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Barbara Patrick
Eastern Michigan University

Aaron . C. Rollins Jr
University of Louisville

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Shifting the Blame in Public Education: Are There Parallels Between Opinion and Policy?

Barbara Patrick
Eastern Michigan University

Aaron C. Rollins Jr.
University of Louisville

Federal policies have expanded the use of market driven performance reforms. A growing number of these reforms assume that citizens believe educators should be held accountable for outcomes and funding sanctions will cause underperforming school to enhance outcomes. However it is unclear if citizens share these views. This research assesses these assumptions by examining who citizens believe should be most accountable for education outcomes and whether they support policies that removes funds from underperforming schools and rewards them to other education entities. The results reveal that citizens believe either parents or students should be held more accountable for education outcomes, not teachers. Also targeted groups were less supportive of financially sanctioning underperforming schools.

Efforts to enhance the quality of education received by underserved populations have generated considerable debate (Patrick, 2014; Harrison-Jones, 2007; Lipman and Haines, 2007; Causey-Bush, 2005; Cooper, 2005; Gray, 2005; Weckstein, 2003). Recently, in *Bad Students, Not Bad Schools*, Robert Weissberg (2010) argued that poor educational outcomes are not the fault of public educators or school curriculums; instead, responsibility should be assigned to students. He believes student actions and desires will determine whether the racial and economic gaps in achievement close and if America will remain academically competitive with other industrialized nations (Weissberg 2010). His controversial assertion contends that blame lies with the students, not with the facilities or curriculum. This idea challenges the premise of federal *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) and *Race to the Top* legislation, which aims to close achievement gaps and enhance educational outcomes by using performance management techniques to hold educators accountable (Klein, 2010).

Though both Weissberg's hypothesis and federal accountability policies have produced considerable research and discussion (Dee & Jacob, 2011; Patrick & French, 2011; Bushaw & Lopez, 2010; Nichols & Berliner, 2007), an expansive review of the literature failed to uncover research gauging whether citizens believe students should be held the most culpable for education outcomes. Meaningful assessments of public accountability reforms must include students thereby allowing citizens to identify which of the three most important

stakeholders-teachers, parents, or students-they believe should be held most accountable for education outcomes. Citizens' views on this issue, particularly underserved citizens, are pivotal to meaningful discussions of education policy reforms. Without citizens' widespread support for the belief that educators should be held most accountable, reforms that provide them with tools to sanction poorly performing schools are likely to be unsuccessful (Brown, Lopez-Medina, and Reed, 2004). This research undertakes the task of addressing this shortfall in the literature by utilizing survey data to examine who citizens believe should be held most accountable for educational outcomes-teachers, parents, or students. It also gauges citizens' views on school accountability by examining whether they support policies that would take funds away from underperforming schools. Such support is crucial to federal provisions that encourage students to transfer from underperforming schools or seek the assistance of alternative educational providers. If citizens do not agree that underperforming schools should receive a financial sanction, reform policies that aim to improve educational outcomes by building a competitive market may encounter barriers and resistance on the behalf of targeted citizens (Patrick and French, 2011).

In order to assess the views of policy-targeted vulnerable populations, the sample population is composed of residents of the state of Mississippi. Mississippi's racially and economically diverse population, history of poor academic performance, use of federal funding for education, and teacher recruitment issues render it the optimal site to assess the views of the intended beneficiaries of federal reforms (Patrick, 2008). The demographic variables under study include race, income, education, political ideology, and residency. The assessment of these variables will also allow the research to add to the discussion on the linkage between public opinion and policy outcomes. An extensive body of literature notes the importance of the relationship between public opinion and policy (Hartley and Russett, 1992; Bartel, 1991; Page and Shapiro, 1983; Erikson, 1981). Successful policy reforms, particularly performance management and market reforms that require citizens to actively engage in the evaluation process require citizen support. If citizens exhibit a lack of support during the time point under study, the finding might offer insight on the limited success of recent education legislation.

Review of Literature

Performance approaches to education reform suggest that compliance accountability models have fostered an educational environment where some professionals are disconnected, unmotivated, and self-interested (Moe, 2003). Advocates of performance approaches propose to address these behaviors by adopting federal policies that provide parents with service provider options and impose sanctions on schools and teachers whose students fail to meet performance expectations (Gittell and McKenna, 1999; Elliot and MacLennan, 1994). At the crux of the legislation is the assumption that parents share this view. However, it is unclear if they agree. Budgetary evidence suggests that many of the citizens poised to benefit the most from publically induced finance sanctions neglected to exercise their right to do so. Less than 7 percent of the estimated \$1.8 billion reserved for transfers out of poorly performing school and supplemental services have been used by those attending academically vulnerable Title I schools (Kahlenberg, 2010). Other descriptive studies have shown that less than three percent of transfer-eligible students requested and followed through with a transfer out of underperforming schools. In Mississippi, only 4 of 3,450 identified transfer-eligible students requested and transferred to higher performing schools (Brown et al., 2004).

The dismal use of sanctioning provisions raises questions about performance legislation as well as the application of coproduction theory on which the success of such policies depend. Coproduction theory asserts that policymakers and citizens must act as equal

partners or co producers of policy reforms (Marschall, 2004; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). Education policies that fail to align with citizens' ideas and preferences demonstrate a lack of consideration for citizens' role as co-producers of policy outcomes. Citizens may then respond to such policies with inactivity. When this occurs performance provisions that aim to enhance educational outcomes by allowing citizens to sanction underperforming schools may be unlikely to receive public support and success.

Irvin & Stansbury (2004) highlight this occurrence by denoting the geographic, economical, and ideological distances between federal policymakers and targeted citizens. Federal policymakers view performance reforms as the solution to the problem of poor performance. However, citizens' intimate knowledge of the effects of poverty and other excluded environmental variables may lead them to frame the issue and solution in a different manner. When this occurs policy targeted groups such as parents, urban residents, minorities, the economically disadvantaged, and those with low levels of education may be less inclined to support reforms. They may feel they are likely to be victimized by policies that compromise teacher recruitment efforts by linking funding and job security and to student performance in districts where students have historically underperformed (Rusaw, 2007; Orr, 2003; Fox, 1999; Obiakor & Utley, 1995).

These citizens may be more open to applications of co-production theory that allow them to serve as active partners during policy development not just during evaluation. For example, research has shown that schools that form partnerships with parents, families, and community are more academically successful than those in communities where interaction is limited (Belfield & Levin, 2007; Barton, 2003; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). The partnerships have even been found to positively enhance the performance of students across different grade levels, races, and income categories, regardless of their parent's educational sophistication (Barton, 2003). These findings highlighted the importance of direct citizen participation and prompted internal organizational stakeholders, such as teachers and administrators to argue that reforms that focus solely on schools and educators leave out a vital element of success (National Education Association, 2008). Berliner (2005) asserts that reforms that fail to adequately address these elements risk being "reversed by families, negated by neighborhoods, and might well be subverted or minimized by what happens to children outside of schools." Survey research has also added validity to these claims.

Bushaw & Lopez (2010) found that a large percentage of Americans (76%) believe parents, not teachers, are more important in determining whether students learn in schools. A New Zealand focus group discussion revealed parents and teachers felt students should take personal responsibility for their academic achievement (Rubie-Davies, Peterson, Irving, and Dixon 2010; Muller, Katz, and Dance, 1999; Clifton & Bulcock, 1987). The finding coincides with Florida school teachers' frustration with high-stakes tests linked to teacher evaluations. The teachers expressed a sense of powerlessness because they were held accountable for student outcomes even though they had little control over whether students would utilize the skills and strategies they had been taught in the classroom. One educator asked "What about the accountability of parents and students?" (Jones and Egley 2004, 12). Weissberg (2010) echoes this sentiment by positing that intellectually mediocre and unmotivated students cause poor student outcomes. He further posits that policies that fail to capture this sentiment will continue to fail.

Though citizens may not support all of Weissberg's assertions, it is important to assess their views on school accountability and sanctions. Several current federal policies assume that citizens believe educators are primarily responsible for educational outcomes and should receive financial sanctions (Wong, 2008). However this assumption may not

accurately reflect the view of targeted citizens. For example, Cooper (2005) pointed out that low income African American guardians held negative perceptions of public school teachers and indicated these educators contribute to poor student outcomes. Yet unfavorable views of educators may not translate into support for funding sanctions for the institution because such actions would likely victimize students by advancing financial instability and limiting the ability to attract quality teachers (Rusaw, 2007; Orr, 2003; Fox, 1999; Obiakor & Utley, 1995). Similarly, economically disadvantaged and poorly educated citizens' exposure to impoverish and routinely underperforming schools may lead them to exhibit low levels of support for funding sanctions and teacher accountability due to their interactions with and awareness of the challenges teachers encounter.

A fourth and pertinent factor in school accountability that is often not adequately considered is geographical differences in views or support. Stephen (2007) noted that lawmakers designed recent performance reforms to accommodate diverse urban populations. Rural residents live in densely populated areas, limiting their access to competing education service providers. The lack of access may impact views and cause citizens to bond with the only school located within their district. Such a bond or partnership can positively impact impressions of educators and enhance outcomes (Berliner, 2005; Belfield and Levin, 2007; Barton, 2003; Henderson and Mapp, 2002). Additionally, rural residents' political ideologies may lead to very different characterizations of market reforms in education than urban residents. Given that America is largely rural, it is important to assess these views and determine if policies have aligned with their beliefs. If citizens' policy views and reforms do not align, it is unlikely that they will not use test results in a manner that compels schools to dismiss teachers deemed responsible for poor student outcomes. They may also neglect to support performance provisions that extract funds from academically weak public schools to support other programs. When this occurs legislators aim to utilize market approaches to education reform will further alienate the demographic groups they seek to engage and appease because the citizen may feel that the reform techniques are inadequate and do not reflect their preferences.

Given the implications of accountability views and funding sanctions assumptions, this research examines citizens' views on sanctions for poorly performing schools and outcome accountability. Survey data of five demographic variables are used to assess varying views of targeted groups. They include race, income, education, place of residence, and political ideology. The following discussion highlights the manner in which the data was collected and assessed.

Method

Participants

All data was collected in the state of Mississippi. Though researchers often criticize single state studies for their lack of generalizability, Mississippi's cultural, economic, and political environments make it a prime candidate for exploration. Policymakers designed school reforms to target academically struggling schools and disadvantaged populations (Patrick and French, 2011; Dee and Jacobs, 2011). Mississippi has consistently ranked among the lowest performing states on uniform standardized test. The state has one of the largest African American populations of all fifty states, a population targeted by accountability reforms (Rastogi, Johnson, Hoeffel, and Drewery, 2011). It also has problems attracting highly qualified teachers to critical needs districts (Gates, 2013). Citizens in the state have consistently ranked education as one of the most important policy issues facing the state (Shaffer, 2010). Also, assessing support levels among Mississippi residents will provide

insight on grassroots support among rural residents, a population that demands more critical examination.

Data on Mississippians' policy preferences was taken from the Mississippi Poll Public Opinion Survey. The Mississippi Poll systematically collects and stores attitudinal data. The data is collected by the Survey Research Unit of the Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State University. Pollsters used a computer-assisted telephone interviewing system to interview a random sample of 523 adult Mississippi residents from April 5-21, 2004. Though the research acknowledges the lapse in time between data collection and the current environment, the significance of the findings are not diminished. Citizens' views on responsibility for education outcomes among three of the most important stakeholders-teachers, parents, and students-has not been adequately assessed. Such an assessment is important if policy reforms are to adequately address the issue and appease citizens. Additionally given the expanded effort to financially sanction schools and teachers (Patrick, 2012) and actively engage citizens in the evaluation and sanctioning process it is important to determine if policymaker actions were symbolic or if they aligned with citizens' views and promoted the spirit of a coproduction model at the height of the reform movement.

Assessing citizens' attitudes at this time point is also important because it allows the research to capture policy views in an environment where school accountability and performance funding were salient issues. The 2004 presidential election year and George W. Bush's commitment to NCLB made it a central issue on the campaign trail. Political support for the legislation at the federal level remained present, as states were required to implement NCLB amidst their complaints about the challenges associates with funding, accountability shifts, and other concerns (Patrick, 2007). Also and most importantly to this research, Brown and others (2004) pointed out that during this timeframe less than two percent of transfer eligible students in the state of Mississippi were actually requesting and utilizing the provision. The lack of citizens' action raises concerns about the potential success of market type reforms in education. This assessment of who should be held most accountable for outcomes and performance funding sanctions views will allow for examination of whether citizens disagree with the underlying premise of federal legislation as well as Weisberg's proposal that students should be held most culpable. This has implication for the applicability of coproduction relationship between policymakers and targeted demographic groups.

The response rate was 48% with a sample error of about 4.4 percent. The results were weighted by demographic characteristics based on US Census data to ensure an adequate representation of all adults.

Materials and Procedure

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables for this study are perceptions of accountability and funding sanctions attitudes. The researcher measured perceptions of accountability by asking respondents "Who should be held most accountable for a student's academic performance-the teacher, parent, or student?" While the item measures differing accountability views, it is important to note its limitations. The question fails to differentiate students by age, thereby limiting the ability to determine whether citizens' accountability views vary by student age. The question also neglects to make distinctions between educators in public, private, or charter schools. The lack of distinction between sectors does not decrease the importance of the study of accountability views. Accountability views carry implications for actors in all three sectors; therefore, the question adds value to this study and the broader conversation of school accountability. For the purpose of this study, those identifying teachers as the most

accountable were coded with the number zero. All respondents indicating parents should be held most accountable were coded with the number one. Those selecting students as the most accountable were coded with the number two.

The researcher measured the second dependent variable, attitudes towards funding sanctions, by asking respondents, "Would you favor or oppose a policy that would take money away from poorly performing public schools, and give the money to parents of students attending that school so that they could seek other educational opportunities?" The question provides insight on the use of school transfer provisions, as well as voucher programs that are financed with public funds. Those who disagreed or opposed were coded with the number one. Those who agreed or favored the policy were coded with the number zero.

Independent Variables and Hypotheses

The study's independent variables include, race, income, education, residency, and political ideology. Race was measured by asking respondents whether they were white/Caucasian, black/African American, Hispanic, Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, or other. Due to low statistical power caused by a small amount of respondents in several racial categories, the variable race was recoded to include the categories of white and minority. The researcher measured income by asking, "Last year what was your total family income before taxes: below \$20,000, \$20-30,000, \$30-40,000, \$40-50,000, \$50-60,000, \$60,-70,000, \$70-80,000, \$80-90,000, \$90-100,000 or \$100,000 and above." The researcher measured education by asking, "What was the highest grade of school you completed: less than 12th grade, 12th grade, some college, college graduate, graduate work." The researcher measured residency by asking "Which of the following best describe the place where you live: rural area, urban subdivision or suburb, or urban area not a suburb?" Political ideology was gauged by asking whether respondents identified themselves as liberal, moderate, or conservative. All respondents who replied don't know or refuse to answer any question were excluded from the analysis.

In alignment with the literature discussion the research hypothesizes that racial minorities, economically disadvantaged, rural, and less educated respondents are unlikely to support the use of stringent accountability interpretations and mechanisms in education. It also posits that liberals are unlikely to support the use of stringent accountability interpretations and mechanisms in education. Liberals tend to be unsupportive of school funding provisions that result in decreased funding to underprivileged schools and threaten the ability of those schools to attract quality educators. Support for financial sanctions, in the form of voucher programs, have received strong opposition from liberal ideologues (Schneider and Coleman, 1996).

The first dependent variable, school funding sanction views, is a dichotomous variable. We used binary logistic regression to assess variations in the views of different racial, economic, education, geographic or residential, and ideological groups.

$$Y_1 = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6$$

Where,

Y_1 = School funding sanction views (0-support, 1-oppose)

X_1 = Race (0-Caucasian, 1-Minority)

X_2 = Rural Residents (1-Rural)

X_3 = Suburban Residents (1-Suburb)

X_4 = Income (Categories 1-4, 1-less than 20,000; 4-\$40,000+)

X_5 = Education (Categories 1-4, 1-high school dropouts; 4-college graduates)

Next we assessed variations in teacher accountability views of the previously stated demographic groups. The following equation is employed:

$$Y_2 = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6$$

Where,

Y_2 = Teacher Accountability Views (0-teacher, 1-parent/student)

X_1 = Race (0-Caucasian, 1-Minority)

X_2 = Rural Residents (1-Rural)

X_3 = Suburban Residents (1-Suburb)

X_4 = Income (Categories 1-4, 1-less than 20,000; 4-\$40,000+)

X_5 = Education (Categories 1-4, 1-high school dropouts; 4-college graduates)

Initially the dependent variable was coded as an ordinal variable with three categories and ordinal regression was applied. However segregating parents and students into separate groups failed to produce a meaningful statistically significant model. By collapsing parents and students into one unified group and utilizing binary logistic regression a significant model emerged. The analysis allows the research to assess whether citizens agree with federal reforms that seeks to hold bureaucrats or educators primarily outcomes for outcomes. It also assesses the Weissberg hypothesis but in a more limited manner. In order to better address this limitation additional analysis including a descriptive bivariate assessment of the relationship between each independent and dependent variables was performed.

A specification check of each equation was completed. The variance inflation factor and tolerance statistic revealed that multicollinearity was not a problem for the models.

Results

Table 1: Assessing School Funding Sanction Views

Independent Variables	B	Std. Error	Wald	VIF
Income	-.192	.114	2.863+	1.597
Education	.211	.131	2.603+	1.368
Minority	.423	.281	2.259	1.211
Liberal	.632	.334	3.588*	1.024
Suburb	.501	.289	3.006+	1.281
Rural	.383	.267	2.056	1.303
Constant	.189			
Nagelkerke R ²	.065			
Chi Square	17.613**			
Sample Size	523			

+p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01

Table 1 includes the assessment of the views on school funding sanctions. Its coefficient values for liberals, minorities, low income, and rural respondents reveal support for the research hypotheses that these individuals are less supportive of performance funding sanctions for schools than their counterparts in the general population. Notable among the regression estimates is the positive statistically significant coefficient for liberal ideologue. Liberals were less supportive of policies that would take money away from poorly performing schools and allow parents to seek other educational opportunities. The finding is consistent

with other research and is essential to performance reform efforts because ideological perspectives are shaped by a host of variables that might influence support of policy reforms. Economic stratification, childrearing or upbringing, experiencing discrimination, quality of education received, access to upward mobility, and numerous other factors shape ideological viewpoint and often promotes the adoption of liberal attitudes among targeted vulnerable groups that feel they have been granted limited access to the policy process and means of production in society.

Such a finding could prove to be problematic for modern reforms that seek to target groups that feel disenfranchised and are disadvantaged. Lower levels of support among these respondents may limit policy success thereby signaling the need for more meaningful uses of coproduction and other theoretical and practical models that incorporate the use of mechanisms that will allow citizens to actively engage in the policy development process. The absence of such mechanisms will further insure that reforms such as Race to Top's charter school expansion efforts, the NCLB transfer provision, and similar policies will encounter barriers to success among targeted groups in places like Mississippi that have historically performed poorly. This point is further highlighted by the assessment of views along economic lines.

The negative coefficient for the income variable indicates that respondents in higher income categories were more likely to support funding sanctions for schools those in lower income categories. The results offer support for the study's research hypothesis and previous findings. Similar to the plight of racial minorities, economically disadvantaged respondents may exhibit limited support for performance policies due to their intimate knowledge of the effects of poverty and other environmental variables as well as the fear that children of lesser means may be victimized by further depleting the funds of underfunded schools (Patrick, 2014; Rusaw, 2007; Orr, 2003; Fox, 1999; Obiakor & Utley, 1995).

The variables assessing the views of rural and minority respondents were nearing statistical significance and in the hypothesized direction thereby indicating that rural and minority respondents were more opposed to funding sanctions than their respective urban and Caucasian counterparts. The rural finding aligns with a Harvard study positing that parents in the states of Mississippi, Connecticut, Utah, Maryland, and Virginia exercised caution in their request to utilize the transfer provision. Less than 3 percent of transfer eligible student in these states requested and followed through with a transfer under NCLB (Brown et al, 2005). Though lack of options may partially explain the dismal transfer numbers in some districts it may not be the only variable accounting for the underutilization of the transfer provision. This study's finding of lower levels of support among rural residents of Mississippi may also be a determining factor.

It is also important to note the lack of support for funding sanctions among suburban respondents. Though not included in the hypothesis testing, these respondents were more opposed to funding sanctions than both rural and urban and respondents. While this is an important finding, the coding of the variable should be noted. The state of Mississippi is largely a rural state. For the purpose of this study rural was classified as those living on a farm or ranch. Those who lived in a town or community of 10,000 or less were classified as suburban. Given the rural nature of the state, it might be argued that although the suburban respondents are a distinct group, they may exhibit some rural traits. Additional analysis was performed combining both groups. The direction of the relationship did not change. However, the variable was no longer statistically significant.

Unlike the previously discussed variables, the relationship between education and school sanctioning views was not in the hypothesis direction. Individuals with higher levels of education were more opposed to funding sanctions those with less education.

Approximately 65 percent of college graduates were opposed to funding sanctions compared to 64 percent of those with some college education and 61 percent of those who did not complete high school (see Table 4). The margin of difference in opinion varied slightly for the entire sample. However a more pronounced distinction was found in the views of racial minorities, one of the intended target groups of education performance reform legislation.

Table 2: Assessing School Funding Sanction Views for Minorities

Independent Variables	B	Std. Error	Wald	VIF
Income	-.191	.256	.557	1.444
Education	.584	.302	3.732*	1.384
Liberal	.556	.602	.853	1.012
Suburb	1.736	.630	7.600**	1.225
Rural	1.381	.602	5.265*	1.274
Constant	-.703			
Nagelkerke R ²	.208			
Chi Square	16.987**			
Sample Size	147			

+p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01

Given racial minorities identification as one of the primary targets of performance reform legislation, additional analysis was performed on their school sanctioning views. The results of Table 2 indicate that education and residency significantly impacted respondents' views. Highly educated minorities were more likely to oppose funding sanctions than those with less education. The finding aligns with research positing highly educated individuals' access to resources and knowledge allows them to better assess both the potential benefits and harm that performance policies may have on the quality of education their child receives (Schneider et al, 1998). They are also more likely to be highly engaged in the education process and better equipped to navigate the choice system than those with less education (Apple, 2004; Ball, Bowe, and Gewirtz, 1994). Their intimate knowledge of the challenges their school system encounters might add understanding to their opposition to funding sanctions. Additionally highly educated minorities may be granted more access to high performing schools due to neighborhood options than those with less education. The access to better schools may impact their level of support for funding sanctions that offer citizens options and negatively impact their neighborhood schools.

Similar to the findings of Table 1, rural and suburban respondents were more opposed to funding sanctions than urban respondents. The finding supports the research hypothesis. Rural minorities are less likely to have access to options among competing entities than their urban counterparts. Limited or lack of options may cause respondents to exhibit more loyalty to their community schools.

The assessment of outcome teacher accountability views reveals that conservatives place more responsibility on the parent and student for education outcomes. While suburb/rural respondents placed more responsibility on educators. More specifically, approximately 50 percent of conservatives believe that parents are largely responsible for student academic performance. Conservative support for parent accountability was followed by 34% of respondents placing responsibility with the individual student. Only 16% of conservative ideologues placed primary responsibility with public educators (see table 5). The finding is consistent with conservative ideals of limited government interference and more

personal responsibility. Liberals, who tend to subscribe to the belief that the government has a responsibility to actively engage in the process and protect the rights of the less fortunate place more responsibility for student performance on public educators. The finding supports the research hypothesis.

Table 3: Assessing School Accountability Views (Teacher vs. Parent/Student)

Independent Variables	B	Std. Error	Wald	VIFs
Income	.117	.146	.650	1.803
Education	.170	.173	.967	1.541
Minority	-.144	.322	.200	1.223
Conservative	.753	.294	6.575+	1.026
Suburb	-.594	.354	2.815+	1.297
Rural	-.363	.354	1.052	1.307
Constant	.845			
Nagelkerke R ²	.074			
Chi Square	16.558**			
Sample Size	523			

+p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01

Suburban and rural residents were more likely to place more responsibility for education outcomes on educators than their urban counterparts. About 23 percent of rural respondents, 29 percent of suburban respondents, and only 14 percent of urban respondents believed that educators or teachers should be held most accountable for outcomes. Each group placed more responsibility on the parents and students. Forty one percent of rural respondents placed the most responsibility on parents. This was followed by 35 percent of suburban respondents and 47 percent of urban respondents concurring. The finding supports the research hypothesis.

Although not statistically significant, respondents of greater financial means and higher levels of education place more responsibility on parents and students than their respective cohorts. The bivariate cross tabulation analysis of Table 5 revealed that a meager 10 percent of college graduates and notable 30 percent of those who did not graduate high school believed teachers should be held most accountable for education outcomes. Similarly only 11 percent of those with the highest level of income believed that teachers should be held most accountable for education outcomes compared to 22 and 29 percent of the lowest income groups. Respondents of the highest income and education groups were much more likely to assign greater responsibility to the student than the teacher, with the percentage of respondents placing responsibility on the student more than tripling the number of each group who placed primary responsibility on the teacher. Differences in teacher/student accountability views are less drastic for those in the lowest income and education levels. They are more likely to assign equal responsibility to students and teachers. Approximately 22 percent of those of the lowest income bracket place responsibility with the teacher. Twenty nine percent of the same group place more responsibility on the student.

Minorities were slightly more likely to subscribe to the belief that teachers should be held more accountable for student performance. Approximately one quarter of minority respondents favor teacher accountability. Less than 20 percent of white respondents share a similar viewpoint. The finding supports the research hypothesis.

Table 4: Attitudes on School Funding Sanctions for Poor Performance

Variables	Favor	Oppose	Total
<i>Education</i>			
H.S. Dropouts	39%	61%	100%
H.S. Graduate	31%	69%	100%
Some College	36%	64%	100%
College Graduate	35%	65%	100%
<i>Ideology</i>			
Liberal	24%	76%	100%
Moderate	31%	69%	100%
Conservative	38%	62%	100%
<i>Race</i>			
White	37%	63%	100%
Black	26%	74%	100%
<i>Income</i>			
>\$20,000	28%	72%	100%
\$20-30,000	28%	72%	100%
\$30-40,000	42%	58%	100%
Over \$40,000	39%	61%	100%

Table 5: Accountability Attitudes (Teacher, Parents, or Students)

Variables	Teacher	Parents	Student	Total
<i>Education</i>				
H.S. Dropouts	30%	32%	38%	100%
H.S. Graduate	25%	42%	33%	100%
Some College	15%	44%	41%	100%
College Graduate	10%	51%	39%	100%
<i>Ideology</i>				
Liberal	29%	35%	36%	100%
Moderate	20%	36%	44%	100%
Conservative	16%	50%	34%	100%
<i>Race</i>				
White	19%	42%	39%	100%
Black	25%	43%	32%	100%
<i>Income</i>				
>\$20,000	22%	49%	29%	100%
\$20-30,000	29%	32%	39%	100%
\$30-40,000	22%	49%	29%	100%
Over \$40,000	11%	50%	39%	100%
<i>Location</i>				
Rural	23%	41%	36%	100%
Town (less 10,000)	29%	35%	36%	100%
City	14%	47%	39%	100%

Discussion

Several notable findings are revealed in the assessment citizens' accountability views. First, the highly educated and high income earners were less likely to believe that teachers

should be held most accountable for education outcomes. Highly educated individuals may possess the intellectual ability and financial means to assist students with schoolwork. This might reduce the amount of stress they place on the public school teachers. Also, well-educated respondents information and knowledge of the inner workings of the system might influence their position on teacher and school accountability. Buckley & Schneider (2003) noted unlike poorly educated parents, parents with college degrees seek out information to help make decisions about their child's school system. The pursuit of information can increase awareness of the numerous studies highlighting teachers' lack of autonomy in the classroom, control over educational inputs, and inability to determine or regulate outcome (Horner, 2001; Leonard, Beauvais, and Scholl, 2003; Rosenholtz, 1985). Likewise, other studies have noted that parents are vital to a student's academic success. Parents' active engagement, regardless of their race, income, or educational background is empirically linked to student performance, especially for minority students (Belfield & Levin, 2007; Cavanaugh, Schiller and Riegle-Crumb, 2006; Reynolds & Clement, 2005; Barton, 2003). Awareness of these findings and other challenges educators encounter may cause college educated citizens to refrain from placing primary responsibility on public educators.

Slightly more than 1/3 of highly educated participants place primary responsibility with the student, thereby showing agreement or support with the Weissberg hypothesis. The transfer of responsibility to this group of stakeholders may connect with ideas about personal responsibility and work ethic. Rubie-Davies, Peterson, Irving, Widdowson, and Dixon (2010) offers support through their assessment of parents and students achievement expectations. They found that students and parents' expectations for teachers were rational, with both groups expecting educators to be fair and helpful. Parents were expected to motivate students. Students were expected to actively engage in the process, set goals, and commit themselves to academic excellence. These findings may explain the sizable number of college graduates who placed primary responsibility with the individual student.

Minorities and whites who did not graduate high school differ in the views of student and parent accountability. Minorities place more responsibility on the parent while a larger percentage of Caucasian respondents believe students should be held most accountability. The higher levels of support for student accountability found among white high school dropouts may be rooted in traditional ideas about education accountability. Historically teachers have been trusted to operate under a system of personal and professional ethics that were built on the assumptions that they were public servants who sought to do good work (Robicheau, 2008). Similarly, few policies existed to mandate parent involvement and accountability because society believed parents were motivated to promote the best interest of their child by ensuring they had school necessities, completed homework assignments, and attended school regularly. Schools reserved accountability policy mechanisms for students through mandatory examinations, graduation requirements, and other elements that gauged their knowledge and held them accountable for learning concepts taught in the classroom (Patrick, 2007).

Over time, federal policies such as *No Child Left Behind* have amended teacher accountability models and increased the amount of responsibility they hold for student outcomes. These policies may not align with the position of many less educated whites who support traditional student accountability models. As Frank (2004) notes in *What's the matter with Kansas*, poorly educated low income white Southerners were very conservative in their political and social ideologies. Their tendency to place a great importance on personal responsibility aligns with placing responsibility on the individual student.

The assessment of school funding sanction views produced similar results. The views of several policy targeted groups do not align with the performance provision that have been

legislated. Racial minorities and low income respondents were less support school funding sanctions than their peers. The lack of support among these groups may help explain the limited success of the NCLB transfer provision. It also highlights concerns that policymakers efforts to provide the most vulnerable members of society with tools to potentially impact education outcomes may not align with citizens' desires or views. Kelly (2005) raised concerns about this important issue by asking whether or not we are creating market and performance reforms that align with the desires of the citizenry. Clearly this analysis of citizens' views heighten the need to better address this issue and seek out more meaningful ways to include citizens in the policy process.

Conclusion

Coproduction theory posits that successful policy requires that policymakers and citizens act as partners. In the field of education reforms, this partnership operated under the premise that federal policymakers would give citizens performance or market reforms that addressed their needs and citizens would respond by utilizing newly created provisions to sanction poorly performing schools. However, this study reveals that many citizens do not believe blame for poor educational outcomes lies with teachers or school. The results indicate that the majority of respondents across demographic groups do not identify teachers as the individuals who are most accountable for educational outcomes. Their lack of support is problematic for policies that rely on citizens to serve as guardians of the newly created reforms and push to have teachers in subjects where students fail to meet performance expectations removed from the classroom.

A sizable percentage of respondents also failed to support financial sanctions for underperforming schools. Their lack of support raises problems for federal reforms that allow parents to sanction schools by sending their child to a competing school in the same district. An overall lack of support from the community may substantially decrease the probability of reform success. This may offer understanding to the dismal use of the NCLB transfer provision that allowed students to transfer out of underperforming schools. It also has implications for Race to the Top's accountability model and charter school expansion efforts.

If policymakers aim to better engage citizens and provide them with tools to enhance service quality, efforts must be made to provide vulnerable citizens with a role in policymaking and not just evaluation. Utilizing the principal agent theory and allowing citizens to sanction bureaucrats after policies have been implemented may provide the ability to significantly change the system. However, such efforts could encounter roadblocks due to low levels of support among targeted citizen groups. Future reforms might benefit from a grassroots approach that allows citizens to determine which market or performance reforms work best in their environments.

Barbara Patrick is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at Eastern Michigan University. She received her Ph.D. in public policy and administration from Mississippi State University. Her articles on educational policy, performance management reforms, and teacher accountability have appeared in *Public Administration Quarterly*, *Politics and Policy*, *Public Integrity*, and *Public Performance and Management Review*.

Aaron Rollins is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Urban and Public Affairs at the University of Louisville. He received his Ph.D. in Public Policy and Public Administration from Mississippi State University. His research focuses on issues pertaining to public sector services, urban policy, social equity, organizational effectiveness, education policy, and the

politics of race. His research has appeared in: *Public Administration Quarterly*, *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership, & Governance*, and *Child and Family Social Work*.

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