

Why Parents Choose: Patterns of School Choice and the Role of the Hartford Community Schools

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Introduction

- Hartford Reform Strategy
 - All-choice system of school
- Hartford Community Schools
 - 6 elementary/middle schools
 - Improve academic outcomes & neighborhood stability
 - partnerships with local non-profits
 - Extended school hours & services
 - Schools as local community centers

Research Question

- Why do low-income minority parents choose schools and what does this mean for the role of the Hartford Community Schools within the larger district reform strategy?

Case for Significance

- Is school choice an appropriate and effective method to equalize education?
- “How” well studied, “why” not well studied

Literature Review

- Rational Choice Theory (Bell, 2008)
- Choice differs along socioeconomic lines (Haynes, Phillips, & Goldring, 2010)
- Increase class/racial segregation? (Schneider et al, 1998)

Methods

- Qualitative
 - 6 interviews with Hartford parents
- Quantitative
 - Survey data collected by the National Household Education Survey – Parent and Family Involvement in Education

Thesis

- I argue that a range of social and economic factors, not parental indifference, significantly impacts the patterns of school choice among low-income minority parents. The community school structure is necessary in Hartford to better serve the needs of local students and their families.

Location

- “I’m a strong believer in my children walking to school. I believe in the community school. I believe in neighborhood schools”
 - (Hartford Mother)
- “I wanted to pick my son up. I didn’t want him walking home.”
 - (Hartford Mother)

Parent Involvement

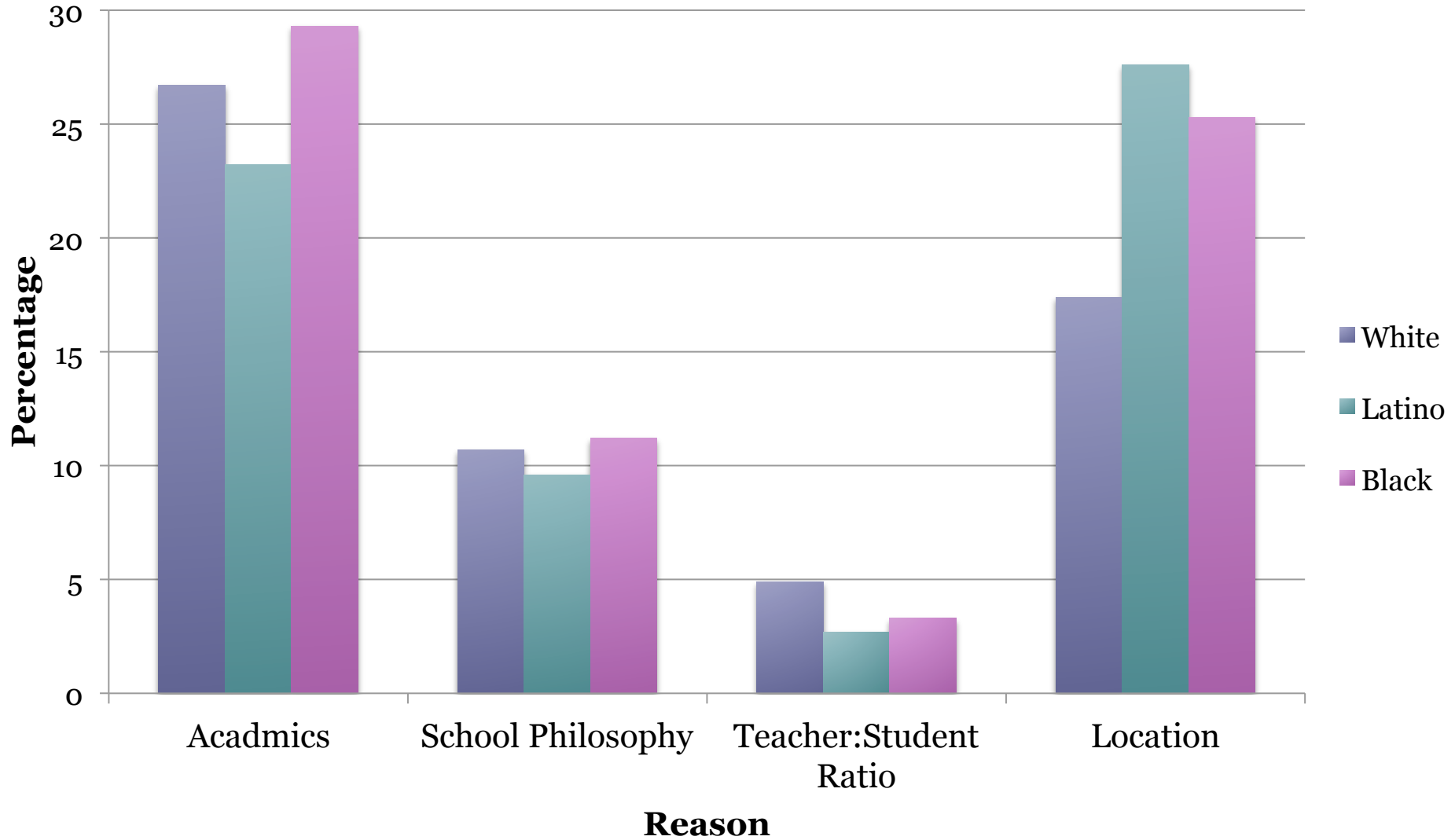
- “The other choice, a suburban town, my concern for that, I wasn’t driving. I didn’t have access to a car. I’m still not driving but I have access to a car, now. And I am very involved in my kid’s life. If he were to go to one of those suburban schools I want to be sure that when they have parent teacher conferences, parent-school association, I can take an active part in that.

▫ [Hartford Mother](#)

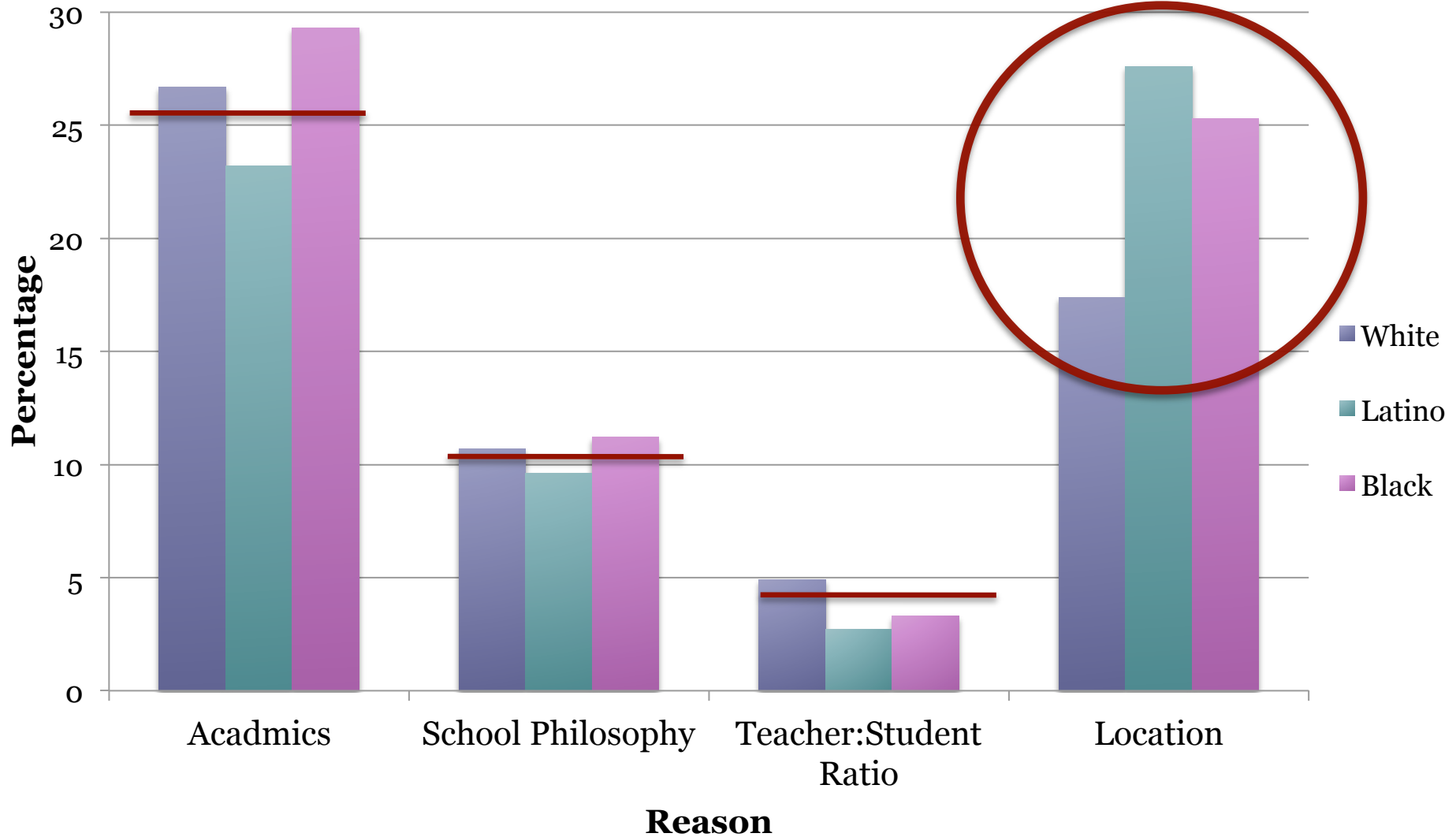
Race and Ethnicity

- “I looked at academics... and the other thing, to be honest with you, when I look at the racial make up of the schools, I didn’t want my child to be, one of the 10 black children in that school”
 - (Hartford Mother & 1st generation immigrant)
- “I think one of the very good things that is lacking in our schools is, I think, the mindset of the people who serve the people”
 - (Hartford Mother)

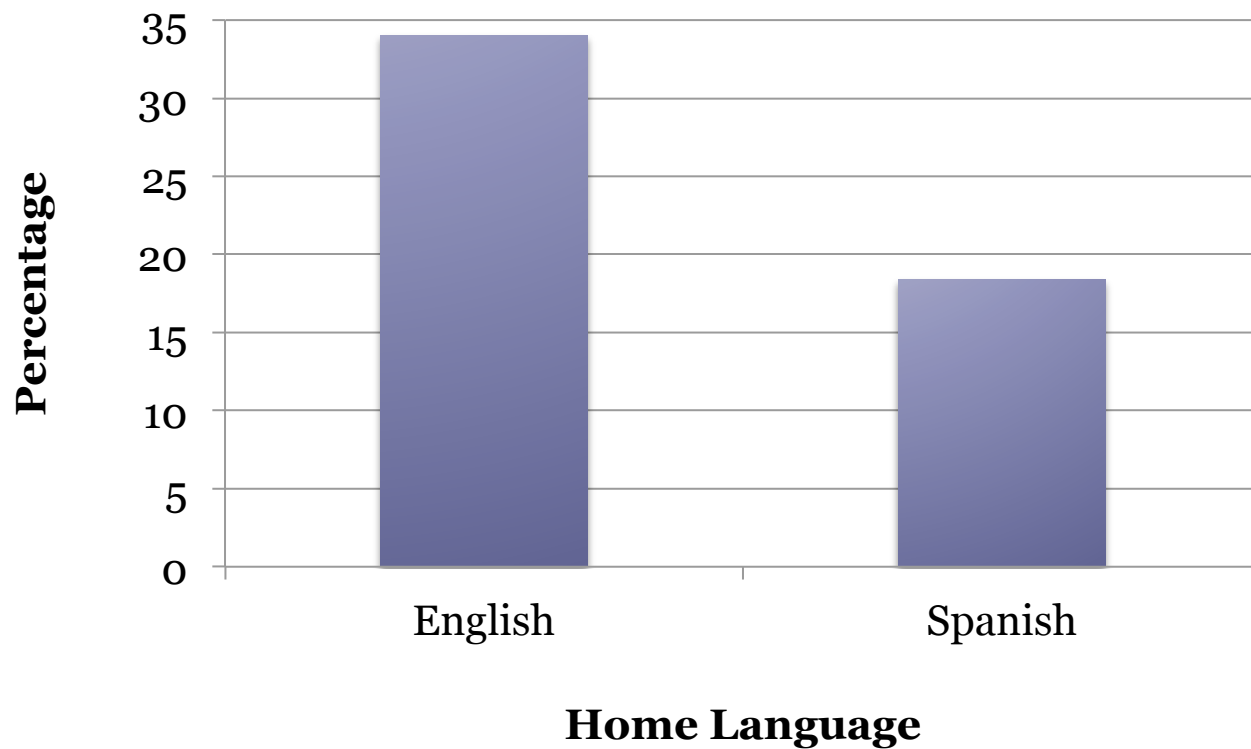
Main Reason for School Choice by Race/Ethnicity



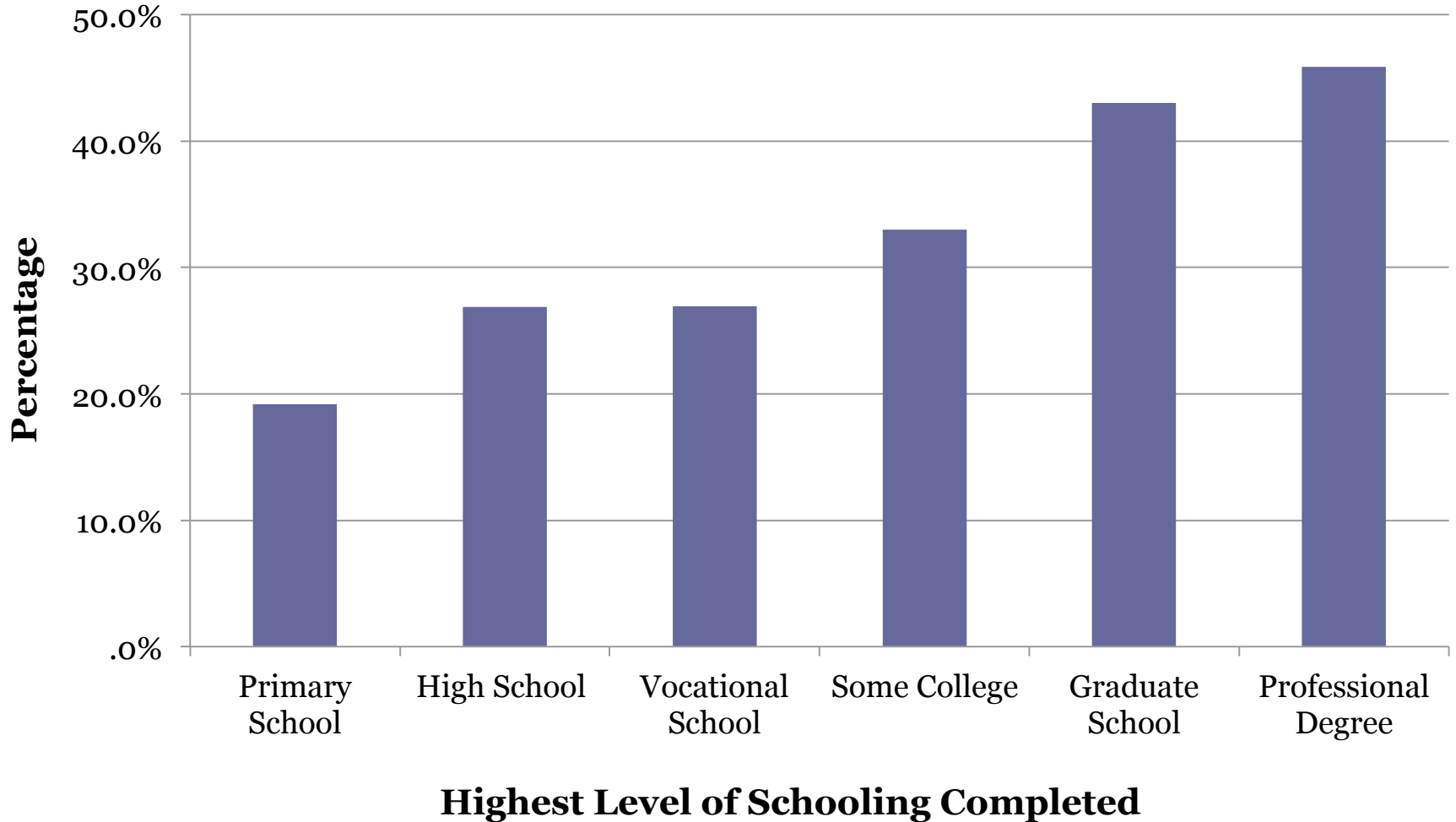
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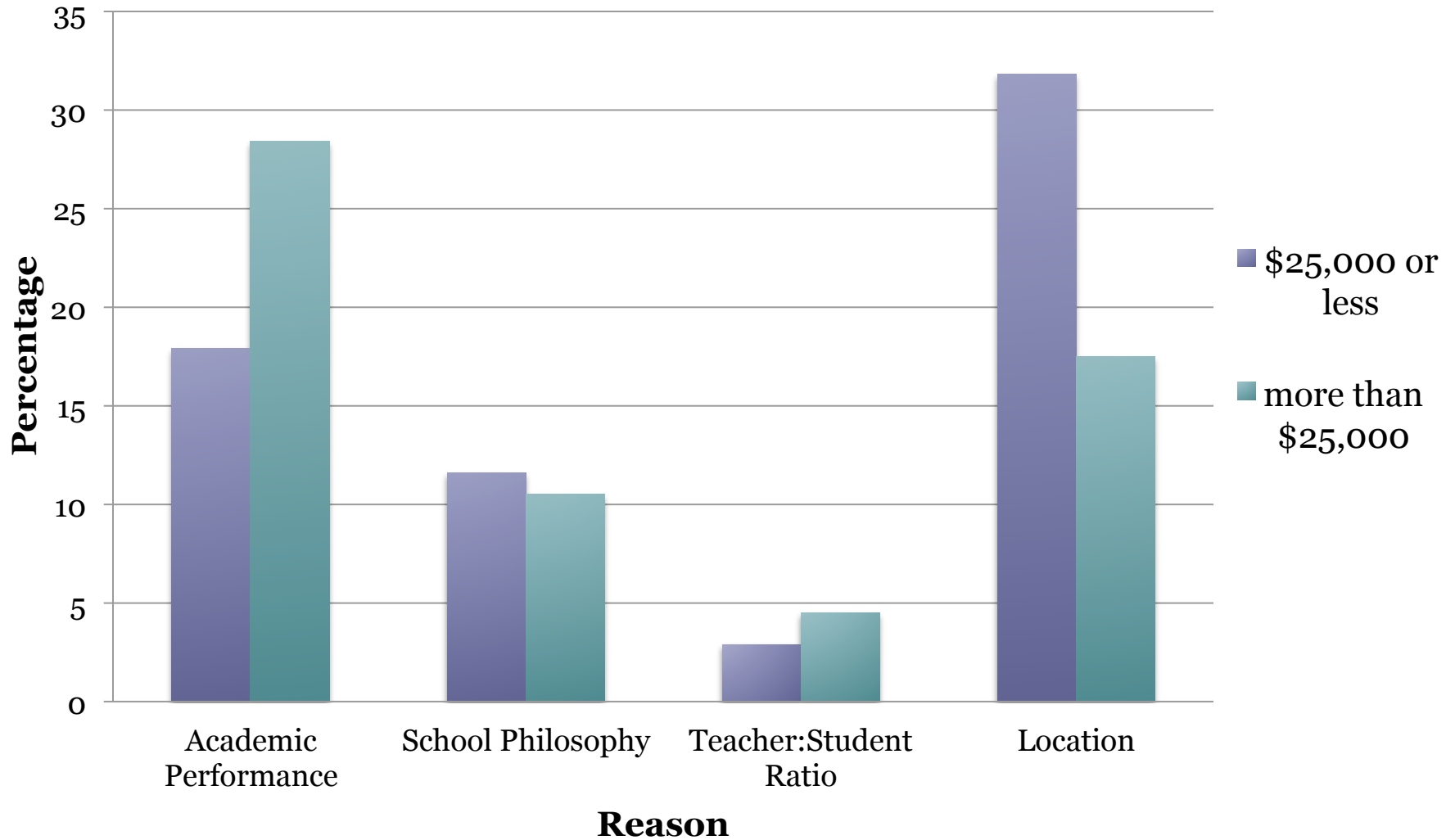
Home Language of Parents who Considered Other Schools



Mother's Highest Level of Education Compared with Likelihood to Consider at Least one Other School



Main Reason for School Choice by Income



Conclusion

- Race/Ethnicity alone does not impact school choice
- School choice is affected by economic factors and social structures/hierarchy
- Hartford Community Schools as crucial support structure

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