

The Slippery Slope: An Exploratory Study of the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program

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Why Indiana?

UCLA



Indiana's Choice Scholarship Program is the largest voucher program in terms of statewide income-based eligibility (50 percent of families with children).

Indiana's Choice Scholarship Program is also the nation's largest voucher program in terms of participation (35,458 enrollees in 2016–17).

Research Questions

1. What are the sources and types of information that parents access on the ICSP and how do they use, make sense of, and perceive the quality of that information?
2. What are the early effects of the ICSP on public education, equity, and civil rights?

Literature on Information

- **Limited access to quality information, especially for people of color** (Joseph et al., 2017; Mavrogordato & Stein, 2016; Notre Dame Task Force, 2009; Orfield & Frankenberg, 2013; Sattin-Bajaj, 2014)
- **Reliance on social networks** (Fleming et al., 2015; Mavrogordato & Stein, 2016)
- Parents are not able to order and **rank school preferences in a rational/systematic** way (Angus, 2015; Brathwaite, 2017; Epple et al., 2017)

Deweyan Framework of Interests

- “Parents have multiple, competing interests in schools that only **imperfectly coalesce into particular choices**” (Wilson, 2016, pp. 160–161)
 - Academics
 - Tuition price
 - Distance of the school from a family’s home
 - The changing identity of the child

Data Sources- Interviews and Observations

Name	Background	Children Receiving Vouchers	Ethnicity	Gender	Voucher Amount
Lucy	Voucher Parent	8	White	Female	50%
Jane	Voucher Parent	2	Hispanic	Female	90%
Allie	Voucher Parent	1	African-American	Female	50%
Rudy	Indiana Civil Society Organization	N/A	White	Male	N/A

**Choice Scholarship Program Income Limits by Household Size
2017-2018 School Year**

	69% of Reduced Lunch Eligibility	100% of Reduced Lunch Eligibility	150% of Reduced Lunch Eligibility	200% of Reduced Lunch Eligibility
Persons in Household	Annual household income limit for a "90%" Choice Scholarship*	Annual household income limit for a "90%" Choice Scholarship**	Annual household income limit for a "50%" Choice Scholarship***	Annual household income limit for a "50%" Choice Scholarship****
1	\$15,316	\$22,311	\$33,467	\$44,622
2	\$20,625	\$30,044	\$45,066	\$60,088
3	\$25,933	\$37,777	\$56,666	\$75,554
4	\$31,242	\$45,510	\$68,265	\$91,020
5	\$36,551	\$53,243	\$79,865	\$106,486
6	\$41,859	\$60,976	\$91,464	\$121,952
7	\$47,168	\$68,709	\$103,064	\$137,418
8	\$52,476	\$76,442	\$114,663	\$152,884

Data Sources- Document Analysis



Indiana
State
Teachers
Association



Findings

Findings

- Imperfect information
- Negative perception of public schooling
- Questions surrounding equity and civil rights

Imperfect Information

- Department of Education information was perceived by parents in this study as **confusing to navigate and understand**
- Parents in the study relied most on private sources of information including **friends/family, school employees, and local NGOs, social media**
- Information (regardless of the source) was used by parents for **all stages of ICSP engagement** including initial discovery, determining eligibility, and initial and continued enrollment
- **Advertisements** were another form of information parents used or at least noticed

Findings

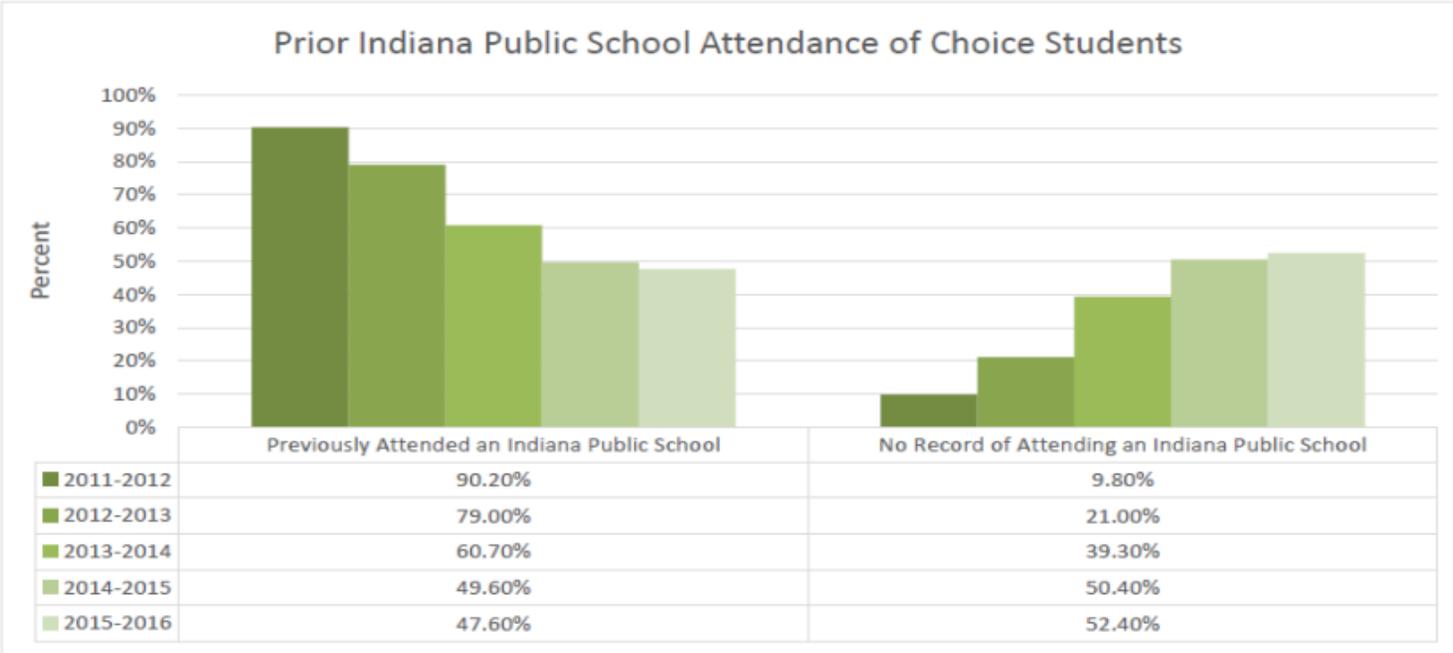
- Imperfect information
- **Negative perception of public schooling**
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Negative perception of public schooling

- **School grades created a negative perception of public schools** amongst parents in the study
- Different **interpretation of grades**
- **Automatically eliminated** a number of schools for parents without further investigation

Name	Federal Grade 2018	State Grade 2018	State Grade 2017
Adams Central Elementary School - Adams Central Community Schools	C	C	B
Adams Central High School - Adams Central Community Schools	B	A	A
Adams Central Middle School - Adams Central Community Schools	B	A	B
Adams Elementary School - Fort Wayne Community Schools	C	B	D
Adams High School - South Bend Community School Corp	B	A	A

Negative perception of public schooling



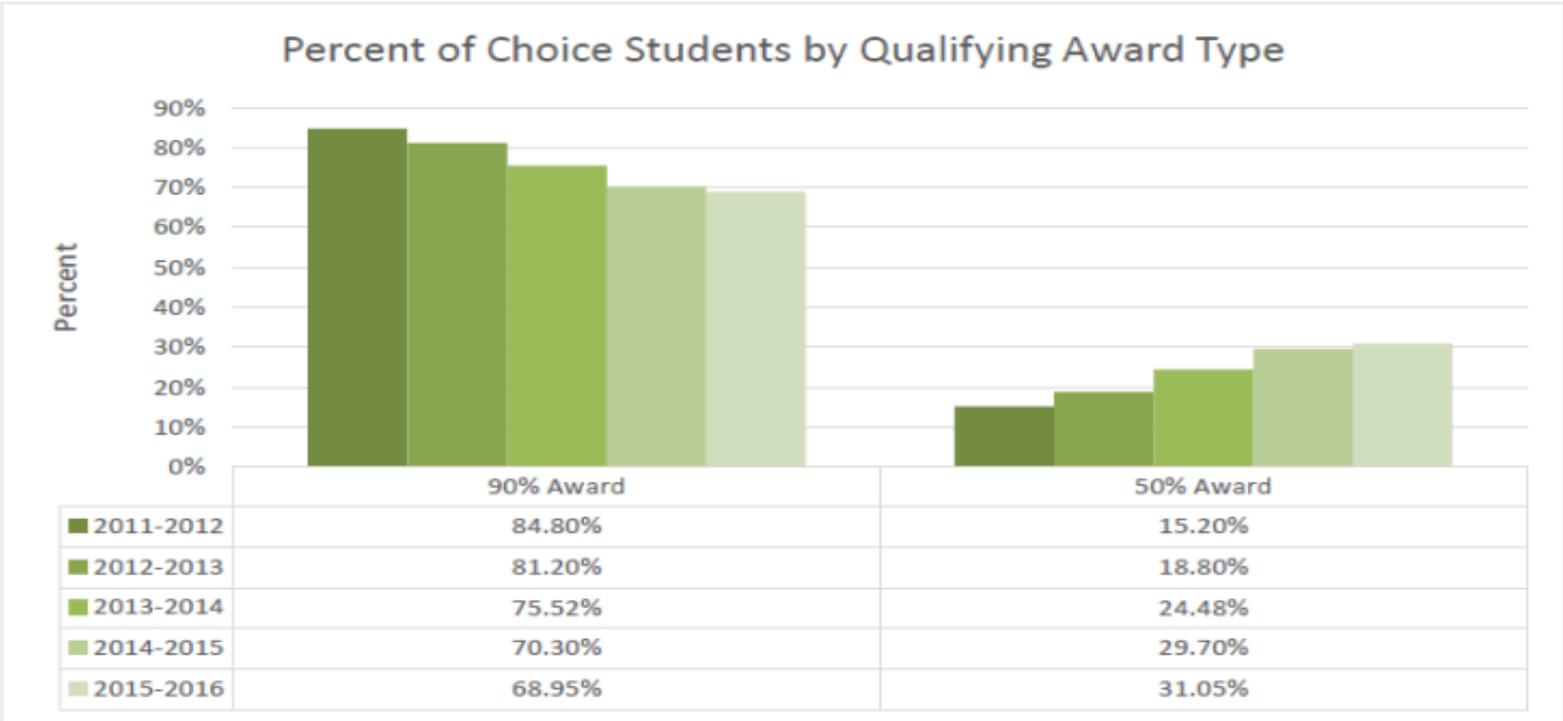
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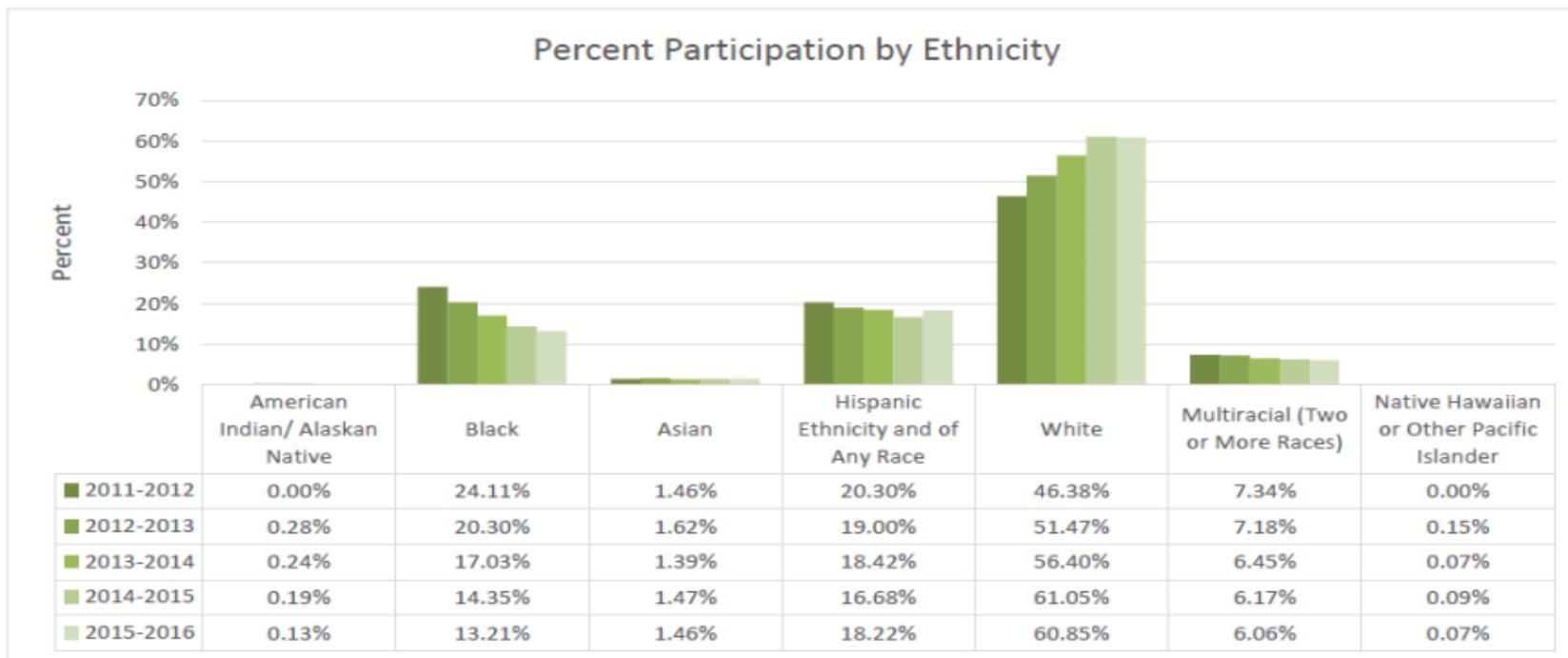
Questions Surrounding Equity and Civil Rights

- One parent discussed **competitive admissions** practices by participating ICSP schools limiting their choices
- Vouchers provided by the ICSP do not always provide families with enough money to cover the **full price of schooling** (tuition, transportation, materials)
- Decreased usage by **ethnicity** and **income**

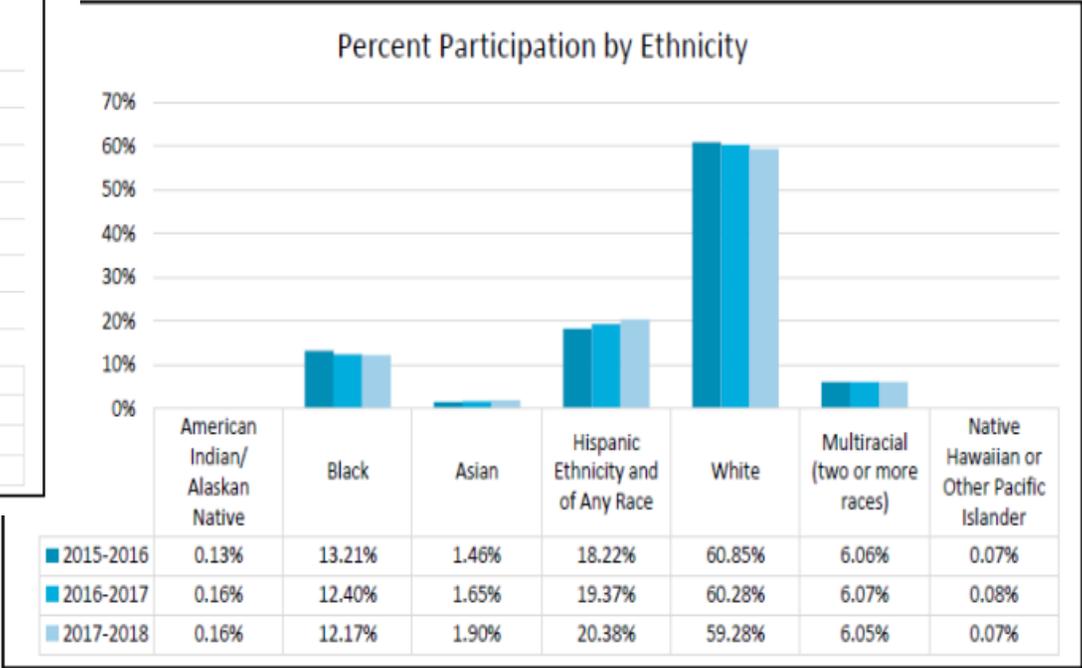
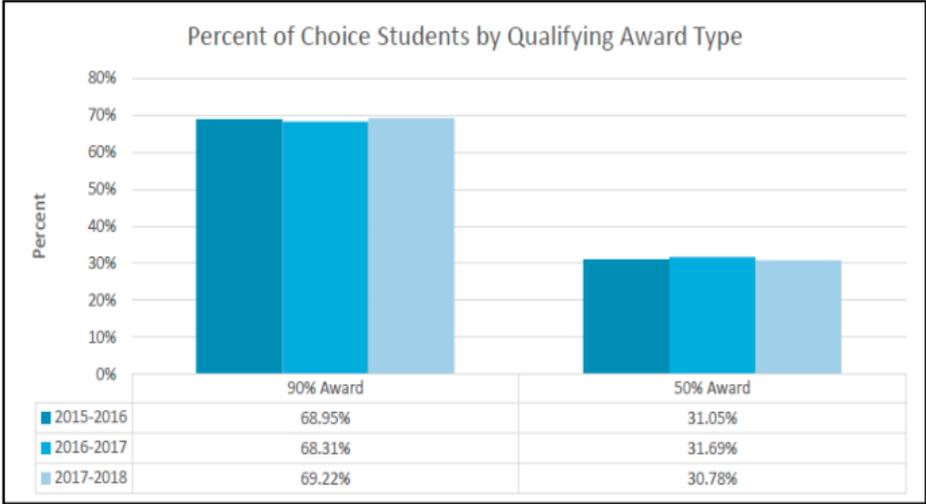
Questions Surrounding Equity and Civil Rights



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Limitations

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- Small sample size. Should be taken as **exploratory in nature** rather than finding specific causal or generalizable claims
- Laws/Rules change quickly
- Questions for further study
 - What is 'perfect information' and how can parents access it?
 - Need to interview non-voucher receiving parents
 - Role of advertisements
 - Usage trends (ethnicity, income, public school)
 - School grading systems

Thank You

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Imperfect Information

“And **because we're not poor**, not close to it, why would we be thinking we qualified for anything? ...And [the school's finance officer] was like, "Well because, one of your children is now on a service plan. So you're not looking at this column, you're looking at this column." Well, this is like rocket science to the common parent...**because if the funding is there the public needs to know** so they can do the best possible thing for the child.

-Lucy, Voucher Parent