THE STANDARD(S) CHOICE: EDUCATION CHOICE & STANDARDS DISCOURSE IN INDIANA

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Education choice and standards-based accountability have been the two most dominant movements in U.S. education policy over at least the last quarter century. The integration of the two movements has become increasingly common in education policy frameworks, but the theoretical tension between the curricular autonomy and curricular alignment fundamental to the respective movements has never been fully resolved. This research explores the theoretical curricular tension between education choice and standards-based accountability through an analysis of the public discourse over the consideration, adoption, and implementation of Indiana’s 2011 statewide voucher policy, the Choice Scholarship Program [CSP], as represented through two state newspapers. The dissertation begins with a reflection on the meaning of “curriculum,” an overview of the U.S. education choice and standards-based accountability movements, and an explanation of the theoretical curricular tension between choice and standards-based accountability policies. The Indiana CSP, unique among U.S. voucher programs in the standards-based accountability policy mechanisms it includes, is then reviewed within a discussion of why it could lead to curricular tension in participating schools. I then discuss the discourse analysis methodologies used to examine (a) who participated in the public discourse over the state voucher policy; (b) what kinds of discursive frames participants used; and (c) how concepts related to education choice and standards—and potential curricular tension
between the two—were framed. Research findings include a discussion of sixteen identified discourse actor groups and the nature and frequency of over twenty conceptual frames employed to define education vouchers, curriculum, and standards. I conclude with a proposed theory of contemporary curriculum diversity and ideas for future research.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Curriculum Vitae
Choice \ˈchόɪs\: the opportunity or power to choose between two or more possibilities
Standardize \ˈstan-dar-,diz\: to change (things) so that they are similar and consistent
(Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary)

This research explores potential curricular tension resulting from the increasing integration of the two most influential policy movements in U.S. education over at least the last quarter century, the education choice and standards-based accountability movements. Key to the presence of this curricular tension is the degree to which these movements are situated within two inherently contradictory theoretical frameworks—the choice movement within a foundational belief in curricular diversity and the standards-based accountability movement within a set of underlying beliefs that have trended toward standardization and more common curricula. In a paradoxical circular twist, the degree to which these movements are situated within inherently contradictory theoretical frameworks depends on one’s understanding of concepts like curriculum, choice, and standards. This research pursues understandings of these understandings. Before tracing the outlines of this pursuit, and for reasons that will be explained momentarily, let’s pause to consider this curricular tension through the lens of a contemporary newspaper editorial.

In April 2014 the New York Times published an editorial by political analyst David Brooks titled “When the Circus Descends.” The brief article was an endorsement of the Common Core State Standards and a critique of its critics, whom Brooks likened to the circus. As expected in an editorial piece, Brooks attempted a number of points—but only one was repeated three times over the 797 words. The point was first made in the fourth
paragraph, where Brooks (2014) wrote re-assuredly, "Remember, school standards are not curricula. They do not determine what students read or how teachers should teach" (p. A23). Brooks reiterated this point several paragraphs later, writing, “Localities preserve their control over what exactly is taught and how it is taught” (p. A23). Brooks repeated the fundamental point once more three paragraphs later, where he again claimed, “Teachers and local authorities still have control of what they teach and how they teach it” (p. A23). Brooks was not addressing education choice per se in his newspaper column, but he was addressing the potential curricular tension between common education standards and curricular diversity. In doing so, Brooks was framing his understanding of concepts like “curriculum” and “standards” within a larger discourse on choice and standards in education. If curricular tension exists within these two movements, it should be detectable within this larger discourse. The research presented below examined this larger discourse in an attempt to better understand frames of understanding related to this potential curricular tension and (perhaps) contribute to future discourse and understandings.

How does one look for (and find) tension in discourse, especially discourse as expansive as that addressing education choice and standards? Examining (or identifying) the full discourse was not methodologically or practically feasible. The study therefore examined a much more focused discourse that while not fully representative of the broader discourse hopefully still provides a rich case study through which to consider the broader discourse. Specifically, the study examined the public discourse over the consideration, adoption, and implementation of Indiana’s statewide education voucher program, the Choice Scholarship Program (CSP). The CSP makes an intriguing case study because, as will be explained in chapter two, education vouchers represent a form of education choice that
has historically been characterized, at least in large part, by the high level of curricular autonomy exercised by schools participating in voucher programs and the foundational belief in curricular diversity held by voucher advocates. Chapter two considers why the CSP is unique from other U.S. voucher plans in its use of standards-based accountability policy mechanisms. The Indiana CSP policy discourse should therefore provide a setting where school choice (as represented through vouchers and their focus on curricular diversity) and standards-based accountability (as represented through state academic standards and testing policies) are integrated into a single policy framework that is potentially conducive to curricular tension. The research is divided into seven chapters.

Chapter one considers three key education concepts: curriculum, choice, and standards. The chapter’s first section suggests that “curriculum” is best understood along a spectrum of meaning ranging from a narrow identification of instructional materials in a specific course to considerably broader conceptions of the overall learning environment. The chapter’s second section provides an overview of the education choice movement with a focus on education vouchers. The chapter’s third section reviews the education standards-based accountability movement with a focus on high-stakes testing and accountability—the defining characteristics of contemporary education standards-based accountability policy frameworks. The first chapter concludes with a discussion of the theoretical curricular tension in policy frameworks combining education choice and standards-based accountability mechanisms.

Chapter two presents the Indiana CSP within the context of other U.S. voucher programs and discusses why the CSP represents such a unique, and perhaps prescient, case study on the intersection of school choice and standards-based accountability frameworks.
Chapter three describes the study’s research methods. Borrowing from a tradition of discourse analysis research in the sociology field, the research examined discursive patterns in newspaper coverage of the Indiana CSP voucher program 2009-2013. Although not representative of the full spectrum of public discourse, newspaper coverage of major policy issues—like the adoption of statewide education voucher programs—may play an important role in how influential segments of the population come to understand issues. Newspapers may also be one of the most representative forums within wider policy discourses. Unlike private discourse between policy makers and those who influence them or the academic discourse between scholars and policy advocates, the discourse presented in newspapers is considerably more inclusive and accessible. Politicians, special interest groups, educators, academics, parents, and other stakeholders all have access and can participate. Whose voices are represented and which discursive frames are utilized may be consequential variables in the evolution of larger cultural understandings of policy formation and implementation processes. At the very least, the newspaper discourse forum should provide a departure point toward a more nuanced understanding of the discursive frames produced and adopted by discourse participants to shape the policy discourse.

Chapter four presents the results of the study’s actor representation analysis of the public discourse over the consideration, adoption, and implementation of the Indiana CSP 2009-13. The first section in chapter four considers noteworthy characteristics and trends in the study’s full data set and the chapter’s second section examines what types of participants—“actors”—participated in the discourse, how frequently different actor groups participated, and which actor groups supported or opposed vouchers and the CSP.
Chapter five presents the results of the study's discursive frame analysis of the public discourse over the consideration, adoption, and implementation of the Indiana CSP 2009-13. The chapter's first section explores the discursive frames that were used by actors participating in the discourse to construct understandings of education vouchers and the CSP. The chapter's second section combines the findings from chapters four and five to review which discursive frames different actor groups favored or avoided.

Chapter six builds on the understanding of the full discourse over the Indiana CSP detailed in chapters four and five to present the results of a more focused discourse analysis—how concepts like curriculum and standards were framed in the larger CSP discourse and the degree to which recognition and framing of curricular tension resulting from the integration of choice and standards-based accountability frameworks occurred.

Chapter seven offers a brief reflection on study findings, proposes a theoretical model of contemporary curriculum diversity, and suggests some ideas for future research.
1. CURRICULUM, CHOICE, & STANDARDS

*The term “curriculum” is many things to many people.*
(Ted Aoki, Curriculum Scholar)

**Curriculum**

How we understand “curriculum” influences how we understand education choice and/or education standards. The term “curriculum” serves many purposes and can assume different meanings depending on the context within which it is used. We must therefore seek to understand the various conceptions of curriculum so that we may better determine which of its meanings most appropriately fits the context when the term is used.

This is no easy task. There is an entire subfield within the larger study of education that focuses on the meanings of curriculum. A full review of the ideas within this field exceeds the scope of the present study, but some sense of the term’s elasticity is necessary in order to sufficiently understand its contextual relationships to education choice and standards. With this limited goal in mind, the study employs a spectrum approach to understanding the breadth of meaning in the term “curriculum.” Let’s review this spectrum and then use curricular scholar Eliot Eisner’s (1994) theoretical framework of “the three curricula” to provide an additional layer of depth to the spectrum model. *Appendix A: Curriculum Meaning Spectrum* visually displays four layers of meaning for “curriculum.”

At its most narrow, curriculum refers to the content of a single course.¹ Specifically, this definition of curriculum includes the books, film, and other “content” students engage during the course, often through reading. For example, the curriculum of an English Literature course might comprise works by Edward Gibbon, George Bernard Shaw, Jamaica

¹ This “unit” could be narrowed even further by considering smaller units of curriculum down to individual
Kincaid, Virginia Woolf, and William Shakespeare. We might be even more specific, asking *which* works by these authors are included. This technical definition of curriculum, though accurate, tends to separate *content* and *process* in teaching and learning. The curriculum is the content of the course, which is separate from how that content is taught—that process is called pedagogy. Pedagogy is discussed further below, but for now our first (and most narrow) understanding of curriculum will be the specific content offered in a course.

As the definition of curriculum expands beyond the specific content in a single course offering we come to the second layer of the spectrum of curriculum meaning—a program of study including multiple course offerings. This second understanding of curriculum is expressed nicely by the Merriam-Webster (2014) online dictionary:

**The courses that are taught by a school, college, etc.**  
*1: the courses offered by an educational institution*  
*2: a set of courses constituting an area of specialization*

The first thing we notice about this definition is that it specifies the inclusion of an institution offering the curriculum. This assumption is restrictive, as will be shown when considering levels of education choice later in the chapter, but it is otherwise a clear illustration of a particularly common understanding of curriculum. Thus in a small high school we might expect to find courses in English, math, science, history, physical education, and art, among (perhaps) others. The sum of these courses, some possibly differentiated for the perceived abilities of different groups of students, would represent the curriculum. We might be tempted to inquire further about how many of each type of course was available and to whom, but for now we will table such inquiries in order to focus on varying definitions of curriculum. For many, these two understandings of curriculum—the specific content of a single course and the larger program of course offerings—represent the full
spectrum of curriculum. For others the meaning of curriculum expands beyond these two definitions to encompass additional elements of the learning environment—like pedagogy.

For the purposes of this study, pedagogy describes the approach used by a teacher to structure the learning environment, or—if framed through the common transmission metaphor—deliver the content. Not all educators believe pedagogy and content are as easily separated as our first and second understandings of curriculum would suggest. There is a long and influential strain of understanding in the education field that has stressed the pedagogical component of a larger “curriculum” (Pestalozzi 1801; Dewey 1916, 1938; Montessori 1946). Such views of curriculum intentionally include pedagogy within the definition of curriculum. The third understanding of curriculum will therefore be an instructor or institution’s broad approach to curriculum & instruction, including both the first two definitions of curriculum and the pedagogies employed as part of the curriculum.

The most expansive definition on the spectrum of curriculum meaning encompasses the full learning environment. This understanding of curriculum goes beyond content, courses, and instructional pedagogy to include “the nature of educational experience” (Pinar, 1975, p. xi) or “all of the experiences the child has under the aegis of the school” (Eisner, 1994, p. 26). This meaning of curriculum might include environmental elements like a school’s mission, culture, or rules; the exchange of cultural knowledge and socio-economic experience between students; or the physical environment where learning occurs (i.e.—Is it cold? Are people hungry?). This understanding is considerably broader than the others on the spectrum. This is not to say that we cannot or should not still use curriculum to define the more discrete aspects of the school or learning environment, only that we should be aware that curriculum can refer to a spectrum of meanings from the
content offered in a single course to the overall learning environment in a school or setting where learning occurs and that many factors can influence this spectrum of curriculum.

Considering Eliot Eisner’s (1994) theory of “the three curricula” adds depth to this spectrum understanding of curriculum. According to Eisner, schools provide at least three curricula—the explicit, implicit, and null. The explicit curriculum encompasses the publicly stated objectives of the school or institution. These include course offerings at a minimum and may include other stated objectives like citizenship development or workforce readiness, depending on the particular school. Eisner’s explicit curriculum roughly includes the first two layers of meaning in the curriculum meaning spectrum in Appendix A.

Eisner’s implicit curriculum includes all that, although not necessarily intended or stated, is learned (or at least experienced) none-the-less. Eisner (1994, p. 97) explained:

The implicit curriculum of the school is what it teaches because of the kind of place it is...through the ancillary consequences of various approaches to teaching, by the kind of reward system that it uses, by the organizational structure it employs to sustain its existence, by the physical characteristic of the school plant, and by the furniture it uses and the surroundings it creates.

Eisner’s implicit curriculum did not have an inherently positive or negative nature.² Related to Eisner’s implicit curricula, however, is a darker notion of a hidden curriculum (Jackson 1968; Freire 1970; Illich 1970; Apple 1995, Gatto 2003). Conceptions of a hidden curriculum are typically more oppressive in nature and, like the implicit curriculum, include those lessons learned by students (and others) not necessarily through explicit curricular objectives but through the lessons taught through the environmental norms,

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² For instance, if students were informed that a course would be graded on a curve with only eighty percent of the students passing the course, we might identify competition as an important aspect of the implicit curriculum. Whether values like competition should be inculcated in schools, and if so to what degree, are the kind of subjective inquiries that can lead mutually well-intentioned people to disagree.
practices, and values of the school. Examples in some settings might include *lessons* like “recall is the highest form of intellectual achievement [or]...the voice of authority is to be trusted more than independent judgment” (Postman & Weingartner, 1969, p. 20). Michael Apple has argued that this hidden curriculum “posits a network of assumptions that, when internalized by students, establishes the boundaries of legitimacy” (1975, p. 99). Many education scholars contend the lessons learned through this hidden curriculum can be just as—or more—influential than the more publicly visible explicit curriculum. The implicit curriculum is present throughout all four layers of the curriculum meaning spectrum.

Eisner’s “null” curriculum includes everything excluded from the explicit curriculum. For example, the course catalog at Andover Phillips Academy, a prestigious private boarding school, includes language courses in: Chinese, French, German, Greek, Japanese, Latin, Russian, and Spanish. At Andover these courses are part of the explicit curriculum. At other secondary schools where some of these courses are not offered they would be considered part of the null curriculum. The list of null curricula is inherently infinite, but it may be important to continuously consider what is offered, what is not offered, to whom, and why? Eisner’s null curriculum might be viewed within the bounds of the first two layers on the spectrum of curriculum meaning as that which is not included in the explicit curriculum. Or it could be viewed as that which is excluded from the explicit *and* implicit curricula, in which case it would pervade the full spectrum of curriculum meaning.

With this spectrum understanding of curriculum and an understanding of Eisner’s explicit, implicit, and null curricula we can now consider the two most influential education movements of the last quarter century—the choice and standards movements. Each
movement was (is) in its own way an attempt to influence school curricula. Let’s now review each of these movements and how they have exerted curricular influence.

**Education Choice**

Choice may be one of the most dominant socio-economic constructs in contemporary U.S. culture. While a full exploration of its meaning is beyond the scope of the present study, a general understanding of the education choice movement—a broad area of study in its own right—is necessary. This section reviews the education choice movement with a focus on education vouchers—the policy tool this research centers on.

A core characteristic of the education choice movement is the centrality of student choice regarding which school to attend. Thus, when people talk of education choice, they are often talking about providing students (families) a choice in which school to attend. The Brooks article discussed in the introduction, however, did not mention education, student, or school choice. Brooks discussed *professional choice*—decisions made by educators. The distinction is an important one, and yet the forms are closely related. Using the spectrum understanding of curriculum we can see how the choices educators make—"*what they teach and how they teach it*" (Brooks, 2014, p. A23)—can influence all four layers of the curriculum, from explicit course content through the overall learning environment. Although distinct, the level of autonomy professional educators have to make choices has clear implications for all four dimensions of curriculum and thus for curricular diversity.

While recognizing other variations of education choice, this study considers education choice from the perspective of the educational environments from which a student may choose to learn. As with curriculum, in order to better understand the various manifestations of education choice within the large and relatively diverse system of U.S.
public schools, the study employed a spectrum approach as represented below in Chart 1: 
*(Traditional) Education Choice Spectrum.* This spectrum provides a framework within which diverse policy manifestations of education choice have historically been differentiated. Such representations merit caution. The diffuse nature of education policy and custom in the United States means the definition of “common school” differs greatly from place to place. The labels this spectrum offers increasingly blur in practice and in some places might be non-existent. For example, levels two through four may not be available in many rural locations. Still, the spectrum is utilized to establish a common understanding within which to situate a consideration of education choice and vouchers.

**CHART 1: (TRADITIONAL) EDUCATION CHOICE SPECTRUM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Within-School</td>
<td>Inter/Intra-School</td>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Home School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice</td>
<td>Choice</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>&amp; No School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The (traditional) education choice spectrum distinguishes degrees of education choice policies. Different levels provide students different options regarding the schools (and learning environments) they attend and learn in. A student's choice is never absolute in that it is always but one of many curricular choices made by multiple stakeholders within (or beyond) the available schools at any level. The choice does, however, largely determine whose sets of professional decisions will shape the educational environment engaged. As a general (theoretical) rule, as we move from level one toward level five schools (or the professionals in them) exercise increased degrees of professional and curricular autonomy from “state” (district, state, and federal) administrative and regulatory controls, thus (theoretically) resulting in a more diverse set of curricular
approaches to education, thus (theoretically) resulting in more education choices for students. Let's review the five levels on the (traditional) education choice spectrum.

Level 1 choice includes the curricular choices students may exercise within their “assigned” school, or choice among the courses offered within the school. These choices include, among others: choice between teachers teaching the same subjects, choice between differentiated courses of the same subject, and (some) choice among subjects offered. The depth and breadth of these choices will vary from school to school.

Level 2 choice includes choice between public schools, either within the same administrative district (intra-district) or across separate districts (inter-district). This may include magnet or alternative schools that offer intentionally differentiated curricula. Level 2 choice introduces an array of curricular choices to the student beyond those offered in most level 1 scenarios, but like level 1 these schools are typically subject to significant influence from many or all of the non-school level choices inherent to public schools.

Level 3 choice includes charter schools, a “type” of school that was introduced into public education during the 1990s. Precise definitions of charter schools vary from state to state, but generally speaking charter schools are “independent” organizations chartered by school districts to execute the functions of the common school but that are exempt from some or many of the administrative and regulatory requirements that common schools must abide by. Since at least 2003, however, charter schools have been required to take state assessments and are, at least theoretically, subject to similar levels of standards-

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3 The nature of these organizations varies widely from for-profit corporations to non-profit foundations and universities to small groups of parents. This opening of the “education market” and introduction of the profit motive into “public” education has proven to be one of the more contentious aspects of the choice movement.
based accountability as the “public” schools available to students in levels 1 and 2.\(^4\)

Level 4 choice represents an important break in the choice spectrum from “free” public schools to fee-based private schools.\(^5\) Partly because the “private” schools represented in this level do not rely on public funds they have been, at least historically, far more autonomous from state administrative requirements—including standards-based high-stakes testing and accountability—that have become so fundamental in public schools. As level 4 choice is outside the boundaries of the public education provided by the state it requires purchase from private providers. In the absence of education vouchers or other policies students may only exercise level 4 choice if they can afford the expense.

Level 5 choice includes education environments outside the formal structure of a learning institution like a “school.” The farthest point on the education choice spectrum would involve no formal education at all. Such an approach, sometimes referred to as “unschooling” in contemporary U.S. education discourse, can reflect the views of education scholars and parents who stress the oppressive nature of modern schools’ hidden curriculum. Unschooling “is essentially student-directed learning without [an explicit curriculum], focusing on the interests of the child, and allowing the student to pursue their varied interests as far and wide as they personally choose” (Taylor-Hough, 2010, p. 7). Although such learning environments apply to relatively few U.S. students they provide a useful example of the elasticity of curricular diversity across learning environments.

In theory, students should increase the level of curricular diversity available from

\(^4\) The passage of No Child Left Behind (2001) required charter schools to participate in the same state standards-based accountability frameworks as public schools.

\(^5\) The line between public and private schools is blurring in more ways than one as some charter and even traditional public schools now charge “fees” for participating in aspects of the educational environment (sports, clubs, etc.) that were once considered within the “free” mandate of public schools.
which to choose as they acquire access to increasing levels of school choice and their roughly corresponding degrees of professional and curricular autonomy from non-school level administrative requirements. This does not necessarily mean that more curricular autonomy or diversity are desirable or favorable, to the individual or society, only that they tend to be more present as we move to the right of the choice spectrum—in theory.

The broad nature of education choice makes it difficult to follow as a continuous movement. Some scholars (Billick et al, 2011; Herbst, 2006) trace the concept of school choice back to Adam Smith’s (1776) *Wealth of Nations* or John Stuart Mill’s (1859) *On Liberty*. The “right” of parents to choose an education outside of the public schools was confirmed in the 1920s through two Supreme Court cases; *Meyer v. State of Nebraska* (1923) and *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925)—but this right to a private education assumed no corresponding public obligation to pay for it. Still, despite this debatably long intellectual heritage, many education scholars credit Milton Friedman and his (1955) *The Role of Government in Education* with initiating the contemporary school choice movement.

Milton Friedman was an economist at the University of Chicago who won the Nobel Prize in Economic Science in 1976. His ideas on education are best understood within the context of the larger economic views expressed in his influential 1962 book, *Capitalism & Freedom*. Friedman identified the book’s “major theme” as “the role of competitive capitalism,” which he defined as “a system of economic freedom and a necessary condition for political freedom” (p. 4). The book’s minor theme was “the role government should play in a society dedicated to freedom” (p. 4). While Friedman found some level of government subsidy for public education justified, he believed the “nationalization…of the ‘education industry’ [was] much more difficult to justify” (p. 89). He presented schools as goods within
an education marketplace which to date had been defined by monopolistic government control. Friedman believed this monopolistic control could be broken by introducing choice—and thus competition—into education. The mechanism for such a transformation would be education “vouchers,” or payments from the government to students to be used to purchase education at the school of their choice. Education would be purchased by students as consumers in a free market where privately run schools competed for students.

Many of Friedman’s ideas continue to resonate in the education choice movement (and beyond), but three in particular have served as conceptual foundations for contemporary school choice discourse. The first is the monopolistic and inefficient frame Friedman used to describe the public education system. This image of public schools has persisted among critics and advocates of public schools alike. Second is the assumption that increased choice and competition are inherently positive. This view tends to de-emphasize the perspective of those who compete (knowingly or not) and lose, instead stressing a belief that injecting competition and market-based accountability into education will result in schools having to improve to survive, or as Friedman wrote, “The development and improvement of all schools would thus be stimulated” (p. 93). The third persistent idea is that vouchers are inherently progressive because their value is inversely correlated to family income level. School choice should thus prove more equitable than the prevailing discriminatory policy regime of “residential choice” that favors students who can afford to live in areas where they will be assigned to a school of their choosing.

Friedman’s application of the economic concept of the free market to public education did not appear to gain much traction in education policy at first—if judged by the education choice policies of today. Although voucher initiatives were introduced in voter
referenda across multiple states 1970-2007, they were defeated on every occasion. The “first” U.S. voucher policies were passed in Milwaukee (WI) and Cleveland (OH) in the early 1990s and only within the last several years have voucher policies begun to proliferate. If, however, we consider education choice through the (traditional) education choice spectrum we see the idea of choice, for varying reasons, has been steadily gaining influence in public education for some time. Although not a uniform progression, the manifestation of education choice has expanded from level 1 to level 4 choice relatively chronologically.

This choice movement was first evident in diversification of courses offered within the “common” school, or level 1 choice—particularly at the secondary level. The diversification was both vertical in that “the same” courses were differentiated by perceived ability levels and horizontal in that more courses were offered. Marzano & Kendall (1996) described this historical expansion of level 1 choice in public schools:

From the 1940s until the mid-1970s, the emphasis on serving the interests of individual children generated a geometric expansion of the number of courses that constituted the high school curriculum. By the mid-1970s, the U.S. Office of Education reported that more than 2,100 different courses were being offered in American high schools (p. 12).

The expansion of level 2 choice gained momentum in the 1960s and 70s as the influence of more progressive approaches to education and judicial pressure to desegregate schools led to the introduction and spread of a variety of alternative, specialty, “free,” and magnet schools. The first adoption of intra-district choice plans occurred in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1981 (Young & Clinchy 1992; Henig & Sugarman 1999; Herbst 2006). As late as 1999, Henig and Sugarman could claim that even when excluding

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6 See Appendix B: State Referenda on Education Vouchers in the United States.
7 This expansion was uneven and it should be noted that differentiating courses doesn’t necessarily mean an increase in student choice, especially where administrative tracking systems are used by adults to sort students into “appropriate” courses.
residential choice, “about half of the school choice…being exercised by American families is taking place in the public education system” (1999, p. 17). Some of this choice would have comprised level 3 charter school options, but most of it was level 2 choice.

The first charter school legislation—or level 3 choice—can be traced to Minnesota in 1991 and there has been a veritable explosion of charter schools over the last twenty-five years. Chubb and Moe’s (1990) Politics, Markets, & America’s Schools is often cited as an influential catalyst for the charter movement. Using Friedman’s frame of a monopolistic public school system and interpreting standardized test results to support providing schools increased professional autonomy, Chubb and Moe provided a fairly detailed set of reform proposals centered on school choice, which they suggested was “a self-contained reform with its own rationale and justification…[with] the capacity all by itself to bring about the kind of transformation that, for years, reformers have been seeking to engineer in myriad other ways” (p. 217). Charter legislation would spread throughout the United States over the last decade of the twentieth century before exploding throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century. There were “some 2,300 charter schools...enrolling nearly half a million students” in 2001 and “about 4,600 charter schools with 1.4 million students” by 2009 (Ravitch, 2010, p. 125). Miron & Welner (2012) estimated the number of students enrolled in charter schools at 1.8 million in 2011 and calculated that “approximately 200,000 new students...are...added to charter enrollments each year” (p. 8).

“As of summer 2013, 42 states and the District of Columbia had enacted legislation” allowing charter schools (Cunningham, 2013, p. 1). Charter schools have unquestionably become an increasingly utilized type of public school over the last twenty-five years.

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8 Italicized emphasis in the original.
Voucher policies—or level 4 choice—have exhibited considerably less growth over the last quarter century. They were initially limited to a handful of districts and states and were primarily targeted to special needs or low socio-economic students who were assigned to (perceived) “failing” schools. The pace of voucher expansion has picked up over the last decade. Thirteen states and the District of Columbia now have some form of statewide voucher policy and it appears that as vouchers have moved from state referenda to state legislative houses they have become an increasingly popular policy mechanism.9

Although level 5 choice—homeschooling—is in some ways unique from the other levels of school choice in that it removes the learning environment from the formal institution of the school, this level of education choice has also realized a steady increase in popularity. Due to the nature of homeschoolers and wide diversity in state regulations overseeing homeschooling, estimating the exact number of students homeschooled in the United States is challenging. Still, there is consensus among homeschooling scholars that it has grown over the last twenty-five years. Bashman et al. (2007) estimated the number of children homeschooled in the United States to have grown from around 50,000 students in 1985 to between 1.1 million and 2.1 million by 2007, depending on the source. The International Center for Home Education Research estimates that “there are probably more than two million homeschooled students in the United States today” (ICHER.org, 2015). These estimates equate to roughly four percent of the U.S. K-12 school population.

The choice movement is often traced from Friedman’s free-market framing of education and the first voucher and charter policies of the 1990s. Clearly Friedman’s influence on the movement was significant, as were the initial district and statewide choice

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9This count will likely be outdated in the near future as multiple states are considering voucher policies.
policies. Still, it would be a mistake to limit the choice movement to these foundations. The concept of increased “choice” in education has been growing for some time, slowly expanding conceptions of school governance structures and blurring historic boundaries between public and private education. The moral interpretations of this trend are diverse and controversial; that vouchers represent an important concept within the trend is not.

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) defined “school vouchers, also known as opportunity scholarships, [as] state-funded scholarships that pay for students to attend private school” (Cunningham, 2013, p. 8). The underlying economic premise of education vouchers is double taxation. Public schools are primarily funded through public taxes. Families choosing to educate their children in private schools must therefore pay for education twice, once through taxes for the public education they do not use and once for the private education they do. Vouchers reimburse families for services not rendered.\(^{10}\)

This underlying premise is not new.\(^{11}\) It was a persistent theme of U.S. education policy discourse during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when many Catholics felt compelled to withdraw their children from the protestant dominated public schools (Herbst, 2006; Ravitch, 2010; Carpenter II & Kafer, 2012). Despite this continuous debate on funding Catholic schools successful attempts at implementing voucher policies would

\(^{10}\)This theoretical economic model becomes increasingly fragile when extended to other public goods. For example, might families be reimbursed for the cost of maintaining a judicial service if they do not commit crimes, or the cost of highways if they prefer to take the scenic route? The model is also problematic when we consider tax-paying families that have no children requiring education. Many assume taxes for public education to be just based on cumulative social benefit, or what Milton Friedman (1962) referred to as the “neighborhood effect.”

\(^{11}\)Some claim the two longest running education voucher programs in the United States were enacted in Vermont and Maine in 1869 and 1873, respectively. Though sometimes considered voucher programs, their purpose was not to provide funding to students who chose not to attend public schools—but to students who had no choice because no public schools existed in their rural area and more so, it was not feasible to build and maintain them. These programs continue today, with approximately 8,200 students participating across approximately 150 private schools in Vermont and Maine (Friedman Foundation 2014).
not pick up until after Friedman's work had reinvigorated the debate in the mid-twentieth century. The first attempts were enacted at various levels across several southern states following the Brown v. Board of Education (1954) Supreme Court decision that ruled against the policy and principle of educational segregation. These early voucher programs, often referred to as “schools of choice” or less favorably as “segregation academies,” sought to reposition school assignment as a student’s choice rather than a district or state responsibility. These policies would be overturned through executive or judicial means through the 1950s and 60s, but the stigma such policies inflicted on school choice remains evident in education policy discourse through the present (Peterson, 2009; Ravitch, 2010).

Outside of Friedman’s circle of free-market libertarian economists most early support for education vouchers came from the intellectual left, where advocates viewed vouchers as a policy tool that could benefit poor and minority students lacking the resources to escape perceived poor-performing urban schools (Rodgers, 2011; Carpenter II & Kafer, 2012; Peterson, 2009). Aside from the aforementioned programs in Vermont and Maine the first successful voucher program was enacted in 1990 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program represented an eclectic consortium of sponsors that included African-American activists, the state Republican governor, the Democratic mayor of Milwaukee, and the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, among others. The program attracted large opposition as well, from professional teacher and administrator unions, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the state superintendent of instruction (Viteritti, 1999; Ravitch, 2010). The program included participation limits, was only available to low-income students, and initially excluded
religious schools. It experienced considerable legislative compromise on the path to adoption and, once enacted, extended legal battles. Judicial decisions would eventually affirm the program’s legality and today almost 25,000 students from families earning less than 300% of the poverty level attend over 110 private schools in or around Milwaukee (Friedman Foundation 2014).

Five years after the Milwaukee program was enacted a similar program was initiated in Cleveland, Ohio. Like the Milwaukee plan, the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring voucher program targeted low-income students in the “historically low-performing” Cleveland schools. Eligible recipients could use the vouchers at private secular or sectarian schools. This triggered a legal challenge to the program that, among other complaints, claimed the program was unconstitutional based on the 1st Amendment clause of the U.S. constitution separating church and state. The Zelman v. Simmons-Harris (2002) Supreme Court decision found the Cleveland program constitutional. Despite this major ruling voucher programs would remain in the political background as charter school legislation proved the policy tool of choice through the 1990s and into the early twenty-first century.

The major exception to this voucher drought was Florida, where a voucher proposal was enacted within the framework of the state’s larger standards-based accountability policies. The 1999 Florida voucher program was significant for at least three reasons. First, it was statewide, unlike the municipal plans in Milwaukee and Cleveland. Second, eligibility was determined by school performance metrics, not socio-economic status. Under the Florida plan, students whose assigned schools received an “F” grade two out of four years were eligible for a voucher to attend a higher performing public school or a private school.
And third, it was found unconstitutional due a state uniformity clause. The state Supreme Court found the voucher program unconstitutional because “the private school’s curriculum and teachers are not subject to the same standards as those in force in public schools” (*Bush v. Holmes 2006*). The Florida ruling was worrisome to some sectors of the education voucher movement because such legal interpretations, if adopted as precedence in legal decisions in other states, could serve to extend the kind of administrative and regulatory frameworks from which voucher proponents have historically sought escape. The ruling excluded private schools from participating in the voucher program and effectively reduced the program to a public school *intra-state* choice plan (Hannaway & Cohodes, 2007). Florida also enacted the John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program targeting special needs students, another first and a trend that would be followed in other states. Over 27,000 students with disabilities used these vouchers at more than 1,200 private schools across Florida in the 2013-14 school year (Friedman Foundation 2014).

Following Florida’s lead, seven states adopted voucher policies for students with special needs between 2003-13. During the first decade of the twenty-first century, voucher plans were adopted in Colorado, the District of Columbia, Ohio, Arizona, and Louisiana. The Colorado and Arizona policies were overturned by state courts for reasons related to state constitutions. The Ohio plan, which was the second statewide plan after Florida, also determined eligibility by a student’s assigned school performance in the state accountability system. The Louisiana program’s eligibility was determined by socio-economic status. It was originally limited to a number of eligible parishes but was

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12 The seven states comprised OH, UT, GA, LA, OK, MS, and NC. OH and MS have multiple programs for students with special needs. See Appendix C: *Public Voucher Programs in the United States* for years adopted.
expanded to cover the entire state in 2012. The Opportunity Scholarship Program in the District of Columbia is small, currently serving fewer than 2,000 low-income students, but significant because it is a federal program. Its existence may be representative of the increasing coalescence of both political parties around (some) school choice. Indeed, the new political consensus around education choice (some might argue education policy in general) may support Bolick’s (2009) assertion that there is “no stopping the choice train” (p. 287). The initial years of the century’s second decade have seen even more voucher policies enacted or expanded. As voucher programs continue to multiply and expand the relevant policy question concerning education vouchers might not be if, but how?

Perhaps just as important as whether voucher policies will continue to proliferate is, assuming they do, what form they take. The current study examined how the statewide voucher policy in Indiana was framed in public discourse through its consideration, adoption, and implementation (2009-2013). As will be discussed in chapter two, the Indiana CSP is unique among voucher programs because it represents the heaviest extension to date of high-stakes standardized testing and accountability frameworks into a statewide education voucher policy. Before, however, reviewing the Indiana model and discussing the methods used to examine its framing in public discourse it is first necessary to consider what has, along with the choice movement, influenced U.S. education more than any other trend over the last twenty-five years—the education standards movement.

The Education Standards Movement

Like choice, “‘standards’ is a warmth-inducing word” (Popham, 1997, p. 21). Perhaps this is because—like choice and curriculum—its meaning can vary widely. If used

13 The Obama administration does not endorse vouchers.
in a sufficiently ambiguous context the term can be appropriated into a diverse set of understandings. As with curriculum and choice, we must consider the spectrum of meanings the term “standards” spans to fully understand and appreciate its varied use. One way to better understand “standards” is to consider shifting uses of the term over time.

The modern standards movement in the United States is often traced to the 1980s. In particular, three events during the 1980s are viewed as foundational to the movement. The first was the release of a report in 1983, *A Nation at Risk*, by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. The second was the release of the *Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics* in 1989 by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), generally considered the first set of “national” academic standards in the United States. The third was an education summit in Virginia in 1989 where President George Bush and the nation’s fifty governors agreed on the first-ever national education goals. All three events were significant milestones in the standards movement.

The *A Nation at Risk* report issued in April 1983 by the National Commission on Excellence in Education has long been a lightening rod in education policy scholarship. Commissioned by President Reagan’s education secretary, Terrell Bell, the report declared in the opening paragraph that “our nation is at risk” and that “the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people” (NCEE Report, 1983, p. 9). The orotund report provided a laundry list of statistics and claims to support its recommendations. Critics of the report have highlighted the dubious nature of much of the evidence and assumptions used to frame the issues (Berliner & Biddle, 1995), but there is little doubting the reverberant effect the report had on education reform efforts through the rest of the
decade (Rothman, 2011; McGuinn, 2006; Hursh, 2005; Schwartz & Robinson, 2000). The report strengthened and legitimized several intertwined narratives that have proven foundational to the modern standards movement—that the United States has a failing education system; that this failing education system is the cause of real or perceived national economic problems; and that “gainful employment” and economic competitiveness are the ends of public education. *A Nation at Risk* did not introduce these narratives into the national education discourse, but it did help entrench them as a priori assumptions in that discourse over the years that followed.

Although *A Nation at Risk* is commonly cited as initiating the modern standards movement the term “standard” was used somewhat loosely throughout the report. The report cited standards eight times before the recommendations section to refer to, in order: standardized tests; a general sense of a school’s expectations; a general sense of society’s educational expectations; college curricula; high school graduation requirements; college admissions standards; a general sense of a school’s expectations; and competency exams. In the recommendations section of the report the word “standards” was used once in reference to expectations of those preparing to teach and six times over a brief section that proposed adopting “higher expectations for academic performance and student conduct,” increasing college admissions standards, and using standardized tests to certify student credentials and track students into interventions or “advanced or accelerated work” (NCEE Report, 1983). Although the report may have served to further legitimize standardized test scores as a central indicator of education quality the committee dedicated relatively little attention to test-based assessment and where it did its recommendations were not that far removed from the assessment policy frameworks that were already in place across many
states at the time. Standards, at least as used in *A Nation at Risk*, represented more a general sense of higher quality in education—an underlying meaning that appeals to all and continues to serve as a core understanding of the term among supporters of standards-based accountability today. It was also representative of the diverse understandings of the period related to what education standards were and what raising them entailed.

Dozens of education reform reports were published in the years following the release of *A Nation at Risk* and hundreds of education reform committees were formed at the state and local levels across the United States (Goertz, 1986; Schwartz & Robinson, 2000; McGuinn, 2006). This “excellence” reform movement did focus on “raising standards,” but there was no consensus on what that meant or how it might be achieved. In 1986 Margaret Goertz published a report sponsored by the Educational Testing Service, *State Educational Standards: A 50-State Survey*. A response to the last three years’ “wave of education reform,” the report was a compilation of “detailed state-by-state descriptions of the range of state policies affected by the current education reform movement” (Goertz, pp. 1-2). Goertz found it necessary to begin the report with a “typology of standards imposed by education decision-makers at the state, district, and local level” (pp. 2-3). As Goertz’s “Matrix of Educational Standards,” made clear, “the term educational standards refers to a wide range of activities applied to a number of target populations for a variety of purposes” (Goertz, p. 3).\(^{14}\) Goertz identified three types of standards used by states and districts: performance, program, and behavior standards. Goertz (pp. 3-6) explained:

> Performance standards measure an individual’s performance through tested achievement, grades and observed behavior...Program standards include curricular requirements, programmatic requirements and other requirements affecting time in school, class size, and the number and type of

\(^{14}\)See Goertz’s matrix of educational standards in Appendix D.
individuals staffing the classrooms...Standards affecting behavior include attendance requirements, disciplinary codes and use of time in the school.

Aside from a review of curricular changes resulting from forty-one states “raising coursework standards for high school graduation” in the less than three years since A Nation at Risk was released the remainder of the report was heavily focused on test-based standards. This focus on testing might be expected of a report commissioned by the Educational Testing Service, but the identification of other forms of performance standards (grades and observation) and what were loosely referred to as “opportunity” standards was reflective of the diverse discourse of the time on educational standards. Still, the stress on testing was important—after all, one of the major themes of education reform in the 1980s was raising standards. Raising standards implies a set of pre-existing standards—and pre-existing standards complicate narratives that identify the 1980s or A Nation at Risk as the beginning of the education standards movement.

There are many ways to consider the history of education standards. Goertz’s standards matrix might prove informative if considered through a diverse set of historical class, race, gender, or cultural perspectives. For our current purposes, however, the study focuses on the history of content (or academic) and test-based performance standards because they have proven the most resilient and influential over the course of the standards movement. By the time A Nation at Risk was published in 1983 most states had already mandated education competency testing. All but a few of these state competency tests were adopted after 1974 in a wave of education reform stretching through the mid-80s (Goertz, 1986; Airasian, 1987; Archibald & Porter, 1990; U.S. Congress Office of Technology Assessment, 1992; Heubert & Hauser, 1999). This rash of mandated competency testing was viewed by some as a reaction to the earlier referenced progressive
reforms of the 1960s and 70s (Archibald & Porter, 1990; Heubert & Hauser, 1999; Ravitch, 2010). The purpose of these tests varied across states. According to a report by the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment, during “the minimum competency testing movement of the 1970s and 80s...many State legislatures pegged promotion, placement, and graduation requirements to performance on criterion-referenced tests” (Heubert & Hauser 1999, p. 14).

The use of standardized tests for academic placement in the U.S. was not new. Tests had been utilized in schools to place students since at least the 1920s. Following the decline in the belief that tests could be used to identify a single measure of intelligence in the 1930s and 40s testing advocates positioned them as a meritocratic tool, ensuring that both the most talented students could be tracked into advanced courses and that students requiring support could be identified for educational interventions (Ackerman, 1995; Mazzeo, 2001). The wave of tests in the 1970s and 80s, however, assumed purposes beyond providing diagnostic information for educators to use in making instructional decisions. As assessment expert Peter Airasian wrote in 1987, “The growth, centralization, and politicization of the educational system over the past two decades...have produced two new roles for standardized testing: monitoring the educational system as a whole and certifying individual performance in the system” (p. 402). Airasian identified three criteria separating the new competency tests from the guidance-focused assessments of the past: they were mandated by state legislatures; they were externally developed, essentially replacing more local assessment systems; and they carried clear sanctions and rewards. The certification function introduced new levels of student accountability, denying

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15 Scores on criterion-referenced assessments are determined by the % of correct answers. Scores on norm-referenced assessments are determined by the % of correct answers compared to other test takers.
education credentials to those who could not meet the identified competency standards. The standards movement was becoming the standards-based accountability movement.

Viewed in the light of the test-based reforms that preceded the “beginning” of the standards movement we might be tempted to view the beginning as more of a policy shift within an already existing testing and accountability movement based on minimum required standards to one which sought (theoretically) more challenging expectations for a broader set of students. While this focus on “increased standards” is notable, it did not change the basic structure of the existing test-based policy frameworks that had been established during the 1970s or earlier. As Archibald and Porter noted in a 1990 Congressional Office of Technology Assessment report, *A Retrospective and an Analysis of Roles of Mandated Testing in Education Reform*, “whether standards have been called basic skills, literacy, or excellence, they have been largely defined by external authorities and measured by mandated tests” (p. 4). If there was a diverse set of understandings around what standards were and which ones were important in the 1980s there was no misunderstanding which standards were already firmly entrenched in education policy—test-based standards were.

This policy shift whereby education standards (what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade) were increasingly “largely defined by external authorities and measured by mandated tests” (Archibald & Porter, 1990, p. 4) would gain momentum throughout the reform-oriented 1980s. David Hursh has argued that “after the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, education decision making began to shift from the local to the state level...corporate and government officials blamed education for the economic problems of the 1980s and began to call for...raising standards, implementing
standardized tests, and holding students and teachers accountable” (2005, p. 606). This shift in control over education standards was symbolically consummated in 1989 by the Charlottesville, Virginia summit, where President George H. Bush convened the nation’s governors for only the third time in history (Rothman, 2011). William Mathis (2010) summarized this important final year of the 1980s decade of education reform:

President Bush met with National Business Roundtable leaders in 1989 and together they set forth what they considered to be the…essential components of a high-quality education system, including standards, assessments and accountability…[Later] in 1989, President Bush called the first education summit, at which governors agreed to set national goals and pledged support for state-based reform initiatives. Educators were for the most part not represented in these two efforts. As a result, standards making shifted from the professional sphere to a business-influenced political domain (p. 8).

Although education policy discourse may have become more situated in the “business-influenced political domain” during the 1980s, the actual policy reforms of the decade were implemented at the state and local levels. That would change in the 1990s as standards-based accountability reform began to affect federal education policy. Patrick McGuinn has argued that during the first years of the 1990s, “A centrist, bipartisan coalition was…beginning to emerge behind a new reform-oriented federal education policy regime centered on standards and tests. But considerable disagreement remained about the precise role that the federal government should play in designing and implementing them” (2006, p. 83).

Following the 1989 Charlottesville summit, President Bush announced national education goals in his 1990 State of the Union address.16 The ten-year goals were both

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16 The six goals were: (1) All children in America will start school ready to learn; (2) the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent; (3) students in grades four, eight, and twelve will be competent in English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts,
ambitious and vague. Although attempts to pass education legislation encompassing these goals (and others) stalled in Congress, a National Education Goals Panel consisting of elected officials was formed in 1990 under the Bush administration to oversee the implementation of the first-ever national education goals. The panel’s mission would become controversial and shift over time and the panel itself would be dissolved as part of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), but there was a clear emphasis on the development of standards and assessments in the Panel’s initial years. One of the Panel’s early actions was to establish the National Council on Education Standards and Testing (NCEST), whose mandate was “to provide advice on the desirability and feasibility of national standards and testing in education” (Raising Standards for American Education, 1992, p. B-1).

The 1992 NCEST report, *Raising Standards for American Education*, was heavily influenced by the national narratives of a failing American education system’s “de facto national minimum expectations” and the need to reform the education system “to improve economic competitiveness” (Raising Standards for American Education, 1992, pp. 2-3). The report was also reflective of the evolving debate concerning what raising standards meant. In contrast to the three types of standards provided by Goertz (1986) six years earlier, the NCEST report identified “several specific components designed to flesh out an overall definition of education standards” (1992, p. E-4). The “components” included:

Content standards should set out the knowledge, skills, and other necessary understandings that schools should teach…Student performance standards should establish the degree or quality of student performance…School delivery standards should set out criteria to enable…the public to assess the quality of a school’s capacity and performance in educating their

history, and geography; (4) every school will be free of drugs, violence, firearms, and alcohol and will offer a disciplined learning environment; (5) U.S. students will be the first in the world in mathematics and science achievement; [and] (6) every adult will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy (McGuinn, 2006, pp. 61-62).
students...[and] System delivery standards should set out criteria for establishing the quality of a school system’s...capacity and performance in educating all students (pp. E-4-E-5).

Content standards were an early term used to describe what the CCSS now refer to as “academic standards.” In the report and in many subsequent policies performance standards would equate to test scores, no longer including other forms of assessment like grades and observation. The school and system delivery system standards represented the evolution of some combination of Goertz’s program standards, particularly as described by her “other” category (see Appendix D). The NCEST report defined what were often referred to as “opportunity to learn” standards in a way that curiously blended them with performance assessment outcomes, but their inclusion represented a position taken by many that the equity and excellence in performance standards being demanded by many could not be achieved unless significant disparities in resource allocation among the nation’s schools were addressed through providing requisite resources across diverse socio-economic and cultural communities. The report strongly endorsed the creation of “national standards tied to assessments,” but recommended the opportunity to learn, or delivery standards, be left to the states to address. The panel’s recommendations were contentious (Koretz, et al, 1992; Schwartz & Robinson, 2000; Rothman, 2011) due to their effectively excluding opportunity to learn standards, not addressing how out-of-school factors like student socio-economic status influence performance standards, or discussing the known and theoretical negative consequences of high-stakes testing. They would nonetheless foretell the direction of the standards movement and national education policy.

The political climate in the 1990s prevented the adoption of federally mandated test-based standards during either the H.W. Bush or Clinton administrations, but federal
policy encouraged and supported state and private efforts to develop national capacity in
standards-based education. During the H.W. Bush administration this was accomplished
primarily through funding private organizations to develop content standards (Marzano &
Kendall, 1996; Ravitch, 2010; Rothman, 2011) and by creating government-sanctioned
groups like the National Education Goals Panel to advance standards-based reform.

The Clinton administration was able to pass its legislative education reform package
through the Goals 2000: Educate America Act and the Improving America’s Schools Act of
of Goals 2000 was a grant program to support state development of standards and
assessments and school district implementation of standards-based reform” (Federal
Education Policy and the States 1945-2009, 2006, p. 65). From the perspective of national
standards-based education policy, the 1990s was essentially a decade of capacity building.
If viewed in that sense, the standards movement progressed substantively during the
1990s, for as Rothman (2011) observed, “In 1996, fifteen states had developed [content]
standards [in math and language arts]; by 2000, forty-nine states…had done so” (p. 42).

Others have suggested that the standards movement ended in the 1990s. For some,
this was in response to the fiasco of the national history standards (Brandt, 1995; Gagnon
1995; both as quoted in Marzano & Kendall, 1996). The development of standards by states
and private organizations following the release of the Curriculum and Evaluation Standards
for School Mathematics in 1989 by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM)
was not without tension and conflict. Indeed, some have referred to the education reform
of the 1990s as the “standards wars” (Stotsky 2002). With so many sets of standards being
developed by so many entities there was plenty of “content” to critique. Conflicts erupted in
math (Wu, 2002; Raimi, 2002; Clopton, et al, 2002), science (Metzenberg, 2002; Cromer, 2002; Gross & Stotsky, 2002), and English (Carnicelli, 2002; Stotsky, 2002; Smoot, 2002) content areas, among others. These tensions were perhaps most obvious when a “H.W. Bush administration initiative to create a common, culturally unifying set of U.S. history standards reignited the conflict at the national level in 1994-1995” (Rodgers, 2011, p. 228).

Wary of the traditional tensions in the teaching of history, the initiative sought broad support from the start. As Gary Nash (Nash, et al, 2000), one of the principal actors in the initiative, explained—the national history standards initiative was:

A project to develop, through a national consensus-building process, voluntary national standards for history…the collaborative team included virtually all the stakeholders in history education. Taking part were some thirty organizations representing the nation’s parents, history teachers, school administrators, curriculum specialists, librarians, independent schools, professional historians, and educational groups” (pp. xxii).

The inclusive approach, however, proved unable to achieve the sought after consensus. The National History Standards Project devolved into a heated national debate on the nature of U.S. history, how it should be taught, and who should decide. The Standards became so politically toxic they would eventually be formally censured by the U.S. Senate and public efforts at national standards would be deferred for nearly fifteen years. Critics of high-stakes testing like Diane Ravitch have argued the “standards movement collapsed as a result of the debacle of the national history standards” and was then “hijacked” by the standards-based accountability movement when “No Child Left Behind made testing & accountability our national education strategy” (2010, pp. 29-30).

The 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was the most significant event in U.S. education during the first decade of the twenty-first century. It was, and continues to be, a deeply divisive policy in education scholarship and practice. Some scholars like Diane
Ravitch see NCLB as a break from the standards movement. Other critics of the law like David Hursh view NCLB as building on “the standards, testing and accountability movement” (2007, p. 295). This second view is often taken by contemporary advocates of the standards movement who unlike Ravitch see the inability to establish national standards in the 1990s as a setback rather than an end to the movement. Marzano et al. claimed NCLB “incentivized standards-based reform” (2013, p. 1) and Rothman believed “NCLB…built on the standards-based system established by the 1994 Improving America’s Schools Act” (2011, p. 247). These diverse views mark an important break in the standards movement that occurred with the passage of NCLB—the end of the policy debate on what education standards meant. So what exactly did standards mean in NCLB?

NCLB required states to adopt “challenging academic content standards and challenging student academic achievement standards,” but states had already developed state assessment frameworks during the testing reforms of the 1970s and 80s and developed academic standards as part of the Goals 2000 and Improving America’s Schools Acts of 1994 (2001, pp. 1444-1445). That legislation required states to “develop school improvement plans that establish high content and performance standards in at least mathematics and reading or language arts,” and to administer “assessments aligned with the content standards...‘at some time’ between grades 3 and 5, again between grades 6 and 9, and again between grades 10 and 12” (McGuinn, 2006, p. 96). As Erpenbach et al. noted in a report commissioned by the Council of Chief State School Officers in 2003, “Although the requirements for standards and assessments under NCLB are indeed rigorous, they represent more an expansion of the previous requirements than they represent new

17 Academic achievement standards represented the combination (and renaming) of content (academic) and performance (achievement on tests) standards.
territory. For most states, however, the accountability requirements would represent a new continent altogether” (p. 2). In NCLB, standards meant test-based accountability.

The NCLB Act (2001) was over 1,000 pages and included many explicit provisions and objectives. The core of NCLB, however, was the testing and accountability framework. As discussed, neither testing nor accountability were new concepts in education. The wave of minimum competency assessments developed through the 1970s and 80s sought to hold students accountable for minimum levels of academic achievement as determined by test scores and some states required students to pass tests for grade promotion or to graduate from high school (Heubert & Hauser, 1999; Hursh, 2007). The act did effectively increase the frequency of high-stakes testing and expand the reach of accountability from students to professional educators. NCLB increased the frequency of student testing by mandating students be assessed annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school using standardized tests. These student test scores—also referred to as academic achievement—would then be disaggregated into subgroups (black, Hispanic, white, limited English proficient, etc.) and compared to scores from students in the same grade and subgroup from the year before to determine if states, districts, and schools made “annual yearly progress” (AYP). AYP referred to state determined formulas for measuring increases in student test scores toward the goal of 100% “proficiency” on state math and reading tests by 2014. NCLB then defined specific steps that must be taken and sanctions applied to schools that failed to make AYP for $x$ consecutive years, culminating in the possible closure or restructuring of the school. Thus, NCLB extended the concept of accountability from students to educators as schools failing to meet AYP were assigned labels, subjected to funding penalties, and
threatened with closure and possible staff job loss. While a few states had already adopted this kind of educator accountability policy framework, NCLB made it national policy.

For the purposes of this brief history of the standards movement, three additional significant aspects of NCLB need to be highlighted. First, it represented the first time the federal government assumed the role of defining who could teach through its requirement that schools use “highly qualified” teachers. Second, it defined the kind of performance standards that could be used. The technical requirements for a “valid and reliable” assessment system in NCLB effectively required states to adopt basic assessments that were a blend of norm-referenced and criterion referenced tests in order to allow for the kind of annual comparative reporting the act required. Many states were thus forced to abandon alternative assessment systems (Erpenbach et al, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Rothman, 2011) to implement the standardized system mandated by NCLB. This standardization of how academic achievement would be determined would, among other outcomes, result in “fifteen states—educating 42 percent of U.S. students—us[ing] tests that were completely multiple choice in 2005-06 (Rothman, 2011, p. 51). Third, NCLB expanded education choice policies. Although the inclusion of education vouchers was removed from early drafts of the legislation (McGuinn, 2006; Horn & Wilburn, 2013), provisions were included that created level 2 choice and funds for level 4 supplemental educational services for students whose schools failed to achieve specified AYP targets. Ultimately, NCLB marked the end of the policy debate on what standards meant. As far as national education policy was concerned, NCLB ensured the official ascension of performance-based standards and accompanying demise of opportunity to learn standards.
Standards = tests and standards–based accountability applied only to students and educators.

After NCLB the next major events in the standards movement, which by this point some were referring to as the testing and accountability movement, were the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative and the federal Race to the Top Program. Just as the call for raising standards in the 1980s and 90s was justified as a response to the perceived low standards of the minimum competency testing reform of the 1970s and 80s, the call for common core state standards was justified, in part, by the perceived low standards some states established to try and avoid, or at least prolong, the severe sanctions prescribed by NCLB when AYP wasn’t achieved—which was inevitable based on the technically unrealistic goal of 100% proficiency for all students, even those who didn’t speak English or had severe learning disabilities. Once again, low standards and economic competitiveness were cited as reasons why standards had to be raised for everyone. The CCSS Initiative, which was sponsored by the National Governor’s Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, developed the CCSS, “a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA). These learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade” (CCSS Initiative website, 2014). In contemporary standards terminology the CCSS, which as of February 2015 had been (at least formally) adopted in forty-three states and the District of Columbia, are referred to as “academic standards.”¹⁸ They are “learning goals [that] outline what a

¹⁸ It is difficult to provide an accurate count of participating states at present. The CCSSI website counted 43 states as late as July 2014, but did not appear to take into account recent legislative or executive actions in multiple states that effectively blocked, reversed, or delayed the implementation of the standards as part of what appears to be a growing resistance movement against the CCSS—not to be confused with resistance against standards & accountability in general. The latter is harder to detect, but may be growing.
student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade (CCSS Initiative Website, 2014). The CCSS have run into controversy in places and have not been fully implemented in many states, but the adoption of quasi-national academic standards by so many states clearly represents a significant episode in the standards movement—from this point on more accurately referred to as the standards-based accountability movement.

The technically impossible 100% proficiency targets under NCLB resulted in higher and higher numbers of schools across the United States becoming subject to punitive sanctions each year. By 2010 almost 40 percent of U.S. schools were labeled “inadequate” under federal education law (Horn & Wilburn, 2013). Nearly all in the education policy discourse were beginning to realize that a law that results in everyone being guilty is not likely to be obeyed for long. Despite this developing consensus, as of June 2015 NCLB still defined federal education law. The Department of Education has issued annual waivers to states to avoid the heavy sanctions associated with failing to meet 2014 proficiency targets. In exchange for these waivers states must develop education reform plans that adhere to the same core set of principles contained in NCLB, but without the same AYP requirements.

These core principles are most clearly expressed in the federal Race to the Top Program. As defined by the Department of Education, the Race to the Top Program was a “$4.35 billion…competitive grant program designed to encourage and reward States that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform.” The program invited states to define their own education reform plans in grant applications. State applications were reviewed and scored based on pre-defined reform criteria which focused on “gains in student achievement,” adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to…compete in the global economy,” “building data systems that measure student growth
and success,” and “improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance” (Race to the Top Program Executive Summary, 2009, p. 2). For the purposes of this review the Race to the Top Program and federal education waivers have furthered four trends within the standards-based accountability movement. First, they have reinforced the centrality of performance standards, also referred to as “student outcomes,” “student achievement,” or “student growth”—all determined by standardized tests as previously defined in NCLB. Second, funding was effectively dependent, based on the rating criteria, on states adopting “common” standards and assessments which, as defined, could only apply to the CCSS and the two private-state consortia that are developing standardized tests aligned to them.19 Third, the concept of accountability has been further extended into the field of professional educators. Whereas NCLB used student data to rate states, school systems, and schools—the new policy requires tracing student test scores to individual teachers and principals and using those scores to make personnel decisions related to compensation, promotion, tenure, certification, and employment. Student data must also be traced to the institutions that certified teachers, thus extending test-based educational accountability to professional educators working in teacher preparation programs. Fourth, the Race to the Top initiative expanded federal support for education choice through policy requirements supporting the expansion of charter schools—or level 3 choice.

The phrase “education standards” has historically and continues to represent a spectrum of meanings. As with curriculum and choice, there is value in considering this spectrum of meaning when discussing standards in varying contexts. Despite these varying uses and meanings it appears clear that as far as education policy is concerned standards

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19 This requirement appears to have loosened some in response to the CCSS controversy.
have come to mean standardized test scores. The degree to which these standards, or “learning goals [that] outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade,” influence curriculum or are curriculum depends on the meaning of curriculum. This influence introduces the potential for tension when standards-based accountability frameworks are adopted by “private” schools utilizing historically autonomous curricula.

**Choice, Standards, & Tension**

 This study was careful to identify tension between education choice and standards as potential. That is because there is considerable difference of opinion as to whether it exists and, assuming it does, to what degree. This potential tension between the autonomy of diverse schools (and curricula) and a common set of standards is not new. The education choice movement can trace its roots to the libertarian distrust of a common state curriculum. John Stuart Mill expressed this sentiment in the nineteenth century when he wrote, “A general State education is a mere contrivance for moulding [sic] people to be exactly like one another” (1869, p. 190). This distrust of lack of diversity in means and ends in national education was adopted by economists like Milton Friedman nearly a century later who, wary of a “state monopoly” in education, applied free-market economic theory to education and argued that “the injection of competition would do much to promote a healthy variety of schools...[and] to introduce flexibility into school systems” (1962, p. 93).

The education choice movement also—especially in its formative years during the 1960s and 70s—drew heavily from the educational philosophies that had matured following the progressive movement of the twentieth century’s early decades. Although these philosophies are inherently diverse, John Dewey offered an illustration of such views and their general inertia in opposition to standardized approaches to education:
To imposition from above is opposed expression and cultivation of individuality; to external discipline is opposed free activity; to learning from texts and teachers, learning through experience; to acquisition of isolated skills and techniques by drill is opposed acquisition of them as means of attaining ends which make direct vital appeal (1938, p. 19).

The economic and instructional philosophies that have shaped the education choice movement do not always overlap in their assumptions or desired ends, but most share a common faith in diversity of means, and (sometimes) of ends, in the educational pursuit. They also share a common understanding of the importance of the professional choices that must be made in an environment of diverse educational means and ends—though this understanding can be muted when discourse occurs within discursive frames that position choice as a means to fix an assumed failing education system rather than as an educational end in its own right. The degree to which these intellectual roots of the choice movement have or continue to guide it are debatable—that the movement is significant in U.S. education policy and practice today is not. But so is standards-based accountability.

The standards-based accountability movement is defined by common educational ends. These two potentially opposing beliefs, one contingent on diversity of ends and one on standardizing end(s), could create curricular tension in education policy. As Lora Cohen-Vogel observed, “theoretically, whereas school choice is supposed to release schools and their potential for innovation and improvement from bureaucratic control, prevailing modes of educational accountability, arising from politically negotiated standards and performance, are rooted in external controls and bureaucratic relationships” (2003, p. 5). This theoretical contradiction has been present throughout the national discourse on education choice. Even Friedman, the free-market economist and influential choice advocate over much of the second half of the twentieth century, recognized the need to find
a balance between these two apparently opposing interests in his early writings. As to uniform standards, Friedman believed

By imposing uniform standards in schooling...central government could undoubtedly improve the level of performance in many local areas and perhaps even on the average of all communities. But in the process, government would replace progress by stagnation, it would substitute uniform mediocrity for the variety essential for that experimentation which can bring tomorrow’s laggard above today’s mean (1962, p. 4).

Friedman tempered this distrust of standards, however, 85 pages later, where he proposed that after providing parents with vouchers to be redeemed in the education marketplace, “The role of the government would be limited to insuring that the schools met certain minimum standards, such as the inclusion of a minimum common content in their programs” (1962, p. 89). This discourse on how to balance common standards and curricular autonomy has simmered below the larger for-or-against discourse over education choice for decades. Gregg Garn and Casey Cobb reviewed the evolution of the concept of accountability—central to this tension—in their School Choice and Accountability (2012), eventually proposing four categories of accountability: bureaucratic, performance, market, and professional. Bureaucratic accountability involves administrative regulations; performance accountability involves measuring student outcomes; market accountability relies on parent choice (and accompanying student funding); and professional accountability would involve a system where educators ensure quality through increased self-governance. To date, high-stakes testing (performance) and accompanying accountability mechanisms have become the defining characteristic of standards-based accountability. Chapter two will explain how standards-based accountability mechanisms distinguish the Indiana CSP from other voucher programs. The
study thus focused on how standards-based accountability frameworks could potentially conflict with the curricular autonomy and diversity goals of traditional voucher policies.

Arthur Wise & Linda Darling-Hammond considered this potential tension between common tests and education choice during the minimum competency-testing era in their *Educational Vouchers: Regulating Their Efficiency and Effectiveness* (1983). They wrote:

There are...many potential problems with [using tests to determine] whether voucher schools are effective. First, the more difficult and extensive tests are, the more likely they are to drive the curriculum in all schools. To the extent that they homogenize curricula and, perhaps, even teaching methods, they undermine the diversity that vouchers are meant to offer (1983, p. 11).

This relationship between tests and curriculum has been widely acknowledged within education scholarship and policy discourse. In subsequent decades as high-stakes testing expanded this phenomenon—curricular homogenization—would often be referred to as *curriculum narrowing* (Archibald & Porter, 1990; Koretz et al, 1992; Heubert & Houser, 1999; Thompson, 2001; Siskin, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Nichols & Berliner, 2005; Hursh, 2005; Au, 2007; Ravitch, 2010). Curriculum narrowing refers to the dual influence high-stakes standards-based accountability policies can exert over curriculum. First, they tend to elevate the importance of curriculum, content, or skills that are tested and lower the importance of those that are not. Second, they tend to encourage pedagogies that (are perceived to) result in higher test scores. If this phenomenon does indeed occur in schools subjected to high-stakes standards-based accountability policy frameworks all four layers of the spectrum understanding of curriculum would be influenced. Consider how course content, course offerings, pedagogy, and the overall learning environment could be affected in a description of curriculum narrowing offered by Diane Ravitch (2010, p. 107):
One of the unintended consequences of NCLB was the shrinkage of time available to teach anything other than reading and math. Other subjects, including history, science, the arts, geography, even recess, were curtailed in many schools. Reading and mathematics were the only subjects that counted in calculating a school’s adequate yearly progress, and even in these subjects, instruction gave way to intensive test preparation. Test scores became an obsession. Many school districts invested heavily in test-preparation materials and activities. Test-taking skills and strategies took precedence over knowledge. Teachers used the tests from previous years to prepare their students...in urban schools, where there are many low-performing students, drill and practice became a significant part of the daily routine.

The degree to which curriculum narrowing occurs in varying contexts is unclear and its fundamental desirability is contested. The goal here is not to establish whether standards-based accountability policy frameworks have positive or negative influences on affected curricula, only to establish that there is a common strain of understanding in education discourse that assumes some influence. As Polikoff & Porter (2014) explained:

A central premise of standards-based reform policies is that the content of teachers’ instruction is weak and variable across sites, owing in large part to the conflicting messages teachers receive about what they should teach. It is thought that providing teachers with more consistent messages through content standards and aligned assessments, curriculum materials, and professional development will lead them to align their instruction with the standards, and student knowledge of standards content will improve (p. 401).

Within such understandings, standards-based accountability policy frameworks are designed to influence curriculum at some level, but other views exist. The Indiana Department of Education describes Indiana’s academic standards as “benchmark measures that define what students should know and be able to do at specified grade levels beginning in kindergarten and progressing through grade twelve. The standards...must be used as the basis for curriculum and instruction in Indiana’s accredited schools [but] the academic

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20 See Wayne Au’s (2007) High-Stakes Testing and Curriculum Control: A Qualitative Metasynthesis, for a review of the research on the degree to which high-stakes standards-based accountability narrow curricula. See the National Academy of Education’s Standards, Assessments, and Accountability (2009) for a less descriptive discussion of the effects of high-stakes assessments on curriculum and teaching.
standards are NOT a curriculum” (IDOE website, 2015). This framing of standards, though not fully addressing testing and accountability, attempts to clearly demarcate standards and curriculum. O’Connor (2014) described this understanding of standards and curriculum as the “what and how of schooling.” This framing of standards:

Marks the standards as setting out what is essential, while the curriculum is interpreted as incorporating wider content detail and the classroom decisions and interactions of teachers and students... In much of the state-level policy discourse, standards are identified as “the what” of schooling, while curriculum and instruction are identified as “the how” (p. 20).

O’Connor noted that “this narrative emphasizes the local authority of districts, teachers, and schools in curriculum making” (p. 20), thus (conveniently) addressing deep historical tendencies valuing local curriculum control in the United States. This frame, which is the dominant frame in policy language today, might be supported by evidence from the education choice movement itself. In this view, the influence of curriculum narrowing is nullified, or at least mitigated, through the multiplication of so many different kinds of schools resulting from the expansion of levels 2-4 choice. Carpenter (2008), after offering a concise review of the academic debate over whether standards-based accountability policies were restricting charter diversity, used a rough typology to determine that “the charter landscape grew more diverse throughout the 1990s rather than less” (p. 93). This period was pre-NCLB, but it does raise a seemingly obvious question. How does curriculum narrowing explain the (real or perceived) differentiation between so many schools in the era of school choice? As Mary Ann Raywid (2008) observed:

We have come to have a considerable amount of school-to-school diversity...we now have schools and academies that are themed on the basis of differing philosophies or approaches, on the basis of academic disciplines, prospective career choices, hobbies, learning styles or methods, or learning

21 Text bolded and capitalized in the original.
locations (e.g., museums, stores, construction sites). And now with charter schools, we have schools that are run by individual proprietors, corporations, unions, teacher groups, churches, coops, hospitals, research organizations, banks, civic organizations, television stations, and military organizations. So in the relatively brief time of three decades, we have moved from virtually no diversity and choice within public education to quite a range of choice, both as to programs and as to providers (pp. 6-7).

Such observations beg a reconsideration of whether or not curricular tension resulting from the increasing integration of the education choice and standards-based accountability movements should or does exist, or if it does, whether or not or to what degree it is mitigated by the overall influence of expanding school choice policies. It should be clear by now that different perspectives exist regarding choice and standards in education. Some, like political analyst David Brooks and the Indiana Department of Education, see no conflict between standards and professional and curricular autonomy.22 Others see varying degrees of tension between standards-based accountability frameworks and school choice frameworks. That the tensions caused by these differing views are present in education scholarship might lead us to expect to find at least elements of tension in the public discourse on education choice and standards, particularly in a policy like the Indiana CSP where the two policy movements were more heavily integrated than in any other U.S. voucher program. Chapter two reviews the CSP and explains why it is such an interesting case study on the integration of choice and standards-based accountability.

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22 At least regarding Indiana Standards. Views differ regarding the CCSS. This is discussed in later chapters.
2. THE INDIANA CHOICE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM (CSP)

We have the opportunity in Indiana today for this state to be leading the charge across the rest of the nation...Indiana can be at the forefront of education reform.

(Michelle Rhee, Education Reform Advocate)

To me, it sounds like another of the continual attempts coming from the administration to destroy public education in Indiana.

(Nathan Schnellenberger, Indiana State Teachers Association President)

Background and Overview

The Indiana Choice Scholarship Program (Public Law 92-2011) is one of five statewide voucher programs in the United States not limited to students with disabilities, or six if including the Opportunity Scholarship Program in the District of Columbia. The CSP “provides funds to assist with the payment of tuition and fees at a participating Choice School” (CSP Annual Report, 2014, p. 3). While in practice most of the “choice schools” are private schools, public schools may also qualify to accept eligible students under some conditions. The Indiana Department of Education listed 317 approved choice schools for the 2014-15 school year—approximately one-third of the “close to 900” non-public schools in Indiana (Indiana Non-Public Education Association, 2014). The number of private schools participating in the program during the 2013-14 year was the same as the previous year after three consecutive years of expansion. Student participation has increased each year, from 3,911 during the initial 2011-12 school year, to 9,139 in 2012-13, to 19,809 in 2013-14 (Choice Scholarship Annual Report, 2014). This number represents less than 3%

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23 The other four states comprise LA, NC, OH, and WI. Technically OH has two statewide programs, but they are treated as a single program here due to significant policy overlap. Implementation in NC was suspended by a state court in 2014 and remains on hold pending further legal decisions. The programs in VT and ME are excluded from this count. They are unique in tenure and design and, depending on the requisite criteria one employs, may or may not technically qualify as voucher programs. According to Maine’s State Department of Education, “Maine does not have a voucher program.” This list may expand by the 2015-16 school year.
of the students across the state who were eligible to participate and less than 2% of the
approximately one million “public school” students in Indiana.24 Almost all of the students
who have participated in the program over its nearly four-year history have come from
low-income households and effectively volunteered for the program. The ethnic
distribution of choice scholarship students suggests a focus on students from traditionally
underserved populations, as shown below in Table 1: Indiana CSP Participation by Ethnicity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>2+ Races</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indiana Public Schools</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-1525</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice Scholarship</td>
<td>56.4%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program 2013-1426</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the relatively minor reach of a program targeting traditionally underserved
students living within 200% of the federal poverty level, the Indiana Choice Scholarship
Program has proven quite controversial. As will be discussed in chapter five, critics of the
program point out that these students are not receiving “new” funding support, but simply
taking from Peter to pay Paul, with Peter representing the public school system. While the
nature of this controversy will hopefully prove insightful in its own right, the Indiana CSP
was not selected for this research because of its reach, target population, or contentious
nature. The Indiana CSP was selected because its structure provides a unique lens through
which to consider one possible future framework of U.S. education policy and practice. This
will be discussed in more detail in chapter seven and the unique policy mechanisms in the

24 This number is difficult to estimate. According the U.S. Institute of Education Statistics, roughly half of
Indiana’s public school students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Program eligibility allows for 150% of this
rate for a partial scholarship and up to 200% once students have qualified at 150% in the initial year.
26 Indiana Department of Education Office of School Finance (2014).
CSP will be discussed in the second section of this chapter. Before examining those policy mechanisms let’s briefly review the history and overall structure of the Indiana CSP.

The Indiana CSP was adopted in 2011, but it was not the first “choice” policy in Indiana. Like most other states, Indiana had both charter schools and intra-district choice policies long before 2011. In 2009 the state passed legislation creating Indiana School Scholarship Tax Credits. These credits allowed private individuals or corporations to claim state tax credits for donating money to scholarship granting organizations (SGOs) that then distributed funds to eligible children to help pay private school tuition. This quasi-voucher system never used “state funds” and thus circumvented the legal challenges of the later CSP. The discourse over the policy, which eventually passed both the Republican held state senate and Democratic held state house, offered a glimpse of the discourse that would play out over the CSP a little over a year later. As Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette reporter Niki Kelly observed at the time, “Opponents call the provision a back door to vouchers, but supporters say it simply provides an opportunity for low-income students struggling in traditional schools to attend a private school” (Kelly, 2009, p. 1A). The back door would open to vouchers in 2010.

The smoldering debate over education vouchers in Indiana was reignited in late 2010 following an election where Republicans gained substantive majorities in both houses of the state legislature. In early December, about one month after the election, Republican Governor Mitch Daniels and Republican State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Bennett proposed a state education voucher program at a meeting of the State Education Roundtable, an appointed group of “key leaders from education, business, community, and

27 Republicans gained three seats in the Senate to command a 36 to 14 majority. Republicans gained twelve seats in the state house, giving them a 60 to 40 majority. Democrats held the state house before the election.
government” (in.gov/edroundtable, 2015) that served in an advisory capacity on issues related to state education policy. The proposal would evolve into House Bill 1003 and lead to a contentious debate in the state legislature and public over education vouchers. This debate was intensified when Republicans also introduced several bills intended to reduce the power of labor unions. Lacking the votes to stop the Republican bills, the Democratic caucus in the house resorted to a walkout on February 22, 2011. Without the necessary quorum, the Republican bills died in the state house. This walkout would extend for weeks, drawing national attention and ultimately resulting in the Republican withdrawal of several labor-oriented bills. The Republican caucus was not willing, however, to withdraw House Bill 1003. Concessions were made to appease the Democratic caucus, the initially proposed income limits were lowered and participation caps were included for the first three years of the program, but the bill eventually passed once the Democrats returned to the State House and conceded defeat on the issue. Continued strong Republican majorities in the state legislature would result in expansions of the program in subsequent years through the creation of additional paths to program eligibility. Disagreement within the Republican caucus would result in these expansion efforts subsiding in 2013. Let’s next review the basic policy structure and eligibility requirements of the Indiana CSP.

Students must satisfy three initial criteria to be eligible for a Choice Scholarship: reside legally in Indiana; be between 5 and 22 years old; and be accepted by a participating Choice School. Students must also meet income threshold requirements. In most cases students are eligible for a full scholarship if their household income is equal to or less than the income threshold established for participation in the federal free or reduced lunch program and are eligible for a 50% scholarship if their household income is equal to or less
than 150% of this threshold. The program initially required students to have been enrolled in a public school for at least two semesters prior to eligibility for a Choice Scholarship, but several amendments to the policy have created additional “pathways” to eligibility, including: if a student is a sibling of a Choice Scholarship student; if the student has previously been awarded a voucher through one of five approved private voucher granting organizations in Indiana; if a student has a documented disability; or if a student would otherwise be assigned to an “F” rated school. Students utilizing one of these alternative pathways accounted for over 40% of awarded scholarships in 2013-14. Approximately 80% of scholarships to date have been awarded to students in grades 1-8.

Students who meet the criteria and are accepted in a participating choice school file paperwork with the state department of education to make a payment to the school on their behalf. The amount of the payment varies. For the 2013-14 school year it was up to $4,700 for elementary students or up to 90 percent of “the per-student state funding for the student’s school corporation of residence” for secondary students (Choice Scholarship Annual Report, 2014, p. 16). Because these payments are made from the department of education’s annual budget each choice scholarship payment results in a reduction by the same amount in the department of education’s annual budget. Critics of the program (and vouchers in general) correctly point out that voucher programs reduce the amount of funds available to the “public” schools. Voucher proponents correctly point out that this reduction in funds is proportional to a reduction in students to be educated by the public schools. The intricacies of these two positions will be discussed in later chapters.

28 For 2013-14, a household with four members would have qualified for the 100% rate at or below an annual income of $43,568 and the 50% rate at or below $65,352.
In many ways the Indiana program is not that different from other state programs (excluding the Vermont and Maine programs). Participation caps were removed after the program’s third year and the Indiana plan does not target students assigned to a “failing” school as heavily as some other states, but otherwise the program is fairly similar to other existing statewide voucher programs. What makes Indiana’s voucher program unique is the level of curriculum control it exerts over participating private schools. This control is accomplished through standards-based accountability requirements choice schools must agree to concerning: the explicit curriculum; state testing participation; participation in the state “A-F” school rating system; and the use of state approved teacher evaluation systems.

**Curricular Control**

What makes Indiana’s voucher policy unique is the level of curricular control it exerts over private schools participating in the program through its standards-based accountability requirements. The Indiana CSP emphasizes standards-based accountability to a higher degree than any other state voucher policy. This is accomplished through multiple program requirements for participating private schools including: mandated explicit curriculum; mandated participation in state testing; mandated participation in the state “A-F” school rating system; and mandated teacher evaluation systems.

The Indiana Choice Scholarship Program is defined in state administrative code (IN IC 20-51-4—20-51-11). The opening lines of the code provide an excellent example of how different understandings of what “curriculum” means can result in inherently conflicted education policy frameworks. Consider the kinds of policy mechanisms that might result from the opening statement of the administrative code defining the Indiana program based on the spectrum understanding of curriculum discussed in chapter one:
Sec. 1. (a) Except as provided under subsections (b) through (h), it is the intent of the general assembly to honor the autonomy of nonpublic schools that choose to become eligible schools under [the CSP]. A nonpublic eligible school is not an agent of the state or federal government, and therefore:

(1) the department or any other state agency may not in any way regulate the educational program of a nonpublic eligible school that accepts a choice scholarship under this chapter, including the regulation of curriculum content, religious instruction or activities, classroom teaching, teacher and staff hiring requirements, and other activities carried out by the eligible school (IC 20-51-4-1, Autonomy of nonpublic schools; curriculum).

Following this language prohibiting the “regulation” of participating schools’ “education program,” including “curriculum content” and “classroom teaching,” the code specifies fifteen documents that must be maintained by the school and available to students (See Appendix E: Application To Become An Eligible School Under Indiana’s Choice Scholarship Program, p. 2, 3rd bullet for a full list of documents). The code then stipulates that secondary schools (6-12) must allocate “five full class periods” “within the two weeks preceding a general election” to the discussion of five civics-related content areas before then identifying what are essentially twenty-one broad learning objectives that teachers must place a “special emphasis” on in their “instruction.” These requirements are followed by a set of curricular requirements defining courses that must be offered and “the study of the Holocaust and the role religious extremism played in the events of September 11, 2001.” It is important to note here that I am not suggesting the curricular requirements required of participating Choice Schools are unreasonable or unworthy, only that they are in fact curricular requirements—despite the stated intent of the policy to

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29 See Appendix E: Application To Become An Eligible School Under Indiana’s Choice Scholarship Program, p. 2 for the full list.
30 Ibid.
specifically avoid regulating a schools’ “education program,” “curriculum content” or “classroom teaching.”

The Indiana CSP is also unique in its use of the state standards-based accountability system. All state voucher programs require some form of testing. Several programs require participating schools to administer something akin to a “nationally standardized test” (NC Opportunity Scholarships) to voucher recipients and to report results to the state and, in some cases, students’ parents. Other states, like Louisiana and Ohio, require participating schools to administer state assessments to voucher students. The Indiana program requires Choice Schools to administer the suite of state achievement exams, or ISTEP+, to all students in the school, not just voucher students. Thus if a school admits a single Choice Scholarship student it must test every student in the school “in English language arts and mathematics in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8[,]…in science in grades 4 and 6[,]…in social studies in grades 5 and 7[, in] …Algebra I[,]…English 10[,]…Biology I[,] and]…each…end of course assessment used for accountability purposes under IC 20-31-8 (511 IAC 5-2-3). According to the Indiana Department of Education, the “ISTEP+ reports student achievement levels according to the Indiana Academic Standards that were adopted by the Indiana State Board of Education” (IN DOE Website, 2014). As discussed in chapter one, academic standards are, a priori, assumed and designed to orient curriculum. While ISTEP+ assessments may or may not be “objective,” they are designed to assess a specific set of academic standards, which are in turn designed to guide curricular programs. The CSP even requires parents of CSP students to sign a waiver agreeing to not opt their children out of the exam in order to remain eligible for the program in subsequent years.

31 The Vermont program does not and the ME program is conditional; if a school is comprised of 60% or more voucher students it must administer state exams, otherwise there are no testing requirements.
As discussed in chapter one, tests do not inherently control curriculum. It is when the tests are tied to high-stakes (accountability) that they can exert a narrowing influence on the curriculum. Historically these stakes have been targeted at students through tests that served as gatekeepers to different levels of curriculum or for advancement to higher grades—practices still widely employed today. In recent years high-stakes tests have increasingly been used to exert control over the curriculum and instruction of schools and teachers. The Indiana CSP pursues both of these objectives by regulating that choice schools participate in the state’s A-F school rating system and adopt state approved teacher evaluation models. Both requirements exert curricular control through the heavy emphasis associated with student results on a test that is inherently designed to measure alignment to pre-specified academic standards—a core influencer of curriculum.

Indiana is the only state where participating private schools are subject to the same school rating system as public schools. The Indiana program does not subject private schools to the same level of sanctions as public schools for being assigned a poor rating, including school closure, but it does use sanctions such as making the school ineligible to accept future Choice Scholarship students. Such rating systems also utilize the shaming of schools to influence increased curricular and instructional foci on achieving improved student test scores because “the performance of a school’s students on the ISTEP program test and other assessments…are the primary and majority means of assessing a school’s improvement” (IN IC 20-31-8-1). Choice Schools must not only administer state achievement tests to all students, the results of the tests carry programmatic and public relations consequences. This creates an intended incentive for participating schools to align curricular programs and instruction to state academic standards and the state tests.
In addition to explicit curricular requirements, full-school participation in the suite of state assessments, and participation in the state A-F school rating system, the Indiana program requires choice schools to adopt state approved teacher evaluation models. While there are multiple models to choose from, all state approved models must include “objective measures of student achievement and growth to significantly inform the evaluation [and these] objective measures must include...student assessment results from statewide assessments” (IN IC 20-28-11.5-4). Because “ISTEP+ reports student achievement levels according to the Indiana Academic Standards” (IN DOE, 2015) this requirement provides another incentive to align curricular programs and instruction to state academic standards and the state tests, this time at the teacher and classroom level.

The Indiana CSP is thus unique among state voucher programs in both the reach of its choice provisions and in the curricular control exerted over participating “private” schools through standards-based accountability policy mechanisms. Chapter one explained how the intersection of these two defining policy frameworks might result in curricular tension. Chapter two has identified why the Indiana CSP should provide a context where this tension might be detected. Next chapter three will describe the research methods utilized to seek this tension by examining discursive framing found in the public discourse in Indiana 2009-2013 over the consideration, adoption, and implementation the CSP.
3. METHODS OF ANALYSIS

Facts, as much as images, take on their meaning by being embedded in some larger system of meaning or frame.
(William Gamson, Sociologist)

Theoretical Framework

This research began with a curious interest in a theoretical tension between the two most influential movements in U.S. education over at least the last quarter century—the choice and standards-based accountability movements. These are broad movements whose meanings vary across diverse segments of the population. Where some see tension, others may not. Whether or not this tension is perceived may well be dependent on the frames used to understand the movements and the meanings associated with key terms used to describe them. (At least) three terms are of particular importance: standards, choice, and curriculum. These terms possess broad meanings and can be framed in many ways.

Chapter one proposed that while the meaning of “standards” in education discourse has varied over time and can, in appropriately ambiguous contexts, assume a range of meanings, in practice the term has become equivalent to high-stakes standardized testing. These tests, in theory and practice, are designed to exert some level of explicit curricular control and standardization and, many have contended, also heavily influence what might be considered implicit and null curricula in schools as well. Chapter one also suggested that school “choice” is best understood on a continuum. The choice movement’s social and policy roots are varied and may be traced to an odd collection of ideological parents including (but not limited to) economic free-market ideologies, progressive conceptions of individualized pedagogies, and attempts to empower or exclude historically disadvantaged
student populations. These conceptual roots, though varied and perhaps for different reasons, share a common theme—an a priori belief in the value of curricular diversity.

The key to this potential tension, or lack thereof, appears therefore dependent on the meaning of our third term, “curriculum.” If viewed narrowly enough, as the specific content offered within courses, then standards-based accountability policy frameworks do not necessarily threaten curricular diversity. The curriculum becomes just another environmental variable to be managed, perhaps even by teachers, to achieve maximum achievement. As the meaning of curriculum expands to include courses offered and pedagogies used the tension should become more noticeable. That which is measured gains importance over that which is not and pedagogies become subject to the constant pull of (measured) results oriented value systems. If we expand the definition of curriculum even further to express the overall learning environment and its accompanying implicit, null, and hidden curricula, for students and educators, the tension between curricular diversity and standards-based accountability policy frameworks should be considerably more palpable. Jobs and even the continued existence of schools can be on the line. In short, what matters is how terms like standards, choice, and curriculum are framed.

Scholars, policymakers, and stakeholders employ diverse sets of frames to define these concepts in education. While some of these terms and frames are addressed throughout this study, the focus of the research is the conceptual framing in the public discourse over education choice and its relation to standards in Indiana. Specifically, the study examined framing patterns in the public discourse over the consideration, adoption, and implementation of Indiana’s CSP state voucher program through two of the state’s

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32 “Achievement” in most contemporary education policy discourse typically means higher test scores.
largest circulation newspapers, the Indianapolis Star and the Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette 2009-2013. Chapter two explained why the Indiana CSP makes a good case study for locating potential curricular tension over standards-based accountability and school choice frameworks. The Indiana CSP integrates its standards-based accountability model, which can potentially lead to curricular narrowing, with its state education voucher program, a policy mechanism historically stressing curricular autonomy and diversity, to a higher degree than any other state voucher program. Let's now review why and how the study analyzed newspapers to seek potential tension in discursive framing of the CSP.

Newspaper coverage of a policy issue does not represent the full arena of public discourse, but there is a history of thought that supports the idea that media coverage is an influencer of, and/or influenced by, public opinion (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Gamson et al, 1992; Neuman et al, 1992; Edwards & Chomsky, 2002; Kollmeyer, 2004; Anderson, 2007; Steensland, 2008; Tarasawa, 2008; Cohen, 2010; Fromm, 2010; Goldstein, 2011). Although not representative of the full spectrum of public discourse, newspaper coverage of major policy issues—like the adoption of statewide education voucher programs—does represent some segment of the public discourse. Some might even suggest it represents the “public discourse of record.” Newspapers may also be the most representative space of significance within the larger discourse. Unlike private discourse between policy makers and those who influence them or the academic discourse between scholars and policy advocates, the discourse constructed in newspapers is considerably more inclusive and accessible. Politicians, special interest groups, educators, academics, and other stakeholders can all access and, perhaps, participate in this influential forum.
Situated within a broader understanding of the history of a policy discourse, newspaper coverage can also provide an excellent departure point for pursuing other discourse strands. Identifying discourse participants, or actors, can provide trails beyond the newspaper discourse forum to related discourse strands represented through organizational position papers, primary policy documents, or issue-relevant research or scholarship. Which actors gain access to this public discourse may be critical to how issues are understood within the larger discourse community and by those who follow it. Which discursive frames are (or are not) used by these actors in newspaper discourse may be consequential in the evolution of larger community understandings of the policy formation and implementation process. At the very least, how policy ideas are framed in newspapers offers a departure point for examining the larger policy related discourse. How policy ideas are framed in the discourse of record is important. But what are frames?

Central to scholarship on the influence of media in public discourse is the concept of framing. Frames provide the structure and boundaries of discourse. Ferree, et al (2002) defined frames as “central organizing ideas that provide coherence to a designated set of idea elements” (p. 105). Similarly, Entman (1993) provided the following description:

Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. Typically frames diagnose, evaluate, and prescribe (p. 52).33

According to Brian Steensland (2008), “studies of policy framing began in earnest in the late 1980s” (p. 1029). Gamson et al. (1992) observed around that period that

33 Italicized emphasis in the original.
Media sociologists have come to rely increasingly on the concept of frame. As a concept, it seems both indispensable and elusive. Frame plays the same role in analyzing media discourse that schema does in cognitive psychology—a central organizing principle that holds together and gives coherence and meaning to a diverse array of symbols (p. 384).

A review of the wealth of research that has been conducted on media framing since that time is beyond the scope of the present research. Some of this research is referenced in later chapters, but for now a very tentative summary of some key limitations worthy of consideration in the present research will have to suffice.34 First, while a relative consensus exists that media framing exerts some level of influence on public discourse, just how much and when is debatable. Does media shape public discourse, or does public discourse shape media? How diverse sets of the population interpret and make meaning from media is also highly contested ground. This research is not based on preconceived notions about whether media played the role of horse or cart in the public discourse over Indiana’s adoption of a statewide voucher program. Nor does the research make claims about the relative influence of media framing in this or other public policy discourses. Second, while “positive” or “negative” positions are important in discourse, what really matters are the frames used. Actors may take opposing views on themes within a frame while maintaining perfect agreement on the frame itself. For example, actors may disagree as to whether the glass is half full or half empty, but they share a foundational assumption that what is important is how much water is in the glass. Such disagreements could potentially never consider issues related to how water is distributed to the glass, how the water is measured

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once inside the glass, or how the small amount of water in the glass came to be so important in the first place. As Entman (1993) noted, “Most frames are defined by what they omit as well as include, and the omissions of potential problem definitions, explanations, evaluations, and recommendations may be as critical as the inclusions in guiding the audience” (p. 54). This “principle of omission,” much like the null curriculum discussed in chapter one, may prove insightful when applied to the spectrum understandings of the study’s key terms. Third, just as important as which frames are used are who uses them—precisely because this influences which frames are used. To this end, the research leveraged methodology advanced in Steensland’s (2008) “Why do Policy Frames Change? Actor-Idea Coevolution in Debates over Welfare Reform.”

Steensland (2008) examined “the dynamics of policy framing in the debate over guaranteed income proposals for reforming the American welfare system in the 1960s and 1970s” (p. 1033). Analyzing coverage of guaranteed income policies in regular news stories in the New York Times 1964-1980, he utilized two “analytically distinct [methodological] frameworks,” an “actor representation approach” and a “frame adoption approach” (p. 1028). As defined by Steensland, an actor representation approach “examines the composition of actors who are covered in media accounts of policy debates” (p. 1031). Different actors employ different frames in public discourse. Which actors are included in the discourse can therefore influence which frames are used. The second approach, frame adoption, examines the “distribution of policy frames” over time (p. 1032). The current study covers a considerably shorter period of time than the Steensland study. This makes tracing the evolution of frame adoption less relevant, but the distribution of policy frames across actors and the discourse can still be analyzed. Examining both actor representation
and frame distribution allowed findings between these two significant elements of public discourse to be “oriented.” In short, the research methods sought to determine who participated in the discourse over the consideration, adoption, and implementation of the CSP in Indiana and how they framed key ideas related to vouchers and curricular tension.

The study’s primary research interest was how the potential curricular tension between education choice and standards was framed through two of Indiana’s largest-circulation newspapers, the *Indianapolis Star (Star)* and *Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette (Gazette)*, during the consideration, adoption, and implementation of the CSP. As with earlier understandings of choice, standards, and curriculum, however, how these findings are understood will be dependent on context. To better understand how the potential curricular tension between choice and standards was framed, the study situated the primary findings within findings from a secondary research interest, an exploration of the full discourse over the CSP. This secondary research interest was actually much broader than the primary research interest, which was only a small part of the full discourse, but it appeared both necessary and useful. Chapters four and five provide an analysis of the full discourse followed by a discussion of the primary research interest findings in chapter six. The next section describes the methods used to identify and analyze discursive frames.

**Research Methods**

The analysis examined the discourse over the CSP occurring in two of Indiana’s largest circulation newspapers 2009-2013. The CSP was adopted in 2011. Adding two years before and after the adoption year allows a sense of how the discourse evolved from its early consideration through adoption and implementation. As discussed in the next three chapters, there were noticeable trends in frame usage over even this brief period of
time. The Star and Gazette were selected because they are the major newspapers in Indiana’s two largest cities and, as one long-term resident of the state suggested, tended to lean to different ends of the (mainstream) political spectrum. Situated in Indiana’s capital and largest city, Indianapolis, the Star reported a 2014 circulation of just over 134,000 readers, the largest circulation in the state. The 2010 U.S. Census estimated 820,445 residents in Indianapolis. This population was 62.8% white, 27.5% black, and 9.4% Hispanic/Latino. The Gazette is based in Fort Wayne, the state’s second largest city, and reported a 2014 circulation of 48,557 readers, the fourth largest in the state. The 2010 U.S. Census estimated 253,691 residents in Fort Wayne. This population was 73.6% white, 15.4% black, and 8.0% Hispanic/Latino. By comparison, the state of Indiana had nearly 6.5 million residents in 2010. The state’s population was 84.3% white, 9.1% black, and 6.0% Hispanic/Latino. Using two newspapers allowed for comparison of two similar but different forums. Adding additional sources, newspapers or otherwise, would likely lead to even more nuanced comparisons of the analysis. It may also be fair to ask whether using two urban newspapers excluded frames used in more rural communities of discourse? The research does not claim that the two newspapers are representative of the full discourse in Indiana, only that they provide a rich enough sample to begin to examine the discourse.

To search for frames in the discourse over the Indiana CSP required first identifying articles that addressed the CSP. “Article” is an umbrella term used throughout the research that includes news stories written by reporters or attributed to national newswires, signed or anonymous editorials, and reader letters published by either paper to convey frames related to the CSP. Star articles were accessed through Lexus-Nexus and Gazette articles accessed through Access World News. Text searches identified all articles that contained the
words “voucher + school,” “voucher + education,” or “choice scholarship” 2009-2013. After accounting for duplicate articles across searches, there were a total of 867 articles (491 in the Star and 376 in the Gazette). After filtering out articles that did not contain frames related to the CSP, 367 articles (158 in the Star and 209 in the Gazette) remained. Filtering articles for frames is discussed below, but let’s first review how frames were identified.

Identifying these “indispensable and elusive” (Gamson et al, 1992, p. 384) constructs, or frames, required operationalizing them. Frames manifest in actor “utterances” (Ferree et al, 2002; Steensland, 2008) where they serve as organizing principles around which a variety of verbal packages may cluster and derive meaning. Ferree, et al (2002) defined an utterance as “a speech act or statement by a single speaker” (p. 50). Utterances may project multiple frames, or no frames at all. They may be a few words, or longer—perhaps as long as a paragraph or two of text. This can be subjective, and some of the challenges with separating distinct utterances are discussed below. This can be particularly difficult in editorial formats, where the entire article is sometimes little more than a long, run-on utterance. Examples are in order. Consider the following utterances:

**#1:** Because Hoosier taxpayers are now funding Catholic, Muslim, Lutheran and soon, Southern Baptist private schools, those taxpayers should have a say in the boardrooms (Sade, 2013, p. 1C).

**#2:** The purpose of the legislation has primarily to do with education—not fostering religion (Kelly, 2012c, p. 1A).

**#3:** As a taxpayer, I have every right to demand that not one penny of my money goes toward the religion-based indoctrination of children (Sherlock, 2011, p. B11).

These three utterances were coded as using a *religion* frame to describe vouchers. Note that whether the utterances frame vouchers or their relation to religion in a positive
or negative light varies. Example #3 frames vouchers negatively, but the first two examples are considerably more neutral. In fact example #2 is attempting to separate the voucher plan from religion, but in doing so continues to utilize the religion frame. Notice also how utterances can contain more than a single frame. In examples #1 and #3 the actors combine a religion frame with an economic frame by establishing an undesirable relationship between public funding (taxpayer money) and religious schools, thus resulting in a negative framing of vouchers where the two constructs (religion and public funding) overlap. As will be discussed in chapter five, these two frames were regularly combined in utterances by voucher opponents. Assigning frames to utterances required determining which utterances contained relevant frames. But how does one identify frames?

Recall that Entman defined framing as “promot[ing] a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation (1993, p. 52). Similarly, Steensland “identified frames...based upon the three main functions they perform in relation to public policy: diagnosing social problems, prescribing solutions, and linking policy options to social values” (2008, p. 1035). Borrowing from these definitions, the study used a loose rubric to help determine when utterances were projecting frames of vouchers or the CSP as (a) a problem definition; (b) a moral interpretation or evaluation; or (c) a treatment or recommendation. With the assistance of this “frame-screening rubric” the original 867 articles were filtered down to 367 containing frames of vouchers or the CSP. This involved reading each article and assigning it to one of three categories. The first category comprised the 367 articles that included utterances that framed vouchers or the CSP. This category represents the analysis sample. The second category included utterances that did reference vouchers or the CSP, but did not frame them. For example:
#4: A...Superior Court judge is set to hear arguments today in a lawsuit challenging Indiana's new school voucher program (Editorial, 2011f, p. 8A).

This utterance in example #4 addressed school vouchers, but it did not use a frame. It did not situate vouchers within one of the three categories (problem definition, moral interpretation, or treatment) that represent framing. One could infer that there is a problem with vouchers because arguments were being heard before a judge, but we don’t know what those problems are. Likewise, the actor behind this utterance (an editorial board) did not assign a positive or negative evaluation to vouchers, but simply referenced them in a neutral manner. If you say it will rain tomorrow you are not framing rain. If you say, “It is good it will rain tomorrow, the crops need it,” or “if it rains tomorrow it will spoil the parade,” you would be framing rain by evaluating it in a positive or negative manner. Thirdly, the utterance did not offer vouchers as a solution or recommendation, but simply as an item involved in an administrative process. These types of utterances, which clearly referenced vouchers or the CSP but did not frame them, were excluded from the study. The third category comprised articles that contained the words in the search, but did not reference education vouchers or the CSP. The text in these articles might have referenced “food,” “library,” “healthcare,” or some other form of voucher, but not education vouchers.

The 367 relevant articles were then copied into Microsoft Word documents so they could be imported into ATLAS.ti, a qualitative research software package. ATLAS.ti is designed to assist the study of “analyzing unstructured data—data that cannot be meaningfully studied by formal, statistical approaches” (atlas.ti.com, 2014). The two primary advantages of a program like ATLAS.ti are its highly efficient coding format (for initial and subsequent coding passes) and its analysis and reporting features. To add an additional layer of contrast to the analysis the articles were divided into six subgroups.
Articles for each of the two papers were assigned to one of three groups: news stories, editorials, or reader letters. Separating these three “sub-forums” within the larger newspaper discourse allowed for analysis of important distinguishing characteristics of each. These characteristics are discussed in the next chapters, but quick definitions are in order. News stories are articles written by journalists or, on occasion, picked up from a national newswire like the Associated Press. Editorials are opinion pieces. They are often not subject to the same level of “balance” or “objectivity” that many new stories sometimes attain. Reader Letters are just that—letters sent in by the general public. Distinctions between these article forms are discussed below, but first a review of the coding process.

Coding is the essential element of this research. It is also a very subjective matter. Even if processes like using multiple coders to establish inter-rater reliability—something this study did not do—help to mitigate the subjectivity of coding, constructing the coding frameworks is a highly subjective process. As with high-stakes testing, that which is coded gains status and that which is not becomes less important. If frames were misinterpreted, or missed altogether, the analyses in the following chapters might be more perceived than real. The research began with an earnest desire to better understand the full spectrum of views in the discourse being analyzed, but I cannot fully separate the design of the coding framework from the perspectives I have developed from over a decade in the education field. In an attempt to alleviate the influence of author bias, a pilot-coding process was conducted on a randomly selected subset of sixty news stories from the Gazette to inductively construct a coding framework. Codes were identified and compiled one article at a time. By the midpoint of the second pass the codes had been consolidated into a
framework that, with a few exceptions, would serve as the framework for the rest of the study. With a coding framework established, the first coding passes could be executed.

Codes were assigned to every utterance in the 367 articles that either (a) framed vouchers or the CSP or (b) framed some understanding of curriculum or standards. These two coding protocols did overlap, but utterances coded through the first protocol obviously did not all include an understanding of curriculum or standards and utterances coded through the second protocol were not always related to vouchers, although to be included they had to be in an article that did include at least once utterance qualifying under the first protocol. In other words, utterances reflecting an understanding of curriculum or standards did not need to also frame vouchers. This resulted in the frequency of the curriculum/standards frame being exaggerated in the soon to be reviewed analyses of frame production. Utterances coded through the first protocol were assigned a minimum of three codes. The first code identified the actor. The second code identified the frame(s). The third code identified whether the utterance framed vouchers or the CSP in a positive, negative, or neutral manner. Utterances could only be assigned to a single actor and position category, but could contain multiple frames. A single article would often contain multiple utterances, and therefore multiple actors and frames. Utterances coded through the second protocol were not assigned positive, negative, or neutral frames, unless of course the utterance qualified under the first protocol and referenced curriculum or standards. The pilot coding study resulted in the code list displayed in Table 2: Article Coding Framework, with the following exceptions. The actor code “Legal (Attorney/Judge)” and the frame codes “Harms Public Education,” “Common Schools,” and “Research/Efficacy” were added during the second or third coding pass. “Harms Public Education” had
previously been coded as a polar opposite of “Choice = Good/Opportunity” and the other frames had been coded as “Other,” a code used throughout the analysis to capture any frames that didn’t neatly fit into the coding structure. This “joker” code allowed the capture of frames that may have otherwise escaped the imperfect coding framework and, as will be discussed in chapter five, provided insights into potential future coding frameworks. Still, the pilot coding framework held up considerably well over the full coding process.

**TABLE 2: ARTICLE CODING FRAMEWORK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Actor Codes</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Frame Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A: Administrator (private)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>F: Choice = Good/Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A: Administrator (public)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>F: Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3*</td>
<td>A: Editorial Board</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F: Competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A: Education Interest Group</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F: Harms Public Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A: Governor’s Office</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F: Other/Not Sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6*</td>
<td>A: Journalist</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F: Economic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>A: IHE Faculty/Other</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F: Research/Efficacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>A: Legal (Attorney/Judge)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>F: School Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>A: National Figure</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>F: Social Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>A: Other Actor Type</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>F: Common Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>A: Parent/Citizen</td>
<td></td>
<td>Position Codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>A: State Representative (D)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>P: Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>A: State Representative (R)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>P: Opposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>A: Student</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>P: Supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>A: Superintendent’s Office</td>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum Tension Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>A: Teacher (private)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Z: Curriculum/Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>A: Teacher (public)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Only used w/editorials

As mentioned above, there are nuanced distinctions between news stories, editorials, and reader letters. News stories generally provide a cleaner identification of utterances and actors. News stories are written by journalists, but the journalists (often) utilize actor utterances to provide different perspectives on the issues discussed. Within a
single article a journalist might use quotes from three (or more) separate actors, each employing different frames of the same issue. This format makes it relatively easy to assign codes to distinct actors and utterances. Editorials are more challenging. Editorials are essentially long utterance packages intended to promote a specific frame or frames. It is also difficult to attribute distinct utterances in an editorial to actors other than the author. While editorials may cite multiple facts or fact-like sentiment, it is not always clear how or from where the information was derived. Assigning individual utterances in editorials to an actor other than the article’s author was therefore not feasible. This resulted in a noticeable concentration of actors in the editorial sub-forum, perhaps a telling phenomenon. The actor frame disappears altogether for reader letters, where all of the authors share the same distinction, members of the public who joined the public discourse through (usually) brief opinion letters submitted to (and selected by) the editors. The study separated editorials from reader letters because the latter, although selectively chosen, represent a broader public contribution to the discourse—opposed to the professional framing done by journalists, many actors in news stories, and many authors of editorials. The next three chapters will review some intriguing patterns across the sub-forums of the larger discourse.

To better understand the coding process let’s review some additional examples:

**#5:** Simply put, we are providing our neediest families options they’ve never had before, and they’re taking advantage of the opportunity to select schools that work best for their children (Elliott, 2012b, p. B.1).

The utterance in example #5 was in a news story. It was first assigned an actor, in this case the State Superintendent of Instruction, Tony Bennett. So the utterance was coded as **#15: Superintendent’s Office.** It was also assigned code **#30: Supports,** because the utterance was framed in support of vouchers and the CSP. There were two CSP related
frames in the utterance. First, Superintendent Bennett framed vouchers as “options” and “opportunity.” This frame, #18: Choice = Good/Opportunity, portrayed vouchers as a choice or opportunity—understood by advocates as inherently positive. Bennett combined this frame with frame #26: Social Justice, by associating vouchers with “our neediest families.” This utterance also used a curriculum frame, broadly speaking, by associating vouchers with “schools that work best for their children.” This utterance was therefore also coded under #31: Curriculum/Standards. Let’s explain another example:

#6: The article states that $37 million in state-paid vouchers has gone to private schools to fund the education of 9,300 students. If this is correct, the cost amounts to about $4,000 per student, which is the best bargain in town when compared to the cost to fund these same children in public schools (Dotterweich, 2013, p. 6A).

The utterance in example #6 was in a reader letter. It was not assigned an actor code. It was assigned a position code, in this case #30: Supports, because the utterance was framed in support of the CSP. The entire utterance clustered around a single frame, #23: Economic, as the speaker portrayed vouchers as something that should be understood based on the accounting of public finances. This frame was employed by both voucher advocates and critics alike, but not surprisingly within different normative understandings.

In summary, the study used textual analysis methods adopted from the sociology field to analyze discursive framing in the discourse over the consideration, adoption, and implementation of Indiana’s Choice Scholarship Program (CSP), a state education voucher program implemented during the 2011-12 school year, through two state newspapers 2009-2013. The study’s coding framework was constructed using a pilot coding process that inductively identified most of the frames eventually identified in the study. Two coding protocols were employed on a sample of 367 articles. The first protocol addressed the
study’s secondary research interest, an understanding of the actors and frames in the full discourse over the consideration, adoption, and implementation of the CSP in Indiana. The second protocol addressed the study’s primary research interest, how concepts like “curriculum” and “standards” were framed in the discourse and if and how actors recognized the potential curricular tension present in the CSP’s integration of education choice and standards-based accountability policy frameworks. The research was designed primarily to inform more nuanced questions concerning potential curricular tension between education choice and standards policy frameworks and, even more, among conceptual understandings of diverse stakeholders. Perhaps it is even possible it will in some small way help interested parties reflect on how core terms in contemporary education policy and practice discourse are framed in public forums and what, if any, influence such frames have on public understandings of public education policy. Next, chapters four and five review the findings related to the study's secondary research interest, identifying actors and frames in the public discourse over the consideration, adoption, and implementation of Indiana’s CSP 2009-2013.
4. CSP DISCOURSE ACTOR ANALYSIS

*I would look at it as a paradigm shift. It's not funding schools or a school corporation but funding education for kids.*
(Tony Bennett, Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction)

*At the bottom of it all, we are on very different philosophical ground about what taxpayer dollars should be used for.*
(Teresa Meredith, Indiana State Teachers Association Vice-President)

Data Overview

Chapter three explained the methodology used to identify and code frames, actors, and positions across the sample of 367 Gazette and Star articles. The next three chapters review the results of that exercise. Chapter four discusses findings related to part of the study’s secondary research interest—who participated in the discourse over the Indiana CSP? The chapter is divided into two sections. This first section reviews general patterns in the study’s data set to provide some context to the analyses over the next three chapters. The second section reviews findings from the actor representation analysis. Who participated in the CSP discourse and what positions did different actor groups tend to take regarding vouchers and the CSP. Chapter five then reviews findings from the frame utilization analysis and considers the actor representation and frame utilization analyses together. What kinds of discursive frames were used to describe vouchers and the CSP, how often were different frames used, and who used which frames? Chapter six reviews findings related to the study’s primary research interest, how understandings of curriculum and standards were framed and if and how curricular tension between education choice and standards was framed. Before diving into a discussion of findings let’s review the study’s full data set, shown in Table 3: Article, Utterance, & Position Distribution.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NEWS STORIES</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>EDITORIALS</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>READER LETTERS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ART(^{35})</td>
<td>UTT</td>
<td>%(+/-N)</td>
<td>ART</td>
<td>UTT</td>
<td>%(+/-N)</td>
<td>ART</td>
<td>UTT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JG</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>45/21/35</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>24/31/46</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>58/32/9</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>53/18/28</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Article, Utterance, & Position Distribution displays the number of articles and utterances from each of the two papers in the sample by sub-forum (news stories, editorials, and reader letters). The table also indicates what percentage of the utterances from each paper and sub-forum were supportive of, in opposition to, or neutral on vouchers or the CSP. Note that there were far more utterances than articles. With the exception of reader letters in the Star the average ratio of utterances per article ranged from 3:1 to 4:1 across sub-forums. Most articles did contain multiple frames, even contradictory frames. Some articles also contained only a single frame.

The first trend the article analysis revealed was a higher level of overall issue coverage by the *Gazette* than the *Star*. Recall from chapter three that the initial article search returned 867 articles (491 in the *Star* and 376 in the *Gazette*). After filtering, however, the 367 frame-relevant articles were weighted heavier to the *Gazette* (158 in the *Star* and 209 in the *Gazette*). Quantitatively, this imbalance was driven by two factors. First, the *Star* contained significantly more articles that included search words like “vouchers” and “school,” but where “voucher” did not refer to education vouchers. Second, the *Star* tended to cover vouchers, especially after their adoption in 2011, as more of an administrative issue, which tends to avoid framing. This kind of administrative framing was present in the *Gazette* post-adoption as well, but the *Gazette* remained focused on the issue

\(^{35}\) ART = Articles; UTT = Utterances; %(+/-N) = % of utterances that supported, opposed, or were neutral in their framing of vouchers or the CSP.
of vouchers and the CSP more intently near the back end of the study’s timeframe than the *Star* did. One might say the *Star* implicitly framed the CSP as somewhat of a fait accompli following the legislative process in 2011. This is not necessarily unimportant, especially because Table 3 also reveals that the *Star* tended to frame vouchers and the CSP in a more positive light than the *Gazette*. This is particularly evident in the editorials, where 53% of *Star* utterances supported vouchers or the CSP, compared with only 24% in the *Gazette*. This was a noticeable trend. The positions of the papers were loosely held secrets at best.

This is not to say that a range of positions was not represented across both papers, in all three sub-forums—it was, but the full coverage of vouchers and the CSP was considerably more supportive and positive in the *Star* and more critical in the *Gazette*. Thus the *Star’s* coverage tended toward supporting vouchers and the CSP explicitly and implicitly. Recall the concept of the null curriculum from chapter one—that which is excluded from the curriculum. If we consider the coverage of the issue over the period of the study we can see how issue coverage by the two papers diverged following 2011, the year of adoption and clear peak year in terms of coverage. This might be expected as the coverage in 2011 presented a contentious debate over whether or not to adopt a state voucher policy. As seen in Table 4: Issue Coverage Over Time, after 2011 the issue remained active in the *Gazette’s* community of discourse but faded to a relative non-issue in the *Star’s*.

**TABLE 4: ISSUE COVERAGE OVER TIME**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>NEWS STORIES</th>
<th>EDITORIALS</th>
<th>READERS LETTERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JG</td>
<td>IS</td>
<td>JG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aside from the overall supportive and critical positions of the Star and Gazette, respectively, and a general trend toward more neutral framing following the year of adoption (2011), there were a few other general data trends worth mentioning. There was a clear difference in style between reporters at the two papers, as best evidenced through the percentage of supportive, critical, and neutral frames used in the news stories. Generally speaking, the reporters at the Gazette tried to maintain seemingly neutral positions in their stories. Even though the Gazette’s editorial board took a critical stance on the CSP, the news stories tilted toward using supportive or positive frames. The Star reporters appeared somewhat less concerned about balance or neutrality, sometimes writing stories that read far more like position-driven editorials. These position trends also make the distribution of reader letters more intriguing. Both papers maintained a relatively similar pattern in both the number and nature of printed reader letters, with the balance titled toward opposition. Of course we can’t know how representative the reader letter distribution was. Although both papers published more critical articles the balance seems oddly even when compared to “a statewide survey of Hoosier attitudes toward education conducted in late 2010 by the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy at Indiana University.” It found that only 6.5% of respondents supported “vouchers for tuition assistance for students to attend private school” (Star Editorial, 2011a, p. A.7). In summary, there was a noticeable clustering of frames defining vouchers or the CSP in 2011 when the discourse was focused on the question of policy adoption. The discourse in the Star tended,

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36 Neutral frames are slightly inflated as many editorial straw man frames, which comprised a small segment of the overall sample, were coded as neutral. Straw man frames are where an actor describes a frame proposed by an opponent and then dismisses it. The frame is depicted as a form of “anti-frame,” which didn’t seem to fit in either supports or opposes, but a little of both. It is also possible that the use of some straw man frames might actually work to reinforce the very ideas the actor is attempting to dismiss.
especially through editorials, to support vouchers and the CSP and the Gazette editorial board tended to oppose the CSP. Let’s now look at the actor representation analysis.

**Actor Representation**

The actor representation analysis sought to identify which and what types of actors participated in the public (newspaper) discourse over the CSP and vouchers in Indiana and what policy positions they tended to adopt. Although large numbers of people in a community can participate in public discourse through newspapers most are limited to processing the published discourse. Only a small number of community members actually *produce* (newspaper) discourse. Which actors have this productive capacity, and how often, can influence the nature of public discourse and the frames that are used to define issues in it. This can be particularly important if different kinds of actors tend to adopt different frames within a given discourse, although actors and frames can also present a chicken and egg scenario where it is not clear whether actors create or adopt frames at given points in a discourse. Let’s begin by reviewing actor group participation in the discourse. Recall that the study coded actors for news stories and editorials. *Table 5: News Story Actor Representation*, displays actor representation across news stories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BOTH PAPERS</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State Representative (R)</strong></td>
<td>69</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education Interest Group</strong></td>
<td>69</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrator (public)</strong></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrator (private)</strong></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Governor’s Office</strong></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State Representative (D)</strong></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Superintendent’s Office</strong></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One of the most interesting trends evident in Table 5 is the similarity across papers in actor representation. There are some important variations—the *Gazette* relied more heavily on Republican state representatives and school administrators and the *Star* more heavily on education interest groups and, to a lesser extent, the state superintendent’s office. These differences aside, there were clear patterns across both forums regarding which actors had access to the discourse. Let’s review the actor categories.

**Minor Actor Groups.** There was a high degree of correlation between which actors were excluded from the discourse in both papers. Teachers, students, and faculty or representatives from institutes of higher education combined accounted for only 4.7% of discourse production in news stories. Indeed, teachers from private schools were fully excluded from the discourse in news stories and, as will be shown below, editorials as well. The category was created in anticipation of examining trends between teachers from different kinds of schools, as was possible with administrators, but was never required. Teachers were nearly excluded from the discourse in Gazette news stories but for a single utterance from a public school teacher. The *Star* allocated 4.7% of discourse production to public school teachers. Students were given token representation across both papers

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37 This is slightly misleading as teacher union representatives were included in the education interest group category, as will be discussed below.
with all six utterances in the news story sub-forum provided by students attending private schools. Faculty or representatives from institutes of higher education were also barely present in news stories. The Gazette quoted Terry Spradlin, associate director for education policy with the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy at Indiana University once. The Star quoted David Dresslar, executive director of the Center on Excellence in Leadership of Learning at the University of Indianapolis once and Martha McCarthy, chair of educational leadership and policy studies at Indiana University, twice. How significant the exclusion of these groups was will be discussed in chapter seven.

The Gazette had one actor coded as “other actor type.” The single utterance produced by this actor may provide important insights into the place, chronologically or otherwise, of public policy discourse. In September, 2013 the Gazette published a story based off of “emails and other documents obtained by The Associated Press [that] show that a small group of GOP powerbrokers crafted the details of the education policy that made Indiana a conservative model over Scotch whisky at an Indianapolis steakhouse and in meetings at a private club.” That actor, Al Hubbard, was “a skilled fundraiser who once served as a top economic adviser to Bush…[and whom]…the group tasked…with reaching out to former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush for model legislation” (LoBianco, 2013, p. 3A). Hubbard’s (unintended) contribution to the discourse was actually an email utterance, rare for the full discourse. The utterance was coded as an “other” frame. It was, ironically, an attempt to frame the discourse framing:

#7: "Language is very important. 'Voucher' should not be used. Perhaps 'transfer tuition,' Hubbard wrote in a July 27, 2010, email to [state superintendent Bennett's chief-of-staff Todd] Huston and others. They ended up settling on "school choice scholarships" (LoBianco, 2013, p. 3A).
Hoosiers dominated coverage of the full discourse across both papers with, as will be discussed below, significant contributions from education interest groups, some Indiana-focused and some nationally oriented. National actors did play a role, however, producing 3.4% of the discourse. In the Gazette, 80% of these contributions clustered in 2012 and were related to the national presidential election. The Star quoted national figures in only three articles. The national contributors participating in the discourse in support of vouchers comprised 2012 Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney (4 utterances), Education reform advocate Michelle Rhee (4 utterances), and Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal (3 utterances). National figures participating in the discourse and opposing vouchers included President Barack Obama (1 utterance), education historian and education reform critic Diane Ravitch (1 utterance), and American Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten (1 utterance). This relatively light contribution to the discourse by national figures might suggest any results of the full study are inherently provincial to Indiana. Indeed, the answer to that legitimate question can only be obtained through comparative research on other communities of discourse. Still, it may be less important whether or not national figures contributed to the discourse as it is whether, when and if they did, they produced different frames than the local actors. Which frames different actor groups utilized in the discourse will be discussed in chapter five.

The CSP’s constitutionality was an important strand of the discourse. A legal challenge was filed following the adoption of the policy in 2011 and the outcome remained in doubt until the state Supreme Court ruled on the matter on March 26, 2013. Attorneys and judges contributed 4.9% of news story sub-forum discourse production, with 95%
occurring between August 2011 and March 27, 2013—the day after the Supreme Court ruling. The suit claimed the CSP was unconstitutional on two grounds. First, that it violated the state constitution’s prohibition of funding religious schools with public tax dollars; and second, that it “undermine[d] the general and uniform system of common schools the state is required to provide” in the state constitution (Kelly, 2011k, p. 1A). This requirement of “common” schools is pertinent to the study’s interest in curricular diversity and will be discussed more in later chapters. Ultimately the state Supreme Court would find the program constitutional. Regarding the first point of challenge, the justices ruled that "The principal actors and direct beneficiaries under the voucher program are neither the state nor program-eligible schools, but lower-income Indiana families with school-age children." (Kelly, 2013e, p. 6A). On the second challenge the justices ruled that “so long as a ‘uniform’ public school system, ‘equally open to all’ and ‘without charge,’ is maintained, the General Assembly has fulfilled the duty imposed by the Education Clause" (Kelly, 2013e, p. 6A).

Coverage in both papers provided neutral utterances by judges (who were usually careful to distance themselves from positions other than constitutional on the program) and arguments for or against the CSP’s constitutionality by attorneys on both sides of the suit.

**Parent/Citizens.** There is somewhat of a break between the actors already discussed and those yet to be discussed. Of the actor groups reviewed thus far, none represented greater than 3.5% in both papers. Parent/Citizen actors represented at least 6.7% of the discourse production in each paper and 7.1% of the total news story sub-forum discourse. This becomes more significant when combined with parent/citizen participation in the reader letter sub-forum, discussed later in the chapter. A few trends are worth noting in the Parent/Citizen actor category. First, nearly all of the actors were in fact parents, and
the majority of them were parents who either had or desired to have their children educated in a private school. This “sample bias” resulted in a second trend—the parent discourse production heavily favored vouchers and the CSP, with 83% of the utterances in support. Even in the Gazette, which tended to frame vouchers through a more critical lens, 88% of parent/citizen utterances supported the CSP. Third, and this will be discussed in chapters five and six, Parent frames tended to make varying references to curriculum, often related to the perceived individual needs of their children. As for timing, all of the Star articles quoting parent/citizen actors were clustered in 2011 whereas the Gazette discourse included parents from early 2011 through late 2013. With the exception of this timing trend, parent/citizen actor representation was remarkably similar across both papers—mini-case studies of parents satisfied with their child’s private school education.

**Elite Actors.** The quantity of discourse production by the “bottom half” of the actors proved relatively consistent across papers. That consistency was not maintained by the “top half” of actor groups. This top half was heavily weighted toward elected state officials and accounted for approximately 80% of the total discourse in the news story sub-forum. Excluding justices on the state Supreme Court, represented through the legal actor category, a distinguishing feature of many of the actors in this top half of actors was their position as policy makers—the state superintendent, elected legislators, and the governor. These are actors who (often) understand the significance of effective framing of issues in public discourse. This becomes doubly influential when the “elite” of the top half are identified, those actors whose individual quantity of discourse production was significant.

The State Superintendent of Public Instruction’s Office provides a nice introduction to this “elite” influence. This actor category accounted for only 7.5% of the total discourse
in the news story sub-forum, but of the 31 utterances produced 26 of them were by State Superintendent of Instruction Tony Bennett. All were in support of vouchers and the CSP. Bennett, a Republican, was defeated by Glenda Ritz, a Democrat, in a statewide election November 6, 2012. Ritz contributed only two utterances to the discourse (in the news story sub-forum), both critical of vouchers. Other officials in the Superintendent’s office produced three neutral utterances. Tony Bennett thus contributed more to the discourse (6.3%) than any of the actor groups except parent/citizens in the bottom half of actor groups. State Superintendent Bennett was one of several elite frame producers.

The Governor’s Office offers another example of an actor category that was represented similarly across both papers. This actor group accounted for 9% of the total discourse and 10.5% in the Star. Like the superintendent’s office, this actor category was heavily concentrated in utterances by two elite actors. Three of the actor category’s total 37 utterances were produced by representatives of the governor—the rest were attributable to the Governor himself. Mitch Daniels, the Republican governor who ushered in the CSP produced 4.6% of the sub-forum’s discourse. Mike Pence, Daniel’s successor and also a Republican, was elected in 2012 and sought to expand the program, with mixed success. He represented 3.7% of the discourse. All of the utterances from the Governor’s Office were in support of vouchers and the CSP. Neither governor produced as much discourse as Tony Bennett, but together the two Republican governors accounted for 8.3% of the discourse production in the sub-forum, enough to qualify them as elite discourse producers. This should not necessarily be surprising. Daniels and Bennett were considered the champions of the CSP and the governorship and state superintendency are intended to be individual positions that wield significant influence over education policy. Still, identifying elite
discourse producers may be important, especially if their frames and positions tend to be similar. Let’s next review school administrators, the actor group responsible for the second largest quantity of utterances in the sub-forum’s discourse after state representatives.

The two papers utilized educational administrators as discourse producers in starkly different ways. In the Gazette, public and private administrators accounted for the second and third highest levels of participation, respectively, generating over 20% of the full news story discourse. In the Star’s news story sub-forum, however, administrators produced only 12.2% of the discourse. Not only did the Star seek participation from administrators considerably less often than the Gazette, the administrator actors were more homogeneous in the Star’s discourse. As with the larger discourse in the Star, administrator actors were concentrated in 2011. There was an aggregate balance between public (10) and private (11) school administrators, with the public administrators tending to oppose the CSP (8 opposed; 2 neutral) and the private administrators tending to support it (9 supported; 2 opposed). The private administrators were almost all principals, or a variation of principals but with different titles—representative of the terminology in the private sector—like director or executive director. There was also an associate director of external relations. As for the public administrators, 9 of the 10 utterances (eight opposing the CSP) were attributed to Indiana Public Schools (IPS) superintendent Eugene White, qualifying him among a second tier of elite discourse producers. The Gazette sought administrator feedback often over the course of the discourse, with 64% of the public school administrator utterances and 52% of the private school administrator utterances being contributed after 2011. In line with the larger discourse trend, these post adoption year utterances were considerably more neutral and, unlike the seemingly predictable
positions in the Star’s discourse, neither private (15 neutral, 9 supported) nor public (26 neutral, 9 opposed) administrators fell neatly into opposing camps. The private administrator category in the Gazette included principals, executive directors, partnership directors, spokespeople, headmasters, and a chief of staff. Roman Catholic Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend Superintendent of Schools Mark Myers contributed 8 utterances (5 supported, 3 neutral) on behalf of private administrators, placing him in the second tier of elite individual discourse producers. The Gazette included a wide range of public school administrators in the sub-forum. Superintendents, board members, and spokespeople from eight different public school systems participated. Fort Wayne Community Schools (FWCS) superintendent Wendy Robinson and FWCS spokeswoman Krista Stockman contributed six and 8 utterances, respectively, with most of them assuming a neutral position. FWCS school board president Mark GiaQuinta, however, took a strong opposing position in most of his eight utterances. These three actors joined IPS superintendent White and Roman Catholic Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend Superintendent of Schools Mark Myers as second tier elite discourse producers. Despite the seemingly predictable positions of administrators in the Star’s discourse, the Gazette discourse revealed a more complex set of positions by administrators in both public and private schools. Let’s now move on from administrators to review another complex actor category, individuals from education interest groups.

**Education Interest Groups.** Education interest groups are organizations whose actors or reports produced utterances in the CSP discourse. This actor category accounted for a significant amount of discourse production, especially in the Star where interest groups produced over a quarter of the news story sub-forum discourse. Interest groups are a unique actor category in that they are organizations rather than individuals. True, it is
usually individuals who speak on behalf of the organization, but members of interest
groups rarely differ in their positions on issues. Of the nineteen interest groups that
contributed utterances to the discourse sub-forum none of them took conflicting positions,
i.e. one spokesperson opposed the CSP and one supported it.59 This distinguishes interest
groups from other actor categories like administrators or representatives from institutes of
higher education. Administrators are individuals in social/professional roles. While there
was some level of alignment to perceived positions of self-interest—private school
administrators supporting vouchers and public school administrators opposing them—it
was by no means uniform. Many administrators, especially private school administrators,
produced discourse that reflected thoughtful consideration of multiple perspectives on the
potential effects of the CSP. Faculty or representatives from institutes of higher education
may belong to the same organization, but the level of position conformity among such
actors rarely achieves the level of issue consensus demonstrated by interest groups. In this
regard, interest groups might be considered quasi-actors, (often) well-resourced entities
aligned toward achieving specific policy objectives, perhaps not that different from the
governor or superintendent’s offices in their intentional attention (and predictable
approach) to frame setting. As shown above, the governor and superintendent’s offices
were the key advocates for the CSP. This makes interest groups important players in the
discourse. With the other actor groups reviewed thus far effectively split on the issue or
excluded from the discourse, frame production from interest groups might serve as one of

59 Several organizations did produce supportive or oppositional utterances and neutral utterances.
the only other intentional efforts to shape the public discourse.\textsuperscript{40} With this in mind, let’s review patterns from this actor group.

\textit{Table 6: Education Interest Group Representation} displays the organizations that contributed to the news story sub-forum, ranked by the quantity of utterances produced.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{ORGANIZATION} & \textbf{# UTT} & \textbf{+} & \textbf{-} & \textbf{N} \\
\hline
Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice & 16 & 16 & & \\
Indiana State Teachers Association & 16 & 16 & & \\
School Choice Indiana & 7 & 5 & 2 & \\
Indiana Non-Public Education Association & 5 & 3 & 2 & \\
Indiana Coalition for Public Education & 5 & 5 & & \\
Institute for Justice & 4 & 4 & & \\
American Federation of Teachers – Indiana & 2 & 2 & & \\
Indiana Catholic Conference & 2 & 1 & 1 & \\
Indiana Legislative Services Agency (non-partisan) & 2 & 2 & & \\
Indiana Parent-Teacher Association & 2 & 2 & & \\
American Civil Liberties Union – Colorado & 2 & 2 & & \\
Catholic Conference of Ohio & 1 & 1 & & \\
Indiana High School Athletic Association & 1 & 1 & & \\
National Association of Independent Schools & 1 & 1 & & \\
School Choice Ohio & 1 & 1 & & \\
Florida Education Association & 1 & 1 & & \\
Fort Wayne Community Schools Teachers Union & 1 & 1 & & \\
Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents & 1 & 1 & & \\
Washington Township Parent Council & 1 & 1 & & \\
\hline
\textbf{TOTAL} & \textbf{71} & \textbf{33} & \textbf{31} & \textbf{7} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Education Interest Group Actor Representation for News Stories}
\end{table}

On the surface the positions taken appear to be even across the actor category. This held true in both papers. The interest groups were also primarily Hoosiers. The exceptions included the Institute for Justice, “a Virginia-based libertarian group that supports vouchers and...pledged to help defend Indiana’s law (Elliot, 2011, p. A.1); the Colorado office of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU); the Catholic Conference of Ohio; School

\textsuperscript{40} State representatives have not yet been discussed. They share some similarities with the governor, state superintendent, and education interest groups.
Choice Ohio; the National Association of Independent Schools; and the Florida Education Association. Combined, these organizations represented only 14% of interest group discourse production. This percentage would be considerably higher, however, if we didn’t consider the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, founded by the late and previously discussed economist and school choice advocate, Milton (and wife and fellow economist Rose) Friedman, a state organization. The Foundation is based in Indiana, but it is nationally focused. The Friedman Foundation was also an elite discourse producer.

With sixteen utterances each, both the Freidman Foundation and the Indiana State Teachers Association (ISTA) qualify as elite discourse producers. Although organizations are being counted as quasi-actors, the actual utterances were in fact attributable to a handful of individuals, with Robert Enlow, the President and CEO of the Friedman Foundation accounting for fourteen of his organization’s sixteen utterances and the sixteen utterances from the ISTA being contributed by association president Nate Schnellenberger (11) and vice-president Teresa Meredith (5). A handful of other organizations also provided regular contributions to the discourse. This list is clearly not inclusive of the groups that participated in advancing or opposing the CSP in Indiana, but it offers a good starting point to investigate relevant interest groups. Indeed, in addition to participating in framing the CSP through media discourse, several of the identified organizations contributed reports or surveys at timely points during the consideration of the policy. Another interesting finding from the actor analysis is that representatives from teacher unions accounted for 65% of the utterances opposing the CSP. This heavy concentration of union participation raises an important question—do teacher unions represent the majority of interest groups opposing vouchers (and in this case the CSP), or is that just how
the discourse is framed in the media? Either way, teacher unions played an important role in the discourse, a point to be remembered later when considering frame usage. Let’s now review the final, and largest, actor group in the sub-forum, elected state representatives.

**State Representatives.** The state representatives actor category was comprised mostly of elected members of the Indiana state senate and state house. There were a few exceptions, including the state attorney general and a handful of candidates for elected office, including U.S. congressman Mike Pence while a candidate for governor and Glenda Ritz while a candidate for state superintendent. These were exceptions to the rule. State legislators accounted for 97 of the 106 total utterances from this actor category. Because the CSP took form through state-level policy it seems reasonable that elected officials would be so active in the public discourse. State representatives produced over a quarter of the discourse in the news stories sub-forum. This raises important questions about the influence of politically oriented speech in public discourse—this will be addressed in later chapters. Let’s review the participation trends from this influential category.

**TABLE 7: STATE REPRESENTATIVE PARTICIPATION TRENDS (NEWS STORIES)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gazette Republican</th>
<th>Gazette Democrat</th>
<th>Star Republican</th>
<th>Star Democrat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7: State Representative Participation Trends (News Stories)* displays participation in the discourse by state representatives from both parties over the study’s five-year period. Republicans appeared to have produced a good bit more discourse than
Democrats. Republican utterances accounted for two-thirds of discourse production in the actor category. This trend was even more evident in the Gazette, where Republicans produced 70% of the discourse in the sub-forum. This weighting is important, especially in Gazette discourse in 2011 when the policy was being publicly debated, but a few points are worth noting. First, the CSP was always a Republican policy. Second, there were considerably more Republican representatives over the period of the study. Indeed, it was the recently acquired “super majority” achieved by Republicans in the state legislature in the 2010 elections that (likely) allowed the CSP to be proposed and passed. The participation is fairly balanced if considered in regard to party representation in the legislature. Third, much of the coverage in 2013 was the result of Republican infighting over the details of legislation to expand the CSP. Coverage of this debate in the Gazette, which focused on two Republican legislators, resulted in an inflated imbalance of representation between the two political parties.

Still, this overall imbalance should not go unnoticed, especially when considering the high correlation between supportive and opposing positions taken by the two parties. Actors from both parties utilized neutral frames at times when discussing vouchers or the CSP and there was not complete consensus within the parties on for or against positions. Republican state senator Vaneta Becker of Evansville believed the CSP was "unfortunately a very bad piece of legislation" that would "go a long way in destroying public schools in the state of Indiana" (Kelly, 2011g, p. 1C) and Democratic state senator Earline Rogers of Gary defended Governor Daniels’ education policy agenda, saying that while "some think this is an attempt to bring public schools down…just the opposite is true. To improve public education, we're going to have to change the status quo" (Schneider, 2011a, p. A.1). These
were the only examples, however, of representatives straying from their party’s position or at most, a neutral position. Republicans supported the policy 78% of the time (19% neutral) and Democrats opposed the policy 81% of the time (16% neutral). This element of party politics lends importance to Republican discourse domination; a trend that is further supported by an analysis of elite discourse producers. The state representatives actor category produced two elite discourse producers, Republican house speaker Brian Bosma (19 utterances) and Republican house education committee chair Robert Behning (15 utterances). Republican Senator Luke Kenley (8 utterances) and Democratic representative Ed DeLaney (6 utterances) were the only other actors with more than four utterances. Let’s now shift our focus to the analysis of actor representation in the editorial sub-forum.

**Editorial Sub-Forum.** Actor representation was more concentrated in the editorial sub-forum than in the news story sub-forum. As Table 8: Editorial Actor Representation shows, three actor categories produced 83.3% of the editorial discourse. Education interest groups managed to produce significant discourse in both news story and editorial sub-forums, perhaps an important insight into frame setting influence within the larger discourse. These three actor groups deserve a closer examination, but let’s first review participation from the fourteen actor groups who produced the other 16.7% of the sub-forum discourse while keeping in mind our concept of the null curriculum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 8: EDITORIAL ACTOR REPRESENTATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOTH PAPERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Interest Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator (public)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IHE Faculty/Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each paper had eight actor groups that did not participate in the editorial sub-forum. Five actor groups were excluded in both papers. This concentration of actors producing discourse in the editorial sub-forum may not be unimportant. Editorials accounted for approximately one-third of the full discourse across both papers (36% in the *Gazette* and 30% in the *Star*). Unlike news stories, which often rely on single utterances, perhaps even sometimes out of context, editorials are generally (and hopefully) well thought out arguments supporting or opposing issues or positions. This forum should therefore serve as a potential breeding ground for discursive frames, especially if the actors writing the editorials are aware of and intentional in their use of frames. Definitive answers are elusive, but it might be worth considering how frame setting could differ if the tables were turned and excluded or marginalized actor groups played a larger role in the discourse production.

**Excluded Actors.** As mentioned earlier, private school teachers were excluded from both the news story and editorial sub-forums. Of all the professional roles in the education field only one is essential—the teacher. All the other roles could disappear (bus drivers might assume secondary importance in this hierarchy) and classes could go on the next day.
Private school teachers would appear to be influential stakeholders in a discourse about educating more children in private schools, but they did not participate in this discourse.

Other actor groups fully excluded from the editorial sub-forum included students, national figures, legal actors, and the governor’s office. Student exclusion in state policy discourse may not be very surprising, but perhaps worthy of consideration. The absence of national figures in the editorial sub-forum is also noteworthy, but it is difficult to assess how noteworthy without a better understanding of how national figures participate in other statewide debates of national interest. The absence of legal actors is less surprising. It would generally be inappropriate for judges to write editorials. There were actually a few attorneys who were coded as “education interest group.” This decision was based on the nature of the utterances provided by the actor. If the utterances were directly related to legal issues, like the constitutionality of the CSP, the actors were coded as legal. If the actors happened to be attorneys who worked for an education interest group and their utterances were more reflective of an advocacy position, they were coded in the education interest group category. This “double actor category” was a rare occurrence, but technically some attorneys did contribute to the editorial discourse. It is also perhaps not surprising that the governor’s office did not contribute to the editorial discourse. One of the inherent characteristics of editorials is that they do require some level of detail. The sound bite utterances in news stories require far less detail and thus tend to be the sub-forum where elected officials contributed most to the public discourse, at least in the present study.

Minor Actors. After this set of excluded actors another set of minor actor groups each individually produced between 1.1% and 1.8% of the editorial sub-forum discourse. Public school teachers, parent/citizens, other actor types, elected representatives, and the
state superintendent’s office comprised this present but not very active group of actors. The Star sub-forum included six utterances across 2 articles from actors falling outside of the study’s coding framework. In an editorial published a few days after “Gov. Mitch Daniels…signed into law a measure that lets parents at a certain income level spend tax-supported vouchers on private education for their children” (Star Editorial, 2011c, p. B.3) the Star featured an article including extended passages from three local reverends. Two were decidedly neutral and a third was critical of the new policy. The other contribution from an “other actor” was a single utterance supporting an expansion of the CSP in a “legislative wish list” written by Abdul-Hakim Shabazz, an “attorney and editor of IndyPolitics.org,” (Shabazz, 2013, A.10) at the start of the legislative session in 2013.

The research design largely excluded parent/citizens from the editorial sub-forum. It could be argued that editorials and reader letters are essentially the same form of discourse. Indeed there were instances where distinguishing editorials from reader letters was challenging. In most cases, however, editorials exhibited two regular characteristics that seemed to differentiate them from reader letters. First, they were almost always longer than reader letters. Second, editorials usually provided titles, organizational affiliation, or background information on the authors. Reader letters tended only to include a name and town. Taken together, these two article characteristics likely lend an air of authority to editorials that reader letters typically do not command. Again, this is debatable, but it is the way the present study was conducted. Within these parameters, parent/citizen discourse production was primarily captured in the reader letter sub-forum. Overall this actor group was significant, accounting for 21% of the total articles in the Gazette and 30% in the Star, but parent/citizens produced only 1.6% of the editorial sub-forum discourse.
Private and public school teachers were excluded from the editorial sub-forum in the Star discourse. The sole public school teacher editorial was published in the Gazette in December 2011 by Vic Smith. Technically Smith retired in 2009 after serving as a teacher for forty years. Had Mr. Smith been coded as “other actor” teachers—not counting representatives from teacher unions as in the news stories—would have been fully excluded from the editorial sub-forum. Again, this may not be insignificant and will be discussed in chapters six and seven. Mr. Smith argued against vouchers and the CSP.

State representatives and the state superintendent’s office were two actor groups that made significant contributions in the news story sub-forum but were relatively quiet in the editorial sub-forum. State superintendent Tony Bennett did write two editorials, one in each of the two papers. Both were supportive of the CSP. It could be argued that a single editorial by the state superintendent might be more influential in the discourse than an editorial written by a lesser known or less officially qualified actor. This may be so, but the superintendent’s office was less active in the editorial sub-forum than the news story sub-forum. State representatives were also noticeably absent in this editorial sub-forum, representing only 3.2% of the full discourse between both parties. Indeed, elected representatives were barely represented in the Star editorial sub-forum at all. The only article was written by a Democratic representative from Indianapolis, Ed Delaney. He produced only one CSP discourse-relevant utterance in a general critique of a legislative session. Elected representatives were barely more active in the Gazette editorial sub-forum where Republican representatives Bob Morris of Fort Wayne and Robert Behning of Indianapolis wrote editorials supporting the original CSP in 2011 and an expansion of the

41 Vic Smith is also a volunteer with the education interest group Indiana Coalition for Public Education. This actor could just as easily have been coded in that actor category, thus excluding teachers from the sub-forum.
policy in 2013, respectively. These were seemingly balanced by an editorial authored by four Democratic state representatives arguing against expanding the CSP in 2013 and a general defense of public education by Kevin Boyd, the 2012 Democratic congressional candidate for the 3rd District (and also a Presbyterian church pastor). As with superintendent Bennett’s editorials, these may have carried outsized influence, but as with the state superintendent, elected representatives mostly avoided the editorial sub-forum.

Another actor group that made relatively minor contributions to the editorial sub-forum included representatives from institutes of higher education. This group produced 2.9% of the sub-forum discourse, an increase from the mere 1% contribution in the news story sub-forum, but not much. It is interesting to ponder how greater participation in public discourse from scholars might influence issue debates, especially considering, as will be done below, the heavy participation of interest groups. Such participation could potentially lead to more nuanced discourse. Then again it may just expand the number of actors on either side of an issue with scholars taking sides on issues and using their credentials to bolster policy advocates rather than explore and explain the complexities of the issue at hand. Indeed, it can be quite challenging to enter a policy debate and not favor one policy or another—such is the nature of public policy debates. This observation was supported by the sole editorial in the Gazette produced by a representative of an institute of higher education. The editorial was written by Daniel Holm, an associate professor of elementary education at Indiana University-South Bend. Dr. Holm’s editorial listed a number of problems with vouchers and raised several perspectives that were not often discussed. Still, he couldn’t avoid taking a position, ending the editorial by writing, “Using tax dollars, in the form of vouchers to fund private schools, is just a bad idea” (Holm, 2011,
p. 9A). This for/against positioning of scholars could be seen in the two editorials by this actor group in the Star. In February 2011, during the heat of the debate over the proposed CSP policy, William Scheuerman, a professor of political science at Indiana University-Bloomington, wrote an article opposing vouchers. A week later, David Murphy, chair of the Department of History and Political Science at Anderson University, wrote an editorial specifically critiquing Scheuerman’s article and supporting the CSP. The influence of increased participation in public discourse by scholars is not clear. What is clear is their lack of participation in the public discourse over the CSP in Indiana.

Education administrators were the last actor group contributing to the editorial sub-forum outside of the “big three” groups that dominated the sub-forum—editorial boards, interest groups, and journalists. Administrator participation was uneven across the two papers. The actor group did not produce any discourse in the Gazette editorial sub-forum, perhaps odd if we recall that public and private school administrators accounted for over 25% of the discourse in the Gazette’s news story sub-forum. Administrator participation was considerably more even across the Star sub-forums, representing 12.2% of the discourse in the news stories sub-forum and 10.3% in editorial sub-forum. In the editorial sub-forum a private school principal wrote an editorial a few months into the CSP’s initial implementation year supporting the policy. This “private school position” was balanced by two articles opposing the CSP, one from a retired middle school administrator and one from the principal and 33 staff members at Washington Elementary School. These contributions in the Star resulted in administrators being the fourth most active actor group in the editorial sub-forum, but their contributions to the sub-forum and those of the other actor groups already mentioned were shadowed by the “big three.”
The Big Three. The “big three” actor groups—editorial boards, interest groups, and journalists—produced 83.3% of the utterances framing vouchers or the CSP in the editorial sub-forum. This is a significant concentration of discourse production, especially when considering the wider influence editorial boards and journalists exert over framing of articles in the news story sub-forum and inclusion of articles in the reader letter sub-forum. This fundamental characteristic of newspaper discourse represents a serious limitation of media discourse analysis. We can never be sure the degree to which these actor groups, editorial boards and journalists, are reflecting public discourse or trying to shape it.\textsuperscript{42} We can look for clues in discourse patterns—many of these have already been discussed, but the uncertainty around how these discourse gatekeepers “managed” the discourse remains for those not on the inside. We never know which articles weren’t published or, for the articles that were published, which lines (or frames) were edited. What we can see, and what some percentage of readers surely notices during public debates, are the supportive or oppositional positions editorial boards and journalists stake out on issues.

In addition to their editorial and framing influence, editorial boards and journalists at the two papers generated 53.4% of the discourse in the editorial sub-forum. Contributions from journalists were relatively stable across the two papers, accounting for 14.1% of the discourse in the Gazette and 21.6% in the Star. In the Gazette this represented only two journalists: Karen Francisco, “an Indiana journalist since 1982 and an editorial writer at The Journal Gazette since 2000” (Francisco, 2012, p. 11A); and Tracy Warner, an “editorial page editor [who] has worked at The Journal Gazette since 1981” (Warner, 2011a,\textsuperscript{42} These two approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive and can vary from issue to issue or on a single issue over time. For a critical examination of this “media influence” in public discourse see Herman and Chomsky’s (2002) \textit{Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media}.}
These two actors could technically be classified under the editorial board actor group, but where authors of editorials were identified they were classified as journalists. In contrast, editorial boards were “anonymous” articles. Both Warner and Francisco appeared to consider multiple sides of the issue, but ultimately leaned toward opposing the CSP. The combined utterances of the two reporters opposed the CSP 41% of the time and assumed neutral positions 59% of the time. Warner and Francisco contributed twenty and ten utterances to the Gazette’s editorial sub-forum discourse, respectively. Journalists played a larger role at the Star where they were the second most active actor group after interest groups. These contributions were spread across five reporters, with Dan Carpenter (20 utterances), Russ Pullman (13 utterances), and Matthew Tully (7 utterances) producing more than a single utterance in the sub-forum. As with the Gazette coverage, some of these reporters also served on the editorial board and also as with the Gazette, the editorials by reporters tended to align with the overall position of the editorials written by the editorial board. Of the forty-two utterances produced by journalists in the Star editorial sub-forum, 52% were neutral, 10% opposed, and 38% supported vouchers or the CSP. Let’s now review editorial board discourse production in the editorial sub-forum.

Unsigned articles by the editorial boards at the Gazette and Star produced 36% of the discourse in the editorial sub-forum. This concentration was even more evident in the Gazette, where the editorial board produced 51.2% of the discourse in the sub-forum. This heavy weighting toward a single source raises questions about the representativeness of the larger sub-forum and discourse.43 This is important to note, but recall that the purpose

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43 It is probably not a “single” source in that published editorials were in all likelihood written by multiple members of the editorial board. Still, a single group producing half of the editorial discourse on an issue (and also selecting the other half of the editorials) is significant and should not be overlooked.
of the present study was not to examine the fully representative public discourse over the CSP but only the portion of that discourse that was captured through newspaper discourse. Due to their outsized influence, the frames employed by editorial boards will be important, but that will be considered in the next chapter. As to their participation, in the *Star* the editorial board produced 16.5% of the discourse in the sub-forum. All but one of the *Star* editorials were written in 2011. As with overall coverage, the *Star* editorial board apparently considered the voucher issue a non-issue following its passage, implementation, and constitutional blessing from the state supreme court. The one editorial not written in 2011 was a favorable look back at the CSP a year after implementation. The *Star* editorial board framed the CSP neutrally 45% of the time and supported the CSP 55% of the time.

Editorial board discourse production at the *Gazette* accounted for 51.2% of the sub-forum discourse. This heavy reliance on editorials written by the editorial board could be due to several factors. It may simply represent differing approaches between a “state paper” in the *Star* and a “town paper” in the *Gazette*. Perhaps actors seeking editorial forums were more likely to write the *Star*. These are untested hypotheses. The heavy concentration of sub-forum discourse is also very likely due to the editorial board at the *Gazette* continuing to treat the CSP as an issue after 2011. Editorials flowed from the board at the *Gazette* over the full period of the study, 2009-2013. That steady flow of editorials produced 51 articles. Just as the *Star’s* editorial board did not produce any discourse opposing the CSP, the editorial board at the *Gazette* did not produce any supporting it. Thirty-two percent of the utterances were opposed to the CSP and 68% framed the policy in a neutral manner. The editorial board at each paper clearly qualified as elite discourse producers. What kind of
discourse they produced will be considered in chapter five. Now let’s consider the participation of the other “big three” group in the editorial sub-forum, interest groups.

Editorial Boards and journalists appeared to wield the most influence over the discourse. This might be expected due to the nature of the discourse forum. Following these “two” groups in influence was likely education interest groups. Recall that this actor category was the most significant contributor to the news story sub-forum in the Star and the third most active discourse producer in that sub-forum across both papers after elected representatives (from both parties) and education administrators (from public and private schools and school systems together). Interest groups continued to receive favored actor status in the editorial sub-forum. In the Star interest groups produced 43.3% of the discourse, more than any other actor group and twice as much as the next producer, journalists. Interest groups were less active in the Gazette sub-forum, producing 14.9% of the discourse. This share of sub-forum discourse is even more significant when we recall that the editorial board and journalists produced over 65% of the sub-forum discourse. Interest groups effectively dominated the one-third of the discourse allocated to non-Star affiliates. We have seen that the respective papers leaned toward supporting (Star) and opposing (Gazette) the CSP, with significant neutral coverage of the issue in both papers.

How did interest groups balance out on the policy? They didn’t. Across the two papers interest groups framed vouchers or the CSP neutrally 12% of the time, and a good number of these instances were actually straw-man frames, favorably 76% of the time, and unfavorably 12% of the time. Editorials by interest groups in the Gazette, which tended toward opposing the CSP, did not include any utterances in opposition of the CSP. This was an influential actor group that decidedly favored the CSP. The actors that comprised these
education interest groups can be seen in Appendix F: Education Interest Groups (Editorials). The frames education interest groups used will be discussed in chapter five.

To summarize actor representation in the public discourse (as represented through coverage by the Star and Gazette) over the CSP, many participated and some dominated. Teachers, representatives of institutes of higher education, and students were largely silent in the discourse. Legal actors (judges and attorneys) contributed to discourse concerning the legal status of the program and education administrators from both public and private schools and school systems also contributed, sometimes in ways that defied the typical for-or-against positioning by most actors. There was some participation by national figures, but Hoosiers dominated the discourse. The full discourse was also dominated by a relatively small group of actors. The state superintendent of schools, the governor, Republican state representatives, and a range of education interest groups dominated the discourse and supported the CSP. Democratic state representatives and representatives from teacher unions also produced significant discourse and opposed the CSP. On the whole, the editorial board and reporters at the Star favored the CSP and the editorial board and reporters at the Gazette opposed or criticized it. Chapter five will review the discursive frames used to define vouchers and the CSP and which actors used which frames.
5. CSP DISCOURSE FRAME ANALYSIS

All truths are but half-truths.
(The Three Initiates, Hermetic Philosophers)

Frame Distribution

Chapter four reviewed which actors participated in the public discourse over the consideration, adoption, and implementation of the Indiana CSP. Chapter five reviews the frames that were used in the discourse to describe vouchers and the CSP. The second section of the chapter will discuss which actors used which frames. Identifying actors in discourse analysis is not particularly difficult. It may require some research when a reporter has neglected to identify party affiliation for a quoted official and there can also be difficulties associated with editorials that attribute ideas to other actors. Determining which actors are assigned to which groups, like representatives from teacher unions to education interest groups or elected school board members to education administrators, is subjective and can influence findings. These challenges aside, identifying actors is a relatively objective exercise. Identifying frames is much more subjective. Identifying and categorizing these “indispensable and elusive” (Gamson et al, 1992, p. 384) constructs requires a level of interpretation not necessary in actor representation analyses. For example, consider actor and frames for the following utterance from a news story.

#8: We are here to stand with these beautiful children and our colleagues in the General Assembly to say education reform does rock in Indiana. For the sake of the kids, we demand great schools in every community (Kelly, 2013c, p. 1C).

Identifying the actor is easy—the article credits the quote to governor Mike Pence. Which frames were used is more difficult to determine. This particular utterance was not
coded with a frame because it did not reference vouchers or the CSP specifically, but instead referred to “education reform,” a blanket phrase that can and does encompass multiple education policies, not just education choice policies or vouchers. Still, the example can still bear fruit. Which frames does the statement utilize? Clearly the Governor is associating education reform with children/kids, and more specifically he is associating education reform with benefiting children/kids. He also claims that education reform “rocks” and is a solution to a perceived problem, which in this case is implied—we don’t have great schools in every community. There is more going on here than who the actor is.

The methodological challenges inherent in discursive frame analysis were discussed in chapter three. Rather than rehashing these limitations here it is simply worth observing that this section of the analysis, much like the analysis to come in chapter six, is considerably more qualitative than the analysis discussed thus far. The study can claim with confidence that actor x contributed y utterances to the articles in the sample. Claims about frame usage should be prefaced with an assumed “approximately.” Some of this “elusiveness” will be discussed throughout the section and the inclusion of the “other” frame category captured frames that did not easily fit the frame coding schema, but it should be remembered that regarding the quantification of the study’s frame analysis claims are made only about overall trends. Were this a more quantitative exercise we might expect that the number of times a frame was used would include a standard error of something in the neighborhood of 2-6%. These cautions noted, Table 9: Frame Distribution provides a sense of which frames were used in the discourse. The review will proceed as with the actors, from the least to the most present, finishing with “other” frames that escaped the coding schema developed during the pilot exercise described in chapter three.
### Table 9: Discourse Frame Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame Code</th>
<th>News Stories</th>
<th>Editorials</th>
<th>Reader Letters</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gazette Star</td>
<td>Gazette Star</td>
<td>Gazette Star</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum/Standards</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice = Good/Opportunity</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Justice</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Quality</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harms Public Education</td>
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<td>Competition</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Research/Efficacy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Frame Distribution provides a sense of how frequently major frames were used to assign meaning or value to vouchers and the CSP.\(^44\) Recall from chapter three that frames tend to perform certain functions in discourse. Entman (1993) proposed that:

Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. Typically frames diagnose, evaluate, and prescribe (p. 52).\(^45\)

Entman defined framing as “promot[ing] a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation (1993, p. 52). Similarly, Steensland “identified frames…based upon the three main functions they perform in relation to public policy: diagnosing social problems, prescribing solutions, and

\(^{44}\) Recall that utterances coded as "curriculum/standards" did not need to be directly related to the framing of vouchers, only within an article that did include voucher frames. This results in an exaggeration of the frame’s importance when considering voucher framing. Were this category only employed in the case of voucher framing it would represent less than 10% of the frames used to define vouchers. This coding anomaly does not affect the scale of usage among the other frames and will be discussed further in chapter six.

\(^{45}\) Italicized emphasis in the original.
linking policy options to social values” (2008, p. 1035). Borrowing from these definitions, the study used a rough rubric to help determine when utterances were projecting frames of vouchers or the CSP as (a) a problem definition; (b) a moral interpretation or evaluation; or (c) a treatment or recommendation. These three “forms” that frames assume are important, though not comprehensive, and will be used to help explain frames below.

**Research/Efficacy.** The Research/Efficacy frame described vouchers through research conducted on vouchers/school choice or by some claim of efficacy. This frame was utilized relatively sparingly throughout the full discourse, accounting for just 3% of total frame production. This lack of attention to research might seem ironic within discourse on education policy. Research-based education practice (or at least rhetoric) has been en vogue in recent decades. As we will see, however, more attention to the research base or efficacy on vouchers would not necessarily lead to a more informed discourse. Where this frame was used it assumed three general forms. 74% of the research/efficacy frames used claims about research or efficacy to support (31%) or oppose (43%) vouchers. For those who supported vouchers research was used to define vouchers as a proven treatment, thus recommending vouchers based on their demonstrated efficacy. Some examples:

**#9:** Students in the D.C. voucher program have shown consistently high marks on standardized tests and have enjoyed greater safety than their peers in D.C.’s failing schools. An evaluation published in February by the U.S. Education Department pronounced the program a success, noting a $7,500 scholarship was more cost-effective than the $15,000 D.C. public schools spend per pupil (Boychuk, 2010, p. 9A).

**#10:** Every high-quality study conducted into the effectiveness of school voucher programs shows they increase test scores for participating children and stimulate traditional public schools to improve twice as fast (Enlow, 2011, p. B.7).

**#11:** The ongoing study, led by David Figlio, a professor of education and social policy at the university, found that students who take advantage of
vouchers tend to improve their academic performance in their new schools. Vouchers also haven’t crippled the public system. The analysis indicates public school performance actually has increased as a result of vouchers, which the researchers attribute to increased competition (Star Editorial, 2011b, p. A.12).

#12: If the Choice Scholarship Program is allowed to continue, there will be change for the better. Studies have shown that similar programs in Ohio, Florida, Wisconsin and Texas resulted not only in better educations for students who attended private schools, but also for those who attended public schools (Markman, 2011, p. A.15).

Note the range of claims made in these utterances. Example #9 actually makes three claims intended to demonstrate the efficacy of vouchers, all related to the DC voucher program: increased standardized test scores; greater safety; and cost-effectiveness. This reference to research, like nearly all those taking firm positions in support or opposition to the CSP, highlighted selective “positive” outcomes of studies, but it did at least clearly identify which voucher program was being discussed, which efficacy metrics were used, and in the case of the third claim on cost effectiveness, provided enough information to actually locate the study being referenced if a reader was so inclined. To the extent one can use research to support education vouchers this use was relatively responsible. Example #11 follows this pattern, highlighting favorable aspects of a particular identified study to make two claims about vouchers: they “tend to improve...academic performance;” and they increase “public school performance” through a competition effect. Again, this reference, though selective, was relatively responsible, at least more so than Examples #10 and #12. The competitive effect claim is controversial, but it is correctly attributed to the author of the referenced study.46 Example #10 attempts to monopolize research in support

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46 Some voucher proponents claim the effect of public schools having to compete against private schools is that staff in the public schools work harder. This is then (potentially and theoretically) reflected in higher test scores. This “competitive effect” theory is controversial because, aside from the foundational assumption that
of vouchers, claiming “every high-quality study” finds vouchers lead to higher test scores and leads to improvement in public schools. Even with the “high-quality” caveat in this utterance it would be difficult to follow-up on this claim because it is not clear which studies were included within the actor’s understanding of “high-quality” or “every.” At best, this claim fails to recognize the need to control for student demographic and other factors when comparing test scores in voucher research and at worst it is simply a false claim.

Example #12 is similar in that it loosely references a set of unidentified studies on vouchers and summarizes them as resulting in “better educations” for private and public school students. General phrases like “better education” are inherently subjective and can be understood to mean different things by different people. The use of these phrases within the research frame can often be a red flag regarding utterance validity. Let’s compare these examples to utterances from actors who employed frames to oppose vouchers and the CSP.

**#13**: A program like that is radical. It’s untried in other states. Using public tax dollars to supplement people who are already well off to send kids to private schools is fundamentally un-American as far as I’m concerned (Elliott, 2011b, p. A.1).

**#14**: It has been proven that the much-touted higher performance of private schools is a myth. A Northwestern University study validated what data from the National Center for Educational Statistics have long reported: When making comparisons between public and private schools, "it’s going to be a wash in terms of test scores." Public schools are equally competitive with private schools when demographic factors are considered for both (Ellis, 2011, p. B.7).

**#15**: Another high-profile voucher program, the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program, was the subject of a long-term study by Indiana University’s Center for Evaluation & Education Policy. It concluded: "Results indicate that by the end of sixth grade, after controlling for differences in public school staff are not already working hard, it is difficult to attribute increases in test scores to competition with other schools any more than any other factor like curriculum/staff changes, different student cohorts, or perhaps even the high-stakes testing and accountability policy frameworks that, independently of school choice policies, can result in curriculum narrowing/alignment and higher test scores.
minority status, student mobility and prior achievement, there are no statistically significant differences in overall achievement scores between students who have used a scholarship throughout their academic career ... and students in the two public school comparison groups (Gazette Editorial, 2011a, p. 11A).

#16: The sad part about this is we haven't stopped to see what the outcome is from the 2011 reform we made. It doesn't matter if the program hasn't been evaluated...we're just going to do it (Kelly, 2013b, p. 1A).

Whereas CSP advocates used research or efficacy to frame vouchers as a \textit{treatment or recommendation} that had been proven effective, opponents of the CSP used research or efficacy, or sometimes a perceived lack of research or efficacy, to frame vouchers as a \textit{problem}; an untried policy that could not be supported by research or had been shown to be largely ineffective (at increasing student achievement). This frame \textit{tended} to be less extreme than some of the misleading utterances supporting the CSP, like examples #10 and #12 above. This was not always true. Example #13 includes three claims, that vouchers are radical, untried in other states, and un-American. The second claim loosely relates to efficacy, but as covered in chapter one, vouchers have been tried in other states. While the CSP is unique, the claim is not completely true and becomes especially problematic when contextualized with the other two sensational claims in the utterance. Attempting to co-opt “Americanism” to one’s policy view in a debate between “Americans” is both inherently divisive and inherently and paradoxically incorrect. The next two examples, #14 and #15, are more measured and generally representative of the frames used in utterances opposing the CSP. They refer to specific studies (not all utterances in opposition followed this practice) and point out that they essentially found little to no statistical differences between “test scores” or “achievement scores” between public and voucher school students. This framing of vouchers, that they lacked research support, would also be adopted to
oppose expansion of the program after 2011. Example #16 provides a sample of this frame. It may be interesting to note that while supporters of the CSP tended to stretch the veracity of their claims to frame vouchers as being a research-backed treatment and opponents of the CSP could be more specific and accurate in their claims, the oppositional frame essentially served a neutralizing function. The body of research on vouchers/school choice does tend to show that differences in “achievement” or standardized assessments are non-existent or negligible when controlling for demographic or other student variables. Opponents could therefore not claim (at least not credibly) that voucher research demonstrates that vouchers lead to decreased test scores, only that they generally have no “effect.” This required the use of other frames if the intent was to convince others that vouchers were “bad” policy. This “middle ground” position that recognized research as indecisive in evaluating education vouchers led to a number of articles that appeared to rise above the for–or–against positioning to point out complexities in the discourse. Consider the following examples of neutral *research/efficacy* frames:

**#17:** Because of the unique attributes of the students utilizing school choice programming, it is not a helpful measure to simply compare students who use school choice programs against students who do not use school choice programs, and conducting useful research on the efficacy of school choice programs is difficult (Gazette Editorial, 2011e, p. 6A).

**#18:** Now that the court has made the decision on the legal issues, it’s up to legislators to decide from a policy standpoint if the voucher program is effective. For some kids it probably is, but we don’t know if that’s the case for all (Gazette Editorial, 2013b, p. 6A).

In summary, framing vouchers as a research proven treatment or as a problem because of a lack of conclusive research were the two most dominant forms of the *research/efficacy* frame. Actors using the former approach tended to present selective research outcomes or stretch their claims to present vouchers as enjoying unquestioned
and obvious research support. Actors using the latter approach tended to point out that voucher research was in fact not conclusive and, if anything, generally suggested little to no measurable differences in student achievement. This “neutral” frame could be used in opposition when combined with other frames. There was also a sample of utterances using the research/efficacy frame that appeared to fall outside of the study’s three-form rubric (problem definition, interpretation or moral evaluation, or treatment or recommendation) and instead framed vouchers as something that had proven resistant to the application of “research proven” evaluations. This frame form, which avoided policy positions and complicated the discourse, accounted for 26% of the utterances using the research/efficacy frame, but was essentially insignificant when considered within the full discourse.

Common Schools. The common schools frame positioned vouchers as a problem in that they prevented the state of Indiana from fulfilling its obligation to provide a “general and uniform system of common schools.” Specifically, the state constitution proclaims that “it should be the duty of the General Assembly to encourage, by all suitable means, moral, intellectual, scientific, and agricultural improvement; and provide, by law, for a general and uniform system of Common Schools, wherein tuition shall be without charge, and equally open to all” (Indiana Constitution, 1851, Article 8, Section 1). The common schools frame and the religion frame were the two core legal arguments challenging the CSP. The common schools frame was used much less frequently than the religion frame; it accounted for only 3.6% of discourse frame production. It was decidedly used in utterances opposing vouchers and the CSP (62%), with neutral frames accounting for 34% of frame usage and utterances supporting vouchers or the CSP representing 4% of total frame usage.
Voucher critics and CSP opponents tended to use the *common schools* frame in one of two related ways. The first was to critique the policy because it allowed participating choice schools to retain school-specific student admission and retention policies. That, combined with potential tuition charges above the voucher amount resulted in choice schools not being “without charge and equally open to all.” Actors using this frame understood these distinguishing factors to differentiate choice schools from the “common schools” described in the state constitution thus deeming them ineligible for state funding.

**#19:** Private schools can refuse admittance to any student for any reason. If a child has low test scores, or is a behavior problem, or speaks a language other than English, that child could be refused admittance. Public schools are required to accept all students (Holm, 2011, p. 9A).

**#20:** The law doesn’t give parents choice but instead gives private schools choice in selecting the students they want. Bishop Noll High School (Lake County) received 88 applications from voucher students, but only accepted 58. Voucher schools are not ‘equally open to all’ (Smith, 2011, p. 7A).

This issue of student selection is important. It should become increasingly clear why as the rest of the frames are reviewed. Indeed, this is a common point raised by critics of school choice policies. Choice advocates often frame schools of choice as “outperforming” public schools, usually referring to scores on standardized assessments or perhaps graduation rates. This comparison can be problematic when one school can “select” the students that produce its test scores and another must accept all students, including the ones not selected by the private schools. How student selection and retention are managed within school choice policy frameworks varies widely. The CSP stipulates that a participating choice “school will not discriminate against any potential students based on race, color or national origin, and will follow the school’s admissions policy in regard to choice scholarship students” (Application to Become an Eligible School Under Indiana’s CSP,
In other words, participating choice schools retain wide discretion in what kinds of students they accept. Beyond questions regarding the obvious advantage such policies provide to voucher schools in a high-stakes standards-based accountability policy environment (as in Indiana), the introduction of such policies into the “common school” system raises other questions about the values of inclusiveness that have, in recent history, become central to the operation and regulation of public schools. To voucher critics this shift signals a potential return to discriminatory practices and segregation, not just by color, but by economic status, academic ability, religion, and philosophical/political orientation.

CSP opponents expressed these concerns in forms of the common schools frame:

**#21:** Vouchers were spawned initially to prevent integration (Walsh, 2012b, p. B.9).

**#22:** His plan encourages parents to segregate their kids-at public expense-from the rest of the community. We already know where this will lead. Believers will use public money to send their kids to schools based on their respective faiths. Liberals will want their kids on the waiting list for Montessori schools. The well-to-do will use the money to send their kids to fancy private academies in order to get a head start in the race for college admissions for elite colleges (Scheuerman, 2011, p. A.11).

**#23:** I have a student in our building who has some severe emotional handicaps. He's also in the special education program. That is the kind of student who will not be accepted in a charter school or a private school because of his testing scores…but that child deserves an education just the same as any other child (Schneider, 2011c, p. A.1).

What exactly constitutes a “common school” is central to the study’s primary research interest on curricular tension between choice and common standards, but that will be discussed in chapter seven. For now let’s complete the review of how the common schools frame was used. As noted, CSP supporters tended to avoid this frame, but there were a couple of examples where it was employed in support of the CSP. One was a quote denying the practice of student selection at any choice schools from a regular participant in
the discourse whose utterances regularly demonstrated a high level of veracity elasticity.

Another, presented in example #24 offered a rebuttal to the charge that vouchers lead to student homogeneity. Such forms of the common schools frame were rare:

**#24:** Without citing any evidence, [Actor] claims that private schools encourage segregation. This is another gross oversimplification. Take a look at inner-city Catholic schools in Indianapolis, Chicago and any other American metro area, and try to argue that they lack diversity. Come to Anderson and look at my children's school, St. Mary's, where a third of the enrollment is Hispanic and a quarter on free-lunch programs. Private schools aren't running from diversity (Murphy, 2011, p. A.13).

The actor behind example #24 raised an interesting question: just how diverse are voucher (or other choice) schools? Interestingly this question was not addressed in the frames employing the research/efficacy frame. Ultimately the CSP’s legality in regard to the common schools clause of the state constitution would be determined in 2013 when the state Supreme Court found the program was indeed constitutional. The court interpreted the General Assembly to be within its constitutional duty so long as a system of common schools—a uniform public school system—remained available. In other words, a “separate” system like the CSP merely complements the system of common schools that remain open to all. The charges of discrimination and segregation would continue after the Supreme Court ruling, but as with the religion frame, they became less potent after legal defeat.

To summarize, the common schools frame was used primarily by opponents of the CSP to position vouchers as a problem because they prevented the provision of tuition-free common schools available to all and because they could lead to discrimination and segregation as schools selected students based on widely varying school-specific criteria. Supporters of the CSP tended to avoid the common schools frame, preferring several more positive frames that will be discussed below. The common schools frame is integral to the
potential tension sought in the study's primary research interest, but these kind of curricular and competitive aspects of the frame were not often present in the discourse. The next frame did address one of these aspects, though perhaps in a different manner.

**Competition.** The competition frame described vouchers as increasing competition between schools. At 5.7% of total frame production, this frame was utilized nearly twice as often as the research/efficacy frame, but noticeably less often than many other frames in the discourse. The competition frame was utilized in utterances supportive of vouchers and the CSP 49% of the time, in utterances opposing the CSP 8% of the time, and in neutral utterances 43% of the time. This distribution is deceiving and requires deeper analysis. A high number of neutrally oriented competition frames were clustered in the Gazette news stories, and to a lesser extent in editorials, during implementation of the CSP in 2012. These frames need to be explained, but first let’s review the use of the competition frame to support the CSP. This was the most common use of the frame and explains some voucher supporters’ natural affinity with the frame. This frame is representative of the free-market economic roots that have provided one intellectual influence on the education choice movement. This form of the competition frame understands competition as normatively positive, a benefit to any context where something must be produced. In this regard it is subjectively difficult to separate these frames as serving either as an interpretation or moral evaluation or a treatment or recommendation. Actors using this form of the frame appear to see competition as both morally beneficial in and of itself and as a treatment or recommendation for almost any scenario related to production. Consider this sample of utterances framing vouchers in this supportive form of the competition frame:

#25: Choice in education creates competition. Competition creates a better product, a better outcome (Kelly, 2013c, p. 1C).
#26: We've had the voucher program for two years and we are starting to see that choice has provided competition and forced everyone to up their game (Kelly, 2013g, p. 1A).

#27: [Parents] also appreciate that the program holds great potential for improving academic performance in both public and private schools. These parents want what's best for kids and they know that competition will make all schools better as they strive to implement innovations that can attract and retain students (Brown & Elcesser, 2011, p. A.15).

#28: [The Supreme Court decision upholding the CSP] is also a victory for every Hoosier that supports school choice as a means of making every traditional public, private and charter school compete to give the very best education to their students (Elliott & Evans, 2013, p. A.1).

Much like the choice/opportunity frame that will be discussed later in the chapter the competition frame is impressive because it cannot be, or at least wasn’t, effectively countered by other forms of the same frame opposing vouchers or the CSP. Most of the neutral frames, which represented a significant portion of the frame usage, did not so much oppose the a priori benevolence of competition, but rather sought to either (a) testify to the challenges that such an environment created for public schools or (b) testify to the benefit that such an environment created for private schools. The latter were not necessarily supportive of the CSP and the former were not necessarily critical of it. The actors (many administrators) were simply describing their reality in a competitive environment, often without explicit value judgments attached. Many of these frames were clustered in the Gazette’s coverage of the implementation of the CSP 2011-12, coverage that we recall from chapter three was sparse in the CSP advocacy oriented Star.47 Consider the following examples where the competitive environment is acknowledged as reality:

47 Several articles in 2012 examined whether or not voucher dollars were being used to provide “recruiting fees” to families or student recruiters, but did not per se oppose the CSP.
Now that schools and districts must compete for students, FWCS has to change the way it does business. To do so…it must first make sure everyone knows about the quality education the district provides (Haynie, 2012b, p. 1C).

In terms of connecting with the community and families, we can take nothing for granted. Make no mistake, parents and students are our customers, and we will make sure their needs are met (Sade, 2012, p. 1A).

We’re working on how to get parents informed about our schools so they can make an informed choice," he said. "We don’t choose parents, they choose us (Haynie, 2011a, p. 1A).

These explicit or implicit observations could, in the case of public school administrators, loosely imply that competition and thus vouchers are a problem because they force schools to invest resources in marketing and recruitment instead of learning, but this interpretation was usually implied at most. This neutral form of the competition frame did not provide a frame to compete with the benevolent form of the competition frame. At times it gave the impression that competition could have unintended consequences, but some actors were just as likely to co-opt the competition frame to promote public schools over private schools. There were a handful of exceptions to this promotion or acceptance of a state of competition in education, but they were quantitatively insignificant. These “counter frame” examples challenged the primary assumption in the competition frame:

Supporters of vouchers call this diversion of tax dollars a means to create businesslike competition to improve student achievement at lower cost. They do not recognize that, unlike business, public schools don’t ship their product—our children—to cheaper labor markets to be "assembled" at lower costs (Ellis, 2011, p. B.7).

The new voucher program isn’t about private schools competing with public schools. The program is about giving students more options to succeed. That said, Wayne Township schools have been particularly supportive and our partnership has added to each school’s educational experience. We hope that this partnership continues (Hudson, 2011, p. A.13).
#34: Intentionally or not, lawmakers have set the battlefield for public education. As the contest heats up, they should ask whether charter schools and vouchers are truly delivering the innovation and improvement promised—or simply running up costly legal and marketing bills (Gazette Editorial, 2012a, p. 8A).

These utterances, and the few others like them, sought to reject the assumption that competition in K-12 education is beneficial. Such utterances used the *competitive* frame but positioned competition as a problem for public education, or at least tried to position collaboration as more essential. Still, the frame was seldom employed in this manner.

In summary, the *competition* frame was heavily used by advocates of vouchers and the CSP who shared a fundamental belief in the virtue of competition in productive exercises and education as a productive exercise. Much like the marketing slogan for cheese, actors employing this form of the *competition* frame appeared to believe that competition makes everything better. By contrast, most actors who otherwise opposed the CSP tended to either reluctantly accept the new competitive environment or co-opt it to promote the value of public schools over private schools. A few actors questioned the benefit of competitive education environments, some even offering visions of collaboration.

**Harms Public Education.** The harms public education frame was employed slightly more often than the competition frame. It accounted for 6.1% of frame production across both papers. This frame was used in one of two ways, by opponents of vouchers and the CSP to frame them as a problem and by supporters as a straw man frame to discredit the claim that vouchers are a problem because they harm public education. It was far more common among opponents (81%) than among supporters using it as a straw man (19%). Voucher critics using this frame tended to position their utterances along a loose continuum of harm. On the more civil end of the continuum frames positioned vouchers as
“diverting” or, more nefariously, “draining” money/resources from public schools. This use of the harms public education frame had significant overlap with the economic frame, which will be discussed shortly, and was relatively non-confrontational in that it didn’t make explicit claims about vouchers causing harm to public schools, but simply pointed out that the policy would result in a decreased level of funding for public schools. Some examples of this resources argument form of the harms public education frame include:

**#35:** We think it drains resources from current public schools, and we think it’s a lot better to focus on improving all public schools rather than draining those resources (Higgins, 2010, p. B.1).

**#36:** This bill will have significant fiscal impact on traditional public schools. I think this is absurd. It’s something we should not be doing (Elliott, 2013c, p. A.13).

**#37:** The thing that’s most concerning to me is not the expansion of vouchers but the drain that that expansion is going to cause on the current funding to public schools, on top of the cuts that have already been made in the last four years. It would be one thing if they created a separate pot of money and said, ‘OK, well this goes to the voucher program,’ but that was never done (Schneider, 2013b, p. B.1).

**#38:** The objective of self-proclaimed ‘reformers’ is to siphon resources away from public schools and divert them to private and religious institutions (Martin, 2011a, p. 1C).

This form of the harms public education frame that positioned vouchers as having a negative financial influence on public schools was common among the opponents framing vouchers or the CSP as a problem. Sometimes the frame was combined with other frames like in example #38, where the religion frame was also incorporated into an utterance using the harms public education frame. The middle point on the harms public education frame continuum took the description of vouchers or the CSP further. Not only did vouchers result in less overall funding for public schools, they also caused direct harm. In the examples above this connection between the CSP and harm to public schools was
implied when the frame alluded to less funding, but didn't include a claim of harm. This second form of the frame made the harm claim explicit. Consider the following examples:

#39: The honest truth is you're not going to get that many exceptional outcomes in this, and you are going to do it at the risk of damaging traditional public schools. It's a zero-sum game (Kelly, 2011h, p. 3C).

#40: My concern is for my own children, that this voucher program could drain their schools and harm their futures (Elliott, 2011e, p. A.1).

#41: This money goes to private and sectarian schools, while your public schools see reduction or even the loss of extracurricular activities and academic programs, remediation services, curriculum development, electives, and teachers (Walsh, 2012b, p. B.9).

#42: Many teachers in our school and beyond are concerned that parents and other citizens in Indiana don't understand the ramifications of what our state government is trying to do to public school education by promoting charter schools and vouchers. The children in our schools will suffer, which will affect the future of the state, if we go down this misguided path (Gibson, 2011, Web Letter).

Examples #39-42 are representative of this second form of the *harm public education* frame, which was differentiated from the first form by explicit claims of harm. Some of these “harm” claims were specific, like in example #41. More often than not, however, the claims of harm were vague and didn’t specify exactly how harm would be done, although a reduction in funding was often understood to result in educational harm. These harm claims were amplified on the furthest point of the *harm public education* continuum. In this form of the frame vouchers and the CSP were described as an “attack” or “attempt to destroy” public education. This form was not as common as the first two, but it remained present throughout the discourse. Examples of this form include utterances like:

#43: It's unfortunately a very bad piece of legislation. It will go a long way in destroying public schools in the state of Indiana (Kelly, 2011g, p. 1C).

#44: Public-sector employees and our public schools are under an unprecedented attack by conservatives who intend to leach every dime they
can get out of public education and funnel the proceeds into tax breaks for the wealthy and for-profit voucher systems for private schools across this country (Maydwell, 2012, p. A.15).

**#45:** This is a methodic, thought-out ploy to destroy public education. It’s about the dollars (Elliott, 3.20.13a, p. B.1).

These examples represent the extreme of the *harms public education* frame continuum. All three forms positioned vouchers as a problem that resulted in harm to public education. The level of harm to public education varied between frame forms, from a simple reduction in funding to the wholesale destruction of public schools. While the frame was most often used by opponents of vouchers and the CSP, there were some straw man uses of the frame where voucher supporters tried to discredit the claim that vouchers harm public education. This straw man form of the *harms public education* frame was most present in editorials, especially in Star editorials where it was used twice as often as the three oppositional forms combined. Some examples of this form of the frame include:

**#46:** As lawmakers debate how to improve the voucher program for the 2013-14 school year and beyond, they will be hit with misinformation from opponents claiming that it somehow hurts public schools. So, let me share a few perspectives to counter those arguments (Brown, 2013b, p. 7A).

**#47:** A little perspective is needed. Thus far, and admittedly Indiana’s voucher program is still new, fewer than 3,300 students have enrolled in the state program. Although that’s a fast start compared to other states that offer vouchers, it’s still a tiny percentage of overall student enrollment in Indiana. And it’s unlikely that a significant percentage of Indiana families will ever take advantage of vouchers. So opponents’ argument that vouchers will substantially hurt traditional schools is decidedly overblown (Star Editorial, 2011d, p. A.10).

In summary, the *harms public education* frame was used primarily by opponents of the CSP to position the policy as a problem due to its negative affect on public schools. This was often described in financial terms and stressed that the CSP would result in a reduction of overall funding for public schools. This claim was taken further with the inclusion of an
explicit connection between the CSP and harm to public education, students, or the state of Indiana. Occasionally the frame would position the CSP as an attack on or attempt to destroy public education. These forms of the *harms public education* frame were sometimes questioned or dismissed by supporters of the CSP, but neutral frames accounted for only 19% of the total frame usage. Rather than using this critically oriented frame voucher supporters tended to employ frames that portrayed the policy in a positive light or, as the next frame demonstrates, portrayed public education in a negative light.

**School Quality.** The *school quality* frame was slightly more common than the *harms public education* frame, accounting for 6.4% of discourse frame production. The *school quality* frame was used most often in utterances supporting (56%) the CSP, but was also used to oppose (17%) the policy and was used in a substantial number of neutral frames (27%). These neutral frames are important because, as with the *competition* frame, actors otherwise opposing the CSP sometimes co-opted it to support their short-term objectives. Before considering these, however, let’s review the forms of the frame that supported or opposed vouchers and the CSP. The utterances that utilized the *school quality* frame to support the CSP framed the poor quality of public schools as a problem, thus positioning or implying that vouchers and the CSP were a *treatment or recommendation*. This form of the frame was the most common. Consider these examples describing public schools as failing.

**#48:** In Indiana, tens of thousands of families are trapped in government-assigned schools that all too often fail to meet their children’s needs. Nearly 25,000 children in this state are forced to attend chronically failing schools each year (Messer, 2011, p. 7A).

**#49:** With our current school system performing so poorly, parents should not be forced to enroll their children in a public school before having access to state-issued vouchers (Saleik, 2011, Web Letter).
#50: We chose to use the voucher program to send our child to a church-affiliated school to get a high-quality education because public schools are failing miserably (Toth, 2.6.13, p. A.9).

#51: Public schools...have just gotten away from what’s important. They’re so focused on big football stadiums, big-screen TVs and referendums. There’s a lot of politics. It’s not about the kids (Elliott, 2011i, p. A.1).

#52: This bill is truly focused on what’s best for children. Heaven forbid that an F school would close or that a failing school would allow parents to have choices (Kelly, 2013f, p. 1A).

This assumption of failing public schools was discussed briefly in chapter one and will be considered further in chapter seven. It is foundational to frames that position vouchers (or any education reform policy, regardless of ideological underpinnings) as a treatment or recommendation. Indeed, this critical view of the status quo cannot be limited to contemporary education reform, or even the field of education. A critique of current affairs nearly always accompanies a proposed plan for changing those affairs. Whether or not the critiques of schools today are more or less fervent than the critiques of education in earlier times is debatable. That the frame of public schools as failing is used to advance education reform—in this case education vouchers—is not. This form of the school quality frame saturated some discourse sub-forums and was rarely challenged. When the assumption of failing schools was challenged it was done so in one of two manners: through the use of a straw man frame and/or through a counter claim—that public schools were performing at a high level. The following examples demonstrate how CSP critics attempted to discredit the form of the school quality frame that positioned public schools as failing, sometimes even countering this claim through claims of public schools' high quality.

#53: The Indiana legislature, with the governor's approval and that of our current political leaders, has joined the chorus in repeating "failure, failure,
failure" and "crisis, crisis, crisis." That was used to pass the Choice "Scholarship" [voucher] law (Walsh, 2012a, Web Letter).

#54: The Nation at Risk provided the impetus for assaulting public education with the incessant cry of failure regardless of any evidence to the contrary. Successes were commonly ignored while any sensational examples of failures, which are inevitable in every sizeable institution, were posited as proof of widespread failure. The clamor for vouchers increased (Walsh, 2012b, p. B.9).

#55: Because evidence of school success does not justify efforts to turn over public schools to for-profit turnaround operators or to send tax dollars to low-performing charter schools or private and parochial schools with little accountability or oversight. How can you frame public schools as "failing" when they are doing nothing of the sort (Gazette Editorial, 2012c, p. 12A)?

#56: Recent legislative efforts to reform public schools are based on the false premise that they are failing...[Indiana public schools] have steadily improved. From graduation rates to National Assessment of Educational Progress data to ACT scores and beyond, 20-year trends are upward (Williams, 2011, p. B.9).

These attempts to discredit or counter the failing public schools form of the school quality frame were present but relatively rare. Where utterances opposing the CSP did utilize the school quality frame it was more commonly used as a method of critiquing the program's size. This was particularly common in 2011 during the debate over the initial policy adoption and in 2013 when eligibility for the program was expanded, although not as much as some actors proposed. There was a particular spike in the use of this form of the frame when it became obvious that some voucher students were transferring to private schools that were assigned lower grades on the state accountability grading scale than the public schools they had left. Consider the following examples of this form of the frame:

#57: [Actor] said the amendments were an "enormous improvement," but he wanted to go further and offer the vouchers only to kids who attend a school that is ranked in the state's two lowest-performing categories. "If this voucher program is designed to help those who suffer in poor schools, this amendment is consistent with that. We are not going to give vouchers to people who go to wonderful schools and get straight A's" (Kelly, 2011f, p. 1C).
What frustrates us is the idea that the legislators who wanted this voucher program wanted it to be available so that if people’s children were in failing schools, they would have the option to go somewhere else. That’s not what we’re seeing. For instance, three private schools in the state that just received an F rating from the state in annual school accountability rankings received almost $1 million for 222 voucher students this year (Kelly & Crothers, 2012, p. 1A).

As with the competition frame, otherwise opponents of the CSP—and supporters of the CSP who sought to slow its expansion—would co-opt the frame to position vouchers as a tool for students to escape “failing schools” as acceptable, but other ways of qualifying for vouchers as unacceptable. Actors using this frame, although generally opposing the CSP or some proposed program expansion, would essentially endorse the form of the frame that positioned public schools as failing in order to achieve short-term policy goals. This was somewhat ironic but not uncommon. These associations of school quality with the state accountability school-grading framework are relevant to the study’s primary research interest in conceptions of curriculum and tensions between choice and standards policy frameworks, but this will be discussed in chapter six. For now it is sufficient to point out that employing frames of failing public schools to critique reform policies can actually serve to justify the very assumptions used to support the discourse supporting the reforms.

In summary, the school quality frame was often used by supporters of the CSP to position vouchers as a treatment or recommendation in response to the problem of failing public schools. This perceived problem was usually not supported by evidence, but simply taken for granted. Some actors did attempt to discredit the claim that public schools were failing and some even claimed the opposite—that public schools were of a high quality. These counter claims were rare, however, and were crowded out by the dominant form
and by the use of the frame by actors opposing the original policy or its expansion beyond “students in failing schools,” thus effectively endorsing the dominant frame. The overall effect of the school quality frame thus appeared to be a constant frame of failing schools.

**Social Justice.** The social justice frame was employed to position vouchers or the CSP as advancing or impeding the cause of social justice. This phrase—social justice—is particularly en vogue in contemporary academic and popular culture. An online search for the phrase will return a bevy of competing definitions that, if combined, would stretch the phrase’s meaning beyond utility. A full consideration of social justice is well beyond the concerns of this chapter, so for the purposes of this study the pursuit of social justice is defined as *the continuously increasing alleviation of the disadvantages of the least fortunate among us*. Again, this is an imperfect definition of a complex idea, but it need only be sufficient for defining the boundaries of the frame used in the study’s discourse analysis.

Its presence in the discourse over education policy should not be surprising. Society has long placed the hope and burden of social justice on the schools. The schools are a battlefield of competing ideologies that ultimately can be reduced to conflicting ideas of what a socially just society is. Supporting social justice is not difficult. Agreeing on what it means is. The discourse over the consideration, adoption, and implementation of the Indiana CSP offered multiple forms of this broad social justice frame. Accounting for 8.1% of total frame production, the social justice frame was relatively prevalent in the discourse. This prevalence was amplified, much like the school quality frame, by its concentration in support of the CSP, thus quantitatively framing the CSP as advancing social justice.

Perhaps the most interesting trend in the social justice frame was its near monopoly in support of the CSP. This is worthy of consideration, but it is also important to point out a
potential methodological issue that contributes to this imbalance. Because society has traditionally viewed education and public schools as a mechanism for increased social justice it could be argued that the harms public education frame is actually a form of the social justice frame. This is a plausible position. The present study separated them based on the distinction between (potentially) implying that harming schools results in harming the least fortunate among us (harms public schools frame) and explicitly identifying some set of individuals or groups within the least fortunate among us (social justice frame). This distinction should become clearer with some examples. Utterances using the social justice frame in support of the CSP accounted for 76% of frame production. The remaining quarter of the frames were evenly split between utterances opposing the policy (12%) and neutral frames (12%). Why did policy supporters prove so successful at positioning vouchers within a social justice frame? Let’s review these supportive forms of the frame, which generally fell into one of three broad frame sub-forms: association, individual story, and defense of the disadvantaged. Consider these examples of the association sub-form:

**#59:** Nearly two years ago, Gov. Mitch Daniels signed the School Scholarship Act into law to give low and middle-income families the opportunity to choose the school that best meets their child’s unique learning needs (Brown, 2013a, p. A.17).

**#60:** Voucher supporter [Actor] said he believed the bill’s provisions for expanded eligibility are the "logical next moves" to allow low-income families more options in the education of their children (Davies, 2013, p. 1C).

**#61:** Almost 85 percent of those students come from low-income families who participate in the federal free and reduced lunch program. Fifty-three percent of voucher students represent minority families (Brown & Elcesser, 2011, p. A.15).

**#62:** All children deserve to have the same opportunities to excel academically regardless of the financial circumstances in which they are born. The Choice Scholarship program provides students from lower-income
families a high-quality education that they may otherwise not receive (Behning, 2013, p. 7A).

This association form of the social justice frame associated vouchers or the CSP with “low-income” students or families. The frequency of this association in the discourse was actually underrepresented because boilerplate definitions of the CSP used by journalists in the news story sub-forum were not captured. Consider these two (excluded) descriptions of the CSP. They are similar, but one uses the social justice frame and one doesn’t.

#57: House Bill 1003 [which created the CSP] takes a portion of state funding usually provided to public schools and gives it instead to families who want to send kids to private schools (Kelly, 2011f, p. 1C).

#58: Vouchers allow low-income families to redirect tax dollars from their local public school district to pay tuition when their children transfer to private schools (Elliot & Evans, 2013, A.1).

As discussed in chapter two, the CSP is inherently directed, at least in its present form, at low-income students. Living in a household that does not exceed 200% of the federal poverty level is a program eligibility requirement. This program characteristic, which is common (at some percentage) but not absolute among U.S. voucher programs, provides a decided advantage for voucher advocates. They can (rightly) argue that the program alleviates the disadvantages among recipients of vouchers, most or all of who are within the least fortunate among us, at least economically. Even (or perhaps especially) the subtle association found in defining vouchers as “allowing low-income” children to do something, anything, is a direct line to advancing social justice. Conversely, opponents must critique the policy on the grounds that it harms students not participating in the program, an awkward position and one that avoids the claim of benefit to participating students all together. The ease of use by supporters and avoidance by many opponents of the CSP was evident in the very low use of the frame in the Gazette editorial sub-forum (8% of total
frame usage), a bastion of critical framing of vouchers and the CSP. This association form of the frame was complemented by another less frequent form of the social justice frame that emphasized individual stories. Consider these examples:

**#65:** “I’m barely scraping through, and if I could get these vouchers it would mean so much,” said [Actor], who has two daughters in [Public] Schools (Kelly, 2011i, p. 1A).

**#66:** [Actor] said vouchers gave her the chance to move her four children to private school—an option her parents always wanted for her but could not afford. [Actor], who lives in Franklin Township, attended Lutheran High School for one year before her parents could no longer meet the tuition costs. "It was always our desire to have our kids in private school...but we couldn’t financially afford it with four kids" (Elliott, 2011i, p. A.1).

Both forms of the social justice frame, association and individual stories, employed fairly subtle techniques for framing vouchers or the CSP as advancing social justice. The third supportive form of the frame abandoned subtlety in favor of explicit claims that the CSP advanced social justice or positioned support for vouchers as a defense of the rights of the disadvantaged. This form of the frame was common. Some examples include:

**#67:** We think it’s amoral to base quality of education on the ZIP code you live in. For us, it’s a civil rights issue, an issue of economic freedom and educational freedom (Higgins, 2010, p. B.1).

**#68:** A great education should not be an option available only to a privileged few but rather a fundamental right for all Americans. In Indiana, we are removing barriers to success and opportunity for students who have been denied equitable access for far too long (Kelly, 2011g, p. 1C).

**#69:** The students benefitting from that option are overwhelmingly from low-income families (84 percent) and live in urban settings (69 percent). A majority (54 percent) also are minorities. Those are populations that for decades have had little choice but to send their children to failing schools while families with higher incomes opted out by moving to the suburbs or writing large checks to private schools (Star Editorial, 2011e, p. A.12).

**#70:** Thousands of Hoosier families made powerful choices for their children, choices made possible by Indiana’s commitment to educational options for all students—regardless of background, income or ZIP code. Simply put, we
are providing our neediest families options they've never had before, and they're taking advantage of the opportunity to select schools that work best for their children (Kelly & Crothers, 2012, p. 1A).

This combination of explicit claims that the CSP advanced social justice, individual stories of struggling families that were helped by the CSP, and the constant and subtle association of the CSP with “low-income” students and families resulted in the social justice frame being wielded most often by supporters of vouchers and the CSP. There were exceptions, however. The 24% of utterances that were opposed to or neutral on vouchers and the CSP tended toward two oppositional forms of the social justice frame. As with other frames, some opponents of the CSP utilized straw man frames to attempt to discredit the claim that the CSP advanced social justice. Straw man frames should be familiar by now:

#71: Some members of the General Assembly want to start an expansive voucher program that includes giving money to the middle class. They tell us this will open doors for the poor and save us money because private school tuition is less than it costs to send a student to public schools (Tankersley, 2011, p. A.13).

#72: Vouchers are more about giving nonpublic schools the choice to divert public money to support their religious missions than allowing low and middle-income students the opportunity to attend a school of their choice (Smith, 2011, p. 8A).

Another oppositional form of the social justice frame sought to explicitly claim that vouchers or the CSP worked against social justice. This form, which extended the implied meaning of vouchers in some of the harms public education frames to a direct claim of harm to groups within the least fortunate among us was rare but occasionally used:

#73: It is unethical and unjust to use tax dollars in a way that will result in leaving public schools with less money for the neediest children. Vouchers will not assist severely impoverished children (Chang, 2011, p. A.13).

#74: So, taxpayers will be subsidizing religion, and poverty will remain the problem of the urban public schools. Those public schools will have less
money to work with, because vouchers are zero-sum—the money is taken from the overall pot, not added to it (Carpenter, 2011, p. A.12).

CSP opponents used these two forms of the social justice frame to counter efforts to position the CSP as advancing social justice. Quantitatively, this use was rare.

To summarize, the social justice frame—which prevalence was underestimated by a study design that excluded boilerplate voucher definitions in the news story sub-forum—was used most often in utterances that supported vouchers or the CSP. Voucher advocates employed a trio of frame forms to position vouchers as advancing social justice: association, individual stories, and defending the disadvantaged. Opponents of the CSP used the social justice frame far less often, perhaps due to the use of the harms public education frame, or perhaps because it was difficult to negatively frame vouchers using the primarily low-income students in the program. In the battle over the mantra of social justice, at least in this study’s discourse, supporters were more effective in framing vouchers as a treatment or recommendation to the problem of alleviating the disadvantages of the least fortunate among us than opponents were in framing vouchers as a problem due to their exacerbation of the disadvantages of the least fortunate among us. This trend of supporting vouchers or the CSP was also present in the fourth most commonly used frame.

**Choice/Opportunity.** The choice/opportunity frame was one of the most commonly used frames in the CSP discourse in Indiana. At 10.1% of total frame production, the choice/opportunity frame was regularly used in all sub-forums 2009-2013. It was also used almost exclusively by supporters of the CSP. Utterances in support of vouchers or the CSP accounted for 90% of all frame occurrences. Only a single utterance opposing the CSP used the frame and neutral frames (10%) were rarely used to discredit the frame, at least not
effectively. At least within the limits of the present study, it appears safe to conclude that the choice/opportunity frame was the primary frame relied on by supporters of the policy. This is perhaps best evidenced by the name of the policy, the Choice Scholarship Program.

The concept of “choice” is deeply engrained in U.S. culture. Closely related to the concept of “freedom,” its power extends into multiple realms, from the spiritual to the economic. In his intellectual history of the late twentieth century, Age of Fracture (2011), Daniel Rodgers traced the period’s shifting ideas from the field of economics through “reconceptualizations of power” and struggles for race- and gender-based social memory before considering how these “debates over which ideas…might endure” (p. 181) altered “conceptualizations of society and time” (pp. 11-12). Ultimately Rodgers concluded, as his title suggests, that “viewed by its acts of mind, the last quarter of the [twentieth] century was an era of disaggregation, a great age of fracture” (p. 3). One of the central premises behind Rodgers’ argument was the concept of choice. Rodgers viewed “the era’s emphasis on choice [as] the most contagious of the age’s metaphors,” (p. 270), arguing that as “market ideas moved out of economics departments to become the new standard currency of the social sciences…words like ‘choice’ were called upon to do more and more work in more and more diverse circumstances” (pp. 10-11). These “words like choice” were the core of slightly differing forms of the choice/opportunity frame used throughout the discourse over the CSP by voucher advocates. More precisely, words like “choice,” “opportunity,” “option,” “chance,” “decision,” and occasionally “access” or “alternative” were the descriptive anchors of the choice/opportunity frame. Consider the interchangeability of terms in the following examples:
#75: This isn’t about a specific legislative issue. What matters is voters all across the country want to see options in every state (Elliott, 2011a, p. B.1).

#76: At bottom, this is not about material matters. It is about the civil right, the human right, of every Indiana family to make decisions for its children (Tully, 2011, p. A.1).

#77: Those children, and their parents, have waited long enough for a better chance in life (Schneider, 2011, p. A.1).

#78: The legislation is not about private schools. It’s about families and providing opportunities for kids. It allows private schools to better serve our missions by providing services to a broader base of students (Elliott, 2011b, p. A.1)

#79: I’ve seen the difference it makes. I think, as parents, we should have the choice to send our children anywhere, public or private. They are funding public schools anyway. Why exclude private schools (Elliott, 2011b, p. A.1)?

Examples #75-79 demonstrate how vouchers were positioned as “options,” “decisions,” a “chance,” an “opportunity,” and a “choice.” These different examples, though common, happened to be clustered within eleven days of coverage in the Star news story sub-forum. All of these terms carry generally positive connotations. This assumption of “goodness” was present in most forms of the frame, but was occasionally expanded to associate vouchers, through a descriptive term, with other concepts or to position voucher opponents as taking something away from others, especially the least fortunate among us.

#80: At the heart of it, we’re a pluralistic society here in the United States and we’ve always believed in providing people with lots of choices (Hessel, 2012, p. A.1).

#81: Which one of us wants to pick the child that doesn’t get this choice (Schneider, 2011d, p. B.3)?

The choice/opportunity frame was undisputed territory in the battle over framing vouchers and the CSP. Although it could be positioned as a treatment or recommendation, it usually took the form of an interpretation or moral evaluation. No problem was necessary
for choice or opportunity. Choice was assumed to be a morally just concept in and of itself. The few actors who employed this frame in ways other than support of the CSP proved uninterested in or ineffective at countering the framing of vouchers as a choice or opportunity. These counter forms of the frame, which accounted for 10% of choice/opportunity frame production, included two commentaries on the irony between “conservative” and “liberal” positions on tax money supporting (or not) schools and abortion clinics; several critiques of those claiming “choice” is more important than “accountability;” and a few straw man frames, none of which attempted to dispel the claim that vouchers were in fact a choice or opportunity, but only that other flaws of the program outweighed this virtue. CSP opponents effectively avoided the choice/opportunity frame.

In summary, the choice/opportunity frame was effectively and frequently employed by CSP supporters to position vouchers as a choice, opportunity, option, chance, or similar concept associated with the inherent goodness (believed to be) found in the freedom to make decisions. This “power of choice” could be prescribed as a treatment or recommendation if combined with other frames, like school quality, but was usually sufficient in and of itself, thus interpreting or evaluating the CSP as a morally just policy necessary on its own merits above and beyond any other problems that might exist in education or society. The choice/opportunity frame was the primary frame used in utterances supporting vouchers and the CSP. This frequency of use, and its near exclusion from utterances opposing the CSP, provides compelling evidence of the frame’s effectiveness. Only three frames were used more often in the discourse than the choice/opportunity frame—the next two were often used in tandem.
Religion. The *religion* frame was the second most commonly used frame in the discourse after the *economic* frame (which will be discussed next), accounting for 13.4% of total frame usage. These two frames were used together often, with over half (55%) of the utterances using the *religion* frame also employing the *economic* frame. The overlap of these two frames formed the core of the legal battle over the CSP in Indiana. At the heart of the issue was the establishment clause in the state constitution. This “separation of church and state” was discussed in chapter one—the constitutionality of appropriately structured voucher programs was established by the *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* (2002) Supreme Court case, but state constitutions often contain their own language prohibiting the use of state funds in support of religious institutions. Indiana’s does. This uncertainty over the legality of the CSP remained until the State Supreme Court ruled in favor of the program on March 26, 2013. The debate over the legality of the CSP played out in the public discourse through this date and even beyond, as some actors continued to claim the program illegal despite (or in spite of) the “incorrect” decision reached by the Supreme Court justices. The Gazette editorial board provided a concise and prescient summary of this debate in 2011:

**#82:** The constitutional argument over vouchers is likely to come down to this: The anti-voucher side argues that the program violates the state constitutional ban on state money going to "the benefit of any religious or theological institution." The pro-voucher side will argue that the vouchers aren't going to benefit a particular religion but going to individual parents, who then decide which schools their children will attend (Gazette Editorial, 2011c, p. 14A).

Thirty percent of the utterances using the *religion* frame assumed a neutral position on the CSP. Many of these neutral utterances were similar to example #82, simply

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48 Although listed at the third most used frame in Table 9, curriculum/standards frame usage was inflated. If the curriculum/standards code were limited to utterances specifically framing vouchers (as discussed earlier) frame would be closer to 10% of total frame distribution.
providing a summary of the disagreement over the program’s legality under the state constitution. The other 70% were decidedly employed by CSP opponents, with negative positions on the CSP reflected in 51% of the religious frames and positive positions in only 19%. Alongside the harms public education and common schools frames, the religion frame was the frame of choice for CSP opponents. Actors using the religion frame to oppose the CSP defined vouchers as a problem because they used state funds to support religious institutions. Sometimes this association of public funding and religion was sufficient in and of itself to negatively frame the CSP. This is reflective of deep cultural perceptions about the roles and places of education and religion in contemporary society. Consider the following examples of oppositional forms of the religion frame:

**#83:** There is no question that this law violates the provisions of the Indiana Constitution that protect taxpayer dollars from being funneled to private, religious and for-profit organizations (Kelly, 2011j, p. 1A).

**#84:** I have always put my daughter in parochial schools and I will go on record as saying I absolutely do not want my tax dollars used to pay for vouchers that include faith-based education (Lehrman, 2011, p. A.13).

**#85:** Voucher money will go to support religious education. Many private schools have a religious mission. As such, many parents want their children to attend because they agree with the religious focus. The question is, should taxpayer money be used to support various religious ideologies? Using taxpayer money to support religious-based private schools would seem in direct conflict with our country’s tradition of the separation of church and state (Holm, 2011, p. 9A).

Examples #83-85 relied on the cultural (and legal) understandings of the separation of church and state, or using public tax dollars to fund religious institutions, to oppose the CSP. Sometimes the negative aspects of this association would be described in more detail to ensure readers understood why this separation was necessary, as in these examples:
In most of these schools, religion is an extremely important part of what they do. Some of the educational programs have religious components and students participate in religious ceremonies (Ritchie, 2011, p. B.3).

I do not want my tax dollars financing schools that teach "creation science" or that claim a certain religion is the one true faith and that believers in all others are doomed (McKinney, 2011, p. A.11).

[The expansion of the CSP would result] in the transfer of a far greater percentage of public education funds to parochial schools, none of which are subject to the stringent open admissions and other requirements heaped on public schools (Wiltshire, 2013, Web Letter).

Examples 86-88 were more explicit in why public funding should not be used on religious education. Some forms of this frame critiqued the value of religious curriculum. Other forms combined with the common schools frame to assert that religious schools were not subject to the same admissions or retention policies as public schools. Some opponents wondered how supportive state leaders would be of using taxpayer funds for Muslim schools. Ultimately, the frame would prove insufficient to the cause as legislative and judicial action would prove decisive over public opinion in the policy battle. Although still used, the frame lost its potency following judicial assertion of the program's constitutionality. Conversely, the affirmation of the program's legality strengthened the effectiveness of the frame for CSP supporters. Supportive forms of the frame accounted for just under one-fifth of total frame production, suggesting that supporters preferred the reliability of other frames like choice/opportunity or social justice. With a few rare exceptions, this supportive form of the religion frame assumed two basic structures. The first, reflected in examples 89-90 below, was a straw man argument repositioning the state→church association as a state→parent→church association. This was the basic legal argument behind the constitutionality of the CSP, that funds were not being distributed
from the state to religious organizations but rather to parents who were then choosing to
direct those funds to religious schools, as argued by actors issuing the utterances below:

**#89**: Under both the U.S. and Indiana constitutions Indiana can provide
private scholarships to children as long as the program is religiously neutral
(that is, it doesn’t favor or disfavor religious institutions over secular ones)
and it allows parents—not the government—to determine which school their
child will attend. Indiana’s program satisfies these criteria in that both
religious and non-religious schools may participate, and parents—not the
government—decide which school a child attends, be it public, private or
religious (Gall, 2011, p. 14A).

**#90**: The scholarships or vouchers provided to families are for tuition.
Moreover, the parent may use it at any accredited school (religious or non-
religious) participating in the program: The vouchers are not tied to specific
schools. The money does not support a house of worship; rather it supports a

This counter-frame, although used far less often in the discourse, proved to be the
“correct” understanding of the constitutionality of the CSP, at least to the extent that the
courts are the determinant of such matters. There was another form of the religion frame
that was used often enough to warrant discussion. This second supportive form of the
frame did not try to distance the association between vouchers and religion, as the form in
examples #89-90 did, but rather embraced the introduction of religion into education. The
forms of the religion frame discussed thus far attempted to either position vouchers as a
problem (opponents) or discredit the problem frame, often by repositioning vouchers as a
choice/opportunity. This second supportive form of the frame instead positioned vouchers
as an interpretation or moral evaluation because of their association with religion or as a
treatment or recommendation based on the absence of religion in public schools. Actors
using this form of the frame appeared uninterested in the legal concerns over the
separation of church and state. They were more interested in the perceived beneficial
aspects of a religious education. This form of the religion frame is seen these examples:
#91: A major reason she chose Precious Blood for her sons is the religious education they receive there and the school 's small class sizes. It's a very close-knit community, with a lot of parent involvement (Janssen, 2013, p. 1A).

#92: We are looking for people who really want a good education and a Christian Catholic education for their children. This is a wonderful opportunity for that (Elliot, 2011, p. B.1).

#93: The question is not whether schools will promote morality and religion with taxpayer dollars but how and which they will. Vouchers do not change that. They just give parents the freedom to ensure their children's schools won't undermine their efforts to hand their religious beliefs down to their children...When the state allows them this choice rather than confining children to only the moral education public schools promote, it is merely ending its preference for one religion over another. That's why people like me, who want separation of church and state and freedom of religion, hail the voucher ruling (Pullmann, 2013, p. 9A).

In summary, the religion frame was the second most common frame in the discourse over the CSP in Indiana. It was used primarily by opponents of the policy to frame the CSP as illegal and at odds with the perceived cultural precedent of separation of church and state. A reliance on this frame may have proven costly to voucher opponents when their legal interpretations were at odds with both the legislature and courts, at least in Indiana. CSP supporters relied on the religion frame much less often, but did use it to try and discredit the frame of illegality and, to a lesser extent, to embrace religion in education. The most common forms of the frame occurred in tandem with the most commonly used frame in the discourse, the economic frame. This popular frame will be reviewed next.

Economic. The economic frame was the most frequently used frame in the discourse, accounting for 18.3% of the frame utilization across all sub-forums. This might not be too surprising. Money is at the root of much of public policy, particularly public money and the taxes paid to raise it. The status of taxpayer has historically been associated with the right to participate in public policy discourse. If the significance of the association has lessened
over the years the tradition behind it perhaps has not. The spending of public funds is often contentious, even more so when related to otherwise contentious policy initiatives. Even beyond this contributing stakeholder rationale for advocating or disputing policy positions, the economic frame is arguably the most dominant frame in public discourse today, policy or otherwise. For now let’s review how the *economic* frame was used in the discourse over the consideration, adoption, and implementation of the CSP in Indiana.

The *economic* frame was in many ways a foundational frame, one easily combined with other frames to create meaning. This was not always the case; the *economic* frame was the sole frame in utterances 19% of the time. Consider these stand-alone examples:

**#94:** I don’t believe public tax dollars should go to private companies (Janssen, 2012, p. 1C).

**#95:** According to Indiana University’s Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, Indiana’s total expenditure per student in 2006-07 was $9,929. At the same time, the median tuition at Indianapolis-area private schools is $5,200. For every student transferring to a non-public school, there would be a total savings of more than $4,000 per student (Enlow, 2011, p. B.7).

Example #94 draws on perceived limits of what public funds should and should not be spent on. Example #95 provides an economic rationale for the program, a popular technique in any policy argument. This “cost estimate/justification” form of the *economic* frame was relatively common. It generally consisted of projected cost estimates, often without any accompanying context, to demonstrate how the CSP would or would not be sound economic policy. Consider these examples of this form of the *economic* frame:

**#96:** [Actor] said the broader eligibility provision was estimated to cost between $17 million and $40 million a year, while a report by the nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency on a similar proposal last year found the annual cost could reach $115 million (Kelly, 2013a, p. 1C).
**#97:** HB 1003: Voucher bill would allow public dollars to flow to private schools. Every 1,000 students receiving a voucher are estimated to reduce overall state tuition support by $5.5 million (Gazette Editorial, 2011a, p. 11A).

**#98:** The Indiana Department of Education has said that $16 million will flow to private schools instead of public schools based on nearly 4,000 vouchers this year. The non-partisan Legislative Services Agency estimated that as much as $40 million could transfer from public to private schools in 2012-13 when 15,000 vouchers are allowed. After that year, there are no limits, and the transfer of funding to private from public schools could balloon (Smith, 2011, p. 7A).

**#99:** Our early estimates show that the new program could end up saving taxpayers as much as $5 million, and those savings will be recognized as the program provides new benefits that include the delivery of more high-quality education options for families and increased competition among all schools (Brown & Elcesser, 2011, p. A.15).

Examples #96-99 positioned vouchers as an economic issue, one that ostensibly could be identified as excessive cost or cost savings, depending on one's calculations. Sometimes the math in these frames provided the intended positive or negative association, but as mentioned, the *economic* frame was combined with other frames 81% of the time. Example #99 incorporates the *economic, competition, and choice/opportunity* frames together. The latter two frames were most common among supporters of the CSP, and this utterance is true to the pattern. This combination was rare, however. The *economic* frame was combined with the frames generally used in support of the CSP—*choice/opportunity, school quality, social justice, and competition*—only 17% of the time. In contrast, the *economic* frame was combined with the *harm public education* frame 16% of the time and with the *religion* frame 40% of the time. Knowing this, it should not be surprising that the *economic* frame was used more often in utterances by opponents of vouchers and the CSP (55%) than it was in utterances by supporters (22%) or in neutrally framed utterances (23%). The *economic* frame is in fact central to these other two oppositional frames. It is
not the presence of religious schools that (most) voucher opponents oppose, but the use of public funds to support them. The argument that vouchers harm public education is also, at least within this study, dependent on their use resulting in less funding for public schools.

The combination of these frames with the economic frame was quite common. Examples:

**#100**: Public tax money for schools should not go to churches, and that includes church schools, which often operate as a ministry of the church (Warner, 2011a, p. 13A).

**#101**: Because the vouchers would be funded from the public school budget, public education would face budgetary shortfalls. Public schools will become the option of last resort, disproportionately used by those who couldn't do better (Scheuerman, 2011, p. A.11).

**#102**: As a taxpayer, I have every right to demand that not one penny of my money goes toward the religion-based indoctrination of children (Sherlock, 2011, p. B11).

Examples #100-102, which combined the economic frame with the harms public education and religion frames, were more common than frame combinations that supported the CSP, but policy advocates did not abandon the economic frame. When used to support the CSP the economic frame generally assumed one of several forms. One primary form of the frame was discussed above, by positioning vouchers and the CSP as representing aggregate economic cost savings. CSP advocates also attempted to counter the frame advanced by opponents that the economics of the CSP meant less funding for schools. This form of the frame aligned well with effort to distance the association between state funding and the religious schools that ultimately received (portion of) the funding as discussed above through attempts to reposition the state→church association as a state→parent→church association. The same logic was used to discredit the drained
funding understanding in the *harms public education* frame that was often combined with the *economic* frame. Examples:

**#103:** Why not let education dollars follow students to a school that best meets their needs? We know it will save the state money and we know that money following students is already what happens when a student transfers from one public school to another (Enlow, 2011, p. B.7).

**#104:** Our job is not to subsidize public school districts or religiously based schools. It’s to subsidize the education of children, regardless of where they go to school (Elliott, 2011i, p. A.1).

In summary, the *economic* frame was the most commonly used frame in the discourse. It could function as a stand-alone frame, positioning vouchers or the CSP as “bad” or “good” economic policy due to excessive spending (a *problem*) or cost savings (a *recommendation or treatment*). More often, however, it was combined with other frames, especially two of CSP opponents’ primary frames, *harms public education* and *religion*. When data was referenced to support the economic positioning of policy advocates or critics it was often provided out of context. Much like the less frequently used *research/efficacy* frame, the *economic* frame appeared to be more influenced by perspective than a careful consideration and assessment of evidence. The frames discussed thus far accounted for 74.7% of the identified frames in the research sample.

Of the remaining 25.3% of frames, 15.5% framed understandings of curriculum or standards, or discussed curricular tension related to integrating education choice and standards & accountability policy frameworks in the CSP. Those frames relate to the study’s primary research interest and will be discussed in chapter six. The other 9.7% of codes were attributed to the “other” frame code that was established to capture any utterances framing vouchers or the CSP that fell outside of the frames already reviewed. Some of these proved relatively common in their own right. Let’s review this sample of “other” frames.
Other. The other frame served as a “wildcard” code to capture utterances that framed vouchers or the CSP but did not quite fit within one of the frames discussed above. That this code was required for 9.7% of the total utterances should reveal both the imperfection of the study’s coding schema and the difficulty of quantifying discourse analysis. The utterances in this category were diverse if not frequent. A closer examination of the “sub-frames” within this category would likely inform the design of future coding schemas, but for the purposes of the present study interest is limited to analyzing the CSP discourse as a means to provide context for an analysis of the discourse in search of concepts of curriculum, standards, and curricular tension between choice and standards policy frameworks in the CSP. With this limit in mind, the discussion of the other frame will be reduced to several of the major sub-frames within the frame and a few examples of the category’s diversity for good measure. Specifically, three sub-frames will be briefly reviewed: policy feature, constitutional, and teachers union. Consider some examples:

#105: Florida also caps the number of voucher participants at about 30,000, a modest number in a state with nearly three times the population of Indiana (Star Editorial, 2011b, p. A.12).

#106: And the availability of private school options-and transportation-in rural areas also complicates the voucher idea. "It’s just not that simple" [Actor] said (Kelly 2011b, p. 1A).

#107: He called for making it easier for families to obtain publicly funded vouchers to send their children to private schools, backing legislative proposals to eliminate the current requirement that students first spend a year at a public school before obtaining a voucher (Schneider, 2013a, p. A.1).

The policy feature frame focused on specific administrative issues or policy features within the CSP that could not be assigned to one of the major frame groups. These frames generally assumed a neutral position, with occasional positions in support of the policy or at least policy feature. The policy feature frame accounted for 1.7% of frame production.
across the full discourse. Some of the administrative issues and policy features covered include program participation caps, student “count days” for determining how much of the full-year voucher choice schools receive when students leave during the school year, challenges involving providing transportation to students receiving choice scholarships, administrative control of the CSP at the state level, the program requirement that students must have spent one year in a public school before becoming eligible, and the expansion of the program to several groups including children of veterans and foster parents. Another sub-frame within the other category was the constitutional frame. Some examples:

**#108:** During the lengthy public debate in the 2011 legislative session, the opponents made it clear they would challenge the new law. We are confident the courts will agree that this new law is both constitutional and in the best interests of Hoosier children (Kelly, 2011j, p. 1A).

**#109:** It's the end of the constitutional debate. Anyone who says it is not legal in the state of Indiana no longer has a leg to stand on (Elliott & Evans, 2013, p. A.1).

The constitutional frame accounted for 1.3% of total frame production, but was actually much more present. Frames that referenced the constitution or constitutionality but also made it clear why vouchers were or were not constitutional—for example because of the clause prohibiting public funds supporting religious institutions—were coded according to the why, in this case the religion and economic frames would have been applied. The utterances that were captured in the other code frame vouchers as the CSP as constitutional (or not), but did not clarify why. Adding in all references to the constitution or constitutionality would result in a little more than double the utterances assigned the frame, perhaps not an insignificant difference. The constitutional frame was relatively
balanced between utterances assuming supportive and critical positions on the CSP.

Another frame coded as other that was understated was the teacher union frame.

#110: The unions’ willingness to put the educational futures of all these children at risk demonstrates their commitment to kill competition and thereby preserve their power at the expense of Hoosier families (Erickson, 2011, p. 7A).

#111: The priority must be on doing what’s best for students, not what’s best for teacher unions or school districts. The state has set that priority properly with its voucher program (Star Editorial, 2011e, p. A.12).

Under this study’s coding protocol utterances employing the teacher union sub-frame within the other frame category accounted for 0.9% of frame production across the full discourse. This is understated because it only includes frames where vouchers were framed in direct relation to teacher unions. In these utterances teacher unions were the problem, a challenge that had to be overcome through the treatment or recommendation of vouchers. If the term “teacher union” had been captured every time it was referenced this frame would be considerably more common. This presence of “teacher unions” in the discourse is somewhat captured in the actor representation analysis and adding a layer of frame analysis that coded references to actors (teacher unions, democrats, the governor) in addition to identifying these frames under actors would likely not have improved the overall analysis, but might have more accurately reflected both the explicit and implicit framing of teacher unions across the full discourse. Still, the nearly 1% of frame production was dedicated to positioning teacher unions as a problem may be interesting enough. These last three other frame examples offer a glimpse of the diversity of frames in the discourse, even though actors in the discourse rarely used any of them:

#112: Can parents be trusted to make wise choices on behalf of their children’s education? That’s the real question at the heart of the ongoing
debate about Indiana’s new school voucher program (Star Editorial, 2011d, p. A.10).

#113: The logical conclusion of opponents’ argument against vouchers is to require all families to enroll their children in public schools. That’s been tried in totalitarian societies, but a monopoly on children doesn’t necessarily yield excellence in education (Pulliam, 2011, p. A.10).

#114: His bill would also serve the interests of Stand for Children, a political action committee that supports, among other things, private school vouchers and charter schools—and which gave $500 to [Actor’s] campaign last year. More vouchers could also help the interests of K-12 South Point II, connected with a for-profit company that, among other products, offers private online instruction—and which gave [Actor] $1,000 last year (a, 2013i, p. 6A).

This sampling of frames found in the other category offers a glimpse of frames that could have been, but for whatever reason were not, more present in the discourse over the CSP. The final frame, identified under the previously discussed second coding protocol, was the curriculum/standards frame. This broad frame accounted for the remaining 15.5% of frame production and will be discussed in chapter six. Before moving to chapter six to review findings from the study’s primary research interest the final section of chapter five briefly reviews the combined analyses of the last two chapters—the actor representation and frame distribution analyses. In other words, which actors used which frames?

**Actor Frames**

Having first identified the actors that participated in the public discourse over the consideration, adoption, and implementation of Indiana’s CSP and then analyzing the frames that were used in the discourse to define vouchers and the CSP, the next logical step might be to ask which frames the different actors used. It might be possible to predict (or guess) which frames actor groups used based on the discussion of actor group positions on vouchers and the CSP in chapter four and the ways frames were used to position vouchers.
and the CSP in chapter five. Fortunately such exercises can be supplemented by evidence. 

Appendix G: Actor Frame Usage provides the distribution of frame usage across each actor group for the full discourse. Even excluding consideration of the curriculum/standards frame, which represents the study’s primary research interest and will be discussed in the next chapter, multiple patterns emerge. Let’s review the most significant observations.

Recall the trio of elite actors from section two—the state superintendent’s office, the governor’s office, and Republican state representatives. This group was central both in policy formation and the framing of the policy in public discourse. Which frames did they rely on in this effort? As the data shows, these actors relied heavily on just two frames, the choice = good/opportunity frame and the social justice frame. All three of these actor groups utilized the choice = good/opportunity frame over a quarter of the time they contributed to the discourse. These two frames accounted for over half of superintendent Bennett’s frame production and an impressive 66% of the frames used by the governor’s office. The (relatively) more diverse actor group of Republican state representatives was not quite as concentrated as the governor or superintendent’s offices, but a heavy reliance on the two frames was still clear. What was almost as interesting as the frames this group of policy makers used to define vouchers and the CSP were the frames they didn’t use.

As discussed above, the economic and religion frames were both used heavily in the discourse and were often used together to reflect the controversy in using public funding sources to fund religious institutions. Some believed this was illegal under the Indiana state constitution. Accordingly, nearly all of the actor groups utilized these two frames at least twenty percent of the time, and usually more often. A few exceptions to this rule were national figures, other actor types, and students—all of who contributed only minor frame
production to the discourse. The other exception to this rule, however, were the three actor
groups driving the policy: the state superintendent, the governor(s), and Republican state
representatives. The governor’s office never utilized the *religion* frame and the
superintendent’s office and Republican state representatives almost never used it.

Another frame these three policy-making actor groups avoided was the *harms public
education* frame. It was not used at all by the governor or superintendent’s office and only
used a single time by a Republican state representative. Unlike with the *religion* frame,
however, these actor groups were not alone in avoiding the *harms public education* frame.
The only two actor groups to consistently rely on this frame were Democratic state
representatives and public school teachers. These two actor groups, along with teacher
union representatives in the education interest group actor group, were the primary
opponents of the CSP. While the *harms public education* frame was used by other actor
groups it never gained significant traction outside of these core opponent groups.

There were other patterns in frame utilization across actors. As alluded to in section
two, legal actors (attorney/judges) were heavily concentrated in the *religion* and *economic*
frames, reflective of their input on the central legal issue in the discourse. There was a
heavier reliance on the *competition* frame by administrators than other actor groups. This
may be reflective of their describing the environment they operated in as well as
sometimes advocating for a particular school or school system within that competitive
environment. All actor groups tended to avoid the *research/efficacy* frame. Other than these
patterns, however, what might be most intriguing about the frame utilization analysis
across actor groups was the distribution. *Most* actor groups employed multiple frames, an
observation supported by the relatively even distribution of a reliance on *other* frames
across actor groups. Despite this distribution across frames, only one frame was used by someone in every actor group in the discourse—the curriculum/standards frame. This frame is discussed next in chapter six, but first let’s summarize findings thus far.

Many actors participated, but some dominated the public discourse over the consideration, adoption, and implementation of the CSP in Indiana. Teachers, representatives of institutes of higher education, and students were largely silent in the discourse. National figures were also largely excluded in the Hoosier dominated discourse. Education administrators from both public and private schools and school systems contributed to the discourse and parent/citizens accounted for a significant percentage of frame production, but mostly through reader letters. The Republican state superintendent, two successive Republican governors, Republican state representatives, and a consortium of education interest groups dominated the discourse in support of vouchers and the CSP. Democratic state representatives and representatives from teacher unions also produced significant discourse and opposed the CSP. On the whole, the editorial board at the Star favored the CSP and the editorial board at the Gazette opposed or criticized it.

The study identified eleven major frames used in the discourse over the CSP in Indiana. Each of these frames accounted for 3% or more of the total frame production in the discourse. One of these frames, the other frame, included more than a dozen frames that did not fit within one of the other ten frame categories. These various other frames were individually utilized less than 2% of the time and though some are potentially intriguing, their infrequent use likely lessened their influence on the full discourse in this study. Many of the actor groups employed economic and religion frames to define vouchers and the CSP. Actors constructing frames critical of the CSP also used the economic frame together with
the *harm* public education frame while CSP advocates tended to rely on the *choice = good/ opportunity, social justice, competition, and school quality* frames. Frames relying on *research/efficacy* studies of vouchers were not common and when present, not always reliable. With the context of the full discourse over the CSP in Indiana reviewed we can move to a consideration of the study’s primary research interest, the potential presence of curricular tension in the discourse between the curricular diversity assumed within education choice policies and the curricular alignment potentially present in high stakes standards-based accountability policies. This will be discussed next in chapter six.
6. CSP DISCOURSE CURRICULAR TENSION ANALYSIS

*Any customer can have a car painted any colour that he wants so long as it is black.*
(Henry Ford, Industrialist)

Seeking Tension

This research began with a curious interest in a theoretical tension between the two most influential movements in U.S. education over at least the last quarter century—the education choice and standards movements. Chapter one reviewed the history of these two movements and considered the potential curricular tension between the foundational tendencies of the respective movements toward curricular diversity and curricular alignment. Chapter two reviewed why the Indiana CSP, unique among voucher programs in its use of policy mechanisms designed to exert curricular control, makes such an interesting case study to examine this curricular tension. The third chapter described the textual analysis methodologies used to examine the public discourse over the consideration, adoption, and implementation of the CSP through two state newspapers. Chapters four and five provided an overview of the actors who participated in that discourse and the discursive frames they used to define vouchers and the CSP. This larger understanding of the policy discourse provides the context required to consider how actors communicated concepts like curriculum and standards and if actors recognized the potential curricular tension the CSP could create in participating choice schools. Chapter six reviews how these understandings and recognitions of potential curricular tension were framed in the larger CSP discourse. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of chapter-relevant research method nuances before discussing curriculum and standards framing and considering instances where curricular tension was addressed in the discourse.
As discussed in chapter three, the study employed two coding protocols. The first protocol, which resulted in the findings presented in chapters four and five, coded actors participating in the discourse and the frames they used to discuss education vouchers and the CSP. The second protocol coded utterances in the discourse that communicated understandings of curriculum or standards or addressed the potential for curricular tension within the CSP policy. These two protocols were distinct but not mutually exclusive. In order to be included in the research sample an identified article from one of the newspapers had to contain at least one utterance framing vouchers or the CSP in line with the first coding protocol. Once included, however, any utterances in the article that communicated understandings of curriculum or standards or addressed the potential curricular tension inherent in the CSP policy were coded using the second protocol. Recall that the discourse over the consideration, adoption, and implementation of the CSP in Indiana was selected as the discussion forum for the research study because the nature of the policy should have initiated discourse addressing the potential curricular tension resulting from the integration of the curricular diversity stressed in voucher programs and the potential tendency toward curricular alignment found in high-stakes standards-based accountability frameworks. This coding approach resulted in the boundaries for capturing conceptions of curriculum and standards and discussions of curricular tension expanding beyond the framing of vouchers and the CSP. This expanded discourse field combined with the broad nature of curriculum and standards as discussed in chapter one resulted in a relevant inflation of the percentage of utterances in the larger discourse over the CSP that employed a curriculum/standards frame. As explained in chapter five, this methodological imperfection was tolerated because the scale of code usage related to vouchers and the CSP
in the discourse was unaffected and because the primary focus of the study was not to identify the exact distribution of frames used to define vouchers or the CSP, but to identify conceptions of curriculum and standards and recognition of curricular tension within an understanding of the larger discourse over vouchers. The practical result of this coding overlap was that some utterances communicating understandings of curriculum, standards, or curricular tension were found within frames of vouchers or the CSP and some were simply found in articles containing frames of vouchers or the CSP. This overlap will be obvious in some of the examples provided, both in chapter six and in earlier chapters. Let’s now review the data set identified through the second coding protocol—utterances communicating understandings of curriculum, standards, or curricular tension within the larger public discourse over the consideration, adoption, and implementation of the CSP.

The second coding protocol identified 247 utterances that communicated understandings of curriculum, standards, or curricular tension within the larger discourse over the CSP. These utterances were then coded into three sub-categories: curriculum, standards, and tension. The first sub-category—curriculum—included utterances that communicated understandings of curriculum. As will be made clear in the discussion below, this category reflected the considerable elasticity of the term that was discussed in chapter one. The curricular sub-frame accounted for 47% of the identified utterances using the curriculum/standards frame. Utterances employing the standards sub-frame were also identified using liberal coding boundaries and accounted for 36% of total utterances utilizing the curriculum/standards frame. The third sub-category identified utterances that referenced curriculum and standards and/or recognized or dismissed the potential curricular tension that could result in choice schools participating in the program.
Utterances using this *tension* sub-frame were present, but noticeably less common, accounting for just 17% of total utterances utilizing the *curriculum/standards* frame. Let’s now review each of these sub-frames within the broader *curriculum/standards* frame in more detail, beginning with the most commonly used, the *curriculum* sub-frame.

**Curriculum Framing**

*Curriculum.* Chapter one proposed that how we understand “curriculum” influences how we understand education choice and/or education standards. As depicted in *Appendix A: Curriculum Meaning Spectrum,* “curriculum” is a highly elastic term that encompasses a spectrum of meanings from the content offered in a particular course to the overall learning environment in a school or setting where learning occurs. The degree to which standards-based accountability frameworks influence a school’s curriculum is affected by multiple factors—the meaning of curriculum certainly being one of them. Using the curriculum meaning spectrum in *Appendix A* as a guide, 117 utterances in the discourse over the CSP communicated some understanding of curriculum, exclusive of additional utterances coded in the *tension* sub-frame recognizing the program’s potential for curricular tension, to be discussed later this chapter. That equals roughly 7.4% of the total utterances in the study, not an insignificant percentage even taking into account the *curriculum/standards* category inflation discussed above. That curriculum should play an important role in a debate over education vouchers should not be surprising. After accounting for geography and (perhaps) cost, a school’s curriculum—broadly speaking—would generally be the primary distinguishing factor in an environment of “choice.” Let’s review the various manifestations of curriculum in the discourse over the
CSP in Indiana, exclusive of utterances expressing an understanding of curriculum within a frame recognizing the potential curricular tension inherent in the CSP policy structure.

The most narrow understanding of curriculum—the contents of a specific course—was only identified once in the discourse. This might not be too surprising. An examination of the specific content within a single course may entail a level of detail too discrete to inform the larger policy debate. In the single example, even though specific curriculum is noted (the Torah and other religious texts) in the utterance, it is clear that the actor is communicating an understanding of curriculum much broader than specific texts.

#115: What makes the school unique...is the depth to which it's able to immerse its students with a full-day program. Everything we do in this school is infused with a Jewish sense. For example...a world history class would include discussions on the role Jews have played throughout history—whether or not it's in the textbook. The school day is split, with 60 percent focused on general studies and 40 percent on a Judaic curriculum that includes learning about the Torah and other religious texts, Jewish holidays and the modern-day Hebrew language. This is a way for them to learn about who they are and where they come from. Students must be Jewish to attend the school (Hessel, 2012, p. A.1).

Example #115 provides a good example of the spectrum of curriculum meaning. A specific text and courses of study are identified as well as a representation of the larger learning environment and culture of a school where “everything...is infused with a Jewish sense.” This religious influence was also present in many of the utterances framing curriculum through the second layer of curriculum meaning—courses of study—about half of the utterances framing curriculum as a course of studies were related to religion. References to courses of study represented 15% of the utterances in the curriculum sub-frame of the curriculum/standards frame. Some religious and non-religious examples:
#116: The terrible downside to this is that the public schools lose money which supports the programs most parents and students value: the extracurriculars of band, chorus, theater, newspaper, yearbook, educational field trips, athletic and academic teams and their coaches. Art, PE and elective music classes are usually the first of the curricular cuts. Money that reduces class size, allows creation of new courses, pays for educational development, and provides support and remediation for students is reduced, if not lost, as costs for everything increase regardless (Walsh, 2012a, Web Letter).

#117: [IPS Superintendent] White is betting heavily on his own school-choice strategy. He plans an expansion of school options such as magnet schools with special curriculum in medicine, law and science (Elliott, 2011h, p. A.1).

#118: [Actor] said the biggest change from [the school operating as a charter school] to [operating as a private school accepting vouchers] is the faith-based learning, which will include Bible classes for older students and weekly chapel for younger students (Crothers, 2013, p. 1C).

#119: [Parent] said she loved the curriculum, the technology, the small classes and the instruction in Christian principles so much that she decided to enroll [her daughter] (Elliott, 2011d, p. A1).

Examples #116-118 all reference specific course offerings. Example #116 lists multiple courses of study that the actor claims will be adversely affected by the reallocation of funds from public to private schools. Example #117 references curriculum within a competitive frame, positioning the specialized courses of study at public magnet schools as a distinguishing feature in the education choice marketplace. Example #118 identifies specific courses (Bible studies) and example #119, although not listing any specific course offerings, does at least identify curriculum as a distinct variable serving to distinguish one school from another. There were also a handful of utterances that made loose references to “academics,” but as a general rule, understandings of curriculum as discrete content within a course or even as wider course offerings were rarely used by actors in the CSP discourse.
There were, however, utterances that identified non-academic “curriculum.” Example #119 offers a good illustration. The actor producing this utterance was attracted to “instruction in Christian principles.” References to non-academic curriculum—ethics, morality, philosophical or religious principles—accounted for a slightly higher percentage of sub-frame production than references to course content and academic courses of study. These sub-frames were indicative of the blurred boundaries of the curriculum meaning spectrum. Not quite content or courses, the curricula expressed in the below utterances were clearly representative of learning “objectives,” but also extended into more general conceptions of pedagogy and the overall learning environment.

#120: Ethics, morality and religious education are only a part of the academic excellence that parochial schools provide (Neff, 2011, p. A.23).

#121: [Actor]…said she and her husband made the choice to move their children from public to private school because they like the values and respect taught there (Martin, 2011b, p. 1C).

#122: Our mission is to see that every school in our diocese will model the teachings of the church, reinforce parental Catholic values, and contribute to the spiritual and academic growth of all Catholic children…Our teachers and administrators…continue to provide school environments with a strong and present Catholic identity in order for children to practice and share the truth and beauty of their faith (Warner, 2011b, p. 6A).

These expressions of curriculum including instruction in and/or a culture of ethics or values were used almost exclusively to identify differentiating features of participating choice or public schools. This is noteworthy. These are areas of learning that are not addressed in state standards-based accountability frameworks and, as noted in footnote

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49 These “subjects” are “non-academic” only in the contemporary sense of the phrase. Such areas of study were once considered the core of academic study and are still considered academic areas of study today in higher education. They have, however, been largely relegated to occasional character development programs in many public schools in favor of more empirically oriented “subjects” of study. Notice that the actor in example #120 still includes these “subjects” within the umbrella definition of “academic.”
are rarely core curricular foci of public schools. The reasons for this are historically complex. What is important here is to note that such conceptions of curriculum remain important to some actors participating in the CSP discourse and, no doubt, in society today.

There was a counter-frame to identification of (perceived) increased focus on ethics and values in private schools. Although rarely used, 7-8 utterances expressed the (perceived) values and principles learned through public school instruction, what might be called the democratic citizenship form of the curriculum sub-frame. Some examples:

**#123:** A high-quality public education is key to our continuation as a free society. Schools are not educational factories. They are the real melting pot of our society where children of different economic, ethnic and social backgrounds learn to live, play and work together. Public schools develop citizens for the future of our free and democratic society, and help lead them to good decisions for self and community (Boyd, 2012, p. 9A).

**#124:** Public education's most overlooked virtue is the way it teaches the simplest but most important lesson of democracy: We're all in it together. Public schools bring our kids together and let them figure out how to get along with peers of every imaginable background. Our kids generally pull off this remarkable task well. Isn't it just possible that American democracy has done pretty well, despite all the things that increasingly pull us apart, because of our public schools (Scheuerman, 2011, p. A.11)?

Examples #120-124 all express curricular understandings of specific values that were or were not present in different schools. These values could be and often were vague, but they did at least identify some curricular emphasis around which potential discussion could follow. Other utterances in the curriculum sub-frame identified other “non-values oriented” environmental characteristics of schools. Some were specific, but just as often actors would simply refer to a school’s “environment” or a student’s “experience.” Some of the school characteristics identified could also be considered pedagogical. This loose but specific environmental sub-frame accounted for roughly 25% of the utterances using the curriculum sub-frame. Consider this diverse set of examples of educational environments:
#125: It's a different environment, smaller classes...and we're going to have more one-on-one time with the teacher. I'm going to have to get used to the uniforms, though (Haynie, 2011b, p. 1A.)

#126: Voucher families say that their children are benefiting from smaller class sizes, more personalized attention, a family-like environment, greater opportunities for tutoring and more (Brown, 2013b, p. 7A).

#127: I have heard from countless parents who continue to utilize the School Choice Program for a variety of reasons. These include bullying, specialized learning needs, school safety, the desire to introduce their child to a new environment and many others (Behning, 2013, 7A).

#128: When it was all said and done, [actors] chose an IPS Center for Inquiry magnet school. CFI focuses on using experimentation to solve problems—a method most often associated with science. "We liked what they stood for...when we looked at it, I said, 'Yes! I want my child to learn this way to be a critical thinker" (Elliott, 2011h, p. A.1).

#129: Different environments work for different students...and the voucher program provides more possibilities to find a program that more specifically meets your child's needs, whatever those are (Hessel, 2012, p. A.1).

These references to curricular environmental characteristics, especially if combined with the references to ethical, moral, or religious instruction or environments, represented a significant percentage of utterances framing curriculum. Only one sub-frame in the curriculum/standards frame was more common—the individual needs sub-frame. Indeed, the individual needs form of the sub-frame may not even belong in the curriculum sub-frame. It was included because its use implies that something about a school—some unidentified distinguishing curricular characteristic or focus—is advantageous to the needs of an individual student. Example #129 provides an introduction to this expression of curriculum. What is the distinguishing feature of a curriculum that “meets your child’s needs, whatever those are?” This individual needs form of the sub-frame expressed curriculum solely as something addressing an individual’s unique needs. It represented
over one-third of the utterances in the curriculum sub-frame, or more if we include utterances like example #129 that also make reference to some other form of curriculum, in this case “environments” and “programs.” The examples below should suffice to illustrate the individual needs form of the curriculum sub-frame.

#130: It seems clear to me that the goal of public funding for education, including the voucher program, is the same as it ever has been. It’s all about meeting the needs of kids and their families (Muehl, 2013, p. 7A).

#131: We live in a great district, but we needed more options because it didn’t quite meet her needs (Elliott, 2011c, p. B.3).

#132: We want to support kids wherever their needs are most efficiently met. Some public school options are great and some private schools are great, too. The vouchers let parents decide which educational option is right for their children (Hudson, 2011, p. A.13).

#133: That’s 20,000 kids whose families decided to send them to schools that better met their needs, that better fit their personalities, that better addressed their unique strengths and weaknesses, and that they believe give them a better chance at receiving the education they deserve (Tully, 2013, p. A.25).

The frequency of the individual needs form of the curriculum sub-frame—it was utilized exclusive of other references to some level of curriculum in 40 of the 117 utterances in the category—may be important. Unlike the other expressions of curriculum in the discourse, whether course offerings or various ethical codes or values, the individual needs conception of curriculum is unique in that it focuses on individuals. The other expressions of curriculum begin with some form of identified content, even something as vague as “Catholic values.” The curricular understanding expressed in the individual needs conception of curriculum was in many ways the equivalent of the choice = good/opportunity frame used to define vouchers and the CSP. Both oriented the understanding of curriculum and policy from the social to the individual level. Though not necessarily
explicit, this conception of curriculum is reflective of the foundational assumption in curricular diversity historically present in the education choice movement and U.S. voucher policies. This individualized assessment of curricular needs could result in diverse conclusions regarding the perceived “effectiveness” of curricula, for example:

**#134:** The beneficiaries who count, [school choice advocates] assert, are the children of modest incomes who have been unfairly denied access to better schools. Better, of course, may mean objectively better, subjectively better suited or merely perceived to be better. My dad thought parochial schools were better because the nuns had no kids of their own to compete for attention (Carpenter, 2012, p. B.9).

Temporarily excusing the assumption of objectively determining that one school is “better” than another, the point is nicely made. In a pure system of choice quality is determined at the individual level using a wide and diverse set of metrics. At its purest form, this environment is often referred to as “market accountability,” where the sum of individual choices made by parents/students in an education marketplace determines the success (or failure) of competing schools. Could the integration of these subjective perceptions of school quality with the standardized determinants of school quality in Indiana’s standards-based accountability framework lead to curricular tension? Some actors recognized this tension. Before discussing this small group of actors let’s summarize the *curriculum* sub-frame and review how conceptions of standards were framed.

Discussion of formal course curriculum was essentially absent from the discourse over the CSP in Indiana. There were occasional references to courses of study at various schools, and there were also references to specific pedagogical and environmental characteristics of schools like smaller class sizes, uniforms, and increased individualized instruction. These expressions of curriculum noted, the dominant trend within the discourse was to frame curriculum through values-oriented learning environments or
learning environments that were “best” for an individual student. Utterances framing curriculum were most often produced by two groups, Parent/Citizens (34%) and Education Interest Groups (25%). These two actor groups produced 59% of the curriculum frames across sub-forums. Republican elected officials (9%) and private-school administrators (8%) also produced some curriculum framing, but no other actor groups accounted for more than 5.6% of utterances framing curriculum. In short, Parent/Citizens and Education Interest Groups drove the production of curricular framing in the discourse over the CSP in Indiana. The curricular understanding most often expressed in the discourse was one of differentiated learning environments—often distinguished through non-academic values and whose quality, appropriateness, or “fit” were determined at the individual level based on a student’s self-perceived needs.

**Standards Framing**

**Standards.** Chapter one discussed some of the diverse meanings associated with education standards. As with historical U.S. education discourse, standards were employed in multiple contexts in the discourse over the CSP in Indiana. Also as with the historical discourse standardized assessments proved to be the dominant frame. With 88 utterances expressing some form of education standards, assessment, or accountability, frames of education standards accounted for 5.5% of the full CSP discourse. Factoring in the category inflation due to the *curriculum/standards* coding protocol would result in the *standards* sub-frame being used about as often as the least-used voucher frames. While the concept of standards was expressed in multiple forms, standardized assessments as an indicator of quality in one form or another proved the most common. Utterances were included in the
standards sub-frame category if they attempted to frame standards, tests or assessments, or accountability. Tests or assessments and accountability were included within the concept of standards because, as discussed in chapters one and two, in policy and practice standards have become manifest through standardized assessments that are then used to enforce accountability policies. Let’s begin with a sampling of different forms of standards:

Example #135: Republican lawmakers on the panel made significant changes to the legislation Tuesday-including lowering the income thresholds and holding private schools to some accountability standards if they accept state dollars (Kelly, 2011d, p. 1A).

Example #136: [Actor] said her school gained 58 voucher students and only four or five left during the school year. She said a few decided it wasn’t the right choice for them and the school asked a few students to leave. "We want kids to feel welcome, but we also won’t lower our standards, so that’s a fine line,” she said (Kelly, 2012a, p. 1A).

Example #137: [Actor] is a strong supporter of the "common core," standards that 46 states have agreed to share. Indiana has already approved the standards and is moving toward implementing them. A new test that about half the common core states will take is coming by 2014. "They’re the right standards for Indiana children," he said, "for our children to become ready for college and careers." (Elliott, 2012a, p. B.1).

Example #138: Many Christian schools offer superior education and standards that result in fewer pregnancies and less substance abuse (Cruz, 2011, p. A.17).

Example #135 was typical of approximately a dozen utterances addressing some vague form of standards and/or accountability to convey some action taking place intended to improve educational achievement. This frame was sometimes combined with direct references to assessments or ISTEP+, Indiana’s suite of state accountability assessments. Example #136 used standards to define approaches taken by schools related to student admissions and retention. Whereas the common schools frame discussed in chapter five tended to position such practices as non-inclusive, most of the 7-8 instances where they were expressed in the context of standards positioned them as educationally sound and
perhaps necessary. There were several references to the aforementioned Common Core State Standards, including a forceful endorsement of the CCSS by the Gazette editorial board in December 2013. Alas, more frames of the CCSS may have enriched the study’s data set, but they were rarely cited in the articles discussing the CSP. The overlap of these two controversial issues within the state will be considered further in chapter seven. Example #138, if not empirically certain, at least provides another context within which education standards might be understood. These forms of the standards frame were present, but most framing clustered around a few loose frame forms. Although the utterances clustering around these forms did not explicitly address potential curricular tension, many of them were related to concepts that should lead to recognition of potential curricular tension. Two in particular included standards framing through teacher and school evaluations.

One discourse strand within the larger CSP discourse addressed teacher evaluation policy. Recall from chapter two that the CSP requires participating choice schools to adopt state-sanctioned teacher evaluation models, all of which require some level of reliance on student scores on state assessments to determine teacher “effectiveness.” Consider the following examples of what might be termed a teacher quality standards sub-frame.

#139: Public education may be improved by...maintaining high standards for those entering and continuing in the teaching profession by focusing on professional preparation and development (Boyd, 2012, p. 9A).

#140: [Actor] said a "significant portion" of a teachers' annual evaluation-and salary-should be based on student growth and performance as measured by test scores (Kelly, 2011a, p. 1A).

#141: Under SB1, the teacher evaluation measure, a veteran teacher or principal would rate teachers every year as either "effective," "highly effective," "improvement necessary" or "ineffective," based on state tests and other indicators. Only teachers in the top two categories could earn raises, and those who rate in the lowest two categories would have to follow a 90-day remediation plan. "Senate Bill 1 is designed to have these annual
evaluations be a little more rigorous than they are now," said [Actor] (Schneider, 2011b, p. B.1).

There were approximately ten utterances addressing teacher quality standards. Example #139 was the exception to the rule among these forms of the standards sub-frame in that it did not frame teacher evaluation through “student growth and performance,” “student achievement and growth,” making “test score gains,” or a teacher’s “ability to help kids learn.” The other occurrences of this form of the standards sub-frame did frame teacher evaluation through standardized assessments. Examples #140 and #141 provide a sense of this form of the frame. There were also several utterances where opponents of such policies recommended that, while tests could be used as part of the evaluation, they should comprise a smaller percentage of the evaluation than some desired. Although this sub-discourse was a minor strand of the larger discourse, its dominant frame of teacher quality standards was one determined by student scores on state standardized assessments.

As with teacher quality standards, approximately ten utterances addressed the specific state indicator of school quality standards. This sub-frame referenced the A-F labels discussed in chapter two that assigned letter grades to schools based primarily on student scores on state standardized assessments. Some examples of this sub-frame:

**#142:** Private schools that accept the vouchers would have to give their students the ISTEP+ exam and be placed on accountability categories like public schools. And only private schools in the top three categories would be eligible to accept the vouchers (Kelly, 2011e, p. 1C).

**#143:** The law itself contains very specific transparency and accountability measures. All participating schools will take the ISTEP+ test and be graded A-F just like traditional public schools and public charter schools. These provisions will certainly provide a strong look at the educational opportunities these schools offer (Gazette Editorial, 2011e, p. 6A).
Taken together with the teacher quality standards sub-frame, the school quality standards sub-frame expressed an understanding of education standards through standardized assessments and correlated “grades” ostensibly representative of a school’s overall quality or “opportunities these schools offer.” This understanding was likely reinforced through the other two most common forms of the standards sub-frame, the standardized assessment critique form and the quality indicator form. Let’s review some examples of the standardized assessment critique form of the standards sub-frame:

**#144:** She dismissed teacher merit pay as ineffective and said standardized tests were designed to evaluate students—not teachers. Moreover, she said, standardized tests aren’t the best way to measure whether students are getting a great education. "I’m not opposed to tests," she said. "I'm opposed to the usage of tests" (Haynie, 2012a, p. 1A).

**#145:** Testing, through the state’s ISTEP and end-of-course exams in English and math, are key to Bennett’s accountability system. “That’s a problem,” Ritz said. "I’m entering the race for the most primary, basic reason of having quality instruction in the classroom…high-stakes testing is overwhelming our system to be able to do quality, in-depth instruction (Elliott, 2012a, p. B.1).

**#146:** First, schools are labeled as failing along narrow guidelines that fail themselves to assess the all-around quality of the education they are delivering. Anyone who evaluates individual schools needs to focus on more than pen and paper test scores in two subjects (Berry, 2011, p. A.15).

**#147:** We need real reform, which is not about teaching to the test but which recognizes research-supported methods that are truly child-centered. The bottom line of a business is profit. The bottom line of schools is children. Creativity and passion, empathy and problem-solving are not standardized (Fuentes-Rohwer, 2012, p. A.9).

Examples #144-147 are representative of the approximately dozen utterances framing the use of student scores on state standardized assessments to determine teacher, school, or instructional quality as problematic. Much like the strain of thought in education discourse that has viewed standardized assessments skeptically or critically, the use of
standardized assessments as education quality standards did not go unchallenged in the CSP discourse. Also like the critical voice in the larger education discourse dissenting frames of standardized assessment as an indicator of quality were the clear minority voice in the CSP discourse. Far more common were frames that did offer standardized assessment as an assumed quality indicator. Even excluding the aforementioned examples of teacher quality standards and school quality standards, both of which included assumptions of standardized assessment scores as reliable quality indicators for a variety of purposes, over twenty-five utterances employing the standards sub-frame used standardized assessments as an assumed indicator of education quality. Combining these with the teacher and school quality standards forms results in over 75% of the standards sub-frame production expressing standardized assessments as a reliable indicator of school quality. Some variations of the quality indicator form of the standards sub-frame:

#148: Indiana public schools needed some good news and they got it-ISTEP+ scores on the rise for the third consecutive year since the state switched to spring testing. Three years of increases can't be dismissed as a fluke, particularly when Indiana's non-public schools saw more than a full percentage-point decrease this year (Gazette Editorial, 2012b, p. 6A).

#149: Private schools that accepted voucher students saw their ISTEP passing rates dip this year at the same time public school scores rose slightly, a Journal Gazette analysis shows. (Kelly, 2012b, p. 1A).

#150: Some of the [choice] schools did see slight drops in their scores and we fully expected that. When a school takes on a large number of new students that's certainly going to impact its scores. [Actor] said other choice programs nationwide have shown an initial negative impact before growing again (Kelly, 2012b, p. 1A).

#151: The state's new Learning Connection website allows parents to see how individual schools perform under the growth model. Results from the 2011 ISTEP+ scores aren't yet charted for the growth model, but the goal is for schools to show high achievement and high growth. (Gazette Editorial, 2011d, p. 6A).
Examples #148-151 all framed standardized assessments as an assumed education quality indicator…or standard. Example #148 provides a nice encapsulation of one simplified understanding of education standards via standardized assessments where scores up is good and scores down is bad. This foundational assumption of test scores reflecting education productivity is implied in examples #149-150 where actors discuss test score performance between public and private schools. The actor in example #150 was faced with the suggestion that increasing test scores in public schools and decreasing scores in private schools (participating in the CSP) were reflective of educational quality trends in the two “sectors” of education providers. Rather than question the soundness of the metric the actor sought to explain the short-term anomaly while providing assurances that test scores would in fact go up among choice schools. Again, these frames of standardized assessments as quality indicators did not go unchallenged, but they were not proportionally challenged. Example #151 reflected a sub-strand in the discourse that framed a proposed new “growth model,” but it was never pointed out that growth models are essentially just another way to present standardized assessment data, subject to most of the same critiques of their cohort based predecessor models. This will be addressed in chapter seven, but let’s first summarize how understandings of standards were expressed in the CSP discourse before considering discourse that recognized (or dismissed) the potential for curricular tension in choice schools participating in the program.

As might be expected, understandings of standards in the discourse over the CSP in Indiana were relatively diverse. Much of the production of standards frames expressing standardized assessments as indicators of educational quality was attributed to the editorial board at the Gazette. A scattering of other actors also produced understandings of
standards. Standards regarding graduation rates, dropout rates, test scores, drug-use, and pregnancy were all cited, among others. This conceptual diversity noted, the dominant understanding of education standards was expressed directly or indirectly through the use of standardized assessments as an indicator of educational quality. This could be seen through the expressed use and assumed merit of policy mechanisms designed to label or “grade” schools and teachers based primarily on student scores on standardized assessments, through repeated acknowledgements and affirmations of the accountability achieved through requiring participating choice schools to administer state assessments to their students, and through a variety of frames that positioned scores on standardized assessments as assumed indicators of school quality. Critiques of standardized assessments as an indicator of education quality were present throughout the discourse, but accounted for less than 15% of standards frames produced. On the whole, the discourse over the CSP in Indiana seemed to mirror historical understandings of education standards. There were many understandings of education standards, but the dominant (though not unchallenged) frame was one of standardized assessments as an indicator of education quality.

Framing Curricular Tension

Tension. The historical, theoretical, and empirical research discussed thus far was intended to provide context for the primary objective of the research study—examining public discourse for evidence of conceptual framing of the theoretical curricular tension between the historically assumed curricular diversity present in the education choice movement and the potential for curricular narrowing present in high-stakes standards-based accountability frameworks. Discourse over Indiana's CSP was selected because the statewide voucher policy is unique among state voucher programs in its use of policy
mechanisms designed to exert curricular control. The analysis of conceptual framing of curriculum and standards discussed earlier in this chapter found that the curricular understanding most often expressed in the discourse was one of differentiated learning environments—often distinguished through non-academic values—whose quality, appropriateness, or “fit” were determined at the individual level based on (perceived) student needs. It also found the dominant understanding of standards to be expressed as student test scores on the state’s standardized assessments—tests designed to assess a specific curricular framework. Theoretically the policy should have resulted in some level of curricular tension. Empirically, the dominant frames of curriculum and standards as individually assessed differentiated learning environments and standardized assessments should have produced discourse recognizing this tension. And it did, but not very often.

Forty-two utterances were coded in the tension sub-frame of the curriculum/standards frame. This represented only 2.6% of frames in the discourse, a very small percentage when also taking into the account the category inflation explained earlier. Even more, the actual number of utterances that framed the potential for curricular tension in schools participating in the CSP was actually much smaller. Many of the 42 utterances coded in the tension category expressed vague concerns over government control or called for increased curricular regulation of participating choice schools. Others recognized potential curricular tension but dismissed it. Only a very few actors addressed the policy mechanisms explained in chapter two or the theoretical tension between curricular autonomy and state standards-based accountability policies discussed throughout this study. Overall, there were four common forms of the tension sub-frame.
Twenty-one percent of the utterances in the *tension* sub-frame expressed concern in an apparent lack of curricular tension in the CSP. These actors advocated for increased curricular control of participating choice schools. Consider the following example:

**#152: Problem 1:** Private schools are able to opt out of following state curriculum guidelines. This means that, while public schools must utilize the subject matter standards that the Indiana Department of Education has laid forth as essential for a child’s education, private schools are free to develop standards consistent with the mission of the school. These standards may or may not correspond with state standards (Holm, 2011, p. 9A).

Example #152 is reflective of utterances that recognized some level of curricular control or standards in the CSP, but framed the level of control as insufficient. The actors producing these utterances framed the lack of curricular control as a policy flaw. This framing of a *lack of control* over participating choice schools was actually far more present in the discourse than represented through the nine utterances that expressed this sentiment using *curriculum/standards* frames. This call for accountability was assumed in many of the utterances referencing generic accountability and was also essential to the *common schools* frame that positioned private schools as not being subject to the same open access standards that define traditional public schools. It was also implied in many uses of the *religion* frame, where policy critics were often opposed to the public funding of religious education. Those frames didn’t really address curriculum or standards, however. This may reflect the general absence of discussion around curricular control in the CSP discourse. If so, this absence may be at least partially explained by the addition of the policy mechanisms discussed in chapter two to the CSP. Example #152 was from early January 2011, apparently before drafts of the CSP policy included these policy mechanisms. Within weeks they had been added. The inclusion of these policy mechanisms designed to induce
alignment to state curriculum standards appeared, for the most part, to prevent policy critiques founded in a perceived lack of curricular “accountability” in choice schools.

The inclusion of the policy mechanisms described in chapter two may have shielded the CSP from charges of insufficient curricular accountability. Many actors, however, either didn’t recognize the curricular control exerted through these mechanisms or dismissed the curricular control as insignificant. Such a view was clearly taken by the sponsors of the bill. Consider the following utterances from Republican state assembly speaker Brian Bosma and from the state superintendent’s office during the Bennett administration:

**#153:** Bosma said he is not interested in removing accountability for the private schools that accept the state money. The bill requires those private schools to give the ISTEP+ proficiency test to its students and for the schools to be ranked in the state’s accountability categories from A to F (Kelly, 2011c, p. 1C).

**#154:** The spokesman for the state Department of Education, said that what’s most important is not what niche a particular school serves, but that all schools in the voucher program offer a high-quality education. To that end, he said, all voucher schools must be held accountable, and the same requirements must apply to all schools regardless of their focus (Hessel, 2012, p. A1).

The view expressed in examples #153 and #154 is important—in no small part due to the actors who expressed it. Such understandings of the relationship between standardized assessments and curriculum recognize that different curricula exist and see the results of state standardized assessments as an indicator of educational quality—not as an indicator of achievement based on a specific curricular framework. In other words, the tests indicate educational quality independent of a school’s curricular alignment to the state standards. This was the view expressed by political commentator David Brooks in the introduction. It can also be detected in the below utterance written by a Star journalist:
#155: Schools that accept voucher students also would not be required to alter their curriculum, but they would have to agree to have all their students included in the state testing program and accountability system. That means their schools, just like public schools, would receive letter grades based on those scores (Elliott, 2011b, p. A.1).

This framing of state accountability assessments as neutral in regard to curricular frameworks relies on one of two assumptions. The first is a misunderstanding of the design and assumed logic behind state standards and assessments. The second is that the curricular control exerted through state standardized assessments and accompanying accountability mechanisms does not adversely affect the ability of schools to establish and teach diverse curricula. This second assumption may or may not acknowledge the potential curricular control within standardized assessment and accountability frameworks, but finds it insignificant either way. This view is particularly pertinent when expressed by private school administrators who do not view the CSP policy structure as infringing on their curricular autonomy. In Indiana this view was not uncommon, as evidenced by the substantial percentage of private schools that administered the state assessments to their students before the consideration, adoption, and implementation of the CSP. Consider:

#156: All Catholic schools in Indiana were already state-accredited and administering state exams, two major requirements for schools joining the voucher program (Hessel, 2012, p. A.1).

#157: Indiana is somewhat unusual in that most private schools, whether they accept vouchers or not, participate in the state testing program (Elliott, 2013d, p. A.1).

Indiana being “unusual” in regard to private schools participating in the state testing program is important for at least two reasons. First, it helps explain some of the lack of perceived curricular tension in the CSP discourse. Second, it reflects a belief among private school educators that participation in the state’s standards and accountability framework,
or at least the standards part of the framework, does not impede (or impede to an acceptable degree) a school’s ability to offer an autonomous and (perhaps) diverse curriculum. This suggests that state standards-based accountability frameworks do not adversely affect curricular diversity. Although theoretically challenging, the view was empirically common.

Together, forms of the *tension* sub-frame that sought increased curricular control or dismissed the significance of curricular control accounted for one-half of the utterances in the category. The rest of the utterances explicitly addressed potential curricular tension for choice schools participating in the CSP. Some of these utterances framed vague expressions of government or state control while others were far more specific in their expression of curricular tension. The former accounted for 21% of the utterances in the sub-frame. The below examples illustrate these vague *state control* forms of the *tension* sub-frame:

**#158:** I think there is a mixed reaction [among private schools]. Some folks are cautiously excited. A few others have philosophical problems with accepting state money (Kelly, 2011i, p. 1A).

**#159:** By their nature, [private schools] are independent and have concerns about regulation and taking state and federal dollars. Independence and autonomy are central to their mission (Elliott, 2011g, p. A.1).

**#160:** The government believes that all tax money is theirs, not yours, and all government vouchers come with strings attached. The freedom of all our faith-based schools to operate without the constant fear of lawsuits will be gone. Government will begin to dictate what we can and cannot do in our new government-assisted learning environment (Lehrman, 2011, p. A.13).

**#161:** Where power and money goes, control goes. The state will, by its nature, assert authority (Schneider, 2011d, p. B.3).

These forms of the *tension* sub-frame recognized some level of potential tension between state regulation and the historically autonomous learning environments—or
curriculum, broadly speaking—maintained by non-public schools. While these utterances did address potential curricular tension at some level, they did not possess a level of detail sufficient to address the policy mechanisms that might cause that tension. Indeed, it is not clear that many of the actors producing these vague references to tension from state control were familiar with the specific policy mechanisms or the potential irony of using standardized state assessments to evaluate an education environment predicated on autonomous and diverse curricula. Utterances that accomplished that were rare. Only 12 utterances from 8 articles addressed specific elements of the CSP that might lead to curricular tension in participating choice schools. Put another way, discussion of curricular tension resulting from CSP policy mechanisms designed to exert curricular control and unique among national voucher programs accounted for only .007% of discourse framing. Although proportionally miniscule, these utterances are worth closer examination. Let’s review these specific curricular tension frames in more detail by discourse sub-forum.

The discourse in the news story sub-forum produced 613 frames. Only three of them addressed specific potential for curricular tension in choice schools participating in the CSP. In the Gazette, only a single article out of 89 in the sub-forum covered this element of the CSP. Concern over potential curricular tension was explained in this article by a private school administrator whose school was not going to participate in the CSP:

**#162:** Accepting state vouchers would entail accepting state funding, and independent schools across the country are committed to not accepting public funds. Accepting students with public vouchers would entail considerable regulation by the state. Issues of regulation and reporting requirements would in turn direct our curriculum, our faculty selection, and our testing requirements in a way that we believe would be inconsistent with our schools’ missions (Kelly, 2011i, p. 1A).
The point made in example #162 was apparently of little interest to reporters covering the CSP for the Gazette. The overall effect of the article, which contained 5 of the 7 frames in the *Gazette tension* category, was to dismiss the potential for curricular tension in schools participating in the CSP. The author, journalist Niki Kelly, proclaimed, “schools that participate still generally remain free from state regulations. But they do have to be accredited, take part in ISTEP+ testing and be placed in accountability categories like public schools” (Kelly, 2011i, p. 1A). The question of *specific* curricular tension within the CSP was not addressed again in the *Gazette’s* coverage of the program through the news story forum. Coverage in the *Star’s* news story sub-forum was essentially identical. Utterances addressing specific curricular tension were produced only twice in the sub-forum, both times buried within stories by journalist Scott Elliot on wide ranging features of the CSP:

**#163:** For some schools, elements of the voucher law give them pause…The law requires participating schools to administer state tests to all of their students. It also requires the state to give each school an A to F letter grade at the end of each school year, as is required for public schools. Private schools accepting vouchers also must follow state curriculum requirements for core subjects and agree to state inspections (Elliott, 2011d, p. A.1)

**#164:** The International School in Indianapolis, for example, is still studying the program and has not decided whether it will participate. "We are committed to not doing anything that will detract from the excellence and the world-class rigor of the academic program we’ve established," said [actor]. The International School offers full language immersion, in which students take their studies in French, Spanish or Mandarin. School officials are not sure whether state curriculum guidelines and the requirement to administer state exams make sense for those programs (Elliott, 2011g, p. A.1).

Example #163 barely addressed potential curricular tension, but did present “state curriculum requirements” as problematic for participating choice schools. Example #164 actually provided an example of a curricular program that didn’t align with state standards and therefore might result in curricular tension with the standards-based accountability
elements of the policy. Unfortunately, the issues of curricular diversity this example provided were not pursued further by journalists at either paper. There was slightly more interest in potential curricular tension from actors in the editorial sub-forum.

The discourse in the editorial story sub-forum produced 639 frames. Seven of them addressed specific potential for curricular tension in choice schools participating in the CSP. This minor discourse strand was slightly more present in the editorial sub-forum than the other sub-forums, but even this is somewhat misleading as 4 of the 7 utterances were from a single article. If the omission of the issue from news stories might be explained by the surface level nature of policy journalism, it seems more likely that editorial actors would find interest in the integration of school choice and standards-based accountability. Actors in the Gazette’s editorial sub-forum addressed the issue only twice. Actually, the utterance in example #165 didn’t specifically address the CSP, but did express a clear understanding of curricular tension through standards “dictat[ing] what schools may teach.”

#165: Although…[P]resident [Obama] uses words such as "competition," "innovation" and "cutting edge," it’s not clear he is using the dictionary definitions of those words. What was clear from Obama’s remarks is that he intends to centralize education decisions even more. Under the Obama plan, the federal government would dictate what schools may teach or they’ll be denied their share of $14.5 billion in Title I money intended for poor and minority districts (Boychuk, 2010, p. 9A).

The actor in example #165 was not referring to Indiana standards, but the CCSS. This example will be addressed below when discussing the Star’s editorial sub-forum and example #167. The other example in the Gazette is remarkable for two reasons. First, for its precision in identifying potential curricular tension for schools participating in the CSP. Second, because following explicit recognition of this potential tension by the Gazette’s
editorial board the issue was not addressed again. The (very long) utterance, which in this rare case comprised the full article, is worthy of reading in its entirety:

**#166:** Indiana's new voucher law declares the state isn't going to interfere or dictate a private school 's educational program - before listing a number of requirements. The Indiana Department of Education "or any other state agency may not in any way regulate the educational program of a nonpublic eligible school that accepts a choice scholarship under this chapter, including the regulation of curriculum content," the law states, and "a nonpublic eligible school shall be given the freedom to provide for the educational needs of students without governmental control." Then the law lists these requirements: The school must allow students to use any of 15 documents in a report or work product, including the Constitution, Declaration of Independence, the national anthem, "writings, speeches, documents, and proclamations of the founding fathers and presidents of the United States"; Frederick Douglas' speech at Rochester, N.Y., on July 5, 1852; the appeal by David Walker; the Mayflower Compact; "Common Sense" by Thomas Paine; and "Chief Seattle's letter to the United States government in 1852 in response to the United States government's inquiry regarding the purchase of tribal lands." How is this giving schools freedom to teach "without government control?" The school must "provide a daily opportunity for students to voluntarily recite the Pledge of Allegiance in each classroom or on school grounds." Any school that receives vouchers must "(r)equire that each teacher employed by the eligible school present instruction with special emphasis on honesty, morality, courtesy, obedience to law, respect for parents and the home" and "the dignity and necessity of honest labor." "Provide good citizenship instruction that stresses the nature and importance of" - among other things - "(r)especting the rights of others to have their own views and religious beliefs." Private schools that accept vouchers must teach English, grammar, composition, second languages, math, social studies and citizenship, including "a study of the Holocaust and the role religious extremism played in the events of Sept. 11, 2001, in each high school." Other required subjects include sciences, fine arts, health education, physical fitness "and the effects of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and other substances on the human body." All Indiana schools accepting tax money, including private, charter and traditional public schools, may not "teach the violent overthrow of the government of the United States." Will this make the Civil War off limits? In addition, private schools accepting vouchers must be accredited, offer ISTEP+ and be subject to the category ratings of public schools - meaning, yes, some private schools may well be inclined to emphasize the ISTEP+ results. Schools that fall in the lowest two categories of performance will face a loss of the vouchers. Granted, many of the concepts and subjects the state is requiring of the private schools are worthy and should indeed be taught. But it is disingenuous for the law to proclaim private schools accepting vouchers have "the freedom to provide for the
educational needs of students without governmental control," then list how the government will control them (Gazette Editorial, 2011b, p. 14A).

The Gazette's editorial board could not have been more direct in identifying curricular tension, but the issue was not raised again. As with the news story sub-forum, the editorial sub-forums were remarkably similar in their approach to this curricular tension. Like in the Gazette sub-forum, the Star editorial sub-forum included two articles containing explicit frames of curricular tension—one addressing the issue in some detail and one addressing the issue through the lens of the CCSS. Let's review the latter first:

#167: It is bad enough that the Hoosier State is junking one of the nation’s finest sets of state-developed academic standards in favor of national ones that appear to be flawed and have not been field tested. Even worse, the Common Core-linked national assessments, which are being funded by the federal government and developed behind closed doors, will replace the ISTEP. Thus, after Indiana has spent millions to conform its teaching to the Common Core, it will be on the hook to use federally influenced tests by which both teachers and private schools accepting voucher students will be gauged. How can school choice survive in a climate of mandated sameness (Holland, 2012, p. A.11)?

Example #167 was contributed to the CSP discourse in Indiana by Robert Holland, a Senior Fellow for Education Policy at the Heartland Institute in Chicago. If you notice some relation to example #165 above it may not be coincidence—that utterance was contributed by Ben Boychuk, “managing editor of School Reform News, a monthly policy newspaper published by the Heartland Institute.” Clearly the actors from the Heartland Institute recognized that education standards can “dictate what schools teach” and make educators “conform [their] teaching.” It is not clear if the actors at the Heartland Institute were wary of the “mandated sameness” in state-based education standards or just the CCSS.

As with the editorial in the Gazette (#166), there was a single article in the Star editorial sub-forum that specifically addressed potential curricular tension for choice
schools participating in the CSP. Andrea Neal, an “adjunct scholar with the Indiana Policy Review Foundation,” wrote the April 2011 editorial. Although a single article, four distinct utterances were coded. This was largely due to Neal’s use of multiple frames in her article, whereas the Gazette editorial in example #166 was singularly focused on the ways in which the program controlled curriculum—thus it was coded as a single utterance, the only example in the news story and editorial sub-forums where an utterance accounted for the entire article. The four utterances in the Andrea Neal article are provided below:

**#168:** Opponents of vouchers worry that they’ll lead to excessive entanglement of church with state. Proponents should worry about excessive involvement of state in private and religious schools. Andrew J. Coulson, director of the Cato Institute Center for Educational Freedom, documented that problem during his recent look at voucher and tax credit programs in 15 states and the District of Columbia. His paper, "Do vouchers and tax credits increase private school regulation?" was the first empirical study of the topic. He reached an unequivocal answer. "Voucher programs are associated with large and highly statistically significant increases in the regulatory burden imposed on private schools (compared to schools not participating in choice programs). And this relationship is, more likely than not, causal. Tax credits do not appear to have a similar association" (Neal, 2011, p.A.8).

**#169:** Here’s where the law of unintended consequences kicks in. To accept voucher students, a private school would have to be accredited by the state or by an accreditation agency recognized by the state, administer the ISTEP test, comply with teacher evaluation and data collection requirements and meet certain school performance and improvement targets that apply to public schools (Neal, 2011, p.A.8).

**#170:** Requiring ISTEP is a case in point. As it is now, many private schools administer tests such as the ERB, NWEA or the Iowa Test of Basic Skills because they are more connected to their curriculum or provide more useful data. As Coulson points out, state-mandated testing "exerts a homogenizing pressure on what is taught" and this limits consumer choice. "Reporting poor results on an official test—even one that does not well reflect a school's mission—would put it at a competitive disadvantage. So an art-centric school that posts poor science scores is under pressure to increase the time and intensity of its science classes in order to avoid a black eye on official tests, which thereby takes away from its core mission." Here’s another example of how requiring ISTEP would reduce choice. "Though language learning occurs
most easily in younger children, a school that opted to focus on foreign languages and history in the early grades and then turn to mathematics in the later grades would be at a grave disadvantage on official mathematics tests in the early grades, creating pressure for it to abandon its pedagogical mission” (Neal, 2011, p. A.8).

#171: When private schools that accept vouchers face the same curriculum and testing mandates as public schools, it’s really not a free market (Neal, 2011, p. A.8).

Neal’s editorial expressed concern over “excessive involvement of state in private and religious schools.” As reflected in example #171, Neal was arguing from a free-market perspective. To make her point she cited a study by Andrew Coulson (2011) of the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank headquartered in Washington, DC. Coulson examined multiple regulatory mechanisms employed in voucher and tax credit policies in the U.S. Some of the categories assessed included “curriculum regulations,” “testing requirements,” and “staffing regulations.” Ultimately Coulson found that private schools participating in voucher programs were subjected to more regulatory requirements than private schools not participating in voucher programs or private schools participating in tax credit scholarship programs. Neal identified the policy mechanisms in the CSP that could lead to curricular tension in example #169 and then quoted the Coulson study to provide specific examples of how some curricular frameworks would be better positioned for evaluation with state assessments than others in example #170. Whether or not one aligns with Neal and Coulson’s free-market justification for reduced regulation the point made is quite clear—not all curricular frameworks are aligned to state tests. Alas, as with the Gazette editorial sub-forum, the conceptual recognition of potential curricular tension caused by the CSP policy was introduced and then subsequently ignored in the Star.
A lack of interest in the potential curricular tension for private schools participating in the CSP was apparently characteristic of the reader letter sub-forums in each paper as well. Only two utterances out of 334 in the reader letter sub-forum recognized this tension:

**#172:** I have no problem with allowing students to attend schools provided by other organizations, religious or otherwise. But I do wonder that schools can qualify as part of the "uniform system of common schools" even while requiring courses and activities that would not be acceptable at public schools. My son’s experience at a local parochial school long before vouchers included required chapel attendance, religion classes, and science classes emphasizing creationism and the evils of evolution. Have these somehow been inserted into state standards for education (Meier, 2013, p. 6A)?

**#173:** I can't help but respond to Andrea Neal’s April 13 column lamenting the strings that come attached with public funds when they’re accepted by private schools ("Private school vouchers come with string attached"). As an avid public school supporter, part of me believes that she is correct in her assertions, except that she conveniently exempted public schools from her analysis. The other part of me can’t help but notice the blatant double standard being asserted. On the one hand, standardized tests are good for public schools because they hold them accountable. However, these tests are bad for private schools because they destroy the individuality of each learning environment. I ask Neal: Are standardized tests good or bad measures of educational attainment? Whichever answer she gives should be consistent. There was an old saying about a goose and a gander that applies here (Maiers, 2011, p. A.13).

The actor in example #172 perceptively noted that the courses in his child's private school were not aligned with the state accountability assessments. Curricular tension was clearly expressed, but it was almost in passing as the actor seemed to use the point of curricular alignment with state assessments to support religion and common schools frames, not as a point worthy of consideration and discussion in its own right. The actor in example #173 was responding to the Andrea Neal article discussed above. In doing so, he raised a question that was left unanswered throughout the discourse...if curricular autonomy—expressed as “learning environments” in the utterance—is so valuable to
private schools why is it not considered valuable to public schools? This is an important question, but there was not enough focus on the tension between curriculum and standards in the public discourse over the CSP for it to be addressed. It will be considered in chapter seven. Before addressing this question and reflecting on the study and potential areas for future research let’s briefly summarize the analysis presented in chapter six.

Chapter six reviewed findings related to the study’s primary research interest, how conceptions of “curriculum” and “standards” were expressed within the larger discourse over the CSP and if and how actors in the discourse recognized and framed potential curricular tension between the curricular autonomy traditionally assumed in voucher programs and the curriculum alignment assumed of policy mechanisms unique to the CSP among U.S. voucher policies and designed to exert curricular control over participating schools. The analysis of conceptual framing of curriculum and standards found that the curricular understanding most often expressed in the discourse was one of differentiated learning environments⎯often distinguished through non-academic values⎯whose quality, appropriateness, or “fit” were determined at the individual level based on (perceived) student needs. It also found the dominant understanding of standards to be expressed as student test scores on the state’s standardized assessments⎯tests designed to assess a specific curricular framework. Theoretically, these dominant and contradictory understandings should have resulted in recognition of potential curricular tension in schools participating in the CSP. Instances of this recognition, while present, were rare. Frames of potential curricular tension caused by the CSP’s integration of choice and standards-based accountability policy frameworks accounted for only .007% of the discourse over the consideration, adoption, and implementation of the CSP. The issues of
potential curricular tension were clearly defined early in the discourse, but never commanded any level of attention. In short, the issue of potential curricular tension resulting from the integration of choice and standards-based accountability policy mechanisms founded on assumptions of curricular diversity and curricular alignment were effectively not part of the public discourse over the policy in Indiana, despite the inclusion of policy mechanisms unique among U.S. voucher plans. Chapter seven considers why.
7. TENSION: THE NULL DISCOURSE

_The way one tries to measure inequality is never neutral._
(Thomas Piketty, Economist)

Absence of Tension

The study sought conceptual framing of tension between curricular diversity and curricular standardization in the discourse over the consideration, adoption, and implementation of Indiana’s 2011 state voucher policy—the Choice Scholarship Program. Despite the theoretical tension inherent to the CSP’s unique policy design and empirical evidence suggesting that the dominant and theoretically oppositional understandings of curriculum and standards in the discourse should have resulted in recognition of curricular tension, conceptual framing of this tension was rare. It would seem appropriate to ask why.

One possible explanation is that, contrary to the assumptions in this research, the CSP was not conceived or perceived to result in curricular tension in participating choice schools. As discussed in previous chapters, this could be technically “true” when using a narrow definition of curriculum. Choice schools still select the discrete content offered in courses and the courses the CSP requires choice schools to offer may well have already been offered by many of the schools prior to joining the program. It could also be true that—for some number of schools—the adoption of the CSP’s standards-based accountability policy mechanisms that were defined in chapter two did not result in curriculum narrowing. If we accept that state assessments are designed to report “student achievement levels according to the Indiana Academic Standards” (IN DOE Website, 2014) then there are, theoretically, two ways in which a participating choice school would report test scores that would result in a high grade on the state’s A-F school ranking system.
without making changes to the school’s existing curriculum. The first would be if a school’s curriculum, broadly speaking, was already relatively “aligned” with the Indiana Academic Standards, or at least the state assessments developed (theoretically) from those standards. The second would be if a school’s curricular alignment to the Indiana Academic Standards was not a significant variable in the “performance levels” of the school’s students on the state assessments. Both of these possibilities deserve closer examination and will be considered in the chapter’s second section. For now it is sufficient to acknowledge that the curricular tension the study sought may simply have not been present in many schools.

Another explanation for the lack of curricular tension framing in the CSP discourse could be the forum. The benefits of analyzing public discourse through newspapers were discussed in chapter three, but every discourse forum has its limits. Newspapers are not known as forums where in-depth policy discourse occurs, nor am I the first scholar to bemoan the lack of depth in media coverage related to his specific area of research. There is likely some level of truth to this explanation, but it is not completely satisfying. For one, policy mechanisms were discussed throughout the discourse. Second, the policy mechanisms described in chapter two were unique to the Indiana CSP among U.S. voucher policies. Both papers regularly proclaimed the Indiana CSP policy as unique due to its size and eligibility requirements. It seems reasonable this line of inquiry could have also led to identifying the CSP’s standards-based accountability framework as unique. Third, as explained in chapter six, the potential for curricular tension in choice schools participating in the CSP was explicitly framed early in the discourse and one of the framing actors, the Gazette editorial board, was a major discourse producer and influencer. A blanket dismissal of the forum therefore appears hasty. It may prove more beneficial to consider the lack of
curricular tension framing by actor groups. Different actor groups no doubt did or didn’t use or adopt certain frames or others in the discourse for reasons, some of them likely different among groups. Framing of curricular tension would be no different. Let’s briefly consider why three important macro-groups of actors may not have addressed curricular tension in the CSP discourse: parents, policy advocate elites, and policy opponent elites.

**Parents.** Parents, meaning discourse actors who self-identified as parents of K-12 students or were identified as such in news stories, were one of if not the most active actor groups in the full CSP discourse. Even more, the actor group was highly diffuse—many actors in the group produced small amounts of discourse. Other actors groups produced less discourse than parents, but the discourse many of them produced was attributable to only a few individuals. This should have led to a diverse spectrum of understandings and frames from parents. It did, but framing of potential CSP related curricular tension was uncommon. Examples #172 and #173 (in chapter six) did touch on this tension, but curricular tension between the CSP’s standards-based accountability framework and curricular autonomy did not appear to concern parents. This may be because while parents regularly framed curriculum, they didn’t frame standards—at least not through standardized assessments. What was far more important to parents was how schools addressed the individual needs of their children. Parents simply didn’t refer to state or CSP standards-based accountability frameworks. There were occasional references to failing schools and even references to specific failing schools, but the designation of “failing school” appeared to be more of an assessment of public education in general or based on a parent’s personal assessment of a specific school’s inability to meet the needs of her child. Indeed, the only real connection to framing standards through standards-based accountability
mechanisms and parents was the minor controversy that erupted in the discourse 2012-2013 when it became clear that some number of voucher students had transferred and were transferring to choice schools that had been assigned lower A-F rankings than the public schools they had attended previously. This is important for at least two reasons. First, that parents could clearly differentiate learning environments between schools within the same standards-based accountability frameworks is a reminder that concerns over such policy mechanisms are a matter of degree—homogeneity is not absolute. Second, it raises questions about the degree of correlation between the state and parents’ conceptions of school quality. To summarize, parents almost completely avoided recognizing and framing the potential for curricular tension in schools participating in the CSP. This may have been partly due to parents’ high reliance on subjective assessments of a school’s “fit” to their child’s individual “needs” and low reliance on standardized assessments and their resultant school quality A-F grades.

**Policy Advocate Elites.** Policy advocate elites comprise the consortium of actor groups that produced much of the public discourse in support of vouchers and the CSP. This included the governor’s office; the state superintendent’s office; Republican elected representatives; and national figures (supporting the CSP). The last actor group was not significant in the discourse but followed similar framing patterns to the other groups considered policy advocate elites. Whereas parents may have not recognized or avoided framing curricular tension in the CSP discourse due to a focus on their own individual children or perhaps even due to a lack of expertise as to the design or intent of state assessments, policy advocate elites should not be impeded by either of these factors. Framing of potential curricular tension was avoided nonetheless. The CSP’s standards-
based accountability policy mechanisms were not in original drafts of the bill but added in mid-February. This did not generate any immediate discussion of curricular tension, despite the unique nature of the policy mechanisms among other U.S. policies. Perhaps unlike with some actor groups, how policy advocate elites understand the potential tension between education choice and standards/accountability policy frameworks is important. It is also rarely clear.

One reason it is so difficult to understand how policy advocate elites in the CSP discourse understood the potential for curricular tension in participating choice schools is because policy elites are, by nature, adverse to addressing complex policy features in public speech. Recall William Mathis’s claim from chapter one that by the end of the 1980s “standards making [had] shifted from the professional sphere to a business-influenced political domain” (2010, p. 8). One significant outcome of this shift may be that the most important actors in contemporary education policy discourse avoid any detailed discussion of education policy. Professional educators and education scholars have perhaps been as historically apt to ironic understandings of education theories as policy elites or other actor groups, but for all their faults they can—and often must—provide some level of explanation supporting the education policies they advocate for within their communities of discourse. While it is debatable how accessible these discourse communities are to the public they are no doubt more accessible than the private discussions policy elites engage in during the policy formation process. This leaves only the public forum, where discourse production by policy elites is often reduced to aspirational sound bites or inspirational
slogans like “ensuring all children succeed.” It would be rather informative to hold in-depth conversations with policy elites to probe their understandings of potential curricular tension between choice and standards-based accountability policies, but as this appears unlikely we are left with the clues provided in their many brief public utterances.

Policy advocate elites were eager adopters of the dominant curriculum frame in the CSP discourse—the environmental needs of individual students. Thus, as was common within the discourse, policy advocate elites were framing an education environment where students (families) selected a school within a “marketplace” of differentiated curricula based on which one was perceived to be most appropriate for a student’s individual needs.

Policy advocate elites also regularly used the school quality frame to describe public schools, both generically and in reference to the state’s A-F grading scale. These co-existing beliefs in identifying a quality education by both the subjective assessment of individual students (families) and by standardized state assessments would seem to imply that the latter do in fact represent a reliable way to assess the assessment of the former. Put another way—curricular diversity is encouraged so long as it results in achievement on the state assessments that are theoretically aligned to the state’s approved curriculum framework. This may have been Superintendent Bennett’s understanding of a policy framework like the CSP that integrates school choice and standards-based accountability mechanisms. Consider the following utterances produced by the Superintendent’s office:

**#174:** Parents should have the right to choose the opportunity that meets the needs of their children. (Kelly, 2011d, p. 1A).

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50 Avoiding theoretical tension in “success for all” requires creative definitions of either “success” or “all” and becomes a catch-22 within a system of high-stakes tests specifically designed to ensure all don’t succeed.


**#175:** To ensure all options are high quality, the agenda also demands accountability for all charter schools and for nonpublic schools that participate in the voucher program (Bennett, 2011, p. A.13).

**#176:** The spokesman for the state Department of Education said that what’s most important is not what niche a particular school serves, but that all schools in the voucher program offer a high-quality education. To that end, he said, all voucher schools must be held accountable, and the same requirements must apply to all schools regardless of their focus (Hessel, 2012, p. A.1).

The utterances in examples #174-175 were produced by Superintendent Bennett and reflect the dual reliance on subjective choice and standardized assessment to determine school quality. If there was any doubt about the relation between these two policy options they were confirmed by a spokesperson for the Superintendent in example #176. Education scholar Joel Spring (2000) has offered a succinct and apt description of such an environment, “in this context, choice [becomes] a method for creating competition among schools over the best methods for imparting [common] standards” (p. 28). This model where curricular diversity is an environmental variable whose value is determined by its (perceived) effect on standardized achievement will be revisited in the next section.

The subjugation of curricular diversity to an environmental variable in the service of standardized achievement is foundational to the CSP policy framework and, for that matter, most other U.S. choice options like charter and magnet schools. Such an understanding of curriculum and standards does not recognize curricular tension between education choice and standards-based accountability because it is assumed that selection of schools based on the perceived fit to a student’s individual needs will result in higher achievement on state standardized assessments. Alas, the potential tension in such an assumption is rarely addressed in public discourse and remains unconsidered by most, perhaps even the actors. In a rare breach with this policy paradigm Republican house education committee chair
Robert Behning expressed less certainty in the complementary nature of curricular/environmental diversity and standardized assessment. Unfortunately the research sample (2009-2013) only captured the beginning of a discourse strand that would eventually question the logic of using standardized assessment to determine education quality in an environment of encouraged curricular diversity. Consider the following examples:

**#177:** [Behning] isn’t interested in looking at academic results, instead focusing on the choice of parents to pick a school (Kelly, 2013d, p. 1C)

**#178:** Behning said voucher schools are generally performing well on state tests, and parents should be trusted to judge their quality (Elliott, 2013b, p. B.3).

Representative Behning appeared to clearly differentiate between two distinct methods of assessing school quality, state tests and parent judgment. Such views are promising in that they may have the potential to stimulate a deeper conversation about the potential curricular tension between the two methods of assessing school quality. Such views were likely influential in the design of other U.S. voucher programs, but most of those programs were designed in earlier times. It is also possible there were hidden motives for including the unique standards-based accountability mechanisms in the CSP. Perhaps policy architects felt the policy would be too open to critiques of an accountability “double standard” for public and private schools or that the inclusion of such mechanisms would increase the degree to which private schools could be considered within the “common schools” concept. The recent voucher program in North Carolina was halted by a state court for several reasons, including the following policy flaw as explained in the judicial decision:

Private schools receiving Opportunity Scholarships are not subject to any requirements or standards regarding the curriculum that they teach, are given no requirement for student achievement, are not obligated to demonstrate any growth in student performance, and are not even obligated to provide a minimum amount of instructional time. The Opportunity
Scholarships would provide taxpayer funds to private schools without regard to whether these schools satisfy substantive educational standards. Appropriating taxpayer funds to unaccountable schools does not accomplish a public purpose, in violation of North Carolina Constitution Article 5, Sections 2(1) and 2(7) (Hart v. State of North Carolina, 2014).

The judge in North Carolina apparently understood “educational standards” to mean state standardized assessments and student “growth.” Other methods for assessing educational quality did “not accomplish a public purpose.” The North Carolina Opportunity Scholarship, enacted in 2013, did not require participating private schools to administer state assessments or utilize the relatively new concept of “student growth,” the increasingly preferred method of presenting standardized assessment data. Might the policy in Indiana have realized a similar fate if standards-based accountability mechanisms were not included? With so many private schools already using the state assessments perhaps the addition of the accountability mechanisms in the CSP might have been viewed as a way of avoiding the complications such judicial understandings of education standards could entail without incurring much pushback from at least a critical mass of private schools. In summary, despite regular framing of curriculum through differentiated learning environments whose quality was determined by the subjective assessments of parents, CSP policy advocate elites either didn’t recognize or didn’t address the potential for curricular tension. Unfortunately the nature of this group’s discourse production does not allow for confident assertions as to why these actors didn’t recognize or frame this tension. It may be due to hidden reasons related to legal or public perception concerns, the relatively unique environment in Indiana, or simply a belief in a model of education where curricular diversity advances the goal of standardized achievement. This model needs to be addressed, but first I consider why policy opponent elites avoided framing curricular tension.
**Policy Opponent Elites.** Policy opponent elites comprised the consortium of actor groups that produced much of the public discourse in opposition to vouchers and the CSP. The primary actor groups in this macro-group were teacher union representatives and Democratic state representatives, but education scholars have been included because of similar framing patterns and to provide a transition to the chapter’s second section. Policy opponent elites produced a discursive framework of dissent in opposition to vouchers and the CSP, but they all but avoided framing the curricular tension the policy might cause in participating choice schools. This may be pragmatic, but there is also an unfortunate irony in such discursive strategies. While it may be true that parents tend not to equate education quality with standardized assessments and/or that (many) “choice” policy advocate elites tend to also be less critical of standardized assessments, many actors among the policy opponent elites were well aware of and vocal about concerns related to standards-based accountability frameworks, including curriculum narrowing. This was evident within the CSP discourse through frames used by policy opponent elites to critique standards-based accountability frameworks related to teacher and school evaluations. Just as some policy advocate elites were situated in an awkward and theoretically problematic position of advocating for two “accountability” systems—one of parent/consumer choice and one of standardized state assessments—some policy opponent elites adopted an equally awkward and theoretically problematic position of critiquing standards-based accountability frameworks in public schools while advocating for the very same systems in “choice” schools. Four Democratic state representatives penned the following excerpt:

**#179:** We also need to evaluate the large amount of time and money spent on high-stakes testing. When standardized testing first entered the public sphere in Indiana, Gov. Robert Orr offered it as part of the A-plus program to
help identify individuals who need help in the classroom. Since then, it has morphed into the standard means of determining the performance of schools and teachers, with penalties in place for those who do not make the grade on these pass/fail tests. The time has come to analyze the financial burden of large quantities of student testing on taxpayers. Large amounts of money that could be better allocated elsewhere, such as remediation, instruction and professional development, are going into the coffers of testing vendors. Beyond the financial issue, we must ask ourselves how many instructional days we are willing to lose to administration of high-stakes tests, and what their true value is. While we recognize and accept that our state has become a welcoming environment for charter schools and voucher programs, we urge our legislative colleagues as well as constituents to ask for, and carefully review, evidence of their effectiveness before we allow further expansion. **Additionaly, the same levels of accountability should be expected from charter, public and voucher private schools** (Smith et al, 2013, p. 7A).

Policy opponent elites adopting this framework effectively treated standards-based accountability frameworks like a weapon; threatening when wielded by others, useful when wielded against the real and perceived foes advancing “choice.” Indeed, wariness of curricular tension resulting from standards-based accountability policy frameworks would appear to be a naturally unifying issue among many choice advocates and opponents. It has not proven so thus far. This may be partially due to the competitive use of standardized assessments in the policy discourse over education choice, more simply illustrated as “my test scores are better than yours.” It is also likely influenced by the rigid “for” or “against” perspectives many in the education field have developed regarding “choice.” This dual framing of standards-based accountability, framed as harmful in one context and essential in another, extends well beyond the CSP discourse to broader communities of education discourse. Such a position need not be explicit, as in example #179. Consider education scholar Diane Ravitch’s (2010) *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education*. Ravitch examined curriculum and

51 Emphasis added.
standards in great detail. The book was a critique of both standards-based accountability policy frameworks and education choice policy frameworks. Ravitch described, explicitly or implicitly, curriculum narrowing no fewer than fourteen times (pp. 30; 73; 76; 83; 85; 89; 90; 96; 107; 108; 110; 123; 245; 270) and ultimately concluded that “putting so much emphasis on test scores produces other outcomes that harm the quality of education [and] inevitably encourages schools to narrow the curriculum” (Ravitch 2010, p. 270). Despite this framing of contemporary standards-based accountability policy frameworks, Ravitch allocated most of the book’s seventh chapter critiquing education choice policies to a review of comparative standardized achievement studies. The overall conclusion was that choice schools had not demonstrated consequential differences in standardized test scores from public schools. To be fair, Ravitch did raise other concerns with school choice (and standards-based accountability) and one reason education choice critics may have to use standardized achievement results in defense of public schools is in response to the constant claim, often de-contextualized or false, by choice advocates that “choice” schools “outperform” public schools in “student achievement.” Regardless of the reasons why “choice” policy opposition elites frame curriculum tension related to standards-based accountability differently in “public” and “choice” schools the fact that they do may result in a missed opportunity to move beyond frames of education choice as “good” or “bad,” especially if determined by student performance on common standardized assessments, to a discussion of how the still relatively nascent choice movement can be influenced to achieve broader goals in education and society. In summary, education policy opposition elites appeared to recognize the curricular tension that could result from standards-based accountability policy frameworks within the context of public schools, but advocated for
their use in the CSP and choice policies nonetheless. The inclusion of standards-based accountability policy mechanisms may have been considered a minor achievement by some policy opponent elites, but the victory may prove Pyrrhic as it effectively justifies the model supporting the failing schools frame that plagues public schools today.

Ultimately it is unclear why recognition and framing of potential curricular tension in participating CSP choice schools was so rare in the public discourse over the consideration, adoption, and implementation of the CSP in Indiana. The forum may not have been conducive to detailed examinations of specific policy mechanisms and different actors likely avoided recognition and/or framing of potential curricular tension in schools participating in the CSP for different reasons. The widespread administration of the state standardized assessments by a critical mass of private schools in Indiana prior to the creation of the CSP was likely significant. Yet it also appears clear that many did not perceive any curricular tension. Such perceptions might be rightly questioned if held only by policy elites, but this view was also held by school administrators, parents, and other actor groups—a probable sign that tension was in fact absent, at least in some contexts. Still, there was enough recognition and discussion of curricular tension in the CSP discourse to support additional consideration of the theoretical tension present in the integration of school choice and standards-based accountability frameworks. The third section considers potential areas for continued research, but first the next section offers a conceptual model within which to consider contemporary policy frameworks that integrate education choice and standards-based accountability frameworks and to guide the design of future research exploring the nature of curricular diversity within such frameworks.
A Model of Contemporary Curricular Diversity

Two important characteristics of contemporary U.S. education choice discourse include (a) the oppositional nature of the discourse, whereby individuals (or organizations) assume positions that are “for” or “against” education choice; and (b) the heavy reliance on standardized assessments by discourse producers on both “sides” to (ostensibly) demonstrate the righteousness of their position. One of the unfortunate consequences of the present state of education choice discourse is thus that the focus on “if” has obfuscated a consideration of “what” despite the presence of “is.” An environment of school choice exists, but what does that mean? Labels that were developed generations ago have been stretched beyond reliability. The theoretical categories for “magnet,” “charter,” and “voucher” schools have grown insufficient to describe the levels of curricular diversity in the evolving system of public schools, or what might be better termed “schools available to the public.” Many school systems have begun to offer school “catalogs” of varying degrees of sophistication to help the public differentiate between schools “within” the system. To label a school a “charter” or “voucher” school reveals little. Research into this diversity would be beneficial in its own right, but it is also necessary to better understand how curricular diversity is influenced by the integration of school choice and standards-based accountability policies. For example, consider Success Charter Schools in New York, “the city’s largest network of charter schools” (Taylor, 2015, p. A1). The New York Times published a news story on Success Charter Schools in April 2015. The full article is reprinted in Appendix H: At Success Academy Charter Schools, High Scores and Polarizing Tactics. The article addresses a number of issues surrounding charter schools and provides relatively good descriptions of various levels of the curriculum at Success Charter Schools.
What becomes clear is that the curriculum—broadly speaking—in Success Academy Charter Schools has been purposely designed to achieve high scores on the state standardized assessments. The kind of intensive test preparation that is described in the article provides a vivid illustration of curriculum narrowing...or might it better be described as curricular focusing? Despite political tension with New York’s mayor, networks like Success Academy Charter Schools that intentionally and aggressively narrow/focus their curriculum to achieve test results are regarded as exemplars within a model of curricular diversity that views and values curricular diversity only as an environmental variable to be managed in pursuit of standardized achievement.

This leads to another unfortunate outcome of the oppositional nature of U.S. education choice discourse—it prevents a good number of highly knowledgeable education professionals and scholars who have assumed oppositional stances on education choice issues from playing a more influential role in its evolution. The curricular “model” used in Success Academy Charter Schools is but one model in the landscape of U.S. education choice. Montessori schools, language immersion schools, vocational schools, “subject” themed schools, and in some states like Indiana, religious schools. In a policy environment that values standardized achievement scores above all else curricular models like the one employed at Success Academy Charter Schools are likely to thrive (at least in some environments). How might other models, many of which if not labeled charter or voucher would otherwise be of great interest to many professional educators and education scholars, fare in such a policy environment and who has or will have access to which models? Clearly it will be difficult to assess access to and change in curricular diversity without firmer understandings of the present state of curricular diversity. Such
considerations would benefit from a theoretical model that seeks to explain the relationship between curricular diversity and co-existent standards-based accountability policy mechanisms designed to assess specific curricular frameworks. Appendix I: Contemporary Curriculum Diversity Model provides a visual representation of both the general form of contemporary standards-based accountability policy frameworks and one potential way in which curricular diversity could manifest in such a policy framework.

Figure A in Appendix I: Contemporary Curriculum Diversity Model represents standards-based accountability models. The linear, two-dimensional model illustrates multiple aspects of standards-based accountability systems. Fundamental to the model is its absolute linear nature. More is better than less. Higher is better than lower. As in financial accounting value is absolute and two-dimensional. The primary purpose, or at least outcome, of the model is to rank and sort. This is done through individual or aggregate student test scores on standardized assessments designed to (theoretically) reflect “proficiency,” “success,” or “achievement” in demonstrating understanding or possession of pre-identified knowledge or skills within a pre-defined learning progression. Student test scores on cyclical assessments can be aggregated in different formulas to apply linear value, or rank, to students, schools, districts, states, teachers, schools of education, or other entities that can be theoretically associated with a group of student test scores. This “value” system is central to the economic rationale that saturates the model. Recall discussion of the competition frame in chapter five. Actors using this frame viewed education as a competitive market where the primary goal is student achievement, or having whichever composite group of test scores that represent your interests as near to the top of the scale as possible. When this happens you, whichever entity you represent, are judged to have
provided a high-quality education. Those whose composite scores placed them lower on the scale are judged to have not provided as quality of an education and are advised to do something different so that by the next assessment their scores will be higher. Low-ranked entities are encouraged to adopt “best practices,” or curricular approaches, from entities with higher rankings. Because test scores are assumed to represent understanding or possession of important knowledge and skills growth in test scores means an increase in important knowledge and skills among students. As in the economic theories that were so influential in the education choice theories formulated in the second half of the twentieth century, growth (in the economy or test scores) is assumed to be the tide that lifts all boats.

In order to stimulate the pursuit of achievement, accountability is added to the model. Those entities ranking near the top are rewarded, or at least avoid sanction, and those who score near the bottom are sanctioned. The idea is that all entities in the endeavor will strive to achieve a level—or standard—of “education quality” sufficient to ensure some collective attainment of stated educational goals, generally assumed to be related to state or national economic competitiveness among contemporary U.S. education standards. Aside from issues related to assessment validity, the value of common educational goals, philosophical concerns with a competitive growth economic model, or the assumption of state or national economic growth as the goal of education, standards-based accountability models are fairly straightforward—except for the persistent problems of two inherent characteristics of the models, perpetual failure and socioeconomic status.

Contemporary standards-based accountability models are purposefully designed to ensure failure. In a two-dimensional system of absolute value assessment unless all scores are equal, some scores will be higher and lower than others. This linear distribution of
scores can be achieved through norm-referenced test designs that interpret scores “based on a comparison of a test taker’s performance to the performance of other people in a specified reference population” (Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing 1999, p. 178) or through criterion-referenced test designs that “make score interpretations in relation to a functional performance level” (Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing 1999, p. 174). In practice these designs become hybrid as what is important is how the distribution scale is divided and how much failure, as determined by percentage or cut score, is sought during the development of the standardized assessments. Contemporary standards-based accountability models are self-fulfilling prophecies, regardless of how much growth occurs, some percentage of entities assessed by the model will be labeled failure. Were the results otherwise the assessment would be deemed invalid. This inherent characteristic of standards-based models is even more troubling when considered with another core characteristic of the models, the consistent correlation of test scores across time and designs to socio-economic status52. Simply put, if there is anything we know about standardized assessments it is that, on average, students of higher socio-economic status will score higher than students of lower socio-economic status. This fundamental correlation is so universally acknowledged that any education research attempting to compare assessment scores among “specified reference populations” and not “controlling” for socio-economic factors would be instantly discredited. The reasons for this correlation, as intriguing as they are, are beyond the focus of the present study. What can be claimed here is that some portion of this correlation is caused by the degree of alignment between the knowledge and skills students develop outside of schools and the knowledge and skills

52 Due to the high correlation between socio-economic status and race/ethnicity in the United States this correlation is particularly significant for students of color.
that are assessed on the standardized assessments. After all, learning doesn’t just occur in schools, particularly in a standards-based accountability model that is anchored around the progressive mastery of formal English. Put another way, any number of environmental variables allow students in some non-school environments to develop the knowledge and skills assessed on standardized assessments to a higher level than students in other non-school environments and, on average, this non-school acquisition of the knowledge and skills assessed on the standardized assessments occurs at an increasingly higher rate in higher socio-economic environments that in lower ones. What does this mean for entities being assessed based on composite groupings of student scores on standardized assessments? *Ceteris paribus*, their accountability rankings will benefit from increasing the percentage of high socio-economic students in their composite grouping. Assuming this is not possible, or to complement such a strategy, another way to achieve higher student test scores is to change the in-school environment, defined in this study as the curriculum.

If we continue to assume that state standards-based assessments do in fact reflect to a reasonable degree the knowledge and skills defined in a given set of academic standards then if a school is unable to increase the socio-economic standing of its population the most obvious strategy to achieve higher test scores would be to “align” the school’s curriculum to the academic standards which the tests assess. Figure B in *Appendix I: Contemporary Curriculum Diversity Model* represents the spectrum of curriculum meaning discussed in chapter one and depicted in *Appendix A*. Again, the article depicting Success Charter Schools in *Appendix H* illustrated one model of curricular alignment to standards in pursuit of high achievement on standardized assessments. All levels of curriculum are influenced by such alignment. Coverage of tested content increases. Course content and instructional
pedagogies are analyzed and assessed by their (perceived) influence on student test scores. Teachers are rewarded or punished based on test scores, providing additional incentive to adopt curriculum and pedagogies that are perceived to increase test scores. An overall culture of “achievement” pervades the school and is evident in environmental norms from school uniforms to rituals of public praise and scorn. It is again important to note here that I am not ascribing educational value to the curriculum offered at Success Charter Schools. Indeed, it is an intriguing question as to whether the proliferation of such curricula leads or will lead to increased economic competitiveness or social justice (as defined in chapter four and to the degree possible considering the larger economic context within which schools exist). Despite the “true” value of such a curriculum what seems theoretically probable is that elements of the curriculum in such environments not perceived to support achievement face increased pressure to be relegated to the null curriculum. The knowledge and skills defined in the relevant academic standards exert a pull on the curriculum, increasingly constriciting the curriculum to the academic standards assessed. If the value of such a model is controversial, its existence is not. Focusing (narrowing) curriculum is the assumed outcome of standards-based accountability education reforms. It is simply important to remember that standards-based accountability models assess specific curriculum frameworks, not some generic sense of achievement, learning, or growth as actors framing test scores often seem to believe. Curricular diversity is not recognized as a valuable educational goal, but as an environmental variable in achieving student achievement. Curricula deemed successful in this pursuit proliferate while others wane. As curriculum alignment, whether internally or externally motivated, increases among schools the degree of curricular diversity in the overall system of schools within a given
environment should decrease. This does not mean the distribution of curriculum alignment/focus/narrowing is evenly distributed.

The underlying assumption in contemporary education policy and practice that an increase in aggregate test scores—or increased achievement—will lead to aggregate benefits for society is deeply influenced by similar assumptions about the relationship between aggregate economic growth (at a community, state, national, or global level) in broader policy frameworks. This view of growth was earlier summarized as the tide that lifts all boats. In recent decades this underlying belief in the distributive nature of growth has been questioned by economists, perhaps most famously in Thomas Piketty's (2014) *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Using an impressive collection of historical economic data and framing the consideration of the evolution of wealth through its degree of distribution among a society as opposed to its absolute growth, Piketty used a simple formula, \( r > g \), to demonstrate that the natural affinity of economic growth is to increase the wealth of the wealthy at a rate higher than the poor or even average citizen.\(^{53}\) The logical outcome of this economic theory is that those with wealth will, on average, increase their wealth at a rate higher than those with less wealth, thus the “gap” between the have and have-nots will steadily widen. Figure C in *Appendix I: Contemporary Curriculum Diversity Model* offers a visual model of how this economic logic might be applied to the integration of standards-based accountability and school choice education policy frameworks. In this model Figure A represents the knowledge and skills defined in the academic standards to which the standards-based accountability assessments are (theoretically) aligned and Figure B represents the level of curricular elasticity within a  

\(^{53}\) Where \( r \) = average return on capital and \( g \) = economic growth rate.
school or diversity within a system of schools. As schools narrow/focus their curriculum to support achievement against common academic standards the four layers of curriculum constrict within individual schools and the overall level of curriculum diversity in a system of schools decreases. Because the degree to which such curricular changes will influence student test scores are balanced by the socio-economic status of students within a school or system, higher levels of curricular focus/narrowing are required for the same “alignment” effect in schools with students of lower socio-economic status than in schools with students of higher socio-economic status. This is in part because of the “returns” on the skills and knowledge (social capital) higher socio-economic students acquire outside school—skills and knowledge that pay dividends year after year on state assessment scores. Schools with large populations of low socio-economic students must compensate for the absence of this social capital enjoyed by higher socio-economic students through leveraging more out of curricular alignment. The model suggests that, ceteris paribus, access to curricular diversity for individual students and within a system of schools will increase in correlation to socio-economic status. To the extent that knowledge and skills not included in common academic standards are important—that they represent some form of social capital—the gap between these forms of knowledge and skills among those with access and those without will widen. This is only a theory, a conceptual framework that might guide the construct of future research into curriculum diversity trends within a contemporary standards-based accountability system. The chapter’s third and final section suggests several potential research designs that might serve to advance such scholarship.
A Consideration of Potential Future Research

There has been an apparent lack of interest in considering the theoretical tension between the curriculum autonomy and diversity foundational to the education choice movement and the desired curricular alignment, narrowing, or focus foundational to the standards-based accountability movement. This lack of interest is due to multiple reasons, some quite justifiable. Still, it is an area worthy of more focus. Regardless of whether curriculum diversity is understood as a desirable goal in and of itself or as a means to increase standardized achievement, a better understanding of the level of curriculum diversity and its relation to standards-based accountability models could provide new perspectives on how educational inequities are framed. The future directions of such research are boundless, but three potential agendas are suggested for those interested.

The present research examined curricular tension through discourse analysis. In other words, it did not seek actual curricular tension, only understandings of tension through public discourse. Although limited in obvious ways, an extension of this research would likely serve to inform future research of a more physically empirical nature. The general findings of the present study would surely benefit from comparison to other case studies of discursive framing related to understandings of potential curricular tension within policy frameworks that integrate education choice and standards-based accountability. Two potential discourses that could be examined using the methodologies defined in the present study include the discourse in Indiana over the consideration, adoption, implementation, and abandonment of the CCSS and the discourse in North Carolina over the North Carolina Opportunity Scholarship Program, similar in many ways to the Indiana CSP except in its use of standards-based accountability mechanisms and its
fate, at least initially, regarding legal challenges. It would be particularly interesting to compare how actor groups in Indiana understood the influence of standards on curriculum in the CCSS discourse with their understandings presented in the present study, or to see how consistent the actor groups and frames identified in the Indiana discourse were to those in North Carolina or other states. In addition to its inherent value such research would likely serve to firm up definitions of discursive frames described in the present study. Other benefits like the identification of important interest group discourse producers and patterns related to the exclusion of actor groups could follow such research.

Another area of study that would complement the present research or the potential extensions of that research discussed in the previous paragraph could involve using new research methodologies to extend and enrich understandings of curriculum, standards, and the potential tension between the two. Such research would extend an examination of the discourse in the present or future studies beyond the public discourse forum of newspapers to include other relevant discourse forums. This might involve legislative archival work or interviews with key actors. Other actors groups that were essentially or actually excluded from the process could be given voice. Of particular interest might be teachers from private schools who have joined the CSP. Such interviews might even be targeted using state assessment data to identify schools that experienced significant changes in their school A-F grades and/or had significant shifts in student demographics. Other discursive research might examine the burgeoning spectrum of “school catalogs” that school districts have begun to develop to help parents and the general public differentiate between different schools in the education marketplace. Such a research study might be considered a quasi-literature review of district conceptions of curriculum diversity. The
findings of the present study are limited by the narrowness of the forum examined, but the understandings gained can guide and inform examinations of additional discursive forums.

A third area of potential research could involve more empirical studies of the actual influence of standards-based accountability policies like those in the CSP on participating schools who previously enjoyed curricular autonomy. This would essentially be policy implementation research situated within a nuanced conceptualization of differentiated curricular environments. Ethnographic case studies of individual schools or groups of schools in common or different policy and socio-economic environments would begin to provide a level of understanding of the tension between curricular diversity and standards-based accountability far more nuanced and complex than can be gleaned from an analysis of discourse only. If reliable “categories” could be developed to differentiate curricular environments—and this would be quite challenging—such examinations could be scaled through less in-depth methodologies. Consider the breadth of understanding that might be achieved if all of the areas of future research were pursued, even if only in the state of Indiana. We may be at a point of unique opportunity. Education choice and standards-based accountability have become entrenched, if not unopposed, in U.S. education policy. Although it may appear that the integration of these two movements will result in the former being defined as a means to achieve the end of the latter the future is never certain. If this occurs Joel Spring’s description of an education marketplace where all choices lead to the same standards will prevail. The only choice available will be the standard(s) choice.

While merits may exist, contemporary standards-based accountability models are irreparably burdened by their inherent and perpetual production of failure and predictable sanction of students, educators, and communities for their lack of the socio-economic
capital that such assessments unquestionably measure. In the system Spring (2000) described the entire education system is aligned to a single growth metric, much like the assumed merit in economic growth.\textsuperscript{54} But what if such growth actually serves to widen gaps in capital, whether actual financial capital or other forms, like access to otherwise null curricula. There are serious issues yet to be resolved in the education choice movement. What is the role of private, profit-seeking entities in such an environment? Under what circumstances can a school refuse to accept or retain students? To what extent do we as society value curriculum diversity beyond the diversity within the bounds of our own value systems? Are conceptions of separation of church and state different today than they have been historically? If so, why and what does that mean? These are not new questions, but the context they are considered in may be unique in some ways today. The answers to these questions have, for varying reasons, resulted in many stakeholders in U.S. education discourse using standards-based accountability to oppose education choice. What might the possibilities be if the framing of these movements were reversed and education choice were used to oppose the failed regime of standards-based accountability?

\textsuperscript{54} Except, of course, for schools that can exist on the tuition of their students. Elite K-12 schools \textit{somehow} manage to avoid standards-based accountability and yet still achieve remarkable results in producing "college & career" ready students, at least as measured by "success" in college and careers (as opposed to test scores).
Appendix A: Curriculum Meaning Spectrum

Learning Environment

Content + Pedagogy

Course Offerings

Course Content
## Appendix B: State Referenda on Education Vouchers in the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Voted Yes</th>
<th>Voted No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dist. of Columbia</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

55 Source: Americans United for Separation of Church and State.
Appendix C: Public Voucher Programs in the United States$^{56}$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>SN$^{57}$</th>
<th>VOUCHER PROGRAM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>VT</td>
<td></td>
<td>Town Tuitioning Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>ME</td>
<td></td>
<td>Town Tuitioning Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>WI</td>
<td></td>
<td>Milwaukee Parental Choice Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>OH</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cleveland Scholarship &amp; Tutoring Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>FL</td>
<td></td>
<td>Public Voucher (ruled unconstitutional by state court)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>FL</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>OH</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Autism Scholarship Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>CO</td>
<td></td>
<td>Public Voucher (ruled unconstitutional by state court)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>DC</td>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity Scholarship Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>OH</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Educational Choice Scholarship Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>UT</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>AZ</td>
<td></td>
<td>Public Voucher (ruled unconstitutional by state court)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>GA</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>LA</td>
<td></td>
<td>Louisiana Scholarship Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>LA</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>School Choice Program for Certain Students with Exceptionalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>OK</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarships for Students with Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>CO</td>
<td></td>
<td>Douglas County Choice Scholarship Pilot Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>IN</td>
<td></td>
<td>Choice Scholarship Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>OH</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>WI</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parental Private School Choice Program (Racine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Mississippi Dyslexia Therapy Scholarship for Students w/Dyslexia Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Nate Rogers Scholarship for Students with Disabilities Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity Scholarships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Special Education Scholarship Grants for Children with Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>OH</td>
<td></td>
<td>Income-Based Scholarship Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>WI</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parental Choice Program (Statewide)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^{57}$ SN = programs limiting eligibility to special needs students.
### Figure 1

**Matrix of Educational Standards**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF STANDARD</th>
<th>STUDENTS</th>
<th>SCHOOLS/LEAS/THES</th>
<th>TEACHERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. PERFORMANCE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| A. STUDENT TEST SCORES | Gatekeeping (S)  
Remediation (S/L)  
Tracking (L)  | Planning (S/L)  
Monitoring (S/L)  
Accreditation (S)  
Resource Allocation (S)  | Evaluation (L)  |
| B. TEACHER TEST SCORES |          | Monitoring (S)  
Accreditation (S)  | Gatekeeping and Diagnosis:  
Entrance into Teacher Education Programs (S/I)  
Completion of Teacher Education Programs (S/I)  
Certification and Re-Licensing (S)  |
| C. GRADES | Gatekeeping (S/L)  | | Gatekeeping:  
Entrance into Teacher Education Programs (S/I)  
Completion of Teacher Education Programs (S/I)  |
| D. OBSERVATION |          |                   | Gatekeeping:  
Completion of Teacher Education Programs (S/I)  
Certification and Re-Licensing (S)  |
| **II. PROGRAM** |          |                   |          |
| A. CURRICULUM | Gatekeeping:  
High School Graduation Standards (S/L)  
Number of Courses  
Type of Courses  | Educational Opportunity:  
Range and Level of Courses Available  
Instructional Quality:  
Curriculum Guides (S/L)  | Instructional Quality:  
Instructional Materials (S/L)  
In-service Training (S/L/I)  
Curriculum Guides (S/L)  |

( ) denotes jurisdiction with authority to set standard.  
S = State government  
L = Local School District  
I = Institution of Higher Education
### Appendix D: Goertz's 1986 Matrix of Educational Standards (2 of 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF STANDARD</th>
<th>TARGET OF STANDARD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STUDENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. PROGRAM (cont'd)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. PROGRAM</td>
<td>Educational Opportunity:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Program (S/L)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. Academic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. College Prep</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. General Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. Vocational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type and Availability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Special Programs (S/L)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. Special Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. Compensatory Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. Bilingual/ESL</td>
<td></td>
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### III. BEHAVIOR

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<td>C. USE OF TIME</td>
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# Application to Become an Eligible School Under Indiana’s CSP (2 of 2)

## Appendix E: Application to Become an Eligible School Under Indiana’s CSP

### Application to Become an Eligible School Under Indiana’s Choice Scholarship Program

**State Form 54706 (R2 / 3-13)**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

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<td>Name of school leader/main contact person</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Address of accrediting body (number and street, city, state, and ZIP code)</td>
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<td>Internet address</td>
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<td>____________</td>
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## Assurances

As a condition of becoming an eligible school, the school makes the following assurances by the representative’s signature:

- School will administer accountability assessments including Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress Plus (STEP+) and End of Course Assessments (ECAs) to all students at the testing grade levels and participate in all required training and security measures.
- School will not discriminate against any potential students based on race, color, or national origin, and will follow the school’s admissions policy in regard to choice scholarship students.
- If the number of applicants for enrollment in an eligible school under a Choice scholarship exceeds the number of Choice scholarships available to the eligible school, the school will draw at random in a public meeting the applications of applicants who are entitled to a Choice scholarship from among the applicants who meet the requirements for admission in the eligible school.
- School will not transfer or attempt to transfer the choice scholarship to any other student.
- School agrees to inform IDOE via a prescribed form within five (5) business days of a choice scholarship student being withdrawn or expelled.
- School acknowledges that: 1. retroactive reimbursement to the State of Indiana may be required, or 2. future payments may be adjusted, as a result of the withdrawal or expulsion of a student.
- School agrees to participate in any data collections required by the department pursuant to IC 20-51-1-4.7, IC 20-51-4-6, IC 20-51-4-7, or IC 20-51-4-10.
- School understands and agrees to the requirement that parents must co-sign a claim form provided by the department for the distribution of monies, on a schedule set by the department.
- Upon eligibility, school agrees to complete and file a vendor application with the Indiana Auditor of State.
- School agrees to provide prospective parents with a statement about any costs beyond the required fees, including whether the school participates in the Free / Reduced Lunch Program. School acknowledges that any fees in excess of the amount of the choice scholarship must be funded through other sources.
- School agrees to provide prospective parents with information about transportation, including whether it is provided and whether the school is located along any existing bus routes that may be utilized.
- School acknowledges that, by July 1, 2013, it will have a staff performance evaluation plan as required by 20-25-11.5-4(a) and (b).
- School shall certify to the department annually that the eligible school is complying with the following legal requirements and that the school will cooperate with any visit made to the school by the department to verify compliance with these provisions, including granting the department reasonable access to its premises. School further understands that violation of any of the following requirements under the law or failure to comply with these assurances is grounds for loss of eligibility, and has the right to an administrative hearing upon loss of eligibility.
ASSURANCES (continued)

- An eligible school may allow a principal or teacher to read or post in the school building or classroom or at a school event any excerpt or part of a writing, document, or record listed below.
- An eligible school may not permit the content based censorship of American history or heritage based on religious references in a writing, document, or record listed below.

A library, a media center, or an equivalent facility that an eligible school maintains for student use must contain in the facility’s permanent collection at least one copy of each writing or document listed (1) through (9) below.

1. The Constitution of the United States
2. The national motto
3. The national anthem
4. The Pledge of Allegiance
5. The Constitution of the State of Indiana
6. The Declaration of Independence
7. The Mayflower Compact
8. The Federalist Papers

10. The writings, speeches, documents, and proclamations of the founding fathers and presidents of the United States.
11. United States Supreme Court decisions.
12. Executive orders of the presidents of the United States.
13. Frederick Douglass’ Speech at Rochester, New York, on July 5, 1852, entitled “What to a Slave is the Fourth of July?”
14. Appeal by David Walker

- An eligible school shall do the following:
  1. Allow a student to include a reference to a writing, document, or record listed in subsection (b) in a report or other work product.
  2. May not punish the student in any way, including a reduction in grade, for using the reference.
  3. Display the United States flag in each classroom.
  4. Provide a daily opportunity for students to voluntarily recite the Pledge of Allegiance in each classroom or on school grounds. A student may not be required to participate in the Pledge of Allegiance if the student or his or her parent of guardian chooses to not participate.
  5. Provide instruction on the constitutions of Indiana and the United States.

For an eligible school that enrolls students in grades 6 through 12, provide within the two weeks preceding a general election the full class periods discussion concerning:

1. the system of government in Indiana and in the United States;
2. methods of voting;
3. party structures;
4. election laws; and
5. the responsibilities of citizen participation in government and in elections.

- An eligible school must require that each teacher employed by the school present instruction with special emphasis on:

1. honesty;
2. morality;
3. courtesy;
4. obedience to law;
5. respect for the national flag and the Constitutions of the United States and Indiana;
6. respect for parents and the home;
7. the dignity and necessity of honest labor; and
8. other lessons of a steadily influence that tend to promote and develop an upright and desirable citizen.

- Provide good citizenship instruction that stresses the nature and importance of the following:

1. Being honest and truthful.
2. Respecting authority.
3. Respecting the property of others.
4. Always doing the student’s personal best.
5. Not stealing.
6. Possessing the skills (including methods of conflict resolution) necessary to live peaceably in society and not resorting to violence to settle disputes.
7. Taking personal responsibility for obligations to family and community.
8. Treating others the way the student would want to be treated.
10. Respecting the student’s parents and home.
11. Respecting the student’s self.
12. Respecting the rights of others to have their own views and religious beliefs.

- Provide instruction in Language arts, including English, grammar, composition, speech, and second languages, Mathematics, Social studies and citizenship, including the constitutions, governmental systems, and Indiana and United States history, including study of the Holocaust and the role of religious extremism played in the events of September 11, 2001, Sciences, Fine arts, including music and art, Health education, physical fitness, safety, and the effects of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and other substances on the human body.

Notification of the department when an employee with a department-issued license is convicted of certain felonies (IC 20-28-5-6)

- Expanded criminal history checks for all applicants for employment who will have “direct, ongoing contact with children.” (IC 20-28-5-10)
- Parental Access to Student Records (IC 20-33-7)

| Signature of authorized agent | Title of authorized agent | Date (month, day, year) |
## Appendix F: Education Interest Groups (Editorial Sub-Forum)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Interest Group</th>
<th>(+) / (-)</th>
<th># Utt</th>
<th># Art</th>
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Notes: "+" = supported the CSP; ":-" = opposed the CSP; "Utt" = utterances; "Art" = articles; One article was co-written by actors from three organizations. Each organization was credited .3 articles and 2 of the 6 utterances for this article.
## Appendix G: Actor Frame Usage (%)

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<th>HPE</th>
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### Frame Key
CGO: Choice = Good/Opportunity; CS: Common Schools; C: Competition; HPE: Harms Public Schools; O: Other; E: Economic; R: Religion; R/E: Research/Efficacy; SQ: School Quality; SJ: Social Justice; CS: Curriculum/Standards

### Actor Key
A Priv: Administrator (Private); A Pub: Administrator (Public); EB: Editorial Board; EIG: Education Interest Group; Gov: Governor’s Office; IHE: Institute of Higher Education Faculty/Other; J: Journalist; L: Legal; NF: National Figure; Other; P/C: Parent/Citizen; EOD: Elected Official – Democrat; EOR: Elected Official – Democrat; Stud: Student; Sup’t: State Superintendent of Instruction’s Office; Tchr: Public School Teacher

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Appendix H: At Success Academy Charter Schools Article

At Success Academy Charter Schools, High Scores and Polarizing Tactics
The New York Times
April 6, 2015
By Kate Taylor

At most schools, if a child is flailing academically, it is treated as a private matter.

But at Success Academy Harlem 4, one boy’s struggles were there for all to see: On two colored charts in the hallway, where the students’ performance on weekly spelling and math quizzes was tracked, his name was at the bottom, in a red zone denoting that he was below grade level.

The boy, a fourth grader, had been in the red zone for months. His teacher, Kristin Jones, 23, had held meetings with his mother, where the teacher spread out all the weekly class newsletters from the year, in which the charts were reproduced. If he studied, he could pass the spelling quizzes, Ms. Jones said — he just was not trying. But the boy got increasingly frustrated, and some weeks Ms. Jones had to stop herself from looking over his shoulder during the quizzes so she would not become upset by his continued mistakes.

Then, one Friday in December, she peeked at his paper, and a smile spread over her face. After he handed in his quiz, she announced to the class that he had gotten a 90. “I might start crying right now,” she said, only half-joking. “I’ve got to call your mom.”

In its devotion to accountability, Success Academy, New York City’s polarizing charter school network, may have no peer.

Though it serves primarily poor, mostly black and Hispanic students, Success is a testing dynamo, outscoring schools in many wealthy suburbs, let alone their urban counterparts. In New York City last year, 29 percent of public school students passed the state reading tests, and 35 percent passed the math tests. At Success schools, the corresponding percentages were 64 and 94 percent.

Those kinds of numbers have helped Success, led by Eva S. Moskowitz, expand to become the city’s largest network of charter schools, which are publicly funded but privately operated. By next year Ms. Moskowitz, known for her attention-grabbing rallies and skirmishes with the teachers’ union and Mayor Bill de Blasio, will have 43 schools; a proposal by Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo could bring her closer to her goal of 100. That would give Success more schools than Buffalo, the state’s second-largest district.

In a rare look inside the network, including visits to several schools and interviews with dozens of current and former employees, The New York Times chronicled a system driven by the relentless pursuit of better results, one that can be exhilarating for teachers and students who keep up with its demands and agonizing for those who do not.
Rules are explicit and expectations precise. Students must sit with hands clasped and eyes following the speaker; reading passages must be neatly annotated with a main idea.

Incentives are offered, such as candy for good behavior, and Nerf guns and basketballs for high scores on practice tests. For those deemed not trying hard enough, there is “effort academy,” which is part detention, part study hall.

For teachers, who are not unionized and usually just out of college, 11-hour days are the norm, and each one is under constant monitoring, by principals who make frequent visits, and by databases that record quiz scores. Teachers who do well can expect quick promotions, with some becoming principals while still in their 20s. Teachers who struggle can expect coaching or, if that does not help, possible demotion.

Rachel Tuchman, 25, said that during her three years as a teacher at Success, she had friends who worked in the fields of finance and consulting, and she went to work earlier and stayed later than they did.

“You’re being treated like you’re on the trading floor at Goldman while you’re teaching in Harlem,” said Ms. Tuchman, who is now in her first year at Yale Law School.

She also said that she thought the workload was necessary to achieve the results that Success has, adding, “It takes a very specific type of person who can handle the pressure.”

One consequence of the competitive environment is a high rate of teacher turnover. Some teachers who left said that the job was too stressful. Others said they left because they disagreed with the network’s approach, particularly when they believed it was taken to extremes. In an internal email that some former teachers said typified the attitude at some schools, one school leader said that students who were lagging should be made to feel “misery.” Suspension rates at Success schools, compared with public schools, are higher.

Former staff members described students in third grade and above wetting themselves during practice tests, either because teachers did not allow them to go to the restroom, which Ms. Moskowitz disputed, or because the students themselves felt so much pressure that they did not want to lose time on the test.

Jasmine Araujo, 25, who joined Success through the Teach for America program, quit after half a year as a special-education teacher at Success Academy Harlem 3. She now teaches at a charter school in New Orleans. “I would cry almost every night thinking about the way I was treating these kids, and thinking that that’s not the kind of teacher I wanted to be,” Ms. Araujo said.

By the Numbers
Ms. Moskowitz and a number of her teachers saw the network’s exacting approach in a different way: as putting their students on the same college track as children in wealthier neighborhoods who had better schools and money for extra help.
Success students are generally barred from the city’s best elementary schools because they do not live in those schools’ zones.

“For affluent parents who are concerned about the test scores, they have an exit strategy — their exit strategy is to hire a private tutor,” Ms. Moskowitz said.

No one criticizes those parents, but “when we support our students, we get criticized,” she said.

“And I would argue that it’s not fair that only the kids who can hire private tutors should do well.”

At Success, everyone is measured by whether their students are doing well.

After every networkwide quiz, students’ scores are entered into the Success computer system, which then ranks each teacher. The purpose of this, teachers and principals said, is to identify high performers and to see what practices they are using, and conversely, to determine which teachers might need better practices.

“We’ve never had a conversation where, like, ‘You are 32nd in the network,’ ” said Lisa Sun, the 26-year-old principal at Success Academy Harlem North Central, a middle school. Rather, she said, she discusses with the teacher which skills the students are lacking, as reflected by the data. “ ‘And it’s not because of them, it’s because of you. We have to talk about what you need to fix to make it better.’ ”

A teacher whose students are performing poorly on assessments, or who cannot maintain discipline, might be moved midyear to another grade, an assistant teacher’s position or tutoring outside the classroom. At the beginning of the year, each class is named after the college that its lead teacher graduated from and the students’ expected year of college graduation. Dana Adnopoz’s homeroom at Success Academy Harlem North Central is Dartmouth 2026. Ms. Jones and her co-teacher have Hunter-Siena 2027.

But because teachers frequently leave or move, one teacher who taught at Success Academy Harlem 3 from 2010 to 2012 and left because she viewed it as overly strict recalled that in the spring of her second year, only a few of the classes in the school were still being led by the teacher whose college they were named after.

This teacher, like some other former Success teachers, did not want to be named criticizing the network. These former teachers said they feared hurting their future job prospects by disparaging a former employer or by being identified as critics of charter schools.

**Dawn to Dusk**

Each school day, Kristin Jones takes a 5:30 a.m. ferry from Staten Island, where she lives with her mother and two younger siblings, to Manhattan. In the winter, the sun is not yet up when she walks into school at 6:40 a.m.
Growing up, Ms. Jones always knew she wanted to be a teacher. She would tape loose-leaf paper to the mirror on her dresser to turn it into a makeshift blackboard and have her cousin and younger brother pretend to be her students.

Beginning teachers at Success are paid comparably with those in city public schools though instead of a pension, they receive contributions to a retirement account. Unlike public-school teachers, who often have to use their own money for basics like photocopies, Ms. Jones and her colleagues do not worry about supplies. The closets teem with notebooks, folders, pencils and pens. Each middle school student receives an iPad. Success Academy schools are also rich in the kind of extracurricular activities that have increasingly been cut from public schools, such as art, music, chess, theater, dance, basketball and swimming.

Success Academy supplements the public money it receives with money raised from private donors. In its 2013 fiscal year, the most recent for which fund-raising figures are publicly available, it received nearly $72 million in public funds and $22 million in donations.

Because so many administrative functions at Success schools are handled by the organization, principals have a lot of time to observe teachers. When William Loskoch, Ms. Jones’s principal, visited her classroom one day in December, he frequently stopped her co-teacher, Sarah Vistocco, 24, who had started at the network in May, to redirect a discussion or ask her to reinforce the rules.

When a student was struggling to come up with an adjective to describe the protagonists of two myths the class had read and Ms. Vistocco moved on, Mr. Loskoch, 34, stopped her and went back to the girl to try to draw her out.

When the students were sitting on the floor and he noticed that they were not sitting properly, he interrupted the lesson and said, “Ms. Vistocco, can you reset your expectations?”

Success has stringent rules about behavior, down to how students are supposed to sit in the classroom: their backs straight, and their feet on the floor if they are in a chair or legs crossed if they are sitting on the floor. The rationale is that good posture and not fidgeting make it easier to pay attention. Some teachers who had orderly classrooms and a record of good student performance said, after their first year, their school leaders allowed them to bend the rules somewhat, such as not requiring students to clasp their hands as long as their hands were still.

“We believe that structure and consistency leads to better outcomes,” Ms. Moskowitz said. The network’s rules, she said, were consistent with expectations of students throughout most of the history of American education.

“Maybe some people prefer chaos,” she added. “We don’t.”

Indeed, watching the students at Success Academy Harlem 4 walk to lunch, the scene was
anything but chaotic. In their blue and orange uniforms — the girls wear jumpers, and the boys shirts and ties — they walked silently in two lines, starting and stopping at the teacher’s command. If so many children walking in formation was reminiscent of the von Trapp children at the beginning of “The Sound of Music,” the orderliness also meant that no time was wasted.

Likewise, inside Ms. Jones’s classroom, the atmosphere was calm, and she was demanding.

When the students were writing summaries of myths, she scolded the class: “I don’t want to continue seeing names of characters that start with lowercase letters. It’s an indicator of low effort.”

But when she was pleased with a student — as when the boy scored well on his spelling quiz — she radiated pride.

Asked whether she thought the students who were in the red zone would be demoralized, Ms. Jones said, “I’m sure they’re not happy about it.”

“But they’re very resilient,” she added. “And then, as soon as they get a great grade, they’re praised for it,” and, she said, they can see the difference that their increased effort made.

“They don’t want to stay there,” she said. “They want to improve.”

**Carrots and Sticks**

In 2005, Ms. Moskowitz, then a city councilwoman, ran for Manhattan borough president and lost — in part because of opposition from the teachers’ union, the United Federation of Teachers, which was enraged by a series of hearings she held in the City Council that were critical of work rules embedded in the union’s contract.

After the election, she was recruited by a pair of hedge fund managers who were interested in setting up a charter school, and she opened the network’s first, the Harlem Success Academy, in 2006. In subsequent years she opened more schools, first in Harlem and then in other neighborhoods in the city, and now has a total of 9,000 students in schools in every borough but Staten Island.

The Bloomberg administration gave her free space in public schools, often angering parents and teachers in the schools that had to share buildings with Success. Last year, after Mr. de Blasio briefly blocked three Success schools from public space and threatened to charge the network rent, Mr. Cuomo pushed through a law guaranteeing all new or expanding charter schools in the city free space or money to find their own.

Ms. Moskowitz has used her high test scores to argue that she should be allowed to open more schools, and an effort by Mr. Cuomo to raise the limit on the number of charter schools in the state could make it easier for her to do so.

At any given time, multiple carrots and sticks are used in the quest to make sure every
student does well on the standardized tests. This system goes into overdrive in late January, as the annual exams, which begin this year on April 14, approach.

Success did not allow a reporter to observe test preparations, but teachers and students described a regimen that can sometimes be grueling.

To prepare for the reading tests, students spend up to 90 minutes each day working on “Close Reading Mastery” exercises, consisting of passages followed by multiple-choice questions. The last two Saturdays before the exams, students are required to go to school for practice tests.

Students who do well on practice tests can win prizes, such as remote-controlled cars, arts and crafts kits, and board games. Former teachers said that they were instructed to keep the prizes displayed in the front of their classroom to keep students motivated.

Students who are judged to not be trying hard enough are assigned to “effort academy.” While they redo their work, their classmates are getting a reward — like playing dodge ball against the teachers, throwing pies in the face of the principal or running through the hallways while the students in the lower grades cheer.

On the Friday before test preparations began, a calendar counting down the days to the test hung on the wall in Yale 2025, a sixth-grade classroom at Success Academy Harlem North West. The page for Monday was already displayed; in large type, it said: “53 days left.”

Carolyn Farnham, 24, the teacher, asked her students how they felt about the start of test preparations.

“It has the potential to be both really, really dull and really, really stressful,” she said to her students, adding, “That’s certainly not what I want.”

Some students responded that they did not mind because they had done well on the tests in the past. But several said they disliked it.

“I know that it’s here to help us,” one girl, Maliha, said. “But sometimes when people don’t get the best score, they seem to feel, like, really down on themselves. And when effort academy and detention and stuff like that is introduced,” she said, “one gets — me personally — really angry and upset.”

A boy raised his hand.

“I always get a high three or a low three or sometimes a four,” said the boy, Erick. (A three is considered passing, and a four is the highest score.) “What I don’t like is I have to go to school on Saturdays, so I feel like I don’t get rest, and I get a lot of stress in my neck because I got to go like this all the time,” he said, hunching forward like he was looking at a test paper.
Another girl, Ruqayyah, agreed that test preparations caused anxiety. But “on the other hand, there’s prizes,” she said, “which are really cool and motivate us to do our best.”

“I hope also you want to do your best for you,” Ms. Farnham said, “not just for prizes.”

The network’s critics — including the teachers’ union, which sees Success as taking money and space from public schools — say the network’s high scores are a mirage created, in part, by inordinate test preparation.

The network’s oldest students are still in high school, so it is difficult to gauge the long-term benefits of their education. Halley Potter, a fellow at the Century Foundation, a progressive policy organization, and the co-author of two books about charter schools, said that network’s test scores were impressive, but that the conclusions that could be drawn from them were limited.

“Success Academy’s strong test scores tell us that they have a strong model for producing good test scores,” Ms. Potter said, adding that there could be lessons in Success’s practices for schools that are trying to improve their scores.

She noted that Success schools tend to have fewer nonnative English speakers and special-education students than public schools; those groups tend to score lower on tests. Ms. Potter also said that the network has made trade-offs, including not offering foreign languages until eighth grade, in order to devote more time to math, English and science, the only subjects in which all elementary and middle school students take state tests.

Teachers and principals at Success said that they prepare their students so intensely for the tests because of the opportunities that high scores can present, such as invitations to top public middle or high schools, or scholarships for private schools.

Two documentaries, “Waiting for Superman” and “The Lottery,” have captured the desperation of parents trying to get their children into Success through the annual lotteries it holds; this year, the network said, it received more than 22,000 applications for 2,688 seats.

Shakeya Matthew’s sons attended Public School 165, on West 109th Street, before getting into Success Academy Harlem 4 this year. Ms. Matthew, 33, said that her younger son had struggled last year in kindergarten and that his teacher seemed overwhelmed. Now, as a Success first grader, he is reading at a second-grade level. She said that she is in more frequent contact with her sons’ teachers now than when her sons were in the public school. Success teachers will call or send her a text during the day or in the evening with news about how one of her sons did on a test or with other updates.

“It seems like they definitely put forth more effort and go an extra mile,” Ms. Matthew said.

Walking Away
The high-pressure atmosphere at Success leads to substantial teacher turnover, though the
precise rate is unclear. According to the latest school report cards, in 2013-14 three Success schools had turnover rates above 50 percent, meaning more than half the teachers from the previous year did not stay.

But Success officials said that these figures were inflated by the number of teachers who move from one Success school to another, or to nonteaching positions within the network. According to its own numbers, attrition from the network from June 2013 to June 2014 was 17 percent. By comparison, attrition from the city’s public school system in 2013-14 was 6.1 percent, according to the Education Department.

Still, current and former employees said departures were common. Ariadna Phillips-Santos, 34, taught kindergarten and first and second grades at Success Academy Harlem 5 from 2010 until 2012. Having worked in public schools, she was impressed by the academic rigor and the plentiful supplies. But she was raising a young son on her own, and juggling his care with her long work hours was almost impossible, she said. Ms. Phillips-Santos, who is now a dean at a public elementary and middle school in the Bronx, said she recalled asking her Success principal one day if she could leave at 4:55 p.m. — after the students had been dismissed — because her son’s day care had called saying that he had a fever and was vomiting, and being told, “It’s not 5 o’clock yet.”

Ms. Moskowitz said that Success was accommodating to working parents. She said that Success allowed some teachers and even some principals to work part time and that the network offers a month of paid maternity and paternity leave.

Most of the former teachers interviewed, however, said that they left not because of the workload, but because they disagreed with Success’s approach, which they found punitive.

One teacher complained that she was expected to announce all of her students’ scores on practice tests, by asking those who had scored a four to stand up, followed by those with a three and then those with a two. The teacher and her colleagues persuaded their supervisors not to make students with a score of one stand up, but those students were still left conspicuously sitting down, she said.

At one point, her leadership resident — what the network calls assistant principals — criticized her for not responding strongly enough when a student made a mistake. The leadership resident told her that she should have taken the student’s paper and ripped it up in front of her. Students were not supposed to go to the restroom during practice tests, she said, and she heard a leader from another school praise the dedication of a child who had wet his pants rather than take a break.

“I dreaded going into work,” the teacher, who now teaches in a public school, said.

Other former staff members also described students having wet themselves, in some cases during practice tests. Two former staff members who worked at Success Academy Harlem West, a middle school, in the 2013-14 school year, said that they recalled having to go to
the supply closet to get extra underwear and sweatpants, which were always on hand, for students who had wet themselves.

Ms. Moskowitz said that, to mimic the environment of the actual test, when students are not supposed to go to the restroom except for an emergency, Success has all students go to the restroom immediately before practice tests. But students are still allowed to go during tests, she said. She acknowledged that there were sometimes accidents, but attributed them to the challenges of sharing space in public school buildings, which meant the restrooms were sometimes several floors away.

“We have plenty of kids who don’t always prepare adequately,” Ms. Moskowitz said, adding that “very occasionally there are accidents, and we get that it’s uncomfortable for the student.”

“It’s very emotional,” she said. “Teachers get emotional about it.”

**Suspension Rates**

Several former teachers and staff members said that they had also been uncomfortable with Success’s suspension rates.

At Success Academy Harlem 1, as the original school is now called, 23 percent of the 896 students were suspended for at least one day in 2012-13, the last year for which the state has data. At Public School 149, a school in the same building, 3 percent of students were suspended during that same period. Statewide, the average suspension rate is 4 percent. (A spokeswoman for Success said that the suspension rate at Success Academy Harlem 1 has since declined to 14 percent, and that several of the newer schools had rates below 10 percent.)

Students who frequently got in trouble sometimes left the network, former staff members said, because their parents got frustrated with the repeated suspensions or with being called in constantly to sit with their children at school.

Ms. Moskowitz said that the question of what was an appropriate number of suspensions was a complicated one, but that the suspension rate in public schools should not be regarded as “the gold standard.” She said that even very young children could do things that required an intervention, such as bringing razor blades to school or cursing at teachers.

“Often the suspensions are really to get the parents and the school to be on the same team, that there’s a serious issue,” she said. “If we don’t intervene, when they’re 13, that’s going to be a bigger problem,” she said.

The network’s critics say that its performance is skewed by the departure of its most difficult students. In a visit last month to a public school where 4 percent of students passed last year’s math tests, and that shares a building with a Success school where 96 percent of the students passed, the city’s schools chancellor, Carmen Farina, said, “We
would like to be at that percentage, but we keep all our kids from the day they walk into the building."

Success students who leave after fourth grade are not replaced because, Ms. Moskowitz said, new students entering at that point would be too far behind their classmates. But even if all those students stayed and continued to do poorly, Success schools would still significantly outperform their neighboring schools on tests.

Dahlia Graham, a teacher who came to Success Academy Harlem 1 in 2009, said that in the public school in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, where she previously taught, there was no clear discipline system. If a student hit another student, he might be removed from class briefly, but then would return, still angry, and disrupt the class again. She said it was a relief when she got to Success, where she said hitting resulted in suspension.

“It made my life so much easier,” Ms. Graham said.

As for the teachers who said they did not like the environment, Ms. Moskowitz said: “Most of the people who leave are a little angry, like they don’t like their work and they don’t seem happy teaching, and we really can’t have people who don’t love it.”

A Demanding Culture
On April 1, 2012, a leadership resident at Success Academy Harlem 2, Lauren Jonas, sent an email to her fourth-grade teachers.

The email, provided by a former staff member, said that the results on a recent, three-day practice test were “not what we had hoped for."

“You must demand every single minute,” Ms. Jonas wrote. “You must have higher behavioral and academic expectations than ever before.” Every letter was capitalized.

Nine to 12 students had failed to use the test-taking strategies they had been taught, known as the “plan of attack,” Ms. Jonas wrote.

“We can NOT let up on them,” she continued. “Any scholar who is not using the plan of attack will go to effort academy, have their parent called, and will miss electives. This is serious business, and there has to be misery felt for the kids who are not doing what is expected of them.”

At Ms. Jonas’s school, 64 percent of the teachers the year she wrote that email were not teaching there the next year, according to state figures. Researchers have linked high teacher turnover to lower performance by students on tests, but that is not the case at Success. At Success Academy Harlem 2 last year, 91 percent of students passed the state math tests, up from 76 percent the previous year. At Public School 30, which shares the building with Success Academy Harlem 2, 16 percent of students passed.

Ms. Jonas is now principal of one of the network’s newest schools, Success Academy
Harlem North West, a middle school.

When the 2012 email was read to her recently, Ms. Jonas cringed and said that she did not remember writing it. She said that she did not want students to be miserable and described her words as “poorly chosen.”

“I should be certainly more careful in how I’m communicating and how others might misinterpret the meaning behind it,” she said.

But Ms. Moskowitz defended the wording of Ms. Jonas’s email, saying that a reporter was reading too much into it.

“We use that terminology sometimes, meaning, you know, ‘Kids, you got to get it right the first time, and we’re not playing,’” she said.

“That is part of our culture — not having kids getting away with just not trying,” she continued. “Everybody’s working too hard. Parents are sacrificing to get up early. Teachers are working really hard. Simply not trying is not part of our culture.”
Appendix I: Contemporary Curriculum Diversity Model
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