The Ideological Politics of Charter Schools

By

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To my father, Rodney Blissett

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I. Introduction

The world of education policy is messy and complicated. Decisions about what to do and what policies to implement are affected by more than just considerations of efficacy, but also questions of moral virtue. The promise of democratic education often introduces conflicting values that must be resolved in order for us to move forward. How do we balance personal liberty in school choice with the equalization promise of traditional public schooling? What is the long-term plan for affirmative action? Can we simultaneously hold teachers accountable while providing formative training and assessment? Moreover, the clashes of values and the raising of these questions happens in a policy context muddled by both structural politics and personal predilections. In the words of Amy Gutmann in her piece, *Democratic Education in Difficult Times*:

> These are difficult times because we are difficult people. There are undoubtedly other, less "personal" reasons that make these difficult times and also other, more "structural" reasons that help explain why we are difficult people, but I want to begin by focusing on the fact that we are – for whatever simple or complicated reasons – difficult people. (Gutmann, 1990, p. 7)

The current state of education research in educational policy seems, at the moment, to be dominated by economic and econometric approaches to questions of policy efficacy. What works? For whom? Under what circumstances? This work is indeed important. To the extent that a certain policy outcome, such as the academic achievement of students (measuring student learning) is desired and we need to make a decision about how to reach that goal, it seems only logical that we should only pursue and invest in those solutions that actually work. However, there are certain moral questions that are already in place before we even begin our inquiry.

What policy outcomes are desired, and what is the normative expectation for those outcomes? Is the policy solution we are seeking morally acceptable to us? In other words, do *all* of the possible outcomes of the policy sit well within our ethical frameworks? A simple example I often use to make this case is with student discipline. Before even deciding to evaluate a particular policy that causally affects student discipline, we must already make several ethical calls. First, how do we operationalize what "good" and "bad" student behavior looks like? More broadly, who are we to be defining the outcome in the first place? What role *should* education play in shaping behavior? Second, is the proposed policy ethical? Let us say that the proposed policy involved severe disciplinary punishments. Let us further say that these punishments did in fact effectively create the outcomes we desired in terms of changes in student behavior. I propose that the efficacy of the policy, in our decision-making process, would not matter, as considerations of the boundaries of the means through which we achieved those policy goals would become most important.

I begin my dissertation with this quote from Gutmann to highlight a simple reality: it is not abundantly obvious whether we can agree on these value questions in education policy. As a public service, the provision of education and the creation of education policy is filtered through a complex, collaborative, and democratic process. I argue that at a multitude of points in this process, it is the conflicts in people's values, not rational discussions of efficacy, that dominate the path the policy takes. One policy arena in which this is particularly visible is in charter school policy. In brief (though even defining charter schools is value-laden), charter schools are publicly-funded schools that operate independently of traditional public government rules and regulations. In other words, they are publicly-funded, but privately-managed.

As noted by Garcia (2010), "Where one stands on charter schools is a matter of perspective. They have demonstrated the paradoxical capacity of being nearly all things to all people" (p. 33). While charter school research thus far has largely focused on the capacity of charter schools to impact student outcomes such as student achievement (for a comprehensive review, see Berends, Watral, Teasley, and Nicotera, 2008), the definition of charter schools may be at least as equally important to understand. To the extent that the political character of charter schools ("where one stands") is linked to popular conceptions of what charter schools mean, understanding both the outcome potentials of charter schools *and* ideological connections of charter schools seems imperative.

Still, without this research, charter policy has been consistently on the move throughout history. The 2015-16 school year marked the 25th anniversary of charter schools in the United States. In 1991, Minnesota passed the first charter school law and in the next year, had only one operating charter school (Wohlstetter, 2013). By the 2003-04 school year, 39 states (including the District of Columbia) had a total of 2,977 charter schools serving over 780,000 students. Student enrollment in charter schools nearly tripled over the next ten years and as of the 2013-14 school year, there were over 6,400 charter schools serving over 2.5 million students in 41 states.[1]

Recently, in September 2015, Washington state's Supreme Court became the first state to rule that state-funded charter schools are unconstitutional (Brown, 2015). After proceedings and arguments that lasted over a year, the high court reasoned with a 6-3 vote that because charters are not governed by elected boards accountable to voters as a whole, they did not truly count as "common schools" and were not eligible for taxpayer funding (Brown, 2015; "Washington charter school law rules unconstitutional by state's high court," 2015). This decision

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[1] All raw charter school counts and enrollments were calculated by the author from school universe data from the Common Core of Data.

counteracted Washington's original 2012 charter school law, which was rejected three times by voters before finally passing (Brown, 2015). Especially in light of the fact that the state of Washington was already in contempt of court over the legislature's failure to submit a plan to fully fund traditional public schools by 2018 (Santos, 2016), questions about whether charters deserved public funding were front and center.

According to Washington's Chief Justice Barbara Madsen, "Whether charter schools would enhance our state's public school system or appropriately address perceived shortcomings of that system are issues for the legislature and voters. The issue for the courts is what are the requirements of the Constitution" ("Washington charter school law rules unconstitutional by state's high court," 2015). In other words, the merits of charters were not on trial. Instead, the question for the court was about definition. What is a charter school, and does that definition comport with how we as a society believe public education should look? Whether or not charters are *effective* was not under consideration. This alternative focus is also highlighted by scholars Lubienski and Weitzel (2010a) in their book, *The Charter School Experiment: Expectations, Evidence, and Implications*:

> In an age where policy makers require 'data-driven decision-making,' a focus on 'what works,' and the use of 'scientifically based research' in advancing school reform, one would expect that policy makers drew on evidence of charter school effects in advancing the movements. However, a retrospective analysis of the evidence available at the time indicates that information on program effectiveness did not seem to be the primary driver of charter school expansion. Instead, policy makers appear to have drawn on other justifications regarding the theoretical

potential of charter schools in embracing this model—and still do today"

(Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010a, p. 26)

As such, it seems to be the case that the inclusion of research into the policymaking process, as it stands now, would require some understanding of what it is that charters mean to citizens and policymakers. What theoretical potentials are under consideration when charter school policy is the target of discussion? While there has been ample scholarly literature that outlines, at a rhetorical level, the ways in which the United States has treated charter school policy, there is little empirical evidence on this point.

In this dissertation, I investigate the deeper dimensions of charter school politics. In my first paper, I draw on the experiences of East Nashville. A 2014 proposal to expand school choice policies in East Nashville generated, among other things, two opposing social movements for and against the proposal, respectively. Clashes such as the ones in East Nashville are not uncommon in the school choice arena, but there is not much extant research empirically investigating the perspectives that underlie this conflict. In this study, I investigate using qualitative approaches the conflict in East Nashville in order to gain a better understanding of the meanings that distinguished the two social movements. I find consistent themes across interviewees that suggest significant differences in perspectives on choice and charter schools, including perspectives on the role of teachers and leaders, community, and no-excuses environments. However, I also find important points of commonality, including opinions on the current state of schooling and issues with the democratic procedures (or lack thereof) of the policymaking process.

My second paper looks at the media. To understand the ideologies connected to charter schools, I conduct a probabilistic topic modeling study, using correlated topic models, of over

300,000 newspaper articles published in the United States that mention charter schools from 1990 through 2016. Through this analysis, I find evidence of specific topics that have been varyingly associated with charter school discussions throughout history. First, in earlier years, there was significant emphasis on the publicness of charter schools and their independence from the public system. Later, there was more of an emphasis on the financial resources aspect of charter school policy. My results have important implications for future research directions that may be important to address in connection to the concerns that exist in public ideology.

Finally, I take a look at the psychological process of information seeking. Theories of motivated reasoning suggest that the information people seek out may be affected by prior motivations. Whether this is the case is especially critical to understand in education policy as researchers attempt to change the information landscape. Using an information search experiment inspired by methods from political psychology, I test whether (a) different types of information are more interesting to people than others, (b) different types of people differentially seek out information, and (c) different attitudes and behaviors predict attitude changes. I find evidence that people tend to seek out pro-attitudinal information and that people's search behaviors differ by ideology and schooling background. In addition, people of different identifications differentially change attitudes, and information on student achievement was the most influential for changing attitudes. The results have important implications for researchers

II. School Choice and Charter School Policy Advocacy in East Nashville

On September 9, 2014, Metro Nashville Public Schools Superintendent Jesse Register proposed to the district school board a series of policy reforms aimed at addressing disparities in access to quality schools in East Nashville. This proposal mentioned several different strategies, including: wrap-around services for students, converting some schools to charters for turnaround, and offering school choice to parents. In a setup that Register called the "third way," he pushed for collaboration between Metro schools and the local charter organizations in order to convert East Nashville into a school choice zone (Garrison, 2014; MNPS Board of Education, 2014b; Zelinski, 2014a). This proposal ignited a social flame that resulted in a series of fairly public confrontations between supporters and detractors. On October 14, 2014, two school board meetings later, the 215 maximum occupancy room was flooded with people wanting to offer their voice to this debate, including those in opposition to the proposal who were pushing for increased community involvement, supporters who wanted to ensure that students are given choice, and calls from all for the board to address achievement gaps in East Nashville's struggling schools (Boucher, 2014a; MNPS Board of Education, 2014a). Two major groups emerged as the main protagonists in this story: East Nashville United (in opposition to the proposal) and East Nashville Believes (in support of the proposal) (Boucher, 2014b; Cavendish, 2014; Rizzone & Rizzone, 2014; Zelinski, 2014b).

Conflicts such as this one are not particularly uncommon when the issues at hand are charter schools and choice. To the extent that we believe that the democratic involvement of local stakeholders is an important part of education policymaking, we might expect that resolving the conflicts between those stakeholders is an important step in creating policy change. However, this resolution requires understanding the positions of the involved parties. Despite

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their emergence out of a fairly concrete event, the nature of the two organizations – East Nashville United and East Nashville Believes – is not immediately clear or understood by all. For example, as former East Nashville Believes leader Katie Rizzone once noted, "This is not a charter organization. We are a group of parents who acknowledge the effectiveness of charters and believe they should be included, but we embrace all schools and any quality school that is accessible to all" (Boucher, 2014b, para. 12). However, media on the subject consistently frame the conflict with a spotlight on charter policy by characterizing the debates as centering on charter policy issues (Cavendish, 2014). This study finds that while the two groups do indeed make some arguments in line with what seem like the most prominent arguments for and against choice in the broader literature, there are also significant departures that these two groups take from the more popular narrative surrounding school choice. In order to gain this clarity, this study explored the following questions through a case study: How do participants in East Nashville Believes and East Nashville United define the reasons for their activism? What meanings do they attach to the reasons at the bases of their actions? What rationales do participants across the two groups share, and where do their rationales differ?

The Politics of Choice and Charters

What would we expect to see as prevalent themes in the conflict in East Nashville? The broader political landscape surrounding choice and charters might offer some clues here. In this section, I review the broad politics of these reforms. I conclude with implications for local community debate.

Charter Schools: A Contested History

One basic rationale for charter school policy is that of creating more options and flexibility (Wohlstetter, Smith, & Farrell, 2013). There are various reasons why charter school advocates see options and flexibility as desirable qualities of an education system. First is the idea that charter schools, where the school has more independence, give educators the space and freedom to be innovative about ways to deliver quality education. It was this reasoning that was contained in "Education by Charter: Restructuring School Districts," which was penned by Ray Buddhe from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst as one of the first papers discussing charter schooling as a strategy for school reform in the United States (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010b; Murphy & Shiffman, 2002; Wohlstetter et al., 2013). It was this idea that also inspired Al Shankar, then-president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), to endorse the charter school movement in 1988 (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010b). Shankar saw charters as offering opportunities for testing new methods for enhancing student learning (Grier-Reed & Poch, 2012). Not only did Al Shankar himself endorse charter schools, but they were also endorsed by the majority of members at the 70th convention of the AFT (Murphy & Shiffman, 2002) At this stage in history, charters were seen as a way to empower existing teachers. Their proposal aligned with experiments that were being undertaken throughout the 1980s in deregulation policy towards allowing schools to exercise flexibility and better serve their students' needs (Wohlstetter et al., 2013). In 1991, progressives and conservatives together proposed and passed the first state charter school legislation in Minnesota. Along with support from market enthusiasts, teachers unions, alternative educators, and religious conservatives, this movement also gained the endorsement of the Minnesota Citizens League, who put out the slogan

"Chartered Schools = Choices for Educators + Quality for all Students" in the late 1980s (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010b; Wohlstetter et al., 2013).

For several years and presidential administrations, charters have also been an integral part of federal education plans. The Clinton administration included a charter school grant program in the 1994 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) under a Democrat-led Congress and increased this grant program over six-fold in 1999 under a Republican-led Congress. President George W. Bush's administration produced No Child Left Behind (NCLB), another reauthorization of ESEA, which included charter schools as an effective remedy option for districts and states to pursue when faced with failing schools (Murphy & Shiffman, 2002). Most recently, the Obama administration also expressed its support for charters. Just before opening state applications to the $4.35 billion 2009 Race to the Top grant program, then Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced that limits on the growth and establishment of charter schools could jeopardize states' chances of being awarded the funds (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

The early days of choice and charter school policy advocacy were surprisingly and notably bipartisan in the midst of a generally contentious policy arena (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010b; Wohlstetter et al., 2013). Those ideologically left of center liked charters for offering choice to families without being a voucher program, while those right of center liked acclimating people to ideas of choice more broadly (Miron, 2008; Spring, 2002). According to Bulkley (2005), cultural conservatives saw charters as a way to increase parental control over the values their children were taught while also seeing them as a way to restructure schooling. Meanwhile, Democrats were attracted to charters for being viable choices and introducing competition without actually privatizing schooling through vouchers.

The early broad support was not to last, however, as history moved forward and charter schools became an object of political life and, simultaneously, political contention. Today, support for charter schools is more polarized not only to the extent that there is a diversity of perspectives on charter schools, but also that splits on charter school perspectives often accompany lines between other classes of social groupings. Pro-charter groups often include: local dissatisfied parents, community-based organization, national advocacy organizations, state charter associations, business and real-estate leaders, faith-based organizations, institutions of higher education, foundations and philanthropists, and workforce development agencies. Anti-charter groups, conversely, often include: teachers unions, school boards, local administrators, non-certified school employees, sports and public school system support groups, and parent teacher associations (Kirst & Wirt, 2009).

In addition, despite early bipartisan support, there is still some evidence that there are ideological divides between liberals and conservatives and between parties on charter school policy. Clinton & Richardson (2015) found that the content of state charter school policy could be predicted by the ideological median point of state legislative chambers, as well as partisanship of governors. Similarly, among all tested personal characteristics, Blissett & Alsbury (2016) found that a school board member's ideological identity (e.g., conservative) was the strongest predictor of that board members' perspective on charter schools. That said, differences between pro-charter and anti-charter advocates may be much less severe than assumed and are possibly a result of sociopolitical factors like differences in language and history, misreading of positions as characterized by most extreme members, and a perception that the opposing sides are advocating for something that hurts children (Hill, Rainey, & Rotherham, 2006).

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School Choice: Markets and Opportunity

As noted by Fusarelli (2003), "Few educational reform proposals generate as much vitriolic rhetoric or outright hostility as proposals for school choice…Political battles over school choice are viewed as life-or-death struggles for the soul of American education" (Fusarelli, 2003, p. 1). Vouchers were the first battleground for school choice in the United States. First proposed by Milton Friedman in 1966, the idea of school choice through vouchers has been highly contested throughout time (Noll, 1991). From 1966 to 1999, vouchers were put on public ballots 22 times and were defeated in all but one case (Wolfe, 2002). In particular, the ideas were supported by a new coalition referred to by Carl (1994) as the "New Right": a joining of neoliberals and neoconservatives interested in promoting market ideals (Scott, Lubienski, & DeBray-Pelot, 2008). The market-based arguments for choice were again pushed by Chubb and Moe in 1990 with their publication, *Politics, Markets, and American Schools*, which avoided the term "vouchers" and garnered substantial support within the Republican party (Viteritti, 2003). Partially because of the contested history surrounding voucher proposals, it has been hard to settle the debate on school choice along partisan lines, and in some ways, the inclusion of school choice as a sanction option in No Child Left Behind might be viewed as a compromise on the issue (Scott et al., 2008).

As noted, from the beginning, charter school policy has been linked to school choice and open enrollment policies and in many cases, charter schools are seen as a version of choice (Cookson, 1994; Mintrom, 2000), with other versions including vouchers, private schools, and tax plans (Fusarelli, 2003). Many definitional justifications for school choice rely on the argument that families are best and most morally fit to choose the educational paths for their children. Charter schools are seen as a way to increase the variety of options available such that

people can gain access to schools that uniquely fit their needs. The responsibility for determining the best education for a child is seen as the role of the family and, more importantly, not the government (Kane, 1992). This responsibility, in the autonomy-driven view, is a matter of justice, as exemplified by the following quote.

> The first reason to have a market-based or choice system is that it is consistent with the value system of our nation. We wouldn't tolerate for a moment the idea of the government assigning us our jobs, newspapers, or colleges; neither should we tolerate government assignment of our children to elementary schools.
>
> (DuPont, 1994, p. 126)

To proponents, choice is seen as a liberating act, meant to change the educational landscape into a market of choices for families. Not only that, but choice was seen, in later years, as way of extending opportunities, currently only available to the rich, to all (Nelson, Palonsky, & Carlson, 1990). In this view, often, opponents of choice are seen as being paralyzed by fear of change and a misplaced sense of content with the status quo (Godwin & Kemerer, 2002).

Opponents, in certain circles, see choice as a part of a neoliberal agenda with the mission of privatizing education, where charters, as privately-managed schools governed by the public, are cynically meant to "demonstrate the wonders of educational competitions where the invisible hand will then guide everyone closer to educational success" (Blacker, 2013, p. 34). The concern for opponents in this regard is that the decentralization of management through choice and, relatedly, charter school policy implementation, opens the doors for the unequal treatment of the already disadvantaged (Blacker, 2013). In addition, there is significant concern that choice exacerbates segregation along socioeconomic lines, especially because not all families have the same realistic access to choice (Nelson et al., 1990). Who, also, should be considered a choice?

Choice opponents have periodically been concerned with the question of common values and the extension of choice options to religious and other private schools (Nelson et al., 1990; Noll, 1991). Lastly, there are questions about the extent of the de-accountability of choice schools that should exist (Godwin & Kemerer, 2002).

Translations to Local Debate

What should we expect to be the issues of contention on the ground, within communities? Overall, major themes in the debates over school choice and charter schools have included the goals of market efficiency and the extension of opportunity. As such, we might expect local debates to also focus on these issues. However, while the narrative painted at the national level, at a broad scale, may be informative for understanding the kinds of issues that may be present in individuals' minds as they debate policy, there are reasons why we might also expect certain mismatches between national and local discussions. Given the sheer number of local communities that exist and their diversity, it is difficult to make generalizations about what any particular political debate may look like (Dye, 1981).

As noted by Oliver, Ha, and Callen (2012), models explaining national politics are often ill-suited to explain local politics. Local community issues tend to be intimate affairs involving engaged, informed, long-term residents and homeowners. They are less likely to be highly ideological because of geographic ideological segregation, and they tend to be focused on issues that occur in a particular time and space (Oliver et al., 2012). Instead, local conflicts may tend to originate along other forms of human diversity. James Coleman outlines several stages to community conflict, including an exposition starting with a single issue, an expansion of the issue domain as people bring up suppressed problems they see with their opponents, and a final

divergence of the conflict from the issues originally at hand (Dye, 1981). As such, we might

expect the issues in East Nashville to land quite far from the issues we consider central to the

school choice debate.

Still, it is important to understand these local debates. The governance of education, as it

is not mentioned in the Constitution, falls to states and communities. In particular, decisions

about school choice are often left to local decision-makers. To the extent that these decision-

makers have an investment in serving the interests of the public, the need to understand the

dynamics of local politics around school choice is a practical reality. In addition, for the reasons I

have mentioned, assuming that local politics take on the same shape as national politics may lead

one in the wrong direction.

Thus far, I have discussed inquiry into local politics absent of any consideration of

political conflict. It is often the case that there is more than one perspective present in a

community to be considered, and the resolution of policy will need to incorporate one

perspective or the other (or both). Given the likelihood of there being winners and losers in the

policy debate, there is the potential for significant conflict to arise. Work on conflict

distinguishes between task and relationship conflict. Task conflict refers to conflicts over ideas

about shared projects and administrative details. Relationship conflict refers to differences in

personalities and clashes over relationships (De Dreu and Weingart, 2003). This distinction is

similar to the distinction drawn between substantive and affective conflict, respectively, by

Pelled (1996). Not all kinds of conflict, however, are bad. Amason (1996) found that cognitive

(i.e., substantive) conflict increases decision quality, decision understanding, and affective

acceptance. Still, it is important to note that "conflict often turns out to be like Pandora's box;

once released, its forces can become uncontrollable and potentially damaging" (Amason, 1996, p. 138). In other words, conflicts over ideas can often turn into conflicts in personality.

As such, to the extent that the peaceful resolution of conflict is a goal, it is important in the investigation of community politics to consider not only the differing perspectives, but also the ways in which those with differing perspectives view and treat each other. This argument is similar to the one made by Hetherington and Rudolph (2015), who state in their investigation of the polarization of the American electorate, that "a key reason for disagreement on issues across party lines in the electorate is the deep dislike and distrust that partisans have of government when the other party runs it" (Hetherington & Rudolph, 2015, p. 214). In this study, thus, while the method allows for great flexibility on the part of qualitative participants in terms of what they choose to discuss, I organize their thoughts into two large buckets: those dealing with their respective ideas about the policy situation, and those dealing with their perspectives on the politics and each other.

The Nashville/East Nashville Context

Located just east of downtown Nashville, the East Nashville community sits in a bend of the Cumberland River, bounded by I-65, I-24/40, and Briley Parkway to the northwest and north. Overall, it is 21 square miles in terms of total land area, and in the 2012 American Community Survey, East Nashville had 58,571 residents, amounting to 9.3% of the total Nashville population (Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County Planning Commission, 2015). The story of East Nashville as a neighborhood (made of smaller neighborhoods) as it is known today can largely be traced to the revitalization efforts that occurred after the damage caused by a tornado in 1998 (Kreyling, 2005). The city has experienced significant gentrification over time, though the extent

of the gentrification differs by region (Miller, 2015). Today, the region is arguably one of

Nashville's most urban areas with a mixture of housing types from single- and two-family

detached homes to accessory dwelling units, townhouses and small-scale stacked flats

(Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County Planning Commission, 2015). It is known as a

"trendy" part of town for Nashvillians (Bliss, 2016). It hosts a variety of types of people and has

a particularly large concentration of artists and entrepreneurs. Many buildings have been

converted to art galleries, restaurants, bars, and incubator spaces for small businesses

(Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County Planning Commission, 2015).

Politically, Nashville itself, like many urban areas, trends more Democratic than its

Republican surroundings (Woods, n.d.). Based on the percent of the city that voted liberal in the

2012 presidential election, Nashville ranks as one of the most liberal cities in Tennessee (White,

2016). In this election, Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama won 58.5% of the votes

in Davidson county (the Metropolitan Nashville county). In addition, this county sent a

Democratic candidate to the House of Representatives in each of the last five congressional

elections (Frohlich & Kent, 2016). Within Nashville itself, the East Nashville community is often

discussed as a liberal haven. Congressional district 51, which encompasses downtown and most

of East Nashville, has been called "a Democratic breeding ground that may contain the city's

highest per-capita population of left-leaning political strivers" (Hale, 2014). This social and

political context is important to this study, as many school choice debates have been popularly

described as operating along traditional liberal/conservative lines. However, what might the

debate look like in an environment where most people identify as liberal? It may be the case

that traditional arguments aligning with American political ideologies would not be as relevant.

Given its historic position as a part of the Civil Rights Movements in the south (Houston, 2012), Nashville has been a prominent player in national policy discussions about desegregation and choice (Goldring & Smrekar, 2002). In the same year as the community-changing tornado, Nashville was granted unitary status, ending decades of cross-town busing that had the aim of desegregating schools. After this change, student assignment was organized into a system of clustered feeder patterns with two main goals: to limit the distance between home and school, and to limit the number of schools that a student has to attend during their time in the district. It is important to note that the new organization also included increased choice options, which primarily included magnet schools, enhanced option schools, design center programs, and laboratory schools (Goldring, Cohen-Vogel, Smrekar, & Taylor, 2006; Goldring & Smrekar, 2002). These different types of schools all served different purposes. Originally, during desegregation, magnet schools were placed in inner city neighborhoods and were meant to attract white parents and students. Under unitary status, the role of magnets slightly changed, where they now are meant to provide choice options and maintain voluntary integration. In Nashville, there are two types of magnets: those with admissions criteria and those that are academically selective. Cluster design centers, like magnet schools, have specialized programs and voluntary enrollment. Unlike magnets, however, they are designed to meet the needs of a particular cluster. The main features of enhanced option schools, which were funded in the unitary status plan, include smaller class sizes and an extended school year. In addition, they are meant to be provide services to neighborhoods and surrounding communities such as early childhood education, after school care, social services, and homework help.

The most important takeaway from this history is that to an extent, even before Jesse Register's announcement, Nashville already had a system of choice. There is an important

implication of this policy content. This context makes it such that people's perceptions of choice may not be simply based on conjecture and prediction, but also direct experience with a choice system. This availability of information through actual observation makes this story less about the introduction of choice into a choice-less environment and more about the expression of choice opinions by those who have already had a chance to witness what choice does. In addition, the existence of the choice system beforehand provided for there to be time in which people could already form social attachments to the various sectors involved in choice in Nashville. Rather than having to form their opinions on choice when Jesse Register made his announcement, many people likely have already formed affiliations with different positions by virtue of the choices they have had to make already.

Participants and Method

A unique benefit of the East Nashville context in terms of understanding education policy debate is that much of the conflict can be tied to a specific series of events, starting with Jesse Register's announcement in early September 2014. Rather than investigating people's attachments to charter school advocacy in abstract, I am able to investigate this attachment in a context that is rooted in a very concrete set of experiences. By comparing people's different perspectives on the same target, I can better isolate those meanings that participants share across perspectives and where meanings differ. To investigate these meanings, I employed a qualitative case study approach in which I conducted a series of interviews with participants in the two social movements in question, East Nashville Believes and East Nashville United.

In order to understand these questions, I make use of principles from interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). The goal of IPA is to investigate, in depth, how participants

make sense of a particular experience. In other words, the goal is to understand what it means to "take their side" in a reflexive manner, which is particularly important for studying social movement actors (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The main methodological difference between IPA and more traditional methods of qualitative analysis is the implementation of a double hermeneutic. Hermeneutics, generally, presumes that the translation of a person's interpretation is contingent on the mind-set of the person and their state in communicating that interpretation. As such, IPA emphasizes that the researcher must ask themselves two consistent questions to truly understand someone's perspective. First, what is this person communicating about their experience? Second, in recognizing the active nature of the communication being undertaken by both the participant and the researcher, what is the person trying to do in their communication (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012)? A very concrete example of where this perspective is important is in the study of social movements, where interviewing advocates may involve not only them simply communicating their perspectives, but also communicating the virtue of their perspective. The double hermeneutic of IPA pays close attention to this detail and uses it as a part of its investigation, rather than treating it as a limitation. Practically, as discussed below, this necessitates an iterative theme-finding process during the analysis stage of the study (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Because of the deep and close attention paid to the whole context, IPA studies are primarily idiographic and tend to case study approaches with small sample sizes. IPA is a subfield of qualitative psychology, primarily present in health psychology. In one example, Hamill, Carson, & Dorahy (2009) investigate the psychosocial adjustment of amputees after their procedures. The authors interview eight prosthetic clinic patients using semi-structured formats and were able to identify common processes of identity renegotiation undertaken by the

individuals after their amputations. IPA, however, has also made some inroads into non-health-related social sciences. In order to investigate the processes through which entrepreneurs with failed ventures recover and learn from said failure, Cope (2011) interviews eight purposively-chosen entrepreneurs and finds that for these individuals, failure served as a mechanism through which they learned higher-level concepts about entrepreneurship beyond general reflection on their own abilities and ideas.

Overall, I found the participants through a combination of convenience and snowball sampling. I identified potential interviewees from names mentioned in news articles written in the Tennesseean (Boucher, 2014a, 2014b; Zelinski, 2014b) and contacted them via social media and email, as possible. In addition, I received several names from individuals who were active in Nashville school politics discussions on Twitter. Finally, in my early interviews, I asked for suggestions of others to interview from the participants themselves. For all contacts, I only attempted to reach them at most three times. In total, I conducted interviews with ten individuals, five from each of the two different groups. Interviews lasted typically no longer than an hour. Most interviews were conducted in various coffee shops in and around Nashville, and three were conducted over the phone. I allowed the interviewees to set the time and place.

All interviews were only semi-structured and began with only one consistent prompt in which I asked participants to explain how they came to be involved with their specific movements. The purpose of this structure (or lack thereof) was to allow the participants, as much as possible, to freely associate concepts as they saw them to be relevant. This can be an important decision for IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2008). As participants talked, I probed them on their reasoning for specific actions and beliefs. In particular, I made sure to consistently clarify with interviewees their positions as they explained their participation and their reasons for doing

so. I also assured and reminded participants, if they expressed any criticisms of their own self-perceived rambling, that I was interested in discussing whatever they felt was important. It is important to note that these interviews were often quite emotional, as I discuss further in the discussion of my results. As such, I was occasionally faced with a situation in which the participant was in a possibly detrimentally negative emotional space. In these instances, I acknowledged the participants' current emotions and intentionally shifted the conversation to focus on the more positive aspects of their narratives. This intentional shifting of conversation was the exception, however, and not the rule, and thus I do not expect it to have biased my results in any notable way.

Almost all of the participants were parents of children either in or about to be in Metro Nashville public schools. Their involvement with their own groups varied, with some being very central to the organization of the group, and some having only participated in a couple of events. Across the two groups, the average level of participation was equal. The majority presented as women, and most presented as white. In an effort to gather the most useful information, participants were informed that all published material would be written as agnostic on the subject of school choice in East Nashville and that the purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of the diverse perspectives that exist.

With the interview transcripts, I analyzed the data using a multi-step procedure as outlined by Smith and Osborn (2008). First, within each interview, I read and re-read the transcript to become intimate with the case, highlighting places where the interviewee was communicating a specific argument or belief. Through my iterative process, I found that these beliefs often repeated themselves throughout the transcripts, and as such, I kept a record within each transcript of unique beliefs communicated by the participants. I then re-read the transcript

to confirm that the final list of perspectives accurately reflected what the participants actually said, as a check on my own synthesis. These cleaned beliefs, summarized as a list of themes, were typically 6-12 items long. Within each social movement's participants, I created a master-theme list by organizing the themes of the participants into larger categories. Finally, as presented in this manuscript, I compare and contrasted the master-theme list from East Nashville Believes to the one from East Nashville United.

It is important to note that this study is designed to investigate a certain set of research questions within a very specific context. What happened in East Nashville was likely unique in many ways, and what I found here is only meant to be suggestive of what is possible elsewhere. Further deductive research will be necessary to validate these results. Beyond this general comment on inductive research, it is also important to note that the events in East Nashville occurred more than two years ago, and as such, all evaluations constructed by the participants are retrospective and likely to be filtered through a process of remembering.

Results: Views on the Policy

The participants of East Nashville United ("United") and East Nashville Believes ("Believes") discussed two large classes of beliefs. First were those beliefs related to the proposed policies from Dr. Register. Second were those beliefs related to the politics of the situation. I separate my discussion of those results accordingly. I discuss in this section common themes among participants, within groups, about the policies at hand. While there was significant heterogeneity among participants,[2] clear themes emerged within the groups that formed distinct

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[2] The use of the word "participants" as I discuss results refers to their participation in the interview, not their participation in their respective movement.

policy positions. All statements made in this section are accounts as communicated by participants.

Believes Beliefs: Teachers and Leaders Making a Difference

Overall, participants in East Nashville Believes remained active in the movement because of their personal connection with the charter school sector, either by their own children's enrollment in charter schools or their relationships with others involved in the charter school/choice discussion.

Sense of urgency. All participants spent a significant amount of time expressing the urgency with which they felt we as a society should be addressing what they perceived as a failing school system. They cited examples of poor conditions and inequities and, consistently, noted a certain amount of frustration with the seeming dispassionate approach of the system in general towards addressing the problems that exist. One participant noted that,

> "I too [previously] bought into the idea that, you know, it's poverty, it's all these historical issues that schools can't possibly address, but I can see that in fact, some schools are addressing them with success. And so if that can happen in one school for one kid and we can see that, why aren't we moving at warp speed to make that happen in every single school?"

Here, the participant was expressing an admitted previous alignment with a perceived popular ideology that says that poverty is an ultimate barrier to children's education and that without addressing poverty first, it is impossible to fully educate a child. However, upon seeing examples of schools that were surmounting issues of poverty and still producing strong results

for all children, this participant changed their perspective and now wonders why other schools are not replicating this success.

In general, these participants felt that change should be happening faster: "the needle isn't moving as fast as I think it should be moving…I think the problem is that the people making those decisions don't feel that disaster because it's not happening to their kids." Another said, passionately, "Well, if it's broken, we've got to fix it, and it's a – you know, the system is broken. You know, it's – it's systematically failing not just children, but generations of families, and it's got to stop. It's got to stop." There was a uniform mentality that the current system of education is deplorably broken and that given the extremity of the disaster, policymakers should be working with much swifter urgency than they were.

East Nashville already had a system of choice, to an extent, before Dr. Register's announcement. Participants in Believes frequently explained how the current system primarily benefits those with greater means and more ability to take advantage of choice, namely families with financial and transportation resources. They often referred to existing disparities in the current educational system: "I don't trust the argument that the public – like the government is going to get it together, because they've never – they've never had the interests of like, poor, brown-skinned people as their priority." Participants noted that "in the current system, someone with economic means has inherent choice," and that therefore not addressing the differential access people have to choice by *expanding* choice options was "maintaining the status quo, just kind of, you know, maintained white privilege." Choice already existed, to interviewees, for those with greater means, a social privilege that was particularly coincident with racial privileges and groupings, and leveling the playing field meant increasing access to choices for everyone.

Teachers and school leaders as major resources. Although they did not claim to be completely pro-charter, participants did note that they felt that the charter sector in East Nashville was exemplifying some of the higher performance that they would like to see in schools generally. When probed about the types of qualitative differences that exist between charter schools and traditional public schools, participants referred primarily to the quality and organization of the teachers and principals: "It's the adults in the school that I feel make the biggest difference." In addition, "the job of education is not the job of the peers. It's the job of the adults in the school. And so since I could see now that there were adults in leadership positions and teachers that were making that happen, I just felt like this is a no-brainer." Another said that "I think finding good leaders and finding good teachers is problem number one." The primary responsibility for education was attributed to the adults within schools.

While noting the significant social barriers that often make it more difficult for less advantaged populations to succeed, Believes participants seemed to hold the strong belief that these social barriers can be overcome within schools by staff who hold all students to high expectations. One attributed the success of East Nashville's charter schools to the fact that "they have a commitment that every child will make huge gains." Another participant said,

> "I want my child to go to a school where every child, regardless of their race, their
> income, their background – they're all held to the same standard, they're all
> pushed to excel, they, you know, have the same high expectations…And yes, I
> feel like we need to solve all of those social issues, but I think we can't wait to
> solve those issues before we say, 'No, these kids can learn, we can give them
> what they need, we can close that gap'…I'm not saying those aren't barriers, but I

still feel like, no matter where a child comes from, it's our job to educate them so

that they're no longer in that situation when they're an adult."

This participant saw schools, in the words of Horace Mann, as the "great equalizer" not just in their capacity, but also in their responsibility. Not only was there evidence that charter schools were able to level the playing field, but this commitment to doing so is a core responsibility of schools to which all schools should strive.

Success comes from autonomy. Why do charter schools have more of an ability to succeed? According to Believes participants, the major answer is that charter schools are given more autonomy to manage their staff: "It seems like the charters have more freedom to sort of create their own personnel." In addition, autonomy gives charter schools the ability to target their services and programs to the students who need it. According to another participant, "I don't think every school should look the same…I think our schools should be – should be allowed flexibility with curriculum." Again, ultimate trust and responsibility was given to the adults in the schools who, to participants, should be given the latitude to do what they feel is right to address the needs of individual students.

United Beliefs: Community are the Foundation

In contrast to participants in East Nashville Believes, participants in East Nashville United were much more concerned with neighborhoods and communities as a unit of focus. Most had been involved with local neighborhood and community organizations and groups before East Nashville United. While views on charter schools and school choice were even more heterogeneous within this group, interestingly, there were still some consistent views.

Communities as key. In traditional public school systems, local schools and school feeder patterns can often be organizing forces in the communities within which they reside: "you have neighborhoods that are arranged in a certain way, you have elementary schools that go to middle, that go to high school, so everything is structured around that." To participants in United, these communities formed around schools are extremely important and are valuable to people's way of life. Further, many of these local communities, according to United participants, were currently being maintained by engaged residents and families, and they felt that charters and choice systems fundamentally disrupt and dissolve these community systems. According to one participant, "people ought to be able to walk their kid to the school down the street." This sense of the importance of community was noted by another participant in a way that encapsulates many of the interviewees' perspectives.

> "These communities that are built around schools are very important to people, and they – sometimes, you know, a family – individuals and families pour a tremendous amount of their time and energy and resources into schools as a way of building community, as a way of connecting with a greater cause, and that has to be treated with a lot of respect, and there's a fragility to that, and if you start messing with that community in a way that is disrespectful, which I felt like Dr. Register's announcement was very disrespectful, then it undermines other people coming forward to be involved in the community, be involved in wanting to work with the schools, because nobody wants to see their work undone and nobody wants to see their family invested in a school community and have that community just torn asunder because it fits somebody else's greater vision."

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This participant, along with others, communicated that there was already significant work being put into community schools by parents and community members. This collective work seemed very important to a collective identity that these people had as a community. As such, the proposal to expand choice options, to these members, felt like an affront to their work and was a great sign of disrespect.

To United participants, communities are built around schools and "to build communities with schools as a part of those communities…you can't leave anybody behind." This sentiment of being left behind was echoed by others, including another participant who said "everyone would be calling up to certain schools, and the schools that are somewhat struggling or have a reputation of being struggling would be totally left behind, and it would sort of make that problem worse." As summarized by another, "we're making a choice to leave some behind." This consequence of expanding choice was endemic to the policy option, and to United participants, it was morally objectionable.

Beyond the harm that this does to communities, according to United participants, this does direct harm to schools. As opposed to Believes participants, who viewed teachers and leaders as key resources, United participants saw engaged families are a core resource to schools and a major factor in their success. Charters, by virtue of their enrollment practices, would take students with the most engaged parents away from traditional public schools. This engagement, whether that be directly through volunteering or indirectly through at-home supports, was a key resource that United participants felt was at risk in Dr. Register's plan, as charters were "taking the interested parents and sucking them out." This interest could involve joining parent groups, donations, or connections, which allows for the environment of the school to change. In terms of at-home supports, one participant said, "That doesn't mean those parents can even give one

minute of their time to the school, to volunteer or be Mrs. PTA. But at home, they care very much about the educational outcome of that child, and that matters a lot." Another participant corroborated this worry, stating that "the parents are still making an active choice, and they don't measure that. The stats don't measure how much of a difference a parent – just having a parent that makes – that is able to make an active choice has on the effects of that kid doing well." The participants also spoke of this in broader terms:

> "…we believe that you have to be a part of the change you want to see, and if middle class people, people with gifted kids, people with means and understanding move out of high poverty, less than stellar academic programs, then they're just going to get worse, and they're going to die an ugly, painful death, and the kids with them, and the communities on top of that."

Like with the responses of Believes participants, we see here the significant theme of responsibility. However, a critical difference is that the responsibility for making schools better lies with the community that can support those schools. In particular, this participant felt that the exit of people who could be a part of that supportive community leads to the school's demise.

Resistance of charter environments. In regards to charter schools themselves, participants all noted that they did not have a good impression of the environment of charter schools. Supported by things they had witnessed when visiting or observing schools ("it felt like a military academy to me"), United participants often viewed charter schools as more tightly controlling children's behavior in a "militaristic" environment: "You know, you act up: demerit, demerit, demerit." Another corroborated this hesitance surrounding "the no-excuses, the hard discipline, the what seemed to me to be a soul-sucking option for kids." This participant continued, "I don't want to see that kind of discipline around my kid. I don't want to see that

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kind of school environment around my kid, and I imagine I'm not the only person." After visiting a charter school, another participant said, "it has a very strong, controlled, military feel to it, and I just thought, 'I would never put my kid in a school like this, this is horrible.'" Charter schools represented a type of education that people did not find to be appropriate.

Choice increases segregation. To United participants, diversity in schools is very important, and current choice systems increase segregation because not everyone has equal access to choice. An expansion of the choice system, therefore, would exacerbate these problems and increase the segregation of the district. The major problem, as viewed my participants, was unequal access to transportation: "with creating sort of an all choice zone, I felt that would primarily benefit families who had their own car." Not only that, but choice gives people the chance to self-segregate when there is a set of "desirable" schools and a set of less desirable schools. One participant said, "if you don't design a system where it's easy to have everybody come together in one school, then people segregate into their own communities."

This was particularly problematic to United participants not just for equity reasons, but also because diversity was seen as a major resource for schools. As one participant noted, "it's much better for all children that you put a mixture of socioeconomic groups and a mixture of ethnicities together, and they all perform better." In other words, when you desegregate schools, "all boats will rise." (The naval metaphor was used several times across participants.)

Accountability for the district. Finally, a central political problem with charters and school choice, to United participants, is that it allows the district to remove itself, in terms of responsibility, from the ills of the system. They, like Believes participants, recognized the many shortcomings of the traditional public schools. However, they believed that the most appropriate action is to hold the district accountable and to "dig deep" into the issues and fix them, rather

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than abandoning the schools for another sector. Participants wanted to see the district "actually come into the school and do your due diligence about what's missing, what's broken." In this way, they were conveying that there needed to be more accountability. According to one participant, they were displeased when the district would make decisions to close schools

"without necessarily having a public accounting for why the schools are not doing well. What – what kind of supports – what have they – what have they been given? What have we tried to do to resolve that? Have we gotten new principals in? Have we – like, what has the district tried to do to resolve that? Is there anything the community could do to help support the school more?...I guess I just wanted to have more of an accounting of the [Metro Nashville Public Schools] administration about how long this school has been struggling."

Closing schools without this public accounting, to this participant, amounted to the district recusing itself from any responsibility for the problems that existed.

Comparisons

As noted above, the only consistent prompt given to all participants was a question about how they came to be involved with their respective groups. However, consistent themes still emerged in terms of the ideas that people wanted to discuss. To Believes participants, school choice seemed to be the central organizing principle, while charter schools were simply an example of the type of choices that make school choice worth it as a policy. To United participants, choice was also the main source of concern, but charter schools were an example of what could go wrong. Interestingly, a key difference emerged in terms of what major resource was important for the success of students. For Believes participants, that resource was teachers

and leaders. For United participants, it was engaged communities. There were, however, several points of commonality. First, both groups seemed to be concerned that current systems essentially only afforded choice to those with the means to take advantage of it. The solutions, however, differed because of the differing views on what the outcomes would look like. To participants in Believes, choice and charters were offering the only real solutions at the time, and as such, *expansion* of choice systems to extend access to those populations was the solution. To participants in United, charter systems were already dismantling communities and were not providing a type of education that they felt was appropriate, so any expansions of choice systems were objectionable. That all said, as discussed in the next section, the groups did express sympathy for each others' positions.

Distilling these above arguments, the two groups both had an interest in equity. Both groups were concerned about the means by which those from historically disadvantaged populations would be able to benefit from the current system. However, the solution to inequities, for Believes interviewees, was innovation as present in charter schooling. For United interviewees, this innovation was not a factor, and rather, they focused on competition as a threat. Lastly, there was an additional component of the discourse that has not yet been as discussed in the existing literature. According to the interview participants, the groups had fundamentally different foci and perspectives when it came to the actual educational content of charter schools, which exacerbated the differences in opinion regarding innovation and competition. Believes interviewees saw charter schools as holding all children to high standards regardless of social background, which was seen as the critical difference in approach that charter schools were taking. On the other hand, United interviewees discussed militaristic

environments within charter schools as major threats to what they viewed as appropriate education for children.

Results: Views on the Politics

To reiterate, all participants were initially only prompted to explain how they came to be involved with their respective movements. Beyond explaining their perspectives on the issues proposed by Dr. Register, however, all participants painted a picture of the political environment as well, including the goals of their own participation and what they viewed as perspectives of those that disagreed with them. In the following section, I split the discussion of these dimensions accordingly.

How the Movements Viewed Themselves

While media and even this study, thus far, have characterized the two groups as being pro- and anti-choice/charter, they did not see themselves that way. The motivations for mobilization were political in both cases, where they felt they were expressing a voice that had not yet been solicited or respected.

East Nashville Believes. First and foremost, Believes was a coalition formed as a countermovement to express minority voices. The backlash to Dr. Register's announcement was strong and swift, and to many in Believes, the content of the backlash felt like a direct attack on their choices and beliefs. This was largely due to the fact, as mentioned above, that Believes participants were largely involved because of very personal connections with the charter school system. They felt that much of discourse targeted them personally: "So I was very offended, you know, because these are my children that you are – you know, that they're angry about."

Believes was therefore formed as a way to express that there was an alternative voice in the community that supported, in broad strokes, choice and charters. One participant said, "It seemed like the most vocal people were against school choice, and we sort of wanted it to be known that there was a big population of us that were for it."

In the op-ed written by Ms. Rizzone, she noted that "This is not a charter organization." True to this sentiment, all Believes participants communicated that they did not necessarily believe in charter schools as an ultimate solution to the problems of the educational system. To them, charters in East Nashville just happened to be exhibiting the kinds of success that they thought should be supported: "I do also recognize not every kid is going to have parents that are going to be able to navigate to get them into a charter, so we don't want to leave those kids behind, but I just don't see another game in town right now, you know?" In referencing what needs to happen with East Nashville schools, another said, "It didn't necessarily have to be a charter school, but there was an urgent need for that school to, you know, change." According to participants, they were not so much concerned about whether or not charters were the solution, but rather that charters *in the East Nashville context at this time* seemed to be the best example available of what quality education should look like.

The goal of Believes, rather, seemed to be to keep charter schools as an option on the policy table and inform the community about what charter schools were:

> "That was part of what we wanted to do with East Nashville Believes, was to provide also like, an information – kind of be disseminating, work with non-profits to go out and inform parents who maybe didn't have ready access to that information – you know, get out how to sign up – how to – how to get – were trying to take people to tour schools that maybe couldn't drive there and they

needed transportation, let them know what schools they – how the schools were

doing in their neighborhood, kind of an education piece to it."

In this way, participants viewed themselves as democratizing the policy arena by giving

people more information about their options.

East Nashville United. United, according to participants, was somewhat divided in its

approach towards charter schools. This was well-known by the participants, and as such, they

mainly focused their advocacy on increasing community voices in the decision-making process.

Not only was this practical given the differences in opinion that existed, but it also seemed to be

one of the most major sources of frustration on that part of United participants. To them, this

announcement came "out of the blue" with no input from the community. According to one

participant, "It was all back room, closed doors, and that just, in and of itself, is entirely

objectionable to me, and I think that was the biggest issue for a lot of people." Another asked,

"How can you not talk to us before you make a decision like this?" Furthermore, not only did

United participants see the engagement of the community as a moral imperative, but they also

felt that it was practical: "And I think that that's where that on-the-ground community building

work is done, is that the best solutions really come from people that are living it." Indeed, this

function of providing voices for East Nashville parents was seen as a major part of the identity of

the East Nashville United movement:

> "I think we showed that East Nashville wasn't just the poor side of town that you
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> can just – you know, that we will stand up for our community. And it's a little
>
> different over there than other parts of town. East Nashville does have a real sense
>
> of community. We don't just care about ourselves. We care about our whole
>
> neighborhood, and I hope that stays the same."

Indeed, the district and Dr. Register decided to scale back their original proposal. This participant attributed that decision to their ability to prove the power of their community and show the consequences of tampering with the community without buy-in.

How the Movements Viewed Each Other

Participants also shared a significant amount of perspective on what they thought of those who disagreed with them. While neither group referred to the other explicitly as the main culprits, both discussed themes in opinions about the others' perspective.

Believes of charter detractors. Firstly, participants in Believes often saw themselves primarily as bearers of information about the truth of charter schools. They felt that there was a lot of misinformation about charter schools, and they sought to remedy that. As noted by one participant, "They don't know what's going on, they don't know where our funding comes from, they don't know what, you know, our goals are…a lot of people, like I said, don't understand that we're not trying to take away from Metro schools at all, we're just trying to better our children so that we can better our communities, you know?" Another participant, frustrated, said in reference to what they were hearing from charter detractors, "everything you're saying is not reality." This misinformation, according to Believes participants, was "based on assumptions and hearsay rather than actually experience."

Secondly, given that choice was already a reality for many in East Nashville before Dr. Register's announcement, many felt that the views of largely-privileged anti-charter people were "pretty self-serving," as described by one participant. Another said, "I don't trust someone who says I'm against choice for this poor family's kid, but I'm going to use it for my kid." Continuing, this participant felt some of this was tied to deeper issues of race, class, and equity,

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saying "I think at the end of the day, people are deeply afraid that if we level the playing field, you know there's – there's finite opportunities, and there's – for the kids, it's maybe going to be less." Another corroborated this view, saying that there was a "discriminatory tone to what they were saying." This was connected to a sense that people were "more happy to keep the status quo that basically just maintains the racial and economic divide that currently exists."

Believes participants did, however, express similar frustrations about the communication strategies (or lack thereof) of Dr. Register regarding East Nashville's choice option: "I think the way that it happened was just really – it was – it was in poor taste." Another mentioned, "I think the lack of communication was the downfall, but you know, all of a sudden this bomb is dropped, like this is what we're going to do, you know, and parents – no one was consulted, there was no transparency in the decision.

United of charter advocates. Participants in United had few criticisms of Believes specifically, and spoke more broadly of their issues with the mindsets of charter advocates and the charter industry in general. One repeated criticism was the sense that charter people simply wanted to be left alone without any government oversight, in a way that was uncomfortable to United participants. As noted by one participant, "by and large the population there looks at this issue and says, 'We have failing schools. These kids need a change. We're going to save them. Get out of our way.'" More colorfully, this participant also described this mindset as "give me the money, get the hell away from me." Similarly, another participant felt that charter schools were sometimes a part of a larger agenda: "I think a lot of them are unfortunately used to further other agendas, kind of a libertarian, 'We don't need government schools.' You know, it's all privatization, and I think some of them are used for that."

Among those that I interviewed, they felt themselves more even-handed as it pertained to charter schools. They consistently expressed sympathy and respect for those who chose charter schools and worked in charter schools. They even acknowledged the work that charters were doing, with one noting that "they're doing hard work and doing good work and literally saving kids' lives." Another said, "I am fine with charters if that really is what parents want." In addition, United participants expressed some understanding for the decisions that charter parents and advocates were making:

> "I think one of the things I have maybe more sympathy for is one of the reasons that charters exist and one of the reasons they say it exists is that change within the system is too hard. It's too cumbersome. It's too much a bureaucracy, too big, and you've got to go outside to do anything that's innovative and different."

In the end, United participants like this one did not seem to fault choice users and advocates for their choices when led to expand on their judgments.

Emotions in the Advocacy

An important note from the majority of interviews is that they were laden with a significant amount of emotions. All participants had clear emotional investments in the process of advocacy, and these investments made their way into the manner in which they expressed themselves. In particular, the language participants used was often powerful in message, including phrases like "slap in the face" and "torn asunder." In addition, tonally, despite all best efforts on my part to reduce the stress of the interview, the participants often conveyed significant frustration with the events that had happened and voiced this frustration through their gestures and tone. They also noted, explicitly, the high emotions present while the events were

occurring, including several mentions of crying and significant emotional struggles to manage the stresses of advocacy. Finally, there seemed to be a significant amount of communication problems between participants of the opposing groups. As noted by one participant, the general atmosphere was "Horrible…I can't stand that level of lack of civil discourse. It just makes me want to hide under a rock." Several participants did decide to leave advocacy, at least temporary, afterwards: "I'm still going to advocate, but I think I'm going to take some time off because it's hard. It's really hard. And it took me a while to kind of recover from, you know, just all the hatred and anger being thrown at you, you know?" For several participants, the debate became cacophony, and this conflict was almost too much to bear. Yet, they remained involved and persisted because of their deep senses of duty: "Like, I just knew that I had tools that a lot of other people didn't have, and that I could, you know, use my tools for the betterment of my community and the city that I live in."

Discussion and Conclusions

Following the work of Hill et al. (2006), this study finds that there are deep complexities to the opinions of education advocates. First, while both groups acknowledge problems in the current system, they have fundamental differences when it comes to their perspectives on the merits of school choice and charter schools. United participants, holding school-based neighborhood and communities close to their hearts, saw school choice proposals and competition as a dismantling of these communities. In addition, they might have been willing to forgive these changes, but they also held clear ideas about what they viewed as unacceptable learning conditions within charter schools. Believes participants, on the other hand, were not as concerned with the maintenance of these communities, and instead felt that the teachers and

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leaders within the school were the most important factors for breaking cycles of poverty. While not necessarily being completely pro-charter, they felt that charters were able to maintain this internal success because of the autonomy they have to set high expectations for all students.

However, there are also clear commonalities between the groups that might be used as points of departure for us to discuss the future of school choice and charter schools. In particular, the acknowledgement that there are currently severe issues with the educational system that disproportionately benefit already advantaged populations was shared across groups. In addition, the sympathy both sides expressed for the others' perspective suggests that moderated policy proposals that carefully and respectfully acknowledge all sides' positions may be a good place to start policymaking in general. In East Nashville, the main problem seems to be that from the start, all groups were put on the defensive, with United participants seeing their local communities under attack, and Believes participants seeing their own decisions under attack. Neither group broadly corroborated the views that the other ascribed to them either by each other or in the media, suggesting that there was either some sort of miscommunication or, as suggested by Hill et al. (2006), a focus of each group on the most extreme and perhaps most problematic perspectives expressed by isolated members of the opposite group.

Did these perspectives match what we might have expected, given national-level discourse on charter schools? In some ways, yes, while in other ways, no. Viteritti (2003) identifies two relatively distinct periods of school choice advocacy: the first focused on market efficiency while the second focused on opportunity models. It seems that the opportunity model is still heavily present, as concerns for equity were front and center for both participants in United and participants in Believes. In addition, some standard ideas about, for choice proponents, the importance of autonomy and, for choice opponents, concerns about segregation,

were indeed present in the discourses in East Nashville. However, there are three important pieces that seem to have largely been absent from the broader literature. First, there is a strong divide between my Believes and United participants when it comes to beliefs about who has the primary influence on students and learning: teachers and leaders, or the community and parents. Second, significant concerns about the dismantling of neighborhood community systems via choice is an important source of hesitation for charter opponents. Lastly, the entry of no-excuses charter school models into the market introduces new avenues for investigation, and also concern. Interestingly, participants in the interviews did not focus much on the relative efficiency of traditional public versus choice schools. Much of the research thus far has focused on the role of charter schools and school choice in creating a competitive market. These questions, however, were absent from participants' concerns. Also absent was the moral imperative of seeing parents as best equipped to decide what education their children should be provided. As such, market-based arguments about charter schools may have passed their time. While these questions are still important, this suggests possible new priorities for researchers. What effects do choice systems have on local community structures? What are public opinions on the no-excuses charter models? These questions and others may be important for researchers to focus on in the journey to address the concerns of the public.

Some of these results are likely unique to the Nashville context. As noted before, Nashville had already had a system of school choice in place, to an extent, before Jesse Register's announcement. True to the context, it seemed that many people had already entered into the conflict with existing affiliations to different stakeholders in the choice debate. It is likely that this existing history exacerbated the divisions that arose between the groups and contributed to the aforementioned defensiveness. In addition, the consistent focus between the

groups on issues of equity and justice, while differing on other points, may be a consequence of the more liberal nature of Nashville. The absence of market-oriented arguments may also be a result of the lack of conservative perspective. It is important to note, however, that I did not probe participants on their political identifications, so much of this may be speculation. Further research on similar conflicts in a more conservative region may prove useful to illuminating the role of political culture on local choice debates.

Readers may note that the arguments of the two sides did not fall along typical conservative/liberal divides, which might have been expected given the historical alignment of choice and charter positions along these lines in the national rhetoric. In particular, the anti-choice position from United, which is typically associated with liberals, prominently exhibited values close to local communities, which is often seen as a conservative value. First, it is important to note that localism as a value is complex, and its affiliation with particular established political ideologies may not be clear-cut. The preservation of local power had indeed been associated with the conservative position, however, the encouragement of local investment has not been as well-researched. For example, the growth of the "buy local" movement seems to have liberal roots. As such, the association of the typical liberal choice position with the embracing of local communities can be seen as expected in some ways. In addition, a limitation of this data collection is that I did not survey participants on their own ideological positions. It is thus difficult to draw any definitive conclusions about the link between classical American ideologies and choice positions. Those associations are reserved for future study. Also, that East Nashville itself trends more liberal as a community, it may be the case that the divides that did appear needed to appear along divides that exist *within* liberalism, rather than those that exist between conservatives and liberals. Finally, as outlined in the literature, the assumed association

of the national positions with the liberal/conservative divide is not necessarily true. In particular, while liberal and conservative ideologies do seem predictive of charter school attitudes, when it comes to school choice, extant literature thus far has focused more on the coalition known as the New Right. For all these reasons, it is not particularly surprising to see deviations in the results here from what might be expected based on national American political debate.

The hypothesis alluded to at the beginning of this paper that there would be evidence of relationship conflict alongside task conflict was confirmed by the data. Much of the time spent with participants covered their perspectives on the politics. From the beginning, starting with the way that Dr. Register made the original announcement and the kinds of responses that people saw as prevalent to that announcement, there was relationship conflict in the policy process. Both groups, as mentioned, saw themselves as mainly solutions to a relationship problem caused by people aligned with the other side. As such, there is the potential that community mediation could have been a useful intervention in East Nashville. In general, the complexity of the results presented here suggests that some sort of external intervention to address the issues and formally sift through the perspectives towards the goal of finding a solution could have been important. Given the role of the district in contributing to the conflict in the first place, it may have been inappropriate for them to moderate the discussion themselves, but some sort of intervention could have been instrumental in resolving the tensions that sprung.

This paper is one of the first empirical investigations of people's charter school and school choice attitudes. As such, a combination of this work with future research on the subject will provide us will a truly full picture of charter school beliefs in national and local communities. In contrast to Hill et al. (2006), I find that there are indeed fundamental differences in beliefs between charter and choice supporters and detractors. While the specifics of the

differences may differ from community to community, an important takeaway from this study are that there were fundamentally different ways of viewing the world that defined the two groups. Some of these differences were over subjects of empirical fact, which might suggest future avenues for evaluative research. Some of these differences were over subjects of moral virtue, and these differences may be more complicated to address. Nevertheless, if we as researchers intend to help policymaking progress, it may be important to address these differences in opinion that lie outside of the realm of "what works."

Beyond the importance of noting these complexities and using them as we attend to policy problems for practical efficiency purposes, I also propose that there is a moral imperative to this discussion. First, both groups noted problems with the way in which these policies were communicated, which led to much of the conflict. Second, this conflict was a source of significant emotional strife. Many of the participants seemed frustrated, angry, and traumatized by the events surrounding school choice in East Nashville. A non-negligible portion of them mentioned losing close friends. As a result, several disengaged themselves from advocacy in the interest of self-care. To the extent that we, as a society, believe that citizen action and involvement in education policy is something to be desired, there is therefore a call to policymakers and policy actors to moderate public debate and input in a way that can, as best as possible, manage these conflicts. What happened in East Nashville can provide us with many lessons about how to approach policy discourse. First, attending to the deeper conflicts that people have regarding school choice can help us to both form policy solutions that are agreeable to more parties while also gaining a comprehensive view of what may be wrong. Second, the views expressed by the participants in United and Believes were largely matters of priority and perspective, rather than questions of confirmable empirics. This suggests that more research on

these perspectives at a political level may be an important avenue for scholars to pursue as we try

and reform education for the good for all.

III. Charter School Media: A Correlated Topic Model

What is a charter school? It depends on whom you ask. Indeed, the definition itself of charter schools has taken on a variety of forms across media in the United States, and the way charters are defined has important implications for the theoretical potential of charters in the mind of the public. For example, one account from *Cleveland.com* says that "Charter schools are 'public' schools in that they are funded with state tax dollars and are open to any student there is room for, without any entrance exams or requirements. But they are privately run, sometimes by non-profit operators but sometimes by for-profit and private companies that are not open to the same open records and open meetings laws as districts" (O'Donnell, 2017). Here, the author brings attention to the democratic nature (or perceived lack thereof) of charter schooling. In another example from Wisconsin, "Charter schools are, in essence, living laboratories that influence the larger public school system and introduce an element of entrepreneurship within that system" (Idzerda, 2017). This account highlights the innovative potentials of charter schools. In yet another view, "Charter schools are tuition free, independently governed public schools that provide education options in underperforming school districts" (Eigel, 2017). This account notes the potential of charter schools to address the needs of underperforming districts.

This study takes as given that the theoretical potential of a public policy is important in considerations of its implementation. This was evident in the recent Washington state court case ruling the state's charter schools as unconstitutional. After proceedings and arguments that lasted over a year, the high court reasoned with a 6-3 vote that because charters are not governed by elected boards accountable to voters as a whole, they did not truly count as "common schools" and were not eligible for taxpayer funding (Brown, 2015; "Washington charter school law rules unconstitutional by state's high court," 2015). In this case, the courts were primarily concerned

with the democratic theoretical potential of charters. In this case and others, thus, it may be that understanding the theoretical potentials of charter schools as they exist in the American public is important for understanding the possibilities of their implementation.

How would researchers define this theoretical potential? How would they even begin to understand the definitions that charters hold in the American mind? Perspectives from political science offer answers here, particularly those from political ideology. Briefly, political scientists consider an ideology to be a network of attitudes held by individuals such that changes in one attitude should be associated with changes in another because of their connection. For example, it seems to be the case that the concepts of charter schools and school choice are often connected such that the way one feels about choice is predictive of attitudes towards charter schools. Charter school discussion, therefore, is likely to include considerations of school choice as a related concept. In this way, someone's attitudes towards charter schools is inextricably tied to the concepts they see as connected to charter schools.

An important place to look for this ideology is in the media. With both the influence that media has on public opinion (Jamieson & Hardy, 2011; McCombs, 2014) and the role of the public consumer in shaping media agendas (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2010), it is important to understand the ideologies that exist in media. The identification of these perspectives is an important missing piece of the charter school policy story thus far, and it is to this gap that my research project contributes. I begin to address this gap by analyzing all newspaper articles on charter schools from 1990 through 2016. Following an argument that ideologies may be co-constructed by the media and the public, I use correlated topic modeling to ask: How have charter schools been discussed in media? What concepts have been linked to charter school discourse?

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Attitudes and Ideology

In one of the earliest investigation of American attitudes, Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes (1960) defined an attitude structure as "when two or more beliefs or opinions held by an individual are in some way or another functionally related" (p. 189). These separate beliefs correlate with each other such that a change in one should be associated with a change in the other because of some underlying cognitive connection between the beliefs. For example, if someone develops an opposition to the use of animals in pharmaceutical testing, they may also develop an affinity towards vegetarianism. The analyst, in observing this correlation, might conclude that it is due to some underlying attitude structure linking these beliefs together. They might develop a theory that these attitudes are connected because of an overarching belief about the rights of non-human animals. (It is important to note that the definition of this connection is subject to the perceptions and conclusions of the analyst.) Campbell et al. (1960) then define an ideology, simply, to be "a particularly elaborate, close-woven, and far-ranging structure of attitudes" (p. 192).

Possibly the most common use of the concept of ideology in academia and elsewhere is that of the divide between liberals and conservatives in the American public. There are, however, other ideologies beyond the typical liberal-conservative scope. While the more detailed accounts of liberalism and conservativism have shifted throughout time, there have been some mainstays in terms of the core differences in these groups within the United States. Liberals, broadly, hold equality of opportunity as a core focus and, more specifically, hold that (a) this equality of opportunity does not currently exist and that (b) a strong government is the mechanism through which equality can be achieved. In this view, government should play a role in regulating private entities and markets, and it should also steer clear of enforcing private social decisions.

Conservatives, on the other hand, generally oppose government-based efforts to achieve this equality and instead see citizens, families, and communities as the more appropriate drivers of opportunity and innovation. Freedom of individuals to drive their own economic path is a core part of conservativism, and if anything, the government should work primarily in service of protecting that freedom. In the social sphere, there is less consensus in recent years as to the role of government in managing social norms (Ellis & Stimson, 2012). Liberals tend to exhibit preferences for concepts such as progress and equality, which conservatives exhibit preferences for tradition and hierarchy (Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008). In addition, besides preferences for certain forms of social organization, there is also evidence that liberals and conservatives operate from different moral foundations. Conservatives tend to weigh concerns for harm, fairness, loyalty, authority, and sanctity equally. Liberals privilege concerns for harm and fairness above concerns for the other three (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009).

There are, for example, other forms of political thought such as Marxism and fascism that are considered to be ideologies. In some ways, the intentional social arrangements created by political parties to organize political debate may also be considered to be ideologies (Feldman, 2013). Thompson (2001) divides these conceptions of ideology into two groups: one which uses a more neutral idea of ideology as simply systems of beliefs, and one which uses a critical, normative idea of ideology as being one-sided and serving in the interests of elites. What all of these perspectives share, however, is the base definition of ideology as the organization of people's beliefs and attitudes. The strength of a particular ideology, as described by theorists, is characterized by its *constraint* – the extent to which concepts within an ideology are tightly linked to one another and, thus, the extent to which attitudes towards those different concepts remain consistent (Converse, 1964). For example, if someone holds an ideology that tightly

couples the idea of "standardized testing" to "big government," shifting opinions of big government should also shift opinions of standardized testing.

Though research on ideology has come a long way from Campbell et al. (1960), this definition of ideology as a system of beliefs has remained relatively stable. In their study of ideological dimensions of domestic policy preferences, Feldman & Johnston (2014) use latent class and mixture modeling to account for variation in Americans' policy attitudes. From their results, the authors concluded that two important latent clusters of attitudes – economic and social – were needed at a minimum to account for domestic policy preferences. Both in design and result, the authors employed the concept of ideology as interrelated sets of attitudes. The interrelatedness of attitudes is operationalized here and elsewhere as the extent to which variation in respondent attitudes about one item can predict attitudes about another item. This quantitative, static sense of ideology can be traced back to Converse (1964), whose seminal work on mass public belief systems used the word "constraint" to describe the interdependence of attitudes and thus, the existence of an ideology.

Ansolabehere (2001) outlines three conjectures about constraint that would qualify a person's beliefs as an ideology, as shown in Figure 1. First, there is an assumption that individuals, within themselves, hold rational thoughts about issues. In other words, they must have consistent preferences among directly comparable options. Second, getting to the core definition of an ideology, there must be constrained belief systems such that shifting preferences in one rational thought influence the preferences of others within the same issue domain within a person. Lastly, these individual ideologies do not do us much good as social scientists if they do not explain general patterns in the world. Thus, an ideology as a part of political life must appear

in the aggregate or be widely held in order for it to serve as a useful way to simplify political debate.

Patterns of language can capture ideology. This methodology is not a new concept; text classification as a method for using words as features in models that separate documents has been a robust field of study for over a decade. To an extent, one might consider this kind of analysis to be even older than that, where qualitative methodologists have categorized texts based on their content. In one of the only studies of its kind in education, Goldstein (2010) uses the media as a source to understand frames in the discussion of teachers unions, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and education reform. Here, the author found that teachers unions were referred to in a negative light more than half of the time, and that terms highly associated with union coverage included "obstructionist," "against reform," "special-interest," "self-centered," and "status quo." This overwhelmingly negative perspective was especially stark in contrast to messages about NCLB and other school reform efforts. They conclude that there were distinct attitudinal frames present in media coverage and, importantly, that the media does not simply present an unbiased report of the news (Goldstein, 2010). This work, however, was done on a relatively small sample of 66 articles over a short time period (2001 through 2008). My study uses a broader range of articles and as such, requires different analytical tools. Mine is one of the first studies using inductive, computational methods to extract themes from articles about education policy.

Charter School Ideology Thus Far

Do we know anything about Ansolabehere's conjectures 2 and 3 when it comes to charter school policy? From the extant literature, I conclude that we do not know near as much as we

should. Most evidence on charter school beliefs focuses on the first conjecture. Along with issues of school choice and school vouchers, public interest in charter schools has been a consistent target of inquiry for those seeking to gauge Americans' views towards public education. While their methods and findings vary substantially, in the past decade, most large-scale public opinion polls asking this question find that a majority of the public does support charter schools. A broad overview of some of these findings is in Figure 2.

Despite what appears to be consistent support (though not overwhelming) over the last decade, we know little as a field about what exactly people are thinking when they support or oppose charter schools. This lack of information is especially concerning in light of two issues. First, there is consistent evidence that much of the public is not fully knowledgeable about what charter schools are (Howell & West, 2009). Second, charter schools are not a monolithic institution, and determining how to do charter policy may depend on us understanding what and why and how people believe about charter schools and American education. What we do have, which does not necessarily answer our questions but does give us some insight into the concepts that accompany charter school attitudes, is limited evidence that elite cues, social groupings, and partisan/ideological identifications influence charter school attitudes (Attridge, 2012; Blissett & Alsbury, 2016; Reckhow, Grossmann, & Evans, 2014). In one of the only studies investigating the dimensions underlying charter school beliefs, Hill, Rainey, & Rotherham (2006) report on six dimensions of charter school debate they observed at a meeting of charter and union leaders. Importantly, they found that the differences between the groups' perspectives as expressed were often much more polarized/polarizing that the ideas that underlay the expressions.

Despite the lack of evidence, we might still be able to propose an ideology as expressed in rhetoric. Drawing on my own description of the political history of charter schools, we might

consider an ideology such as the one in Figure 3 as underlying charter school discussions in the scholarly literature, at the least. It is important to note, however, that I am not implying that ideologies are domain-specific. Ideologies, by definition, operate across domains, and as such, each of the nodes in the ideology proposal in Figure 3 are domains of beliefs in and of themselves. In addition, there may be more distally-related belief systems. Ideologies, if they are observable, consist of domains that are more and less related to each other. By a "charter school ideology," I am referring to those domains that are more highly related to charter schools. This research project investigates such an ideology, but allows the data to speak for itself.

Charter News Media Data

The main source of data for this research project is every news article published in the United States from June 4, 1990 (one year prior to the passage of Minnesota's charter school law) through September 5, 2016 (one year after the Washington state court decision). These data were drawn from LexisNexis. From LexisNexis, I obtained access to the full text of articles from 641 newspapers in the United States. As my first open search, in order to create a universe of articles within which to conduct further formal tests as described below, I pulled all articles containing the term "charter school." This search retrieved a total of 306,889 separate articles, distributed throughout time as shown in Figure 4. The original texts were extracted in XML format, and the full texts were culled from the XML documents using Perl.

Many of the articles drawn have little to do with charter schools and just happened to include the term once. As such, it would be inefficient to conduct my model estimation using the full query results. In order to identify articles to include in my study, I conducted a series of formal tests of the reliability of search keywords as per Stryker, Wray, Hornik, and Yanovitzky

(2006) and endorsed as best practice by Lacy, Watson, Riffe, and Lovejoy (2015). Stryker et al. (2006) define two measures of a search string's ability to retrieve information: recall and precision. Broadly, recall is the proportion of relevant items that are returned by a search, and precision is the proportion of returned items that are relevant. While any particular search may not perfectly capture the universe of relevant articles, the authors suggest that a sample of articles where calculated recall and precision are equal can be used with relative confidence to estimate the true counts of stories on a topic. Broadly, these steps include iterative reading and sampling using more and more complex search terms in order to maximize recall and precision calculations (Stryker et al., 2006).

In order to calculate precision and recall, I first pulled a random sample of 30 articles. With this sample, I manually read each article to determine the relevancy of that article. I was looking for articles that primarily discussed charter school policy, identified by those articles where either charter school policy was being discussed for consideration or where charter schools (or a charter school) was the central topic of discussion. A third of these articles were relevant as per my qualitative criteria. I pulled a new random sample of 90 articles (3 multiplied by 30) and read these new articles for relevance. I then tested different queries and tagged the articles for their match to these queries. Finally, I calculated the recall and precision within this sample and chose a query with ideal proportions. This query was used to cut the full sample down to the final sample used for analysis.

My final sample, drawn using a simple query that cut the open search query sample to those articles that contain the word "charter school" more than once, consists of 123,039 articles. The recall estimate is 0.91, meaning that this query captures 91% of relevant articles that are actually about charter schools as determined by a manual review of articles. The precision

estimate is 0.58, meaning that 42% of the articles captured in this closed search are not, by manual inspection, primarily about charter school policy but rather just happen to mention charter schools more than once. In the context where I would be treating my data as a sample of the larger population, I would hope for a precision estimate that is higher and at least equal to my recall estimate such that any inferences I draw from the sample are generalizable to the larger population (Stryker et al., 2006). However, the unique nature of this project allows this precision estimate to be sufficient for two reasons. Firstly, because topic models capture informative trends and common patterns in word usage, one should only expect a problem with the less relevant articles if they systematically were related to another topic that the relevant articles did not exhibit. Secondly, even if there is another topic systematically related to the irrelevant articles, the fact that it is systematic would mean that it would be picked up by the probabilistic topic model and thus, may be of interest for the research study anyway as a topic mentioned in conjunction with mentions of charter schools in a broad sense.

Probabilistic Topic Modeling with Correlated Topic Models

In this research, I generate the topics discussed in articles using probabilistic topic modeling. Originally developed as a way to optimize the archiving and subsequent ease of search for collections of text documents, topic modeling assumes that text are generated from *topics*, which are distinct latent distributions that exhibit different word probabilities (Blei, 2012; Mohr & Bogdanov, 2013). For example, documents generated from the "biology" topic might have the words "cell," "organism," and "gene" with higher probability than documents not generated from that topic. The probabilities of these words occurring in the documents are determined by the distribution of the "biology" topic. Unlike other latent class and profile methods, however, it is

taken as possible that documents might be generated from multiple topics at once. For example, the words within an article about stem cell research might be generated from a latent "biology" topic distribution as well as a latent "politics" topic distribution, the latter of which might determine the probabilities of words like "law," "vote," and "Republican."

The specific model I employ in this research is called a correlated topic model (CTM). To explain this method, I first explain the simpler iteration of this method's history, the latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) method. Formally, in this method, a *topic* is defined as a distribution over a fixed vocabulary. Each document is assumed to be generated, again, from a mixture of topics which contribute to the determination of the content (words) of the document in a specific proportion. In other words, each word in a document had a specific probability of being drawn, randomly, from one of the possible topics, and this probability remains constant over all of the words in the document. As such, there are three stages in the generation of the content of a document. First, there is a latent set of topics – the number of which is set at the beginning – each of which has a word distribution β distributed as follows:

$$\beta \sim Dirichlet(\delta)$$

Second, each document w has a distribution of probabilities θ of each topic, where θ is generated from its own process.

$$\theta \sim Dirichlet(\alpha)$$

These two Dirichlet distributions are the latent distributions that produce the individual words in the document. For each word w_i, then, one topic (e.g., "biology) is chosen from the distribution of probabilities, distributed as follows:

$$z_i \sim Multinomial(\theta)$$

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Finally, the actual content of the word (e.g., "gene" or "cell") is chosen using the specific β distribution of the chosen topic z_i with probability $p(w_i|z_i, \beta)$.

An important limitation of the LDA method is in the specification of θ, which, because it utilizes a Dirichlet prior, constrains the components of the distribution to be independent. As such, LDA fails to account for possible correlated occurrences of topics (Blei & Lafferty, 2009). For example, the topics "biology" and "chemistry" likely appear together within documents with higher probability than the topics "biology" and "textiles." This is a critical limitation for this study in particular, as a core assumption of ideology is that particular concepts and topics tend to co-occur in discursive space. As such, I turn to CTM instead of LDA to model my data. The general thought process of how a document is generated is nearly identical in CTM as it is in LDA. The major difference is in the specification of θ. In CTM, θ is determined from a function of a vector $\boldsymbol{\eta}$ of length K, where K is the number of topics, that is based on a multivariate normal distribution:

$$\boldsymbol{\eta} \sim Normal(\boldsymbol{\mu}, \boldsymbol{\Sigma})$$

One then computes θ by applying the following function which maps the original natural parameterization drawn from the normal distribution of the topic proportions, critically dependent on $\boldsymbol{\Sigma}$, to the mean parameterization:

$$\theta = f(\boldsymbol{\eta}) = \frac{exp(\boldsymbol{\eta})}{\sum_i exp(\eta_i)}$$

A downside to the CTM method is that unlike the Dirichlet distribution used in LDA, the new parameterization is not conveniently conjugate to topic assignments, and as such, one cannot use simple integration in the calculation of Bayesian posterior probabilities. As such, I use a standard variational expectation-maximization (VEM) approach to estimate my models. In normal expectation-maximization methods, the algorithm iterates through a two-step process:

First, using a starting set of parameter values and the given data, calculate the conditional distribution of the full data, including the latent topic assignments. Second, get a new parameter value by maximizing the log likelihood of the distribution identified in the first step. However, the variational approach takes a Bayesian tack and calculates full posterior distributions of the parameters and latent variables. In short, VEM is a Bayesian approach to maximum likelihood estimation through expectation-maximization iterations.

Though I am using CTM, I take lessons from LDA models to determine the number of topics to fit. Empirical tests show that CTM models, by virtue of their use of topic correlations to gain more information, tend to fit better than LDA models and are able to support more topics (Wagner, 2011). Though my study of ideology does necessitate the study of correlated topics, I restrain my selection of topic numbers to the number suggested by LDA models for two reasons. First, on a practical level, methods for determining a natural number of topics are more well-researched within the LDA context than within the CTM context. Second, the estimation of fewer topics while allowing those topics to correlate contributes to a more parsimonious model. In the words of Box & Draper (1987), "all models are wrong, but some are useful," and I believe the description of ideology benefits from the retention of some independence between topics. In order to identify an ideally parsimonious number of topics, I employ the method and computational tools created by Nikita (2016), which simultaneously tests several different approaches for identifying the natural number of topics: Arun, Suresh, Madhavan, and Murty (2010); Cao, Xia, Li, Zhang, and Tang (2009); Deveaud, SanJuan, and Bellot (2014); and Griffiths and Steyvers (2004).

Computational and Analysis Steps

All topic modeling techniques (and, for that matter, latent class methods of text classification) treat text data using a "bag-of-words" treatment. In other words, documents are treated as a collection of words in which the order of the words does not matter. As such, these methods effectively discard any grammatical information. However, raw texts, like the following excerpt from McKiernan (2016), are complicated by factors like capitalization and verb tenses.

> Infuriated Massachusetts charter school leaders are slamming a report by the No on 2 campaign that says their schools lack special education teachers, calling it baffling and blatantly false. "That report is totally bogus," charter school administrator Jon Clarke told the Herald. "At Brooke East Boston, we have three full-time special education teachers, a full-time speech language pathologist, a one-on-one special education aide. We make sure all our kids have the supports they need. It's infuriating to see this in the report." Ballot Question 2 asks voters to lift the charter cap to allow 12 new schools or expansions per year. Save Our Public Schools, the teachers' union-backed No on 2 campaign, released a report yesterday claiming charter schools have fewer special education teachers and fewer special education students.

In addition, they contain many words that are ostensibly not particularly meaningful in analysis. A prominent example is articles like "the" and "a." Collectively, these types of words are called "stopwords." To clean the data, the text went through a series of steps meant to reduce the text to an analyzable "bag-of-words": convert all letters to lowercase, remove punctuation, remove stopwords, remove numbers, reduce words to their linguistic roots as possible, and remove extra whitespace. This cleaning was done using the "tm" package in R, which uses a list

of stopwords generated by Gerard Salton and Chris Buckley for the experimental SMART information retrieval system at Cornell University. In addition, after the analysis (described below), I identified a short list of additional words that were particularly prominent in the data according to the final analysis, but did not hold particular significance for the purpose of this study. These words were "charter," "school," "schools," "say," "said," "will," "get," and "one." Admittedly, the process of deciding which words to omit is laden with tradeoffs. The more words that are omitted, the more likely it is that one will find topics with more substantively meaningful word sets. However, omitting words runs the risk of omitting possibly useful information. For the purpose of this initial study, I opted to remove fewer words, which shows in my final results. The final version of the above except looks as follows.

> infuri massachusett leader slam report campaign lack special educ teacher call baffl blatant fals that report total bogus administr jon clark told herald dat brook east boston three full time special educ teacher full time speech languag pathologist special educ aid make sure kid support infuri see reportd ballot question ask voter lift charter cap allow new expans per year save public school teachers union back campaign releas report yesterday claim fewer special educ teacher fewer special educ student

After these data are loaded and cleaned, I create a Document-Term matrix, which contains in the rows each document, in the columns each unique word expressed in the corpus of documents, and in the cells the number of times each word occurs in each document. It is this Document-Term matrix that is the base input to the CTM algorithm, as described above.

The core output of the process is a matrix of posterior probabilities of topic assignment for each document. In the rows are each document, in the columns are each topic, and in the cells

are the posterior probabilities. In other words, this process outputs the topic makeup of each document. In the results, to rank the prevalence of topics across documents, I summed the posterior probabilities of the topics across all documents.

Topic modeling, as a method, allows the data to speak for itself. As such, the topics are not automatically labeled in a way that is easily digestible. Instead, the topics are defined by their respective distributions of word probabilities (β). Using the example from earlier in this manuscript, there is technically no "biology" topic that is output from the model. Instead, one would observe that there is some topic, unlabeled, with the words "cell" and "organism" (as examples) with certain probabilities. In this paper, unless otherwise stated, I define topics by their top five most frequent words (words with the highest probabilities). However, this is not necessarily useful for the purpose of social data analysis. It is therefore up to the analyst to take these word probability distributions (β) and, using a more qualitative approach, assign topic labels. This process is similar to the process undertaken in some unsupervised clustering analyses (e.g., latent class analysis, k-means clustering) of assigning meaningful labels to discovered data clusters *beyond* describing them with their data characteristics. It is important to note that this is a highly interpretative process, not unlike qualitative theme analysis, that relies on the ability of the analyst to draw connections between words and summarize their underlying connection. For example, it takes specific content knowledge *as well as* some amount of intuition to see the words "cell" and "organism" as highly represented within a topic and assign the topic label "biology" rather than the topic label "prisons." At the same time, one might be tempted to label this topic as "ecology," with a similar rationale as why it would be labeled "biology." Essentially, we as analysts are called to give names to patterns in data in order to make them interpretable and useful for social science.

Finally, it is important to again stress that topic modeling is typically conducted, as is conducted here, as an unsupervised analysis. Largely, there are two basic types of classification algorithms: unsupervised and supervised. Supervised processes tend to start with established examples of what different classes of data look like and then train algorithms to *correctly* classify new data into these established classes. A supervised topic modeling algorithm would begin with given information about topics, establishing that there is a set number of topics that exhibit certain word probabilities. This given information would be based on prior knowledge or hypotheses. The goal of the method would then be to assign *new* documents to *the established* topics. Formally, this type of approach is often called *classification*, because it is assigning known class labels to data. The main downside of this approach is that it makes assumptions about the data and, thus, will limit results to the analyst's priors. In many contexts, this may indeed be the goal. Typical logistic regression analyses are a good example of this case. However, sometimes, the research question implies a more inductive approach, where the discovery of new theories and generating processes is prized above the fit of data to existing theories. My research questions here are inductive, which is a function of the current lack of theorizing in the literature about ideologies in education, and as thus, I err on the side of interpreting trends in the data. It important to note that inductive studies such as this one are particularly useful as starting points in inquiry, and as this is one the first papers investigating ideology in education policy discourse, an inductive study is particularly appropriate.

Results

Before presenting the results of my topic modeling, I first explore the results that would have been obtained from a more simple, deductive term search. Extant literature on charter

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schools largely suggests that there are three major bins within which justifications for charter schools fall: innovation, equity, and competition. In addition, it might be expected that charter schools are often also discussed alongside school choice. With this in mind, it seems worth it to explore, at a basic level, the frequency of terms related to innovation, equity, competition, and choice. For each of these categories, I identified a short list of regular expressions of interest which might signal their presence: "innovat," "autonom," and "experiment" for innovation; "equit" and "equal" for equity; "compet," "market," and "neoliberal" for competition; and "choice," "option," and "choose" for choice. Clearly, these are very short list of key terms, as will be discussed, but they provide a first glance into the data.

The frequency of these terms over time is shown in Figure 5. Here, there is relatively consistent ordering throughout time of the frequency of these concepts as defined by the above regular expressions, with choice being mentioned most frequently, followed by competition, innovation, and equity. From this evidence alone, one might conclude that the market-based rationales for charter schools are the most prevalent frames used to discuss them. However, the relative frequency of these concepts is more than likely confounded by the relative frequency of their respective regular expressions in the English language. Broadly, it is difficult, for reasons like this, to take the deductive approach to topic analysis, and as such, I turn to the inductive probabilistic topic modeling.

Models on the full sample, across time

First, I used the methods developed by Nikita (2016) to estimate the appropriate number of topics to model. This involved fitting the topic model for 99 different topic counts (2 to 100) and calculating and comparing fit statistics for all of the estimations. A summary of those

statistics, separated by those meant to be minimized and those meant to be maximized, is shown in Figure 6. The Griffiths and Steyvers (2004) and Arun et al. (2010) statistics suggested a topic count of 50 to 60, and the Deveaud et al. (2014) statistic suggested around 14 topics. The Cao et al. (2009) statistic was uninformative in this case. In order to select the hopefully most parsimonious model, I moved forward with the suggestion from the Deveaud et al. (2014) statistic and estimated the topic model with 14 topics.

I took a random sample of 3,000 articles in order to estimate the analysis with a small enough sample to be computationally tractable,[3] but large enough to capture the relevant topics. The extracted topics, and the top five words for each topic (stemmed) are shown in Table 1. Each article has a probability of exhibiting a particular topic, and in the second column, I present the sum of the probabilities across all articles. At the top, by far, topics related to the general organization and governance of charter schools were the most prevalent with topics laden with words like "state," "board," and "district." At the bottom are topics related to particularly prevalent cases of charter schooling in the United States, including Houston and New Orleans. In order to see if the broad topic distributions have changed across time, I conducted the same analysis on 41 subsequent windows of 3,000 articles, spanning all but the last 38 articles in my data. All windows were selected to be the same size so that the sums of the probabilities would be comparable across windows. Following this analysis, I qualitatively examined the extracted topics for each window and identified five topics of interest: choice (identified by topics with "voucher" or "choice" in their top five words), money ("fund," "money," "budget," or "tax"), New Orleans ("orlean"), the policy process ("bill," "senat," "hous," or "legisl"), and politics ("republican," "democrat," "obama," "trump," "bush," or "clinton"). Most topics concerned

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[3] By "computationally tractable," I mean that one model should take less than one hour to run on my computer. A sample of 3,000 articles fit this requirement.

themselves with more mundane educational words like "student," "teacher," and "district," but these five topic labels stood out as more unique. As noted above, this process is highly subject to my own qualitative interpretation of the data. There does not currently exist a statistical method for defining what is a "unique" response. I determined uniqueness by looking at topics that exhibited terms that I determined to be not necessarily typical to education policy discussions in general. The appearance of more mundane topics is a predictable consequence of the choices I made during my data cleaning to not remove more words from the data.

The prevalence of the identified topics, operationalized by topic rank (based on sums of probabilities), are shown in Figure 7. There was strong presence of choice-oriented topics in earlier years, and the discourse shifted to be more focused on funding in later years. Interestingly, New Orleans (likely as a result of the prevalence of school choice in the city after Hurricane Katrina) became an important, consistent player in the policy discussion after 2005. The presence of language relating to the institutions in the policymaking process remained relatively steady throughout history. Lastly, while it is evident that language related to politics has long been a part of the charter school discussion, its relative presence has waxed and waned. In particular, this theme seems to have picked up in importance since 2008.

Consistency check. One important question regarding changes in topics over time is this: Are changes in topics over time a result of a changing media market or because of changes in media choices? In other words, perhaps it is the case that issues relating to funding were more prevalent in later years because media sources changed the way they talked about charter schools over time to be more focused on funding. The other possibility, however, is that the market of media sources discussing charter schools later in time were more focused on funding. To a certain extent, if we view the media in aggregate as being reflective of the information available

to the public, the effect that this would have on public ideology should be similar, barring systematic variations in which media enter and exit by media type (and this speculation all is ripe for empirical investigation). However, it is still important to distinguish, as best as possible, between these two alternative explanations.

In order to address this question, I first look at the shifts in the media market by calculating, across years, the proportion of years in which each article source (e.g., The New York Times) in my data published on charter schools. The distribution of proportions is shown in Figure 8. Indeed, it seems to be the case that the majority of sources published on charter schools in less than 75% of the years, indicating that there is a possibility that a change in media markets could drive my results. There were, however, 29 sources for which their charter school article publication rate was above 75% across all years in my data. I limited my analysis sample to articles from these 29 sources, and I analyzed the first and last 3,000 articles from this limited sample. The extracted topics are shown in Tables 2 and 3, respectively.

I find similar results to my full window analysis in terms of the relative presence and absence of a choice-related topic in the first 3,000 articles compared to the last 3,000. In addition, similarly, I find that topics related to financial resources hold a higher ranking in the latter window. I also find that topics relating to politics and the policy process are higher ranked in the first window than in the last one. These results suggest that at least in part, the results I find in the full analysis can be attributed to changes in media messages and not simply to changes in the media market. However, the fact that New Orleans does not come up in my last window topics leaves open the possibility for media market effects. The basic takeaway is that there are changes in media coverage of charter schools even when limiting to sources that published on charter schools in a majority of the years covered in my data.

Model on Definitions of Charter Schools

Does this evidence fully answer the question about the concepts associated with charter schools? There are two struggles with interpreting the data thus far. First, one might be concerned that the data are not specific enough. It is likely that popular media accounts of education policy debate in general tend to follow similar forms, and thus, it is difficult to extract whether the above topics are simply endemic to the ways in which we as a society discuss education policy. Second, the original research question targets the concepts associated with what charter schools are. Articles on charter schools may cover anything from sports competitions including charter schools to highlights of arts programs at charter schools. While this kind of information is certainly important to understand for the study of discourse, it may be still too broad. To address this need for more specificity, I limited my analysis to all statements across all articles containing "charter schools are" or "charter school is." This resulted in 30,130 articles that contained these statements (e.g., "Charter schools are like public schools, but are operated by citizens or groups."). In this way, I am able to limit my analysis to statements specifically about charter schools, either about their inherent definitions or about the roles they are playing in the education policy environment (e.g., "…charter schools are the only public schools that are really held accountable."). The frequency to which media consumers would have been exposed to these sorts of statements varies. Some media sources, such as The Army Times, The Athens News, and the Charlotte Business Journal only made statements like this once during the entire time period. Larger sources, such as The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, The Washington Post, and the Boston Globe, made over 500 such statements. On average, among sources that ever published a statement like these, sources published 61 such statements over the entire time period. To make the analysis computationally feasible, I again limited my full

analysis on a sample of 3,000 articles' statements. I conducted the procedure developed by

Nikita (2016) to determine the number of topics to estimate, as shown in Figure 9. I settled on 18

topics, based on the local maximum of the Griffiths and Steyvers (2004) statistic.

Unlike in the models on the full articles, the topics here exhibited significant correlation

with one another. These correlations, with the strengths exhibited by the width of the graph

edges, are shown in Figure 10. Most of the topics were related to one another, with only six of

the topics operating relatively independently. In addition, among the clustered topics, there is a

set of more "core" correlated topics, and then the others are more distally related. The topics are

shown in Table 2, with core topics in bold and peripheral topics in italics. Above all else,

newspapers emphasized that charter schools are indeed public schools. Moreover, they are public

schools that operate independently of district oversight, which is only one dimension of charter

schooling. This result was consistent in the topics derived from the first 3,000 article extracts, as

shown in Table 3. These extracts spanned from June 13, 1992 to June 9, 2001. It seems that the

main perspective through which the media discussed charter schools was as public schools

operating independently of the normal regulations. These results differ substantially from those

derived from the last 3,000 article extracts (in Table 4), where the public-ness and independence

of charter schools was not as emphasized as was their funding. While a topic mentioning money

("fund") was eighth in rank by the sum of probabilities in the first 3,000 extracts, this topic was

first (both "money" and "fund") in the last 3,000 extracts. Conversely, while the first three topics

in the first 3,000 extracts referred to the independence of charters ("independ" and "allow"),

while independence did not appear until the sixth topic in the last 3,000 extracts. The last 3,000

extracts spanned from February 22, 2015 to September 4, 2016.

These analyses comparing across time allow me to see differences in the topics associated with charter school discussions across time. Across both my models using the full articles and my models using restricted extracts, I find that there have been changes in the ways in which media sources have discussed charter schools. In particular, both sources of evidence suggest that today, the importance of money and funds to the charter school story is greater than it has been in the past. It is additionally important to note that media on charter schools have been consistently sure to note the public-ness of charter schools.

Discussion and Conclusions

This project targets Ansolabehere's third conjecture. Personal belief systems may not be overly useful, in a political sense, if they are not held by others as well. By using correlated topic models, I will be able to identify ideological patterns that exist *across* media discourse and outline, if they exist, mass ideologies that shape charter school discourse. However, I recognize that computational content classifications methods such as the one described here rely upon a "bag-of-words" treatment of content that discards linguistic considerations of grammar (e.g., order, distance) and assumes that the vocabulary that humans use itself is sufficient for understanding the broad themes being communicated. To a certain extent, my focus on ideology and not on affect aligns with this methodological assumption. I am ignoring some other possible important dimensions of language use for the purpose of identifying, simply, the concepts that people have in mind when they discuss charter schools.

The first thing to realize from the data presented here comes from my analyses of data sampled across the entire time period. Overall, the most prevalent discussion of charter schools seemed to be about their governance, public-ness, and independence. However, this topic

prevalence was not consistent across time. In early years, there was a heavy emphasis on the fact that charter schools are independently-run public schools. In later media mentions, charter school discussion seemed to be much more concerned with their funding. In addition, the time-bound analysis of the full articles revealed that there was variation in the extent to which political concepts were associated with charter school language, as well as mentions of New Orleans.

It is interesting that I do not find a prevalence of frames related to concepts that one might expect as outlined in Figure 3. In particular, extant academic literature on charter schools has largely focused on their capacity for innovation, their impact on equity, and their role in a competitive market. We might have expected more topics than we saw related to equity and competition. There did not, however, seem to be a prevalence of language related to markets, choices, equity, and opportunities. It may be the case that even these concepts are still too far from the "theoretical potential" discussed by Lubienski and Weitzel (2010). Instead, the political alignment (or divergence) of charter schools with traditional public schools seems to be more important in their discussion. In addition, there seems to be significant attention paid to the relationship between charter schools and financial resources. This evidence suggests an ideology in earlier years that connected charter schools to public schools and independence from the public system. Autonomy, at the basic level, and choice seem to have been more prevalent pieces of the ideological puzzle at first. Later, the competition for *financial* resources (not market demand) overtakes autonomy as the dominant ideological tie. While this research cannot identify the valence of this connection (are charter schools good or bad for financial resource management in the public system?), it does suggest that what may be important to society is their role in the United States' system of scarce resources for public education.

Where does this leave us as researchers? It does seem that questions about the efficacy of charter schools in terms of innovation through autonomy may have been the most pressing questions to answer earlier in history. However, this research suggests that there is more concern recently with financial resources. Limited study exists on this subject (e.g., Honey, Blissett, & Woo, 2016; Xing, Maugeri, Pierson, & Reitano, 2015), and it may be the case that much more is needed to address the ideological connections that are most important to today's public. In addition, the consistently present, though fluctuating importance of political concepts suggests a need for further research on the political role of charter schools and how they contribute to the balance of power between political parties and groups.

This study is, of course, hindered by the sheer complexity of language and the multiple ways in which words can be used. A benefit of this type of analysis is that it can identify broad patterns. A deeper analysis will be required to parse nuances in language that are hidden by this broader analysis. For example, what positions on charter schools, and how, have been attributed to Democrats and Republicans over time? In addition, a full understanding of charter school ideology requires data gathered from the public. This first step, however, identifies particular dimensions of education politics that warrant further investigation as motivators for public thought. It provides us with concrete categories of concepts to test and examine through qualitative, survey, and experimental methods to determine what it is exactly that charter schools mean to the American people.

Table 1: Topic terms for 3,000 random sample

Top Five Terms	Sum(Probabilities)
student + educ + state + public + test	460.00
board + district + year + student + member	440.63
state + educ + fund + budget + bill	306.69
student + year + district + program + teacher	305.56
new + year + children + student + state	243.12
citi + educ + like + teacher + peopl	239.51
state + republican + democrat + elect + court	207.03
citi + build + board + council + counti	187.53
call + center + art + student + visit	153.34
work + bill + offic + teacher + public	134.75
univers + year + colleg + communiti + high	133.21
elementari + met + middl + counti + high	98.11
grade + ride + eleph + orlean + camel	46.27
isd + academi + houston + high + elementari	44.26

Table 2: Topic terms for first 3,000 articles from sources with publication rate >75%

Top Five Terms	Sum(Probability)
board + student + district + state + propos	488.06
educ + teacher + public + student + parent	318.21
bill + state + senat + legisl + hous	280.78
board + district + member + parent + contract	265.53
citi + counti + new + broward + polic	252.92
student + teacher + class + parent + learn	198.06
public + state + privat + voucher + educ	175.13
student + educ + boston + high + public	164.04
tax + educ + republican + state + democrat	156.97
year + program + student + state + children	150.67
educ + citi + year + new + board	146.50
educ + state + public + money + want	139.44
think + public + need + support + want	136.23
peopl + year + children + time + must	127.47

Table 3: Topic terms for last 3,000 articles from sources with publication rate >75%

Top Five Terms	Sum(Probability)
educ + district + teacher + public + state	370.03
student + state + test + teacher + educ	357.03
district + board + student + educ + charter	334.72
student + district + high + year + new	331.33
year + student + public + time + state	243.37
state + million + year + fund + depart	223.83
year + public + children + parent + educ	216.87
state + senat + bill + fund + vote	214.06
state + educ + student + ohio + bill	209.44
citi + elect + campaign + candid + polit	190.63
polic + new + man + peopl + dalla	123.87
due + amount + cpn + reoffer + amp	77.35
isd + houston + team + miami + bush	76.02
high + academi + region + brown + skhm	31.45

Table 4: Topic terms for article extracts

| Top Five Terms	Sum(Probabilities)	Topic Number
public + tradit + educ + independ + held	**180.26**	**7**
public + privat + oper + offer + student	*177.93*	*4*
tradit + account + communiti + innov + grade	175.69	1
fund + district + state + board + oper	*174.82*	*2*
public + board + money + last + year	*173.62*	*5*
public + fund + district + state + local	**171.63**	**11**
public + independ + district + oper + govern	**171.47**	**3**
public + run + independ + educ + fund	**170.63**	**6**
student + perform + well + test + counti	*170.08*	*8*
state + union + citi + regul + budget	*166.55*	*10*
public + educ + district + run + parent	**165.53**	**18**
success + work + good + close + theyr	162.61	16
fund + public + educ + feder + use	*159.97*	*14*
year + new + base + open + first	159.62	9
student + district + can + educ + arent	159.31	15
open + way + fund + public + student	*158.98*	*13*
high + children + just + educ + great	150	12
build + classroom + student + educ + also	132.29	17

Note: Topic numbers correspond to nodes in Figure 8.

Table 5: Topic terms for first 3,000 article extracts

| Top Five Terms	Sum(Probabilities)
public + regul + oper + mani + independ	*177.61*
public + board + local + allow + oper	*176.13*
public + state + educ + independ + parent	**172.96**
public + state + system + educ + regular	171.68
educ + student + experi + success + special	170.45
privat + public + teach + free + manag	*169.18*
open + oper + independ + free + board	*167.76*
state + public + educ + independ + fund	**167.07**
district + oper + part + local + state	*166.92*
district + state + group + run + communiti	*166.73*
student + counti + requir + year + expect	164.48
public + oper + state + fund + mani	*163.24*
parent + teacher + public + student + design	*161.54*
public + fund + money + state + regul	*160.44*
public + run + group + board + teacher	158.99
fund + public + educ + free + use	157.66
public + educ + new + pay + tradit	157.13
enrol + first + educ + answer + student	152.04

Table 6: Topic terms for last 3,000 article extracts

Top Five Terms	Sum(Probabilities)
state + public + fund + money + receiv	*190.32*
board + govern + educ + year + nation	188.27
district + oper + open + children + public	*184.35*
educ + provid + option + make + state	183.07
public + tradit + student + way + fund	**181.23**
public + privat + problem + run + independ	**181.12**
public + part + better + kid + allow	*179.2*
public + fund + run + free + take	*177.37*
student + high + district + requir + still	174.13
student + locat + enrol + grade + fail	167.84
district + parent + board + children + nonprofit	166.62
counti + like + serv + build + among	164.47
differ + charter + budget + spend + base	163.44
public + fund + student + state + independ	**156.78**
new + meet + contract + state + student	152.37
offer + fall + open + academi + scienc	128.08
teacher + choic + great + answer + give	127.89
account + communiti + percent + achiev + improv	125.44

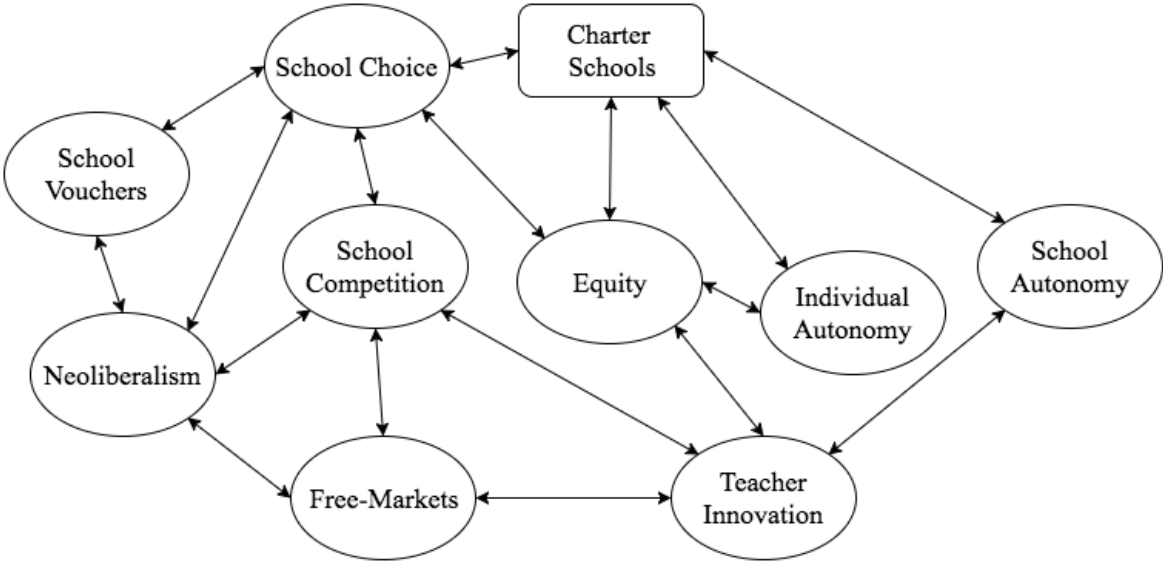**Figure 1: Ansolabehere's conjectures on issue constraint**
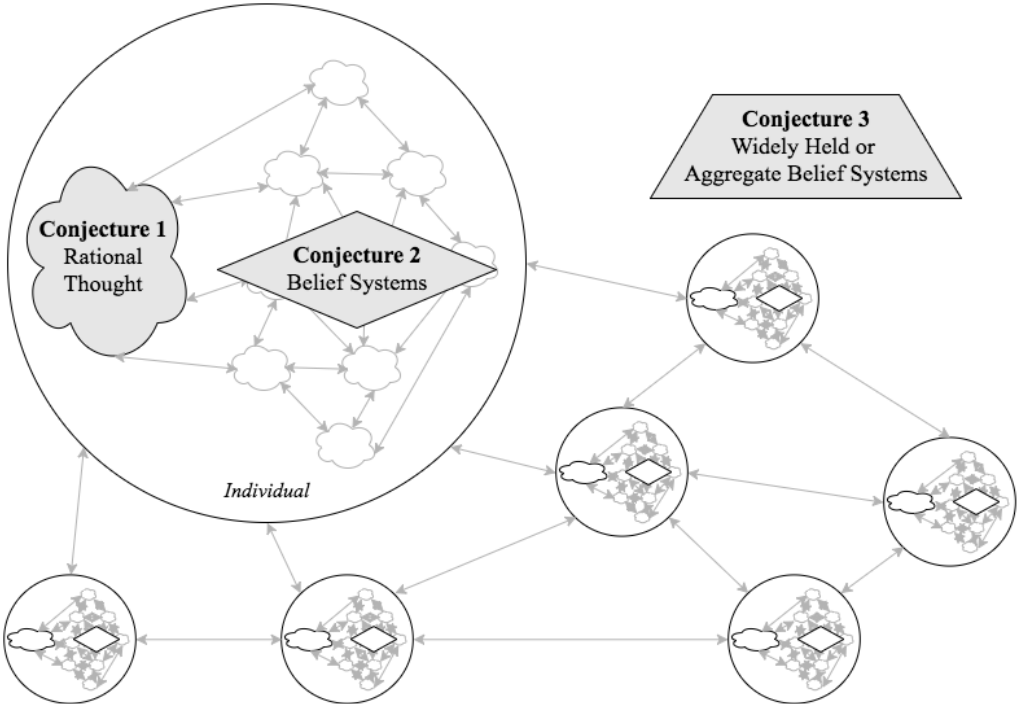
Figure 2: Public opinion poll results for charter school support
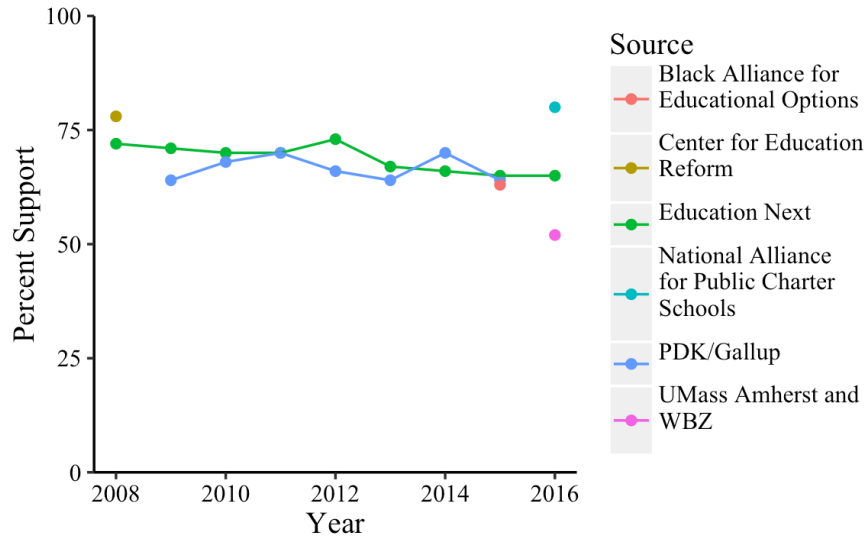
Figure 3: Proposed charter school ideology from extant literature

Figure 4: Distribution of retrieved "charter school" articles from LexisNexis over time
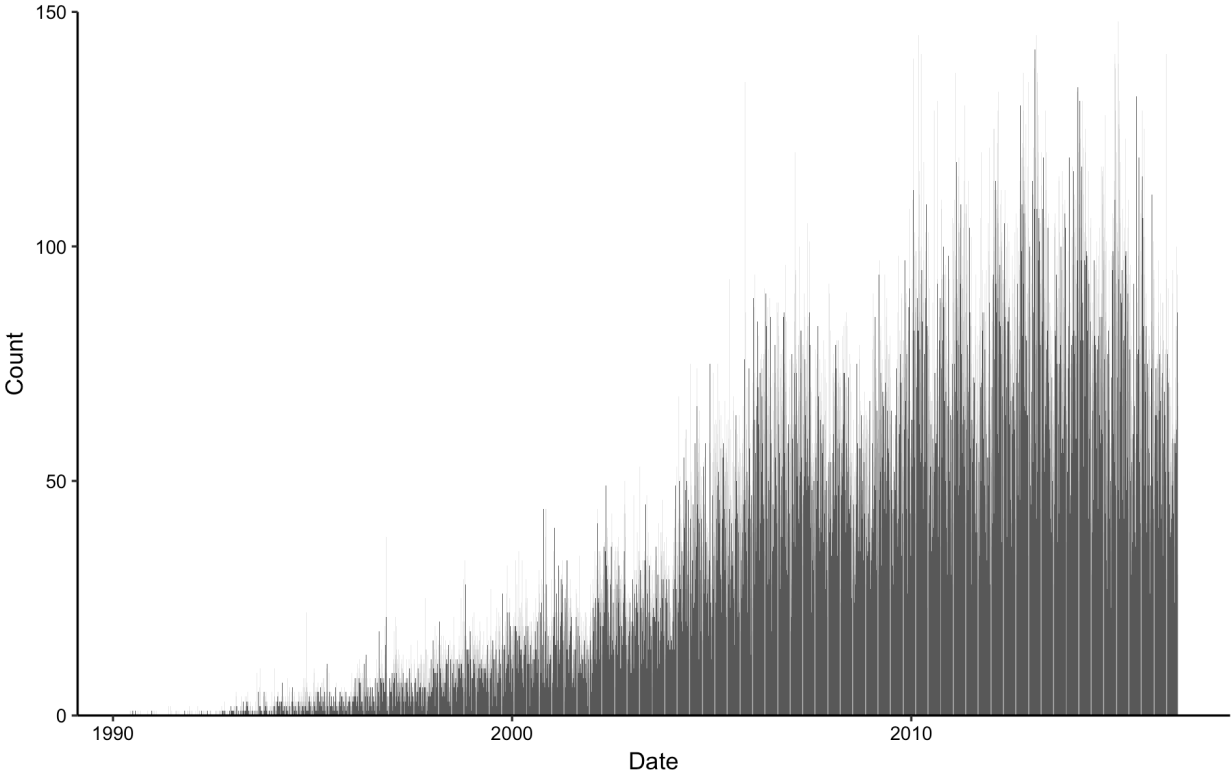
Figure 5: Frequency of deductively-determined concepts and terms over time
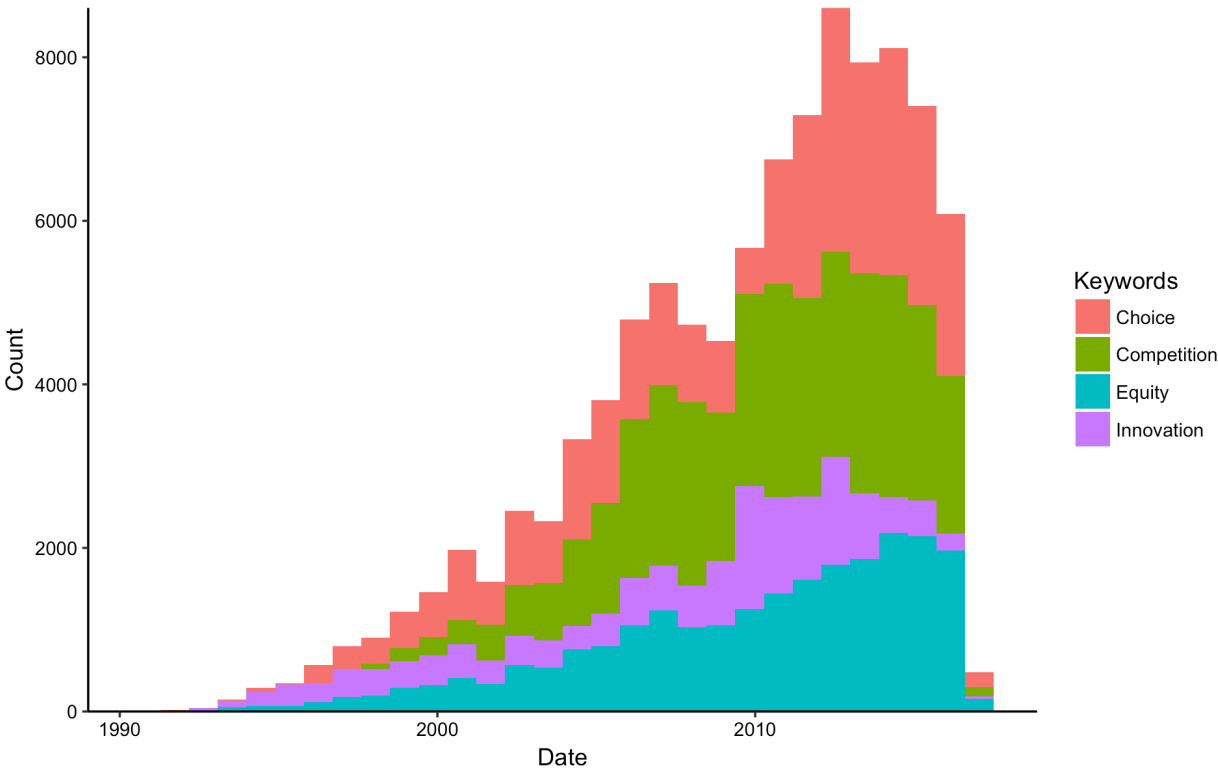
Figure 6: Fit statistics for models with 2 to 100 topics estimated, full articles

Figure 7: Selected topic labels and topic rankings across time

Figure 8: Publishing frequency of article sources

Figure 9: Fit statistics for models with 2 to 100 topics estimated, article extracts

Figure 10: Strength between topics based on topic probability correlations

Note: The numbers in this graph correspond to the topic labels in Table 2.
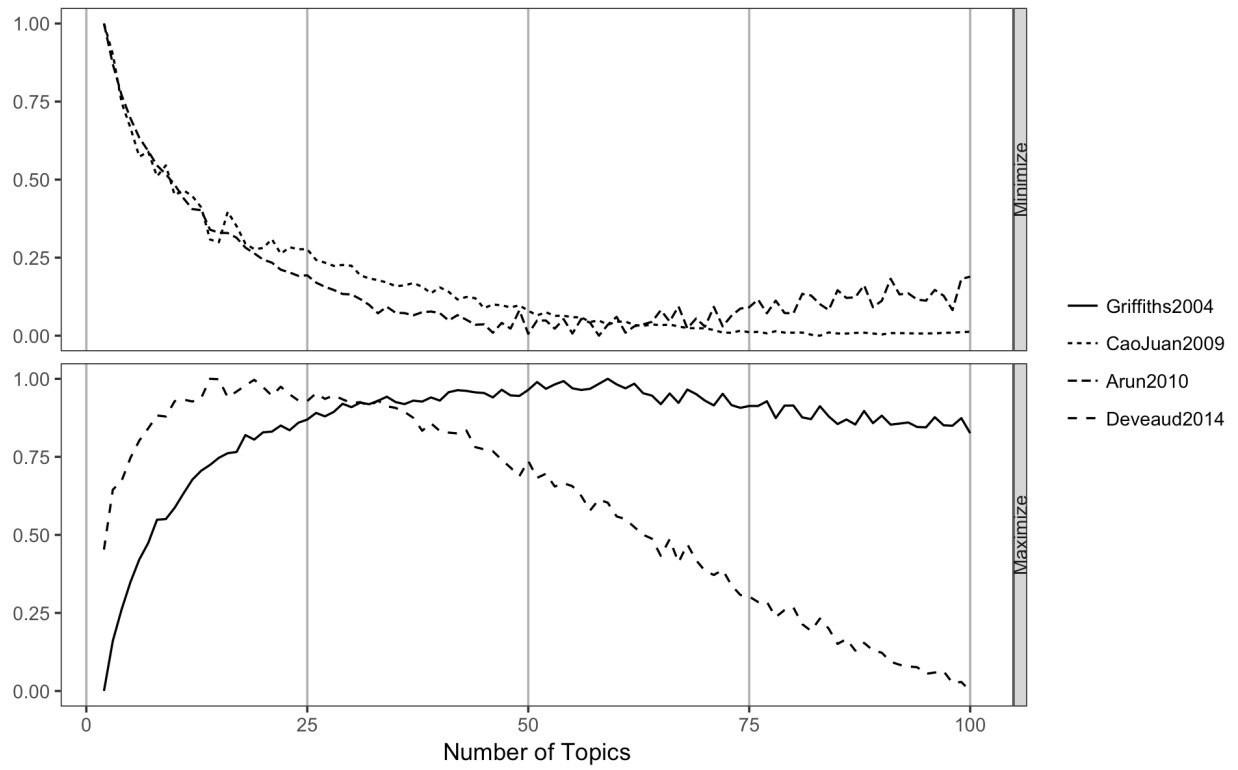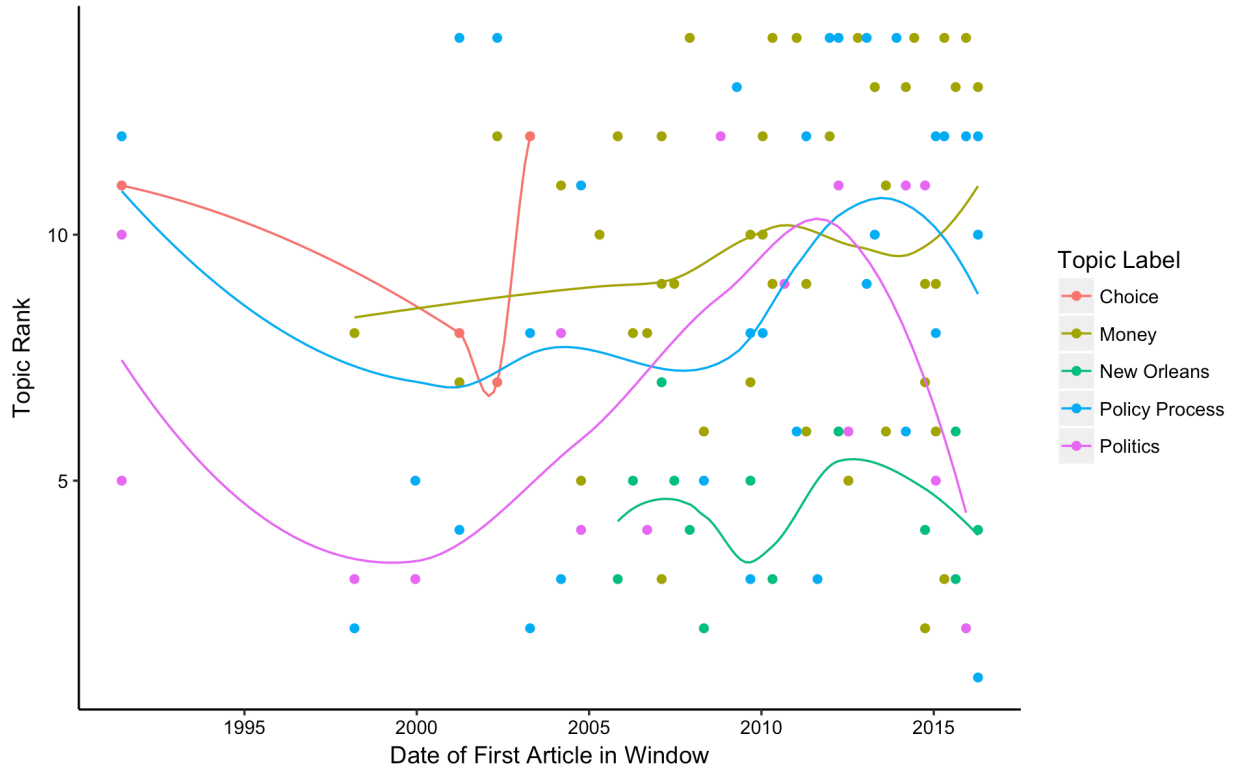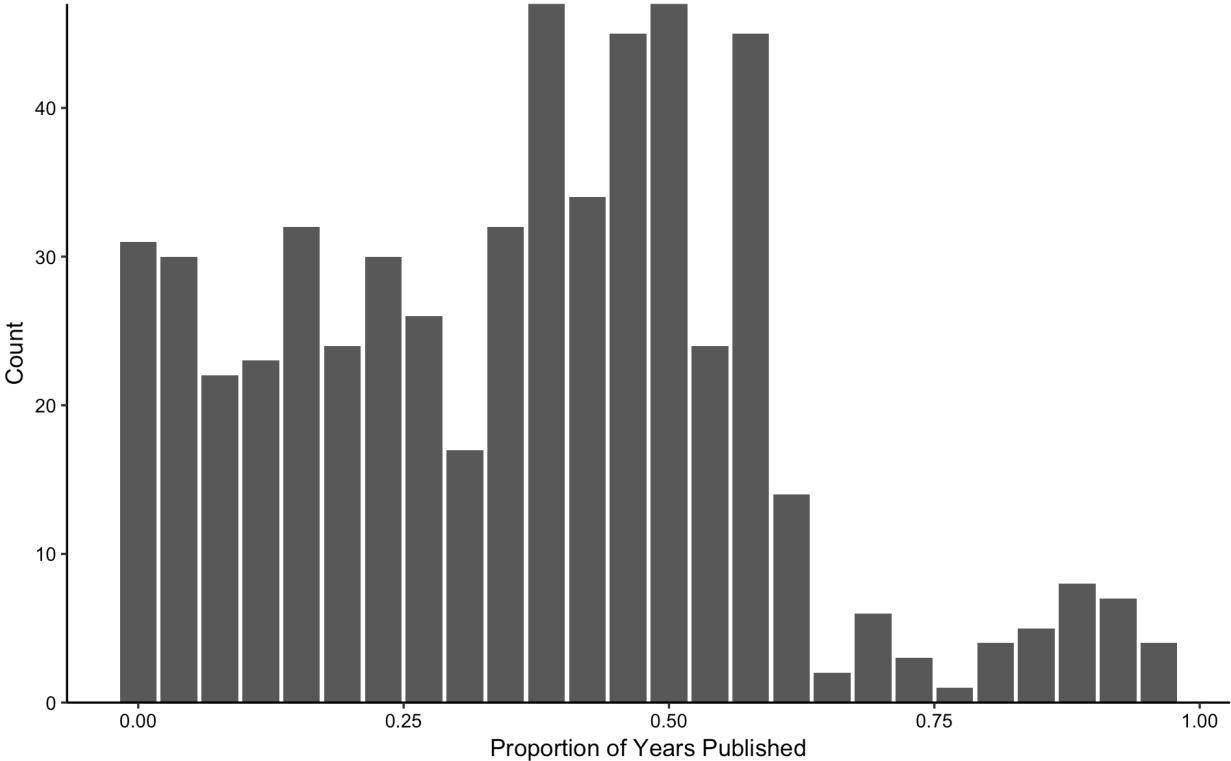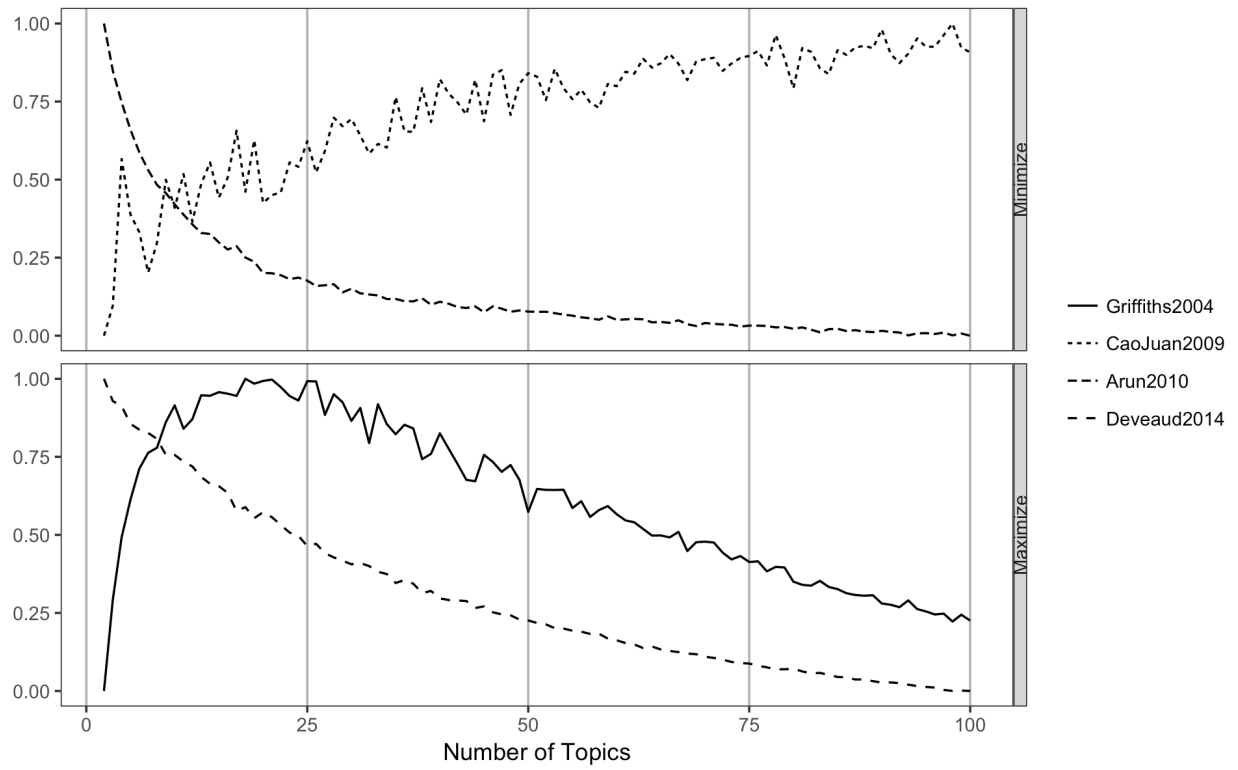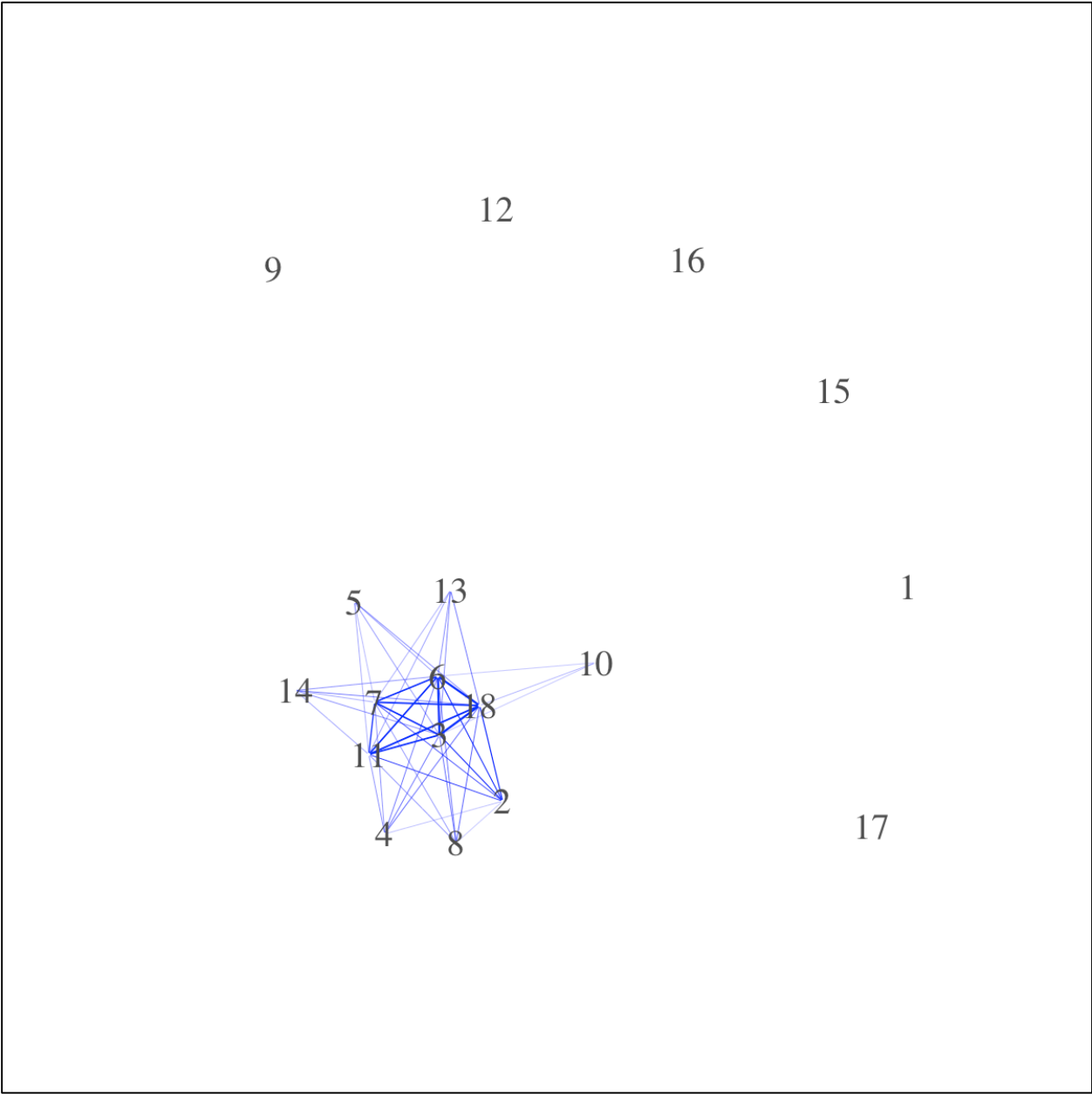
IV. An Information Search Exercise on Charter School Attitudes

In previous work on the subject, I have approached the study of the personal and ideological politics of charter schools and choice from a largely observational perspective. In this view, I take the words that people say and draw interpretations about ideological structures from patterns in what is said. In a purely qualitative approach, I interviewed pro- and anti-school choice and charter advocates in East Nashville to understand the foundations for their advocacy. Here, I found that there were clear points of difference between pro- and anti-choice advocates in terms of their underlying rationales while also identifying possible points of commonality. While important, the results from this study are limited to a particular time, place, and context. To address this limitation and to investigate powerful discourses, I also conducted an investigation of tens of thousands of articles published in news media concerning charter schools. Using probabilistic topic modeling, I was able to identify common patterns in language as it came to the description of charter schools.

At this point, it is still not evidently clear what interventions are available to change the policy debate environment, nor do we know how people may interact with the interventions. As suggested in my qualitative work, there may be two major types of problem sets in the politics of education that may be targeted in the development of an intervention: those dealing with people's actual beliefs, and those dealing with the relational politics of those involved. While the latter likely rests within the realms of diplomacy and conflict management, the first notably sits within the purview of education and information. While there are certainly aspects of beliefs that are questions of morality and deeply held ethical ideologies, an understanding of the role of information in people's opinion process could greatly inform steps forward. In particular, approaches to study that involve direct intervention instead of observation could be important.

In this study, I wish to understand the extent to which different types of information about charter schools are more or less important to people when they are evaluating charter schools. Using established methods in political psychology, I will explore the tendencies of individuals to make deliberate choices about the information they seek. These tendencies rest within the theoretical realm of selective exposure and motivated reasoning. In this theoretical framework, people are not simple evaluators of information, but rather evaluate information in a way that is biased by prior beliefs, attitudes, and states of mind. When I refer to information *types*, I am referring to categories of information based on the concerns to which they speak (e.g., equity, innovation). With this information, I will be able to answer three research questions, all related to one another: (1) First, what information, in terms of information type, do people find to be most important when evaluating charter schools? (2) To what extent do people's prior attitudes influence the kind of information they seek out? (3) To what extent do people's demographic characteristics influence the kind of information they seek out in terms of information type?

This paper proceeds as follows. First, I provide an overview of the information that does exist today on charter schools. Following a question about what information people do/should pay attention to, I then discuss the concept of motivated reasoning in political psychology as a potential source of insight. Next, I review the methods and data source for the exercise I conducted. I follow with a discussion of the results, organized by research question. Finally, I conclude with implications for practice and research.

Mixed Information on Charter Schools

Up until the 1990s, most research around charter schools was mostly theoretical and/or rhetorical. Over time, as data become more freely available and as the implementation of charter policy became more stable, this research shifted to be more evaluative (Miron, 2010). How were charter schools serving the needs of students? Building on the motivations for charters discussed earlier, there are three ways in which we might consider evaluating charter schools outside of their direct impact on the achievement of their students: equity, innovation, and competition (Weitzel & Lubienski, 2010). Equity motivations focus on the posited ability of charter school policy to offer to underserved student population opportunities that are usually afforded to privileged populations. Second, charters were seen as a way to give educators more flexibility for serving their students' unique needs. Finally, through market-based mechanisms, charters (and school choice) should introduce competition into the education system, forcing all players, traditional public schools included, to perform better in order to compete. On all of these points, the evidence thus far has been mixed.

Equity. Regarding the ability of charters to uniquely serve the needs of historically underserved populations, the evidence has been mixed as to whether they are doing so (Weitzel & Lubienski, 2010). One common concern about the equity outcome of charters schools is that when coupled with school choice (as they often are), they contribute to a re-segregation of schools as parents choose to send their students to schools with more people that look like them, especially among white parents ("white flight") (Eidelson, 2014). In addition, inequities in families' realistic ability to choose, as limited by transportation and information (Teske, Fitzpatrick, & O'Brien, 2009), causes some to wonder if only the most advantaged and/or highest performing students are able to move from traditional public schools to charters, leaving

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less advantaged and lower performing students in traditional public schools in a phenomenon called "cream skimming" (Dean, 2014). The research on these re-segregation points has not reached a consensus, and all conclusions are vulnerable to critique. Some research does indicate that white flight occurred, while some does not and points to possible self-segregation on the part of parents from underrepresented minorities (D. R. Garcia, 2010). However, this does not mean that charters have played no part in this re-segregation. In addition, there is little consistent evidence of cream skimming, as charters and traditional public schools have been shown to serve comparable numbers of low performing, disadvantaged students. However, there is still concern that there are unmeasured characteristics that distinguish families to switch compared to those who do not, including involved parents (D. R. Garcia, 2010). Overall, there is some evidence of re-segregation and cream skimming in limited cases, but neither of those phenomena have been found to be particularly widespread (Wohlstetter et al., 2013).

Innovation. The evidence on the extent to which charters are producing more innovative practices is also characterized by weak, inconsistent evidence. Overall, there has been little evidence of new programs or innovations in charter schools writ large, except in the increased use of educational technology in charter classrooms. There are reports that educators in charters often feel that there is more autonomy, but there is little evidence that these feelings are translating into innovative practice (Wohlstetter et al., 2013). Over the last decade, charter schools have been increasingly held to federal and state agency standards, and it may be the case that these regulations are limiting the innovation envisioned by Buddhe and Shankar (Miron, 2010).

Competition. One of the challenges of studying the competitive effect of charter schools on traditional public schools is that charters are not randomly located in districts and

neighborhoods. Not only that, but students and families self-select into charter schools and there are often limits to how much families can actually "choose." Finally, competition is hard to measure, and the distributional effects of competition on different types of schools are difficult to summarize (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010a; Ni & Arsen, 2010). Still, the market-based argument here is that if traditional public schools are forced to compete with charter schools for students, they will expend more effort and energy to raise the quality of their own educational programs. There are reasons, however, to think that this market-based mechanism might not work. For example, the turbulence of constant student switching and moving may not be great for schools, and competitive marketing may create conflict between traditional public schools and charters.

Lastly, there is some practical concern that when more students go to charters, traditional public schools will lose funding that they need to serve their students (Ni & Arsen, 2010). A typical example of this concern is articulated by Caref, Hainds, Hilgendorf, Jankov, & Russell (2012): "The supposed 'bureaucracy' that holds back innovation in neighborhood schools is not an inherent feature of public neighborhood schools but an intentional policy of disinvestment that withholds resources for innovation in neighborhood schools and gives additional funding and autonomy for charters." There is currently a growing literature on this issue that investigates whether this is indeed the case. So far, research finds that traditional public schools do lose revenue when charters exist (Xing et al., 2015), but that this is not necessarily through the disinvestment of the public itself (Honey et al., 2016). In this way, traditional public schools may become less efficient in that they may not reduce their revenue or expenditures until they know that reduced enrollments are permanent (Ni & Arsen, 2010). However, there is little evidence that the competition created by the presence of charter schools improves the achievement of traditional publics (Wohlstetter et al., 2013). If anything, these schools are not necessarily getting

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better, but are instead shifting their resources towards new programs, changing leadership, making magnets, or making programs consistent with parent preferences, but without the increase in achievement that market advocates might expect to see (Ni & Arsen, 2010).

Student achievement. Beyond the innovation argument, charter advocates believe that charters will perform better than traditional public schools because the ability of charters to be run by non-government managers allows them to rid themselves of what is perceived as government inefficacy. Conceptually, charters also have an additional source of accountability that traditional public schools do not have: the ability to fail. They have to be accountable to their own consumers (families and students) because in the event that they are not serving their consumers' needs, they risk being shut down (Miron, 2010). As such, there has been a robust literature on the extent to which charters produce higher achievement gains than traditional public schools.

Overall, as has been the theme with charter school research, results have been mixed. In early years of the charter movement, most evidence showed lower or equal performance by charter schools as compared to traditional publics (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010b). Berends, Watral, et al. (2008) provide a broad overview of reviews of charter school effects throughout time, ranging from a review by Goldhaber in 1999 to a review in 2006 by Hill et al. This review of reviews summarized the mixed effects of charter studies across time, leaving us with few concrete answers about the relative benefits of charter schooling. There is some evidence that more recently, charters have gained ground (Wohlstetter et al., 2013). Using meta-analyses, Betts & Tang (2011) found consistent positive effects. However, these aggregated effect sizes, though statistically significant, were relatively small, hovering at about 0.05. Cremata et al. (2013) find

similar results, with no evidence of effects of math scores, and general positive result for reading, but only amounting to eight additional days of instruction.

Why would there be so much mixed evidence? Beyond typical research heterogeneity regarding differing methodologies, a major reason for this is simply that charter schools are also heterogeneous. Across the nation, there are diverse laws, diverse models, and diverse students being served by charter schools (Wohlstetter et al., 2013). As such, it is difficult to pin down one "policy" that is being evaluated. As such, Berends, Watral, et al. (2008) propose that research on charter schools should not be asking whether charter schools work as a whole, but rather under what conditions they work. Still, this information exists in the world. What are people to pay attention to? What information do people find compelling when evaluating charter schools?

Selective Exposure and Motivated Reasoning

Historically, the study of selective exposure has focused on the tendencies of individuals to systematically expose themselves to information consistent with their prior beliefs and avoid inconsistent information (e.g., Arceneaux & Johnson, 2013). Here, however, I use the term selective exposure more broadly to encompass also those decisions to select information along lines other than belief congruence. Some types of information and arguments may be differentially compelling to different individuals based on their own moral foundations. For example, Peralta, Wojcieszak, Lelkes, and Vreese (2016) find that numerical evidence, for populations with stronger beliefs about climate change and health care, tended to be more important than narrative evidence. In short, the amount of information available often exceeds the intake capacity for individuals, and as such, people make non-random choices about what information to consume. These choices are important for policymakers and researchers to

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understand in order to inform the kinds of evidence and arguments that should be presented if the goal is to shift the landscape of policy debate.

The typical understanding of selective exposure ties into the proposed *defense* motivation that people hold in information selection. Here, people have the goal of protecting their existing beliefs and attitudes. By contrast, it is also suggested that people sometimes are driven by an *accuracy* motivation, whereby they select information in a way that, to them, optimizes the chance that they will be "correct" in their attitudes and beliefs at the end (Kruglanski & Klar, 1987). Both of these concepts are covered in the study of motivated reasoning. *Motivated reasoning* is the concept that the rational considerations that people make in their evaluations of political objects are influenced by relatively unconscious affective biases that are triggered automatically. In other words, the processes people go through, including the acquisition and appraisal of new information, in evaluating a political object are themselves influenced by automatic emotions that exist in that context (Lodge & Taber, 2013).

Given these theoretical frames, what might we expect to see? The first, most obvious conclusion based on the existing evidence is that people will select pro-attitudinal information. People who already support charter schools will be more likely to select information supporting charter schools, and vice versa. The evidence thus far, however, does not speak much to the types of information that different groups will find to be differentially compelling. This study is one of the first to explore this topic in education politics. To an extent, this lack of evidence makes sense, as the relevant information for any particular policy arena is likely to be very arena-specific. For example, while the extent to which the policy supports increased student achievement is likely to be highly discussed in conversations about teacher evaluation, this same evidence type may be largely absent from discussions about suspension policy. In previous work

on the subject, I found that in comparing pro-choice policy and anti-choice policy advocates in East Nashville, there were significant qualitative differences in the type of information they found to be important. Anti-choice advocates were more likely to discuss issues of community and no-excuses charter schools, while pro-choice advocates discussed teachers, leaders, and autonomy. As such, and attempt to influence the policy discussion that is empathetic to meeting people where they are may need to consider the different kinds of information that people find to be compelling. Pro-charter people may be more concerned about issues of student achievement, while anti-charter people may be concerned about no-excuses charter schools and resources.

Methods in Political Psychology and Motivated Reasoning

Methods used to understand motivated reasoning as introduced by Lodge and Taber (2013) may help us get closer to an answer. Lodge & Taber's (2013) *The Rationalizing Voter* stands today as one of the most important works on public opinion. In short, the authors present the results of a variety of political psychology experiments that establish a model of political cognition in which people's evaluations of political objects are influenced not only by rational processes, but also rationalizations and motivated reasoning.

The experiment that the authors conducted is fairly expansive, as it asked multiple research questions at once, and I only describe part of it here. The main experimental tool was the use of an information board. In this device, experiment participants were shown a static grid of possible choices for information they could investigate about a topic. They chose a topic, and then the technology logged the information they chose. The computer records the order and viewing time for the arguments selected. Consistent with their hypotheses, the authors find evidence that despite asking people to view information even-handedly with the objective of

being able to explain the issue to others, people still tended to seek out pro-attitudinal information consistent with their prior beliefs.

A limitation of the information board approach is that it assumes that the information available to citizens is static and always-available. In many contexts, such as the political campaign environment, there is often more information than can be digested easily by citizens, and the information available is always changing. To address this concern, instead of a static information board, researchers have more recently used the Dynamic Process Tracing Environment (DPTE). The DPTE is a web-based interface available from researchers at the University of Iowa and funded by the National Science Foundation. Instead of having access to a constant set of information, participants are presented with scrolling labels of information (e.g., "NBC/Wall Street Journal Poll, early February"), and they can click on any label to gain more information. Scrolling continues throughout the entire process such that people can read two to three of the pieces of information before position changes, and there is a cost to accessing any information while the information continues to scroll. Data gathered from this environment include what item was accessed, time of access, and length of access (Redlawsk & Lau, 2009).

I propose in this study that the information searching mechanisms that are present in the political context are also present in the charter school context. As reviewed, there is a large and evolving base of information available about charter schools. People must make choices about the information they consume, and those choices may be motivated by prior beliefs. Using the evidence gathered from my qualitative investigation of pro- and anti-choice advocates in East Nashville, we might expect previously pro-charter people to be more attentive to information about student achievement, while anti-charter people may be more interested in information related to resources. However, this previous study was conducted in a very specific policy

context in one community. The benefit of this information exercise is that it can provide more generalizable evidence about citizens in the United States. This evidence can help the research community determine how to best serve the public interest by answering questions that exist in the mind of the public. This leaves us as researchers with two large questions: (1) What information is important, and (2) do people's beliefs change?

Participants and Methods for this Study

A total number of 400 participants for this study were recruited via *Amazon Mechanical Turk* (MTurk) on two dates: May 5 and 23, 2017. MTurk has been used in political science literature (e.g., Gerber, Huber, Doherty, & Dowling, 2011; Huber, Hill, & Lenz, 2012). In comparing MTurk participants to traditional collegiate samples used in political science on the extent to which they performed on a measure of attentiveness to instructions, Hauser and Schwarz (2016) found that MTurkers were more attentive. One common concern with MTurk samples, however, is the external validity of the subject pool, as people differently select into participation. To test this, Berinsky, Huber, and Lenz (2012) compare an MTurk sample to data from the American National Election Panel Survey (ANEPS), Current Population Survey (CPS), and American National Election Studies (ANES). On most characteristics tested, the MTurk sample was comparable to the ANEPS sample, while both exhibited similar distortions from highly rigorous CPS and ANES samples. In particular, MTurk participants tended to be younger, liberal, and more educated. This is important to note in the analysis of my results here. However, studies comparing results using traditional samples and MTurk samples have shown consistent results across these groups. Mullinix, Leeper, Druckman, and Freese (2015) find comparable results in treatments effects compared across MTurk samples, other convenience samples, and a

population-based sample. Paolacci, Chandler, and Ipeirotis (2010) find similar comparability when comparing an MTurk sample to an on-line discussion board sample and a collegiate sample at a large Midwestern United States university.

People received the experiment in several steps. First, after an introduction to the full exercise, they were given an attitude battery and attitude strength battery (Appendix A).[4] Second, they practiced using the DPTE system using a series of headlines on arguments pertaining to a topic unrelated to charter schools (whether or not penguins are in fact a type of duck). Third, they conducted the actual DPTE exercise for two minutes. In this exercise, eight different headlines scrolled through, and each was shown around six times. Headlines and content are shown in Appendix B. Content from original sources was edited to be approximately the same length for each item. After the conclusion of the DPTE exercise, participants were shown the attitude and attitude strength items again. Finally, they received a demographic questionnaire, shown in Appendix C, and then were asked to briefly describe their attitudes toward charter schools. This last item was included (and they were told about it beforehand) to incentivize individuals to take the information search seriously. In my study, participants were paid $2.00 for their time.

Overall, I have a design that looks like the diagram in Figure 1, with each dotted line area indicating the data that will be used to answer each of my four research questions. With the attitude direction and strength items, in order to use them as aggregates in the analysis, I extracted principal components factors from factor analyses. For attitude strength, I used a

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[4] Originally, I was concerned that priming people to develop and express opinions on charter schools would affect their subsequent information search behavior. In the first round of data collection, only approximately half of participants were given the pre-questionnaire, and I tested if having been given the pre-questionnaire affected information search behavior. These results are in Appendix D. I find no evidence that this is the case, and as such, I gave everyone the pre-questionnaire in the second round of data collection.

normal correlation matrix, while I used a polychoric correlation matrix for the categorical

attitude items. A scree plot of the eigenvalues is shown in Figure 4. This factor analysis was

done using all the data, pre- and post-questionnaire data combined, in order to capture the

consistent factor.

I model information selection relationships using the model below, estimated using

logistic regression analysis:

$$\Pr(opened) = \alpha + \beta ProCharter + \gamma_1 Equity + \gamma_2 NoExcuses + \gamma_3 Resources + \varepsilon$$

where *opened* is a binary variable indicating whether a specific person opened a specific

item, *ProCharter* is an indicator for whether the item was pro-charter, and *Equity, NoExcuses,*

and Resources are indicators for whether the item pertained to issues of equity, no excuses

charter schools, or resources, respectively. The omitted group was achievement-related items.

The above was my base model. In order to test whether people with different prior attitudes

differentially selected information with different characteristics, I included interactions of the

attitude direction and strength factors as discussed before with the item type indicators. Finally,

for demographic characteristics (party, ideology, education, schooling background), I conducted

subgroup analyses and tested for differences in coefficients using Wald tests. Standard errors

were clustered at the individual level.

Results

Results below are organized by research question.

Q1: What information was most important? In Table 1, I show the percentages of

individuals who selected each of the eight items. Across the board, all items were selected

approximately half of the time. There was not very much variation in the selection of items, with

the pro-charter, no excuses item being chosen least frequently (by 45% of people) and the pro-charter, resources item being chosen most frequently. An initial glance at the percentages reveals no significant patterns of pro- or anti-charter material or any specific type of material being selected more frequently. It does appear, however, that the no excuses item was selected less frequently, whether it was pro- or anti-charter. This is confirmed by evidence in Table 2, which shows the results of a logistic regression analysis of item selection on item valence and type. From these results, I find that a no excuses item has 15% lower odds of being opened.

Q2: *How do previous attitudes predict information selection?* Before looking at the effects of prior attitudes, I first review their distribution. In Figure 2, I show a stacked bar plot showing the percentages of individuals who responded in each response category for each item. There is substantial variation among respondents in their answers. The item that was most agreed-upon by participants was that charter schools allow for more opportunities for teachers to implement innovative practices, with 72% of individuals at least somewhat agreeing with this statement. Conversely, the item for which there was the most disagreement was that charter schools take away resources from schools that need them, with 52% of individuals at least somewhat disagreeing with this statement. It is also important to note that responses to a couple of items exhibited a substantial amount of neutrality. 28% of individuals had a neutral/no opinion about whether charter schools provide a better education and traditional public schools, and 32% held a neutral/no opinion about whether charter schools use practices that align with their values more than traditional public schools.

In Figure 3, I present violin plots for the distribution of the responses to items asking about the strength to which people held their opinions. Interestingly, for three out of the four items, there seemed to be relatively uniform distributions of attitude strength. However, for the

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item asking individuals how certain they are of their feelings on charter schools, people seemed to be disproportionately certain of their opinions. This is especially interesting in contrast to the other attitude strength item distributions.

Factor analyses of the attitude and strength items, as described in the Methods section, reveal the presence of only one underlying factor, as shown by the eigenvalues in Figure 4. Logistic regression models including these standardized factors are shown in Table 3. These models, as discussed, predict the probability of any one item being opened by an individual. First, in column 1, the exponentiated coefficient of 0.86 suggests that on average, those with more pro-charter attitudes were less likely to select an item. In other words, higher pro-charter scores are associated with having selected fewer items in general. Similar results were found for attitude strength, where those with stronger prior beliefs were less likely to select items. In order to observe the extent to which different types of items were more or less important to people with different prior beliefs, I included interaction effects of the prior belief factors with the various item characteristics. I find a statistically significant coefficient of 1.20 on the interaction between prior attitude and the valence (pro- or anti-charter) of the item. This coefficient above 1 (and significantly so) indicates that the more pro-charter a person was, the more interesting a pro-charter item was. This result is in line with previous research on selective exposure. I do not, however, find any evidence that people with varying levels of attitude strength weighed different item types differently in their information searches.

Q3: How did information selection differ by political and educational identification?
In addition to prior attitudes, it was possible that that information selection patterns differed across individuals according to political and educational identifications. The results of subgroup regressions along these lines are shown in Tables 4 and 5. Coefficients in bold exhibited

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statistical significance at the 0.05 level when testing (using the Wald test) for a difference in coefficients across models. In Table 4, I show results by party identification (Democrat, Independent, Republican) and ideological identification (liberal, moderate, conservative). I find evidence that exposure behavior differed along both political party and ideological lines. Republicans were significantly more likely to choose pro-charter information than Democrats and Independents. Similarly, moderates and conservatives were more likely to choose pro-charter information than liberals. In Table 5, I show results by education (has bachelor's degree) and schooling (went to a traditional public school). I did not find evidence that people of different levels of education approached the information search differently. However, people who went to traditional public schools, versus people who did not, did look at different kinds of information. In particular, those who went to schools that were not traditional publics were significantly less likely to choose an item if it pertained to issues of equity or no excuses.

Conclusion

In this paper, I investigated information behavior in two ways. First, I investigated differences in information search behavior across different individuals. Second, I investigated attitude changes. Overall, I found that compared to achievement, equity, and resources, no excuses items tended to be less interesting to people. In addition, different subgroups of participants did differentially search for information. People tended to seek out pro-attitudinal information. In addition, information search tendencies differed significantly for those with different party and ideological identities and different experiences with the traditional public school system.

The use of the DPTE provides good internal validity for the questions investigating information search patterns. It is important to note, however, that the results for my models predicting attitude changes are limited. People were not randomly assigned to information exposure, so it is not necessarily the case that the relationships found there were causal. It may be the case that people more likely to change attitudes one way or another were also more likely to seek out different information. Further experiments will be needed to truly investigate the causal relationship between information and attitudes.

Consistent with hypotheses from motivated reasoning, people tended to seek out pro-attitudinal information. This conclusion, by itself, has important implications. First, this result conflicts with theories of affective intelligence and Bayesian updating, both of which imply that people, when faced with counter-attitudinal information, should update their beliefs. Indeed, as researchers, we might hope that the information we provide the public helps people update their beliefs. The capacity of our work to do this, however, is limited if people tend to seek out information that they already agree with. As such, it is important in the framing of research and its dissemination to think critically about the audiences one wants to reach and perhaps do more to present information in a way that, at first glance, is more congruous with people's priors. Second, some may conclude that this result is troubling. While this research does not investigate the reasons why people are dedicated to their priors, it may be good for researchers and policymakers to be sensitive to this and even seek ways to make people more amenable to investigating perspectives different from theirs.

Extant theories of selective exposure do not particularly provide us much direction in knowing what kind of evidence is important to people. As noted, what information is compelling, outside of congruence with prior beliefs, is likely to be subject-specific. The fact that

people from different backgrounds seek information differently is also important. The conclusions here are similar to those just stated: Any dissemination of information and its framing needs to be sensitive to the ways in which target audiences may digest or seek the information. Not all information reaches all people, and the results of this study provide direct implications to researchers as a field. The future of the relationship between empirical science and policy may depend on the extent to which we as a research community can adjust to the information seeking behavior of the public and policymakers. This study only begins this discussion and opens up further questions that the research community should reflect upon. In particular, are we answering the questions that are important to people in their decision-making processes? What do we have to do to make our work change the hearts and minds of those who are making policy decisions? Future work should continue to investigate the kinds of information that is most important for the people that matter.

Table 1: Percent of people who opened each item

Valence	Type	Percent Opened
Anti-charter	Achievement	50.65
Anti-charter	Equity	51.68
Anti-charter	No Excuses	47.29
Anti-charter	Resources	47.29
Pro-charter	Achievement	49.35
Pro-charter	Equity	46.77
Pro-charter	No Excuses	44.70
Pro-charter	Resources	53.75

Table 2: Predicting item selection from item valence and type

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Is pro-charter	0.98		0.98
	(0.06)		(0.06)
Equity		0.97	0.97
		(0.09)	(0.09)
No Excuses		0.85*	0.85*
		(0.07)	(0.07)
Resources		1.02	1.02
		(0.09)	(0.09)
Observations	3096	3096	3096
Pseudo R^2	0.00	0.00	0.00
Wald χ^2	0.15	5.88	6.04
Prob $> \chi^2$	0.70	0.12	0.20

*Note: * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. Clustered standard errors are in parentheses. Exponentiated logged odds (odds ratios) are presented here.*

Table 3: Conditioning item selection on prior attitudes

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Is pro-charter	1.08	1.07	1.08	1.08	1.09	1.08
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.08)
Equity	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)
No Excuses	0.81*	0.81*	0.81*	0.81*	0.81*	0.82*
	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)
Resources	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Attitude	0.86**	0.79***	0.87			
	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.10)			
Pro-charter X Attitude		1.20**				
		(0.09)				
Equity X Attitude			0.90			
			(0.13)			
No Excuses X Attitude			1.05			
			(0.14)			
Resources X Attitude			1.02			
			(0.14)			
Strength				0.85**	0.82**	0.83
				(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.09)
Pro-charter X Strength					1.08	
					(0.08)	
Equity X Strength						0.96
						(0.12)
No Excuses X Strength						1.07
						(0.13)
Resources X Strength						1.06
						(0.13)
Observations	1544	1544	1544	1544	1544	1544
Pseudo R^2	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
Wald χ^2	9.20	14.41	11.18	9.21	10.19	9.95
Prob > χ^2	0.10	0.03	0.19	0.10	0.12	0.27

Note: * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. Clustered standard errors are in parentheses. Exponentiated logged odds (odds ratios) are presented here.

Table 4: Item selection by political identification

	Party			Ideology		
	Democrat	Independent	Republican	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Is pro-charter	*0.91*	*0.95*	*1.28**	*0.81***	*1.21*	*1.21*
	(0.08)	*(0.10)*	*(0.17)*	*(0.07)*	*(0.15)*	*(0.14)*
Equity	1.09	1.01	0.75	1.01	1.11	0.75
	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.17)	(0.13)	(0.19)	(0.15)
No Excuses	0.88	0.87	0.77	0.82	0.98	0.79
	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.10)	(0.16)	(0.15)
Resources	1.06	1.14	0.79	1.02	1.14	0.91
	(0.14)	(0.18)	(0.17)	(0.13)	(0.19)	(0.18)
Observations	1344	1080	560	1632	760	688
Pseudo R^2	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
Wald χ^2	4.41	3.71	7.18	11.28	4.41	5.05
Prob $> \chi^2$	0.35	0.45	0.13	0.02	0.35	0.28

*Note: * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. Clustered standard errors are in parentheses. Exponentiated logged odds (odds ratios) are presented here.*

Table 5: Item selection by education

	Education		Schooling	
	No Bachelors	Bachelors	Other	Traditional Public
Is pro-charter	0.93	1.03	1.11	0.95
	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.14)	(0.07)
Equity	0.97	0.97	*0.60****	*1.10*
	(0.13)	(0.12)	*(0.09)*	*(0.12)*
No Excuses	0.83	0.87	*0.57****	*0.94*
	(0.10)	(0.10)	*(0.10)*	*(0.09)*
Resources	0.99	1.05	0.82	1.08
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.11)
Observations	1560	1536	632	2464
Pseudo R^2	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00
Wald χ^2	4.26	2.68	15.34	3.74
Prob $> \chi^2$	0.37	0.61	0.00	0.44

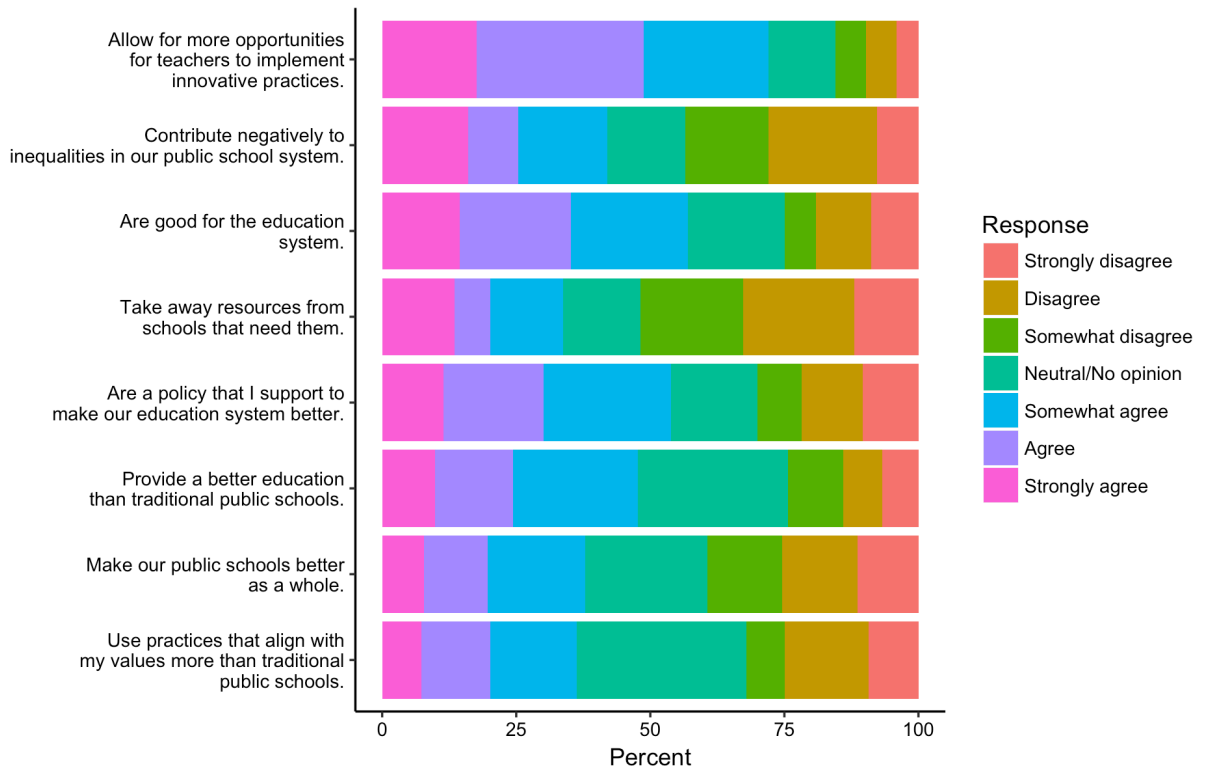*Note: * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. Clustered standard errors are in parentheses. Exponentiated logged odds (odds ratios) are presented here.*

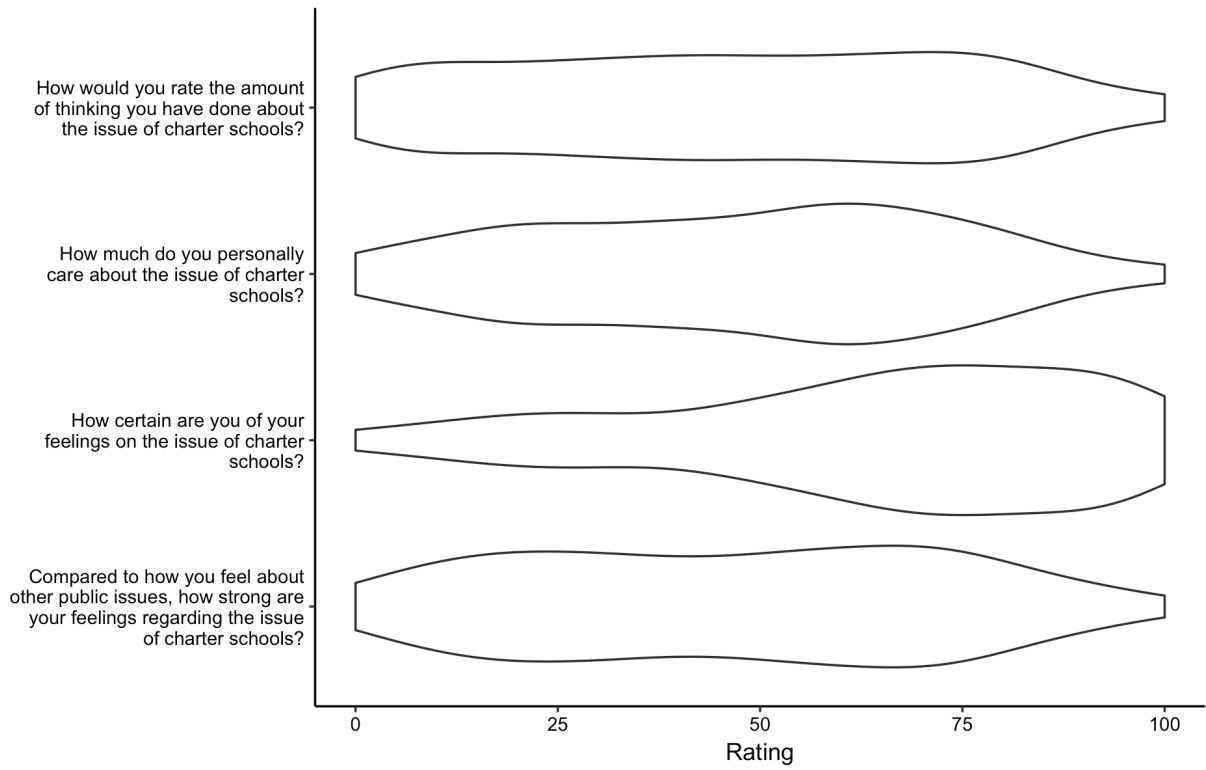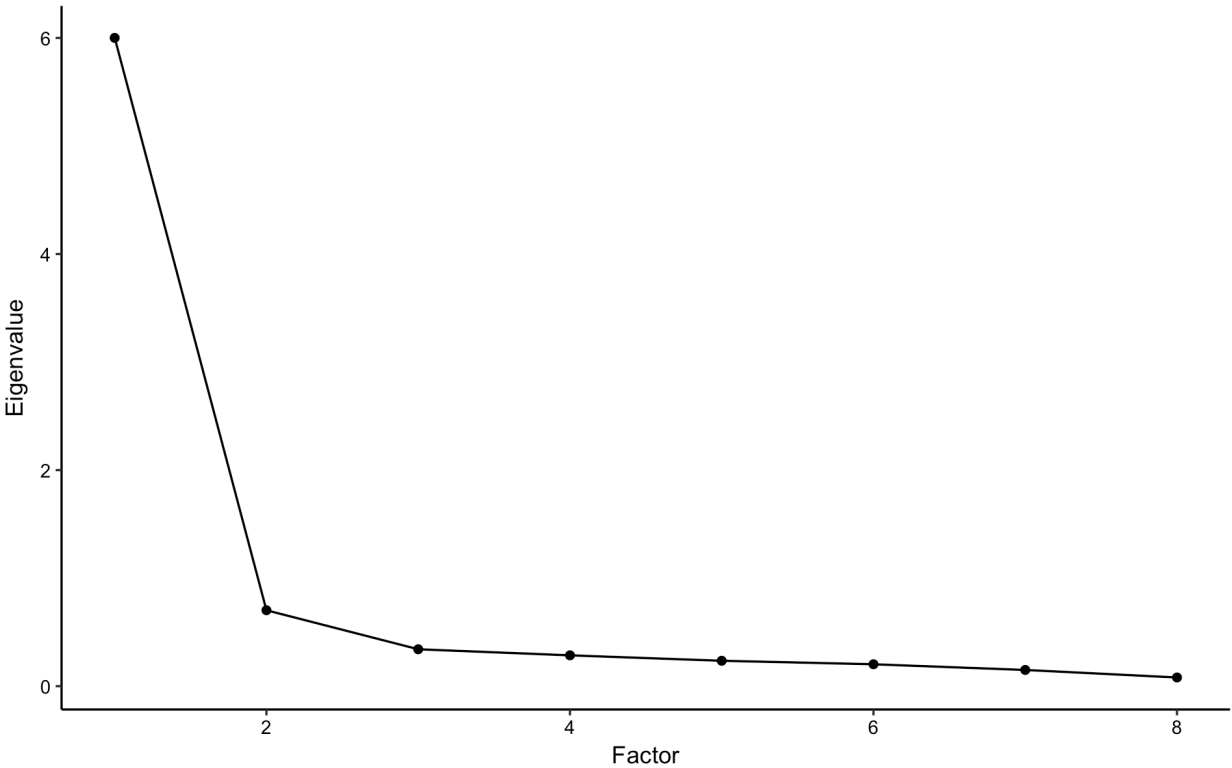**Figure 1: Experimental design and research questions**
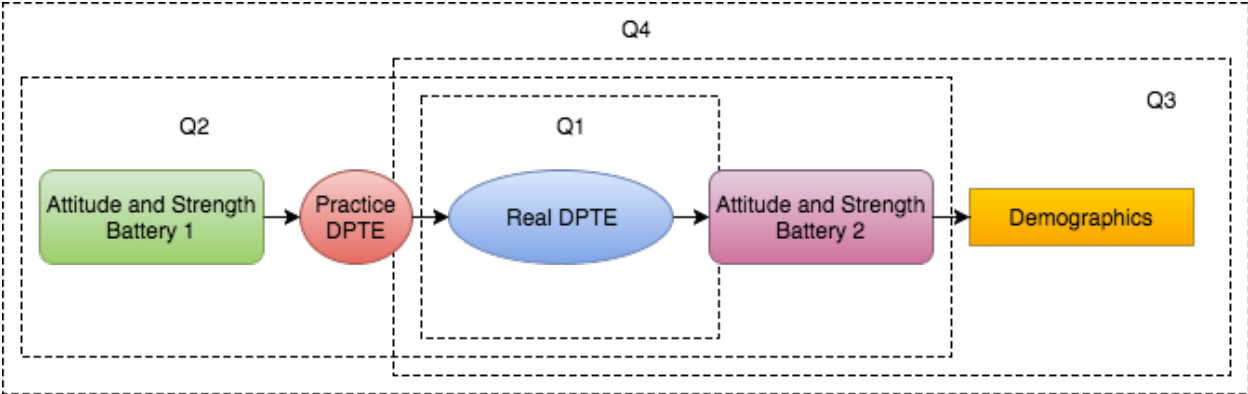
Figure 2: Pre-questionnaire attitudes towards charter schools

Figure 3: Pre-questionnaire strength of attitudes towards charter schools

Figure 4: Scree plot for attitude factor analysis

V. Conclusion

During my qualitative investigation, in order to encourage participants to speak openly and honestly with me, I prefaced each interview with a statement of commitment to writing my research results as agnostic on the subject of whether school choice should or should not be expanded in East Nashville. Upon hearing this, one participant remarked, with some humor, that regardless of how neutral I tried to write, my work would probably be cast as pro- or anti-charter in the end. This remark highlights the importance of this work. Charter school politics have been and continue to be contentious in American politics. Especially with our current political climate and the ideological attachment of the current federal administration to school choice, it is likely that the study of the politics of education will see a revival.

In this dissertation, I investigated the theoretical potentials of charter schools as they exist in the United States. Using three different methods and samples, I illuminated the non-efficacy side of the charter debate. What do people believe about charter schools? In my first paper, I found significant differences in thought processes between pro-charter and anti-charter advocates. I did not find that the major differences were simply differences in opinion over fact that can be resolved empirically. Rather, different components of the complex charter and choice landscape were differentially important to participants. Pro-choice interviewees, for example, saw teachers and leaders as being the most important factors in children's growth. By contrast, anti-choice interviewees prized supportive communities. My second paper took a step back and looked at the discourse surrounding charter schools in American media writ large. Here, I found that there were indeed common patterns that could be identified. In particular, it is important to note that there have been shifts in the ideas associated with charter schools. In earlier years, the connection of charter schools with other choice ideas was more prevalent. However, today, the

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more prominent discourse surrounds charter school funding and the role of financial resources in the debate. Finally, in my third paper, I take a psychological experiment approach to try and understand the kind of information that people find to be important when evaluating information about charter schools. First, in line with previous research in motivated reasoning and selective exposure, I find that people are more likely to seek out information with which they already agree. Second, I find that people with different characteristics, such as ideological identification, seek out information in different ways.

Altogether, what do these data points tell us? There are several types of implications to which I think this research speaks. First, all of this research can be tied to ideas about ideology. As explained in my second paper, an ideology is a well-formed and highly connected belief system. Previously, we have not had empirical evidence about what the charter school ideology looks like beyond speculations derived from theoretical literature. Here, I illuminate two important facts about this ideology. First, there are certain aspects of the ideological network that have been largely missing from the theoretical discussion of charters thus far. Of particular note is the discussion around financial (and other) resources. Second, different ideologies are held by different people.

The other implications of this research are more practical. Policymakers and politicians will do with this research what they will. One way to think about possible uses of this research is in the practice of political framing. In a world where people have diverse constituents and where charter school policy is subject to democratic structures, it is important for people to realize that the alignment of constituencies and stakeholders will require certain types of ideological appeals. For pro-charter and anti-charter advocates alike, understanding the deeper positions of opposition parties is a critical first step in engaging in productive political debate.

The implications for researchers, like the implications for policymakers, depends on one's own goals. Assuming that effects researchers want their research to be influential, there are several suggestions to be taken from this research. First, this research could dictate future empirical research agendas. To the extent that researchers see themselves in service to the public, perhaps investigating those empirical questions that are more closely tied to people's ideologies will be the most fruitful way to make change. On the other hand, the role of the researcher in producing evidence independent of the whims of politics may also be important. However, then, the communication of this research to the public, similar to the advice I have offered to policymakers, needs to be aligned with and compassionate to the ideologies of the audience.

This research is only the first step into this field. Much more work need to be done in order to understand other aspects of the American political mind, including the perspectives of policymakers, the voting public, and even researchers themselves. The core takeaway in terms of the study of education policy broadly is that ideologies, separated from pure efficacy arguments, are prevalent, observable, and important for policy discussion. To the extent that education will continue to be constructed democratically, all stakeholders will need to pay attention to ideologies in order to make real change happen.

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Appendix A: Attitude and attitude strength batteries

Attitude Direction Questions

(7 pt. Likert type agree-disagree response options)

In the United States, charter schools…
1. Provide a better education than traditional public schools.
2. Allow for more opportunities for teachers to implement innovative practices.
3. Take away resources from schools that need them.
4. Are good for the education system.
5. Contribute negatively to inequalities in our public school system.
6. Make our public schools better as a whole.
7. Use practices that align with my values more than traditional public schools.
8. Are a policy that I support to make our education system better.

Attitude Strength Questions

(Continuous sliding response scale)

1. How much do you personally care about the issue of charter schools?
2. Compared to how you feel about other public issues, how strong are your feelings regarding the issue of charter schools?
3. How certain are you of your feelings on the issue of charter schools?
4. How would you rate the amount of thinking you have done about the issue of charter schools?

Appendix B: DPTE headlines

<u>Anti-Charter – Achievement</u>
(Leal, 2016)
Headline: Evidence of charter schools lagging behind traditional publics

California charter schools, including several that intentionally target those at risk of dropping out, account for a disproportionate share of students who fail to graduate high school, according to a report released this week. The report has been produced annually since 2010 by Civic Enterprises and the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University, in partnership with America's Promise Alliance and the Alliance for Excellent Education, as part of an effort to track states' progress toward reaching a national graduation rate of 90 percent by 2020.

"Building a Grad Nation," which tracks graduation rates among public schools nationally, found that 24 percent of California students in all public schools who failed to graduate in 2014 attended charter schools, even though the state's charter schools enrolled only 9 percent of all high school students that year.

In California, 94 percent of traditional high schools in 2014 had a graduation rate of 67 percent or higher, the threshold used to identify a low-graduation-rate school. Sixty-three percent of all charter schools had a graduation rate of 67 percent or higher.

California ranked fourth nationally, behind Ohio, Arizona and Idaho, for the highest percentage of non-graduates who came from charter schools. Across other states, charter schools also had a disproportionate share of students who did not graduate in 2014, according to the report. Nationally, charter, virtual and alternative high schools made up 14 percent of all high schools. However, they made up 52 percent of all schools with graduation rates lower than 67 percent, according to the report.

<u>Anti-Charter – Equity</u>
(Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, Wang, & Orfield, 2010)
Headline: Charter schools are increasing school segregation

Seven years after the Civil Rights Project first documented extensive patterns of charter school segregation, the charter sector continues to stratify students by race and class. Our analysis of the 40 states, the District of Columbia, and several dozen metropolitan areas with large enrollments of charter school students reveals that charter schools are more racially isolated than traditional public schools in virtually every state and large metropolitan area in the nation. While examples of truly diverse charter schools exist, our data show that these schools are not reflective of broader charter trends.

We show that charter schools, in many ways, have more extensive segregation than other public schools. Charter schools attract a higher percentage of black students than traditional public schools, in part because they tend to be located in urban areas. As a result, charter school enrollment patterns display high levels of minority segregation, trends that are particularly severe for black students.

While segregation for blacks among all public schools has been increasing for nearly two decades, black students in charter schools are far more likely than their traditional public school counterparts to be educated in intensely segregated settings. Black students are not the only racial group experiencing higher segregation in charter schools. Higher percentages of charter school students of every race attend predominantly minority schools (50-100% minority students) or racially isolated minority schools (90-100% minority students) than do their same-race peers in traditional public schools. Half of Latino charter school students, for example, attended racially isolated minority schools.

Anti-Charter – No-Excuses
(Bryant, 2016)
Headline: Criticisms of no-excuses charter schools

Recently, a popular idea, at least in policy and media circles, has been to promote the idea that the impact of childhood poverty and trauma is an "excuse" for academic problems. Teachers who practice in "no excuses" schools are encouraged not to accommodate children's problems that are created by adversity, but to lay down strict rules and rigid expectations that challenge children to overcome—even ignore—their personal backgrounds and circumstances.

The notion that a child's circumstances should be of no concern to her teacher goes against the grain of educators who believe education programs should attend to the whole child and not compartmentalize academics apart from students' cultural identities and physical and social-emotional wellbeing. Despite these concerns, no-excuses schools are the overwhelming trend in big city school districts struggling with poverty.

According to a recent article for the Scholars Strategy Network, in these schools, "strict behavioral expectations mandate how students dress, enter a classroom, walk in the hall, or sit in class, and teachers are expected to enforce these expectations using explicit rewards and punishments, such as merits/demerits or adjustments in 'paychecks' that allow students to purchase items from a school store." No excuse schools have notoriously high rates of student suspensions and expulsions and high rates of student attrition. Students who have a hard time complying with the rigid rules are suspended so often they leave, or are sometimes "counseled" into believing that leaving would be in their best interest. Charter schools have become the most prominent adherents to the "no excuse" model.

Anti-Charter – Resources
(Save Our Public Schools, 2016)
Headline: Charters are taking money from public schools in MA

Charter schools are funded by diverting money from local school districts. The 71 charter schools operating in Massachusetts educate just less than 4 percent of Massachusetts children— only 32,000 students—yet they will siphon off more than $450 million this year alone. This money would otherwise stay in neighborhood public schools and be used to improve learning for all students.

A new ballot measure in Massachusetts could allow charters to expand into areas where they don't exist now, taking millions of dollars away from successful district public schools. Under the proposed ballot question, 12 new charter schools enrolling up to 1 percent of the school-age population could be approved every year, forever, with no limit. The amount of money lost will grow: $100 million more the first year, more than $200 million the next year, more than $300 million the year after that, crippling our school system with every passing year.

Our neighborhood schools are left with less money to cover the same operating expenses, such as maintenance, utilities and transportation costs. In cities and towns such as Boston, Holyoke, Randolph, New Bedford, Gardner and Lynn, charter schools can already take as much as 18 percent of a school district's budget. That jeopardizes our public schools—the schools most families choose for their children—and it causes the elimination of classes – such as music, art technology and foreign language courses– and leads to larger class sizes in district public schools.

Pro-Charter – Achievement
(Izlar, 2013)
Headline: Charter schools outperform traditional public schools

Charter school students are making larger gains in reading than their peers in traditional classrooms while performing on par in math, according to a study of 1.5 million U.S. children. The average student at a charter -- a privately run public school -- learned eight more days of reading a year than a pupil in a regular school, according to the Stanford University study. In both subjects, poor students, black children and those who speak English as a second language fared better in charters.

 "The charter sector does seem to be posting better results, especially with disadvantaged students," said Margaret Raymond, director of Stanford's Center for Research on Education Outcomes, which conducted the study. "The fact that they are moving the needle with this many students since 2009 is a pretty impressive finding."

The study found wide varieties among charters schools in different states. Rhode Island's charter schools showed among the biggest gains relative to regular public schools -- equivalent to 85 days in reading and 111 in math. In the District of Columbia and New York City, which was broken out separately, charters also outperformed by a wide margin. New York City charter school children learned an additional 92 days of math in a year. "If there's one thing this report confirms, it's that we can't roll back the reforms that have transformed the educational landscape in New York," said Devon Puglia, deputy press secretary for the city's education department.

Pro-Charter – Equity
(N. Garcia, 2016)
Headline: Charter schools serving more minority students in CO

Charter schools across the state of Colorado are now serving a larger percentage of racial and ethnic minorities than district-run schools. During the 2015-16 school year, 47 percent of charter school students were classified as a racial or ethnic minority, compared to 45 percent of students

at district-run schools. That could be explained in part by the expansion of high-performing charter schools in Denver that serve these populations, as well as new charter schools in regions with large Latino populations such as Greeley and Aurora. The state's charter schools also are serving more students who qualify for federally subsidized lunches. In 2015, about 36 percent of students at charters received free or reduced-priced lunch. That number has doubled since 2008.

In 2015, schools across Colorado saw fewer students meet state expectations on the new and more difficult standardized test compared to previous state exams. But charter schools generally had more students meet the new threshold than district schools.

Charter school students at every grade but fifth also performed better than peers at district schools by 3 to 7 percentage points. Students in all grades who qualify for subsidized lunches at charter schools outperformed their peers at district-run schools on the state's English test. A higher percentage of charter school students with disabilities at all grade levels met state benchmarks on both the English and math tests compared to those at district schools.

Pro-Charter – No Excuses
(Angrist, Dynarski, Kane, Pathak, & Walters, 2011)
Headline: Numbers show benefits of no excuses charter school

Charter schools affiliated with the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) are representative of the No Excuses approach to public education. These schools feature a long school day, an extended school year, selective teacher hiring, strict behavior norms and a focus on traditional reading and math skills. We use applicant lotteries to evaluate the impact of KIPP Academy Lynn, a KIPP charter school that is mostly Hispanic and has a high concentration of limited English proficiency (LEP) and special-needs students.

Our estimates suggest that KIPP Lynn generates substantial score gains for lottery winners, with effects on the order of 0.35 standard deviations for math and 0.12 standard deviations for English/language arts (ELA). Score gains are largest for special education students and students with limited English proficiency, while Hispanic and non-Hispanic students appear to benefit about equally from time in KIPP. Additional analyses show that effects are also larger for those who start out lagging their peers than for more advanced students. An analysis of effects on performance categories shows that KIPP lifts students out of the lowest performance category in both math and ELA.

We note that while our results are for a single school, the KIPP organization runs similar schools across the country. Key elements of the KIPP program also feature in other No Excuses charter schools. Our findings suggest the major elements of this replicable model combine to increase achievement overall, with the largest gains coming from relatively weak students.

Pro-Charter – Resources
("Charters aren't draining district school funding," 2016)
Headline: Charters do not drain district school funding

For months, Massachusetts voters have been told that charter schools are draining money from traditional public schools, thereby threatening the education of non-charter students across the state. That's the principal argument that charter opponents have offered in urging voters to defeat Question 2, which would allow 12 new charter schools or charter school expansions.

But a detailed new report by the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation shows that the anti-charter argument just doesn't pass muster. The foundation, widely regarded as an even-handed fiscal analyst, writes: "Examination of school funding trends in districts affected by charter school enrollments does not suggest that charter schools are over-funded, that students in district schools are suffering a loss of support, or that the per-student funding of districts is trending negatively. Rather, per-student funding has increased quite steadily across the state, and the district-charter balance has been stable."

The study notes that in fiscal year 2016, approximately 3.9 percent of public school students (about 36,000 Massachusetts students) were attending charters – and 3.9 percent of public school funds went to charter schools. That, as the report notes, is in keeping with the state's long-established educational philosophy: Educational dollars should follow the student. That's the same philosophy that informs the state's school-choice program. But in those programs, the sending district isn't reimbursed any amount for the departing students, whereas with charters, there's generous adjustment funding, including the payment of 100 percent of a student's educational cost the first year after his or her departure.

Appendix C: Demographic questionnaire

Do you work in the field of P-12 education (primary or secondary education)?
- Yes
- No

What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- Less than a high school diploma
- High school diploma or equivalent (e.g., GED)
- Associate's degree or vocational degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's, Doctorate, or Professional degree

Select the category that best describes the type of school from which you earned your high school or high school equivalent diploma.
- Traditional public school
- Charter school
- Magnet school
- Private school
- Home school
- GED program
- Other: _____

What do you consider to be your political party affiliation?
- Republican
- Democrat
- Independent
- Other: _____

If you are independent, do you lean more to the Republican party or the Democratic party?
- Republican
- Democrat
- Neither

In general, would you describe your political views as…
- Very conservative
- Conservative
- Moderate
- Liberal
- Very liberal

Appendix D: Information search behavior by pre-questionnaire group

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Is pro-charter	0.89	0.77*	0.89
	(0.09)	(0.11)	(0.09)
Equity	0.99	0.99	0.88
	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.18)
No Excuses	0.89	0.89	0.84
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.18)
Resources	1.08	1.08	1.00
	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.21)
Pre-questionnaire group	1.04	0.91	0.92
	(0.11)	(0.13)	(0.19)
Pro-charter X Pre-questionnaire group		1.31	
		(0.27)	
Equity X Pre-questionnaire group			1.26
			(0.36)
No Excuses X Pre-questionnaire group			1.12
			(0.32)
Resources X Pre-questionnaire group			1.15
			(0.33)
Observations	1544	1544	1544
Pseudo R^2	0.00	0.00	0.00
Wald χ^2	3.22	4.99	3.86
Prob $> \chi^2$	0.67	0.55	0.87

Note: * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. Standard errors are in parentheses. Exponentiated logged odds (odds ratios) are presented here.