EDUCATION POLICY AND NEWSPAPERS: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Jumana Khalifeh

Follow this and additional works at: https://via.library.depaul.edu/soe_etd

Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation
https://via.library.depaul.edu/soe_etd/132

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Education at Digital Commons@DePaul. It has been accepted for inclusion in College of Education Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@DePaul. For more information, please contact digitalservices@depaul.edu.
DePaul University

College of Education

A Dissertation in Education
with a Concentration in Curriculum Studies

EDUCATION POLICY AND NEWSPAPERS: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

by

Jumana Khalifeh

© 2017 Jumana Khalifeh

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

June 2017
We approve the dissertation of Jumana Khalifeh.

Gayle Mindes, Ed.D.
Professor, Department of Teacher Education
Dissertation Chair

Jeffrey Kuzmic, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Curriculum Studies
Committee Member

Roberta Garner, Ph.D.
Professor, Sociology
Committee Member

May 3, 2017
Date
ABSTRACT

This study examined the discursive framing of school closings as promoted by both the 
*Educational Facilities Master Plan* published by Chicago Public Schools in 2013 and the 
discourse of newspaper articles in the *Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun Times,* and *Catalyst Chicago.* A critical discourse analysis approach as both theory and method allowed for better 
understanding of the political nature of social goods and uncovered relations of authority and 
power in the use of language in these texts. This study revealed the complicated nature of the 
interplay of neoliberalism, education policy, and the media in the form of newspapers; therefore, 
it is useful in promoting critical policy research, opening the door for educational reform 
conversations. Findings supported that neoliberal hegemonic ideology is present in the language 
of the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* and newspaper articles. However, this study’s findings 
also revealed the important role media has in providing the ability to resist, contest, and 
challenge neoliberal ideology in a democratic society.

*Keywords: policy, media, newspapers, neoliberalism*
# Table of Contents

List of Figures .......................................................................................................................... vii

List of Tables ............................................................................................................................ viii

Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................... ix

Dedication ................................................................................................................................... x

## Chapter 1: Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1

- Background and Context ........................................................................................................ 2
  - Historical background ........................................................................................................ 3
  - Conceptual context .............................................................................................................. 5
- Research Approach ................................................................................................................ 7
- Statement of Purpose and Research Questions .................................................................... 8
- Significance of the Study ....................................................................................................... 10
- Conclusion .............................................................................................................................. 10

## Chapter 2: Literature Review ............................................................................................... 13

- Overview of Capitalism .......................................................................................................... 14
- What is Neoliberalism? .......................................................................................................... 17
- What is Policy? ...................................................................................................................... 26
  - Policy process ................................................................................................................... 27
  - Critical policy research ...................................................................................................... 30
  - The media and education policy research ......................................................................... 35
- Neoliberalism and the Media ................................................................................................. 38
- Frames and Language .......................................................................................................... 40
- Conclusion .............................................................................................................................. 49
- Gap in the Literature .......................................................................................................... 52

## Chapter 3: Methodology ....................................................................................................... 53

- Theoretical Framework .......................................................................................................... 54
- Critical theory ....................................................................................................................... 55
Chapter 4: Findings

Overview of Politics .................................................................79
Theme #1: Economic Imperatives ..............................................81
  Infrastructure changes ..........................................................83
  Access to high-quality schools ............................................92
Theme #2: Choice....................................................................98
  *Educational Facilities Master Plan* framing .........................98
  *Chicago Sun-Times* framing ..............................................99
  *Chicago Tribune* framing ................................................100
  *Catalyst Chicago* framing .................................................101
Theme #3: Accountability ..........................................................102
  *Chicago Sun-Times* framing ..............................................103
  *Catalyst Chicago* framing ................................................104
  *Chicago Tribune* framing ................................................105
Conclusion .............................................................................106

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications ......................................108

Ideology ..................................................................................110
Hegemony .............................................................................113
Media ....................................................................................118
List of Figures

Figure 1. The conceptual framework for the study. ..........................................................59

Figure 2. How ideology flows between the capitalist class (neoliberals), education policymakers, and media producers (newspapers). .........................................................112

Figure 3. Educators’ disruption of the flow of ideology between the capitalist class (neoliberals), education policymakers, and media producers (newspapers) .................133
List of Tables

Table 1. Data Sample Types ......................................................................................................................65
Table 2. Distribution of Articles ..............................................................................................................67
Table 3. Themes .........................................................................................................................................81
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank many individuals who have supported and encouraged me during the past seven years. I would like to thank my entire dissertation committee. I am deeply thankful to Dr. Roberta Garner, my former sociology professor, mentor, and colleague whose guidance, support, and expertise has made this journey rewarding, especially during the stages that seemed impossible. I wish to thank many of my colleagues in the Department of Sociology at DePaul University for their words of wisdom and encouragement while I was juggling my many roles: teacher, student, mother, and wife. Special thanks to Jennifer Keplinger for not just her proofreading and copyediting expertise but even more importantly for her encouragement and positive outlook throughout the process. In addition, I would like to thank Drs. Staci H. Zake and Amy Haunstein from my cohort for always being there and for the many hours of conversation and reflection that kept us all motivated, but most importantly for the lifelong friendships we have made.
Dedication

To my parents, my late father Zaki Fakhoury and my dear mother Feryal Fakhoury, for instilling the values of hard work, family, and education, and for shouldering the load of life raising five children and accomplishing the goal of a higher education for all of us.

To my husband, Bassam Khalifeh, for giving me words of wisdom at times when it seemed impossible and believing in me.

To my dear children, Rana, Rommie, and Jenna, there are no words to describe what you mean to me. You are my life, my world.

I thank you all and love you!
Chapter 1: Introduction

At the end of my third year of graduate course work in 2013, I read Teaching by Numbers: Deconstructing the Discourse of Standards and Accountability in Education, by Peter Taubman (2009). Taubman focused on the power of individuals responsible for policy-making and the neoliberal economic policy driving the transformation of education through the audit culture of standards and accountability. His analysis of discourse, language, and ideology piqued my interest in understanding the discourse of neoliberalism. Although Taubman tries to define neoliberalism as a doctrine that advocates deregulation, privatization, and spending cuts in a free market society, others have noted that neoliberalism can be understood as a mutable, complex system that integrates ideology and practice and circulates through the discourses it constructs, directing economic policy by prioritizing the market as a guiding force through free trade, market de-regulation, and privatization (Hancock & Garner, 2009; Harvey, 2005; Peck, 2013; Springer, 2012). Because of the complex nature of neoliberalism, this study starts with the premise that a deeper understanding of its language and meaning is relevant as a foundation for this study.

Meanwhile, as I was trying to understand the concepts of discourse and language as they related to Taubman’s (2009) analysis of neoliberalism, local newspapers were reporting on the closure of 49 schools in Chicago, and I wondered how the newspaper articles were interpreting the policies driving the school closures and how the local public understood the discourse and language written about school closures. It was this discourse in policy language that intrigued me about the nature of what was occurring politically in a democratic society. I realized that a critical analysis is needed to understand the way newspapers frame education issues, and this framing is also about how language and power are enacted in text and talk (Gee, 2008,
Fairclough, 2010; Harvey, 2005; Lakoff, 2004; van Dijk, 1988, 2006). Moreover, my choice of critical policy research of the Chicago Public Schools *Educational Facilities Master Plan* (2013) and newspapers is based on judgments of relevance aligned with Gee’s (2011) critical discourse analysis in that they are “ultimately theoretical judgments, that is, they are based on the analyst’s theories of how language, contexts, and interactions work in general and in the specific context being analyzed” and are relevant “to the arguments the analysis is attempting to make” (p. 117). More importantly, issues of language and power related to both education and the profound role of mass media are both critical topics for discussion, because dialogue matters in a democracy.

**Background and Context**

Numerous scholars have argued that the political and economic dimensions of educational issues matter in a democracy (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Dewey, 1916; Giroux, 2004b, 2008; Lipman, 2004, 2006, 2008; Lipman & Haines, 2007; Lipman & Hursh, 2007; Ravitch, 2010). However, this research is not about Taubman’s (2009) audit culture or standardization; rather, it is about the need for critical policy research on *how* and *why* language is used to construct educational discourse. Neoliberalism is an important starting point for understanding educational issues in policy documents and newspapers, because “when we use language, social goods and their distribution are always at stake, language is always ‘political’ in a deep sense” (Gee, 2011, p. 7).

Similar to Taubman (2009), many scholars have noted that historically educational opportunity has been shaped by reform decisions made by political and economic institutions (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Kliebard, 2004; Ravitch, 2010; Taubman, 2010). These decisions are made possible through federal, state, and local legislation. Therefore, understanding the language of education reform policy is important because at no other time in the history of the United
States have so many urban schools been affected by change as they have been by recent school closures (Rury, 2002; Tozer, Senese, & Violas, 2012).

Not only is the discourse of policy documents and newspaper articles important to this study, but also the social changes embedded in larger economic, historical, and political practices. Overall, cities like Cleveland, Washington, D.C., Pittsburg, and New York have all seen massive school closures; however, none were impacted as significantly as Chicago (Lipman, 2008, 2011b), where the seven-member board of Chicago Public Schools (CPS), all of whom were appointed by the city’s mayor rather than publicly elected, made the decision to close 49 schools in 2013. Therefore, if how the public interprets and reacts to critical education policy depends on newspapers’ interpretation of these policies and events, then in a democratic society, the public needs a clear understanding of the relationship between education policy, the media in general, newspapers in particular, and their communities’ economic, political, and social decision makers, particularly in large, complex cities like Chicago.

**Historical background.** The background for this study starts in 2009, when a bipartisan task force was created as part of Illinois by Public Act 96-803, the Chicago Educational Facilities Task Force. Then, from 2010 to 2011, this task force made policy and legislative recommendations to ensure that Chicago CPS made transparent decisions on school action and the closing of public schools in Chicago with the input of the local community members, including parents and teachers. On August 20, 2011, Governor Pat Quinn signed into law Illinois Public Act 97-0474, which required CPS to create, approve, and have in place by July 2013 a 10-year facility master plan that detailed disclosure and transparency in CPS capital budgeting and spending on facilities, i.e., schools (Illinois General Assembly, 2011). On September 25, 2013,
the CPS board voted to approve its *Educational Facilities Master Plan* (Chicago Board of Education, 2013).

Shortly beforehand, in February 2011 Rahm Emanuel was elected mayor of Chicago. He chose Jean-Claude Brizard, the superintendent of schools in Rochester, New York, to become the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of CPS. Soon after, in 2012, the Chicago Teachers Union went on strike for the first time in 25 years for issues that included fair pay, fair teacher evaluation, protection of benefits, and increased teacher training (Liebelson, 2012). Just three weeks after the seven-day strike ended, CPS CEO Jean-Claude Brizard announced his resignation after only 17 months on the job, amid complaints about his communication and management style and his inability to carry out Mayor Emanuel’s directive to lengthen the school day (Byrne, Ahmed-Ullah, & Sobel, 2012). Brizard was then replaced by Barbara Byrd-Bennett, the CEO who would work with Mayor Emanuel to close schools in Chicago. Thus, the issues regarding school closures and how the mayor saw the role of CPS’s CEO were prevalent.

In view of this, backlash over political decisions regarding school closings arose long before the 2012 Chicago Teachers Union strike and subsequent arrival of Byrd-Bennett, with many communities demanding transparency for the guidelines for assessments made regarding schools in their areas (*Catalyst Chicago*, 2010). More specifically, local community members and the Chicago Teachers Union were demanding transparency about the decisions made by Mayor Emanuel about school closures (Harvard Law Program on Negotiation, 2012). In addition, the *Report of the Illinois General Assembly’s Chicago Educational Facilities Task Force 2012-2013* found that CPS under Mayor Emanuel continued to have a lack of transparency about the guidelines that determine which schools would close (Illinois General Assembly, 2014). Equally important is an article written by Christian Far and Marcus Riley (2013) about
the closing of schools; they quote Chicago Teachers Union President Karen Lewis as stating, “All of this stuff is done under the cloak of darkness without transparency” (para. 6). To aid in understanding the complicated nature of three exclusive topics, neoliberalism, education policy, and newspapers, the conceptual context below provides a starting point.

**Conceptual context.** To understand the crisis related to school closure in Chicago, this study asked questions about the relationship that has developed among neoliberalism, education reform policy, and newspapers to reveal how school policy and the discourse of school closures is first shaped by policy documents, then reshaped by a significant segment of newspapers. One aspect of this study, neoliberalism, can be understood as a mutable, complex system that integrates ideology and practice and circulates through the discourses it constructs, directing economic policy by prioritizing the market as a guiding force through free trade, market deregulation, and privatization (Hancock & Garner, 2009; Harvey, 2005; Peck, 2013; Springer, 2012). In Chicago, economic policy has “altered the urban landscape, replacing large swaths of working-class and low-income housing, and public housing with upscale condominiums and retail and leisure spaces” and displays the manifestation of “refurbished downtown landscapes of parks, museums, tourist attractions, upscale shops, residential spaces, and cultural venues” (Lipman & Haines, 2007, p. 472). Full-scale neighborhood destruction in industrial cities like Chicago represents neoliberalism in practice through its market-oriented restructuring projects, gentrification, the privatization of schools, and the destabilizing of employment to temporary status (Brenner & Theodore, 2002, 2012; Giroux, 2008; Harvey, 2005; Lipman & Haines, 2007; Peck, Brenner, & Theodore, 2010). Although many would argue that Chicago’s downtown is a wonderful place to visit and shop, its growth and its upscale landscape was made possible by the destruction of local public schools and the displacement of entire communities, and it diverted
funding that could have been used to revitalize local schools (Lipman & Haines, 2007; Lipman, 2011b). Thus, many urban cities have also seen similar revitalization due to neoliberalism.

It is important to realize that these neoliberal dynamics are not just found in Chicago, but also occur nationally (Brenner & Theodore, 2002, 2012). As the urban landscape has altered, so has educational opportunity. Not only in Chicago, but also across the country, education has been shaped by reform decisions made for political and economic reasons (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Kliebard, 2004; Ravitch, 2010; Taubman, 2010). Starting in the 1980s, concerns raised by the A Nation at Risk report (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) focused on the need for national and international economic competitiveness as a reason for the need to institute education reform. Consequently, federal education policy has attempted to make critical changes in urban schools across the nation through neoliberal reforms, calling on states and local school districts to operate in a privatized marketplace arena at the expense of the public sector (Apple, 2001; Giroux, 2004b; Lipman, 2004; Taubman, 2010).

With that in mind, the primary national and local education policy discussion for more than 30 years has focused on how to solve the following “problems:” underperforming schools, cost savings, and underutilization of buildings (Apple, 2001; Giroux, 2004b; Lipman, 2011), and a major policy strategy for school reform has promoted charter school growth as a solution (Hursh, 2007; Lipman 2011). How these shortcomings are defined and understood influences the policy strategies developed to address them. Some scholars argue that the discursive framing of these education problems and solutions reflects a neoliberal agenda and undermines education’s democratic roots (Giroux, 2004b; Lipman, 2004; Taubman, 2009). For this reason it was critical to pay attention to the discourse and language used in presenting these education policy discussions.
Therefore, it was important to examine the discursive framing of education reform policy and the ways print newspapers in particular report about it because language in use is always about the manifestation of social power (Gee, 2008). Newspapers have long acted as a forum for local policy issues, publishing both professionally written articles that inform the public about changes to policy and stakeholder-written editorials and commentaries that provide insight into community members’ positions on these changes. Newspapers are more readily accessible than television, which regardless does not broadcast public-generated content. In addition, newspapers that still offer a print version are accessible to a greater portion of the public, since they are available to readers who lack digital resources such as a smartphone, computer, or home Internet access.

**Research Approach**

This study draws on James Paul Gee’s (2011) critical discourse analysis and Gee’s suggestion to pick a piece of data (a big or small interaction, narrative or other extended piece of language, an interview, or a written text) that both interests you and that you believe will speak to or illuminate an important issue or question…but with an eye to the features you think will be most important for the issue or question in which you are interest. (p. 125)

It is with Gee’s (2008, 2011) framework that this study starts with the premise that neoliberalism as an economic policy informs current education policy (Apple 2004; Hursh, 2007; Lipman, 2008). Additionally, Gee (2008, 2011) noted that language in use is always connected to power and critical discourse analysis, representing the movement from a microanalysis, i.e., grammar/linguistic patterns like repetition of words, synonymous phrases, use of nouns and
verbs, to a macro-structure analysis, i.e., the larger parts of a story that uses language to give or take away social goods or project how social goods are being or ought to be distributed.

How educational problems are understood is influenced by both how issues are framed in policy documents and how others interpret them. Therefore, in this study, a critical discourse analysis approach was utilized as theory and method to understand policy language, specifically the ideological underpinnings embedded in the discourse of a major education policy document, the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* published by Chicago Public Schools in 2013, as well as newspapers’ reporting of the policy to the public because the media is an important source for the distribution of information about educational reform (Gee, 2008; Hallin, 2008; Marger, 1993). This choice of policy research and newspapers is based on judgments of relevance to critical discourse analysis and are “ultimately theoretical judgments, that is, they are based on the analyst’s theories of how language, contexts, and interactions work in general and in the specific context being analyzed” and are relevant “to the arguments the analysis is attempting to make” (Gee, 2011, p. 117). Therefore, the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* and newspaper articles and editorials served as a useful framework for critical research to uncover relations of authority and power in the use of language in textual documents.

**Statement of Purpose and Research Questions**

This research seeks to understand how a contemporary education policy document, the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* of 2013, and the discourse of newspaper articles represent what Gee (2008, 2011) referred to as the political nature of the distribution of social goods and how they are situated in social and political context. Gee noted that one way in which we can define “politics” is to say that politics involves any social relationships and social practice in which things like status, solidarity, or other social goods are potentially at stake. In this way, a
social practice, whether a single policy document or many newspaper articles published over a period of time, is inherently political, since by their very nature these documents involve power relations that have implications for the potential distribution of social goods, such as education. Since education is situated within the economic and the political social practice, then examining this process of transmission from policy to newspaper is relevant in educational research.

Therefore, this dissertation takes us on a journey of analytical questions that open up new possibilities for understanding the relationship between neoliberalism, education policy, and newspaper coverage of the Educational Facilities Master Plan. There are numerous ways to understand the process of transmission from larger economic forces such as neoliberalism to smaller, micro discourses about education policy. This process is necessary if we want to understand the possibilities of how the media can interpret or represent policy. First, the media (newspapers) could reiterate the intention of neoliberal policy and by doing so normalize both the discourse and the intended discursive meanings. Second, the media could resist by changing the message and leaving room for other possibilities through discourse. With this in mind, it raises questions about the role of media. Is it neutral, simply reporting what the Educational Facilities Master Plan has already stated, so that it parrots the embedded ideologies? Or, does it have a responsibility to dissect policy documents in order to reveal the ideologies embedded therein and provide a space for dialogue? If so, what does this leave us with as readers of the interpreted policy? The larger questions of how and why the relationship between neoliberalism, education policy, and newspaper coverage of the Educational Facilities Master Plan still remain. These questions lay within the transmission process from neoliberal ideology and the media discourse about the policy. I challenge them in this study to reveal the ideology that is embedded in both education policy and newspaper reporting about it.
More specifically, the purpose of this study is to examine the discursive framing of school closings as promoted by both the official *Educational Facilities Master Plan* published by Chicago Public Schools in 2013 and *Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun Times,* and *Catalyst Chicago* articles and editorials related to it. It is guided by three research questions:

1. What ideological framing is embedded in the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*?
2. What are the discursive constructions of educational issues as policy problems and policy solutions embedded in the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*?
3. What discourses are utilized in the newspaper articles to frame Chicago public school closures from 2011-2014?

**Significance of the Study**

Critical discourse analysis offers detailed insight into how ideology is transmitted within discourse through the use of language. Although research has been performed on the subject of school closures (Lipman, 2008; Hursh, 2007), research that specifically analyzes the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* that CPS produced to meet new requirements and newspapers’ reporting about it does not exist. Examining the wording of official school policy documents and the interpretation of these documents in newspaper discourse helps us make sense of CPS’s move to close schools and gives us insight into its ideological underpinnings, which are embedded in discourse, policy, and practice.

**Conclusion**

This study moved beyond existing research about school closings in Chicago to help us better understand who is defining the problems and proposing the solutions that recent education policy has addressed, as well as how newspapers interpreted and framed these problems. This dissertation filled a gap within critical policy research on how this line of transmission can be
traced from a general neoliberal orientation to specific policies in education and how those policies are legitimized for the general public through newspapers. Thus, this dissertation focused on specific policy and specific newspapers to understand a general ideological process within neoliberalism. Chapter 2 provides a context for this study by reviewing literature focused on the relationship between neoliberalism, critical policy research, and the media. This review provided new insight into the interdependence of larger neoliberal economic education policy and the role that three local newspapers had in symbolically representing education social decision-makers in Chicago. Particularly significant to understanding the ideologies of school closures is Lipman’s (2004) statement that Chicago “exemplifies the deepening inequalities and social disruption precipitated by the restructuring of the economy” (p. 26). By defining the ideologies driving education policy and examining both current critical education policy research and the newspapers reporting about it, we can better understand how educational issues are framed, how policy emerges within the educational system, and the persuading and socializing role newspapers have as creators of public knowledge.

Following the literature review is a comprehensive plan for the research (Chapter 3), in which I explain the study’s theoretical framework and the its methodological approach, including procedural details. This research is a qualitative study using a critical discourse analysis approach to understand policy language, specifically how it frames both the ideological underpinnings embedded in the discourse of the Educational Facilities Master Plan and newspaper reporting about it (Gee, 2008). A critical discourse approach uncovers relations of authority and power in the use of language in textual documents; therefore, it serves as a useful framework for critical research analysis to explain the Educational Facilities Master Plan and newspaper coverage of it. Understanding how language and power are manipulated and enacted
in text and talk is crucial for a critical conversation (Fairclough, 2010; Lakoff, 2004; van Dijk, 1988, 2006), particularly about such important issues as educational reform.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review is positioned to help us better understand the broader inter-relationships and inter-dependence of how educational issues are framed in policy documents and how newspapers interpret the policy for the public. This will enable us to make sense of school closure discourse beyond the obvious meanings produced in the Educational Facilities Master Plan policy document. Understanding educational events by examining textual documents that are concerned with important issues in education, such as school closings, will lead to a better understanding of the interrelationship between the economy, the state, and the changing political relations of education policymaking. The following review of pertinent literature creates context for this study by defining the ideologies driving education policy and examining both current critical education policy research and newspapers’ role in interpreting and reporting about the Educational Facilities Master Plan. More importantly, critical policy research offers new ways to recognize how language frames our understanding and thinking about school closures in Chicago, ways that are embedded in larger economic and mass media historical political practices.

This chapter first focuses on the complex nature of neoliberalism by dividing the sections below into four subsections: (a) What is Neoliberalism; (b) What is Policy; (c) Neoliberalism and the Media; and (d) Frames and Language. Within these subsections, both neoliberalism and media are interwoven. This structure attempts to reveal the subtle interrelations of each subsection. Because the nature of this research is theoretical, the focus and therefore the presentation of this literature review initiates a theoretical critique of the relationship among neoliberalism, the newspaper media, and educational policy as a starting point to critical policy
research (Ball, 1993). I conclude this chapter with how this dissertation served to fill the gap in research.

**Overview of Capitalism**

As an introduction to the literature, a brief overview of capitalism is relevant to first provide the foundation for a current understanding of neoliberalism and second to contextualize how the relationship between neoliberalism, education policy, and newspaper (media) operates within historical capitalist economic changes and discourses that have impacted both public and private institutions in the United States. Although some of the information in this introduction is presented in greater detail within each section, it is also presented here to provide a historical reference for understanding what capitalism is and the different forms into which capitalism transforms.

In the most broad and general terms, capitalism is an economic system in which the means of producing goods and services is privately owned. There are markets for exchange, private ownership, control of investments, and markets for labor. Before the 1930s, the ultimate goal of laissez-faire capitalism was to support the greatest accumulation of profits without government intervention, but it is important to understand that traditionally “capitalism’s role is to enlarge the economic pie” (Reich, 2007, p. 4). In most cases, those at the top benefit the most from varied types of capitalism.

Historically in the United States, how the rules of the capitalist economic system function was decided between social democrats and private capitalists. The role of the welfare state has always been critical to capitalism and crucial to the labor market in the United States: “the old saying, ‘the government that governs least, governs best’ is a standard aphorism of advocates of capitalist system” (Wright & Rogers, 2011, p. 44). Interestingly, in order to allow for some
equality in capitalism (if there is such a thing) and through social actors like state interventionists, the welfare state protected and “stood guard” against private capitalists and their threats to free themselves from state controls and interventions (Wolf, 2010). The struggles between social democrats and private capitalists reveals the historical struggles of capitalism, the relationship between the economic processes, the role of government, and the state and its influence on the democratic process in American society.

Although the political struggles over the rules of capitalism are about the dominant economic theory in a certain time period (Keynesianism, Neoliberalism, etc.) and the distribution of wealth. Certainly, it is really a fight over the control of the welfare state and ultimately over the meaning of democracy. These struggles impact equality, public goods, individuals’ access to resources, and the value of social actors who are responsible for policymaking in critical political positions within democratic institutions. Once again, the ideological fight is entangled in the framing of capitalism and democracy. My research questions bridge the gap between economic processes, education policy, and newspapers by allowing room for discourse analysis that marries the theoretical aspect of capitalism with practical processes by showing how it occurs through language use.

The defenders of free market capitalism generally make two kinds of arguments. “The first is a moral argument, if you truly value individual freedom, capitalism is the most freedom-enhancing way to organize economic life and second, the free market and unfettered private ownership is the most efficient way of organizing the economy” (Wright & Rogers, 2011, p. 39). Similarly, the culture of capitalism ideologically teaches people to pursue their self-interests, so the most important aspects of humanity become freedom of choice and opportunity to obtain wealth. During the 1930s, a regulatory regime under Keynesianism capitalism decreased Wall
Street’s political influence and regulated it for the benefit of the public good to ensure that another Great Crash would never happen again. The regulations that set up the New Deal in the wake of the Great Depression and after World War II made possible a system of some security and of much greater equality that helped the welfare state protect public services against private capitalists. The state would be there to regulate, correct, and manage the rules of capitalism to ensure less income inequality and provide access to public services (Kuttner, 2007; Wolf, 2010). The state had the power to manage capital investment and shape the distribution of income and wealth, but as the struggle between social democrats and private capitalists continued, the state’s role changed with other issues of taxation and available resources (Kuttner, 2007; Wolf, 2010).

The political discourse mobilized government through state initiatives to solve problems collectively and advance public purposes like education, building infrastructure, health care, public safety, and food quality regulation, and other financial regulations provided a safety net for consumers.

Wolf (2010) noted, “economic growth and efficiency attributed to capitalism were to be supported while state policy would prevent or counteract the socially undesirable consequences of private capitalist production and commodity markets” (p. 36). Historically, education and other public services have been protected from private capitalists’ interests and “advocates of this economic theory [Keynesian] occupied key economic policy posts and dominated the policy debates” (Kotz, 2015, p. 11). This model of capitalism ensured that the state was responsible for “correcting market failures, reducing income inequality and bringing greater individual economic security” (p. 11). However, the gains made to protect the public from the 1930s to 1970s are being eroded in the current economic climate; as Wolf (2010) stated, “historic compromise set the stage for new struggles and contested terrains” (p.37). Public education
became one of these terrains, viewed as a new type of commodity by both Democrats and Republicans within a type of capitalism referred to as neoliberalism. Replacing Keynesian economic theory and advocating for free-market economic policies and individual freedom of choice, neoliberalism viewed the state as the enemy of individual liberty and a threat to private property (Kotz, 2015).

Thus, neoliberalism is a specific type of capitalism that has emerged as an alternative to a former type, Keynesianism. Both of these types of capitalism are explained within this section. Questions about the relationship between neoliberalism, education policy, and newspapers can be understood in light of defining neoliberalism and how the state, education policy, and media work together to make possible maximum profits as an outcome for the continued existence of capitalism.

What is Neoliberalism?

Neoliberalism refers to an ideology that prioritizes the market as the guiding force of the economy and calls for free trade, market de-regulation, and privatization. As an ideology, it guides the actions of the state and specific policies (Harvey, 2005; Lipman, 2011b). These policies decrease the role of the state relative to the economy, relaxing regulation of the market and reducing state policy efforts to redress social inequality (Hancock & Garner, 2009; Wolff, 2010; Wright & Rogers, 2011). The underlying principle of this ideology and its accompanying policies is that the private market, rather than the public sector, is the best mechanism for achieving maximum human economic activity (Klein, 2007; Kuttner, 2007; Lipman, 2008, 2009, 2011; Reich, 2007; Wolff, 2010; Wright & Rogers, 2011). Neoliberalism has similarities to classical economic theory, a school of economic thought that was championed by Adam Smith in
the late 18th century. Classical economic theory advocated the pursuit of self-interest in an environment of free and open competition with limited government intervention.

New Deal policies after the 1930s tempered the free-market ideology of classic economics. They were enacted as an attempt to create economic stability and counter mass unemployment that occurred during the Great Depression. New Deal policies, which brought a more active role for government in regulating capitalist enterprises and providing social services, continued into the 1980s (Hancock & Garner, 2009; Wolff, 2010). For this 50-year span, the ideas of John Maynard Keynes (Keynesian Economics), which favored an interventionist state, were the foundation of U.S. economic and social policy (Hancock & Garner, 2009).

The Keynesian approach to economic and social policy was replaced beginning in the 1980s with a theory called neoliberal (Hancock & Garner, 2009; Harvey, 2005; Wolff, 2010). The term “neoliberal” is based on the 19th century meaning of “liberal” to refer to a state that allows maximum freedom to the private sector and civil society. The prefix “neo” refers to a revival of the word’s original meaning dating from the theoretical and political efforts of Friedrich Hayek in the years after World War II. Milton Friedman’s economic planning occurred during the 1960s, and his actual policies were implemented in the 1970s and 1980s, most notably in the administrations of Margaret Thatcher in Great Britain and Ronald Reagan in the United States (Hancock & Garner, 2009).

Moreover, when either the term “neoliberal” or “neoliberalism” is used in contrast to the term “free market,” it is generally associated with an attitude that is counter to the ideology and policies of unregulated market dominance, and this critical orientation may be why the term does not appear in most standard economic texts or public discourse because the term seems to be associated with a negative stance. The different reaction to the term “neoliberalism” stems from
the consequences of its economic policies, which have caused greater inequality, poverty, and unemployment as the wealthiest class gained more power and wealth at the cost of everyone else during frequent financial crises. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) described the post-80s, neoliberal shift thus: “With the rejection of the ideas associated with the Keynesian welfare state, governments have increasingly preached a minimalist role for the state in education, with a greater reliance on market mechanisms” (pp. 2-3). This shift to neoliberalism has consequences for public education, media corporations, public discourse and government action in response to economic changes in society. Additionally, the shift to neoliberalism impacts the intellectual debate in a democratic society (Hancock & Garner 2009; Lipman & Hursh, 2007).

A key scholar writing about neoliberalism, geographer David Harvey (2005), defined neoliberalism as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutionalized framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (p. 2). Other theorists have added to Harvey’s definition by including aspects of the role of the state, ideological underpinnings, and the importance of discourse as a way to understand a more inclusive definition of neoliberalism.

Some theorists of neoliberalism have emphasized that it is, above all, an ideology, vision, discourse, and conceptual framework for a market-guided society (Hancock & Garner, 2009; Harvey, 2005; Wolff, 2010). Michael Apple (2001) asserted that neoliberals “are guided by an ‘economic rationality,’ a vision of the weak state” (p. 38), thus what is private is necessarily good and what is public is necessarily bad. Although neoliberalism might seem binary according to Apple, other researchers have viewed its meaning as being more mutable. It is important to understand that neoliberalism is not just an economic policy but an ideology and a “political
rationale that is undermining the major structures, processes, and institutions of American liberal democracy, particularly public education” (Baltodano, 2012, p. 487). Thus, neoliberalism as an economic system is also ideological.

Neoliberalism can take on many forms and discourses depending on the location and purpose. Springer (2012) stated that “neoliberalism should be recognized as a mutable, inconsistent, and variegated process that circulates through the discourses it constructs, justifies and defends” (p. 135). Springer also suggested that neoliberalism can change through different processes to meet the demands of capitalism by constructing discourse that supports specific outcomes. For example, financial institutions, charter schools, and free trade agreements with other nations are all different, but the foundation underlying their continued growth is neoliberal economic policy. Similarly, theorist Jamie Peck (2013) explained neoliberalism thus: “A discrepant, contradictory, and shape-shifting presence found in a wide range of political-economic settings, governance regimes, and social formations, neoliberalism will not be fixed” (p. 144). Basically, neoliberalism reinvents itself in different situations to continue the dominance of capitalism (Harvey, 2005; Klein, 2007; Peck, 2013; Reich, 2007).

Furthermore, Peck (2013) noted, “in some respects, it is more appropriate to define neoliberalism—or the process of neoliberalization—through its recurring contradictions and uneven realization, than in reference to some presumed, transcendental essence” (p. 144). The dualist “state=bad/private=good” stance of neoliberalism as an ideology functions as little more than bias and has unduly influenced how we think about different issues (Apple, 2004).

In addition to describing neoliberalism as a political and economic rational, other observers and researchers have focused on the policies of states that are guided by neoliberal ideology and principles. Madra and Adaman (2010) saw
Neoliberalism not simply as the extension of the rule of the market and the limitation of the state, but rather as a radical reconfiguration of the relationship between the state and the market that aims to transform the state and its mode of exercising sovereignty by modeling it on the logic of “economic incentives.” (p. 1079)

Because of these neoliberal economic shifts, governments have looked for market solutions to educational economic expansion, resulting in the corporatization and privatization of education policies (Lipman, 2008; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Specifically, another scholar who has examined the impact of neoliberalism as ideology and practice within specific institutions and places is Pauline Lipman (2011). In her research on urban education, she suggested that neoliberalism results in the greatest concentration of wealth in the hands of a few and reshapes urban cities to disadvantage the poor. For example, she found that Neoliberalism in Chicago has unfolded as the drive to become a “world class city” … its increasing race and class polarization forms the social landscape on which the trends and tensions of education policy are played out and produces displacement, gentrification, and marketization of public education on the premise of social betterment. (Lipman, 2008, p. 216)

As such, the shift of regulations and reconfiguration of activities of the state have impacted the populations within the state (Hancock & Garner, 2009), and the language used to formulate and sell school policies to the public has been presented as an individual choice for a higher-quality education and future.

Of course, as noted by many economic and educational theorists (Giroux, 2004b, 2008; Harvey, 2005; Lipman, 2004, 2006, 2008; Lipman & Haines, 2007; Lipman & Hursh, 2007) the relationship between neoliberalism and education has taken on market-driven privatization and accountability policies that impact communities (Taubman, 2009). This theoretical interpretation
can be seen in Chicago’s school district, which has faced many issues that range from the state’s budget crises, a deficit, tax increase on Chicago homeowners, and insufficient pension funding from the State of Illinois (US Department of Education), as seen in Lipman’s (2009) ethnographic study examining how in the mid-2000s the Chicago Housing Authority transformed public housing into privatized mixed-income developments, which impacted local residents living there and schools in those areas (Lipman, 2009). Additionally, the 2008 financial crises that some argue was a consequence of neoliberal economic policies (Harvey, 2005) had local impacts. In Chicago, local communities saw foreclosures increase in vacant properties and neighborhood schools saw an increase in population declines (Gallun & Maidenberg, 2013). Furthermore, although the funding for schools comes from property taxes, the taxes collected in neighborhoods does not get re-distributed to that same neighborhood. In addition to taxes, there are also grants, but the money is spent on salaries and expenses, and the money is distributed to different schools, citywide programs, and central offices. The budget for CPS has three major components: an operating budget, which guides the day-to-day activities; a capital budget, which covers the long-term school construction and repair needs; and debt service funds, which are used to pay the principal and interest on bonds that they issue to finance school construction and renovation. Yet, with all the economic impacts, school boards have the responsibility and authority to balance the budget regardless of market forces.

Moreover, neoliberalism uses the logic of market forces through the privatization of education to influence school competition to raise standards (Taubman, 2009). In this sense, the authority that the state once had regarding education decisions has taken a back seat to market mechanisms (Harvey, 2005; Hursh, 2005; Lipman & Haines, 2007.) The federal government has stepped in to direct education policy by encouraging school choice (Hursh, 2005; Lipman &
as well as competition between schools and between students competing for seats in charter schools because of high-stakes accountability measures. In a study conducted by David Hursh (2007) that used secondary data, evidence from test scores in New York, Texas, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), along with an analytical approach based on neoliberalism, suggested that reforms focusing on high-stakes testing are unlikely to achieve their stated goals. The rise of neoliberal education policy revealed a link between NCLB initiatives and market forces. Hursh (2007) claimed that NCLB “exemplifies the transformation in the dominant discourses on education and society, as societal institutions are recast as markets is part of a larger change in social policies and the rise of neoliberal economic and social policies and “the push for markets, choice and competition has become dominant in policy making” (p. 503). Furthermore, Hursh (2007), similar to Lipman (2008, 2009), noted that “NCLB promotes the view that like other neoliberal reforms, we have no choice but to submit to the discipline of the market rather than relying on processes of deliberative democracy” (p. 514). Therefore, Lipman (2008, 2009) has shown how market mechanisms influence policymaking.

In a study that used both semi-structured interviews and critical discourse analysis, Eve Ewing (2016) provided new insight into hearings and meetings surrounding school closure in Chicago. Ewing (2016) compared community members’ and district officials’ opinions of race and racism and their role in the policy decision to close schools. Although the study concentrated on Chicago stakeholders after a school closed, it revealed that the metaphors death and mourning emerged from participants’ accounts of school closure, and these terms were common in public discourse around school closings in general. Ewing focused on the role of race in the Chicago school closings and provided information about the broader societal tensions regarding racism in
urban school policy. Her study further shed light on the personal stories of students, which she labeled as a kind of institutional mourning that occurs when a school closes. Not only did, exploring it within the context of school closure as a sort of death gives us a glimpse into real affects of school closure but also what it means for the African American community of Bronzeville and their sense of loss. Thus the notion of institutional mourning can occur within the context of school closures.

Neoliberal ideas are not attributed to the individuals who have created and enforced them, because they come at the expense of the public in the form of public school closures. For example, Naomi Klein (2007) links capitalism to the changes that occurred in the New Orleans public school district to show how the motives of those in power and those who direct economic activity in the United States continue to find ways to make profits at all costs. Klein calls Milton Friedman, who wrote an op-ed article three months after the levees broke in New Orleans, the “grand guru of the movement for unfettered capitalism” (p. 5). Milton Friedman stated, “Most New Orleans schools are in ruins, as are the homes of the children who have attended them. The children are now scattered all over the country. This is a tragedy. It is also an opportunity to radically reform the educational system” (as cited in Klein, 2007, p. 5). Here Friedman capitalized on a kind of economic shock therapy, devastation after a natural disaster, Hurricane Katrina, not to address issues of displacement, homelessness, and poverty, but to push education reform (Klein, 2007).

Similar to Ewing’s (2016) study on race and school closure, Amanda Walker Johnson (2012) conducted a study that examined how race, neoliberalism, and school reform impact school closure through a conceptual framework using Naomi Klein’s concept of “shock therapy.” Johnson (2012) examined how the discourse and strategy of the “turnaround” are
borrowed from a business model based on neoliberal economic policy to close schools. Although Johnson looked at turnaround strategies focused on school closure in Austin, Texas, she compared those strategies to the neoliberal strategies embedded in school reform efforts started in Chicago under Arne Duncan. To understand turnaround strategies found in current education policy, Johnson noted that in Austin,

the crisis of public school failure allowed for the acceptability of two neoliberal philosophies: that failure is profitable and that public school reform should involve conceding local control to private entities. Companies emerging in the context of accountability reform viewed the failure and impending state action at J High as financial opportunities. (p. 241)

Furthermore, Johnson’s study focused on local and federal policy, and she revealed that in Chicago

school closures not only brought trauma to the communities they served but tragedy too in their wake. The closure and subsequent merger of schools into charters did not account for the social boundaries of the city, particularly social gangs, and tensions and fights between opposing groups led to the death of one student. (p. 250)

Johnson noted that as in Chicago, reforms in Austin that wanted to turn around schools quickly focused on school closure as meeting the definition of failure. Therefore, Johnson’s study provides information to understand turnaround strategies found in current education policy and the privatization of public schools by labeling them as “failing.”

Overall, local and federal policy based on neoliberalism instigated interventions, intended to “clean the slate” and paired with the privatization of school management, constituted “shock therapy” (Johnson, 2012; Klein, 2007). Johnson (2012) further argued that the “exploitation of
crisis were also meant to impose ‘marketizing’ reforms, the reduction of public and democratic control over resources and assets, and the collective trauma left behind by interventions—are applicable to drastic reforms sought in public schools” (p. 235). Thus neoliberalism and local school policy work in inter-related ways that impact both the school and those stakeholders within the school on a real level, but more importantly on a personal level giving us a glimpse into the complicated process of neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism can be understood as a complex system that integrates ideology and practice, directing economic policy by prioritizing the market as a guiding force through free trade, market de-regulation, and privatization. Neoliberalism guides the actions of the state to prioritize the market through federal policies, and in the process, decreases the role of individual states relative to education policy. As stated above, education policy, the closure of urban schools, or use of public tax dollars to open up charter schools affects public education and educational reform as a whole. Overall, neoliberal ideology and practice affects the economic, political, and social aspects of a society and also influences educational reform policies.

What is Policy?

The term “policy” is traditionally understood to describe a document written by government at federal, state, or local levels that is intended to influence and change public or private matters (Ball, 2006). Is policy simply a linear process of creating, implementing, and assessing outcomes of the policy put in place? Educational policy researchers Sutton and Levinson (2001) noted that policy is usually characterized as guidelines and laws that govern and bind people to its written mandates and that orders peoples’ behavior. The impact of public policy on students in educational institutions and the general public is directly related to who has authority over education decision-making and how competing policy arguments in the political
arena are played out. However, the impact of public policy is rarely connected to the political and economic incentives, systematic formation, and the implementation and assessment of policy (Ball, 2006; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). I argue that to understand education policy we must explore the discursive construction of social realities through policy texts. Given that the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* represents school reform centered on school closure, it is important to interpret the language used in the official *Educational Facilities Master Plan*.

**Policy process.** When thinking about policy beyond systematic formation of creating, implementing, and assessing outcomes, we can then see that a lot goes into making a policy. Policy is not simply a thing or just a set of written guidelines and laws from start to finish; instead, policy is a process (Ball, 2006; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Policy does not suddenly appear—it comes alive through the concentrated effort of individuals and their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. As noted education scholars Rizvi and Lingard (2010) stated,

> Policies exist in texts, and a policy can be viewed as a process involved in the actual production of an actual text, once the policy issue has been put on the political agenda. Policy process thus includes agenda setting, as well as work on the production of policy texts. They also refer to implementation processes which are never straightforward, and sometimes also to the evaluation of policy. (pp. 4-5)

Policy is not just a text, a document of governmental initiatives containing goals and intended outcomes; rather, it represents the culmination of a process that has a history of motives and intentions of individuals that shape the policy before it is even implemented.

Furthermore, policy is more complicated than a linear process of creating and implementing agendas and assessing outcomes. Traditional policy research is generally about examining the systematic process of formation and implementation and the outcomes of a
specific policy. Similarly, educational policy research generally focuses on understanding the effects and outcomes of educational initiatives promulgated by local, state, and federal levels of government (Sutton & Levinson, 2001).

Moving away from the taken-for-granted and conventional notions of policy as a mere set of laws and the measurement of their outcomes will allow for other ways of seeing it (Ball, 2006; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Troyna, 1994). Critical policy research has argued that we must ask questions beyond the obvious to understand what is really going on and because “to go beyond surface realities, it also aims to identify those elements which have the potential to change things” (Troyna, 1994, p. 72). It will allow for room to reveal the motives, agendas, and input from a variety of people and points of view to understand the meaning of policy and the impact it has on the lives of individuals affected by it (Sutton & Levinson, 2001). Examining the meaning and impact of policy also leads us to forging new ways of researching it.

Alternatively, Sutton and Levinson (2001) suggested that “the way to unpack policy is to see it as a kind of social practice, specifically, a practice of power” (p. 767). Examining policy as a social practice requires a deeper understanding of the entire policy process through the vision of initiatives, development, implementation, and evaluation as a complex set of interdependent socio-cultural practices through which policy gets written and changed to explain the political powers and processes that shape education today (Sutton & Levinson, 2001). Policy is not just what we are told policy is or how it is formed; rather, it is about the interactions of individuals and how all those involved make sense of their various experiences related to it. Therefore, as a starting point, paying attention to the cultural values, relations, practices, and purposes of policy allows for envisioning the problem in a new way and finding solutions for change.
Many theorists have noted, amidst the often contentious educational discussions over the role of education in a democratic society, that education policy is the product of political processes, is value laden, and involves historical compromises and power struggles over the allocation of resources (Apple, 2001; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Some theorists have supported different ways of understanding and analyzing educational policy in light of context, history, and the now global influence in which they take shape (Ball, 2006; Rizvi & Lingard 2010). For example, Rizvi & Lingard (2010) argued that “public policies were once exclusively developed within a national setting, but now are also located within a global system” (p. 2). Improving academic performance to compete in the global marketplace was the premise of the National Defense Education Act (1958), “A Nation at Risk (1983), ” No Child Left Behind (2001), and Race to the Top (2009) (Apple, 2006; Goldstein & Chesky, 2011; Hursh, 2007). Although the premise of different educational policies is connected to larger social forces, they do represent a process that constitutes issues of power.

Global changes stemming from neoliberalism have altered who has the authority to develop education policies (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Similarly, Ball (2006) contended that the neoliberal economic transformation of the public sector to privatization requires new ways of thinking about education policy. Considering education policy within the larger context of macro-level neoliberal economic changes leads us to a conclusion that “changes in education are part of a much broader and fundamental transformation across the public sector” (Ball, 2006, p. 15). Ball argued that although there are “sectorial variations and differences, these should not prevent us from seeing education against this backdrop of systemic change” (p. 15). Many theorists have noted that this shift in the ideological underpinnings of education policy has been represented to the public under the banner of education reform to either raise educational
standards through accountability, improve school buildings, or give parents choice, even when the parents are not the decision makers in closing schools (Goldstein, 2010; Goldstein & Beutel, 2009; Hursh, 2007; Lipman, 2011). Acknowledging the impact of neoliberal ideology on how policies are now formed, implemented, and assessed requires new types of analyses to explain education policy (Ball, 2006; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Thus, education policy is not just about texts; it has ideological underpinnings, it emerges from processes that involve actors, institutions, and the state, and its influence is both local and global.

**Critical policy research.** Critical policy research provides a more appropriate approach to understanding who gains from education policy and how. Like other critical orientations, critical policy research examines both who benefits and who does not, along with the structures that produce or perpetuate an unequal distribution of benefits (Willis, 2007). Asking questions like these offers new ways of both understanding policy and creating solutions that address structural inequalities. Critical education policy theorists have encouraged researchers to replace traditional notions that see a direct line between policy formulation and implementation and instead consider policy with all its complexity and latent meanings (Ball, 2006; Monkman & Hoffman, 2013). “Critical policy analysis foregrounds deeper explorations, asking who benefits and who does not by the ways that policy is formed and implemented, framed and understood” (Monkman & Hoffman, 2013, p. 67). Critical policy research requires a new way of seeing policy.

A critical policy research approach leads to alternatives for thinking about and seeing policy as a text or official document. Instead we can see policy beyond the policy document itself and the official written language; policy can be seen as more than just a thing or a text. Policy beyond a thing has meaning and involves real people: policymakers writing and framing
both the problems and solutions for that specific policy. This moves away from the notion of policy as a thing, a document or pieces of paper articulating official state or federal mandates, to policy as something that is socially constructed and has meaning through discourse. Moreover, some theorists assert that education policy should be understood as both text and discourse (Bacchi, 2000; Ball, 2006). Policy as a text has many authors and can be read in different ways and settings. Exploring policy as text is to understand policy as a construction of social problems that can include economic and social factors. Policy as discourse examines policymaking from the standpoint of language, discourse, and the communication of policy problems. Under this dual approach, of text and discourse, education policy appears inherently messy, ambiguous, unpredictable, and a possible source of conflict (Ball, 2006).

Differentiating the purpose, goals, and effects of a specific policy on its intended target is to understand how a policy is working, who is benefiting from it, whose perspective is considered important, and what viewpoints are being neglected. “Policy texts are set within these frameworks, which constrain but never determine all of the possibilities for action … policies are also processes and outcomes” (Ball, 2006, p. 44). The effects of policy are real, and interpreting policy text and discourse offers an alternative perspective for understanding how reality is shaped and who shapes current educational policy. Apple (1994) reminded us not only “that policy documents have real effects” but also that “they do make a difference symbolically and materially” (p. 350). Apple further noted that “[policy documents] provide the outlines of the discourse that powerful groups within the state wish us to use to debate where our schools should go and what they should do in the future” (p. 350). Considering policy as text and discourse provides a broader approach for identifying who really gains from how policy is written and implemented.
Additionally, Stephen Ball (1990) noted that critical policy research leads to understanding how social power is reflected in policy text by bringing to the surface the values of the authoritative actors and institutions that are embedded in policy. Furthermore, critical policy studies have been conducted with interest in “how powerful individuals in society influence social values and ideologies as they engage with language” (Goldstein & Beutel, 2008, p. 3). Goldstein and Beutel (2008) conducted a critical discourse analysis of the language used in speeches made available through the Department of Education’s website to understand the impact of the discourse surrounding NCLB on public perception. Using an iterative, multidisciplinary process of both critical discourse analysis and a theoretical media framework, they examined discourse as a social act and analyzed the social, political, and cultural influences on the discourse of speeches. Critical Discourse Analysis was a useful tool for critical policy research to make sense of the uses of discourse that define reality, persuade the public, elucidate power relationships, and manipulate public opinion. Goldstein and Beutel’s study revealed many themes that emerged from political and power relations employed in public discourse with the implicit and explicit intentions of a speaker that “articulated a very specific discourse of equality, equity, justice, and democracy embedded within larger discourses of neoliberal market principles” (p. 5). Likewise, studies that explain or reveal how the public is persuaded by discourse that intentionally markets a particular type of school. After all, this is relevant if we want to make sense of language used in education policy documents.

Similarly, other critical policy researchers, such as Sandra Taylor (2004), have advocated for the increased importance of researching language related to education policy texts. Taylor suggested the need for critical policy research using critical discourse analysis “in documenting multiple and competing discourses in policy texts, in highlighting marginalized and hybrid
discourses, and in documenting discursive shifts in policy implementation processes” (p. 434).

Studies by Goldstein and Beutel (2008) and Taylor (2004) advocated that critical policy research using critical discourse analysis is warranted if educational reform is to be seen as a form of social power through language used in policy discourse.

Exemplifying the importance of discourse, Gee (2008), stated:

Discourse is a socially accepted association among ways of using language and other symbolic expressions, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting … discourses are inherently “ideological” … they involve a set of values and viewpoints about the relationships between people and the distribution of social goods … social power and hierarchical structure in society. (pp. 161-162)

Similarly, Catherine Belsey (1980) stated:

A discourse is a domain of language-use, particular way of talking (and writing and thinking). A discourse involves certain shared assumptions which appear in the formulations that characterize it…. Ideology is inscribed in discourse in the sense that it is literally written or spoken in it; it is not a separate element which exists independently in some free-floating realm of ideas and is subsequently embodied in words, but a way of thinking, speaking, experiencing. (p. 5)

Thus, Discourse is the process through which meanings get produced and enacted through language, so if we see policy as discourse, we can examine it through both the spoken and written language and communication of policy.

However, considered alone the policy as discourse approach ignores the discursive constructions of policy problems and may limit a clearer understanding of the production of meaning (Bacchi, 2000; Ball, 2006). According to Michael Foucault (1972), discourse is about
what can be spoken and where, who, and how we speak, thus it constitutes issues of power and knowledge about how discourse operates by inclusion and exclusion. This is later echoed when Gee (2008) noted that discourses are “products of social histories” (p. 5). Therefore, discourse is not just language—it shapes reality and defines individuals.

Carol Bacchi (2000) noted:

The premise behind a policy as discourse approach is that it is inappropriate to see governments as responding to problems that exist out there in the community, rather problems are created or given shape in the very policy proposals that are offered as responses. (p. 48)

Problems are rarely solved when the focus is just on the discourse of policy, because both the problems and the solution are framed within legal and political circumstances and establish discursive limitations that become ideological. According to Ball (2006), “we read and respond to polices in discursive circumstances that we cannot, or perhaps do not, think about” (p. 49). The effects of policy are primarily discursive, changing the possibilities for “thinking otherwise,” so that the policy researcher is limited as a change agent within the influence of dominant discourses of social policy (Ball, 2006, p. 49). For example, the discursive framing of current education policy regulates the notion of what makes a good teacher, confining it to students’ success as measured by their test scores (Taubman, 2009).

Moreover, Bacchi (2000) suggested that there is difference between the “uses” and the “effects” of discourse to explain education policy (p. 47). Bacchi noted that some “policy-as-discourse analysts tend to emphasize the constraints imposed by discourses, through meaning construction … in the process, the power to contest discursive constructions goes undertheorized” (p. 47). Although policy discourses construct education policy topics,
discursively examining just the text of the policy documents can be limiting because policy documents are discursively produced.

Therefore, in examining policy, we must consider not only texts, but also consider processes that involve actors, institutions, and the state through the constraint of discourses (Bacchi, 2000; Ball, 2006; Rizvi & Lingard 2010). In addition to who has the power to speak, when, and about how meanings arise from practices, relations, and social positions, policy research is also about “place” (Ball, 2006). Policy is, then, about the context of influence, text production, practice, processes outcomes, and political strategies (Ball, 2006; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Paying attention to the cultural values, relations, practices, and purposes of policy allows for different conceptions of understanding problems and, therefore, the solutions as a starting point for social change. One way of seeing these cultural values, relations, practices, and purposes of policy is through the reality as portrayed by the media.

**The media and education policy research.** Critically understanding the interplay of educational reform and the role of mass media, specifically newspapers, as an agent of legitimacy within dominant political and economic institutions is central to this study because of the inter-related influences within those institutions? Martin N. Marger (1993) stated,

> Mass media are of two types: print and electronic: print media are books, magazines and newspaper; electronic media are television radio, and films. To refer to them as mass media implies that their communicative realm is extremely broad, often encompassing the entire society. (p. 239)

Drawing on the notion of societal power established by Marger is important and relevant for this study, because media has a role in solidifying or challenging the public’s understanding of education policy (Chomsky & Macedo, 2000; Goldstein 2010). Additionally, the work of linguist
George Lakoff (2004) on cognitive frames (mental representations and interpretations) is important since mainstream news media is a significant site for education information (Chomsky & Macedo, 2000; Goldstein & Chesky, 2011). The media plays a role in shaping public perceptions (Gerstl-Pepin, 2006) and some argue that neoliberalism manifests itself in education policy (Goldstein, Macrine & Chesky, 2011). Therefore, if media is a form of societal power, it also connects to the distribution of social goods (Ball, 1990; Gee 2008, 2011).

Martin Marger (1993) stated:

In modern societies, the mass media serve several vital functions. They are agents of socialization, instructing people in the norms and values of their society and generally transmitting the society’s culture. They are sources of information, supplying citizens with knowledge about their society and especially about the political economy. They function as propaganda mechanisms through which powerful units of the government and economy seek to persuade the public either to support their policies (government) or to buy their consumer products (corporation). Finally they serve as agents of legitimacy, generating mass belief in (and acceptance of) dominant political and economic institutions. (p. 238)

Based on Marger’s analysis of societal power, mass media in all forms exerts a special power because media providers have close ties to political and economic institutions, and the public learns about and is persuaded by policy issues through local newspapers, Internet sources, or television news coverage. We cannot fully understand education policy without also examining the role of media in informing its citizens.

Some have argued that the media helps advance free-market ideas and shapes the ways education policy is interpreted and presented to the public (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Fenton,
How media frames issues directly affects how we think about and understand vital information as citizens living in a democratic society. Overall, the vast majority of American adults continue to read newspaper media content in print, and it is for this reason that it continues to be an important source of information about educational issues (Barthel, 2015; Newspaper Association of America, 2013). Many theorists of media (Marger, 1993; McChesney, 2001; Silverstone, 1999) have emphasized the importance of studying media within the context of neoliberalism to understand how the public is persuaded by the opinions of those in positions of news reporting.

Roger Silverstone (1999) supported Marger’s analysis, noting,

We cannot escape the media, they are involved in every aspect of our everyday lives …

central to the project [of studying the media] as a whole was a desire to place the media at
the core of experience, at the heart of our capacity or incapacity to make sense of the
world in which we live. (p. ix)

Additionally, it is important to note the foundational and historical theoretical media perspectives about mass media and the role of neoliberalism on the changing media landscape.

Communication theorist Robert W. McChesney (2001), who studies the history and political

economy of media, stated that in this neoliberal age, “media and communication play a central,
perhaps even a defining role” (p. 1) in a democratic society. Likewise, many theorists have
reminded us that neoliberalism requires critical attention as do the policies that impact and shape
public education in the media (Giroux 2004a, 2004b; 2008; Goldstein, 2010; Goldstein & Beutel,
2008).
Thus, we need to study media in all forms to understand if and how it functions because media has a central role in a democratic society (Goldstein, 2010; Goldstein & Beutel, 2008; Hesmondhalgh, 2008; McChesney, 2001; Silverstone, 1999). For my study, I focused on newspapers because it is one of the forms within media that is relevant for having the exclusiveness of information related to local issues. Therefore, print media is an important factor because it continues to be a form of information. It is within the context of the media that we can understand the transmission of this information as it relates to education policy.

**Neoliberalism and the Media**

The relationship between neoliberalism, the media, and education requires special attention, because as Marger (1993) argued, media “function as propaganda mechanisms through which powerful units of the government and economy seek to persuade the public either to support their policies (government) or to buy their consumer products (corporation)” (p. 238). Some theorists argue that since the 1970s, like most social institutions, media fell into the hands of neoliberals and the market forces of neoliberal policy (Chomsky, 2002; Crispin Miller, 1988; Hesmondhalgh, 2008; Marger, 1993; McChesney, 2001). Hallin’s (2008) statement that “mass media are among the most important of those social institutions, which have been subject to ‘enclosure’ by the logic of the market” (p. 43) is of particular importance because the media shapes public policy and public opinion, provides information, and socializes the public. If private interests control public opinion and limit information to increase their corporate profits, it undermines the democratic process. Other theorists have noted that “the critical problem with the media and cultural industries is not simply that their character is determined by market forces, but that they represent the interests of a ruling class” (Garland & Harper, 2012, p. 415). Media corporations, especially newspapers, have been taken over by media conglomerates and have
been reduced to the logic of the market and can influence public debate in a democratic society (Garland & Harper, 2012; Hallin, 2008; Hesmondhalgh, 2008).

Moreover, Hallin (2008) suggested that even experts who critique neoliberalism, like David Harvey, provide only “simplistic formulations” on the role of the media within neoliberal analysis (p. 43). Hallin argued,

Many accounts within media studies characterize the shift to neoliberalism in the media sphere rather differently, as a process of depoliticisation, in which media lose their function as institutions of the public sphere and are absorbed into the world of commerce and consumption as mere vehicles for advertising and for a commodified entertainment industry. (p. 43)

Similarly, Herman and Chomsky (2002) claimed, “media serve and propagandize on behalf of the powerful societal interests that control and finance them. The representatives of these interests have important agendas and principles that they want to advance, and they are well positioned to shape and constrain media policy” (p. xi). With this in mind, the shift in media ownership, control, and information cannot be understood as a separate issue (Bagdikian, 2004); rather, no analysis of education policy can disregard the function of media as “agents of legitimacy, generating mass belief in (and acceptance of) dominant political and economic institutions” (Marger, 1993, p. 238).

News is especially important to linking democracy and public debate. The public understands vital information in society through different news media outlets and newspapers. How newspapers report critical events warrants transparency in order to recognize how we understand education reform. Fenton (2011) noted that within media communication “news is no
ordinary commodity and is linked directly to the health and well-being of democratic practice” (p. 63).

In News: The Politics of Illusion, W. Lance Bennett (1996) argued,

News provides at best, a superficial and distorted image of society and the lack of much deliberate public debate and even less governmental inquiry about what kind of information the nation and its citizens need to decide their political course at home and in the world. Americans may have neglected the kind of attention devoted in other societies to the regulation of democracy’s most important product: political information. (p. xii)

News media provides superficial, one-sided pieces of information that are neither neutral, independent, nor accurate (Chomsky, 2002; Fenton, 2011; Marger, 1993). It disseminates information through “key words that emerge as powerful symbols” that guide conversations about our own experiences as we try to make meaning of them (Altheide, 2002, p, 3).

Eventually, the key words found in newspapers for example, become natural ways of making assumptions about the topic discussed. Newspaper discourse is the vehicle that produces public information about different topics within our culture, and how it frames issues directly affects how we think about and understand vital information as citizens living in a democratic society (Bennett, 1996; Fenton, 2011; Garland & Harper, 2012; Marger, 1993; McChesney, 2001). The way the public understands vital information is related to the language used in those frames, especially when it is about the distribution of a social good like education (Gee 2008). The framing of any social good is political by those in positions of power.

**Frames and Language**

Examining frames is of major concern for educational reform and is important in understanding how messages are mediated and how individuals learn about the world around
them. Gee (2008) reminds us that frames capture certain meanings by the ways information is presented in written or oral discourse and are always political and are reflections of those in positions of power.

What are frames and how does framing occur? According to Altheide (2002), “Frames are the focus, a parameter or boundary, for discussing a particular event. Frames focus on what will be discussed, how it will be discussed, and above all, how it will not be discussed” (p. 4). Similarly, as Lakoff (2004) noted, frames determine how we see the world when we hear certain words and are connected to the way we communicate. He posited that language activates frames, stating:

Frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world. As a result, they shape the goals we seek, the plans we make, the way we act, and what counts as a good or bad outcome of our actions. In politics our frames shape our social policies and the institutions we form to carry out policies. (p. xv)

How do educational issues get framed and how do policy documents reshape reality? The ways in which education problems are framed and how the policy solutions are presented is important if we want to understand the limitations in how issues are presented to the public. A study conducted by Rebecca Goldstein (2011) examined mass media campaigns in the New York Times and Time Magazine revealed that media framing presented an overwhelmingly negative image of teachers’ unions as opposed to NCLB and other school reform efforts. Goldstein’s study wanted to understand how main stream media frame public education by using multiple theoretical paradigms, including frame and discourse analysis that focused not on what the messages were but to uncover how the messages were conveyed to the public. Her findings suggested that media wields a great deal of power in regard to how it frames educational issues related to NCLB and
teachers and “fails to provide the public alternate frames that might also be useful in understanding and resolving issues related to educational reform” (Goldstein, 2011, p. 566).

Similarly, Goldstein and Beutel (2008) conducted a critical discourse analysis looking at neoliberalism’s role in public education and the discourse of equality, justice and democracy surrounding NCLB. The results revealed that through manipulation of discourse, a limited perception of democracy and public education were subservient to neo-liberal market principles. Goldstein & Beutel (2008) urge more research to understand how issues are framed in educational reform as they reflect neoliberal, political and power relations mediated in public discourse.

Moreover, some argue that neoliberalism’s hegemonic nature has portrayed market-based education solutions as common sense despite evidence demonstrating, for example, the inaccurate measure of student learning through high-stakes testing (Apple, 2006; Gerstl-Pepin, 2002; Harvey, 2005; Koretz, 2008; Taubman, 2009). The rhetorical constructs and political discourse surrounding No Child Left Behind (NCLB) have reframed education from the belief that student development is the most important purpose of education and that public schooling can create a democratic society to a new ideal of student learning as a market value with high-stakes testing as a result of the rise of neoliberal education policies and the decline of teaching and learning (Hursh, 2007, 2008). Lakoff (2004) described reframing thus:

To change our frames is to change all of this. Reframing is social change. You can’t see or hear frames. They are part of what cognitive scientists call the “cognitive unconscious”—structures in our brains that we cannot consciously access, but know by their consequences: the way we reason and what counts as common sense. (p. xv)
The neoliberal reframing of the purpose of education through NCLB has not only shaped how we see educational issues by redefining the purpose of public schooling, but also it has redefined what counts as common sense (Gerstl-Pepin, 2002; Lipman, 2011; Taubman, 2009). Thus, any educational events require the debunking of taken-for-granted notions of those events to understand both the policies and the media’s representation of critical issues. Whether frames present educational issues or other topics, Gee (2008) noted that meanings are always political and are produced through the language used in the written or oral discourse and are meant to convey certain aspects of the social world.

Furthermore, using newspaper articles and editorials to help us understand how important issues are being disseminated and portrayed is another way to make sense of how discourse in newspaper articles frames issues and constructs language that affects how the public understands the issues. In the following paragraphs, I present different examples of framing in different articles (labor coverage, racial representation, and the “boy crisis.”) This example is of a major newspaper’s coverage of labor issues. Robert Bruno (2008) conducted a 10-year independent media content analysis of organized labor coverage in the Chicago Tribune and found that

News reporting, which cumulatively portrayed union behavior in an unattractive fashion, is actually more balanced than the papers’ editorializing… there were seven editorials and thirteen opinion pieces published in the first section of the paper about a labor-related issue, in all but one case, the editors’ and authors’ point of view was strongly critical (i.e. negative) of union behavior. (p. 393)

The above example suggests how the language of editorials or news reports has the potential to sway opinion about certain issues. The public will be persuaded by the views of editors and news reporters telling it what to think, because the public assumes the news reflects objectivity based
on factual information, and this outweighs presenting facts and letting the public decide (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). In essence, we are not presented with the “facts” in order to decide; instead, we are actually presented with one side of the story (Bruno, 2008).

Moreover, another example of framing reveals how racial misrepresentations and stereotypes relate to the public’s understanding of political news coverage. David Domke, Kelley McCoy, and Marcos Torres (1999) conducted two experiments on racial bias to study how people activate cognition when evaluating political environments. Based on their findings, Domke et al. (1999) claimed, “news coverage of issues, by priming subjects to focus on some considerations and relationships and not others, influences the strength of the associations between individuals’ racial cognitions and their political evaluations” (p. 570). The public’s cognition is influenced by how news coverage primes its subjects and focuses on certain characteristics of topics, as well as the exclusion of some characteristics and not others. The public may be persuaded by the views of editors and news reporters and how strong certain associations between events and individuals are made. Documents like newspaper articles have the power to influence the public’s perception (Herman & Chomsky, 2002).

In contrast to the examples of labor coverage and racial representation, below is an example of both education issues and framing. Brandon M. Sternod (2011) conducted a genealogical analysis of written news concerning the “boy crisis,” gender gap, and male teachers as role models from 1997 to 2007. He asked, “So why do such taken-for-granted statements concerning the necessity for more male teachers to serve as role models receive such a high degree of media attention while critical educational scholarship and other alternative discourses receive so little” (p. 281). His analysis reveals the “common sense assumptions of male supremacy, innate differences between males and females, the ‘natural’ connection between
male students and teachers, and the dire consequences of a nonpatriarchal world” (p. 281). What is relevant in this study is the discourse and its purposeful association to notions of “truth,” i.e., how “the call for more male teachers as a remedy for the ‘boy crisis/gender gap’ reveals that within the dominant popular news media discourse, women are seen as a threat to the developing masculinity of boys and the related belief that men are the ideal normalizing agents” (Sternod, 2011, p. 281). The framing is relevant to cognition and how the public starts to associate failure of boys in school, through testing as a direct cause of female teachers. This 2011 study has implications for how the public understands news articles and educational reform and provides a space for male teachers to enter a largely female occupation. While the inclusion of male teachers is welcomed, the manner of inclusion creates inequities based on gender, and the newspaper article perpetuated them. Sternod suggested the need for the “public to recognize when it’s being fed a carefully timed and calculated diversion” (p. 281). Ultimately, the results of this study show the critical role media has on presenting educational issues.

Just as newspaper articles may evoke certain meanings and causes about the failure of boys in school as a direct result of female teachers (Sternod, 2011), accountability standards can evoke meanings of blame on teachers for students’ low test scores and, consequently, on failing schools as a public crisis. Another example of how issues are framed by the media and evoke feelings of failure in urban schools is found in research done by Jennifer Cohen (2010). In an analysis of 170 newspaper articles in the Chicago Tribune, she noted:

The use of numbers thus function as a warrant for the claims of school failure, and as the ideological assertion that norm-referenced, quantifiable assessments that can be expressed in statistical terms are needed to respond to that failure. (p. 112)
Just like words, numbers, which are represented through accountability and standards statistics, evoke certain meanings under a “common sense” assumption of objectivity, legitimizing both the news, information, and research within the same frame (Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Lakoff, 2004; Marger, 1993).

Similar to Sternod’s (2011) study, the studies conducted by Goldstein, Macrine, and Chesky (2011) and others (Garland & Harper, 2012; Goldstein & Beutel, 2008; Taylor, 2004) reveal how using certain terms that imply a common sense notion of objectivity represents how media discourse in news reports and newspaper articles frames and constructs language that affects how the public understands educational issues. The critical topic of educational reform is of concern to the public, because it has been constructed and linked to teachers through certain words (high-quality education, highly qualified teachers and students’ test scores) within a common sense notion of cause and effect through the use of numbers and words/terms. By using numbers in the same sentence with the word “research,” the media is implying that numbers are objective. Sternod’s (2011) research represents how frames in educational reform used in scientific discourses legitimize educational policies through tests to support NCLB. This frames the crisis of education as the responsibility of female teachers, who compromise 76% of the workforce as of 2012 (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.) of the teaching force, using the social language of accountability, which overwhelms the political and social landscape but at the same time neglects other causes and reduces education to numbers (Cohen, 2010).

Frames used by government in policy texts or by newspapers are constructed through the use of marketization and mediazation (Goldstein, 2011, Goldstein & Beutel, 2009). Economic and political institutions rely on newspapers to function in support of the government and corporations (Marger, 1993). Hesmondhalgh (2008) stated,
Marketization is the process by which market exchange increasingly comes to permeate media and cultural sectors, most notably privatization of government-owned enterprises and institutions, the lifting of restraints on businesses so that they can pursue profit more easily and the expansion of private ownership. (p. 100)

Cohen (2010) found this occurring in her study; as she wrote,

The crisis discourse surrounding education is grounded in a neo-liberal economic model featuring charges that schools are not preparing the type of worker needed to preserve the nations’ dominant position in a changing global market, and promoting market based reforms such as privatization and voucher programs. (p. 117)

In addition, Rebecca A. Goldstein’s (2010) study revealed how the government used news releases to gain support for NCLB using direct propaganda and taxpayer money (see Goldstein article and direct quote below). She claimed that the political discourse around NCLB was a calculated effort of marketization and mediazation by the Bush Administration to legitimize NCLB. She stated:

The Bush Administration used the information from this study to craft media video news releases (VNRs) for distribution to major media outlets. The VNRs, including a “reporter,” a family, a story line about schools, and the benefits of NCLB, nowhere stated that the federal government produced them. (p. 544)

Similarly, Sternheimer (2010) in her study of non-factual information and government practices presented by the media noted that many social problems are portrayed by the media in superficial ways and all too often the public does not know that these stories are purposely prepared by the government and are not representative of any factual information. If a product is sold to the public with non-factual information, corporate advertisers are penalized for deceptive practice...
Certainly, newspaper articles have a powerful impact on society, but what is more concerning is that taxpayer money is used by the government to promote a version of cultural normality about school reform and to turn school business into a corporate affair (Emery & Ohanian, 2004). If the marketing of school failure is understood as the truth, then the public would want another solution to the failure of schools, and it would welcome corporate takeover of public schools. For example, when charter schools say they will produce a quality education for our children, then parents will see it as a viable option. If the conversation is focused on the failure of public schools and charter schools are presented as the only option (Goldstein, 2010; Goldstein & Beutel, 2009), then the media, both print and electronic, has done its job and helped manufacture consent to advance public policy on behalf of the government and big business (Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Marger, 1993).

Certainly, in modern society, we must not underestimate the power of media and remind ourselves, as van Dijk (1988) stated,

One of the most obvious properties of media news, ignored or neglected in both traditional and more recent approaches in media reporting, is that news reports, whether in the press or on TV, constitute a particular type of discourse … the political, social, or psychological aspects of news processing. (p. 1)

Thus, it is critical to include media in any analysis of education, policy and the economy. Studying media within the context of neoliberalism is relevant because media exerts a special power tied to political and economic institutions, and the public learns about and is persuaded by the opinions of those in positions of news reporting (Goldstein, 2010; Marger, 1993).
Conclusion

This chapter presented research that situates educational reform within the historical neoliberal economic changes that have taken place in the last 30 years, the influence of neoliberalism on educational reform policies, and the pervasive role of the media in shaping citizens’ understandings. Many theorists have noted that the relationship between neoliberalism and education reform policy are related to the market realities that have increased the inequality of income and wealth, heightened job insecurity, restructured urban centers, and diminished human political agency, replacing it with freedom of consumer choice and allowing for unequal power relations (Goldstein, 2011; Klein 2007; Lipman, 2011; Reich, 2007).

Moreover, the media has played a critical role in the publics’ understanding of economic and educational issues. Goldstein (2010) stated, “what the public is often exposed to is based on the interests of those who have the power to control the message and its interpretation” (p. 545). The studies presented in the literature review illuminated how the media, for example framed and helped persuade acceptance of NCLB and other initiatives while selling the idea of underperforming schools as a problem through the discourse of assessment and accountability and return on investment, demanding new skills, calling into question the academic quality of urban schools, and presenting school closure and choice as the solution (Cohen, 2010; Goldstein, 2010). This means that many researchers have noted that the ways in which educational problems are framed belie a neoliberal agenda and may undermine education’s democratic roots (Giroux, 2004b; Lipman, 2004; Taubman, 2009).

The discursive construction of education policy problems, including school closures, has become the educational reform movement of our time (Goldstein 2010; Hursh, 2007, 2008). The U.S. Constitution, is silent regarding the role of the federal government in education and thus
education is a “states” right. But some studies have shown that the historical debate about the nature of schooling in a democracy has been redefined by neoliberalism through the media as a market freedom instead of a democratic freedom (Goldstein 2010; Hursh, 2007; 2008). Similarly, Berliner & Biddle (1995), based on missing evidence to claims made in the 1983 report “A Nation at Risk,” recommendations to change education policy were welcomed by education policy legislatures, corporate elites, and politicians. Information for the public was framed in the media as a national education crisis (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). Moreover, Diane Ravitch (2010) stated, “In the years since A Nation at Risk was published, academics, educators, and pundits have debated whether the report was an accurate appraisal of academic standards or merely alarmist rhetoric by the Reagan administration, intended to undermine public education” (p. 24). Ravitch continues by noting that the “language was flamboyant, but that’s how a report about education gets public attention” and “the national news media featured stories about the crisis in education…the report got what it wanted: the public’s attention (pp. 24-25).

Historically, some have argued that the A Nation at Risk report set the stage for the discursive construction of education policy problems to normalize school closures as educational reform (Goldstein 2010; Hursh, 2007, 2008). With this in mind, research that attempts to connect the relationship among neoliberalism, critical policy research and media (newspapers) is relevant for an inclusive conversation about school closure.

The effects of newspaper discourse are profound in a democratic society. Some theorists argue that although education has been about socializing the citizen shaped by the historical period of that time, the current reform movement hinders our understanding about the importance of education to also promote happy, healthy students who will be ready for democratic participation (Benson et al., 2007; Gutmann, 1987; Noddings, 2007). Research on
education discourse and newspapers has found a significant impact on how the public understands educational issues (Cohen, 2010; Goldstein, 2010; Goldstein & Chesky, 2011; Stroud, 2008). Research on different topics in newspaper articles reveals that the media does not simply tell us what to think about it—articles tell us how to think about issues and what kinds of associations to make by how issues are framed (Goldstein, 2010; Goldstein & Beutel, 2008; Taylor, 2004).

Not only did this section offer why there is a need for critical policy research (Ball, 1990) using a critical discourse analysis (Gee, 2008, 2011; Goldstein, 2010; Goldstein & Beutel, 2008; Taylor, 2004) but it also offered new ways to recognize how language frames our understanding and thinking about educational reform in general and specifically school closures in Chicago (Lipman, 2008, 2011). Equally important is understanding the ways that school closure discourse is embedded in larger economic and mass media historical political practices.

As well as what many researchers (Ball, 1990, Gee, 2008, 2011; Taylor, 2004) have advocated for; an increased importance of researching language related to education policy texts that leads to understanding how social power is reflected in policy text by bringing to the surface the values of the authoritative actors and institutions that are embedded in policy. Critical policy studies in education have been conducted with interest in “how powerful individuals in society influence social values and ideologies as they engage with language” (Goldstein & Beutel, 2008, p. 3) using different forms of texts using a multidisciplinary process. Many of the studies advocate that critical policy research using critical discourse analysis is warranted if educational reform is to be seen as a form of social power through language used in policy discourse.

Likewise, the process through which educational issues are framed influences how the public interprets them. As Lakoff (2004) points out, words are part of a conceptual system,
political in nature, and they become relevant because they connect. Looking at how policy language is related to an educational policy issue can help us understand particular issues in how the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* frames our ways of understanding school closings in Chicago and how the media reports on the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*. Once we have this information, we can start thinking about educational reform broadly and re-frame our conversations about it, because “reframing is social change” (Lakoff, 2004, p. xv). Thus new ways of understanding the language in education policy leads to inclusive solutions.

**Gap in the Literature**

It is clear that research on neoliberalism, media, and the topic of educational reform is abundant (Hursh, 2007, 2008; Goldstein & Beutel, 2008; Lipman, 2008, 2011). These studies have been completed in a variety of ways: critical discourse analysis, content analysis, and media research, as well as qualitatively through interviews. Although critical discourse analysis and sociological analysis have been conducted in regards to educational reform or the closing of many urban schools, there hasn’t been research completed on *Education Facilities Master Plan* of 2013 and three specific newspapers (*Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Sun Times*, and *Catalyst Chicago*). This dissertation addressed a contemporary education policy document (*Education Facilities Master Plan*) and the discourse of newspapers as a specific instance representing the political nature of the distribution of education as a social good situated in the larger economic context and the media’s role within it. Therefore, this study added to the scholarly research by revealing the process of ideological transmission from larger economic forces such as neoliberalism to smaller, micro discourses of newspapers reporting about a specific education policy.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The previous chapter summarized three key bodies of scholarship that are foundational to this study. Since it is my goal to reveal the inter-relationships of neoliberalism, education policy and newspapers, then I must adhere to qualitative research because of how my study was “conceived, accomplished, and how the data are understood” (Willis, 2007, p. 151). And it was this goal that provided “a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individual or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). As a qualitative researcher, my critical framework guided my research to understand how meaning is transmitted to the public through critical discourse analysis in order not to “inevitably dull the critical edge” (Billig, 1999, p. 22) that has the potential to reveal hidden sources of power and manipulation within text (van Dyke, 1995). This qualitative methodology provided a theoretical and practical tool kit to help me trace neoliberal conceptions of education and the interpretation of those policies to the general public. However, it is also important to note that Gee’s (2008) theory and method stand-alone. Also, I used critical theory and its foundation in sociology as an additional theoretical lens guiding my findings in Chapter 4 and my theoretical discussion in Chapter 5.

In this chapter I discuss how I conducted my research. First, I provide the theoretical framework. Then, I explain the theoretical connections between critical theory and critical discourse analysis as theory and method. I provide information on the classic sociological theorists that help situation the theoretical analysis. Finally, I describe the plan for conducting this study: how Gee’s (2008, 2011) method and tool kit directed the research, data sample, collection of data, and how I analyzed and interpreted the data.
The purpose of this study was to examine the discursive framing of school closings as promoted by both the official *Educational Facilities Master Plan* published by Chicago Public Schools in 2013 and *Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun Times,* and *Catalyst Chicago* articles and editorials related to it. The period studied began in April 2011 and continued through December 2014. It is guided by following research questions:

1. What ideological framing regarding school reform is embedded in the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*?
2. What are the discursive constructions of educational issues, as policy problems and policy solutions, embedded in the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*?
3. What discourses are utilized in the newspaper articles to frame the discussion of Chicago public school closures from 2011-2014?

These questions guided my methodological choices, data set and data analysis.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study utilized critical theory and critical discourse analysis because they both stress the importance of discourse and communication in revealing power relationships in the distribution of a social good like education. Critical theory informed my methodology by providing the analytical concepts of the great sociological theorists needed to conceptually explain a modern day phenomena such as school closures. This was done within a broader context that helped reveal how and why these events appear disconnected. In this way, my analysis uncovers, challenges, and hopefully changes these perceptions of power relations (Fairclough, 2010; Gee, 2011; van Dijk, 2005). Critical discourse analysis is situated in a broader theoretical paradigm—critical theory.
Critical theory. As a theoretical framework, critical theory is rooted in the philosophy of Jurgen Habermas (1930, in Garner, 2007, p.423). The theory originates from the Frankfurt School of thought. Habermas, a German sociologist, advanced social theory toward a critical orientation by focusing on the changing role of the state and its impact on the public sphere. He stressed the importance of social structures and their role in advancing commercial mass media through public discourse and print newspapers. He believed that discourse, speech, and print had an inherent purpose in both advancing capitalism and creating a passive consumer public.

“Critical theory must be turned on the processes of communication to expose distortion and to enable us to attain undistorted communication” (Garner, 2007, p. 423). Furthermore, “the public sphere, potentially an area of undistorted communication, has become increasingly restricted in capitalist society; everyday interaction is depoliticized and privatized, and technocratic jargon and media patterns of communication are the dominant modes of discourse” (Garner, 2007, p. 423). For Habermas, it is also this public sphere that could create the potential for reason to emancipate society through discourse and communication.

According to Garner (2007) and later Benson (2009), Habermas contributed to the notion of importance of language and communication. Gee (2008) added to the theory by distinguishing language from discourse. According to Gee (2008), “A Discourse is a socially accepted association among ways of using language and other symbolic expressions, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting…” (p. 161); Gee also stated that discourses are inherently “ideological” in … [that] they crucially involve a set of values and viewpoints about the relationships between people and the distribution of social goods” (p. 162). Thus, critical discourse analysis situated within critical theory is useful for understanding the various
ideological interpretations of school closures through the written newspaper discussions of educational policy.

For as Gee (2008) noted, “language is but a piece of the action, and a social action is constituted as a social practice with value and meaning only in and through the Discourse of which it is a part” (p. 182). That is, words can mean different things depending on how they are situated within different discourses. Gee additionally stated “language becomes meaningful only with Discourses and how language-within-Discourses is always and everywhere value-laden and political in the broad sense of political where it means involving human relationships where power and social goods are at stake” (p. 183). Hence, Gee provided the theory and method for critical analysis of language as used by newspapers to describe the implementation of the Educational Facilities Master Plan and the resulting school closures.

**Classic sociological theorists.** Critical theorists know that power relationships are critical factors in society, and they know that the research they conduct will find specific examples of the negative and positive influence of those relationships, aiming “at uncovering these hidden relationships and making us aware both that they exist and that they disenfranchise some groups while giving excessive power and resources to others” (Willis, 2007, p. 85). Habermas was also influence from the writings of Max Weber (1964) who argued that power and authority must be understood if we want to uncover how different relationships within society function, stating “Power is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests” (p. 152). If power is the ability to impose one’s will, authority is power that is seen as legitimate, that has the consent of those on whom it is imposed.
Critical sociological theorists have defined how concepts open up ways of understanding how power relationships work and how reality is socially constructed through a dominant narrative by those in dominant positions who have the authority to define the narrative (Marger, 1993). Additionally, because critical theory “assumes that people are not always aware of the rules by which they live and by which they organize their experience of the world and that such rules might have unintended consequences” (Ashley & Orenstein, 2001, p. 40), critical theorists have given us the theoretical tools to conceptualize how society works. For instance, Gramsci emphasized that the “intellectuals are precisely organizational and connective. The intellectuals are the dominant group’s deputies exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government” (Gramsci & Hoare, 1971, p. 12). Additionally, Garner (2007), in speaking about Gramsci, reminded us that “hegemony is a form of rule in which the ruled consent to the exercise of power” (p. 279). The role of intellectuals is to provide the translation of economic power into political and cultural power, which is done with the production of organic intellectuals that function to create consent (Garner, 2007). Gee (2011) noted that any issues relating to power and authority are critical to language use, and to understanding how consent is obtained, one must critically look closer to the language used in framing. Critical theorists provided a new way for understanding relations of power in society and how they are presented or integrated in current education policy. As Gee (2008) noted, any interpretation and analysis of language is critical because it is tied to questions about the distribution of social goods.

**Methodology**

This qualitative study is critical both in theory and method and is a methodological approach that is appropriate because it provided the theoretical lens and the discourse tools
(language) that revealed the discursive practice in the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* and newspapers.

**Critical discourse analysis.** Specifically, for this study, I used discourse analysis as the study of language-in-use developed by James Paul Gee (2008, 2011) to consider how language—policy and newspaper language in use —enacts both social and cultural practices, in this case, school reform through school closures. Gee (2011) stated that “many people think language exists so that we can say things in the sense of communicating information... however, language serves a great many functions in our lives and giving and getting information is by no means the only one” (p. 2). Rather, Gee is concerned with how language allows us to do things, be things, and “how it allows us to engage in actions and activities” (p. 2). I used Gee’s lens and methodological approach to understand how “in language there are important connections among saying (informing), doing (action), and being (identity) to know who is saying it and what the person saying it is trying to do” (p. 2). Gee’s (2008) approach was relevant because I aimed to understand why recent educational policy has focused on school closures as a current priority for educational reform and has presented mass school closures as a solution to the problem of underperforming schools, cost savings, and underutilization.

As Gee (2011) stated, “Discourse analysis can illuminate problems and controversies in the world. It can illuminate issues about the distribution of social goods, who gets helped, and who gets harmed” (p. 10). In this sense, language is always political, because there are social goods in society that are distributed. This approach provides theoretical tools for studying the connections between language as part of larger social and economic practices (Gee, 2011).

Gee (2011) claimed that certain aspects of reality are constituted or enacted into practice whenever people speak or write through language. He stated, “All discourse analysis is critical
discourse analysis, since all language is political and all language is part of the way we build and sustain our world, cultures, and institutions” (p. 10). Therefore, this theoretical approach provides the framework to understand how meaning is mediated through discourse as evidenced in both the Educational Facilities Master Plan and newspaper reporting about the implementation of the plan and school closures related to it.

Using critical discourse analysis, I examined the Educational Facilities Master Plan and the newspaper articles discussing the plan and the closing of 49 Chicago public schools to see the ways the newspapers interpreted the educational policy and the actions triggered by the policy. I applied critical discourse analysis to identify ideological themes and power relationships. In Chapter 4, the results of this analysis are described, and in Chapter 5, the meaning of the results is interpreted using a critical theoretical lens informed by a sociological foundation. Figure 1 represents this conceptual framework.
**Data sample and selection.** This study employed purposeful sampling because it “is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2009, p. 249). My sample included primary documents, the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*, and *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Sun Times*, and *Catalyst Chicago* articles and editorials published during the period 2011-2014. First, I examined the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*, which was published in September 2013 and made available to the public on the official Chicago Public Schools website. The *Educational Facilities Master Plan* was chosen because it is the newest policy document that speaks to school closure, my topic of interest, and it is an official policy
document stating how Chicago Public Schools planned to manage school facilities for the most recent closures of schools in Chicago in 2013.

Second, I examined newspaper articles and editorials from the Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun Times, and Catalyst Chicago for reporting on the Educational Facilities Master Plan and discussion of resulting school closures. I specifically selected the Chicago Tribune because it has the widest readership in the Chicago area, with a Sunday circulation of over 900,000; the Chicago Sun-Times because it is the oldest continuously published daily newspaper in the city and it has the second-largest readership; and Catalyst Chicago because it is an independent newspaper that has served as a watchdog and resource for school improvement in Chicago since 1990. Catalyst Chicago’s specific focus on education in Chicago makes it an important source, despite the fact that its readership is significantly lower than the Chicago Tribune and the Chicago Sun-Times.

Newspapers as print instead of digital media continue to be the medium in which many Americans receive information. The exclusiveness of information related to local issues is an important factor, in addition to readers enjoying the habit of picking up a newspaper and taking it with them (McIntyre, 2001). According to a Pew Research Center report written by Michael Barthel (2015), “despite widespread talk of a shift to digital, most newspaper readership continues to be in print” (para. 1). Barthel found that

according to readership data from Nielsen Scarborough’s 2014 Newspaper Penetration Report, 56% of those who consume a newspaper read it exclusively in print, while 11% also read it on desktop or laptop computers; 5% also read it on mobile; and another 11% read it in print, on desktop and on mobile. In total, more than eight-in-ten of those who read a newspaper do so in print. (para. 3)
Therefore, newspapers were the most important medium for understanding the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* and the language used in them to interpret the information in the policy.

**Data collection.** I collected the raw data (the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*) electronically from the official Chicago Public Schools webpage (Chicago Public Schools, 2013a). The specific news stories analyzed here are drawn from two databases, ProQuest and Access World News. ProQuest was used in order to retrieve the *Chicago Tribune* articles and editorials, and the Access World News database was used to retrieve the *Chicago Sun-Times* and *Catalyst Chicago* articles and editorials. Many newspapers with different voices are available on a national level, but I wanted to capture the views of Chicago newspapers, so I selected articles and editorials from these three publications to analyze. I did not choose other papers, because they would not provide the local focus of my study, and for that reason, I identified the local newspapers in Chicago for their overall focus on local issues. Each newspaper was chosen because it represents a different voice and character that will help me to understand the newspapers’ views and reporting of the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* in Chicago. These three newspapers were chosen in order to understand the different possible ways information is interpreted and reported to the public from three viewpoints, as stated previously, as well as because collectively these three newspapers cater to a broad range of readers.

The *Chicago Tribune* was selected because it is a major newspaper and has the widest readership in the Chicago area; with a Sunday circulation of over 900,000, it reaches the largest portion of the public. The *Chicago Tribune* tends to have a conservative character that leans Republican (Rohter & Bennett, 2008).

The *Chicago Sun Times* was selected because it is a daily newspaper with the second largest readership in Chicago, and it is the oldest continuously published daily newspaper in the
city. However, to give us a glimpse into the link between the media and government (Marger, 1993) recently, the Chicago Sun Times did controversially endorse a Republican in the Illinois state gubernatorial election, Bruce Rauner, despite having a no-endorsement policy. Rauner owned a 10-percent stake in the company that owns the paper, but he sold it just before launching his campaign (Erbentraut, 2014). This represents the critical aspect of politics and newspaper ownership. The Chicago Sun-Times reports on local issues in the city of Chicago.

Catalyst Chicago was selected because it is an independent news organization that has served as a watchdog and resource for school improvement in Chicago since 1990. Catalyst Chicago is an editorially independent print and online newsmagazine that is published by the Community Renewal Society (CRS), a non-profit, faith-based organization that works with people and communities to address racism and poverty (Community Renewal Society, 2015). It was chosen because the mission of the newspaper is to improve the education of all children through authoritative journalism and leadership of a constructive dialogue among students, parents, educators, community leaders, and policy makers. Also, Catalyst Chicago’s editorial board is an advisory body drawn from the ranks of public school parents, teachers, principals, researchers, journalists, and members of business, civic, education, and community organizations (Community Renewal Society, 2015).

The specific Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun Times, and Catalyst Chicago news articles and editorials were retrieved from Pro Quest and Access World News databases for dates occurring from 2011-2014. (The Chicago Tribune can only be retrieved from these two databases.) These dates were chosen because Rahm Emanuel was elected in 2011 as the 55th mayor of Chicago. Additionally, on August 22, 2011, Governor Pat Quinn signed Public Act 097-0474, which amended the Illinois School Code by adding requirements related to school
action and facility master planning, which resulted in the publication and availability of the official *Educational Facilities Master Plan* in 2013. I included news articles and editorials that were written a year after the publication of the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* to make sure that any additional information about the events would be included during those dates. I concluded with the four data sample types because of their purpose and of their differing views to give me insight into the reporting on the official *Educational Facilities Master Plan* and the views of the newspapers. News articles and editorials provide an opportunity to see the multitude and mix of what is being reported in different sections of the newspaper about the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*. See Table 1 for a list of the data sample types.
Table 1.

Data Sample Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Sample Type</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Publication Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper: Articles or Editorials</td>
<td>Chicago Tribune</td>
<td>2011-2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper: Articles or Editorials</td>
<td>Chicago Sun Times</td>
<td>2011-2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper: Articles or Editorials</td>
<td>Catalyst Chicago</td>
<td>2011-2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Chicago Public Schools</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educational Facilities Master Plan, 2013</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Description of Newspaper Sampling

Again, to fit the purpose of the study and help answer the research questions, a purposive sampling was chosen to provide an appropriated way to get a sense of the meanings used to justifying school closures in Chicago from a large sample of newspapers. The purposive sampling ensured that the issues of school closures will yield results to the questions of how the discourses of neoliberalism through cost savings are utilized in the newspapers to frame Chicago public school closures. In the purposive sample the selection of the primary articles and editorials and secondary articles and editorials was important to get a sense of all the discourses related to school closures for those years. In addition to school closure as “cost savings,” the secondary data sample revealed other discourses beyond “cost savings” appear. The purpose of using this secondary data sample was to see if this rational was treated positively or negatively? This purpose of the primary and secondary data sample adds credibility to the research to
understand the ideological framing, discursive constructions and the variety of discourses utilized in the newspapers.

This also helped extend current understanding of the application of critical discourse analysis to critical policy research through the addition of these newspapers to the education policy documents. For my primary data sample, I selected news articles and editorials based on headlines and keyword search terms “school closings” and “cost savings” for years 2011-2013. All of these terms speak to the discourse that occurred from 2011 to 2014 on school closures and the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*. The selection process started with the first article then every other article was chosen from each of the newspapers per year for years 2011-2014. This yielded results of 101 articles for the primary data sample. Table 2 presents the results of these findings and the distribution of articles by search terms, year and newspaper (the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Chicago Sun Times* and *Catalyst Chicago*).

Furthermore, for my secondary sample, I selected news articles and editorials based on headline and the keyword search term “school closings” for years 2011-2014. This search term speaks to the discourse that occurred from 2011-1013 on all school closures in Chicago. This will help explore whether other framings are used in the vocabulary of motives for closing schools in Chicago. The selection of the secondary sample set was conducted for each of the newspapers per year (2011-2014). The selection process started with the first article, then every tenth article from each of the newspapers per year for years 2011-2014 was selected. This yielded 65 articles for the secondary data sample. Table 2 presents the findings and the distribution of articles by the search term “school closings” per year and newspaper.
Table 2.

Distribution of Articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Articles with Terms “School Closings” and “Cost Savings”</th>
<th>Articles with Terms “School Closings” without “Cost Savings”</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2011</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalyst Chicago</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Sun Times</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Tribune</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2012</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalyst Chicago</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Sun Times</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Tribune</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2013</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalyst Chicago</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Sun Times</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Tribune</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2014</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalyst Chicago</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Sun Times</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Tribune</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>202</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>857</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data analysis.** Established by Gee (2011) and consistent with a critical discourse analysis approach, my analysis of the data stems from Gee’s notion about language and reality. Certain aspects of reality are constituted or enacted into practice, as “we make or build things in the world through language” (p. 17). Gee’s critical discourse analysis approach provides a useful framework to understand how meaning is mediated through discourse and language, as evidenced in both the Chicago Public Schools official *Educational Facilities Master Plan* and news articles and editorials from the *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, and *Catalyst Chicago*. 
I used Gee’s (2011) specific tools for data analysis that include six tools of inquiry (situated meanings, social languages, figured worlds, intertextuality, Discourses and Conversations) and seven building tasks (significance, practices-activities, identities, relationships, politics, connections, signs systems-knowledge) and it is the intersection of both (tools and building tasks) that become the data analysis in critical discourse analysis. The tools of inquiry are “meant to be “thinking devices” that guide inquiry in regard to specific sorts of data and specific sorts of issues and questions… They are meant to be adapted for the reader’s own purposes…. As well to be transformed as the reader adapts them to his or her own theory of the domain” (pp. 11-12). As the researcher, I provided the discourses and the relationships that are relevant to my own research of school closure in Chicago. I adapted the politics tool of the distribution of education as a social good to analyze the power dynamics through the use of language. The politics tool asks: “How are situated meanings, social languages, figured worlds, intertextuality, Discourses, and Conversations being used to create, distribute, or withhold social goods or to construe particular distributions of social goods as “good” or acceptable” or not?” (Gee, 2010, p. 11-12). It is by asking the questions for the politics tool as thinking devices (tools) that led and guided the theoretical analysis that I attempted to make as I was analyzing the data. The following section presents in detail the steps to Gee’s critical discourse analysis method.

First, after selecting the building tasks and using the tools of inquiry, this enabled the researcher to generate some claim or hypothesis from the data based on mutual considerations of context and language-in-use. This was the starting point of analysis of the data retrieved from the textual documents. Gee (2011) noted:

We gain information about a context in which a piece of language has been used and use this information to form hypotheses about what that piece of language means and is
doing…and ask ourselves what we can learn about the context in which the language was used and how that context was constituted (interpreted) by the speaker or writer and listener(s) or reader(s). (Gee, 2011, p. 20)

This process is the discourse analysis, because it asks, “What that piece of language means and is doing” to understand about the context of how the language was used and how the context was interpreted by others (speaker, writer, listener, or reader) (Gee, 2011, p. 20).

Second, as the researcher, I “picked,” as informed by Gee’s (2008) framework, some key words and phrases in the data (the textual document, the Educational Facilities Master Plan, newspapers), which is similar to picking codes in qualitative data analysis. Gee (2011) viewed the answers to the questions as being always tentative and a working analysis. He suggested:

Pick some key words and phrases in the data, or related families of them and ask what situated meanings these words and phrases seem to have in the data, given what you know about the overall context in which the data occurred. Think about what figured worlds these situated meanings appear to implicate. Think about the social languages and Discourses that appear to be relevant, in whatever ways, to your data. If it is easier to think about what Conversations are relevant to your data, then do that. (p. 124)

Although for Gee (2011) this is not referred to as traditional qualitative coding, it can be understood as inductive coding, since those key words he wants the researcher to pick are those that are of importance for the analysis and are related to the theoretical lens of the research and at the same time are being retrieved from the textual documents of analysis. As Gee noted, it is about picking some key words and phrases in the data. The key terms were picked for the entire data sample. The purpose of the secondary data sample is to understand the variety of motives and frames that emerge from that data set. The secondary data sample was coded in order to
understand the full range of discourses and to get at the variety of ways in which the newspapers discuss and present school closings in Chicago. Although the coding for the secondary sample followed Gee’s framework, I also asked, “What rational or ‘vocabulary of motives’ appears in this article that discuss school closings?” This revealed that other kinds of discourses beyond “cost savings” appear, as well as whether the rational is positively or negatively represented. Therefore, Gee’s (2011) coding approach emerged from the building tasks and tools of inquiry and picking terms from the data itself.

Gee (2011) claimed, “Whenever we speak or write, we always (often simultaneously) construct or build the seven things or the seven areas of ‘reality’” (p. 17). This reality is constructed by larger social structures and the interaction of discourses that transmit information to the general public. Each of these different kinds of building tasks have specific questions that can be asked about a spoken or written piece of language (Gee, 2011). Gee (2011) stated: “a discourse analysis involves asking questions about how language, at a given time and place, is used to engage in the seven building tasks” (p. 121). It is not necessary for a critical discourse analysis to involve all seven building tasks of the approach, but “a discourse analyst can ask seven different questions about any piece of language-in-use” (Gee, 2011, p. 17). Additionally, Gee suggested that, “while not all building tasks will be as readily apparent in all pieces of data, we always have the option to ask questions about each one to see what we get” (p. 22). This is because the results of the building tasks might not always be relevant to the study.

The building task I used is *politics (the distribution of social goods)*, because it best conveys a perspective about the nature of the distribution of social goods, and in this study, the social good is education. Education as a social good is:
at stake any time people speak or write so as to state or imply that something or someone is “adequate,” “normal,” “good,” or “acceptable” (or the opposite) in some fashion important to some group in society or society as a whole…What perspective on social goods is this piece of language communicating (i.e., what is being communicated as to what is taken as being “normal,” “right,” “good,” “correct,” “proper,” “appropriate,” “valuable,” “the way things are,” “the way things ought to be,” “high status,” or “low status” “like me” or “not like me” and so forth)? (Gee, 2011, p. 19).

The politics building task best linked the distribution of education as a social good with the data found in the Education Facilities Master Plan and news articles and editorials from the Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun Times, and Catalyst Chicago to see what it revealed about Chicago public school closures. I drew from Gee’s (2011) method of discourse analysis to look for meanings, patterns, and frames within and across the textual documents. The results of the findings illustrated how Gee’s framework was applied to an analysis of the problem of school closures in policy documents and the newspaper articles. Through the close analysis of these documents using Gee’s (2011) framework as a tool in the critical analysis of public policy and newspaper articles and editorials, this research revealed a deeper understanding of how power operates in policy, newspapers texts, and discourses that describe, interpret, and explain school closure policy in Chicago. Therefore, Gee’s (2011) critical discourse analysis framework as theory and method produced a critical theoretically grounded analysis of the relationship between the construction of school closures as reform policy and an opportunity for a larger conversation about neoliberalism in education policy, and its relationship to the newspaper articles (media) as it is embedded in ideology and discourse through the analysis of language.
**Atlas.ti.** In qualitative data analysis, no computer program performs the analysis for the researcher; however, Atlas.ti (Friese, 2014) allowed me as a researcher to manage large amounts of qualitative data. Atlas.ti is a tool used to organize, categorize, and document themes within raw data. I used Atlas.ti to manage the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*, news articles, and editorials. First, I imported and prepared the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*, task force report, news articles, and editorials (i.e., data) for data analysis. These files were uploaded into a hermeneutic unit in Atlas.ti. A hermeneutic unit is a file that stores all the information. Second, after I imported the data, I coded the data. As described above, coding is the process of assigning categories, concepts, or codes to segments of information found in the text. In Atlas.ti, the data is displayed in two windows. One of the windows displays the document to be coded, and the other window displays the codes that are assigned to each quotation (segment of the data) that I (the researcher) considered to be meaningful. At this point, the computer program helped me with organizing the categories that emerged after the initial reading of the text and the many rounds of readings that took place thereafter. This allowed me to become familiar with the themes and events in the text document and code the data. Atlas.ti has modeled the computer coding process to correspond to the traditional by-hand qualitative coding process: the practice of marking, underlining, or highlighting and annotating text passages in documents or transcriptions.

According to Gee (2011), and with tools available from Atlas.ti, I assigned the codes by highlighting a particular quotation (segment) within the primary document, then I created a code for that quotation (segment) or select a previously created code, as reflective of Gee’s method. Gee stated, “we consider a certain key word or a family of key words, that is, words we hypothesize are important to understanding the language we wish to analyze” (p. 73).
In this process, I also made use of memos by typing and keeping track of my analytic thoughts in the comment field of Atlas.ti to reflect on anything that emerged in relation to the research. Friese (2014) noted, “memos technically speaking provide a writing space like the comment field but memos are an object class of their own. Within Atlas.ti, I was able to link my analytic thoughts to the data segments that support them” (p. 122). The creating of memos in Atlas.ti gave me, as the researcher the opportunity to create what Friese referred to as a “free” memo; he stated, “It is not connected to any other object in your project … memos can also be linked to codes, quotations and other memos” (Friese, 2014, p. 124). This was a great way to facilitate reflection between my thoughts and the relationships that emerged with my research questions and the research.

There were many advantages for using a computer program like Atlas.ti (Friese, 2014). First, it allowed for quick retrieval of the quotations (segments) for particular codes, because it displays the first few words of every quotation highlighted for that code within the primary document and its line number. Second, Atlas.ti provided a search feature to find patterns or strings in the primary documents. Third, qualitative inquiry is iterative in that the research goes through repeated cycles of data analysis to generate what Gee (2011) referred to as a claim that emerges from the data. Atlas.ti provided the space for the iterative process of repeatedly returning to my data source to ensure that my understanding and interpretation are coming from the data and allowed me to assign more than one code to a quotation (segment) from the data. This ensured that synthesizing the codes created broader categories according to Gee’s framework. Additionally, Atlas.ti provide a graphical representation of the data for model-building purposes by the codes that were created and linked together with other codes or nodes (Friese, 2014). The models that were created were only possible with the original codes that I
picked as key terms according to Gee (2008) and that were created during the coding process with the terms, as well as the categories that I assigned to show the rich representation of the data development. Therefore, as with all qualitative data analysis software, the models and analysis that Atlas.ti generated are only as strong as my coding and categorizing processes.

Validity

To address the issue of quality, I used Gee’s (2011) notion of validity as an alternative to the criteria of trustworthiness as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). In any qualitative analysis, the issue of validity needs to be considered. Gee noted:

Validity is not constituted by arguing that a discourse analysis “reflects reality” in any simple way. This is so far at least two reasons. First, humans interpret the world, they do not have access to it “just as it is.” They must use some language or some other symbol system with which to interpret it and thereby render it meaningful in certain ways. A discourse analysis is itself an interpretation, an interpretation of the interpretive work people have done in specific contexts. It is, in that sense, an interpretation of an interpretation. (p. 122)

Gee further claimed that these considerations do not mean that discourse analyses are “subjective” or that they are just the analyst’s “opinion” (p. 122); rather, the 42 possible questions from the six tools of inquiry and the seven building tasks are crucial to validity only if the answers to those questions produce results that are relevant to my study.

Furthermore, Gee (2011) insisted that validity for any discourse analysis depends on four elements (convergence, agreement, coverage, and linguistic detail). I used these four elements within my discourse analysis by committing to the questions from the tools of inquiry and the building tasks:
1. **Convergence:** A discourse analysis is more, rather than less valid (i.e., trustworthy”), the more the answers to the 42 questions converge in the way they support the analysis…the more the analysis offers *compatible* and *convincing* answers to many or all of them.

2. **Agreement:** Answers to the 42 questions are more convincing the more ‘native speakers’ of the social language in the data and ‘members’ of the Discourses implicated in the data agree that the analysis reflects how such social languages can function in such actual settings.

3. **Coverage:** The analysis is more valid the more the analysis can be applied to related sorts of data. This includes being able to relate to what has come before and after the situation being analyzed and being able to predict the sorts of things that might happen in related sorts of situations.

4. **Linguistic Details:** The analysis is more valid the more it is tightly tied to the details of linguistic structure… part of what makes a discourse analysis valid is it is linked to the grammatical devices that manifestly can and do serve these functions, according to the ‘native speakers’ of the social languages involved. (Gee, 2011, pp. 123-124)

First, to ensure validity as described by Gee, I engaged with the building task of “politics,” because it is a social good related to education and asked the relevant questions for that building task. *Politics* helped answer the research questions as they relate to neoliberalism, education policy, and the newspaper media. The answers that emerge from my building task, “politics”, and all the tools of inquiry became the discourse analysis and provided supportive evidence for the meanings of themes and perspectives for my study.
Ethics

This study does not involve human subjects, so the usual ethical concerns are not applicable. The choice of certain newspapers and not others represents what Gee (2011) requires of researchers of critical discourse: “ultimately theoretical judgments, that is, they are based on the analyst’s theories of how language, contexts, and interactions work in general and in the specific context being analyzed” and are relevant “to the arguments the analysis is attempting make” (Gee, 2011, p. 117). The data that I used is available in the public domain, and any reference to individuals will consist of public officials.

Positionality

As a current college instructor at an urban, private university, I see the purpose of education as providing the foundation for meaningful democratic participation and the space that provides the opportunity for public, intellectual conversation. Part of my responsibility as a college instructor and a sociologist is to do my part and educate students broadly about different social problems in society and bring awareness to the social construction process of any topic. It was the process of teaching different topics separately and connecting the functions of the political and economic institutions within society that initiated my interest in newspapers’ role in transferring information about education reform.

Additionally, I know that the current state of education and the massive closures of schools, what some researchers have referred to as the destruction of communities (Lipman, 2008, 2011b; Lipman & Hursh, 2007; Lipman & Haines, 2007), is impacted by economic and political decisions. Therefore, the aim of this research is to be critical about the social construction of knowledge and to explore the major forces of knowledge that shape the way we see the world and to have a critical conversation about educational reform as seen in Chicago.
Limitations and Delimitations

First, regarding the delimitations of my study, I limited my research to include the most recent information related to school closings in Chicago because the goal of my study is specific to this event and understanding the Educational Facilities Master Plan that speaks to it. Second, the timeframe represents the most recent massive school closures in Chicago. Lastly, I decided not to include any newspaper sources other than the Chicago Tribune, the Chicago Sun-Times, and Catalyst Chicago articles and editorials because I want to understand the local news discourse and its representation of the 49 Chicago school closures from the newspapers that had the widest readership. I specifically selected the Chicago Tribune because it has the widest readership in the Chicago area, with a Sunday circulation of over 900,000, the Chicago Sun-Times because it is the oldest continuously published daily newspaper in the city, and Catalyst Chicago because it is an independent newspaper that has served as a watchdog and resource for school improvement in Chicago since 1990.

Although critical discourse analysis led to a greater understanding of the discursive process of school closings between 2011-2014 in this study, the limitations remain with the researcher and the selection of particular documents for the study. The issue of choosing a policy document is a complex one, and as Gee (2008) noted, they are all pieces of the larger conversation and are related to larger texts that speak to language in use and power.

Conclusion

Building on the literature review, this chapter provided the research approach for collecting and analyzing the qualitative data within the critical theoretical framework and by Gee’s (2011) critical discourse analysis method. Finally, the findings are presented with the themes that emerged from the analysis to better understand the complicated nature of education
reform as applied to the issue of school closures and how the newspaper articles shape public perception of school closings as an aspect of educational reform.
Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study is to examine the discursive framing of school closings as promoted by both the Chicago Public Schools official 2013 Educational Facilities Master Plan and Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun Times, and Catalyst Chicago articles and editorials related to it. In this chapter, I present my findings of the discourse analysis using Gee’s (2008, 2011) concept of politics of the language used in the Chicago Public Schools official 2013 Educational Facilities Master Plan and Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun Times, and Catalyst Chicago newspapers. This includes an overview of Gee’s concept of politics, identification of key themes from the data and how my hypotheses emerged from the steps of the critical discourse analysis. Chapter 5 provides a theoretical discussion of the findings using a critical theoretical lens rooted in the concepts of foundational sociological theorists and Gee’s (2008, 2011) concept of politics.

Overview of Politics

The steps used for this critical discourse analysis findings began with the selection of the politics tool because it focuses on the distribution of social goods, and in this study, the social good is education (Gee, 2008, 2011). This critical discourse analysis tool is a process that illuminates the distribution of social goods through language use. “For any communication, ask how words and grammatical devices are being used to build (construct, assume) what count as social goods and to distribute these to or withhold them from listeners or others” (Gee, 2008, p. 121). First, guided by my research questions and the politics tool, I as the researcher was able to generate some claims or hypotheses from the data based on mutual considerations of context and language-in-use. Second, as noted by Gee, I “picked,” some key words and phrases from the data (the Educational Facilities Master Plan and newspaper article/editorials). The key words and phrases chosen are similar to choosing codes in qualitative data analysis. Lastly, I looked for
meanings, patterns, and frames within and across the data (the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*, newspaper article/editorials) and these key words became the dominant discourses (themes). I followed the above steps for the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*, the *Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun Times*, and *Catalyst Chicago* newspapers. In the following section, I present the findings of the three dominant discourses (themes) discovered through the critical discourse analysis. Using Gee’s (2008, 2011) guideline, direct quotes are shown as evidence from the data that shape the discursive contexts of school closure in Chicago resulting from this analysis. The themes are the discourse of economic imperatives, the discourse of choice, and the discourse of accountability were the dominant discourses. Each of these themes and the contexts in which they emerged provided insight into the language produced in the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* and newspapers. Table 3 represents the themes that emerged from combining the key terms that developed over the course of the policy analysis and all the themes and their descriptors.
Table 3.

**Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideological Framing-Theme</th>
<th>Descriptions/Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability Ideology</td>
<td>This key theme makes reference to the implicit and explicit notions of performance, outcomes, data driven decision-making. Evaluations and implementation of policy as a cost-effective reason. Who is held accountable, who is to blame, and who is responsible for others. Outcomes for facilities directly related to quality education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Ideology</td>
<td>This key theme makes reference to the role of money in the development of education, the budget and its future. The cost-effective use of facilities, money, capital, the investment in education as a business. The concept quality and its relationship with terms like money, investment and the purpose of education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice Ideology</td>
<td>It makes reference to the participation of community input, parents in general and the decision making process to obtain access to selective enrollment and therefore a higher quality education. Education as an individual choice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme #1: Economic Imperatives**

The ideological framing (production of meaning) that is embedded in the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* centers on economic arguments and imperatives. The key terms of “money,” “capital,” “cost effective,” and “finance” provide the evidence for the economic arguments (see Appendix A), as these terms make reference to the role of money in the
development of education, the budget and its future use, and the investment in education as a business. These critical investments can be seen in the ways in which grammar functions through the use of the repetition of phrases, verbs, and nouns that create patterns to foster a commonsense understanding of economic imperatives.

The second page of the Educational Facilities Master Plan starts with this claim:

The Educational Facilities Master Plan (EFMP) is part of Mayor Rahm Emanuel and CPS CEO Byrd-Bennett’s larger plan to make critical investments in our schools and classrooms to ensure every child in every neighborhood has access to a high quality education that prepares them to succeed in college, life and career. (p. 2)

The above claim clearly states who is in charge of what Gee (2008, 2011), referred to the distribution of education as a social good. Also, it sets the stage for the economic argument with the words “critical investments;” in the first six pages of the Educational Facilities Master Plan, investment is repeatedly mentioned.

Though the District faces significant financial challenges, failing to make critical investments in our schools and classrooms is something that our students and our city can no longer afford. (p. 2)

CPS is committed to pursuing additional funding…. (p. 3)

The Mayor worked with various corporate partners, who understood the importance of investing in our future workforce…. (p. 4)

While we face this fiscal crisis, there is a $3.5 billion deficit in capital improvements to our schools for repair and maintenance alone and classrooms and state capital and TIF dollars are available that can only be designated to school improvement projects. (p. 5)

Invest in a brighter future for our students. (p. 5)

Additionally, the above claims imply that the document is part of a plan devised by Mayor Emanuel and Chicago Public Schools CEO Byrd-Bennett, when in fact the policy was drafted so that Chicago Public Schools would be in compliance with IL Public Act 97-0474, requiring new planning, accountability, and transparency for decisions made on the closing of Chicago Public
Schools. The *Educational Facilities Master Plan* was not enacted on a voluntary basis by Mayor Emanuel and Chicago Public Schools CEO Bryd-Bennett.

As stated in the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*, economic imperatives for improving schools are explained in two different ways. The first is presented through infrastructure changes to facilities or the closing of buildings based on use criteria like underutilization or overcrowding. It is tied to cost savings, funding, investments, and efficiency. The second reason is connected to investing in access to high-quality schools. Access to high-quality schools comes in the form of necessary resources like core instructional programs, accelerated curriculum, new laboratories, equipment, technology, wireless access, libraries, art rooms, and air conditioners. Although equipment like iPads and air conditioners are understood, terms like accelerated curriculum are not defined.

**Infrastructure changes.** The economic argument is made with key words and phrases that bring attention to a complex system of representation that connect the actions of Mayor Emanuel and CEO Byrd-Bennett and with the approval of the school board, acting as agents for the good of students and the city in the face of financial challenges (fiscal, and the budget crises, pension, etc.). Under-enrollment, overcrowding, and the choices that parents must make to have access to a high-quality education come in the form of creating more selective enrollment seats are explicitly stated problems that policy must solve, and the only solution presented is the closing of facilities. The quotes below state what is written in the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*.

**Educational Facilities Master Plan framing.** Direct quotes from the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* represent the economics argument tied to the improvement of facilities through the repetition of the words “safe” and “healthy,” as well as the aforementioned “critical
investments” and “access to a high-quality education.” The Educational Facilities Master Plan stated:

Though the District faces significant financial challenges, failing to make critical investments in our schools and classrooms is something that our students and our city can no longer afford. (p. 2)

Over the course of the ten-year EFMP, CPS will seek to improve school buildings, so that they provide safe, healthy and supportive learning environments that include sufficient space for the number of students in the buildings, equitable access to advanced technology, playlots, modern computer and media labs, air conditioned classrooms, libraries, and are ADA accessible. (p. 2)

Investing in access to quality education options….to better align our facilities to the educational priorities of those communities. (p. 3)

Investing in access to quality education options…to decrease the distances our children in some neighborhoods need to travel to reach certain types of academic programs. (p. 3)

We have also heard the call for more equitable access to modern technology and for investments to support our diverse learners, including evaluating opportunities to teach more of our diverse learners closer to their homes and in more inclusive environments. (p. 5)

Our vision builds on the goal that Mayor Rahm Emanuel established for the City: a high-quality education for every child in every neighborhood. (p. 10)

We will deliver on his educational priorities of high-quality early learning opportunities…. (p. 10)

We will continue to add new high-quality schools to neighborhood across the city-such as International baccalaureate (IB), Early College Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM, and innovative charter and contract models-as we must ensure that all children have access to high-quality options that support their aspirations for college and career. (p. 10)

The use of repetition creates emphasis on a certain word and takes away the importance of other words in the document. These words are seen throughout the document and represent a common sense notion of Mayor Emanuel and CPS CEO Byrd-Bennett’s decisions as they relate to the words “critical investments” and “access to a high-quality education” through facilities, health, safety, curricular and academic programs, technology, etc. that deliver the economic outcomes of education. The above quotes use the pronoun “we” many times, yet it is unclear who the “we”
represents. Is it just Mayor Emanuel and Chicago Public Schools CEO Byrd-Bennett, or are others involved?

The following passage further represents economic arguments tied to facilities.

…to protect the health and safety of students, teachers, and adults in the school community. This means repairing masonry that is cracked and at risk of crumbling; chimneys that are in danger of collapse; roofs that are leaking and causing interior damage; and boilers that are in urgent need of replacement. It also includes building new playgrounds at schools currently lacking the facilities, to improve both the long-term health of our students and their educational outcomes. (p. 15)

The above statements are presented as the main reason to have confidence in Chicago Public Schools CEO Byrd-Bennett and Mayor Emanuel, as they make these decisions school action, which must be approved by the school board decisions. These key words represent general statements and what those in positions of power believe schools should be. Furthermore, it sets the stage for linking other options, like charter schools, as a way of ensuring this so-called “higher-quality” education. The Educational Facilities Master Plan continues with finance availability and additional services for future actions.

We believe that schools can be appropriate settings, if finances are available and the space permits, to provide additional services to students and their families, via implementation of Student-Based Health Centers (SBHC), early childhood centers, parent universities, and expansion of space for counseling services and other programs critical to supporting and meeting all of our student’s needs. (p. 18)

As mentioned above, the phrase “if finances are available” is contradictory because the original purpose of the Educational Facilities Master Plan was to provide transparency about the criteria used to determine school closures. Although it evokes feelings of hope and sets the stage for all of the positive changes that Chicago Public Schools intends to make, a question must be asked here: “if lack of money and capital are the issues that school closures will solve, where will additional money for all the extra health centers or parent universities come from?” This is
unclear in the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*, and it is counter to the reasons for closing schools in the first place.

In the quotes below, education as a social good based on economic imperatives is directly linked to infrastructure changes and the closing of buildings is based on the criteria of underutilization or overcrowding, which are explained as problems that have always existed.

Alleviating overcrowding at local schools is stated below:

> Over-enrollment has been a decades long problem, particularly on the Northwest and Southwest sides and in some instances on the southeast side of Chicago. (p. 2)

> Last year, 18,000 students applied for 3,000 selective enrollment seats across the city. There are approximately 2,500 students who qualify for these selective enrollment seats, but CPS does not have enough current capacity to accommodate those students. (p. 4)

> CPS took necessary actions to address underenrollment that left many of our schools lacking important resources. (p. 3)

> The Board of Education also voted to approve 11 co-locations to allow CPS to more efficiently use existing space to provide options to students and families and relocate students from low quality buildings and relocate several others. (p. 27)

> Those standards do not take into account mobile capacity and leased capacity that exist at some of these schools. (We have 124 modular units with 424 classrooms at 79 schools and have leased classroom space for 33 schools). Even if these mobile and leased spaces were accounted for in the calculations, 49 of our schools would have been considered overcrowded. (p. 30)

The above quotes reflect a discourse that takes into account all possible scenarios that give Chicago Public Schools the criteria to close schools beyond the 49 that were original chosen to close. The *Educational Facilities Master Plan* referred to calculations to prove that the 49 schools would have been considered overcrowded; therefore, the mayor and Chicago Public Schools present themselves as right in their criteria when they closed those schools. In the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*, it is unclear how Chicago Public Schools calculates overcrowded or underenrolled schools.

Economic arguments for improving schools through school action continue to be
explained as a less expensive option than new construction and infrastructure changes. Chicago Public Schools is careful to make sure that changes are based on the criteria of both underutilization and overcrowded dynamics. As stated in the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*, the infrastructure decisions are explained by addressing underutilization.

The Board of Education also voted to approve 11 co-locations to allow CPS to more efficiently use existing space to provide options to students and families and relocate students from low quality buildings and relocate several others. The Board sought to move students to higher performing options, consolidate into fewer buildings, and keep our better buildings in operation, where feasible (this led to several schools being relocated as part of the process). (p. 27)

In the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*, the infrastructure decisions are explained by defining the causes of overcrowding.

Schools without boundaries: Should never be overcrowded. (p. 31)

Schools with boundaries: Schools that have boundaries and which are either overcrowded or are at risk of becoming so, should: or restrict their enrollment of new students to in-area children only (and out-of-area up to the efficiency range). If the facility houses a citywide program, consideration should be given to removing the program or reducing its size and relocating some or all of that program to a facility with more space or consider boundary changes if there are high performing school options nearby with space to accommodate additional students. (p. 33)

There are several potential causes of overcrowding. In schools that have traditional geographic attendance area boundaries, overcrowding can be caused by two primary factors:

1. Shifts in the number of neighborhood residents enrolling in the school. This could be due to an increase in the number of children living within the boundary, an increase in the percent of children resident in the boundary enrolling in the school, or a combination of those factors.

2. Enrollment of out-of-area students as the school’s capacity is increasingly utilization. (p. 33)

Permanent capacity can take the form of a linked or free-standing annex, an addition, or an off-site branch to expand one school, a new building to replace an existing school (e.g., constructing a larger building and decommissioning the old building. (pp. 33-34)

We would typically consider the following conditions as factors favoring building a new school, rather than adding an annex, addition or branch:

- The existing permanent capacity of the school is very large, such that adding an
annex or branch would risk creating a school of an unreasonably large size.

- We would be able to relieve overcrowding at multiple schools via new school construction.
- Funds are available to build a new school.
- The overcrowded schools do not have space available for an annex or addition.
- Land is available on which to construct a new school.
- Overcrowded schools are low performing.
- The existing building is of such low quality that it would be better to decommission the building than to improve it. (p. 35)

Interestingly, Chicago Public Schools also framed the failure to complete these critical investments as something that the City of Chicago cannot continue to afford as seen below. The *Educational Facilities Master Plan* stated:

Failing to make critical investments in our schools and classrooms is something that our students and our city can no longer afford. (p. 2)

In many cases, there are less expensive options than new construction. (p. 31)

The primary challenge that we face in meeting our aspirations, and those of our communities, is financial. (p. 3)

CPS is committed to pursuing additional funding and, with our school communities, carefully evaluating all potential levers for relieving overcrowding such as boundary changes, changes to our enrollment policies and practices, relocation of programs from overcrowded schools to schools that have more space to house those programs, adding more temporary capacity relief such as leased space and mobile units, and building new facilities. (p. 3)

As stated above, the ideological framing that is embedded in the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* centers on economic arguments for improving schools through school action as infrastructure changes and the closing of buildings based on the criteria of underutilization or overcrowding. Underutilization has been presented as a criterion for the economic decisions to close schools, but there is no clear indication of how much money is being saved. Although budget information would be available on the official Chicago Public Schools website, the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* was supposed to provide that information.

The following sections present the findings of the selection of articles from the *Chicago
Sun Times, Catalyst Chicago and the Chicago Tribune newspapers. In the Chicago Sun Times newspaper, using the search terms “school closings” and “cost savings” for the 2011 year, no articles were found; however, for 2012-2014, a total of 36 articles were analyzed. Using the search term “school closings,” for years 2011-2014 a total of 23 articles were analyzed. In the Catalyst Chicago newspaper, using the search terms “school closings” and “cost savings” for 2012-2014, a total of 25 articles were retrieved. Using the search term “school closings,” for years 2011-2014, a total of 29 articles were retrieved. In the Chicago Tribune newspaper, using the search terms “school closings” and “cost savings” for 2012-2014, a total of 43 articles were retrieved. After reading all the articles, the key terms were “picked” from the articles using Gee’s (2008, 2011) guidelines critical discourse analysis. For an extensive and detailed explanation, please reference the Sample section in Chapter 3 and Table 2 (p. 63).

Chicago Sun Times framing. The findings in the Chicago Sun Times revealed a variety of discourses depending on whether the information was from a news article or an editorial (views of the newspaper board) or commentary (anyone can write). Interesting key terms and themes provided a diverse discourse about the reporting of the Educational Facilities Master Plan. Economic imperatives as a theme in the Chicago Sun Times commentary and news articles lead with a statement that alludes to discrepancies in the savings that Chicago Public Schools had originally presented about the infrastructure information in the Educational Facilities Master Plan and the cost savings from the closing of schools. For example, a May 28, 2013 Chicago Sun Times commentary, “Recovery? Not for the Common People,” by Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr., the founder and president of Rainbow PUSH Coalition, uses grammar features to connect decisions made to larger neoliberal economic imperatives.

Each week in Chicago, we witness more pain. Teachers are laid off and schools are closed. Transit workers are terminated and bus service is cut. Families lose their homes,
and thousands remain underwater, unable to refinance mortgages greater than the worth of their home. Hospital budgets are shut, and costs go up. Summer Pell grants are cut, and students drop out into an economy with no jobs. The supposed recovery hasn’t reached the people. The new jobs offer less pay, less security and fewer benefits than the ones that were lost. African-American families lost nearly a third of their wealth between 2007 and 2010. (Hispanic families lost more than 40 percent.) A fragile middle class has been devastated. Investors and corporate CEOs clean up. The top 1 percent have captured all of the income growth over the first two years coming out of the recession and then some. (p. 18)

The core of the above article presents an alternative discourse about school closure, the teachers who are laid off and others who are dealing with larger economic changes that impact individuals. For instance, the verb used to describe the one percent and how they captured the income growth shows the relationship of the neoliberal economic imperatives.

However, newspaper articles also use the grammar of economic imperatives, lexical choices of verbs and nouns that position the actors involved with factual information to influence public opinion about the distribution of education as a social good. In the Chicago Sun Times example below, “CPS Overestimated Savings School Closings Will Provide,” represents the economic imperatives and those decisions by the institutions, in this case Chicago Public Schools.

Chicago Public Schools has scaled back the savings it expects from closing a historic number of neighborhood elementary schools by $122 million, prompting the Chicago Teachers Union to accuse the district of moving too fast.

In July, slashed school budgets led principals and parents to beg for help, particularly for some tax increment financing money to restore arts teachers, writing programs and toilet paper.

Then suddenly, a week ago, the same mayor who wanted schools closed and has denied declaring a TIF surplus announced the beginning of a school building boom.

During a four-day stretch, Mayor Rahm Emanuel doled out science lab upgrades and playgrounds, a new school and annexes to lessen overcrowding for a total of more than $90 million in big capital spending.

The announcements had much of the city wondering where in the world the money came from, and how, in a district with such need, were these particular projects chosen?
Skeptics point to 2015, when lots of ribbons will be cut by Emanuel during a re-election year. The mayor’s office and CPS officials counter that the money set aside comes with strings that apply to specific situations and cannot be used to hire back staff.

“Most of these projects are getting completed in 2015 when he’s running for re-election,” said Jackson Potter of the Chicago Teachers Union. “That’s not a coincidence.” (Fitzpatrick & Spielman, 2013, p. 6)

Similar to this newspaper article, another Chicago Sun-Times article, “Chicago Public Schools – Mayor’s Rapid-fire Construction Plans Raise Questions about Timing, TIF Financing,” presents unfavorable representations of Chicago Public Schools and Mayor Emanuel. It also informs the public about where the TIF money is going and is in contrast to what was written and promised in the Educational Facilities Master Plan. The language used in the article also alludes to what might be occurring in the future, in this case in 2015. Additionally, in 2014, as seen in the article below, “CTU Report: Chicago Public Schools Broke School-Closing Promises,” there is further information about where the money was actually spent. Information about the direct cost of closing these schools was not clearly presented in the Educational Facilities Master Plan policy document

The CTU estimates that the district spent at least $285 million on costs related to the school closings.

Of the $83.5 million spent on transitions in 2013 and 2014, only $9.3 million of that went directly to schools, with the bulk paying for the “web of supports made necessary to manage the chaos of the largest school closures the district, or any school district, has ever undergone,” including $30 million to a logistics company, the report says. “School closings have done nothing to improve the education of CPS students, nor have they saved money, but the same policies that led to massive closures

The news articles give a more balanced story of the economic imperatives presenting two sides of the story, unlike the editorials that blame one side for the problems of public education and, therefore, who decides the distribution of education as a social good. The words used in the framing of the headlines and the articles themselves suggest that the reader should seriously think about the school closings as they relate to the cost-savings presented by Chicago Public
Schools and the mayor. The analysis and the writing of the news article is based on argumentative structures used by the writer of the article itself. Although the newspaper seeks to sway public opinion, the writer is responsible for presenting the story in a factual way (van Dijk, 1988, 2006).

**Access to high-quality schools.** The second economic imperative is connected to investing in access to “high-quality schools.” Therefore, the continued explicit use of the words “high-quality schools” implies that some schools are not high-quality ones but in reality schools throughout the city are also high-quality based on the school report cards published annually. Although the school report cards for Chicago Public Schools would define the actual schools that are considered high-quality, the repetition of the word connects to Gee’s (2008, 2011) notion of politics and how social goods are distributed. This is what Gee (2008, 2011) referred to as macro-structure analysis, the larger parts of a story are used to understand the use of language that gives or takes away social goods or projects how social goods are or ought to be distributed. In this section, I start with direct quotes that represent the economics argument tied to access to high-quality schools through the repetition of the words “access,” “option,” “high quality,” education.

As stated in the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*:

Selective enrollment schools are another option for students to be challenged in the classroom on top of AP, Honors, IB, STEM and other rigorous curricula offered at neighborhood schools. (p. 3)

New Jones was able to fill an additional 125 selective enrollment seats for this current school year and will grow incrementally over the next four years. (p. 5)

The City of Chicago has experienced a dramatic shift in its demographics over the last 10-15 years. Between the U.S. Census of 2000 and 2010, the population of children aged 0-19 years old living in the City of Chicago declined by 17%—from 845,000 to 700,000. Some areas experienced even steeper drops (on a percentage basis). (p. 19)
The above statements link key words to validate facility closures with having access and options to selective enrollment schools as being better than the schools that closed. This defines the problem and the solution as selective enrollment, which is a market term that alludes to picking and choosing who qualifies (Chicago Public Schools, 2013a). This means that students will be selected based on some criteria. Economic arguments are discursively constructed in two ways that center school action on buildings as the only way to quality education and downplay school performance as the reason determined for closure connected to value added, test scores, and ultimately “accountability,” which is definitely directly tied to federal funding and merit pay (Chicago Public Schools, 2013a). Educational reform through space utilization centers and frames the argument around resources and funding used for the improvement of buildings, either closing or consolidation.

**Chicago Tribune framing.** The findings in the *Chicago Tribune* revealed a variety of economic discourses depending on whether the information was from a news article or editorial or commentary. Using the search term “cost savings” for the 2011 year, only eight articles were found; however, for 2012-2014, interestingly within the 35 articles, key terms and themes provided a diverse discourse about cost savings and the reporting of the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*. The news article discourse ranged from property taxes issues, budget issues, teacher layoffs, and the impact of the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*. Below are the quotes from the range of articles.

“As CPS is looking to address an estimated $720 million budget deficit, the move to consolidate so many low-performing and underused schools is about maximizing space and resources,” district officials said. Parents say they were blindsided by the proposal, which would force nearly 700 students to change schools in the fall, and could cost as many as 100 teachers and eight principals their jobs. (Hood, 2011, p. 1)
The cost-savings articles present a variety of discourses related to the economic arguments as seen with the first quote above and the impact of the facilities argument used in the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*. Interestingly, other quotes, as seen below, link the impact of school closures, reinvesting actions, and restructuring of contracts in addition to the main actors of teachers and principals. Below are a wide variety of the discourses presented in the articles.

As CPS is looking to address an estimated $720 million budget deficit, the move to consolidate so many low-performing and underused schools is about maximizing space and resources. (Hood, 2011)

*Restructuring contracts with teachers, janitors, bus drivers and other pacts that have become burdensome. *Consolidating jobs and departments within the central office.
*Laying off staff. *Raising taxes when necessary. *Creating a school system where the best-performing, not the longest-serving, principals and teachers earn the most money.
(Hood & Ahmed-Ullah, 2011)

The litany of cuts includes as many as 300 teaching positions from underenrolled schools; mentoring programs for at-risk students; bilingual education; literacy initiatives; extracurricular math, science and technology clubs and other after-school programs; and academic assistance for some of the district's lowest-performing students. “The combined cost savings will be approximately $87 million,” said CPS Chief Administrative Officer Tim Cawley. (Hood, 2011, p. 1)

CPS approves teachers contract Wednesday, board members approved a three-year contract with a $250,000 base salary for Barbara Byrd-Bennett, named the district's chief executive officer this month after the departure of Jean-Claude Brizard. (Delgado, 2012)

Pay raises could force even more school closings, layoffs. (Dardick & Hood, 2012, p. 1)

Chicago Public Schools began laying off 200 lunchroom workers Friday in the latest round of pink slips issued by the cash-strapped district. (Ahmed-Ullah, 2013, p. 2)

CPS cutting 663 employees… Chicago Public Schools said Friday that 663 employees at schools the district is closing, including teachers, teaching assistants and bus aides, don't qualify to follow students to their new schools and will be laid off…The total includes 420 teachers, more than a third of them with tenure but rated either unsatisfactory or satisfactory. The cuts are a result of the district's decision to close 49 elementary schools and a high school program that CPS says are underenrolled. More cuts are likely as the district implements its controversial plan, by far the largest school shutdown effort ever attempted in Chicago. (Ahmed-Ullah, 2013)
Thus in the descriptions above there is a link between the impact of school closures, reinvesting actions, and restructuring of contracts on teachers, but the editorial below used verbs (banking) to discredit what the articles report and showing teachers in a negative way. For example, the quote below from an anonymous writer, although very similar to the language found in the Educational Facilities Master Plan, blames teachers’ contracts for the economic problems that Chicago Public Schools is currently having.

CPS budget bomb CPS can't sustain half-empty schools. And lowering the district's overhead needs to extend beyond closings. In the upcoming teachers contract, three big-ticket reforms could help reduce future deficits: Require teachers to contribute more to their pensions... End the banking of vacation and sick days...CPS employees and retirees, not all of them subject to the teachers union contract, need to pay more for health coverage. (anonymous editorial, July, 9, 2012)

All the newspaper articles report a variety of economic discourses that range from cost savings about teachers’ contracts, property tax hikes, staff contracts and the increase of salaries for the CEO, and some school principals allowing for a better understanding of the economic imperatives. Although we do find a repetition of key economic terms, the newspaper descriptions of the events allude to a more comprehensive understanding of school closure and its consequence that impact teachers’ layoffs as compared to the Educational Facilities Master Plan.

**Catalyst Chicago framing.** The findings in Catalyst Chicago revealed a variety of economic discourses using the term “cost saving” for the years 2011-2014 and reporting of the Educational Facilities Master Plan. The news article discourse ranged from budget issues, teacher layoffs, and the impact of class size, to access to high-quality schools; many of these topics are mentioned in the article below, “Layoffs to Total at Least 3,000; New Budget Details Emerge.”

As the district's hopes for a state pension holiday fade, CPS has confirmed it is laying off more than 1,000 additional teachers and nearly 1,100 additional support workers, in
addition to 855 teachers and other staff pink-slipped at turnarounds and closing schools earlier this month.

The cuts bring the total number of teachers laid off due to budget cuts and school closings to 1,581, and the total number of other staff laid off to 1,387, one of the largest layoffs in recent memory. (Karp, 2013, para. 1-2)

The Catalyst Chicago articles present a more positive approach towards the teachers and teachers union and shed light on the topic with more explanations, as shown in the below article, “For the Record: Paying for School Actions.”

To help sell their plans for a district shakeup, CPS leaders have touted a variety of school improvements. But paying for those improvements will mean taking the district deeper into debt at a time when the district is already facing substantial debt service obligations.

Should it be approved by the Board of Education, CPS will issue a $329 million bond to pay for improvements at welcoming schools, turnarounds, schools with co-locations and a few other special district projects, according to a supplemental capital budget released last weekend. (Karp, 2013, para. 1-2)

The same topics arise in a later article, “For the Record: Maintenance Costs for Closed Schools Cut by $30 Million.”

To help sell its plans for closing 50 schools, CPS leaders claimed that it would cost more than $400 million over the next decade to keep the buildings open, repair them and maintain them.

CPS also includes TIF information for each school, showing how much money is available from tax increment financing, an incentive program that developers can access to pay for capital improvements. From the moment that CPS put out cost-savings estimates last winter, principals and parents questioned the figures.

A joint analysis by Catalyst and WBEZ/Chicago Public Media showed that the cost savings touted last year were significantly flawed, and were based on outdated assessments of building needs and other flawed information. (Karp, 2014, para. 1-3)

Additionally, in the articles below, the Catalyst Chicago provides a variety of reasons for the closure of schools other than facilities issues and the impact of those school closures because of cost-savings. We see reference to school performance as a reason to close schools. The impact of school closure makes reference to safety, violence issues, and class size.
CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennett agrees with the recommendation of her hand-picked Commission on School Utilization to include school performance among the criteria for school closing decisions, but she may still close one or two high schools and could veer from other recommendations.

The commission’s interim report, released last week, said the district should not shut down any high schools because of safety concerns as students cross gang boundaries traveling to new schools. (Karp, 2013, para. 1-2)

Certainly, one important impact of the school closing is the new class size in the welcoming schools. This issue was never mentioned in the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* policy document. What was the purpose of the policy document as representative of a blueprint of transparency for school closure information? Its accuracy is being questioned in all the articles.

Soon after CPS leaders announced plans to close schools, parent advocates sounded the alarm that massive school closings would cause class sizes to swell in the receiving schools. Yet it is clear that larger class sizes will be one impact of closing schools that the district considers underutilized. Adding a student or two to classes in receiving schools frees up money, since fewer teachers will be needed and teacher salaries are the district’s biggest expense.

Though the capital cost savings for school closings are unclear and CPS has lowered its initial savings estimates on that front, officials have also estimated that increasing class sizes by just one student would save as much as $26 million per year. (Karp, 2013, para. 1-2)

Furthermore, the *Catalyst Chicago* provides information on the impact of school closure and references class size, safety, and information about the welcoming school. This information is in direct contrast to what was promised in the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*.

“My son is upset,” she says. Miranda’s son has a disability that includes learning and speech difficulties and she’s afraid that he will simply “shut down” if he has to transfer to a new school.

But there’s something more that is eating at her. Even though Manierre is surrounded by high-performing schools, the school that her children are now supposed to attend is a Level 3 school with almost identical test scores. According to state law, Byrd-Bennett has the authority to define “higher-performing,” and she determined that even when a school has the same performance rating, it can be considered higher-performing if it does better on a majority of the metrics, such as attendance and test scores.
The University of Chicago Consortium on School Research found that, in previous rounds of closings, displaced students only reaped an academic benefit if they were sent to markedly better schools, defined as those in the top quartile.

In this case, just six receiving schools out of 55 are in the top quartile of all CPS schools. And in only three cases—3 out of 53 closings—are kids being sent from a school in the lowest quartile to a school in the highest, according to an analysis by WBEZ. Two-thirds of the closing schools are among the lowest rated in CPS, but in 18 cases students will be sent to schools that are equally low-rated.

While leaders may have meant for this to sweeten the deal, parents and activists have been incredulous that their schools must close in order to get resources that are common place in other schools.

Neighborhood schools have been hit hard by the district’s opening of new “schools of choice,” whether magnet schools, charter schools or selective enrollment schools. (Karp, 2013, para. 1-6)

As seen in the examples from the Educational Facilities Master Plan and the Chicago Sun Times, Chicago Tribune, and the Catalyst Chicago articles, the economic theme represented a variety of discourses depending on the newspaper itself or the kind of story, article or editorial. However, the same key words of achieving access to high-quality schools through the repetition of the same sentence throughout the Educational Facilities Master Plan with the words “access,” “option,” and “high quality” education overlap the theme of choice.

Theme #2: Choice

The choice argument is fundamentally tied to the facilities decisions that are made by the Mayor and the CEO and of course the school board, represent who really has the power to define education as a social good. Additionally, the choice argument is tied to parents and the perceived choice they must make for their children to access higher-quality education. When decisions are related to the public, the choice arguments are more direct and use the word “options” to access higher-quality school and the “option” to enroll in a higher-performing school are more direct.

Educational Facilities Master Plan framing. As stated in the Educational Facilities Master Plan,
Access to a STEM education is another powerful choice for parents to put their children on the path to a job in the 21st century.

Selective enrollment schools are another option for students to be challenged in the classroom on top of AP, Honors, IB STEM and other rigorous curricula offered at neighborhood schools. (p. 4)

In the legal sense, this gives the board all the options that may or may not be explicitly and implicitly stated because they have provided themselves with the legal language under school action guidelines to do whatever they see fit.

**Chicago Sun-Times framing.** *Choice* as a theme in the *Chicago Sun-Times* was a dominant discourse and is presented in an unfavorable way toward the teachers union in editorials. It tells a story in which certain individuals or groups are responsible for the chaos that is occurring in educational reform. This is seen in the grammar of the word *choice* but this time as blame, in the commentary, “Teacher union’s unwise ‘strike of choice,’” places the teachers and teachers union as the subject of the problem and also the solution: “As Mayor Rahm Emanuel put it Sunday night, this is a “strike by choice. . . . This is totally unnecessary, unavoidable and our kids do not deserve this” (author, 2012, para.). Another commentary, “If Chicago Teachers Strike Now, it’s the Union’s Bad Call,” takes the same stance.

No issue still to be negotiated justifies Chicago Public Schools teachers striking on Monday. Despite the flame-throwing by the Chicago Teachers Union, a fair settlement is within reach—and it’s largely up to the union to make it happen. (author, 2012, para. 1)

These editorials represent an unfavorable description of teachers and the teachers union, as they are blamed for striking and not caring for the students. Additionally, the language used in the editorials alludes to the *choices* teachers need to make to solve the problem they created by making those choices. On the other hand, government institutions and the mayor are subjects that are presented as favorable actors who are giving the teachers a fair contract. In these editorials, no description of the contract or the settlement is actually presented. The grammar words of
choice and fair are used to connect the micro language to the macro institutional decisions that are made.

**Chicago Tribune framing.** The findings in the *Chicago Tribune* revealed a variety of choice discourses depending on whether the information was from a news article, editorial, or commentary. Key terms and themes provided a diverse discourse about cost savings and the reporting of the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*. The news article discourse ranged from property taxes issues, budget issues, teacher layoffs, and the impact of the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*. Below are the quotes from the range of articles. This suggests that the Chicago Tribune presents choice as positive when it is made by the Mayor and Chicago Public Schools CEO, and it also presents the stakeholders’ perspective. The first article below represents Chicago Public Schools leaders as having courage to make choices needed for the City of Chicago. Furthermore, the second article represents a different concept of choice and the belief in an elected school board to replace an appointed one. The third article represents both the lack of choice of the stakeholders and the impact of the current choice as made by Chicago Public Schools and the consequence of school closure on the safety of children.

According to the Illinois State Board of Education, CPS enrollment has shrunk by more than 22,000 students since the 2000-01 school year, a reflection of Chicago's declining population and the rise of alternative education choices in the city. (Hood & Ahmen-ullah, 2011, para. 13)

Stung by another round of school closings and turnarounds, some community leaders are looking at how Chicago can return to publicly electing its school board. (Hood, 2012, para. 1)

Drawing comparisons to the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa, Jackson said CPS' practices, from a tiered school structure and mayor-appointed school board to school board meetings held during weekday afternoons, are designed to limit community participation and public criticism. (Hood, 2012, para. 13)

You'd get that idea listening to parents and activists protesting the closings of 61 school buildings by Chicago Public Schools. The schools should remain open, protesters say,
because kids will be caught in the crossfire of gang harassment, recruitment and warfare if they are forced to attend another school.

Preschool teacher Suzie McNeil at Mahalia Jackson Elementary School typified the complaint in an interview on "The CBS Evening News": "They're going to fight up and down the street going to school, coming to school. It's going to be chaotic and a mess," she said.

The fear is real, and I'm with the thousands of parents who shudder at the thought of their children getting caught in the middle of gang violence. Children, their parents and teachers shouldn't have to live like this. (Byrne, 2013, para.1-3)

*Catalyst Chicago framing.* The findings in *Catalyst Chicago* revealed a variety of choice discourses using the term “cost saving” for the years 2011-2014 and reporting of the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*. The news article discourse ranged from the false choice that teachers and principals have, the impact of school closures, and the actual closure of schools that Chicago Public Schools explicitly made. Below is an article that focuses on these topics.

Soon after CPS leaders announced plans to close schools, parent advocates sounded the alarm that massive school closings would cause class sizes to swell in the receiving schools.

CPS officials tried to veer away from that discussion, as parents intuitively believe that smaller class sizes are better. Yet it is clear that larger class sizes will be one impact of closing schools that the district considers underutilized.

Kristine Mayle from the CTU says principals have a “false” choice. Sometimes they decide to increase class size by one or two students so they can hire a full-time art or music teacher.

“They are supposed to do what is best for students and sometimes that means hiring an extra security guard because they are in an unsafe neighborhood,” Mayle says.

The union has a committee to which teachers in overcrowded classrooms can complain, but Mayle says it has limited staff to investigate and limited access to resources to provide the teacher with relief.

“We are not talking about a kindergarten teacher with 29 students, but rather the one with 40 students,” she says.

At the same time CPS is closing a record number of schools, it also is implementing per-pupil budgeting in which schools get a set amount of money per student, rather than budgets allocated based on the number of teachers needed in a school. That also could have an impact on class size, Mayle says. (Karp, 2013, para. 1-7)
In the *Catalyst Chicago* example, the key words allude to the impact on the stakeholders and also give enough information to create an overall understanding of the events.

**Theme #3: Accountability**

The ideological framing that is embedded in the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* centers on accountability arguments. The discourse of accountability is explicitly and implicitly defined by those in positions of power, as they decide how education as an accountability system works in a society and, through this accountability, how the distribution of education as a social good is defined. Both Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Chicago Public Schools CEO Barbara Bryd-Bennett are represented as leaders who have responsibility for adhering to federal and state laws but the Chicago Board of Education is not mentioned although they have that responsibility too. The concern here is on holding individuals accountable within our education system. These critical accountability standards can be seen in the ways in which grammar functions through the use of the repetition of phrases, verbs, and nouns that create patterns to foster a common sense understanding of accountability decisions.

Page 10 of the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* starts with this claim: “Principals and teachers must be supported, empowered, and held accountable in ensuring world-class learning experiences for every child.” Next, the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* listed five pillars that make up the framework for success according to the policy with a picture that shows pillars holding up a house. Pillar one is high standards, rigorous curriculum, and powerful instruction; pillar two is a system of support that meet student needs; pillar three is engaged and empowered families and community; pillar four is committed and effective teachers leaders and staff; and pillar five is sound fiscal operational and accountability systems.
Pillar Four: Committed and effective teachers, leaders and staff: Our teachers, principals and administrators will be valued and developed, will hold themselves accountable and will be rewarded for success.

- Design and implement a comprehensive performance evaluation process and system for all employees that requires them to deliver results—not simply comply with requirements—and that supports their professional growth.
- Construct and implement a high-visibility recognition platform for top performers tying rewards and recognition to performance for all employees, and empower great leaders with autonomy to innovate and a platform to share best practices district-wide. (p. 11)

The accountability theme is explicit in key words “evaluation process,” teachers are directly referenced as being held accountable and are also referenced as employees.

Pillar Five: Sound fiscal, operational and accountability systems: priorities that lead to student success must drive planning, spending and accountability at the school and district level.

- Every employee should be held accountable for his/her contribution to student outcomes, and all team members must be provided with useful data and guidance that allow them to effectively work toward these goals.
- Safely transition children from schools undergoing consolidation to a high-quality learning environment in their welcoming schools.
- Establish a common definition of school quality and a comprehensive school accountability system.
- Create long-term financial plans that focus on priorities, eliminate waste, drive a balanced budget and ensure financial stability.
- Develop a detailed operating plan by department that is tied to our strategic, fiscal, and policy priorities, and design and implement a robust management routine inclusive of performance vs. goals (e.g., progress toward key initiatives and benchmarks, budget vs. actual, etc.) and data-driven decision-making, in order to ensure implementation with fidelity to our vision.

These critical accountability standards define who is accountable and therefore responsible for student success, and they are tied to the ways in which grammar functions to connect the words like “fiscal” and “spending” in the same phrase.

**Chicago Sun-Times framing.** The ideological framing embedded in the *Chicago Sun-Times* centers on the discourse of accountability in both explicit and implicit ways about the democratic accountability to public schools, and the accountability that those in positions of power should be held to when schools close, as they decide how education as a social good
should be distributed. These critical accountability standards can be seen in the ways in which direct blame is attributed to individuals responsible for the chaos in education as represented in the articles below.

On Thursday, March 28, the Chicago Sun-Times published the editorial “CTU, don’t burn down the house.” We wish instead it had implored Mayor Rahm Emanuel to listen to the people.

It’s not that we think no school should ever close. We care deeply about children and educators, not empty buildings. It’s that this move will jeopardize the safety and academic development of 30,000 students without any democratic process.

Emanuel wants to close the greatest number of schools in U.S. history despite record opposition and countless examples that the most vulnerable students will be put in harm’s way and lose out on learning from yet another disruptive wave of school actions.

Low-income students of color are proven to benefit the most from small class sizes in the primary grades, yet CPS insists on large class sizes. Such a move sets us back 50 years in Chicago’s history to an era when we had dilapidated and overcrowded Willis Wagons for black students despite under-utilization in white schools.

In addition, the mayor has attempted to mask his political vulnerabilities with inducements like iPads, community gardens, safe passages programs, wrap-around services, air-conditioning, etc. . . for the receiving schools. Why didn’t our neighborhood schools have those basic things in the first place and if those additional resources are maintained, what cost savings will the district realize? No one has a clear answer. (Potter, 2013, para. 1-5)

The above articles create a clear understanding of two sides of the events, both historical and contemporary, and directly attributes individuals, as the actors involved to foster an understanding of school closures and accountability decisions. Both Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and CPS CEO Barbara Bryd-Bennett are represented as leaders who have responsibility for and are concerned with holding individuals accountable within our education system.

**Catalyst Chicago framing.** The accountability framing that is embedded in *Catalyst Chicago* centers on the discourse of accountability in both explicit and implicit ways about the democratic accountability to public schools and the questioning of the decisions made by those in positions of power.
When Margarita Miranda moved to Old Town in 2000, the area looked much different. The Cabrini Green public housing projects cast a long shadow, and neighborhood elementary schools were located on every few blocks.

Today, the high-rise public housing has been wiped away, leaving the area with a smattering of row houses, townhouses and some stretches of still-empty lots.

Over the past decade, three of the schools that served the area’s children have been closed and reopened—one as a charter school, one as a selective enrollment school and the third as a lease by a private Catholic school that costs about $8,000 a year. (Karp, 2013, para. 1-3)

The above article gives voice to the stakeholders and presents the changing dynamics of schools from a historical perspective.

**Chicago Tribune framing.** The accountability framing that is embedded in the *Chicago Tribune* centers on the discourse of accountability in both explicit and implicit ways. At the end of the article, the author reports the new state law that provides accountability for decisions made by CPS.

Half of Chicago Public Schools' buildings enroll fewer students than their classroom space allows, according to new district standards released Wednesday. Under the new formula, 268 of the district's 527 elementary schools are underutilized, as are 68 high schools. Only 249 of the city's 662 public schools were deemed to be efficient in terms of space to student population, according to the district analysis made public for the first time.

In a statement, schools CEO Jean-Claude Brizard said the school-by-school reports "will be helpful tools for guiding our decision-making."

But several advocates contend the new calculations aren't flexible enough—for example, they don't give enough weight to classrooms needed for one-on-one tutoring or for small group instruction, which schools are legally required to provide for some students with learning challenges. (Malone, 2011, para. 1-4)

For the first time, CPS officials published on its website a school-by-school accounting that counts classrooms and students by campus to show whether a building is efficiently run, overcrowded or underutilized.

The public accounting stems from a new state law that requires the nation's third-largest school district to publish by Jan. 1 standards it uses to determine whether a school operates efficiently. By year's end, the district also must publish an annual space utilization report for every school. (Malone, 2011, para. 11-12)
Although not many articles in the Chicago Tribune reported on the Educational Facilities Master Plan, the above article provided the representation for the enforced implementation of the Educational Facilities Master Plan document; therefore, it attributed accountability for the decisions made by those in positions of power.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the study’s findings from a critical discourse analysis of the Educational Facilities Master Plan policy document. I looked at the language in this document through the lens of editorials and news articles in the Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun-Times, and Catalyst Chicago newspaper articles over the period of 2011-2014. The findings, based on the politics tool which is a way of looking at language through a lens as outlined by Gee (2008, 2011), was guided by a process that analyzes any form of communication to “ask how words and grammatical devices are being used to build (construct, assume) what count as social goods and to distribute these to or withhold them from listeners or others” (Gee, 2008, p. 121). This process helped center the focus on the distribution of education as a social goods, and therefore, it provided a better understanding of the discourse of school closure in Chicago. In the findings of this research, Gee’s (2008) method helped to reveal how language is never passive through three dominant discourses that shape the discursive contexts of school closure in Chicago: the discourse of economic imperatives, the discourse of choice, and the discourse of accountability. These dominant discourses are ideological, and therefore equally important in shaping the discursive context of school closures in the documents. Each of these themes and the contexts in which they emerged provides insight into the language produced by those in positions of power who communicate about school closures in the Educational Facilities Master Plan.
policy document and newspaper articles. These findings demonstrate that language is always political when it deals with the distribution of any social good such as education (Gee 2008).

Chapter 5 provides a theoretical discussion of the findings using a critical theoretical lens rooted in the concepts of foundational sociological theorists and Gee’s (2008, 2011) concept of *politics* for a detailed discussion of the findings.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine the discursive framing of school closings as promoted by both the Educational Facilities Master Plan published by Chicago Public Schools in 2013 and Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun Times, and Catalyst Chicago articles and editorials related to it. The use of critical discourse analysis as theory and method using Gee’s (2008, 2011) framework allowed me to provide a small glimpse, a piece of the larger conversation about school closures in Chicago from 2011-2014. The study was guided by three research questions:

1. What ideological framing is embedded in the Educational Facilities Master Plan?
2. What are the discursive constructions of educational issues as policy problems and policy solutions embedded in the Educational Facilities Master Plan?
3. What discourses are utilized in the newspaper articles to frame Chicago public school closures from 2011-2014?

In this chapter, I use a theoretical discussion to present the research findings in this study. As is the job of theory, theorists write about social change more conceptually in an attempt to explain modern-day phenomena. By placing social research in a broader context, we can make sense of trends or events that appear disconnected. The research questions revealed descriptive findings through the analysis of language use; however, it is important to remember that Gee (2008, 2011) argued that the themes that emerge from the analysis are chosen as evidence from the data sample. These questions were answered after I completed the discourse analysis and analyzed the findings from Chapter 4. It is important to note that Gee’s theory and method stand alone; however, to add to the interdisciplinary nature of critical theory and its foundation in sociology, my discussion utilizes a sociological lens grounded in ideology and Gramsci’s
concept of hegemony to form a critical theoretical analysis about the role of media (newspapers) in educational reform. In this chapter, I provide an analytical discussion of ideology, hegemony, and media and illustrate it through a diagram to show how ideology grounds our understanding of the relationship between neoliberalism, education policy, and the newspaper media. Finally, recommendations and limitations with questions for future studies are discussed.

My study demonstrated that “discourse is ideological and can be understood as a socially accepted association among ways of using language and other symbolic expressions, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting” (Gee, 2008, p. 161). Throughout this discussion, my use of big “D” reflects Gee’s notion of Discourse as ideological. The power of ideology is a process that takes shape through language found in the Educational Facilities Master Plan and the Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun Times, and Catalyst Chicago newspapers. Therefore, I chose Gee’s (2008, 2011) theory because as critical discourse analysts we must hypothesize or conceptualize how the relationship of the ideological nature of discourse plays out in the findings of the research we conduct. The hypothesis that Gee insisted on is the same theoretical conceptualization that attempts to explain modern-day social problems through the analysis of language evidenced in the documents chosen by the researcher. The discourse analysis adds support to the neo-Marxist conceptualization of the interaction of ideology in practice among neoliberal economic policy, education policy, and the ways language is used by the media. Thus, from my findings, Gee’s theory as method supports the researcher’s hypothesis and the conceptual inter-relationship among neoliberalism, education policy, and the media grounded in the concept of ideology. In the next section, I discuss how ideology, hegemony, and media are concepts that are foundational to my research and why critical policy research is a way to reveal these relationships.
Ideology is a fundamental concept in many schools of social thought, appearing in the work of Max Weber and contemporary theorists influenced by Weber, such as George Ritzer (2008), a neo-Marxist. In the next sections, I apply formulations from the writing of Antonio Gramsci, a neo-Marxist, to my research on discourses in educational policy and the media. I am using neo-Marxist theory to conceptualize ideology because ideology works through everyday practices within the cultural realm such as language found in policy documents and newspapers. Ideology is manifested in relations of economic power, which originates in Marxist theory and the work of Karl Marx. My discussion of ideology starts with Marx’s historical economic foundation, then moves to Gramsci’s expanded notion of ideology as hegemony to show how the discursive dimension is achieved through consent in everyday social practice.

Ideology

Although the focus of my study is Gramsci’s ideological notion, ideology as a concept originates from the writings of Karl Marx. One way to conceptualize ideology is this original Marxist concept, which describes how dominant ideas within society reflect the interests of a ruling economic class. Marx and Engels (1963) argued that “the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e. the class, which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force” (p. 39). Basically, there are relations of production in society. It is the capitalist class who dominates both the material and mental production, but this class, like any class that aspires to become hegemonic, generates its own stratum of intellectuals whose function it is to universalize, disseminate, and legitimate ideas in the interests of the ruling class. Gramsci (1971) called these intellectuals “the organic intellectuals of capitalism” (p. 3), and contemporary theorists influenced by Gramsci’s work identify intellectuals in public policy and the media as part of this group. Intellectuals can be seen as aligning with the capitalist class
to produce the ideas, values, and beliefs within a society. These ideas and values can be conceptualized as an ideology “a system of thought used to justify class inequalities and the social order” (Garner, 2007, p. 31). In my study, I used this concept of ideology to represent power relations and how meaning is embedded within the work of intellectuals who write education policy and the interpretation of those policies in the form of articles for the public.

One form of how the ruling class continues to dominate can be seen in the production of how these ideas, values, and beliefs are transformed into Discourse, which is always ideological (Gee, 2008). Discourse in my research was the written text in the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* and the *Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun Times, and Catalyst Chicago* newspapers. The political purpose of ideology is to unite the dominant class with subaltern classes and create a consensus of values and shared ideas. The narrow economic interests of the dominant classes have to be restated in universal terms that appear to be in the interests of the society as a whole. For example, this was evident in my research from the universal terms that appear in the interest of society as a whole are found on the second page of the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* stating:

> The Educational Facilities Master Plan (EFMP) is part of Mayor Rahm Emanuel and CPS CEO Byrd-Bennett’s larger plan to make critical investments in our schools and classrooms to ensure every child in every neighborhood has access to a high quality education that prepares them to succeed in college, life and career. (p. 2)

The above statement is evidence that represents how ideology is at work and who is in charge of the means of economic and ideological production. Another example found in the EFMP is the statement “The Mayor worked with various corporate partners, who understood the importance of investing in our future workforce (p. 4).” This statement directly represents the economic production of ideology. These are just a few examples of the language representing the political purpose of ideology uniting the dominant class with the subaltern classes to create a
consensus of values and shared ideas through economic interests that appeared in my research using the theoretical lens of ideology.

In my research, I examined both the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* and articles in three newspapers to explain this relationship. In this case, newspapers are one of these “means of ideological production.” Thus, I found in my research that theoretically the same economic class (neoliberals) continues to dominate because they own the means of “material production” and, therefore, they also own the means of the “mental production” (neoliberal newspapers). When we say that the pendulum always swings back and forth, we can understand it as forces of production playing out to determine social relations of power in society. Figure 2 is an analytical diagram that illustrates how ideology works in the examples of from my study, neoliberalism, education policy, and media (newspapers).

Most relevant to my discussion is the connection found within the interests and political ideologies of the capitalist class and the translation of that ideology through concrete action by way of education policy. The political purpose of ideology is to find consent by uniting the dominant class (capitalist class) with the subaltern classes by creating consensus of values and shared ideas through the media (newspapers). This exemplifies how discourses are used within the three main parts of my study (neoliberalism, education policy, and media) to advance the economic interests of those in power.
Figure 2. How ideology flows between the capitalist class (neoliberals), education policymakers, and media producers (newspapers)

Hegemony

Gramsci’s (1971) concept of hegemony builds on Marx’s idea of the means of ideological production by defining who belonged to the stratum (tier or special hierarchal class). Gramsci argued that “organic intellectuals” are the producers of ideology aligned with the ruling
capitalist class. These “organic intellectuals” are the ones who emerged together with modern capitalism within a tier or stratum of society. These organic intellectuals work to produce ideology to help the ruling capitalist class maintain power. In this sense, we can view these groups of organic intellectuals as legitimatizing the dominant ideologies—our ideas, values, and beliefs, which come from the capitalist class, who also own the means of production. Gramsci used the concept of hegemony to explain why subordinate social classes consent to economic power hierarchies, who continue to produce unequal economic and power relations. Gramsci’s analysis of how organic intellectuals of the ruling class contribute to hegemony gives us insight into our everyday social practices. This concept of hegemony is applied to my study because it is important in understanding how the dominant ideology moves from theory to practice in everyday social action.

To understand how hegemony works from the theoretical lens to the practical aspect, the evidence is found once again in the language used in the Educational Facilities Master Plan. For example, a choice argument is fundamentally tied to the facilities decisions that are made by the Mayor and the CEO but at the same time the choice argument is tied to parents and the decisions they must make for their children to access higher-quality education. The hegemonic language becomes practice because of the word choice in the document. For instance since education decisions are both public and private, when decisions are related to the public, the choice arguments are more direct and use the word “options” to access higher-quality school and the “option” to enroll in a higher-performing school are actually based on the decisions made by the mayor and voted on by the board more. As stated in the Educational Facilities Master Plan,

Access to a STEM education is another powerful choice for parents to put their children on the path to a job in the 21st century.
Selective enrollment schools are another option for students to be challenged in the classroom on top of AP, Honors, IB STEM and other rigorous curricula offered at neighborhood schools. (p. 4)

Hegemony in the legal sense becomes practice because it is the board who votes based on the legal language found under school action guidelines to make decisions. Here the parents can be represented as being part of the subaltern classes that consent to the decisions made by those in power. This is possible because of the values and shared ideas that the media (newspapers) have used to inform the public. This exemplifies how the economic interests of those in power is achieved when we analyze how language works in policy documents and how newspaper articles disseminate information to the public.

Thus, it is these processes of social action in everyday life that produce hegemonic effects that purposely dilute our comprehension of how hegemony works (Gramsci, 1971). Hegemony works as a sort of “common sense” rather than the way we think about ideology as something that cannot be pointed out in concrete ways unless language is critically analyzed. This happens through everyday activities connected with social structures within educational institutions and media structures. The everyday social activities seem like common sense, which in turn become a form of knowledge and truth.

Therefore, Gee’s (2008, 2011) theory and method is also similar to Gramsci (1971), but he also took us a step further by asking how everyday actions are produced and contribute to social relations of power through language. Gee built on understanding how these relations of power (forces of production within social relations) work by looking at the language used within Discourse. For this reason, Gee’s method for analysis aided me in clarifying Gramsci’s notion of hegemony in my study. The connection between Gee (2008) and Gramsci’s notion of hegemony is situated in the language used within Discourse. “Discourse is ideological and can be understood as a socially accepted association among ways of using language and other symbolic
expressions, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting” (Gee, 2008, p. 161). Therefore, the connections found in my research are represented through Gee’s notion of Discourse as ideological. Most importantly, Gee provides the tools that obtain language as evidence in the researcher’s chosen documents. The theoretical understanding of ideological power is a process that takes shape through language.

Thus, to further explain the inter-relationship between neoliberalism, education policy, and the media, I also examined the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* as policy in addition to examining newspapers as one of these “means of ideological production.” In my research, this revealed that another major section of the “organic intellectuals” of capitalism are also policymakers, who develop and disseminate policies or programs that contribute to the functioning of capitalism. Policies like the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* translate capitalist class interest in action within different institutions such as education (Chicago Public Schools). Therefore, Chicago Mayor Emanuel and Chicago Public Schools CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennet as the producers of the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* can be considered “organic intellectuals”: a tier within society that fosters consent for the neoliberal capitalist ruling class (owners of the means of economic and mental production). The newspapers (journalists, editors, editorial board, etc.) are another tier or stratum that are also “organic intellectuals” within society who foster consent for the same neoliberal capitalist ruling class. Given this relationship, civil society and specifically culture become forms of domination to achieve consent for the ruling economic class. Furthermore, since we now understand that ideological power is a process that takes shape through language, the discourse that the public is exposed to impacts their understanding of the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* and the ways the newspapers report about it. Thus, if newspapers are responsible for the “means of ideological production,” then the
“organic intellectuals” of capitalism are the policymakers. This exemplifies that both the media and state policymakers develop and disseminate policies or programs that contribute to the functioning of capitalism. Moreover, a similar position was advanced by Jürgen Habermas (1989) in a critical orientation that focused on the changing role of the state and its impact on the public sphere. He stressed the importance of social structures and their role in advancing commercial mass media through discourse and print newspapers as a mechanism of legitimation (Habermas, 1989). The media along with state policymakers have a critical role to play as a vehicle that achieves consent to advance neoliberal economic policy.

Given this emphasis on social structures, language is the way that different mechanisms of legitimation perpetuate inequality and influence the distribution of social power to advance capitalism. Thus, language (Gee, 2008) is used to communicate the words and the values needed for neoliberal economic policy through the economic, political, and social order (Weber, 1964) to achieve consent.

Likewise, a parallel analysis can be found in the work of contemporary theorists who are influenced by the social theory of Max Weber. Most notably, George Ritzer (2008), in his “McDonaldization theory,” emphasized how the values of efficiency, calculability, predictability, standardization, and control have become pervasive, and an “irrational rationality” has become dominant as the logic of institutional forms and functions (p. 15). This analysis elucidates the values used by the media to justify neoliberal measures of educational policy that I found in my research—“efficiency” itself, “accountability,” “cost-effectiveness,” and so on. Ritzer’s McDonaldization theory helps us see that “formal rationality allows for little choice” and in that sense “everyone can (or must) make the same, optimal choice” (p. 25). Finally, Ritzer placed less emphasis on the class basis of these values than the Marxists did, but he too
pointed to the way in which these terms are used to justify and legitimate decisions about institutional structures and policies and the profound association of these discourses with power differentials in organizations and society as a whole. In my research, the focus on certain terms, such as efficiency, accountability, and outcomes, takes us away from a class-based analysis to a modern day analysis of language use in policy documents and the critical role that media has in legitimating institutional structures.

Thus, if the media and policymakers are responsible for the “means of ideological production,” then it is the meaning embedded in both policy and newspapers that justify and legitimate the decisions made about educational reform. This exemplifies that both the media and state policymakers develop and disseminate policies or programs that contribute to the functioning of capitalism through their role as “organic intellectuals.”

**Media**

A vehicle for the ruling economic class, newspapers as a form of mass media is one of the ways that “organic intellectuals” achieve consent for different federal and state policies. The function of the media is to support the formation of the hegemonic bloc that combines capitalists with major segments of society (government and corporations). Similarly, Marger (1993) argued for a more modern understanding of the role of media in society by stating that media “function as propaganda mechanisms through which powerful units of the government and economy seek to persuade the public either to support their policies (government) or to buy their consumer products (corporations)” (p. 238). In this sense, the media provide hegemonic ideology that is shared by all classes in society by disseminating the values and beliefs about public education—or why the mayor must close 49 schools. Furthermore, we can also think of this relationship as being equally dependent (Marger, 1993). “Taking information from sources that may be
presumed credible reduces investigative expense, whereas material from sources that are not prima facie credible, or that will elicit criticism and threats, requires careful checking and costly research” (Marger, 1993, p. 241). Media turns to policymakers as official sources within government when gathering information about a topic they are reporting on as a way to save money instead of carefully checking facts to investigate a social problem such as school closures (Marger, 1990). For example, as evidenced in the newspapers such as the Catalyst Chicago, the articles discuss the impact on stakeholders:

At the same time CPS is closing a record number of schools, it also is implementing per-pupil budgeting in which schools get a set amount of money per student, rather than budgets allocated based on the number of teachers needed in a school. That also could have an impact on class size, Mayle says. (Karp, 2013, para. 1-7)

Additionally, as evidenced in Chicago Tribune articles about Chicago’s mayor, the following statement is important in understanding the impact on the stakeholders: “Emanuel wants to close the greatest number of schools in U.S. history despite record opposition and countless examples that the most vulnerable students will be put in harm’s way and lose out on learning from yet another disruptive wave of school actions” (Potter, 2013, para. 1-5).

Therefore, the media interpret information and create meaning about events such as school closure and from the above statement it represents how ideology and hegemony work together. These are just a few examples of the language representing the political purpose of ideology uniting the dominant class with the subaltern classes to create a consensus of values and shared ideas through the media for political and economic interests.

Moreover, my study further provided a lens that revealed an equally dependent relationship between government and the media (Marger, 1993). Studies that Goldstein (2010) conducted revealed how policies like the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) was marketed to the public through the use of marketization and mediazation techniques (Goldstein, 2011; Goldstein...
Goldstein explained how media legitimize a discourse about teachers as either being enemies of the state or soldiers of democracy through neoliberal discourses. Similarly, Sternheimer (2010) in her study of non-factual information and government practices presented by the media confirmed the use of marketization and mediazation techniques by government officials and that they are not representative of any factual information. Thus, through the use of certain language, the media legitimize neoliberal discourses (Goldstein, 2010; Goldstein & Beutel, 2009; Hursh, 2007; Lipman, 2008; Marger, 1993) because Discourse is ideological (Gee, 2008).

Equally important is that government elites also depend on mass media to disseminate their messages to the public, and by doing so, they shape and influence public opinion (Marger, 1990). This influence provides the common sense ideology and operates by disseminating notions about closing “facilities” (schools) with such terms as “efficiency,” “cost-effective,” “accountability,” “fiscal budget responsibility,” “under-utilization,” “over-crowded,” and “choice.” Thus, these terms found in the Educational Facilities Master Plan represent neoliberal discourse and are used again in the newspaper discourse that become our common-sense notions of education reform.

However, seen in the opinion pieces in the newspapers or even the discourse of Catalyst Chicago is a kind of opposition to the closing of schools. Interestingly, Catalyst Chicago revealed more perspectives and provided room for more voices as an independent newspaper. Catalyst Chicago represents the fact that the ideological process is not completely seamless because occasionally intellectuals break out of their functions and take a more critical position as in this case. We can explain the role of the Catalyst Chicago as important to the overall understanding of resisting the ideology of the ruling economic class, but it does not have as wide
a readership as the other newspapers; thus, it does not engage the broader public in conversation. Marger (1993) noted that even when the media presents a sort of opposition as independent news sources or “investigative” journalism, as we saw from the Catalyst Chicago, it is done in the spirit of the dominant ideology,” and the dominant political economy is usually not scrutinized or criticized to solve social problems (p. 243). Therefore, in my research I was able to theoretically trace the ideological process through which the ideas and interests of the capitalist class are translated in the form of public policy and then disseminated to the masses by the media as a transmission belt. This process, which is seen in my diagram in Figure 2, is at the heart of the relationship between neoliberalism, education policy, and media as evidenced from the language found in the Educational Facilities Master Plan and newspaper articles.

My focus on critical theory and critical discourse analysis was relevant because both stress the importance of discourse and communication in revealing power relationships in the distribution of a social good like education. The sociological lens provided the analytical concepts of the great sociological theorists needed to conceptually explain the role of policymakers in education policy and media to understand a modern-day phenomena such as school closures by looking for meaning, patterns, and frames within the Educational Facilities Master Plan document and newspaper articles. This was possible because when I used both a broader sociological context and a discourse analysis of language use it revealed how and why these school closure events appear disconnected but in reality are connected to neoliberalism. In this way, my analysis uncovered, challenged, and hopefully changed the way we think about ideology and power relations within dominant discourses.

Thus, it is Gramsci’s (1971) concept of hegemony building on Marx’s notion of ideology that helps us understand how social power is reinforced in society: through everyday social
practices like the enforcement of education policy (*Education Facilities Master Plan*) and the reading of newspapers that use certain discourses to legitimize the interests of the ruling class by making it seem like everyone’s interests and the voice of common sense, using terms such as “efficiency,” “standards,” and “accountability.” This common sense becomes taken for granted, then it turns into everyday knowledge and eventually truth. Ideology, hegemony, and discourse are intertwined and are reinforced through systems of social power. Ideology is the way in which everyone accepts the ideas of the ruling economic class, and those ideas are shaped in the interests of the dominant class. Thus, ideology works through everyday practices such as education policy and newspapers work through Discourse and language. Meaning is embedded within the language used through word choice.

Therefore, the emphasis on word choice is necessary for neoliberalism because Discourse is interpretative and it “has a hegemonic function” (Luke, 1996, p. 20). It is with this idea—that language is the stuff that Discourse is made of and constructs the social world—that we come to understand that Discourse is never neutral and is involved in the production of power relations that determine the distribution of education as a social good (Gee, 2011). Individuals in society are united by these hegemonic ideas through civil society, and they become natural ways to foster consent. However, remember that these ideas were originally produced by the ruling economic class. Parents become united by ideas like having “choice” for their children to “access a high-quality education,” so they agree with policies like Race to the Top (2009) and No Child Left Behind (2001). Thus, these terms become common-sense notions of how parents view education reform and even accept school closures. This common-sense notion was shown in my study through the words used in the articles. For example, the economic argument tied to access to high-quality schools appeared through the repetition of the words “access,” “option,” and
“high quality” education.

As stated in the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*,

Selective enrollment schools are another option for students to be challenged in the classroom on top of AP, Honors, IB, STEM and other rigorous curricula offered at neighborhood schools. (p. 3)

New Jones was able to fill an additional 125 selective enrollment seats for this current school year and will grow incrementally over the next four years. (p. 5)

Furthermore, members of the media identify the stakeholders who matter and give them legitimacy, while at the same time de-legitimizing the stakeholders who don’t matter by labeling them as oppositional (teachers) and, ultimately, not very important, not well informed, or not able to see the big picture. Indeed, it is only when we see Discourse as ideological that we can then understand the inter-relationships among neoliberalism, education policy, and the media as forces that are connected to the ruling economic class. For example, school closure is once again an economic imperative under the premise of facilities problems, which eventually leads to privatization as profit. Another example is the idea of accountability and choice as two sides of the same coin. One as it relates to the individual responsibility of choosing schools and to parents held accountable for their decisions when in reality they have no decision-making power over the schools that close.

**Thematic Connections: Relationship between Neoliberalism, Education Policy, and Newspapers**

This study brought us closer to understanding how critical discourse analysis, used as both theory and method, can allow us to examine language to reveal the inter-dependence of three mutually exclusive topics: neoliberalism, education policy, and newspapers (media) to explain how they function to serve particular interests. My study shows through my theory of the domain (Gee, 2008, 2011) the connection between these exclusive topics and the economic,
choice, and accountability themes are ideological because they give meaning to social situations such as school closings. This is important because these themes reveal the justification that frames social problems to benefit existing systems of domination and provide meaning for the political and economic decisions that represent common-sense notions of them for the public.

As evidenced from the documents, one of the ways in which the themes represent neoliberal practices is the terminology used within the policy document and the newspapers. Specifically, free-market ideology represents

- **school closure** as an economic imperative, which leads to privatization as profit;
- **choice** as individual freedom, which leaves space for competition among students and schools; and
- **accountability** as individual responsibility, i.e., parents being accountable for their decisions when they choose higher-performing schools, which places blame on individuals (teachers) who fail students.

I considered the themes that emerged from my research in two different ways, alone then together, and found that when I tried to understand them separately, they did not make sense to an overall logical argument for educational policymaking.

However, when the three themes and their underlying beliefs are put together, they become the foundation of capitalism: ideological acceptance of them rests on belief in the free market and private ownership. Education policy as a choice rests on the concept of a free society, one in which individuals have the ability to choose their own destiny, but they must be held accountable for their decisions. To ensure the continued justification for existing political and economic interests, newspapers convince citizens who the people or groups are who should be blamed and who is responsible when the system goes wrong. Public consensus is achieved when
the problem is framed to serve the interests of those who stand to benefit from it. The critical discourse theory used in this study made visible the invisible by placing emphasis on the language used in the discourse of each theme, but it is only when we think about their interdependence against the background of the economic system that we are able to see how the entire system works.

Why is this study important? By examining how the three themes work together, this research uncovered the essence of education policymaking: messy and embedded in larger economic forces. The idea that policymaking is messy can only be seen when education policymaking is explored against the backdrop of capitalism, specifically neoliberalism. Additionally, this study is important because it revealed that policymaking involves different dimensions (language-discourse) in relation to larger economic forces that can only be revealed by connecting the themes that emerged from critical policy research. The three themes do not work alone because each needs the other to accomplish the goal of capitalism in general and neoliberalism in particular. Additionally, this dissertation showed that through the use of the language found in discourse, the ideological foundation of individual freedom (choice) helps conceptualize the theoretical grounding for neoliberalism (free market-private ownership) to pursue self-interest. The economic imperative theme goes hand in hand with the ideological foundation of choice and being accountable for individual choice.

The themes do not stand alone; rather, they can only be understood through their interrelated dependence on each other to reveal how neoliberalism works from theory to practice. In reality, the education policy (accountability standards) and choice language that is found in policy documents then reinforced by newspapers (media) represents discourse as a sort of common-sense truth. However, understanding that the ideology of choice as a false
consciousness is only possible when we examine the economic processes of policymaking because choices are made within the constraints of society not outside of it. The ideology of capitalism is the pursuit of self-interest but the hegemonic common-sense notion of *its all up to the individual* is a false consciousness. Choices are made within the political, economic, and historical conditions of a society. Thus, the critical discourse analysis as theory and method connected the dots and situated the foundation for identifying the inter-relationships between the individual topics (neoliberalism, education policy, and newspapers) and the themes of economic imperative, choice, and accountability themes found in the policy document and newspapers.

**Critical Policy Research**

As with all critical approaches, this study showed how critical educational policy research challenges power relations in the distribution of a social good like education. Why is this important? Critical policy research provided new insights to understanding inter-relationships among neoliberalism, education policy, and the media within society to reveal how the “whole system works in the first place and by what means it is held together” (Berger, 1963, p. 37). From a sociological perspective, political, economic, and educational institutions work within a system that portrays contemporary social issues as independently exclusive, but it is through critical policy research that we are able to understand and reveal how the capitalist system is really held in place. Thus, it is only by conducting critical policy research that we can then replace traditional notions that see a direct line between education policy formulation and implementation and consider policy with all its complexity, struggles, process and embedded values (Ball, 2006).

Furthermore, through critical policy research, specifically critical discourse analysis, we were able to see that Springer’s (2012) analysis of neoliberalism as a “mutable” and
“inconsistent process that circulates through its own constructed discourses” (p. 135) has implications for further research in education. This understanding helps us find new ways of seeing that language within policy is always political. In this sense, there are always social goods like education at stake in society, and they are a part of larger social and economic practices in education (Ball, 2006; Gee, 2011). Similar to Springer (2012), theorist Jamie Peck (2013) noted that neoliberalism is never fixed and will always be contradictory, but it shapes itself to fit the goals of a range of political-economic settings and social formations. Given that both Springer (2012) and Peck (2013) defined neoliberalism through both discourse and political and economic frameworks, we should also view neoliberalism with a critical lens. After all, if neoliberalism can change through different processes to meet the demands of capitalism by constructing discourse that supports specific outcomes, then we can see that financial institutions, charter schools, and free trade agreements with other nations are all different, but the foundation underlying their continued growth is neoliberal economic policy. In cases like this, neoliberalism reinvents itself in different situations to continue the dominance of capitalism (Harvey, 2005; Klein, 2007; Peck, 2013; Reich, 2007).

Similarly, critical discourse theorist Fairclough (2010) noted, “the ‘spirit of capitalism’ is therefore an ideology which serves to sustain the capitalist process in its historical dynamism while being in phase with the historically specific and variable forms that it takes on” (p. 257). Thus, my research provided a critical understanding of neoliberalism by conducting a critical discourse of language used in the Educational Facilities Master Plan and newspapers. The themes that emerged from the findings focus on meaning making of the economic, accountability, and choice language that operates as key mechanisms of neoliberal ideology.
Finally, if we want to understand how neoliberalism takes on varied forms and is never fixed, we must take seriously what Ball (2006) asked of us: that any research or analysis of current education policy must be made against the backdrop of macro-level neoliberal economic frameworks of capitalism. Ideas and values are embedded in education policy and cannot be separated from their creators. In contrast, hegemonic power works to convince individuals and the social classes through education policy and the media (newspapers) to subscribe to certain common-sense social values. After all, who wants to race to the bottom or have their children attend lower-performing schools? Using language like “race to the top” or “higher-performing schools” achieves consent through common-sense discourse and notions of truth. Therefore, critical policy research is important as an interdisciplinary framework if we want to understand the current state of education.

**Implications and Conclusion**

This dissertation has shown that critical discourse analysis is able to reveal meanings, patterns, and frames within and across textual documents. Specifically, Gee’s (2008, 2011) framework as theory and method produced a critical theory-grounded analysis of ideology that conceptualized the relationship between neoliberalism, education policy, and media. However, two equally important assertions should be made: (a) critical discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary framework that provides a critical lens to understand discourse and the use of language in education policy, and (b) media is a vital part of understanding the discursive nature of policy documents.

My interest in this study started with Taubman’s (2009) critique of neoliberalism and his effort to deconstruct the discourse of standards and accountability in education. My research of the *Educational Facilities Master Plan* and newspaper articles contributed a small piece to the
larger conversation about school closures in Chicago and the particular meaning this represents for the nation as a whole. To answer Taubman’s call and aid in his effort to deconstruct specific discourses that implement neoliberalism, we must ask, where do we go from here? First, this has implications for the need for critical research in education that fulfills the promise of public education. Education policy is about the context of influence, text production, practice, processes outcomes, and political strategies (Ball, 2006; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Paying attention to the cultural values, relations, practices, and purposes of policy allows for different conceptions of understanding problems and, therefore, solutions as a starting point for social change. Second, we must indeed recognize that newspapers in general are uniform in their voices. Regardless of the subtle objectivity presented by an individual news outlet, the dominant neoliberal ideology is being transferred through all of them. Third, it is through common-sense discourses and language that media shapes the public’s understanding of school closures. Lastly, the media becomes the vehicle that markets education policy as a “choice” and, therefore, shifts the purpose of public education from a social good to a common-sense economic freedom that advances free-market ideas.

**Limitations and Questions for Future Studies**

This research used a critical discourse analysis approach that helped us recognize that within neoliberal discourse, we now can understand how meanings are produced through language use and how language allows us to do things, be things, and more importantly “how it [language] allows us to engage in actions and activities” (Gee, 2011, p. 2). The findings showed that the repetition of certain words like choice, economic imperative, accountability, and access to higher-quality schools were situated within different discourses to become meaningful. Thus, media in the form of newspapers is one of the ways in which policy language becomes
meaningful because Discourse is always and everywhere “value-laden” and “political” (Gee, 2008, p. 183). Therefore, the overall ideology of neoliberalism was not undermined in the policy document or the newspapers; rather, it was legitimated and socially constructed into our current hegemonic ideology. Through language rooted in economic imperatives, accountability, and choice, a moral discourse was constructed that presupposes that things are inevitable, closes off discussion, and distorts a true understanding of critical issues in education reform. Although it is through this study’s research that an inclusive conversation about the inter-connections among neoliberalism, education policy, and the media was possible, it may also be limited by the data the researcher selected.

This dissertation is not without its limitations, and one of them was the difficulty in replicating a study like this because it depends on the researcher’s choices. Also, it is difficult to generalize findings from this study as it employed a qualitative, critical discourse methodology and a specific small data set. This methodology depends on the choice of textual documents and is based on judgments of relevance aligned with a specific critical discourse theorist. Furthermore, the theoretical choices are based on the researcher’s own theories of how language, contexts, and interactions work in general and in the specific context being analyzed (Gee, 2008, 2011).

For the purpose of making this study more generalizable, I would conceive of adding a qualitative content analysis of teacher images and school buildings to draw inferences about cultural representations. I would like to further study the aspect of “safe passage” that was superficially mentioned in the Educational Facilities Master Plan and compare that to actual incidents of crime during 2011-2014. With this in mind, I would also take an opposite idea and research the curriculum of successful community schools, such as one in Tulsa, Oklahoma that
has a majority of underprivileged students like many of the schools that were closed in Chicago. However, it is also possible to conceive future research studies that employ other critical discourse theorists and the similar context of different urban cities across the United States.

In viewing my own limitations, an interesting alternative would have been looking at television news reporting about the *Educational Masters Facilities Plan* and comparing that to the print news. One important focus that I believe is relevant to understanding the dynamics of power and Gramsci’s (1971) notion of “organic intellectuals” is the role of the school board, to which this dissertation did not pay enough attention. Its focus was on symbolic decision makers, like the mayor of Chicago and the CEO of Chicago Public Schools, but it is actually the school board that makes the ultimate decision on school closures and voting on the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*. Additionally, I would conceive of a study that would include speeches from the symbolic decision makers along with interviews from school board members to add to the richness of the analysis.

Additional research is needed to determine whether other urban cities have adopted a facilities plan as a requirement for transparency in school closure decisions as did Chicago. To aid in understanding the facilities plan, one can analyze the local newspapers for each city and conduct a comparison of other cities’ facilities master plan policies. This can provide a larger sample of data and aid in understanding the national neoliberal conversation.

**Where Do We Go from Here?**

This study showed that the public acquires understanding about public education through media discourses in the form of newspapers and can shape public opinion. So, where do we go from here? Kotz (2015) reminded us about a time not too long ago when “the introduction of state regulation of the economy after 1900 was driven by powerful social movements, based
among ordinary people, demanding reform or radical reconstruction of society” (p. 191). Are we able to resist, contest, and challenge neoliberal educational reform and school closure policies? Yes, history has shown us that change is always possible. This section discusses existing ways that many educators have resisted market-driven changes in education and have countered them with strategies of hope for the common and public good.

Certainly a theoretical and practical consensus among citizens in a democratic society can be initiated by the hard work of educators. My research revealed that media’s dissemination of ideas that are influenced by policymakers is not always a completely seamless process. I believe, therefore, that this is the space where strategies for resistance are possible, as was evident in *Catalyst Chicago* or the diversity of opinion in the *Chicago Tribune* and *Sun-Times Chicago*. Since ideas and interests of the capitalist class are translated in the form of public policy, then disseminated to the masses by the media, teachers can take an active role by contacting main-street media outlets to write about policies that affect them and their students. This active role is a way of not only distrust but also disrupting the hegemonic, “common-sense” ideological process. Figure 3 represents how ideology flows between the capitalist class (neoliberals) and education policymakers and how educators can disrupt media producers (newspapers) by reaching out and making sure their voices are heard to impact educational policymaking. Educators are responsible for disseminating educational information and taking the initiative to explain how certain policies impact students and teachers by contextualizing a caring and holistic perspective. This is an opposition that can be understood as a window or a crack in the ideological process that leaves space for democratic interaction.

This study showed that everyday activities such as articles written in newspapers and read by the public are connected to larger social structures within educational institutions and
media structures. These everyday social activities seem like common sense, but in reality language shapes our understanding of events such as school closures. First, this study is important because it showed how education policy is connected to larger trends that appear disconnected. Second, only after we pay attention to language in both policy documents and newspapers can we become aware of how education policy is never neutral and tied to economic processes and other institutions such as the media that present certain forms of knowledge and truth. Lastly, this study showed that words such as *accountability*, *choice*, and *economic imperatives* represent the privatization of public schools and the public acquires understanding about education reform through media discourses in the form of newspapers that can shape public opinion because it reiterates the intentions of the policymakers.

Why is this important? This is important because we must pay attention to the ways language is ideological, impacts everyday social practices and intersects our own understanding about educational reform. As educators we can help lead the way of seeing that language within policy is always political and education is always at stake in a democratic society. Furthermore, what we know as educators matters in a democratic society and this is important because education is part of larger social and economic practices that must be viewed through a critical lens to positively intervene in the political policy process.
Many researchers and educators, including Brickner (2016), have emphasized the importance of contextualizing educators’ dissent through social media. What can teachers do? Brickner noted that activists like Lois Weiner have suggested “that building stronger social justice-oriented unions is critical to pushing back against neoliberal education reform” (p. 16).
Bricker further noted that we must “defend teaching’s nurturing functions and for teachers and unions to stand up for students’ human needs” (p. 17). This ethics of care, which is important for understanding what educators actually do, is central to human relations.

Moreover, Giroux (2011) offered similar challenges about rethinking public values and social responsibility. He suggested that as core public values regarding compassion for the common good have been abandoned under the regime of a market society, we must replace by reclaiming the public sphere as a space as a place for education and the discourse of democracy. Giroux (2011) further noted that “we must become part of an ongoing attempt to give meaning to the interconnections among the new media, non-commodified public spheres, a formative culture that nurtures a belief in the common good and the ethical imagination, and the individual and collective practices needed to uphold the promise of an aspiring democracy” (p. 26). This promise is possible.

Similarly, Allweiss, Grant, and Manning (2015) stressed the importance of understanding current school closings within histories of social exclusion and government policies of space. Furthermore, paying attention to images and constructions of space helps us view local school buildings as places of democratic interaction and how current policies of exclusion undermine democratic participation. The examples of educators as intellectuals and social activists leave us with hope as we see the possibility of dissent transpiring into concrete change through the voices of students, teachers, and social activists.

**Researcher Reflection**

What does this leave us with? To conclude this dissertation, I would like to share some thoughts I am left with as I reflect on my decision to include media as part of this study. I believe that media within this research raised critical questions about newspapers as having an important
role in a democratic society. Understanding this role also leads to questions of citizen and educator responsibilities. These were the reasons that I started the doctorate program and for completing the research. As an educator, I felt a greater responsibility to understand the larger issues that I consciously and unconsciously am a part of and that impact all students.

I am also left with encouragement for further dialogue and future studies I can conduct. Performing my literature review and identifying my study’s limitations have provided future questions about media that I can research. There is the possibility that media could have the task of playing a larger role in questioning neoliberalism and why it is embedded in education policy. Is it the responsibility of the media alone to address these questions? Should this be a task of education reporters or their readers? Should the public and readers of newspapers accept what newspapers write at face value and be participants in neoliberal policy? Is our neutrality a form of ideological consent? How does the notion of free speech fit in with our role as higher education instructors in this new political climate? As this critical discourse analysis reminds us, social action is our duty when we reveal interconnections between economic, political, and cultural forces. I suggest that as educators and intellectuals, we must be critical of what we read. We must read multiple sources on the representation of educational policy with a critical eye. We must also take the time and put in the effort to write opinion pieces and become spokesmen and women for public education and stand guard against private interests. In this regard, we become transformative intellectuals.

I believe in one of the basic tenets of American participatory democracy, the belief in the opportunity of public schooling to create a democratic society. Schools and teachers shape and nurture ideas about democracy, and as Dewey (1916) advocated, intellectual opportunity should be available on an equal basis to prepare citizens for our civic responsibility and our role as
active participants within society. Lastly, I want to express many thanks to all my past and current educators, mentors, and advisors who have planted in me and many others the seeds of democratic responsibility.
References


### Appendix A: Ideological Framing in the Educational Facilities Master Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Words</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td><em>Educational Facilities Master Plan:</em> Establishes a common definition of school quality, performance, data-driven comprehensive standards, and school accountability system. Newspapers: Diverse meaning makes reference to the implicit and explicit accountability systems, both positive and negative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money/Capital/Cost Effective/Finances</td>
<td><em>Educational Facilities Master Plan:</em> These terms make reference to the role of money in the development of education, the budget and its future use, and the investment in education as a business. Newspapers: Diverse discourses that provide the opposite justification that leads to the privatization of education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents/community involvement</td>
<td><em>Educational Facilities Master Plan:</em> It makes reference to the participation of community in general and parents in the decision making about achieving a high level of quality. Newspapers: Diverse discourses that provide more information about the lack of choice parents and community have in the decision-making process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum/Common Core</td>
<td><em>Educational Facilities Master Plan:</em> Direct definition of common core curriculum as policy implementation. Implicitly and explicitly sold as individual choice and access to higher education. Newspapers: Diverse discourse about the impact of education policy on students and families with a lack of choice available to parents and students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Words</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality in education</td>
<td><em>Educational Facilities Master Plan:</em> It makes reference to low and high-quality education. The concept quality and its relationship with terms like money, investment and the purpose of education, access, and choice. Newspapers: Diverse notions of a quality education as taken away from students to support charter schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students involvement</td>
<td>It makes reference about how the students are taken into account in the decision making, and how they are or not considered active members of the educational process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td><em>Educational Facilities Master Plan:</em> Establishes a common definition of access to a higher quality education through facilities closure, competition rhetoric, and individual choice through an accountability framing. Newspapers: Diverse meanings, make reference to access to the dynamics of public schools as a competitive system as compared to traditional public schools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>