Parental Motivations for Magnet School Choice: A Qualitative Study in Hartford, CT

Heather Moore ‘08
Educational Studies: Senior Research Project
Fall 2007: December 13, 2007
Significance

- Increasing popularity of school choice within Hartford
  - Sheff vs. O’Neill
Increasing popularity of school choice within Hartford
- Sheff vs. O’Neill
- Creation of 22 inter-district magnet schools
Significance

A private school curriculum at a public school price
Significance

A private school curriculum at a public school price
Research Question

- How does parental rationale on magnet school choice differ between:
  - high- versus low- rate neighborhoods?
  - white versus non-white parents in Hartford?
Research Question

- How does parental rationale on magnet school choice differ between:
  - high- versus low- rate neighborhoods?
  - white versus non-white parents in Hartford?

  ➔ Parent responses don’t differ between neighborhoods, but they do differ between race
Literature Review

- Large Scale qualitative study on school choice
- Interviews with parents and teachers in Cincinnati and St. Louis
Literature Review

- Large Scale qualitative study on school choice
- Interviews from parents in Cincinnati and St. Louis

My Study?

- Location
- One City
- Only Parents
- Magnet School Choice
Methods

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Rate Neighborhoods</th>
<th>Low Rate Neighborhoods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twain</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAND</td>
<td>Naylor</td>
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</table>
Methods

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*Created by Jesse Wanzer*

- Divided into census block groups
Methods

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- Divided into census block groups
- Highest Choosers?
Hello, my name is ______________ from Trinity College, would you be willing to participate in a two minute interview about your children's school choice right now? Your participation is completely voluntary, and anonymous. (If yes) Is it okay to tape record you?

1. Do you have school aged children?
   a. (If the answer is NO, say thank you and GOODBYE!)
2. What are their current grades?
3. What schools are the attending?
4. Last spring, did your child apply to any magnet schools?
5A. Which magnet schools did your child apply to?
   - Why are you interested in those magnet schools for your child?
     - Like Curriculum?
     - Convenience?
     - Dissatisfaction with current school?
5B. Why didn't you consider applying to magnet schools?
   - Dislike curriculum?
   - Inconvenience?
   - Satisfaction with current school?
6A. How did you learn about magnet schools?
6B. Did you receive information about magnet schools?
7. What are your perceptions of the neighborhood school that your child attends (or would have attended)?
8. Would you consider applying to private/parochial schools? Why or why not?

Demographics
Child
male/female
child's race or ethnicity
how much schooling have you (parent/guardian) completed?
- Some h.s.,
- H.s. diploma,
- Some college,
- College degree,
- Graduate degree

FOR INTERVIEWER ONLY
Interviewer Name
Interview Number
Neighborhood Zone
## Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewer name and number</th>
<th>School Zones: Twain, Sand, Burr, and Naylor</th>
<th>Neighborhoods: High or Low</th>
<th>Current Grades of Children</th>
<th>Current School</th>
<th>Current School Type: Neighborhood, Public, Private, Parochial, Project Choice, Charter, Magnet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jesse 1</td>
<td>Twain</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Twain</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jesse 2</td>
<td>Twain</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Jumoke Academy</td>
<td>Charter</td>
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<td>Twain</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<td>Twain</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Clark</td>
<td>Public</td>
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<td>Twain</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>East Hartford High</td>
<td>Public</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heather 4</td>
<td>Twain</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Lankford</td>
<td>Parochial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noelle 1</td>
<td>Naylor</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Naylor</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noelle 2</td>
<td>Naylor</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>4, 8,10</td>
<td>Naylor, Buckley</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noelle 3</td>
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<td>Low</td>
<td>3, 6, 8, 8</td>
<td>Naylor, Classical</td>
<td>Neighborhood/Magnet</td>
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<td>2, 2</td>
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<td>Heather 5</td>
<td>Naylor</td>
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<td>10, 12</td>
<td>Prince Tech</td>
<td>Magnet</td>
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<td>Naylor</td>
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<td>1, 7, 7</td>
<td>Naylor</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heather 7</td>
<td>Naylor</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>4, 11</td>
<td>Kennelly, Prince Tech</td>
<td>Public</td>
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<td>4, 4, 6</td>
<td>Corpus Christi</td>
<td>Private</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Naylor</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
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<td>Heather 10</td>
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<td>2, 3, 9</td>
<td>Stanton High School, (old)</td>
<td>Parochial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elysha 2</td>
<td>Burr</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Buckley</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
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<td>Elysha 3</td>
<td>Burr</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Burr</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elysha 4</td>
<td>Burr</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>MD Fox</td>
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<td>10th</td>
<td>Buckley</td>
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<td>Low</td>
<td>4, 8</td>
<td>Burr</td>
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<td>Heather 14</td>
<td>Burr</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>2, 7, 7</td>
<td>Dwight, Capital Prep</td>
<td>Pub/Magnet</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Methods

*Created by Jesse Wanzer*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Total Interviews</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twain</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAND</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burr</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naylor</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Interviews</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
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<td>Burr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naylor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Interviews</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choosers</th>
<th>Non-Choosers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High Rate Neighborhoods</strong> (Twain and Sand)</td>
<td>5 (42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low Rate Neighborhoods</strong> (Naylor and Burr)</td>
<td>7 (58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methods

Grade Levels
Pre-K through 12th

Respondents by Race

Respondents by Level of Education
Claim #1: Choosers had similar pull factor motivations in both high-and low-rate neighborhoods.

### Pull Factors?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Rate Neighborhoods</th>
<th>Low Rate Neighborhoods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60% (3 out of 5)</td>
<td>71% (5 out of 7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Educational Opportunities?

“Because I wanted my son to have a good education. I just wanted him to have opportunities.”

(Naylor: Cintli #2)
Claim #1: Choosers had similar pull factor motivations in both high-and low-rate neighborhoods.

"My niece goes there, and it has a good reputation."

(Naylor: Heather #6).
Claim #2: Non-choosers had similar levels of satisfaction with their child’s current school in both high and low rate neighborhoods.

Variety of schools?

High Rate Neighborhoods
80% (4 out of 5)

Low Rate Neighborhoods
75% (12 out of 16)
Claim #2: Non-choosers had similar levels of satisfaction with their child’s current school in both high and low rate neighborhoods.

“The kids are doing good there. Most of their teachers were my teachers. They take care of them.”

(Sand: Heather #2)

High Rate Neighborhoods
80% (4 out of 5)

Low Rate Neighborhoods
75% (12 out of 16)
Claim #2: Non-choosers had similar levels of satisfaction with their child’s current school in both high and low rate neighborhoods.

“...for the younger ones they are doing so well. When you got a good thing going, why change it?”

(Naylor: Heather #5)

High Rate Neighborhoods: 80% (4 out of 5)

Low Rate Neighborhoods: 75% (12 out of 16)
Claim #3: While some white families flatly rejected Hartford public schools, non-white families did not follow this pattern. Close to half of African American respondents constructively criticized their neighborhood schools.

White Families?

“They have always had a Catholic school education.”

(Naylor: Heather #2)
Claim #3: While some white families flatly rejected Hartford public schools, non-white families did not follow this pattern. Close to half of African American respondents constructively criticized their neighborhood schools.

White Families?

“I just knew that I was never sending them to Hartford schools.”

(Naylor: Heather #2)
Claim #3: While some white families flatly rejected Hartford public schools, non-white families did not follow this pattern. Close to half of African American respondents constructively criticized their neighborhood schools.

White Families?

“I’m not crazy about some of the locations of magnet schools. For example, there is one in the Flatbush area, and my daughter wants to go there. But I would have put that school here, and bused those kids here, instead of us going into that kind of a neighborhood.”

(Naylor: Heather #4)
Claim #3: While some white families flatly rejected Hartford public schools, non-white families did not follow this pattern. Close to half of African American respondents constructively criticized their neighborhood schools.

Non-white families?

Zero non-white families spoke in similar fashion.
Claim #3: While some white families flatly rejected Hartford public schools, non-white families did not follow this pattern. Close to half of African American respondents constructively criticized their neighborhood schools.

- **African American families?**
- **43% (6 out of 14)**
  - African American families in both high- and low-rate neighborhoods.
Claim #3: While some white families flatly rejected Hartford public schools, non-white families did not follow this pattern. Close to half of African American respondents constructively criticized their neighborhood schools.

African American families? "There isn’t much that they do with them to make them really think and focus. So, I’m just trying to find something that will challenge them more and get better grades and you know.”

(Sand: Cintli #1)
Claim #3: While some white families flatly rejected Hartford public schools, non-white families did not follow this pattern. Close to half of African American respondents constructively criticized their neighborhood schools.

African American families?

“Umm, no. I just want to do the best for my child.”

(Twain: Jesse #2)
Further Research?
• Jack Dougherty

• Jesse Wanzer, Christina Ramsay, Cintli Sanchez, Noelle Bessette, Elysha Padilla

• Parent Participants
Questions?