



Framing Neoliberalism: A Content Analysis of *Ley de Reforma Educativa de Puerto Rico*

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Abstract: The American educational policy agenda has been fraught with neoliberal laws that center educational improvement and innovation (Barros, 2012). Neoliberalism operates on the premise that market competition will spur excellence in educational opportunities and decrease the education debt in marginalized communities (Fejes & Salling Olesen, 2016). Moreover, in the case of urban education systemic reforms, researchers need to endeavor how marginalized communities relay their concerns or endorsements in the media. News articles are one appropriate unit of analysis for investigating this problem. In this paper, I examine how an education reform law in Puerto Rico, *Ley de Reforma Educativa de Puerto Rico* (LREPR), was reported on in the four most popular newspapers on the Island. Conducting content analysis of newspaper articles produced findings that contribute to the policy literature by describing three central frames found in the media coverage of LREPR: (a) rhetoric on the “Free Selection of Schools” school voucher program, (b) the effects of mass school closures on municipalities, and (c) rhetoric on Alianza Schools—Puerto Rico’s Charter Schools Initiative. I close with how the frames depart from the Republican-leaning political affiliation of the newspapers and present a collective resistance to the neoliberal education reform policy.

Keywords: education policy; neoliberalism; content analysis

Enmarcando el neoliberalismo: Un análisis de contenido de Ley de Reforma Educativa de Puerto Rico

Resumen: La agenda política educativa estadounidense ha estado plagada de leyes neoliberales que centran la mejora y la innovación educativas (Barros, 2012). El neoliberalismo opera bajo la premisa de que la competencia del mercado impulsará la excelencia en las oportunidades educativas y disminuirá la deuda educativa en las comunidades marginadas (Fejes & Salling Olesen, 2016). Además, en el caso de las reformas sistémicas de la educación urbana, los investigadores deben investigar cómo las comunidades marginadas transmiten sus preocupaciones o respaldos en los medios. Los artículos de noticias son una unidad de análisis apropiada para investigar este problema. En este artículo, examino cómo una ley de reforma educativa en Puerto Rico, la Ley de Reforma Educativa de Puerto Rico (LREPR), fue reportada en los cuatro periódicos más populares de la Isla. La realización de análisis de contenido de artículos periodísticos produjo hallazgos que contribuyen a la literatura de políticas al describir tres marcos centrales que se encuentran en la cobertura mediática de LREPR: (a) la retórica sobre el programa de vales escolares “Libre Selección de Escuelas”, (b) los efectos de la cierre de escuelas en municipios, y (c) retórica sobre Alianza Schools—Iniciativa de Escuelas Chárter de Puerto Rico. Cierro con cómo los marcos se apartan de la afiliación política de tendencia republicana de los periódicos y presentan una resistencia colectiva a la política de reforma educativa neoliberal.

Palabras clave: política educativa; neoliberalismo; análisis de contenido

Enquadrando o neoliberalismo: Uma análise de conteúdo da lei de reforma educacional de Porto Rico

Resumo: A agenda da política educacional americana tem sido assolada por leis neoliberais que focam na melhoria e inovação educacional (Barros, 2012). O neoliberalismo opera sob a premissa de que a competição de mercado impulsionará a excelência em oportunidades educacionais e diminuirá a dívida educacional em comunidades marginalizadas (Fejes & Salling Olesen, 2016). Além disso, no caso de reformas sistêmicas da educação urbana, os pesquisadores devem investigar como as comunidades marginalizadas transmitem suas preocupações ou endossos na mídia. Artigos de notícias são uma unidade de análise apropriada para investigar esse problema. Neste artigo, examino como uma lei de reforma educacional em Porto Rico, a Lei de Reforma Educacional de Porto Rico (LREPR), foi relatada nos quatro jornais mais populares da Ilha. A análise de conteúdo de artigos de jornal produziu descobertas que contribuem para a literatura política descrevendo três quadros centrais encontrados na cobertura da mídia sobre o LREPR: (a) a retórica sobre o programa de vouchers escolares “Libre Selección de Escuelas”, (b) os efeitos do fechamento de escolas nos municípios e (c) a retórica sobre as Escolas Alianza—Puerto Rico Charter Schools. Concluo com a forma como os enquadramentos rompem com a filiação política de tendência republicana dos jornais e apresentam uma resistência coletiva à política de reforma educacional neoliberal.

Palavras-chave: política educacional; neoliberalismo; análise de conteúdo

Framing Neoliberalism: A Content Analysis of *Ley de Reforma Educativa de Puerto Rico*

The American educational policy agenda has been fraught with neoliberal laws that center educational improvement and innovation (Barros, 2012). The neoliberal education agenda focuses on a smaller governmental role in public education (Apple, 2001; Apple et al., 2009; Tweedie et al., 1990). Significant to education reform discourse are concepts of democracy, equity, and equality—in essence, how government resources are distributed. This perspective shifts the discourse of education reform to conflicts over resources: who gets what, when, and where. Proponents of neoliberal education reform tout expanded access to diversity of education options such as charter schools, school voucher programs, and increased programmatic features such as STEM initiatives or project-based learning (Brathwaite, 2017). Neoliberalism operates on the premise that market competition will spur excellence in educational opportunities and decrease the education debt in marginalized communities (Fejes & Salling Olesen, 2016). Opponents of neoliberal education reform describe a different reality for these initiatives, such as disrupting communities by increasing charter schools and mass school closures (Henry & Dixson, 2016; Lipman, 2017). For example, they argue that by closing public schools in favor of charter schools, education becomes commodified and restricts the public's access to local schools. In the case of New Orleans, one of the country's largest district reformation efforts, all schools were moved to a charter designation, placing public schools in a quasi-private model removing government oversight and limiting how families were involved at the school level (Buras, 2013; Buras & Apple, 2005). Moreover, scholars have argued that these comprehensive reforms do not, in fact, aid marginalized communities by increasing high-quality educational options; instead, they commodify education for profit purposes (Dixson et al., 2015; Faw & Jabbar, 2020). This leaves marginalized communities in no better place than when the reform was instituted (Komatsu, 2013; Lee & Lubienski, 2017).

The consumers in neoliberal education reform policies are students and families, who are left to discern the best option for their children. Relevant scholarship on the impact of neoliberal education reform policies has shown that families advocate or oppose the education reform (Garcia & Weiss, 2020; Marsh et al., 2015; Nespore, 2016; Rodríguez et al., 2016). Despite the wealth of scholarship that argues both sides of neoliberal education reform, another dimension has not been researched in depth: the connection between how policymakers implement and legislate the reform and how students and families learn about and respond to the law in the media. This element is important to investigate because it allows researchers to see the messages families and students internalize, memorializes how students and families resist or agree to a reform law, and broadens our understanding of the policy process by illuminating the process by which consumers (students and families) understand the market changes (education reform policy). Moreover, in the case of urban education systemic reforms, researchers should investigate marginalized communities relay their concerns or endorsements in the media.

News articles are one appropriate unit of analysis for investigating this problem. The work of newspapers is to provide a method of discourse for citizens. In education, this is especially important because education stories are often covered briefly that are not tied to any former discussion on the topics presented (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). For marginalized communities, news articles provide an opportunity for equity by centering the voices of the subaltern in the media. In this paper, I examine how *Ley de Reforma Educativa de Puerto Rico* (LREPR), an education reform law in Puerto Rico—the third largest district in the United States (Cobb & Iriazzary, 2020)—was reported on in the four most popular newspapers on the Island. Further, I show how frames, a common journalistic technique, were used to highlight the perspectives of the people on the Island

to resist the education reform policy while simultaneously presenting a limited narrative of the political elites who described the positive elements of the law, drawing on neoliberal benefits such as economic mobility and increased competition to weed out poor performers. By conducting a content analysis of newspaper articles, I align with Green-Saraisky's (2015) notion that content analysis of the media illuminates the real-life experiences of those affected by the law. As a result, this study was guided by two central research questions:

1. What are the frames presented in four newspapers on the implementation of *Ley de Reforma Educativa de Puerto Rico*?
2. How do the frames present the implementation of *Ley de Reforma Educativa de Puerto Rico*?

In this paper, I address the extant literature researching the media's role in education coverage and neoliberalism. I then present my findings, which entail three central frames found in the media coverage of LREPR: (a) Rhetoric on the "Free Selection of Schools" school voucher program, (b) the effects of mass school closures on municipalities, and (c) rhetoric on Alianza Schools—Puerto Rico's Charter Schools Initiative. Finally, I close with how the frames depart from the Republican-leaning political affiliation of the newspapers and present a collective resistance to the neoliberal education reform policy.

Background

Ley de Reforma Educativa de Puerto Rico (LREPR; The Education Reform Law of Puerto Rico) was legislated in March of 2018. LREPR has several initiatives that target improvements in Puerto Rico's educational system. Some examples of these improvements are accountability measures for principals, mentors for principals, and a decentralized education government. The most controversial aspect of LREPR has been the inclusion of charter schools (*escuelas alianzas*) and the school voucher program. Before LREPR, neither school choice option was available.

LREPR legislated two inaugural school choice initiatives to add to their education system: *Alianza Escuelas*, charter schools authorized in Puerto Rico; and *Libre Selección de Escuelas* (The Free Selection of Schools Program), a school choice program. As per LREPR (2018), Puerto Rico authorized up to 14 charter schools across the Island. In 2018, the Puerto Rican Department of Education announced the authorization of Puerto Rico's first charter school, managed by the Boys and Girls Club and opening for the 2019-2020 school district. Two new charter schools opened in the 2020-2021 school year (Abrams, 2019). According to charter school regulations in Puerto Rico, as noted in LREPR, no more than 10% of all the public schools in Puerto Rico can be charter schools. Also, "no more than 3 percent of students could attend private or non-district public schools with the use of vouchers" (Abrams, 2019). Additional elements of LREPR include mentors for principals, project-based learning activities for students, and social-emotional learning curricula. The diversity of initiatives within LREPR illustrates how the law was designed to transform Puerto Rico's education system in myriad ways through various avenues.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Few topics directly impact more people than public education. Most Americans have attended public school, and property taxes across the country serve as markers of high-performing schools, giving almost all Americans a financial stake in the education system (Farhi, 2012). However, the media often portray education in their coverage as failing. News reports by prominent news organizations often call for schools to be reformed, despite improvements in the public

education system (Farhi, 2012). In his groundbreaking piece “Flunking the Test,” Paul Farhi (2012) described the oddities of news coverage after hearing CCN host Fareed Zakaria discuss the broken education system in America and how it needs to be fixed. His analysis found that reporters did not define a “failing school” and, instead, relied on their readers to assume their intent. Farhi also found that these news articles tended to blame so-called failing schools on teachers; for example, the term “ineffective teachers” was used 137 times. However, research has yet to build an extensive base that examines how the news is framed.

Issue framing in public education has been studied much less frequently than other social issues such as poverty or crime (Briggs, 2012). This presents a problem when the discourse only touches the surface of issues in education or reacts to popular controversy. Gerstl-Pepin (2002) conducted a discourse analysis of newspapers and broadcast stories on education for the four months preceding the 2000 presidential election. She described the media as a “thin public,” describing the shallow presence of education coverage and the absence of genuine dialogue about education issues (p. 39). Gerstl-Pepin argued that more education research is needed because it is the public’s primary source to obtain information on public goods and services.

Regardless of the modality, education coverage in the media has been found to present negative frames of the education system, regardless of jurisdiction. Dowman and Mills (2008) conducted a qualitative study with educators in New Zealand, examining their sensemaking of newspaper articles that addressed accountability and responsibility in education. Similar to other studies, Dowman and Mills identified the “blame culture” (p. 1) as a prominent frame in the news coverage. All participants in this study felt the news blamed teachers for many issues in schools, actively accounting for them in their professional practice. Dowman and Mills also connected the news coverage to the 1989 Education Reform Act in New Zealand, inquiring if the education reform possibly intensified the blame culture by promoting accountability and responsibility as professional tenets. They found that the news may have strengthened the blame culture, connecting it to the Education Reform Act.

When a system is in crisis, it must be fixed or, as in education, reformed (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Journalists seek sources to verify the claims that the education system is in crisis. Farhi (2012) argued that newspapers depend on political, governmental, and celebrity elites to provide secondary accounts of what is happening in the education system. He found this particularly true in the case of education reform. For example, he suggested that reform leaders such as Bill Gates are given preference as sources for an article without input from alternative viewpoints (Farhi, 2012). Elite sources are given a prominent position to describe the state of a crisis occurring in public schools, even with a considerable amount of research on how framing in the news sways readers. In a discourse analysis of teacher framing in *The New York Times* and *Time Magazine* from 2001-2008, Goldstein (2011) found school reformers are presented as brokers invested in sweeping out bad educators, championing the idea of preventing anything from impeding the improvement of academic achievement.

Issue Framing as an Analytic Tool

Framing provides an audience with a scheme to interpret news events (Neuendorf, 2002). Pickle et al. (2002) found that the content of news stories includes latent implied questions for which frames offer answers by performing four functions: (a) defining and diagnosing a problem, (b) identifying a source or cause, (c) providing a judgment, and (d) justifying a solution for the problem. Through this process, the mass media actively define the frames of reference through which audiences engage in public issues (Tuchman, 1978).

Framing analysis presents the opportunity to do more than just survey education. Framing as an analytical research tool was first theorized by Goffman in 1974. Giltin (1980) further elaborated on this concept by arguing, “Frames are principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens and what matters” (p. 6). Within the context of media, framing determines how issues are constructed.

The existing scholarship has presented a cogent, if not negligible, body of research that allows a deep understanding of how framing news coverage affects the public’s view on education. Through various methods (quantitative, qualitative, content analysis), scholars have also foregrounded how framing and limited coverage do not fully report issues about education. This leaves the public to form biased opinions based on the news reports (Coe & Kuttner, 2018). The present research begins to fill this gap by examining how news coverage of LREPR has been framed and how framing drives a common narrative about the law’s implementation.

Methods

Content analysis has been routinely used in education policy analysis (Cohen-Vogel & Hunt, 2007; Shaheen & Lazar, 2018; Smith et al., 2008). My research sought to understand how *El Nuevo Dia*, *El Vocero*, *Primera Hora*, and *The San Juan Daily Star* have framed the implementation of LREPR by applying qualitative content analysis. Various qualitative researchers claimed that qualitative methods examine phenomena within the unique political and historical contexts in which they are embedded (Bhattacharya, 2009, 2017; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patel, 2014, 2016). Therefore, I chose a qualitative approach because the aim of my study was to provide an insightful description and interpretation of how neoliberalism is framed when reporting on implementing an education reform policy (Chu, 2019). As a result, this analysis follows certain theoretical and epistemological assumptions of qualitative research by recognizing that policy texts and narratives are socially constructed and value-driven (Chu, 2019). Moreover, the meanings of policy texts and adjacent narratives are open to interpretation to reveal what perspectives are valued and driving public discourse. Through the deconstruction of the policy content by reading the documents closely, the values and beliefs of policymakers regarding education reform can be deduced (Krippendorff, 2018; Young & Diem, 2017).

Data Collection

I conducted a content analysis on texts in the Puerto Rican media, focusing specifically on newspaper reports published from March 1, 2018, to June 30, 2020. I chose this timeframe because it begins with the month of the law’s implementation. I created an original dataset of texts from the four major newspapers in Puerto Rico: *El Nuevo Dia*, *El Vocero*, *Primera Hora*, and *The San Juan Daily Star*. These four newspapers are the most read on the Island of roughly 3 million people. Table 1 illustrates the readership of all four newspapers, including global readers and the Puerto Rican diaspora. All four newspapers designate their political affiliation as Republican-leaning. *El Vocero* is owned by Publi-Inversiones; *The San Juan Daily Star* is owned by The San Juan Star, Inc.; *El Nuevo Dia* and *Primer Hora* are owned by GFR Media. All articles were downloaded in Spanish, pdf-formatted from the relevant newspaper websites.

Table 1*Annual Readership of Newspapers*

Newspaper	Annual Readership
<i>El Nuevo Dia</i>	4.8 million
<i>El Vocero</i>	55.2 million
<i>Primera Hora</i>	1.56 million
<i>The San Juan Daily Star</i>	6.7 million

Article Selection Process

To identify relevant articles, I searched each website's archive using the search terms in Spanish for (and translated into English as) "educational reform" and "Ley de Reforma Educativa de Puerto Rico." This provided me with a total of 123 articles from all four newspapers. I excluded news articles from the initial sample of 123 pieces in two ways. First, I excluded articles that were beyond the timeframe of March 1, 2018-June 30, 2020. Second, I excluded four articles that did not explicitly identify LREPR.

The sampling resulted in 119 texts that I coded for analysis. Based on the statistics from the Google Form I created to organize the articles, *El Nuevo Dia* reported 42% of the articles ($n = 50$); *El Vocero* reported 39% ($n = 46$); *Primera Hora* reported 16% ($n = 19$), and *The San Juan Daily Star* reported 3% ($n = 4$).

Data Organization

Once I completed the screening process per my inclusion and exclusion criteria, I created a content log (Green-Saraisky, 2015) in Google Forms by entering in the following information: news source, publication date, author, headline, sub-headline, article type, source type, section article reported in, visuals, and visual type.

Translation. All articles were downloaded in Spanish and translated through Google Translate to English as a third-party member check. As a fluent Spanish speaker, I wanted to incorporate a third party to translate the documents to English in case of discrepancies between colloquial Puerto Rican dialectal Spanish and Spanish written for the public in formal settings such as newspapers. I used Google Translate as the first level of translation. In some cases, Google could not translate some words from Spanish to English due to different meanings. For example, the abbreviation "Dra." was used to describe Secretary of Education Julia Keleher in some places. Google translated this as "Doctor," but the actual translation should be Director because Dra. is a short form for the female "directora."

Data Analysis

Content analysis examines and analyzes a collection of communications. It is often used for its reliability and replicability in empirical studies (Krippendorff, 1989; Neuendorf & Kumar, 2015). Data for content analysis must derive from communicative practices such as news articles or media reports. Similarly, Lasswell (1948) posited that content analysis examines "who says what through which channel to whom with what effect" (p. 117).

Engaging in content analysis requires coding categories and offering explanations from the emerging data analysis (Krippendorff, 1989). The product of analysis is frequency counts to determine the preponderance of the evidence, which is then shaped into frames. I conducted this analysis in five steps. First, I reviewed descriptive statistics generated by the Google Form content log, such as detailing frequency counts of the placement of the articles. Second, I conducted a preliminary reading of the articles. I read each piece once, immersing myself in the data and getting a broad sense of the topics covered in the articles. Third, I engaged in a priori coding derived from the extant literature. Some codes extracted from the literature were “school closures,” “market competition,” “charter schools,” and “school vouchers.” I chose these codes because they are policy technologies used in neoliberal reform (Ball, 2016). Fourth, I revised codes where necessary and engaged in open coding. Finally, I analyzed the coded data. I used the qualitative software Atlas.ti for all analysis.

Trustworthiness

To ensure my findings were trustworthy and valid, I employed Elo et al.’s (2014) “checklist for researchers attempting to improve the trustworthiness of a content analysis study” (p. 3). The checklist includes questions for reflection after each phase of the study, such as “Is this method the best available to answer the target research questions?” and “How well do the categories cover the data?” (p. 3). Thus, after each stage of data collection and analysis, I used the checklist to assess my findings. In doing so, I developed a high degree of trustworthiness in my data while also acknowledging that any research study is a representation made by the author (Elo et al., 2014).

Findings

In this section, I examine how the news articles from *El Nuevo Dia*, *El Vocero*, *Primera Hora*, and *The San Juan Daily Star* framed the implementation of Ley De Reforma Educativa de Puerto Rico from March 1, 2018, to June 30, 2020. First, I present the content analysis portion of the study, illuminating the descriptive statistical trends of the analysis, which helped me identify the frames of the content analysis. Then, I present three frames that I found through the content analysis: (a) rhetoric on “free selection of schools program” (school voucher program) and Alianza Schools (charter schools); (b) the effects of mass school closures on the citizens of Puerto Rico; and (c) the legitimacy of LREPR. Finally, I close with a summary of the frames and offer how these frames discuss the implementation of LREPR.

Breadth and Depth of Coverage on the Implementation of LREPR

The bulk of the news coverage on the implementation of LREPR occurred from June 2018 to June 2019. During this time, 77% of the sample of articles was published. These articles ranged from 500-1,000 words, at times including a photograph as a visual. Table 2 illustrates the coverage distribution; it is clear that *El Vocero* published slightly more articles on the implementation of LREPR than *El Nuevo Dia*. The depth of the topics covered also varied across articles. Articles with a superficial depth level tended to report procedural information such as “how to apply to the Free Selection of Schools Program” (*La Primera Hora*, 2018) or to capture meetings that discussed plans to build a new charter school (Clemente, 2019a). In these articles, the focus was on a short factual statement of what occurred without further commentary. The articles presenting more in-depth coverage included interviews with parents, teachers, and the head of the teachers’ union. For instance, one article described how parents were kept in the dark about the closing of their local public school, forcing them to figure out where to send their children to school (Clemente, 2019a). Additionally, local officials described that they were not aware of the school closures, leaving them

without answers to help their constituents (Alicea, 2018). The varying depth of the articles shows the many ways implementation was covered and the level of information that was given to readers.

Table 2

LREPR Implementation Coverage Distribution

Newspaper	Percentage of Coverage Distribution
<i>El Nuevo Dia</i>	38.7
<i>El Vocero</i>	42.0
<i>Primera Hora</i>	16.0
<i>The San Juan Daily Star</i>	3.4

Placement of Media Coverage

Public discourse about LREPR was discussed in various sections of the newspaper articles sampled. This result seemed somewhat counterintuitive to informing the public about the implementation of LREPR because there was no consistent location to present such information to readers, such as within an education section. The articles were often placed in a variety of sections. Additionally, the data suggested that the article was assigned based on the described conflict. For example, articles in sections devoted to the government, politics, and courts often included articles in which former union President of Asociación de Maestros de Puerto Rico (Teachers Association of Puerto Rico) Aida Diaz complained about implementing LREPR. Articles in the “Spotlight” section typically featured interviews with key stakeholders, such as former Secretary of Education Julia Keleher. While there was an “Education” section in all four newspapers, typically, these articles described the availability of the school voucher program or other items that presented information for citizens to seek services; that is, these articles served a functional purpose rather than a social conversation. Thus, the placement and type of articles offered insights into how public policy issues from LREPR were framed. For example, most articles appeared in the local news section (32%), followed by the front-page section (20%) and the “Government and Politics” section (16%). Only 6% of articles were placed in the “Education” section, and they discussed parts of the implementation process, such as court challenges to LREPR or the opening of the first charter school on the Island. The articles also reported several conflicts in response to LREPR, which aligns with the research on educational coverage (Farhi, 2012). Table 3 illustrates the placement of articles in the newspapers, while Table 4 shows the type of articles published. The continued coverage over the past 3 years demonstrates the newsworthiness of the implementation of LREPR. As found in previous studies, news coverage of the implementation initiatives was placed in various newspapers.

Table 3*Placement of Articles*

Section of Newspaper	Percentage of Sample
Front Page	20
National	14
Feature	1
Education	6
Government and Politics	16
Local	31
Government	4
Politics	3
Local en Español	2
Law and Order	1

Table 4*Article Type in Sample*

Article Type	Percentage
News	94.8%
Feature	3.2%
Op-Ed	1%
Other	0%

Issue Framing of LREPR

Chong and Druckman (2007) explained that frames are developed because “individuals are assumed not to evaluate strength consciously but simply to embrace the frame they hear most often and that most easily comes to mind.” The terms *charter schools* and *school vouchers* were mentioned 292 times in the sample of articles I analyzed. Furthermore, the term *school closures* were mentioned 156 times. The frequent use of these terms in the articles published during this time period demonstrated the media’s focus on school choice initiatives, which led to how three frames emerged from the data. Table 5 shows how many articles in the sample mentioned these three frames. As detailed below, some articles focused on more than one frame.

Table 5*Distribution of Frames*

Frame	Number of Articles Exhibiting Frame
Que Es Esta Ley? - Rhetoric on “Free Selection of Schools Program” and Alianza Schools	62
The Detrimental Effects of Mass School Closures on Puerto Rico Citizens	28
Questioning the Legitimacy of LREPR	56

Frame 1: Que Es Esta Ley? - Rhetoric on “Free Selection of Schools Program” and Alianza Schools

The first frame concentrates on the “Free Selection of Schools” program and the Alianza Schools or charter schools as a partial critique of LREPR and a partial conduit for participation in the initiatives. All four newspapers used the school vouchers program or charter school formation to describe discontent with the initiatives’ launch derived from LREPR. They also questioned the legal legitimacy of LREPR to provide public funds to private entities while providing their readers with ways to apply to the initiatives by reporting on application deadline extensions or compliance regulations. Rhetoric is a particularly strong frame, given the occurrences of the terms *school vouchers* and *charter schools* as well as the volume of articles published on this topic. In the sample collected, 58% of the articles discussed the Free Selection of Schools Program or Alianza Schools.

The most substantial framing on this issue came from articles describing school choice initiatives as unconstitutional. One article began with the statement, “From the beginning, the establishment of charter schools, baptized as Public Schools Alliance in Law 85, has been surrounded by controversy and uncertainty” (López Alicea, 2019). This statement exemplified the central conflict used to describe the implementation of LREPR. Tied to the central conflict was the notion of how political actors, such as governors or education secretaries, acted in concert to get LREPR passed. The evidence suggests that these high-ranking officials used their political capital and official titles to advance LREPR toward legislation. In this way, several articles reported the challenges to LREPR and used former Secretary of Education Keleher and other proponents to explain its benefits. The use of high-ranking officials in various sectors suggested the appearance of a coalition of stakeholders marshaling against the creation of Alianza Public Schools and The Free Selection of Schools program. Additionally, the literature on the use of high-ranking officials explained that their powerful position sways public perception (Hyatt, 2013). In this way, the data suggested that the use of interviewing public officials was to build confidence in LREPR.

By contrast, local officials were often the speakers on which the newspapers reported for their opinions of the school choice initiatives. For example, in one article, Eva Ayala, President of Educamos (a digital education improvement organization in Puerto Rico), was reported as saying, “We can celebrate Keleher’s departure, but the people who are there have the clear intention of continuing with public policy, which is Law 85, and campaign to increase the working hours for teachers” (Rivera Clemente, 2019b). In another article, Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) union, expressed, “Support parents and teachers who—throughout the island—have begun to organize to combat charter schools, authorized by the Puerto Rico

Education Reform Law (Law 85-2018)” (Ruiz Kuilan, 2019). Several news articles repeatedly reiterated the notion that the charter school program and school voucher program were highly contested. These data spotlighted how school choice programs were described across all newspapers during this time.

Frame 2: The Detrimental Effects of Mass School Closures on Puerto Rico Citizens

The second frame concentrates attention on mass school closures as a solution to improve the overall quality of the educational landscape in Puerto Rico. Additionally, the frame highlights commentary on Puerto Rican citizens’ bleak outlook on the school closures. Within this frame, the news articles described the confusion and lack of transparency that municipalities in Puerto Rico faced regarding the school closures. The data suggested that when there is low transparency about issues related to implementing an education reform law, the constituents experience/encounter? confusion. As a result, the articles captured this confusion in statements from several Puerto Rican citizens. For example, a local official who had initially voted for LREPR amendments found a school in his municipality on the closure list in one article. He expressed, “There were schools that had no justification for closing them,” and explained that he advocated amendments to the bill that would become Law 85-2018 (Colón Dávila, 2018). The detrimental effects of school closures were also captured by local government officials who wondered how some schools could close while other schools were not ready to open. LREPR activated mass school closures in several parts of the island, causing many officials to claim they wondered about the rationale for this and noted the mixed messages being delivered. This same local official shared the following comments in *El Vocero*:

This would be the first school year with hundreds of schools closed, which the government attributes to the economic crisis and the dramatic decline in the student population. While this is happening, other campuses that will remain open will undergo repairs after the damage caused by Hurricanes Irma and María. (Clemente, 2020b)

Other articles reported government officials’ objection to the school closures, connecting their complaints to the authorization of charter schools. For example, one Puerto Rican senator disclosed: He [Senator] mentioned, as an example, that in his district, made up of 15 towns, there were almost 50 (school closures). I recommended several amendments, but I don’t believe in that charter system anyway. I am a teacher of the public education system,” he emphasized. (Colón Dávila, 2018)

Concern about school closures in Puerto Rico grew at a time of recovery and instability. This may be a possible explanation for this finding because, overall, Puerto Ricans were looking for stable government institutions to support them as they recovered from myriad crises. Part of recovery from a crisis is the ability to re-engage with public institutions such as schools (Howat et al., 2012). School closures demonstrated a drastic change in communities in Puerto Rico, creating more instability and an appearance of reprioritizing of government entities to decentralize the education system.

Finally, media reports of school closures included a dismal foreshadowing of things to come. *El Vocero* journalist Rivera Clemente (2018) relayed the potential long-term effects on Puerto Rico’s education system, including the following statement from a government official:

We are deeply concerned that Director Keleher also, on repeated occasions, threatens the school communities and the country with the closure of 305 schools before the end of this school year because she alleges that it is a mandate of the

Federal Fiscal Control Board. When reviewing the board's plan, it pointed out that the loss of 10% of students was planned, so that by 2022 the country is expected to have 305 fewer schools. (p. 1)

Using words such as “alleged” and “threaten” showed hostility toward the school closures and the lasting impact of these actions. This quote also sheds light on the dynamic ways school closures were perceived, suggesting that the grievance was about local access to high-quality schools. However, the actual inference was that those citizens were concerned about what these closures would mean in the long term for the Island's health. In summary, the reports on mass school closures were a prominent frame for constructing the implementation of LREPR.

Frame 3: Questioning the Legitimacy of LREPR

The third frame concentrates on challenges to the legitimacy of LREPR, as stated by several stakeholders in Puerto Rico. Of the 56 articles mentioning the legitimacy of the law, most were published from *El Vocero*. These articles charged that LREPR is not legal due to its school choice initiatives. For example, one article reported:

In a press release, the president of the teacher organization, Aida Díaz, argued that the statute violates the rights of teachers and violates the article of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico that establishes that public funds cannot be used to maintain non-state schools. This argument was the one that the Supreme Court supported in 1994 when it declared unconstitutional an educational voucher program that this administration revived in the educational reform. (Caro González, 2019)

The critique of the law came from Island-based labor officials such as the head of the union and mayors of towns and their constituents—that is, how does the United States inform the education policies legislated on the Island? This linked to another article stating:

We [Aida Diaz and the AFT Union] express the most energetic opposition to the privatization of schools with the imposition of the charter model (Escuelas Alianzas) that they want to impose in Puerto Rico, knowing that in the United States, they are a failure and that in other jurisdictions, they are questioned by the struggle of the American teachers. (Colón Dávila, 2019)

This quote connects the notion that Puerto Ricans were looking for more concrete evidence to uphold the rationale for charter schools. Especially interesting in this finding are the explicit naming of the continental United States and the request for proof demonstrating how charter schools will positively enhance the educational landscape. I posit that these requests aligned with a neoliberal market orientation by directing consumers to seek information in a market. However, instead of consumers asking for high-quality education, they challenged why the market should include a new school model.

Summary of Frames

From these three frames, I extracted a coherent argument about the potential adverse effects of the implementation of LREPR. Despite the notion that education is a public good, few news articles incorporated comments from parents, students, principals, and teachers. Instead, a small group of elite government officials frequently drove the discourse. These findings also demonstrated that the frames constructed by the media relied on the notion of sensationalism in journalism instead of nuanced, thematic articles that would present a fuller picture of implementation.

Sensationalizing content to engage and capture consumers is typical in the news media. It is, in part, how news media businesses maintain profitability and high readership. The data from this study suggested that these same strategies—sensationalizing the news to maintain or increase readership—were part of why the stories were reported as they were. For instance, I posit that the brevity of the articles, along with their sensational angle, did not provide more depth to understand various positions taken on topics related to LREPR that were covered in the frame. In this way, the articles can be interpreted as over-statements of conflicts inflated for readership, not necessarily matters of fact. Finally, all three frames and most news coverage placement depicted a contentious relationship between the Department of Education and local schools, teachers' unions, and families. Few calls presented across the articles reflected the positive effects of implementing LREPR, and these calls were usually made by former Secretary of Education Julia Keleher or former Governor Ricardo Roselló.

Limitations

As with all social science research, this study has limitations. In particular, there were three main limitations in this inquiry: (a) an emphasis on themes coded, (b) the genre of journalist writing, and (c) the effect of competing crises on reporting priorities. In the first limitation, clearly one article may cover several themes. Determining which theme is most salient relies on the researcher, which might present bias when reporting. To offset this limitation, I relied on Lasswell's (1948) perspective of "who says what in which channel to whom with what effect?" (p. 216) This allowed me to review the whole article for these questions to develop frames based on the preponderance of what was being discussed in the article. The coding I employed may not always express the weight within the articles that included multiple themes. Additionally, I used Gee's (2004) interpretation of discourse analysis by reviewing the language used in the articles for situated meaning and native language meaning. In this way, I used the case law of LREPR to illuminate the perspectives that were highlighted in the articles.

The second limitation refers to the media used in this inquiry. Journalists are expected to produce brief pieces that show their awareness of an issue while capturing and informing their audience, potentially resulting in a lack of nuance for the sake of basic facts. Thus, this may limit the scope and intent of the articles.

The third limitation involves the myriad crises that have affected Puerto Rico—namely the COVID-19 pandemic, destructive earthquakes and hurricanes, and several large-scale political protests. Thus, news priorities may have shifted away from LREPR implementation efforts to center on the various catastrophes on the Island.

Discussion and Implications

Historically, marginalized communities have resisted oppressive transformations through protests and have gone to the news to amplify their voices (Alcántara et al., 2013; Au, 2016; Danley & Rubin, 2020; Schroeder et al., 2018). These turning points provide catalysts and spotlights that show why neo-liberalization in education is detrimental for the oppressed (Au, 2016). The data from this study suggested a collective resistance to neoliberal education reform.

Based on my analysis, the newspapers created frames that mostly described the fight against LREPR from judicial disputes, to protests, to town hall meetings where citizens vehemently opposed the legislation. Relevant scholarship about neoliberalism affirmed that people internalize ideology as it turns into a social imaginary (Rizvi et al., 2006). Therefore, the news articles did not

have to name an ideology that was already internalized and familiar; instead, they presented the fight against it.

The encroachment of neoliberalism is pervasive in several school districts across the continental United States and now in Puerto Rico through LREPR. Despite the many recommendations of education scholars to navigate neoliberal education reform policies, I advocate for resistance to them. Recent research has shown that neoliberal education reforms have failed to improve public education in the United States and have worked against social justice and educational autonomy (Fabricant & Fine, 2013). The findings from this study contribute to the convincing body of scholarship that has shown how neoliberal education reform law does not serve the interest of public education. Thus, school districts and families need to develop grassroots advocacy (Buras et al., 2013; Dixson et al., 2015). For example, my study showed that three prominent frames were all critiques of LREPR. Similar events have occurred in other cities, such as the teacher strikes in Chicago and Los Angeles, becoming watershed moments for school districts. Stronger resistance requires the building of an explicit, purposeful, counterhegemonic discourse.

The newspapers in this study were Republican-leaning, yet they presented several critiques of the neoliberal education reform law. Discourse in the newspapers focused on neoliberal policy technologies such as school choice, purchasing land for school facilities, and accountability for traditional public-school leaders, to name a few. These articles touched on discrete topics but did not unify them under one overarching theme. They presented the same concerns, and coverage was rooted in the ways citizens and union officials disputed the neoliberal reform efforts. Moreover, the articles included several quotes from opponents of LREPR. Using the words of these opponents could be interpreted as giving a voice to the subaltern. Although neoliberalism is not explicitly named in the articles, in conjunction with this voice of opposition, opponents of LREPR are disputing the way the law will negatively impact their lives, even countering their Republican-leaning ideology. For example, the demand for transparency about how schools were determined to close showed how citizens resisted the government's actions, while including these perspectives in a Republican-leaning paper showed the virility of the claims. Relevant scholarship about neoliberalism affirms that people internalize ideology as it turns into a social imaginary (Rizvi et al., 2006). Therefore, the news articles did not have to name an ideology that was already internalized and familiar; instead, they simply presented the fight against it.

Neoliberal laws are not written for or with public education in mind. Thus, principles of neoliberalism will never provide the resources that public education needs. If the media will not boost their amount of coverage and move away from episodic framing, public school leaders could create their dynamic modalities to present a counterargument. School communities could develop videos, podcasts, and other media informing citizens about the effects of neoliberalism.

Neoliberal education reform policies particularly exacerbate race and economic class inequities. Resistance to these policies often aims to challenge these inequities in the name of social justice (Au, 2016). The forces of neoliberal education reform have swept across many nations. However, as has been the case in Puerto Rico and many places around the globe, teachers, students, and community members have organized against these reforms, broadly reclaiming public education for the public. Resisting neoliberal education reform through large and small acts is critically important and evolves from a commitment to equity and social justice. Resistance protests the oppressive education reform law. It also prods society to envision and articulate progressive and democratic models of public education.

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