearly the full population of articles about Chicago Public High Schools in my selected publications, from which I will statistically sample – which ensures the

rigorousness and scientific validity of my study. Specifically, I chose to look at the two largest Chicago newspapers – the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

The *Chicago Tribune* was first published in 1847. In 2007, the paper had a circulation of 600,000 daily newspapers and nearly a million on Sunday. The *Chicago Sun-Times* in its current state was first published in 1948, and in 2007 had a circulation of 482,000 daily newspapers (Bowker's 2007). In comparison, another prominent Chicago newspaper, the *Chicago Defender*, had a circulation of 15,000. This drastic difference in circulation motivated my decision to focus only on the *Tribune* and *Sun-Times*. The two papers complement each other well with opposing editorial slants – the *Chicago Tribune* acknowledges itself as a "traditionally conservative" publication (chicagotribune.com) while, in recent years, the *Chicago Sun-Times* has opposed the *Tribune* with a "liberal, working-class roots" position (Reed 2007)[1].

Chicago as a Case Study

It is worth further discussing my choice of Chicago as a case study before proceeding – I could easily have chosen one of a number of other large, metropolitan school districts. I chose to look at Chicago for both personal and socio-historical reasons. Personally, I was a student in the Chicago public school system – specifically, at a Selective Enrollment high school - and as a result want to analyze, from a broader perspective, the systemic inequalities that I observed auto-ethnographically. From a scholarly perspective, Chicago is a unique and interesting city for a case study of urban education inequality issues for a number of reasons. It is the third largest

[1] While the two papers are now quite complementary in political ideology, they have not always been consistent in their positions. In the middle of the 20th century, the *Tribune* was a conservative publication while the *Sun-Times* was a progressive, liberal-leaning publication. In the 1980s, the *Tribune* became increasingly liberal, and the sale of the *Sun-Times* to Rupert Murdoch resulted in the *Sun-Times* becoming conservative. Since then, however, the papers have flipped stances again - the *Tribune* has re-visited its conservative roots and the *Sun-Times* returned to working-class, liberal policy.

city in the United States and has the third largest public school system in the nation as well (Kahne 2009: 115). As of 2009, it had around 421,000 students, 110,000 of whom are in grades 9 through 12.

Chicago was not one of the first school systems to start implementing charter schools (Illinois proposed passed charter school legislation from 1995-1996), but once it did, it did so consistently and continues to make efforts towards developing non-traditional schools. The combination of Chicago's contemporary government dynamics, residential segregation, high urban/suburban inequality, and consistent implementation and support of non-traditional schools make it an ideal city for an analysis such as my own.

Selecting a Date

My data set includes articles published between 1990 and 2010. Because charter schools make up a large component of the category of "non-traditional schools," the onset of these charter schools was a crucial factor in the decision of the appropriate date range. Charter school legislation in Illinois was first proposed in 1995, and was approved in April, 1996. In the interest of incorporating a period of time before this in order to be able to analyze a change in what was reported, I chose to pre-date this legislation by 5 years, making my date range an even 20 years. Also considered in this decision was the fact that 1995 marked the Chicago School Reform Amendatory Act, which allowed Mayor Daley to further take control of the Chicago education system and further expanded the influence of business interests (Shipps 2008:63-65).

Crafting the Data Det

I quickly selected AccessWorldNews, a product of NewsBank, Inc., as the database from which I would collect my data set. My University library provided access to the database and I

found it to be the only one that provided complete coverage of both newspapers from 1990-2010. At the time, the database lacked features such as "select all" and a way to export to spreadsheet format, so I worked with customer service at NewsBank to provide me with an exported spreadsheet containing the data set. Initially, I set my sights on a data set that included all articles having to do with Chicago Public High Schools or a specific school. This prompted me to begin testing search keywords including "Chicago Public Schools," "High School," "education," etc. I found quickly that terms such as these resulted in a data set far too broad, incorporating considerable numbers of national education articles and completely unrelated articles. I decided it would be virtually impossible to target articles that were about Chicago Public High Schools in general, but supposed that most articles would make mention of one school or another by name. Because of this, I chose to have my search terms be the school names themselves. Figure 3 details the ideal data set as well as the accessible data set that I chose to use. As mentioned, I found that those articles not included in my data set but that I would have liked to include were impossible to target via the likely database search terms.

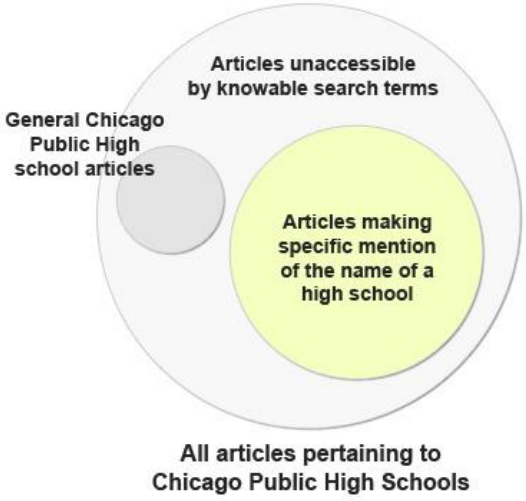

Figure 3: Narrowing the data set

In order to query the database with the names of all Chicago Public High Schools, I needed to develop a list of all of the schools. Initially, I went to the Chicago Public Schools website, cps.edu, and found that their school search tool gave me a list of all high schools if prompted without a search term. However, I soon discovered that this was incomplete, as the CPS website listed only the schools presently open. Using their list would lead to missing data in my data set: the schools that had closed in the last twenty years. Multiple offices at CPS as well as the Chicago Board of Education were unable to provide an official list of school closings. The Illinois State Board of Education (isbe.net) held promise – while they did not have a list of school closings, they did have an archive of spreadsheets containing every school in Illinois for each year.

Having downloaded the 20 spreadsheets (one for each school year), I wrote a script in the programming language *Python* to extract only the schools in Chicago that appeared to be public high schools and put their names in to a list. Then, the script compared the lists for all 20 years and compiled a new list of all the unique entries. I proceeded to manually remove from the list the obvious duplicates that were not identical matches removed by the script (these were a result of typos, minor school name changes, etc.). The list then should have contained all of the public Chicago high schools that were in existence between the years of 1990-2010, which was exactly my desired search. I organized the school names in to a search entry string, and began to test the search in the database before submitting it to NewsBank.

My search tests found a few issues worth noting. First, there were a considerable amount of obituary articles in my search result because the obituaries consistently made passing mention to the high school that the person attended. I was able to remove a number of these from my resulting data set by adding a parameter to *NOT* include articles containing “Death Notice” in

their headline. My data set still includes a large number of these obituaries, which have no further commonalities by which to systematically remove them. These were removed in coding with a code for relevance.

Additionally, there were a number of schools in my list that had to be revised for search accuracy. This was done in a specific, standardized manner. Schools such as Whitney M. Young Magnet High School could not be listed simply as "Whitney Young," as it is commonly referred to, because this search term returned any article that had a person with that name as its author or mentioned in its content. Conversely, schools such as Hancock College Preparatory High School were commonly referenced by multiple names. It could not be referenced solely as "Hancock" because this would bring in considerable amounts of unwanted articles (for example, the John Hancock Observatory is one of Chicago's major attractions). In the search terms list, the school became "Hancock Prep," "Hancock College Prep," and "Hancock College Preparatory." Similarly, Ramirez Computer Science Charter High School could not simply be "Ramirez." It became both "Ramirez Charter" and "Ramirez Computer Science Charter" in order to catch more possible references to the school.

Following these corrections, the full search string was sent to NewsBank to be processed. The length of the search string alone would have made it impossible for me to process the results on my own – the AccessWorldNews search submission does not take an input of that length. The full search term can be found in Appendix A.

All in all, school keywords seemed the right decision considering the limited precedent I found on thematic newspaper content analysis. Kollmeyer's 2004 newspaper content analysis of another large newspaper – the *Los Angeles Times* – used a similar method of crafted keyword

searches to extract all articles that made mention of the economy. Further, he used carefully considered parameters to exclude sections of the data set that would have hindered his analysis, as I did as well.

Sampling from the Data Set

To select articles for my sample, I used a random, stratified sampling technique, stratifying by year and newspaper. First, I assigned each article in my spreadsheet a random number value using Microsoft Excel's random number generator. Then, I sorted the articles by year and then by the random number. The resulting list allowed me to randomly sample in "chunks" – coding a set number of articles in each year. This allowed me to continue sampling in increments as needed, until I reached a large enough sample size, while maintaining the randomness of my sampling method.

There was one major issue that I came across in sampling. Because there were a substantial number of articles, such as the obituaries mentioned earlier, that were in my data set but not relevant to my analysis, I needed a way to systematically exclude these from my sampling. Had the articles been selected manually for inclusion rather than through use of the search terms (understandably an impossible task), the articles that were not relevant would never have been included in the final data set in the first place. So, seeing as these articles should not have been present in the set, if in sampling I drew an irrelevant article I coded it for only the category of 'relevance' and did not count it towards the number sampled for that year. The systematic nature of this occurred through the 'relevance' code I gave each irrelevant article, indicating thing such as if it was a national story rather than specific to Chicago, if its primary focus was on a school outside of the district (private, suburban), if it was an obituary making

passing mention to the high school of the deceased, or if it was otherwise topically unrelated to Chicago Public High Schools.

Coding (scheme and execution)

In order to measure the portrayal of the schools in the articles in my given sample, I created a unique coding scheme to code for a number of themes within the articles. The categories for the codes were devised deductively through my review of the literature around education inequality. I worked to have the most commonly referenced topics represented in my coding scheme categories. As for the codes themselves, I developed each inductively through piloting my content analysis. Initially, I created a list of possible codes for each category and through testing them on two pilot stages I was able to refine them to their final state.

My final coding scheme contains measures for fourteen categories, most containing two or more sub-codes within them. Variables included school safety, availability of programs, student outcomes, sports focus, and others. While there may certainly be more themes of interest within the articles, Weber's guide to content analysis is the first to say that "one major difficulty of content analysis is that there is too much information in texts," making imperative the need to reduce the data retrieved to the minimal amount needed for effective analysis (Weber 1985). It is my belief that the categories I have created and the codes within them meet that qualification.

For each relevant code recorded, I coded both the numerical code (e.g. -1, 0, 1) that corresponded to a theme, as well as a "slant" for the entry. The slants were assessments of whether a given thematic reference was positive, negative, both, or neither. Each of these turned largely qualitative data in to thematically-organized quantitative data that could be analyzed as

such. This practice is not without precedent – Kollmeyer (2004) codes newspaper articles for the conceptually broad "Good News," "Bad News," and "Mixed News" in a similar study.

At the suggestion of a Sociology graduate student experienced with content analysis, I had initially planned to code each article paragraph by paragraph. However, I realized in beginning to code that what I was actually interested in was not the slant of a given article but the slant of a mention of a specific school type within an article. As a result, I coded one line for each mention of a unique school type in an article, allowing me to separate slants and codes for different school types within a single article.

Researcher Effect

There are a few ways in which I may have influenced my topic and method selection, data set and analysis. First, my experience as a student of a non-traditional Chicago Public High School certainly shaped my decision to research the differences between traditional and non-traditional schools. My past personal reading of articles in both newspapers was one motivation for my research question, my hypothesis, and my decision that content analysis of newspaper articles would be a viable option for comparing the different types of high schools. Similarly, the way I frame the question and the way I interpret my results may be highly linked to my having been a student at a *successful* non-traditional Chicago Public High School, and my assumptions about the struggles of other, traditional Chicago Public High Schools – assumptions that are most likely shaped by the very media I am studying.

Additionally, my data set is certainly influenced by the many decisions I have made about how to craft my database search to retrieve an optimal set of articles. However, the steps I have taken are entirely reproducible, and while there may be objection to individual search terms

and their phrasings, I believe that while minor changes to my search would return a slightly different set of articles, they should not have an especially drastic effect on the overall direction or intensity of my results.

Last, there is always some degree of subjectivity in thematic coding. The goal in such an endeavor is to minimize this subjectivity, and I believe I have crafted my coding scheme in a way that does exactly that. I believe that a researcher replicating my study, having developed a familiarity with my coding scheme, would find their resulting codes to be nearly identical to my own, especially because I have coded by school type mention instead of by article, reducing the amount of generalization needed.

I did conduct a sensitivity analysis to evaluate the inter-coder reliability of my coding scheme. To do this, I had a colleague code the first 20 articles that I had coded as relevant myself, and then compared the codes assigned. The results of this analysis are found in Appendix G. Both measures of inter-coder reliability were found to be over 80%, which serves as evidence that inter-coder reliability issues are minimal and have little effect on my findings.

Limitations of my Data

I know that there are potential issues that come from using Chicago as my case study. The overarching concern is that my findings will not have any application to other education systems. First and foremost, Chicago has a very unique political and social history that has shaped its present education/public school system, one that will never be the same as another city. Whether or not this affects how immediately relevant my findings are for other cities, I believe that Chicago's unique history and school situation makes it a better choice for a case study of education inequality rather than a worse one. This is because Chicago's politicians and

school administrators have consistently advocated for the implementation of these schools and as a result there are now a considerable number of charter and magnet schools that are well distributed throughout the city. Other potentials issues with the representativeness of Chicago include the size of the city – as the third largest city in the country, it is probably not reflective of any suburban or rural areas or even smaller cities.

Additionally, the media I selected for my content analysis is a limitation of my study. Newspaper articles may not give the full extent of the media's portrayal of Chicago Public High schools, and they certainly are not the *only* source that citizens and decision-makers have for information about the schools. Also, a majority of the publication years in my data set were during a time where both major Chicago newspapers were considered to be ideologically conservative. This certainly has an effect on the type of stories that are published, and may in fact have affected circulation in favor of other liberal media sources that were not included in my research.

RESULTS

I identified 210 relevant articles from a sample of 598 articles from the total data set of 14,468 articles I obtained from NewsBank. Once coded, these articles produced 274 mentions of distinct school types, as some articles made mention of more than one school type. These school type mentions and the actual number of schools in the district for each school type are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 – School Types in Coded Articles, Actual District

Code	School Type	Mentions in Articles Coded Count	%	Actual District School Count	Make-up* %
0	Neighborhood/District	147	54.04	53	50.48
1	Career Academy	26	9.56	5	4.76
2	Charter	10	3.68	17	16.19
3	Contract	0	0.00	4	3.81
4	Magnet	12	4.41	6	5.71
5	Military Academy	2	0.74	6	5.71
6	Selective Enrollment	68	25.00	9	8.57
7	Small	3	1.10	3	2.86
8	Special Education**	0	0.00	0	0.00
9	N/A	4	1.47	2	1.90
Total		272	100.00	105	100.00

* Including all Chicago Public High Schools from 1990-2010, based on IBOE data
** Such schools exist, but seem not to be represented in IBOE data (See Appendix F for more information)

First and foremost, it is important to note that Neighborhood schools and Selective Enrollment (SE) schools (Codes 0 and 6) are the only types that make up more than 10% of the sample. As I am specifically interested in comparing these two categories, and the decision is rationalized by their frequency in the sample, I will with a few exceptions group all schools that are not Neighborhood or SE in to an "Other" category for the sake of analysis.

Table 1 shows one glaring statistic worth taking note of - even though selective schools make up 8.57% of the district's actual schools, they account for a disproportionately high 25% of the school type mentions in the articles.

Table 2 shows an aggregation of the slant codes for positive or negative evaluations, organized by school types. The 5-point scale is derived directly from the summation of the slant codes. If after summing the slant codes a school-type mention had -2 or less, it was grouped in

to the -2 category. If the slant code summation was 2 or more, it was grouped in to the 2 category.

Table 2: Slants Coded by School Type Mentions

	5-Point Scale of Neg/Pos Slant Evaluation					
	-2	-1	0	1	2	**Total**
Traditional						
Count	28	39	16	46	14	143
χ^2 contribution	**3.8**	**6.1**	0	1.7	**5.7**	17.4
Row %	19.58	27.27	11.19	32.17	9.79	100.00
Column %	75.68	78.00	55.17	43.40	28.00	52.57
Selective Enrollment						
Count	1	5	5	37	20	68
χ^2 contribution	**7.4**	**4.5**	0.7	**4.2**	**4.5**	21.2
Row %	1.47	7.35	7.35	54.41	29.41	100.00
Column %	2.70	10.00	17.24	34.91	40.00	25.00
Other						
Count	8	6	8	23	16	61
χ^2 contribution	1.1	2.4	0.3	0	2	4.8
Row %	13.11	9.84	13.11	37.70	26.23	100.00
Column %	21.62	12.00	27.59	21.70	32.00	22.43
Count Total	37	50	29	106	50	272

over 3.0 χ^2 total: 43.4 p-value: < 0.001

A Chi-square test of Table 2 produced a p value of < 0.001. This highly significant result is for the whole table, so a further inquiry is useful in determining which cells give most weight to the overall statistical significance calculation. The Chi-square contribution in the middle row for each school type demonstrates strongly that disproportionate representations are evident in the mentions for traditional versus Selective Enrollment schools. For Selective Enrollment schools, there are more than the expected number of positive mentions and less than the expected number of negative mentions. For traditional schools, there are more than the expected number of negative and less than the expected number of positive mentions.

The findings about the positive and negative slants from Table 2 match what might be intuitive evaluations about the reality of the traditional versus the Selective Enrollment schools – that Selective Enrollment schools elicit mostly good press (91.17% positive or neutral) and that traditional neighborhood schools make up the majority of the negative mentions. However, we can combine the Table 2 finding of a significantly larger-than-expected number of positive SE mentions with the Table 1 finding of nearly 3.5 times the expected percentage of SE representation based on the actual district make-up. Together, they tell us that SE mentions are significantly positive and appear significantly more than usual. These findings lend strong support to my hypothesis, which was that the media produces an overrepresentation of the positive portrayal of Selective Enrollment schools in its production of articles about the school district.

Acknowledged Exceptions, Gaps

There are a few exceptions to my results that are *not* removed from the data but if anything make the primary visible results smaller in magnitude than they otherwise would be. One prominent example of this would be the Lincoln Park High School International Baccalaureate (IB) program. Lincoln Park High School is a traditional neighborhood school, and has many of the same problems as other Chicago neighborhood schools. However, it is fortunate enough to have a program within the school – the IB program – that is quite successful in itself. This may be because its boundaries include very wealthy neighborhoods of the city. Lincoln Park's IB program is mentioned (in a positive light) explicitly in two articles and likely implicitly in others… it is, however, still categorized as a neighborhood school and contributes to neighborhood school statistics.

A Closer Look at the Articles

While the quantitative data provides an enthralling over-arching picture and allows for statistical analysis, qualitative inquiry into the content of the articles lends depth to the analysis and allows for a further understanding of selected individual article's emphasis and potential impacts. An October 28th, 1994 *Sun Times* article titled "55% of City Schools Hit Bottom on ACT," for example, details how more than half of CPS high schools scored in the bottom one percent on the ACT examination, a negative indicator of test score results and limited higher education attainment. After offering further specifics to the chagrin of the CPS system, the article turned to Whitney Young, a Chicago Selective Enrollment school. Young had the highest ACT average in the city and also boasted score increases over each of the past five years. Like many other articles, this one manages to speak to how poor the district as a whole is doing, while saving spotlight space for the successes of the flagship Selective Enrollment schools.

Some advantages of Selective Enrollment schools are seldom considered, and not fully visible in the quantitative data. For example, while core curriculum may or may not be the same, certain opportunities are readily available at Selective Enrollment schools and are absent at neighborhood schools. While for publicity the Chicago mayor might visit a struggling neighborhood school, one article that was sampled details how 40 economics students at Lane Tech, a SE school, received a lecture and Q&A from the U.S. Commerce Secretary William M. Daley. Another advantage depicted more clearly in the articles themselves is the scale of accomplishments students at the respective school types achieve. Articles about neighborhood school accomplishments might describe their success winning the local city championship 'against the odds,' while an article about Whitney Young lauds it receiving third place in the *National* Academic Decathlon competition.

Code Category Analysis

Analysis of the data rewards a wealth of additional results within specific code categories, some more interesting than others. Table 3 details the breakdown of slants coded, showing eight categories with over 35 slant codes and four categories with 11 or less, largely due to the nature of using a sample rather than being able to code the full population of articles. While there were occasionally articles about these four categories, they were unlikely to be sampled given their relatively low representation in the population. For example, the building of a new school would certainly receive press coverage, but because building creation occurs infrequently, it is unlikely that an article about it would be randomly selected to be in my sample.

Table 3 – Breakdown of Slants Coded by Positive, Negative, Neutral or Both

Table 2	School Safety	Teacher Comp. & Comm.	Leadership	Resources	Physical Conditions	Building Creation	Building Closing	Availability	Disciplinary Action	Student Outcomes	Sports	Administrative Decisions
+	0	17	25	41	0	11	0	41	2	33	59	13
-	39	17	15	23	0	0	4	1	4	30	8	23
Both	9	2	0	3	0	0	1	2	0	10	0	0
Neutral	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	6
Total	48	36	40	68	0	11	5	44	7	73	70	42

School Safety

Traditional schools made up nearly ¾ of all mentions of school safety (Appendix B, Table 1). In fact, of all articles coded about traditional neighborhood schools, 23.8% of them incorporated a discussion or mention of school safety. The subject is rarely mentioned about Selective Enrollment schools, however, with only one mention of school safety in 68 mentions of the school type. Looking in to the specific codes assigned to neighborhood school mentions involving school safety, most mentions (21 of them) were coded for a violent atmosphere outside of the school, highlighting a persistent discussion how students felt unsafe immediately outside schools. There were also a number of particularly gruesome accounts of violent incidents in and outside of neighborhood schools, including shootings, stabbings, and beatings, which goes to show that newspapers will gladly offer the details of school violence, though they often withhold the details about lack of funding and failing to meet academic standards.

One noteworthy case of a school safety mention was "School will require mesh backpacks," a Chicago Sun Times article from June 29, 2001. The article was mostly a discussion of safety measures being implemented, but it interestingly chose to mention the price of the reform measure. Schurz, a Chicago neighborhood high school, was approved to receive $58,000 specifically for the purchasing and distribution of new mesh backpacks, specifically designed to be see-through so that security could spot weapons being brought in to the school. While safety is undoubtedly a necessity for a school to be successful, the specific mention of the amount spent makes a reader question how many books or computers that money would have bought. If those same funds are also given to a school without safety issues, they will have used the money to improve their educational achievement while Schurz will *hopefully* manage safety issues but inevitably fail to increase achievement without additional support.

Resources

The results for the code category on resources significantly supported my hypothesis. Fully 80% of articles suggesting a lack of necessary resources were about traditional neighborhood schools, and these made up over half of all resource mentions about traditional (Appendix C, Table 4). Similarly, 90.9% of all resource mentions about Selective Enrollment schools were about them having necessary resources or succeeding in general.

Surprises: Leadership-taking and Teacher Commitment

There were some surprises in the code categories that went against the general grain of my findings. First, while there were a substantial number of articles about neighborhood school teachers failing, there were also a noteworthy amount about neighborhood school teachers who showed special commitment, defined in the codes as teachers staying overtime or going "above and beyond" (Appendix C, Table 2). This highlights the fact that there are teachers – and more than just rare exceptions – that put in extraordinary efforts in neighborhood schools.

The second major exception was under the category of leadership. I would have expected there to be significantly more negative than positive neighborhood school leadership references, but this was not the case. While there were fourteen negative neighborhood school mentions of a lack of leadership, there were an equal amount of mentions that said that the students, teachers and administration were taking leadership roles and effecting change (Appendix C, Table 3). This suggests that there *is* the possibility for leaders and change initiators in neighborhood schools to make a difference, but re-affirms that there are a number of times when the system lets them down and leaves them without leadership they need for day-to-day management.

Sports

The sports category was the second-most coded category. The results for the category are not terribly surprising – the majority of articles for both neighborhood and Selective Enrollment schools were positive (Appendix C, Table 7). The nature of sports news is that bad or "just okay" teams are rarely covered, so it is not unexpected that only the good teams get coverage and the good teams will typically produce positive stories.

However, the fact that we expect them to be positive, and they in fact are, does not necessarily mean that they are not significant. I find this to be an important result because it is one of few categories for neighborhood schools that are mostly positive. Sports reporting is one arena in which neighborhood schools are often portrayed positively. Unfortunately for education reform, a school's sports success bears little on their academic success (given, there may be some relationship, especially for dedicated athletes). More importantly, supporting a successful sports program might mean diverting much needed funds from building upkeep, education resources, and teacher salaries to sports equipment, fields and coaches.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

My empirical questions asked about the differences in media coverage frequency and slant between neighborhood and selective enrollment high schools. I hypothesized an overrepresentation of the positive portrayal of selective enrollment schools in my sample of articles about Chicago Public High Schools. The previous literature on education inequality, schools of choice and media effects suggests that if this is the case, it may have substantial influence on public perception and, in turn, motivation towards reform. My analysis, specifically the results Tables 1 and 2, lends strong support towards this hypothesis. There do appear to be

important, statistically significant differences in the media portrayal of these two types of schools and, ultimately, what Chicago residents read in the newspaper.

Why is this important? First and foremost, because there is a limited amount of media space. When selective enrollment schools are mentioned more often, the amount of coverage of traditional schools is likely to decrease and, more so, communication of the need for reform in traditional schools and the district as a whole is diluted. Some critics of choice as a reform method say explicitly that choice itself is a "red herring that diverts the public's attention from the need to adequately finance public schools" (Bierlein 1993: 120). To summarize, the Chicago school system and, if the findings are generalizable, other urban school districts, may not be doing as well as the overrepresentation of positive media about elite selective enrollment schools leads us to believe.

What needs to be fixed about neighborhood schools and the district as a whole? From the articles they publish, newspapers would have us think that the neighborhood schools need more metal detectors and security guards. Although safety in schools should be a top priority, it is important to realize that metal detectors are not themselves actually going to improve the education that goes on in the schools and reduce the achievement gaps between these schools and the Selective Enrollment schools. And yet, those are the main types of improvements that major information sources would lead the public to endorse and the policy-makers to pursue.

Implications

While my particular case study is on Chicago, my findings may be applicable to all large urban school systems. Efforts to improve the quality of education media coverage in order to more adequately inform public opinion and motivate reform would likely be valuable in all U.S.

cities. They will be particularly valuable in other districts that have elite magnet schools like Chicago's Selective Enrollments.

Without proper media coverage, and because we only look to reform what we know to be wrong, we may end up being complacent supporters of inaction towards a failing, segregated, stratified education system. The aforementioned literature has shown that newspapers have an effect on the public opinion, which has an effect on public policy, which in turn directs school reform. Therefore, when coverage in newspapers fails to appropriately depict the realities of the district, the public may be misled, public policy misguided, and failing schools left without effective reform.

When the media adequately covers struggling schools, there is precedent that necessary reform actually happens. For one especially direct example of how media inspires reform, consider Chicago's Calumet High School, a neighborhood school that has since been broken into smaller charter schools. School council chairman Edwin Green alerted the media to roof leaks and dangerous falling tiles, and the city quickly responded with a multimillion-dollar renovation (Weele 5) that might never have been considered without the media coverage.

The Calumet story is by far the exception, because newspapers often fail to cover stories like it. It is worth noting that Green had to approach the media to receive the needed coverage, rather than the media approaching him. On the other hand, it is likely that the media actively seeks out the positive stories that regularly come out of the Selective Enrollment schools. One article that I sampled was titled "City Schools Gain in 2nd Test – IOWA Exam Show Small Improvement" (*Chicago Tribune*, May 16, 2000) and discussed improvements in city test scores. The first few lines of the article, though, were not about the district as a whole – they highlight

two Selective Enrollment schools competing for the city's highest test scores. In fact, the article proceeded to say that "Mayor Richard Daley's school team pointed to the improved test scores and the success of Northside as evidence that reform programs are working." This serves as an explicit example that politicians and school administrators claim Selective Enrollment school successes as those of the district as a whole.

Are Schools of Choice the Answer?

Advocates of schools of choice often hold them as *the* reform solution – the answer to the systemic issues in the U.S. education system. Bierlein quotes 1989 Secretary of Education Lauro F. Cavazos as calling choice programs "the linchpin in our common efforts to ensure all Americans—black and white, rich and poor, Asian and Native Americans, Hispanics, and the handicapped—have access to a quality education" (Bierlein 90). If in fact schools of choice *are* the answer to the system's problems, it might be incredibly beneficial that media focuses disproportionately on their success, as my analysis has shown. However, the model is not a system-wide solution if it cannot scale, and it cannot be assumed that the model can scale simply because it has been successful for a few select schools. The most pressing reason for why Selective Enrollment schools cannot scale is because they rely on a special population – the top students in the district. The model cannot be replicated for the district as a whole because there are only so many top students.

Another reason for why schools of choice as a reform measure might not scalable is that while their design relies on applying market forces common to the business world, they differ from businesses in at least two key ways. Weele notes that successful businesses have "adequate supplies and equipment that functions," of which Chicago schools have neither. She notes a few

specific cases where there was limited access even to running water (Weele 136). Additionally, businesses get to choose the market segment that they want to serve, while school districts are mandated to serve all students within their boundaries.

Research has in fact shown that a number of non-traditional school designs have struggled to "[move] their designs from a few pilot schools to a large number of schools" (Gill 229). Gill mentions one specific case in California, where efforts to reduce class size succeeded but in turn created a teacher shortage, leading to the hiring of under-qualified teachers and creating all new problems for the system. Similar issues are probable with the scaling of schools of choice, where the limiting factor could be teachers but might also include pro-active students and parents, physical resources, and suitable building space.

Sociological Relevance

This research could have implications for further work on stratification as well as policy-making that aims for egalitarian school systems. This has significance for minorities oppressed by existing inequalities and their allies as well as for politicians, school and district administrators, and sociologists with an interest in stratification research. The study contributes to the ongoing learning about the use of newspaper content analysis in sociological research in the digital age. Additionally, the findings begin to fill a mostly vacant yet important niche in research on the sociology of education: specifically, how the media over-represents elite magnet schools. If the implications of this are, as suggested, that the message for the need to reform is diluted, then this skewed coverage has serious consequences for the future of our schools.

Limitations

There are some limitations to the applicability of my findings. First, although I would like my findings to be relevant for all large, urban school districts, they can only directly apply to Chicago because I only studied Chicago newspaper articles. It would be interesting to see if large newspapers in other large, urban school districts would yield similar results. A second limitation is data insufficiency, in that I was unable to conduct analysis of media coverage over time (before and after the introduction of schools of choice) because I did not have enough data in each year. While as a single coder I was limited by time, a team of coders might have been able to create a data set sufficiently large for such an analysis.

Further Research Needed

Further research is needed on this subject area. Future studies might first consider analyzing media sources other than print newspapers. Radio, TV, and the internet are all also prominent sources of information. There is research on what type of information citizens get from the newspaper - in discussing adaptations to the challenges modern media types have faced, Tuchman (2002) suggests that some newspapers have adapted to television news' "headline service" by providing "fewer and longer stories," offering more analysis than before (Tuchman 2002:83). This may serve as an indication that media message recipients may look to television or radio for quick, sensationalized stories, but turn to newspapers if they are interested in more in-depth information about a topic. The internet is also becoming more and more of a vital source of information, though one that is particularly accessible to upper and middle class citizens, and it would certainly be worth studying internet-based media sources as well.

Also, while my research primarily focused on media coverage compared to actual school-type breakdown, it would be worthwhile to research what exactly affects school administrators

and their attitudes towards reform efforts. Further, it would be especially valuable to research what particular kinds of media coverage are best at educating and motivating the public to call for reform when necessary, because this would inform newspaper editors not just about the importance of the representativeness of their publications but also about the specific content.

Looking Forward

Positive reform action may start simply with a careful critique of our sources of information. We can work to make sure that our media appropriately reports on the failings of the district where applicable, and not just on the sports and shootings but on the prevalence of limitations to success, including inadequate resources, incompetent or apathetic teachers, and the daily struggle for student attendance and retention. We might motivate ourselves to learn more about the school district independent of how we know elite Selective Enrollment schools are doing, and lobby for reform efforts that make sense for the bottom 90%, not just the top 10%.

If we were able to get the media to be representative in their reporting, the public would be more educated and may drive more informed and effective school reform. Why would this reform necessarily be more effective? Because when it is not effective, there will be the appropriate reporting on it until effective school reform is a reality.

There should be no shortage of hope that this is possible, and many measures indicate that Chicago schools are already improving. The recent election of Rahm Emanuel as Mayor of Chicago, replacing Mayor Richard Daley for the first time since 1989, will inevitably usher in a new wave of school reforms. The jury is still out as to whether or not Chicago can finally shed Education Secretary William J. Bennett's gloomy 1987 assessment of CPS as "the worst in the nation" (nytimes.com), but a careful consideration of school media portrayal and the reform that

results from it might re-align us towards the path to success.

Appendix A: Full Search Term

- In the Chicago Sun Times and Chicago Tribune
- Date range: 1990-2010
- In all fields, NOT: "Death Notice"

("Orr High" OR "Academy of Communications and Technology Charter" OR "Ace Tech Charter" OR "Ace Technical Charter" OR "Acorn Charter" OR "ACT Charter" OR "Act Charter" OR "Air Force Academy High" OR "Alcott Humanities" OR "Alternative Learning Community" OR "Alternative Safe Schools" OR "Alternative Transition" OR "Amundsen High" OR "Andersen High" OR "Arts Of Living" OR "Aspira Charter" OR "Austin Business & Entrepreneurship" OR "Austin Community High" OR "Austin Polytechnical" OR "Blair Special Ed" OR "Bogan Computer Technical" OR "Bogan High" OR "Bousfield" OR "Bowen Environmental Studies" OR "Bowen High" OR "Bronzeville Scholastic" OR "Brooks College Preparatory" OR "Brooks Prep" OR "Brooks College Prep" OR "Buckingham School" OR "Calumet Career Prep" OR "Calumet Career Preparatory" OR "Calumet Prep" OR "Perspectives Calumet High" OR "Carver Area" OR "Carver High" OR "Carver Military" OR "Chicago Academy of Advanced Technology" OR "Chicago Discovery" OR "Chicago Agricultural" OR "Chicago High School for Agricultural Science" OR "Chicago High School for The Arts" OR "Chicago International Charter" OR "Chicago Military" OR "Chicago Preparatory Charter" OR "Chicago Talent Development" OR "Chicago Vocational" OR "Clark Academy Prep" OR "Clark Prep" OR "Clark Academy Preparatory" OR "Clemente Achievement" OR "Clemente Community High" OR "Collins Academy" OR "Collins High" OR "Community Services West" OR "Corliss High" OR "CPS Virtual High" OR "Crane Achievement" OR "Crane High" OR "Crane Technical" OR "Cregier Vocational" OR "Curie Metropolitan" OR "Devry Advantage" OR "Douglass Academy" OR "Douglass High" OR "DuSable Leadership" OR "DuSable High" OR "Dugan Alternative" OR "Dugan High" OR "Dunbar Vocational Career" OR "Dunbar Vocational" OR "Durso" OR "Dyett Academic Center" OR "Dyett High" OR "Englewood Achievement" OR "Englewood High" OR "Englewood Prep" OR "Englewood Technical Prep" OR "Englewood Technical Preparatory" OR "Entrepreneurship High" OR "Epic Academy" OR "Excel - Orr High School" OR "Farragut Career" OR "Fenger Academy" OR "Fenger High" OR "Fenger Achievement" OR "Flower Career" OR "Flower Vocational" OR "Ford Power House Charter" OR "Foreman High" OR "Future Commons" OR "Gage Park High" OR "George Washington High" OR "Global Visions" OR "Graphic Communication Arts" OR "Hancock Prep" OR "Hancock College Prep" OR "Hancock College Preparatory" OR "Harlan Community High" OR "Harper High" OR "Healy Program Center North" OR "Healy School" OR "Hirsch Metropolitan" OR "Hope Prep" OR "Hope College Prep" OR "Hope College Preparatory" OR "Hope Institute" OR "Hope Institutional" OR "Hubbard High" OR "Hyde Park Academy" OR "Hyde Park Career" OR "Idoc/cps South" OR "Idoc/healy South" OR "Industrial Skill Center" OR "Infinity High" OR "Infinity Math Science" OR "Iyc Chicago" OR "Jefferson Alternative" OR "John Hope College Preparatory" OR "John Hope Prep" OR "John Hope College Prep" OR "Jones Academic Magnet" OR "Jones College Preparatory" OR "Jones Prep" OR "Jones College Prep" OR "Jones Metropolitan" OR "Juarez Community High" OR "Juarez High" OR "Julian Achievement" OR "Julian High" OR "Kelly High" OR "Kelvyn Park High" OR "Kennedy High" OR "Kenwood Academy" OR "Kenwood High" OR "King College Prep" OR "King College Preparatory" OR "King Prep" OR "King High" OR "Lakeview High" OR "Lake View High" OR "Lane Tech" OR "Lane Technical" OR "Las Casas Occupational" OR "Linc Alternative" OR "Lincoln Park High" OR "Lindblom College Prep" OR "Lindblom College Preparatory" OR "Lindblom Prep" OR "Lindblom Academy" OR "Lindblom Math & Science" OR "Lindblom Tech" OR "Lindblom Technical" OR "Ramirez Computer" OR "Manley Career & Prep" OR "Manley Career" OR "Manley Community Academy" OR "Manley High" OR "Marine Military Academy" OR "Marshall Metropolitan" OR "Metropolitan High" OR "Mason High" OR "Mather High" OR "Mclaren Occupational" OR "Montefiore Boys School" OR "Morgan Park High" OR "Multicultural Arts High" OR "North Lawndale Prep" OR "North Lawndale College Preparatory" OR "North Lawndale High" OR "North Lawndale College Prep" OR "Nancy Jefferson Alternative" OR "Near North Career Magnet" OR "Near North Career Metropolitan" OR "Near North Special Ed Center" OR "Neil Physically Handicapped" OR "New Millenium Health" OR "Noble Street Charter" OR "North Lawndale Charter" OR "North-grand High" OR "Northside Prep" OR "Northside College Prep" OR "Northside College Preparatory" OR "Northside Learning Center" OR "Nuestra American Charter" OR "Ogden International" OR "Orr Academy" OR "Orr Community Academy" OR "Payton College Preparatory" OR "Payton College Prep" OR "Payton Prep" OR "Peace And Education Coalition" OR "Perspectives Charter" OR "Phillips Academy" OR "Phillips Achievement" OR "Phillips High" OR "Phoenix Military" OR "Prologue Early College" OR "Prosser Career" OR "Prosser Academic" OR "Prosser Vocational" OR "Raby High" OR "Ramirez Charter" OR "Ramirez Computer Science Charter" OR "Ray Graham Training Center" OR "Renaissance Academy" OR "Richards Career" OR "Richards Vocational" OR "Rickover Naval" OR "Rickover Military" OR "Robeson Achievement" OR "Robeson High" OR "Roosevelt High" OR "Safe Schools Alternative" OR "School Of Leadership" OR "School Of Social Justice" OR "School Of Technology" OR "School Of The Arts" OR "Schurz High" OR "Second Chance Alternative" OR "Senn Achievement" OR "Senn High" OR "Senn Academy" OR "Senn Metro" OR "Senn Metropolitan" OR "Shabazz International" OR "Simeon Career" OR "Simeon Vocational" OR "Simpson High" OR "Simpson Academy" OR "Simpson Alternative" OR "South Shore Community High" OR "Southside Prep" OR "Southside College Prep" OR "Southside College Preparatory" OR "Southside Learning Center" OR "Southside Occupational" OR "Spalding High" OR "Spalding School" OR "Spry Community Links" OR "Steinmetz Academic" OR "Steinmetz High" OR "Student Builders Charter" OR "Sullivan High" OR "Taft High" OR "Teacher Preparation High" OR "Team Englewood" OR "Tesla Alternative" OR "Tilden Achievement" OR "Tilden Career" OR "Tilden Community High" OR "Tilden High" OR "Tubman Alternative" OR "University Of Chicago Charter" OR "Uplift Community High" OR "East Garfield High" OR "Urban Prep Academy" OR "Urban Youth High" OR "Vaughn Occupational" OR "Vines Prep" OR "Vines Preparatory" OR "Voise Academy" OR "Von Steuben" OR "Washburne Trade" OR "Washington G High" OR "Washington High" OR "Wells Community High" OR "Westinghouse Achievement" OR "Westinghouse Vocational" OR "Westinghouse Area Vocational" OR "Westinghouse Career" OR "Westinghouse High" OR "Westinghouse Vocational Hs" OR "William Jones College Prep" OR "Williams Medical" OR "Williams Prep" OR "Williams Medical Prep" OR "Wilson Occupational" OR "World Language High" OR "York Alternative" OR "Young High" OR "Young Magnet" OR "Young Womens Leadership" OR "Youth Connection" OR "Youth Connections" OR "Back Of The Yards High" OR "Best Practice High School" OR "Best Practices High School" OR "Big Picture High School") AND ("school" OR "academy")

Appendix B: Category Tables for Slant Coded

Appendix B, Table 1: School Safety Slant					Total		Actual
School Type	**+**	**-**	**Both**	**Neutral**	**Count**	**%**	**District %**
Traditional	0	27	8	0	35	72.92	39.53
Selective Enrollment	0	1	0	0	1	2.08	6.98
Other	0	11	1	0	12	25.00	53.49
Total	0	39	9	0	48	100.00	100.00

Appendix B, Table 2: Teacher Competency & Commitment Slant					Total		Actual
School Type	**+**	**-**	**Both**	**Neutral**	**Count**	**%**	**District %**
Traditional	5	11	2	0	18	50.00	39.53
Selective Enrollment	6	2	0	0	8	22.22	6.98
Other	6	4	0	0	10	27.78	53.49
Total	17	17	2	0	36	100.00	100.00

Appendix B, Table 3: Leadership					Total		Actual
School Type	**+**	**-**	**Both**	**Neutral**	**Count**	**%**	**District %**
Traditional	14	14	0	0	28	70.00	39.53
Selective Enrollment	3	1	0	0	4	10.00	6.98

Other	8	0	0	0	8	20.00	53.49
Total	25	15	0	0	40	100.00	100.00

Appendix B, Table 4: ***Resources, creativity, success against odds***					**Total**		**Actual**
School Type	**+**	**-**	**Both**	**Neutral**	**Count**	**%**	**District %**
Traditional	13	18	2	1	34	50.00	39.53
Selective Enrollment	18	2	1	0	21	30.88	6.98
Other	10	3	0	0	13	19.12	53.49
Total	41	23	3	1	68	100.00	100.00

Appendix B, Table 5: ***Availability, success of programs, curricula, extra-curriculars***					**Total**		**Actual**
School Type	**+**	**-**	**Both**	**Neutral**	**Count**	**%**	**District %**
Traditional	18	1	1	0	20	45.45	39.53
Selective Enrollment	15	0	1	0	16	36.36	6.98
Other	8	0	0	0	8	18.18	53.49
Total	41	1	2	0	44	100.00	100.00

Appendix B, Table 6: ***Student Outcomes***					**Total**		**Actual**
School Type	**+**	**-**	**Both**	**Neutral**	**Count**	**%**	**District %**

Traditional	13	24	5	0	42	57.53	39.53
Selective Enrollment	12	1	1	0	14	19.18	6.98
Other	8	5	4	0	17	23.29	53.49
Total	33	30	10	0	73	100.00	100.00

Appendix B, Table7: Sports					**Total**		
School Type	**+**	**-**	**Both**	**Neutral**	**Count**	**%**	**Actual District %**
Traditional	19	7	0	1	27	38.57	39.53
Selective Enrollment	20	1	0	1	22	31.43	6.98
Other	20	0	0	1	21	30.00	53.49
Total	59	8	0	3	70	100.00	100.00

Appendix B, Table 8: Administrative Decisions					**Total**		
School Type	**+**	**-**	**Both**	**Neutral**	**Count**	**%**	**Actual District %**
Traditional	8	16	0	5	29	69.05	39.53
Selective Enrollment	2	3	0	1	6	14.29	6.98
Other	3	4	0	0	7	16.67	53.49
Total	13	23	0	6	42	100.00	100.00

Appendix C: Category Tables for Codes

Appendix C, Table 1: School Safety Codes							
School Type	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Traditional	8	3	1	4	12	10	21
Selective Enrollment	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Other	1	1	0	4	2	1	5
Total	10	4	1	8	14	11	27

0 · Safety measure being implemented

4 · Violent incident outside the school
Mention of violent atmosphere
5 · inside the school
Mention of violent atmosphere
6 · outside the school

Appendix C, Table 2: Teacher Competency & Commitment Codes				
School Type	**-1**	**0**	**1**	**2**
Traditional	7	6	3	5
Selective Enrollment	2	0	3	3
Other	2	2	2	4
Total	11	8	8	12

-1 · Teachers are leaving their positions

0 · Teachers are failing
Commitment: Teachers are staying
2 · overtime, going “above and beyond”

Appendix C, Table 3: Leadership Codes		
School Type	**0**	**1**
Traditional	14	14
Selective Enrollment	3	1
Other	8	0
Total	25	15

Students, Teachers and/or
Administration taking leadership roles,
0 · effecting change in their school/district

Lack of leadership resulting in
1 · consequences for education

Appendix C, Table 4: Resources, creativity, success against odds Codes				
School Type	**-1**	**0**	**1**	**2**
Traditional	20	1	6	9
Selective Enrollment	2	0	9	11
Other	3	0	6	5
Total	25	1	21	25

-1 · Schools are lacking in necessary resources

School/district/student succeeding (amidst
adversity) in general, or against
1 · competitors outside the district

School has or has access to necessary
2 · resources

Appendix C, Table 5: *Availability, success of programs, curricula, extra-curriculars Codes*							
School Type	**-3**	**-2**	**-1**	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
Traditional	0	2	0	0	2	5	12
Selective Enrollment	1	0	0	0	1	5	11
Other	0	0	0	0	0	6	3
Total	1	2	0	0	3	16	26

2. Mention of available/succeeding specific curriculum

3. Mention of available/succeeding extra-curriculars

Appendix C, Table 6: *Student outcomes Codes*										
School Type	**-5**	**-4**	**-3**	**-2**	**-1**	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Traditional	8	8	14	3	3	0	8	7	5	5
Selective Enrollment	0	1	1	0	1	0	7	4	6	1
Other	2	0	6	3	0	0	7	1	4	3
Total	10	9	21	6	4	0	22	12	15	9

1. Positive mention of school/district college matriculation, job success rates (or specific student college matriculation, job success)

3. Positive mention of school/district test scores results (or specific student test results)

Appendix C, Table 7: *Sports Codes*				
School Type	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
Traditional	1	17	9	1
Selective Enrollment	1	18	1	3
Other	1	20	0	0
Total	3	55	10	4

1. State of sport/athletic program – positive

2. State of sport/athletic program - negative

Appendix C, Table 8: *Administrative Decisions Codes*					
School Type	**-2**	**-1**	**0**	**1**	**2**
Traditional	4	12	5	4	4
Selective Enrollment	1	2	1	2	0
Other	1	3	0	1	2
Total	6	17	6	7	6

-1. Reporter takes a negative view of an administrative decison

Appendix D: Original Research and Method Plans

Originally, I had intended on doing quantitative analysis of CPHS funding data. After acquiring funding data for Chicago Public Schools (CPS) from 1980 to 2010, I planned to look at the continuous measures of school funding (using a calculated per-student expenditure value and the average teacher salary value) and compare the charter and magnet schools to the regular public schools. Also, I had hoped to look at the change in CPS district-wide funding inequality over the last 20-30 years (the rate of change, or derivative, of the regression equation for the range of difference in school funding across the district) and test whether the change in funding inequality went up or down with the implementation of charter/magnet schools. More concisely, I had wanted to measure how the rate of change of funding inequality in the district is affected by the increasing number of charter and magnet schools.

Unfortunately, I found that the available funding data offered far too limited a picture of school funding and school spending. The readily available, publicly accessible data on high school funding was available in the *Comprehensive Annual Financial Report* of the Chicago Public School district. Over half of these were present at Harold Washington public library in Chicago, and they contained reports of the amount of funding allocated to each high school. However, after preliminary analysis of the data, I began to feel that I was spending a considerable amount of time simply reverse-engineering a formula that the district administrators would have used to allocate the funds. It is my understanding that there are separate formulas for the allocation of funding to traditional and non-traditional schools – but, I also imagine that I am unlikely to find blatant inequality in the formulas themselves, as the district would probably have noticed such inequalities internally and attempted to address or obscure them. For this reason, I abandoned this quantitative analysis with the conclusion that a full quantitative study of

funding inequality would need to include measures I could not account for, such as PTA fundraising, physical condition of the school building (how much money goes to repairs, heat-loss due to poor insulation, etc.), and other sources of funding or as financial stress.

Appendix E: Career Academies, explained

The case of Career Academies in the data is one worthy of further explanation. They are the third largest – at 9.56% - in terms of school type mentions in the articles coded (ref. Table 1) and yet they make up less than 5% of actual schools. This alone might warrant their inclusion in the primary analysis, rather than grouping them in to the "Other" category with the rest of the school types. My rationale for grouping them with the others is that there is a strong heterogeneity within the category that complicates any analysis of them. While some Career Academies almost identically resemble neighborhood schools, others have developed unique vocational training programs and relationships with employers that make them similar in some respects to charter and magnet schools. For example, Simeon can largely be viewed as a neighborhood school in the scope of this research in the sense that most of the media coverage about it focuses on sports and violence, like many neighborhood schools. However, articles like "Catering Firm, Cregier High Cook Up Deal" about Chicago Career Academy Cregier High School describe a unique and exciting partnership that will train and employ Cregier students. This breadth of coverage highlights the dissimilarities between the schools that fall under the Career Academy type. The dissimilarities mean that they do not neatly align with neighborhood schools or other non-traditional schools, and because they do not need to be analyzed on their own for the purposes of my research questions, I chose to collapse them.

Appendix F: Special Education schools, explained

Special Education schools were not intentionally removed from the data set in any way – instead, it seemed that they were not included in the Illinois Board of Education data in the same way that the other high schools were. Because I drew my high school search terms from the IBOE data, the fact that I did not extract the Special Education schools to my search terms meant that I did not likely have any articles about Special Education schools in my data set. This is not an issue for my results, because had they been included in my data set and sampled as the others were, they would have either been collapsed to "Other" or excluded altogether, as they are not particularly relevant to my study.

Appendix G: Sensitivity analysis, inter-coder reliability

In order to assess inter-coder reliability, I had a colleague code the first 20 articles that I had coded as relevant myself, and then compared the codes assigned. As for the slants, there were 41 identically coded slants and 7 differently coded slants, meaning that there is approximately 85% reliability. As the reliability is over an acceptable 80%, this should indicate that issues of inter-coder reliability will not significantly affect my findings.

	Count	**Percent**
Coded the Same Slant	41	85.42%
Coded Different Slant	7	14.58%
Total	48	100%

In addition to comparing the coded slants, I compared the recorded codes as well. Within the 41 slants coded the same, there were 36 with identical corresponding thematic codes as well. This indicates an approximately 87.8% reliability for the thematic coding.

Same Codes:	36	87.8%
Total Codes:	41	

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