

NATIONAL CENTER ON  
School Choice



## Perceptions of Charter School Competition and Its Relationship With Principal Leadership in Traditional Public, Magnet, and Private Schools

**Marisa Cannata**

**Paper presented at the National Center on School  
Choice conference, School Choice and School  
Improvement: Research in State, District, and  
Community Contexts, October 2009**

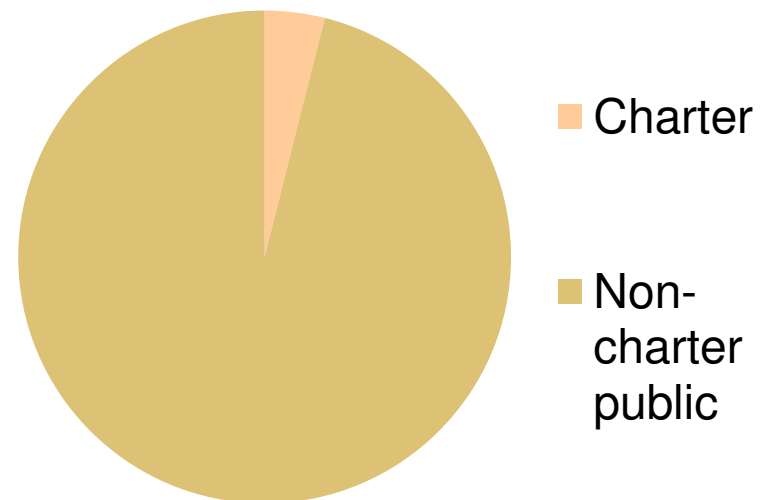


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# Why Focus on Charter Competition?

- Increasing presence of charter schools and charter school research
- Charter schools are a sliver of the public education pie
- Potential for much larger impact of charter schools on education

**Number of schools  
total, 2007-8**



# Theoretical Framework

- Direct and indirect effects of charter schools on educational outcomes (Eberts & Hollenbeck, 2001)
  - Charter schools themselves are more effective
  - Increased productivity of non-charter schools due to competition from charter schools (Betts, 2009; Eberts & Hollenbeck, 2001)
- Changes incentives for schools
  - More incentives to satisfy parents, operate efficiently

# Mechanism of Competition Effect

- School personnel recognize loss of students or threat of losing students as detrimental to school
- School actions as a result of perceived threat lead to improved outcomes
  - Short-term: Adopt new programs or practices, lower class size
  - Long-term: Close underperforming schools, reduce administrative costs

# Research Questions

- What are principals' perceptions of the competition provided by charter schools and how do they vary among magnet, private, and traditional public schools?
- What affects principals' perceptions of charter competition?
- What are the effects of charter competition on principal leadership behavior?

# School Sampling Frame, 2007-08

## Schools tested by Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA)

- 321 schools of choice
  - 223 charter public schools
  - 65 magnet public schools
  - 33 private
- 5,864 traditional public schools
  - 345 after applying matching criteria

# Matching Criteria

- School zip codes used to identify list of public schools
- Same state
- Geographic proximity
- Grade level configuration
- Percentage of students tested
- School-level demographic data
  - Common Core of Data (CCD) (2005-06)
  - Private School Survey (PSS)
  - Free and reduced price lunch
  - Race/ethnicity

# School Participation & Response Rates

- 296 schools agreed to participate (44%)
- 353 principals and assistant principals in 248 schools completed surveys
- 4 schools dropped due to no charter school law
- N=138
  - 101 Traditional public schools
  - 22 Magnet schools
  - 15 Private schools

# Actual Competition Measures

- Actual competition
  - Minimum distance to a charter school
  - Counts of charter schools within distance bands
  - Percentage of students within distance bands that attend charter schools

## Distance bands

- Less than or equal to 2.5 miles
- Between 2.5 and 5 miles
- Between 5 and 10 miles

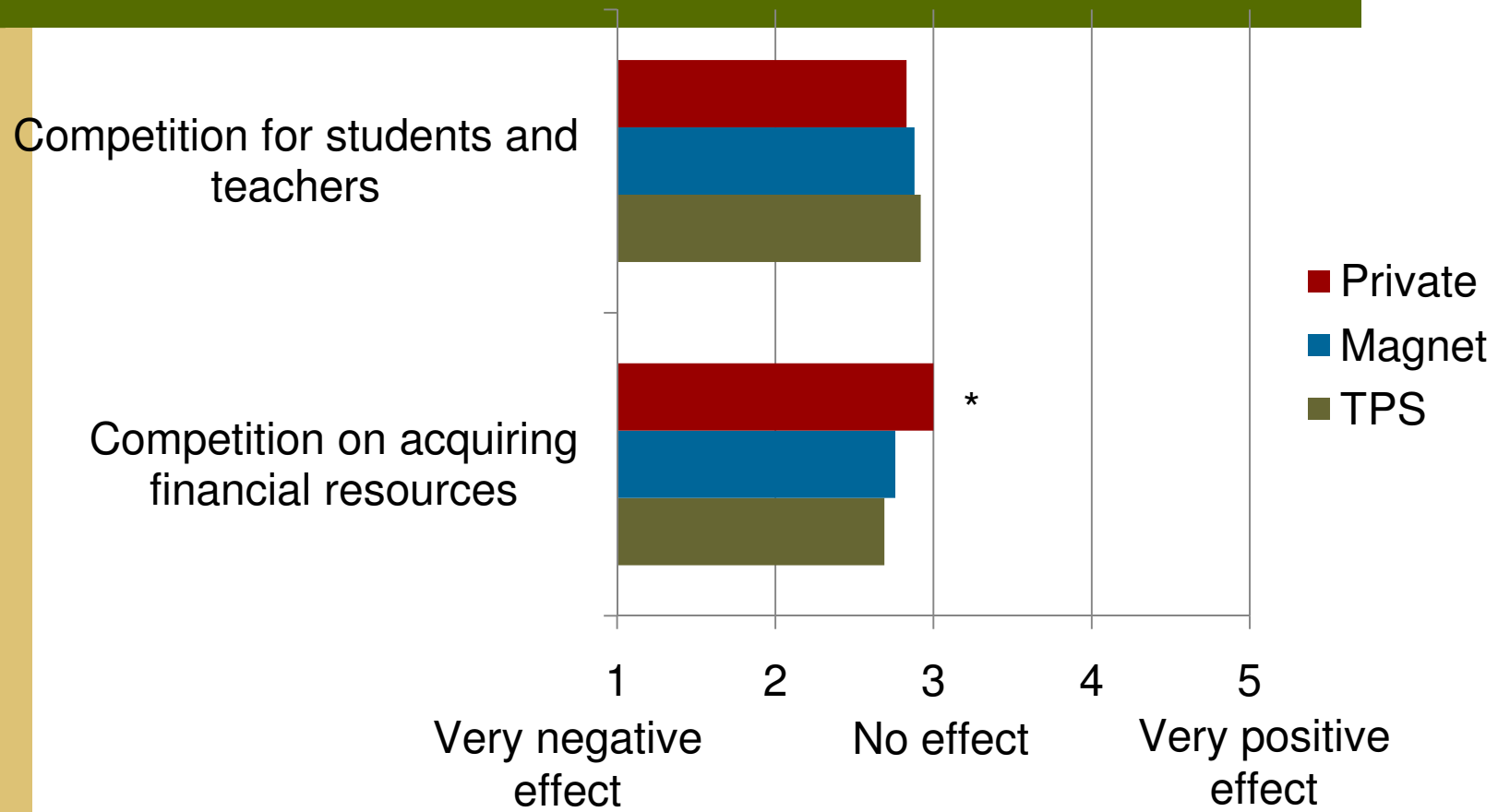
# Perceived Competition Measures

- Competition on acquiring financial resources
- Competition for teachers and students
  - Recruiting teachers, Retaining teachers, Attracting students, Retaining students (alpha=.84)
- Likert scale
  - 1=Very negative, 2=Somewhat negative, 3=No effect, 4=Somewhat positive, 5=Very positive
  - Used both continuous measure and dichotomous measure of whether they perceived very or somewhat negative effect

# Principal Leadership Behavior

- Routine management (alpha=.68)
  - Supervise clerical, cafeteria, and maintenance staff; Monitor public spaces; Deal with emergencies; Work on discipline/attendance issues
- Instructional improvement (alpha=.84)
  - Demonstrate instructional practices; Observe instruction; Examine and discuss student work; Examine and discuss standardized test results; Provide staff development; Support school improvement efforts; Monitor the curriculum; Monitor instructional practices
- Public relations (alpha=.73)
  - Promote the school's image in the community, Attend or participate in events taking place in the community; Host fundraisers; Answer questions from potential students or parents

# What are principals' perceptions of the competition provided by charter schools?



# Analytic Approach

- What affects principals' perceptions of charter competition?

$$\text{Perceived competition}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Actual competition})_i + \beta_2(\text{School type})_i + \beta_3(\text{School characteristics})_i + \varepsilon_i$$

- First used linear model, then logistic model as few respondents perceived a positive effect

- What are the effects of charter competition on principal leadership behavior?

$$\text{Principal behavior}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Charter competition})_i + \beta_2(\text{School type})_i + \beta_3(\text{School characteristics})_i + \varepsilon_i$$

# What affects principals' perceptions of charter competition?

	Attracting and retaining teachers and students		Acquiring financial resources	
	OLS	Logistic	OLS	Logistic
Minimum distance to charter	ns	0.891	ns	ns
Charter school count				
<2.5 miles	-0.064	1.969	ns	ns
>2.5 and <5 miles	ns	ns	ns	ns
>5 and <10 miles	ns	ns	ns	ns
Charter enrollment share				
<2.5 miles	ns	1.116	-0.090	1.092
>2.5 and <5 miles	ns	ns	ns	ns
>5 and <10 miles	ns	1.181	ns	ns

Models also include school type, instructional level, size, principal experience, percent minority, LEP, and FRL students

# What are the effects of charter competition on principal behavior?

	Routine management	Instructional leadership	Public relations
Minimum distance to charter	ns	ns	ns
Charter school count			
<2.5 miles	ns	ns	ns
>2.5 and <5 miles	ns	ns	ns
>5 and <10 miles	ns	ns	ns
Charter enrollment share			
<2.5 miles	ns	ns	ns
>2.5 and <5 miles	ns	ns	ns
>5 and <10 miles	ns	ns	ns
Perceived competition			
Students and teachers	ns	ns	ns
Financial resources	ns	ns	-0.258

# Conclusion

- Few principals perceived charter competition to affect their school.
  - Consistent with previous research
  - If there is an effect, it is negative
- If a charter school was within 2.5 miles, principals were more likely to perceive a charter school threat
- Little evidence that charter competition was related to leadership behavior

# Implications and Next Steps

- Mechanism of charter competition may not operate according to theory
- Need more research on variation among private schools in competition from charter schools
- Additional measures of principal behavior and school practices

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