

SCHOOL CHOICE AND FLORIDA'S MCKAY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:
AN ANALYSIS OF PARENTAL SATISFACTION

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
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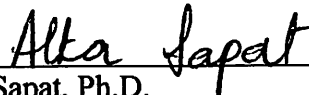
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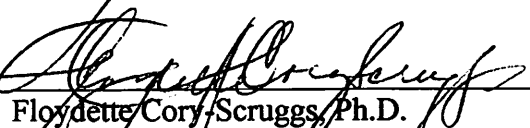
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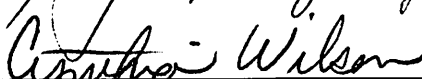
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This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the candidate's dissertation advisor, Dr. Alka Sapat, School of Public Administration, and has been approved by the members of his supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the College for Design and Social Inquiry and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.


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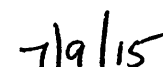

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this dissertation was to add to the literature on the school choice debate and educational voucher programs through an analysis of Florida's John M. McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities. This dissertation looked at the major aspects of school choice theory, parental satisfaction, and reasoning for choice. A theoretical framework for analyzing school choice programs was put forth in this dissertation through an analysis of the over-arching dynamical elements that have shaped the administrative and political arguments for and against these programs. A comprehensive review of the literature on school choice comprised a substantial part of this study due to the need for citizens to better comprehend the origins and evolution of school choice planning and programming.

Florida's John M. McKay Scholarship Program is a publicly funded voucher program that allows parents of students with diagnosed disabilities to participate by enrolling in either a private, public, or not-for-profit option. A central premise of the

program is to encourage market forces in order to promote a healthy competition among schools that provide services geared toward a relatively vulnerable and disadvantaged population. Since the program's inception, there has been limited academic work on the reasoning behind parental choice and overall satisfaction of parents who have opted to participate in the program.

Through the use of a parental satisfaction survey, this exploratory study served as a inquiry into overall satisfaction and key components that comprise the John M. McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities. This dissertation examined and analyzed satisfaction levels of parents who have utilized the McKay Scholarship in Miami-Dade County, Florida. The findings are important for parents and policymakers to understand the influencers of choice and citizen/parental satisfaction as well as religiosity in school choice and the market-based presumptions for the provision of education services. The statistical findings of the survey show significance in the areas of services offered, parental involvement, child's length of attendance, child's age, and importance placed on religion.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the three women in my life who have taught me patience, kindness, respect, and appreciation. During the writing of this dissertation my grandmother, Harriet Wilma Ohrt, passed away after a precipitous downfall in her health. I wholeheartedly believe that without her tenacity and friendship I would not be where I am today. She taught me from a young age never to give up and to make do with what you've got. Secondly, my mother, a 40-year career educator helped instill the importance of education and the doors that it would open for me. Without her love I do not know where I would be. Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to my younger sister, Katie, who has been on the McKay Scholarship for more than a decade. She is the true inspiration for this study.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

School choice initiatives, such as educational vouchers, that serve to give parents choice in regards to where and how their children are educated have been initiated in school districts around the nation. The purpose of this dissertation was to add to the literature on the school choice debate and educational voucher programs through an analysis of Florida's John M. McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities (herein referred to as the McKay Scholarship Program). The broader impact of this examination makes a contribution to the literature and debate about how effective these choice programs are perceived in regard to providing education services and to delivering to the public what is considered to be a "quasi-public" good.

A public good is considered to be a good that is both non-excludable and non-rival (Kahneman & Knetch, 1992; Meerman, 1980; Olsaretti, 2013; Rosen & Gayer, 2009). Surely, no child can be excluded from receiving a basic education, yet the American education system, by means of voucher mechanics, has introduced and promoted an arrangement that is ripe for rivalry through competition and market methods. The profit incentive in education (Mitch, 2008) is clearly visible in school choice programs as there is not only a competition for available resources but choice mechanics have bred much contention among those who hold a stake in the education "marketplace." Further, the theoretical contribution of this dissertation was to inform school choice paradigms, constructs, and the theoretical perceptions for certain institutional (educational) arrangements that provide these services.

This comprehensive and exploratory analysis will assist policymakers to better understand the intricacies of the market-based educational voucher framework for school choice. The findings will increase the amount and substance of relevant information so parents of McKay Scholarship Program recipients, policymakers, and educational leaders can make better informed decisions in terms of financing, structure, and educational outcomes for an extremely vulnerable population. Subsequently, the conclusions derived from this examination will allow policymakers and parents to make more informed decisions about the current educational choice system for students with disabilities in both the state of Florida and across the United States.

Allowing parental choice through educational voucher programming is an idea that has been—and is—ubiquitously growing in popularity throughout the United States (Halloway, 2001) and abroad. The goal of voucher programs and school choice in general “is designed to shift power to parents, enabling them to shop around for their child’s school” (Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2000, p. 87). School choice falls under the larger public choice framework whereas it attempts to increase efficiency and effectiveness of programs by allowing participants to exercise explicit choice when making a decision on where and how these public services—in this case educational services—are provided.

Halloway (2001) maintained that, in theory, school choice should attempt to accomplish two major functions. The first function should serve as a conduit to establishing equitable educational arrangements. The second function should attempt to create and promote “a competitive market that forces schools to improve their offerings and become more attractive to educational consumers” (Halloway, 1991, p. 81). These

two factors, coupled with the quasi-public nature of educational provision (Glennester, 1991), seek to improve the American educational system while encouraging competition within the education “market.” Competition, in this light, is thought to improve quality while keeping the cost of service provision down, thus controlling for cost and demand (Barrow & Rouse, 2000; Butzin, 2007).

A central and significant component of parents’ involvement in their children’s education is the choice they make with regard to the school that their children attend (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Goldring & Phillips, 2008). With this in mind, the past several decades of school reforms have led to parents being more “able to exercise explicit school choice because of specific education policies” (Goldring & Phillips, 2008, p. 209). These education policies have been implemented all over the country and most districts now have magnet and charter school options in addition to programs for open enrollment and voucher utilization. Goldring and Phillips (2008) argued that the literature is relatively limited on public school choice (i.e., those parents who choose to stay in the public school system by either keeping their child at their designated school or opting to place their child in another public school in their respective school district), primarily because the majority of these parents are not considered to be in the “marketplace” for the provision of education servicing. The literature on school choice also points to five considerations that school choice participants—whether choosing public or private options—use when deciding on a school to choose. These include (a) demographic components and/or make-up of the school, (b) degree of satisfaction with previous school attended, (c) parent involvement, (d) priorities of education in regard to

the chooser's preferences, and (e) the existence of social networks (Goldring & Phillips, 2008).

This dissertation focused on satisfaction levels, parental involvement, factors influencing choice, and program perceptions of parents whose child with disabilities is enrolled in schools in the private, not-for-profit, and public sectors under the John M. McKay Scholarship Program. The John M. McKay scholarship was chosen for analysis in the study due to the amount of funding allocated to this program and because it has become a staple in education programming in Florida. These competing sectors vie for a finite amount of funding through state subsidies for education services geared toward this specific population. School financing and structure is at the core of school choice initiatives, which ultimately strive to create a public market that induces and encourages citizens—parents in this examination—to source information on overall school quality.

Concentrating on issues relating to school choice and educational vouchers for children with a broad array of disabilities, a case study approach was utilized to understand these arguments. Through the utilization of a citizen/parental-satisfaction survey (Charbonneau & Van Ryzin, 2012; Livingstone, 2008), this study sought to gain greater insight into how parents feel about the program while trying to understand the main elements and reasoning for why parents have chosen certain schools over others. Additional aspects of the McKay Scholarship program were explored, which include reasoning for choice and analysis of demographic elements.

Founded in 1999 by the Florida Legislature, the McKay Scholarship Program (Fla. Stat. §1002.39) allocates state funds to qualifying public, not-for-profit, and private institutions to provide services geared towards students with a broad array of cognitive,

physical, learning, and behavioral disabilities (Weidner & Herrington, 2006). This school choice program for students with documented disabilities affords parents a choice when deciding on the public, private, and/or not-for-profit nature of their child's education. This set up is similar to any other educational voucher system although it pertains to those students classified as having a disability in addition to other criterion. According to the Florida Department of Education (FDOE, 2013a), to qualify for the scholarship students must be enrolled in a Florida public school for at least one academic school year and meet minimum standards and qualifications. Additionally, parents and/or guardians must complete an application and fulfill all procedural requirements (FDOE, 2013a; Reich, 2000).

The following section addresses the primary questions and theoretical reasoning for this study. The main theories applicable to public and administration and policy are then addressed to better understand the findings and conclusions of this dissertation. Through the scope of school choice mechanics and the existing institutional arrangements in place several questions were addressed. This examination of Florida's John M. McKay Scholarship Program seeks to inquire into matters pertaining to this particular educational voucher arrangement, it also contributed to the larger and broader school choice debate.

Main Questions Addressed

Voucher programs attempt to give parents and/or guardians a choice when it comes to choosing the school (i.e., private, not-for-profit, or public) that they prefer their children attend (Ladd, 2002). Theoretically, if satisfaction levels among parents and/or guardians of McKay recipients in public schools are found to be comparable or higher

than that of private and/or non-profit state-certified schools, this potentially could have serious and important implications for current and future voucher arrangements in relation to policy formulation and the implementation of education policies as well as the broader arrangement of administrative outlays. Contrarily, if satisfaction levels of parents that have used the McKay funds to go to private or not-for-profit school are high, then this would justify the program's main objectives and would imply that the program has been a success in regard to parental satisfaction. In order to further comprehend the major premises and contentions behind the McKay Scholarship Program is it necessary to properly identify what an educational voucher is. According to West (1997),

An education voucher system exists when governments make payments to families that enable their children to enter public or private schools of their choice. The tax-funded payments can be made directly to parents or indirectly to the selected schools; their purpose is to increase parental choice, to promote school competition, and to allow low-income families access to private schools. Some opponents predict that vouchers will destroy the public system, aggravate poverty, and foster segregation. Others fear that voucher receiving independent schools will be regulated out of recognition (p. 83).

Florida's McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities is an example of a school choice voucher program that allows parents of students with diagnosed disabilities to choose the private, not-for-profit, or public institution that is certified to accept McKay Scholarship funding and provide services for recipients who participate in the program. According to the McKay Scholarship Program FAQs webpage on the Florida Department of Education Office of Independent Education and

Parental Choice Website (FDOE, 2013b), the McKay Scholarship Program seeks to provide:

[S]cholarships for eligible students with disabilities to attend an eligible public or private school of their choice. Students with disabilities include K-12 students who are documented as having an intellectual disability; a speech or language impairment; a hearing impairment, including deafness; a visual impairment, including blindness; a dual sensory impairment; an emotional or behavioral disability; a specific learning disability, including, but not limited to, dyslexia, dyscalculia, or developmental aphasia; a traumatic brain injury; a developmental delay; or autism spectrum disorder.

It is essential and vital to understand and compare the perceptions and degrees of satisfaction of those parents and/or guardians who have chosen to place their child with a disability in a private or not-for-profit school as well as those parents and/or guardians who have opted to stay in the public school system, through analysis and examination of Florida's McKay Scholarship program; this is where the gap in the literature exists. This dissertation attempted to address this gap in the literature regarding educational vouchers to the population of students with disabilities while gaining valuable knowledge of parental perception, reasoning for choice, and demographic dynamics of the program. Through an inquiry and examination of perceptions and satisfaction levels of parents and/or guardians using the McKay Scholarship it was possible to determine how parents felt about the voucher—choice—program. Further, this exploration allowed for me to gauge satisfaction and perceptions of those parents who have enrolled their child under the McKay Scholarship Program, and whose child has been placed in either a private,

not-for-profit, or public school that provides particular services geared toward that child's disability. Since a major aspect of school choice programs is to provide a high-quality service, it is essential to understand satisfaction levels of parents and/or guardians of participants in these educational choice programs to better ascertain whether school choice initiatives meet or exceed general perceptions, expectations, and degrees of satisfaction for the creation and implementation of these programs (i.e., the McKay Scholarship Program).

The McKay Scholarship Program was first implemented in the 2000-2001 school year and "the number of students using a [McKay] scholarship has increased from 970 [in 2000-2001] to 26,611" in the 2012-2013 school year (FDOE, 2013a). There are approximately 5,800 students participating in the private or not-for-profit McKay Scholarship option in Miami-Dade County. Based on the 2012-13 Survey 2 Choice Report, there are 3,214 students state-wide and 1,035 in the Miami-Dade County public school system who are currently participating in the McKay public school option (FDOE, Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice, personal communication, March 1, 2013 and September 25, 2013). Therefore, the remainder of students are attending private or not-for-profit, McKay Scholarship-certified institutions. According to the Florida School Choice McKay Report (FDOE, 2011) on the McKay Scholarship Program, the Miami-Dade County school district was the largest recipient of McKay funding (21.62%), Broward County was the second largest recipient (11.65%), followed by Brevard (4.45%) and Hillsborough Counties (4.44%).

An analysis of funding for the McKay Scholarship Program was a necessary precursor for understanding the policy implications that could arise from the findings of

this study particularly because the program is funded through the use of state funds allocated for educational purposes. Further, socio-economic and socio-cultural demographics and severity of disability classifications (i.e., matrices constructed and implemented by the Florida Department of Education) are critical to understanding the entire systemic picture of the McKay Scholarship Program as an example of the broader school choice paradigms.

According to the September 2013 McKay Scholarship Program Fact Sheet provided by the FDOE's (FDOE 2013a) Department of School Choice, \$168.9 million dollars was paid out to scholarship participants as of the 2012-2013 school year (p. 1). During the 2008-2009 academic school year, approximately \$133.9 million was allocated for McKay Scholarship recipients. Over a period of five academic school years average funding for the program has increased by 26.1%. The state-calculated scholarship amount for students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) on file was between \$4,395 to \$19,105 depending on the matrix and severity of the participating child's disability. The average scholarship (voucher) amount was estimated by the FDOE to be \$7,019. As of the 2012-2013 academic school year, "26,611 students from 1,163 private schools participated in the program" (FDOE, 2011, p. 1). Accordingly, private and not-for-profit schools that participate in the McKay Scholarship Program must fully document their compliance standards with eligibility requirements set forth by the State of Florida and specified by law (FDOE, 2011, p. 1).

Within this perspective and context, understanding satisfaction levels of parents and/or guardians is central to maximizing state funds in terms of program efficiency as well as educational quality and overall academic effectiveness. According to Weidner

and Herrington (2006), the McKay Scholarship initiative has allowed for parents to become more “informed consumers” (p. 28). This is premised on their findings that parents and/or guardians received more information from the private school pertaining to their child’s future educational tracks and plans than the former public school provided them (Weidner & Herrington, 2006).

In accordance with school choice theory (Carnoy, 2000; Dahan, 2011; Kane, 2009; Moe, 2001; Schneider et al., 2000; Walberg, 2000; Weiss, 1998; West, 1997), the central notion behind the McKay Scholarship Program is to allow parents and/or guardians to choose the educational institution where they desire their child be placed, whether it be public, private, or not-for-profit. As explained previously, a significant amount of money has been spent and even greater funds are projected to be needed to promote and maintain Florida’s McKay Scholarship Program. Laitsch (2002) argued that while Florida policymakers believe that the market model and injection of competitive forces in education will lead to greater education equality, they still are apprehensive about equity concerns. This is the crux of the school choice debate: how do issues of social equity affect the layout of such programs? It appears incongruous, however, that there is little to no academic research on the levels of satisfaction parents and/or guardians who have opted to keep their child in the public school system through the McKay Scholarship program (i.e., with the public school option) with regard to the service and quality of education afforded and delivered to their child. This is where equity issues arise. Further, there is not much understanding of the underlying reasons for parental choices on behalf of their children (e.g., convenience, quality of education, and service orientation, etc.). Due to the lack of applicable academic research on levels

of parental satisfaction and perception of parents who have opted to participate in these choice programs, the following research questions—along with the theoretical foundations explained in succeeding sections—encompass the underlying basis for this study. For purposes of simplification, the term parents will be used to signify parents and/or guardians throughout the remainder of this dissertation.

The following four questions comprised the reasoning and purpose of this study:

1. What are the reasons underlying parental choices for children on McKay scholarships? Why do parents choose to enroll their child in either a private or not-for-profit educational institution or to keep their child in the public school system?
2. How satisfied are parents of McKay voucher recipients in the public, private, and/or not-for-profit school settings with regard to school quality, educational planning and progression, and quality of service delivery?
3. Are the satisfaction levels of parents of McKay voucher recipients who have placed their child into a private and/or not-for-profit religious school comparable to the satisfaction levels of parents who have opted to keep their child in a non-religious school setting?
4. What other factors affect the satisfaction levels of parents of McKay voucher recipients?

Before turning to chapter 2 it is imperative that the reader review the following key terms that are used throughout this dissertation. It will allow for a better understanding of the literature review, theoretical framework, and conclusions derived from the analysis.

Public choice: A movement started back in the 1950's primarily by economist Milton Friedman. It implies that if consumers of public goods and services (primarily social services) are allowed a choice as to how and where these services are delivered it would lead to more efficient markets for these services and consumers would be more satisfied simply by being able to choose.

Public goods: These goods provided to citizens by government are considered to be non-rival where no citizens can be excluded. For example, national defense is considered a public good as all citizens are entitled to this protection.

Information asymmetry: This term implies that having a lack of or inadequate information can lead to markets failing. For this study this term is used to analyze whether consumers have enough knowledge and information to make proper and prudent decisions in school choice processes.

Educational complex: This term refers to the entirety of the education system. Since this dissertation is studying the John M. McKay Scholarship as a case study. Many of the theories, findings, and inferences can be applied to the broader education system.

Education marketplace: This term is used to infer that a market has been developed for the provision of educational services.

Chit: Referring to school vouchers, a chit is a signed note or bill for services rendered.

Allocative and productive efficiency: These terms denote that efficiency is enhanced on both the supply and demand sides when there is a better match between what consumers need and what they receive.

Preference exposure: In the field of public administration this term is used when citizens exposure their true preferences which can lead more efficacious markets.

Market model: This term is used to imply that there is a profit incentive in private markets.

Chapter 1 aid out the basis for this study and the main research questions that have guided this research as well as a list of terms to use as a guide. The literature review in Chapter 2 emphasizes the underlying framework and social and economic constructions of school choice since these are the reasonings behind educational voucher planning and programming. Previous studies on the McKay Scholarship also are identified in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 identifies the main theories that have influenced the direction of this dissertation. Both Chapters 2 and 3 include some key developments in the vouchers movement, the influence of public choice economics and interest groups, and political contestations and arguments for and against school choice programs as well as issues that were unearthed during this study. Chapter 4 discusses the research design and methodology. Chapter 5 lays out the findings of the survey instrument and Chapter 6 explains and discusses the conclusion as well as ideas for future research and the limitations of this study.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review serves to inform the reader of the many facets of school choice and voucher planning and to provide an overview of the background and context (i.e., program statistics, structure, and demographic composition) of the John M. McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities. Gaps in the relatively small body of literature on the program are identified and discussed. This literature should be viewed in conjunction with the previous chapter on the main theories that have guided this research. The following section discusses the evolution of school choice, new public management (NPM) and school choice, the elite argument and perspective for school choice, and previous studies in regard to the John M. McKay Scholarship Program.

Evolution of School Choice

In reviewing the literature on school choice and vouchers it is critical to briefly highlight the major macro changes that have occurred—almost in a full loop—in the American education system and how the education complex has come to be in its present state. The contemporary debate on school choice “is especially important today, because some of the nation’s largest foundations are promoting school reforms based on principles drawn from the corporate sector, without considering whether they are appropriate for educational institutions” (Ravitch, 2010, p. 4). This is the current state of the American education system: a turbulent environment with contending ideologies and perceptions of how public education should be administered. Henig (1994) argued, “the ascendancy of proposals for choice on the national agenda is partly attributable to their

association with familiar and respected theories of politics and economics, which has given them an intellectual clarity and persuasiveness they would otherwise lack” (p. 99).

Ravitch (2010) posited that social elites pushed heavily for a centralization of the public education system in the 1890s due to widespread corruption within the local school boards, which were operated primarily by business elites. Taylor (2006) looked at special education and education vouchers and maintained that “[s]pecial education was first provided in private residential institutions for children with sensory impairments and mental retardation” (p. 30). By 1910, most children who required special education were more than likely receiving education services in a separate classroom than they were in a private institution. Therefore the idea of providing special education services in a private setting is not a new concept and dates back to the early 1800s (Gross, 2014; Taylor, 2006; Winzer, 1998).

Ravitch (2010) further postulated that “[t]he school reformers of the 1890’s demanded centralization as an antidote to low-performing schools and advocated control by professionals as the cure for the incompetence and corruption of local school boards” (p. 5). The social elites came to the realization that if government was to have a say in how the education system was run, government could subdue some of the economic forces that sought to influence education policy (Ravitch, 2010). As the nation was in the midst of developing and creating a far-reaching national infrastructure, it was necessary to produce a workforce that could handle the intricacies of developing local, state, and federal entities and the commercial activity that would accompany this development. Therefore, there was a need to develop a skilled workforce (Ravitch, 2010) to increase

societal productivity, efficiency, and wealth. Over a 70-year period, however, the policy focused around education did a complete turnabout.

During the height of the public choice era—1950s to 1970s—the progression and development “of choice-in-practices in American education was interwoven most intimately with the thread of racial politics” (Henig, 1994, p. 99). Public choice infers that if consumers of public goods and services (primarily social services) are allowed a choice as to how and where these services are delivered it would lead to more efficient markets for these services and consumers would be more satisfied simply by being able to choose. This is where the crux of the school choice debate begins, which was prompted by the work of Milton Friedman (1955, 1962) who advocated for a choice framework and the injection of free market mechanics into the realm of education policy. This was the public choice argument that gained great traction during the public choice era. During the late 1960s the arguments for or against decentralization “turned into a heated battle” (Ravitch, 2010, p. 4). Beginning in the early 1970s, the praxis—a blending of theory and practice—of educational choice initiatives emerged as an effort to integrate and desegregate schools. Henig (1994) maintained that “During the 1980’s, the practice of educational choice underwent another shift [and] handful of innovative states and local districts began to build on the magnet model” (p. 101). The magnet school model, which allows for parents to influence their child’s education curriculum, has become a “gradual and pragmatic process of administrative adjustment and the growing recognition of choice as a politically useful tool for achieving other goals of educational reform” (Henig, 1994, p. 101).

School choice—an offshoot or subset of public choice economics and political thought—is a movement that has been gaining traction across the nation. Since the late 1950s school voucher programs have been tussled around political and academic circles. The underlying and fundamental argument is that if parents were given adequate means to choose the educational setting that they desire their child to be placed in, it would lead to a leaner, more efficient education system. Friedman (1955, 1962) put forth this idea in a time when the nation was experiencing heavy political, economic, and social turbulence both domestically and abroad. On the home front, the civil rights movement and desegregation was taking place. Ravitch (2010) maintained that the desegregation of schools facilitated and propagated the school choice movement over the next several decades. With the desegregation of schools came attempts to integrate public schools with all children no matter their race. This involved the use of a “busing” system to transport children across towns and counties in the integration process.

Placed in an international context, the Cold War had reached a peak and America now found itself defending its democratic, free market values while attempting to become the world’s sole hegemony. Conflicts across the world, including that of the Vietnam War which created massive domestic upheaval, pushed the school choice debate further into the backdrop. During this race for the United States to become the global dominant hegemonic power many individuals realized that the educational complex was slowly, yet precipitously, deteriorating. In 1983 the National Commission on Excellence in Education published the report, *A Nation at Risk (ANAR)*, which was alarming to many politicians, academics, and the general public. The report showed that the United States was vulnerable and susceptible to suffering from an educational crisis. This would not

only hurt domestic wealth and prosperity, but it also would harm the United States in its attempts to become the dominant international hegemony. The ANAR report findings were flagged as a high priority national concern and the federal government assembled many panels tasked with devising ways to improve upon and adequately avert what was seen as a pressing and severe national security threat.

In the 1960s and 70s, parents, community advocates, and academics began to push for an education system that was decentralized because they thought that government could not supply the essential services that Americans once thought it could (Ravitch, 2010). From the 1970s onward, the current school choice argument moved from one that was hypothetical to a full-fledged nationwide initiative (Henig, 2000; Teske & Schneider, 2001). Decentralization and school choice market mechanics would influence parents to make prudent and rational decisions about the quality and price relationship among schools that essentially would compete for federal and state subsidies. It was thought if schools were operated more like businesses, competition would put low-quality schools out of business and there then would be a competition among superior schools to provide the highest quality education at the lowest price. If schools do not provide a high quality service, in this case education, at a fair and sustainable price, they would simply go out of business (R. H. Henig, 1994; Ravitch, 2010).

As stated earlier, school choice is a derivative of the broader public choice argument and its roots are intertwined with libertarian and neo-conservative ideologies that place a heavy emphasis on market models. Accordingly, conservative politicians, groups, and organizations jumped with splendor at the idea of injecting market forces into the American educational compound. Choice is a staple for the conservatives, albeit

there are several other contemporary nuances that can be correlated directly to the conservative agenda. After all, the term laissez-fair or free market infers some basic principles such as the right to compare cost and quality and to make rational and prudent decisions concerning one's life. Education is as basic as it gets. In the United States it is compulsory for students to attend school up to a certain age. This in itself can be seen as one of the largest markets in American society.

New Public Management and School Choice

With this doing more with less mentality in mind, the push to "re-invent government" came along with Osborne and Gaebler's (1992) book *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit Is Transforming the Public Sector*. It is quite clear that the educational voucher movement has been propagated by those groups that desire a leaner government that is, for the most part, decentralized. The libertarian mentality espouses to just that: create a market for governmental goods and services and then let the so-called invisible hand work out the kinks that inevitably will arise.

The education complex that historically has been centralized and maintained around common public good principles has shaped the environment in which all of American society sources-out and decides on the educational setting that is right for them. The voucher movement and the groups that have influenced and pushed for this type of educational programming either firmly believe that business and market principles can service an ever-growing population or that there is interest in creating a new market where profit can be made. Scott (2013) postulated that at the legislative and regulatory levels of government,

[P]olicymakers have redefined equity in schooling to mean providing parents with sufficient school choices to ‘buy’ education for their children. Although parental empowerment is seemingly a central goal of the legislation, the laws also facilitate the entry of private sector actors into the educational marketplace. The resulting choice options depart from redistributive forms of equity, advantage some parents over others, and also empower for-profit and nonprofit intermediaries and private providers seeking to gain a share of the educational marketplace. (p. 60)

Many of these values such as decentralization, devolutionary processes, and privatization can be seen as core tenets of the new public management (NPM) movement. The quintessential element of NPM is to have government administrators “steer rather than row” (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992, p. 49) with an heavy emphasis placed on contracting out and using market methods traditionally applied to the private sector to infuse government with a new philosophical mentality for efficient management. Evidently, this push accelerated the adoption of school choice mechanics at the state level and different voucher programs, tax incentives, and magnet programs were developed across the country. The central premise was that if schools did not provide a high quality service then parents simply would remove their child from that particular school and move their child to another school with a better cost-quality relationship. The resulting consequence for the low quality service would be that the school in question would simply go out of business. Of course this relates to parents using government education money to take their child out of the public school complex and place their child in a private or not-for-profit school.

Elite Theory and School Choice

Ravitch (2010) made the assertion that, as of the beginning of the 21st century, the economic elites—through the creation of certain policies and the use of manipulative tactics (i.e., foundations established to avert taxes)—have sought to control the education agenda and the curriculum that is administered in all education sectors. Education is compulsory—it is required for all American children. With this said, it is possible to view school choice as a mechanism of repression, primarily due to the dictation of the curriculum by powerful entities that hold a stake in the installation and adoption of certain policies (Farazmand, 1999; Mills, 1956) to further the development of the education market. To further add to this conundrum, Ravitch (2010) pointed out that back in the 1890s, when citizens turned to centralization, there was no evidence of business attempting to dictate education policy, yet the social elites were weary of private enterprise controlling the agenda and curriculum. Contemporarily, the education complex has found itself in a state where powerful business lobbies have the power to influence education policy, primarily by pushing rigorously for choice programs.

The major media outlets, which are owned primarily by those who seek to make profit from the emergence of a new and fervid market, were readily available to feed the public the benefits of instituting a voucher framework for increasing the effectiveness of the education complex. Further, the introduction of this form of economic thought sought to have government not only lessen its so-called monopoly on the provision of education services; the reigning economic philosophy, emerging at the time, was to have government do more with less. Therefore, a complete reversal has occurred over the past century. In her book *The Revisionists Revised: A Critique of the Radical Attack on the*

Schools, Ravitch (1978) argued that “the public schools had not been devised by scheming capitalists to impose ‘social control’ on an unwilling proletariat or to reproduce social inequality; the schools were never an instrument of cultural repression, as the radical critics claimed” (p. 6). Instead, Ravitch (2010) argued:

[T]hey are a primary mechanism through which a democratic society gives its citizens the opportunity to attain literacy and social mobility. Opportunity leaves much to individuals; it is not a guarantee of certain success. The schools cannot solve all our social problems, nor are they perfect. But in a democratic society, they are necessary and valuable for individuals and for the commonwealth. (p. 6)

Moe (2001) pointed out that at the elite level most education voucher advocates argue that the governmental regulation should be kept out of the voucher framework or at least should be kept at a minimum. This was the original argument put forth by Friedman (1955) on the subject in regard to regulating a newly developed system that should operate like any other free market. There is obviously a political continuum in play as there are several political factions that seek to influence the development or abatement of a voucher system. Moe (2001) argued that,

At one extreme are the free-market traditionalists (who are often libertarians), at the other are their staunchly pro-government opponents (who are mainly liberals), and in between are activists from the modern wing of the voucher movement (an ideologically mixed group), who favor low-income vouchers and equity-promoting regulations. Given this [ideological] continuum, the movement’s shift from free markets to a more regulated approach during the 1990s appears to have been quite rational politically, for it has broadened the appeal of vouchers, created

a bigger and more powerful coalition, and enhanced the prospects for political success. (p. 294)

The elite level arguments for school choice are immense and they not only focus on the inclusion of religious affiliated institutions, regulation, and accountability but also attempt to influence curriculum and pedagogy. Many along the continuum see the voucher movement as not only a way to create a market where competition would create a healthier educational system but as a way to promote the fundamental principles of social equity. Through the use of heuristic models, elites have the power to develop cues that feed information to the public, which the public then uses to determine the most suitable choices available to them (Kuklinski & Hurley, 1994). These cues often have an underlying political undertone, which in turn shapes the development, construction, formulation, and installation of various policies. Therefore, the elite arguments have several prongs and contentions are abound within all political parties. This is what has made the promotion and discernment so vivid in the modern framework for voucher programming. Accordingly, it is understood that along the continuum the elite debate is easily comprehensible especially because public tax dollars are being used, is to understand what importance ordinary citizens place on vouchers and how truly satisfied they are with the services being provided.

The next section of this literature review discusses some of relevant literature in regard to previous studies on the John M. McKay Scholarship Program as well as the structure, context, and demographic elements relating to the program.

Previous Studies on the John M. McKay Scholarship Program

There have been a few satisfaction, quality of service, and educational-based surveys conducted in previous academic studies (Greene & Forester, 2003; Weidner & Herrington, 2006; Brown, 2007; Winters & Greene, 2011) that attempt to examine the satisfaction levels of parents of McKay voucher recipients in addition to the academic achievement of these students in participating private institutions. There appears to be a gap in the literature with regard to whether parents generally are more satisfied with the quality of service and educational arrangements among the competing educational sectors (i.e., private, not-for-profit, and public educational institutions).

Limited research (Brown, 2007; Greene & Forester, 2003; Weidner & Herrington, 2006; Winters & Greene, 2011) exists on the state-funded McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities in Florida. The John M. McKay Scholarship Program is a voucher, school choice program that allows parents of a child with disabilities to convert state funds for public education into money that can be used to enroll their child into a private or not-for-profit, state-certified school of their desired choice. Parents also can choose to use the McKay scholarship for their child to attend another public school that offers services geared toward this population. However, once a child is taken out of the public school system and placed into a private or not-for-profit school—or institution—the McKay Scholarship cannot be used to return to the public school system. Therefore, once a child is placed in a private or not-for-profit McKay Scholarship certified school, they must remain with the private or not-for-profit option as long as the parents want to continue to receive funding for the education of their child who has a disability.

According to the McKay Scholarship Program Fact Sheet provided online by The Coalition of McKay Scholarship Schools (2012), the McKay Scholarship Program is available only to children who have a diagnosed disability and who have an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) or who are on a 504 Plan. Part of the federal civil rights legislation commonly known as the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 is a law that specifically prohibits discrimination against students with disabilities and “guarantees them a free and appropriate public education (FAPE)” (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The Coalition of McKay Scholarship Schools (2012) asserted that, “children with disabilities have a tremendous number of unique needs” (p. 1). This contention is in line with the fundamental market model for the establishment of the McKay Scholarship Program primarily because of the uniqueness of certain disabilities that often are difficult to diagnose and the difficulty in finding suitable programs that service students who have these disabilities. The argument that then arises is that we should include all schools no matter in which sector they belong in order to provide services that are effective and cost saving. Although there are numerous programs in Florida’s public school system that are designed to service the needs of this population, the underlying philosophy proposes there are some disabilities that the public school system simply does not have the ability to confront and deal with appropriately (The Coalition of McKay Scholarship Schools, 2012). This dissertation now examines previous academic inquiries into the program.

Greene and Forester (2003) were commissioned by the Manhattan Institute to evaluate the McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities. In 2003, there were 9,202 students enrolled as McKay Scholarship recipients out of a total of 375,000 eligible special education students (Greene & Forester, 2003) in the state of Florida. The

researchers used a telephone survey instrument to inquire about satisfaction levels of parents of students receiving McKay vouchers. One survey compiled feedback from parents of McKay voucher recipients who received the educational services at the time. The second telephone survey compiled feedback from those parents whose dependents no longer received McKay voucher funding but were enrolled in the program at one time.

The findings of the Greene and Forester (2003) study suggest that parents of McKay recipients—surveyed in both telephone interviews—were more satisfied with the private school their child was attending than the public school their child previously had attended. Greene and Forester's central finding was 92.7% of parents whose dependents were receiving funding through the McKay Scholarship Program at the time were very satisfied with the schools they had selected. In addition, parents of McKay Scholarship participants saw the class size drop by nearly half and remarked that their dependents were victimized far less because of their disability (Greene & Forester, 2003).

The perception that students are victimized less largely is due to the fact that the student is placed into an institution with other children also categorized as having disabilities ranging from least severe to extremely severe according to the matrices developed and implemented by the McKay Scholarship Program and the Florida Department of Education. Contrary to the decrease in victimization is the labeling effect, which is a necessary precursor for enrollment in the McKay Scholarship Program. According to labeling theory, once someone is labeled and placed into a classification, it often is hard for them to break free of that label (Stone, 1984) and to have unfettered control over their own person while influencing the collective cognitions of the people

perceiving them (Bernburg, Krohn, & Riveria, 2006; Goode, 1975; Smith, Osborne, Crim, & Rhu, 1986).

Greene and Forester (2003) also found that roughly 70% of the parents of McKay Scholarship participants surveyed responded that they were responsible for no additional fees for services including therapy and additional service provisions or that these additional fees were assessed at less than \$1,000 per academic school year. Furthermore, an overwhelming number of parents whose dependents were previously enrolled in the McKay Scholarship Program but no longer are as 90% of such respondents believed that the program absolutely should continue (Greene & Forester, 2003). The Greene and Forester study offered insights into satisfaction levels with several variables such as satisfaction, cost, demographics, convenience and other relatively intricate factors including religious affiliation. Their study was conducted in 2003 and many challenges (e.g., fiscal crises) have altered the mode and means of service delivery to McKay Scholarship recipients over the past decade. This dissertation will improve upon this work as many more student are enrolled and the program has become a staple in educational programming in Florida.

Etscheidt (2005) looked at school choice initiatives such as charter schools, open enrollment, and magnet schools as mechanisms of school reform. Through a market-based approach, Etscheidt analyzed Florida's McKay Scholarship Program as a viable means of reauthorization of the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act commonly known as IDEA (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Her examination involved the use of empirical evidence on parent choice, student achievement, and school management, which Etscheidt (2005) maintained is "inconclusive and incomplete" (p.

156). Etscheidt's key argument was that the model and overall structure of the McKay Scholarship Program was not designated in the reauthorization law and, therefore, that there is a critical need to further investigate this mode of voucher planning. Etscheidt argued that such an examination of school reform requires a multi-paradigmatic approach that takes into account economic, legal, academic, sociological, and political elements. All of these elements are deeply embedded in the McKay program and should not be discounted when viewing the effectiveness of voucher programs.

Weidner and Herrington (2006) looked at the Florida McKay Scholarship Program on a statewide basis to determine to what degree parents of McKay Scholarship recipients are informed about services and programming relating to the program. They gathered information from parents of current McKay participants through a mailed survey instrument. The information sought by Weidner and Herrington was the satisfaction levels of parents of McKay recipients who had transitioned out of the public school system, with regard to class size, quality of academics, teacher quality, special education, and the curriculum taught. Respondents to the survey were more satisfied with services provided at private institutions than those at public schools. The survey demonstrated that parents of McKay recipients are more "informed consumers" (Weidner & Herrington, 2006, p. 28) in private educational settings.

A principal purpose of the McKay Scholarship program is to allow for the conversion of a portion of state education funds into funds for the education of students in any of the disability matrices, as evaluated through the IEP process, whose parents avail themselves of the McKay Scholarship in either a public or private setting according to each individual parent's preferences. The majority of this funding that parents redirect

from the public sector goes to small private institutions (Lewis, 2005). Small private institutions comprise the majority of private schools in the United States. Florida is no exception. The McKay Scholarship program certifies schools that are relatively small in size and focus exclusively on providing services geared toward the McKay student population (Winters & Green, 2011). In an effort to find common ground, accountability issues have been highlighted by both proponents and advocates of school choice and voucher planning.

Voucher planning has taken many forms and the use of charter schools as a market mechanism of school choice should not be overlooked. Lubienski (2003) looked at charter schools as a method to increase choice and competition among educational institutions. The author posited that, similar to any other industry, this competition will breed a certain degree of innovativeness for the provision of education services. Lubienski argued, “these market-style mechanisms are intended to challenge standardized practices associated with district administration of schools” (p. 395). In spite of this, a thorough and “comprehensive review of practices in charter schools indicates that, although some organizational innovations are evident, classroom strategies tend toward the familiar” (Lubienski, 2003, p. 395). To add validity to this argument Gill and Booker (2008) reviewed the literature on disability diagnoses and educational achievement through an examination of the McKay Scholarship Program and concluded that the previous research “provides reason for cautious optimism that school choice programs improve the quality of schooling provided in public schools, though the overall effect appears to be mild” (p. 138).

Brown's (2007) graduate thesis, "Efficiency or Equality: A Case Study of The McKay Scholarship Program," focused on the aspect of market efficiency in the delivery of education services. Through the use of a case study approach, the predominant theoretical framework of Brown's work was that efficiency triumphs equality in determining suitable market arrangements for educational initiatives. This supposition further reinforces the core aspects of the McKay Scholarship Program.

Harris, Harrington, and Albee (2007) studied three popular voucher programs in Florida. These programs included the John M. McKay Scholarship for Students with Disabilities, the Opportunity Voucher, and the Corporate Tax Incentive initiative. Their study was concerned with the main reasons why Florida has been the most aggressive state in developing school choice planning and programs. According to Harris et al. (2007), the voucher framework is in harmony with the education tradition in Florida of promoting insistent and uncompromising policies of accountability, primarily as a result of Florida's social-conservative political environment. Further, this social conservatism is in line with modern practices of promoting privatization and decentralization.

Florida's demographic composition also makes the educational complex ripe for conservative influence by pushing certain agendas that seek to create—or heighten—the degree of social equity among state residents. Harris et al. (2007) maintained that even with the environment being ripe for a heavy push of privatization in the educational complex, the voucher movement in Florida would not have been adopted as official state policy without the persistence of then Governor Jeb Bush. Complicating the landscape of Florida's school voucher programming is the "shaky legal foundation" (Harris et al., 2007, p. 215) in which they exist. This legal foundation can be seen as unsteady—and

rather unpredictable—“because of the state’s Blaine Amendment and constitutional provisions for ‘public’ and ‘uniform schools’” (Harris et al., 2007, p. 215). Thus, Harris et al. argued that the legal and regulatory realms surrounding school choice planning are certainly on unstable ground and this is not solely the foremost issue regarding the three popular voucher programs in Florida.

Winters and Greene (2011) expanded upon previous studies on the evaluation of public school response by examining the influence of voucher programs for the disabled student population. Through the analysis of a comprehensive and wide-ranging data set from Florida, the authors found that educational vouchers programs, which are specifically targeted toward the disabled student population, raise several implications for the public school system compared to that of conventional voucher programs. Winters and Greene put forth a theoretical framework to gauge both the influence of school quality and the probability that a school will identify a student that falls in the marginal category as disabled. Their study demonstrated certain indications that the competition produced by a voucher program for individuals with disabilities (i.e., the McKay Scholarship Program) decreased the probability that a student would be diagnosed as mildly disabled, but would increase the probability that they would be diagnosed as falling into a more severe category.

The following sub-section of this chapter discusses the gaps in the previous literature by identifying what elements have not yet been touched upon.

Gaps in Past Research and Significance of This Study

The Greene and Forrester (2003) study focused primarily on gauging satisfaction of parents of McKay Scholarship recipients who used the voucher to place their child in a

certified private institution. The central research question put forth by Greene and Forrester was whether parents whose children were in the public school system and used the voucher to move to a certified private institution were more satisfied with services provided and overall quality as well as school conditions. This dissertation seeks to compare and contrast satisfaction levels and reasoning of choice across sectors by including parents who had opted to remain in the public school sector and their reasoning for doing so. This was a significant element of this dissertation as a major attempt was made to determine satisfaction levels of all parents (i.e., those parents of McKay Scholarship recipients enrolled in private, not-for-profit, or public school settings).

Debates about school choice arrangements have increasingly encountered both support and opposition on ideological and educational grounds. The main argument is that choice will increase overall efficiency by applying a competitive pressure on schools to maintain quality while keeping cost down. Opponents see many externalities that have arisen, but those that have not yet manifested are often hard to predict and plan for. Understanding satisfaction and perception is essential to understanding the policy implications related to these intricate economic, political, and social aspects that encompass the larger issue of public choice and the discernment of ideological preferences in regard to school choice.

This comprehensive literature review, which included the previous chapter's analysis and review of the main theoretical underpinnings of the broader issues relating to choice mechanics, has highlighted and drawn attention to some of the key aspects of school choice—primarily the main reasons why parents choose to change school setting (i.e., move from public to private or not-for-profit). This study compared satisfaction

among parents who have enrolled their children in the public option versus the not-for-profit or private option to determine which groups of parents generally are more satisfied with the services provided. The literature on satisfaction of parents who have decided to remain in the public school system needs to be gauged as this is critical not only to understanding choice, but also for accountability issues due to the use of taxpayer money to fund the McKay Scholarship Program and other school choice programs. The literature does not address this issue. It is imperative to examine this facet as it is a key element of public choice economics, education finance, and school choice theories.

Research similar to this dissertation have not been conducted in the past. It is considered very difficult to gather and collect data on this topic. The first reason is that it is hard to work with governing public and private entities that govern and operate the choice programs. Second, it is well known that getting citizens to expose their true preferences is very arduous and sometimes the data collection does not yield any significant findings.

Background and Context of Florida's John M. McKay Scholarship Program

Established in 1999 by the Florida Legislature, the John M. McKay Scholarship Program allocates funds to participating public, not-for-profit, and private schools to provide services to students with documented disabilities. A main precursor for qualification is that the student must have been enrolled in a public school for at least one academic school year prior to applying for the McKay voucher (Weidner & Herrington, 2006; Wood & McClure, 2003). According to Wood and McClure (2003), parents of students with disabilities in the Florida public school system have three options once accepted into the voucher program. These include the following:

Parents of Florida public school children who are not satisfied with their child's current academic progress in school have three choices. Provided their children have met eligibility requirements, parents may transfer their child to another public school within the same school district, transfer their child to a school in an adjacent school district, or they may enroll their child in a private school that is participating in the McKay Scholarship Program. To enroll in another public school within the school district, parents simply need to ask the school district for other options as determined by the local board of education. Only schools in the school district that offer the services required by the child's IEP, as well as possessing the space available, may admit the student. Likewise, only schools that have available space and can provide the services needed are eligible. (Wood & McClure, 2003, pp. 359-360)

If parents choose the private or not-for-profit option, they are required to abide by the school's parental involvement requirements unless the private school excuses them from their involvement standards. These requirements are different for every school certified to accept McKay voucher students. However, the student must remain at that private or not-for-profit school for at least one school year before the parent can opt to change schools, depending on their choice (Wood & McClure, 2003).

School districts in Florida also have certain responsibilities such as making information about the program readily available to parents and also providing transportation to public schools considered receiving schools in the same district. Accordingly, if a parent does opt for one of the options set forth under the scholarship program, the school board is responsible for sharing all pertinent information with the

school that the parent has chosen—no matter the public, not-for-profit, or private nature of the school setting (Wood & McClure, 2003).

The following statistical and demographic information on students enrolled in the McKay Scholarship Program during the 2012-2013 academic school year was provided by the School Choice Fact Sheet found on the Florida Department of Education's (2013a) website:

- There were a total of 26,611 students enrolled in private and not-for-profit schools. During the 2008-2009 school year there was a total of 20,530 students enrolled. This represents an increase in enrollment of 29.6% over the course of five (5) academic school years.
- Race and ethnicity:
 - White (non-Hispanic): 47%
 - Black (non-Hispanic): 25%
 - Hispanic: 24%
 - Other: 4%
- Gender composition:
 - Female: 31%
 - Male: 69%
- Private and/or not-for-profit attendance:
 - Religious: 64%
 - Non-Religious: 36%

- Program level or classification, with the higher the level matrix, the greater the severity of the student's disability, which is documented within the student's Individual Education Plan:
 - Matrix 251 (mild disability): 50%
 - Matrix 252 (mild disability): 24%
 - Matrix 253 (moderate disability): 11%
 - Matrix 254 (severe disability): 7%
 - Matrix 255 (very severe disability): 2%
 - 504 Plan: 6%

Students must be labeled mildly to severely disabled to qualify for and participate in the McKay Scholarship Program. According to Winters and Greene (2011), “[m]ore than half of the students using a McKay voucher have a disability that is in the least severe matrix” (p. 139). The least severe matrix primarily contains classifications for learning, emotional, and behavioral disabilities (Weidner & Herrington, 2006).

Eligibility for the McKay Scholarship Program is broken down into five elements by the Coalition of McKay Scholarship Schools (2012) fact sheet and includes the following:

1. The public school in which the child is enrolled must test this population of students and determine their respective disability. Subsequently, a primary criterion for enrollment in the McKay Scholarship Program is that students must have previously been enrolled in Florida's public school system;
2. It is up to the public school in which the child is currently enrolled to determine what level of service that the student requires. This is procedurally accomplished through the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) process. This is

a relatively important aspect of qualification for the McKay Scholarship because this determination prescribes how much funding the child will receive;

3. If the child is already on a 504 Plan, they are automatically qualified for McKay Scholarship funding;
4. The parent seeking McKay Scholarship eligibility and enrollment must have had their child enrolled in a public school for a total of one (1) academic school year prior to entering the program; and
5. Parents are required to file a “notice of intent to participate” with the Florida Department of Education stating their desire to participate in the McKay Scholarship Program.

The Coalition of McKay Scholarship Schools (2012) fact sheet provides the following information about how the State of Florida determines the quantity of funding each student receives through the McKay Scholarship Program on an individualized basis:

1. The amount of funding each child receives is established through the IEP (except for students on the 504 plan which does not require an IEP be completed) process by determining the level of service required for each child;
2. As of the 2010-2011 academic school year the average scholarship awarded under the McKay Scholarship Program was \$7,209. Students who receive funding under the McKay scholarship Program through the 504 plan received an average of \$3,892; and

3. The costs of services provided to children with disabilities are sometimes higher than the amount allocated through the McKay Scholarship Program. Parents and/or guardians may supplement the differences in cost—the remaining balance—through personal or other outside funding. Some private institutions also provide additional scholarships— external to the McKay Scholarship—to cover these additional costs for services.

In the scope of public organization, it is necessary to identify the key component to qualification for McKay Scholarship funding—disability. A potential McKay Scholarship recipient, once identified as falling into one of the disability categories, must have an IEP developed (McClure & Wood, 2004). This is a plan that lays out the child’s future educational activities, goals, and proposed outcomes.

Reich (2010) stated that, “an individualized education plan/program (IEP) is a federally mandated plan for parents, teachers, school administrators, service personnel [and/or] paraprofessionals, and students (when appropriate) to work together to design instruction, accommodations, and services to children with special needs” (p. 540). The IEP requirement for students with disabilities was initially written into the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (ECHA) of 1975. This act is now referred to as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and was reauthorized in 1990, 1997, and 2004. It continues to require IEPs for all students with disabilities (Taylor, 2006). The purpose of the IEP is to place a guarantee on free, suitable, and effective education for children with disabilities (McClure & Wood, 2004; Taylor, 2006). Subsequently, the IEP process infers that public schools are mandated to provide children with disabilities, ranging from mild to extremely severe, with personal and individual instructional and

service plans. The instructional and service plans should be provided at no cost to the parents and/or guardians (Katsiyannis & Maag, 2001; McClure & Wood, 2004; Reich, 2010).

The following are the critical aspects of the IEP process put forth by Reich (2010):

1. The preliminary step in the IEP process is identifying the students who have a disability and are in need of service provision. Many educational leaders and policy makers define this stage as “child find;”
2. A team of educational leaders with multidisciplinary professional and educational backgrounds must come to a consensus when determining the child’s disabilities, and on the degree of service required for that child. Federal law mandates an IEP must be written and finalized within one month of the determination that a child has a disability; and
3. The IEP is a rather flexible document in terms of form and format and usually varies by state, or by school district in some instances. Although the actual document is somewhat flexible, some elements are required under federal law, such as the composition of the IEP “team,” as well as certain subject matters that are covered in the IEP.

According to Reich (2010), the content (subject matter) and structure (form and format) of the IEP should include the following:

1. The IEP should start with an assessment of the child’s performance primarily by analyzing and gauging his or her level of educational performance. This is usually accomplished through an analysis of in-class tests, homework and

classroom assignments, individualized tests, and assessments completed “by professionals and paraprofessionals, as well as observations by parents, teachers, and other school staff” (p. 541). These areas are geared toward determining the child’s academic, sensory, and social skills. Additionally, children are examined and assessed based on their competencies as they relate to daily living skills, ability to communicate, mobility, and potential vocational skills (i.e., future employment).

2. Goals and objectives—established on an annual basis—of the IEP should be set forth at the IEP meeting. The goals established by the IEP team should have measurable and quantifiable means of assessing effectiveness. Short-term objectives, as well as benchmarks, should be made clear for measurement. Goals and objectives should include physical, cognitive, social, and academic aspects in addition to other related goals and objectives relating to the student’s disability. Effective goal setting and writing should be written to include information about how they will be achieved, addressed, and who (i.e., which team member and educational professional) will be responsible for carrying out the action plan. Additionally, what setting (i.e., school and home) would be optimal for student achievement with all goals and objectives should be indicated.
3. Under federal law, all IEP’s under must state the services to be provided to the disabled child—this is inclusive of special education services. Modifications to the educational programming, and accompanying and complimentary services, should be included in the services listed. Necessary support from

school professionals, including administrators, should be identified. This aspect includes, but is not limited to, professional training and development. Training and development is necessary due to the uniqueness of every IEP. Such services in which professional development and training should apply include, but are not limited to, occupational, physical, speech, and psychological therapies, as well as parental training and transportation needs.

4. The IDEA Act mandates that children with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE) (Taylor, 2006). The aim of education in the LRE is to promote inclusivity of children with disabilities by educating and subsequently socializing them with their non-disabled peers.
5. When constructing an IEP for children that are “high-school aged or older,” the IEP meeting should determine the primary issues for the provision of services and the degree of need. The IEP team should also focus on the availability and type of services needed, as well as the procedural outlook for achieving the transition. The transitional elements of the IEP should consider what the child will do after high school. Beginning at age 14 the transitional outlook should be determined and established in the child’s IEP. By 16 years of age, the transitional element should be incorporated through the child’s IEP meeting and should include detailed and precise statements. By the age of 17, or one year before legal adult age, the IEP must include an informed right section advising the child and family about the child’s rights when they reach 18 years of age. Starting at 14 years, this topic should be introduced into the IEP meetings.

6. The IEP should be evaluated every three years, in addition to an annual review, to identify any problems, discrepancies, and/or modification's (Pretti-
Frontczak & Bricker, 2000; Reich, 2010).

The previous section pointed out the intricacies involved in student planning—specifically in the IEP process. The literature review now turns to an examination of the major facets of school choice and the broader debate to better understand the fundamentals and contending ideologies of voucher planning and programming. The following review also serves as an outline—or theoretical framework—for comprehending how and why the American education system has reached its current state. The main theories guiding this research were discussed in order for the findings of the survey to be adequately and correctly understood. This involved pointing out how these various features and components of the education system have led to the construction and implementation of various school choice programs, specifically the John M. McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities.

CHAPTER 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It is often assumed in our market-based society that the private sector can do a better, more efficient job than that of the public sector (Connell, 2013; Cookson, 1994; Dobson, 2008; McLaughlin, 2005; Prasch & Sheth, 2000). One of the central premises of the McKay Scholarship Program, like any other school choice program, is to relax the burden placed upon government to provide educational services that often are seen as a “quasi-public” good (Bradley & Taylor, 2010; Friedman, 1955, 1962; Glennerster, 1991; Nir, 2003; Rosen & Gayer, 2009). Many factors differentiate education from other services provided in private market places (Schnieder et al., 2000, p. 58). This dissertation was an attempt to analyze and better understand whether these perceptions are indeed supported through an analysis and examination of Florida’s John M. McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities.

Weiss (1998) argued that Allison’s (1971) central notion of the public policy process is that policy deliberation is often “about ‘policy makers’ models of the world that offer them guidance about how, when and why to act” (Weiss, 1998, p. 524). These preferences are seen through the ideological stances that policymakers take on certain societal matters. Citizen satisfaction surveys (Lyons, Lowery, & DeHoog, 1992; Van Ryzin, 2004; Van Ryzin & Immerwhar, 2007), as a method to understanding satisfaction in the delivery of governmental (public) goods and services, were used to guide the parental satisfaction survey (Charbonneau & Van Ryzin, 2012; Livingstone, 2008) so as to compare and contrast perceptions of parents whose are children enrolled under the

McKay Scholarship Program in private, not-for-profit, and public school settings. Public choice (Black, 1948; Buchanan, 1975; Buchanan & Tullock, 1962; Friedman, 1955; Mueller, 1976; Olson, 1965; Tullock, 1970) is, undoubtedly, a guiding theory that informed this study as it pertains to the underlying and often assumed presumption that the private sector can provide a better, more efficacious service (Connell, 2013; Dobson, 2008; McLaughlin, 2005) in regard to the provision of public goods.

Understanding of school choice theory (Carnoy, 2000; Dahan, 2011; Kane, 2009; Schneider, Teske, Marschall, & Roch, 1998; Schneider, Teske, Roch, & Marschall, 1997; Walberg, 2000; Weiss, 1998; West, 1997; Wood, 2007) and how it pertains to the fundamental market model (Walberg, 2000)—as well as the broader efficiency argument—through voucher choice initiatives was an essential theoretical approach of this study. The applicability of this theory was an integral element for constructing and altering current and future policy in regard to the program because the McKay Scholarship is funded through the use of monies gained from public taxes. Applying the assumption that the private sector can do a more efficacious job than the public sector (Connell, 2013; Cookson, 1994; Dobson, 2008; McLaughlin, 2005), this dissertation sought to determine if this common and deeply embedded assumption is supported through the analysis of educational vouchers through choice mechanics (specifically Florida's McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities).

Dronkers, Felouzis, and van Zanten (2010) explored school choice and the relationship among education markets in an international context. The authors proposed four interesting research topics that surround education markets and their effects on the broader, systemic approach to individual choice. These questions revolved around

education markets and school choice, education markets and strategies for families and institutions, regulation of the education market, and the consequences of education markets. These inquiries placed into context the dominant discourse that exists among markets, efficiency, and equilibriums. Nonetheless, Dronkers et al. argued that despite these dialectical discourses, “it is important not to reduce the existence of possibilities for choice in educational systems to the spread of a liberal ideology and to the educational policies it inspired” (p. 99). This liberalist ideology is an attempt to promote and encourage the creation of competition in the education market, similar to all other sorts of markets in countries with strong free market social prescriptions. Therefore, several proposed elements to study surrounding markets and school choice mechanics have been incorporated into a guiding approach to studying parental choice. This is the public choice argument that is explained further.

The foremost inquiry provided by Dronkers et al. (2010) is premised and grounded around their primary question pertaining to the consequences associated with education markets. This is due primarily to two reasons: scarcity of literature on the subject of satisfaction in education markets and both the individual and collective points of view. The individual point of view is concerned with the investment placed into education, the performance of students in educational settings, and the effects that markets have on a student’s social adaptations as well as the parents involved in networked arrangements. Collectively, Dronkers et al. considered the collective viewpoint to be concerned with the overall school effectiveness and the construction and reproduction of inequalities on educational markets as well as with the social and economic segregation of choice and market programming in education.

In 1987, Coleman and Hoffer put forth a rather simple yet perplexing question about education markets. Their central question was “[d]o parents who can choose have more favorable opinions about schools and about the education system and do they participate more in a collective functioning of schools, as is suggested by some studies of private school” (p. 101)? From here, it becomes obvious—through the scope of various public policy and administrative theories—that there should be an unambiguous mode of studying this question. A great deal of this dissertation was focused not only on determining parental perceptions and levels of satisfaction among parents of McKay Scholarship recipients but it was also a bold attempt to create a theoretical framework premised on the analysis of school choice and its relationship to educational markets at the local, state, federal, and international levels.

Rose-Ackerman’s (1992) theoretical framework for matching choice and quality served as an exemplary theoretical approach to determining if satisfaction is heightened due to parental choice. The proxy shopping framework, argued by Rose-Ackerman and originally put forth by Havighurst (1970), to gauge the quality and cost relationship among government subsidized social services implies that even if the more well-to-do parents can afford to subsidize part—or the entire—cost of education, this does not directly lead to a decision in which educational quality is heightened. The emphasis of Rose-Ackerman’s (1992) argument was that without government regulation and monitoring of the free market and the invisible hand (Smith, 1904), it is nearly impossible for parents to make prudent quality-cost decisions. Further, the theoretical notion that parents with greater means have a greater ability to seek out information necessary to make better-calculated decisions—and thereby increase the quality of their child’s

education—is essential to understanding school choice theories and paradigms. The idea of mobility is an underlying assumption of various choice constructs including that of Tiebout’s (1956) concept of “voting with your feet”, a term whereby consumers of any given public good will vote with their feet, depending on the local community that offers these public services that are the closest to their desired preference. The action of staying or moving is tantamount to the notion of buying—through market mechanics—a good according to its market price. Therefore, true preference is revealed.

Tiebout’s (1956) theory of local public goods is highly applicable to the school choice framework—particularly if seen from a transactional standpoint. The central argument put forth by Tiebout is that there are non-political (i.e., market mechanics) solutions to the free-rider problem, which has long been a contentious and turbulent issue in public administration—specifically at the local level. The free-rider problem occurs when those that benefit from public services do not pay for them and this leads to a under-production or under-provision of critical local government services. Tiebout’s model emphasized that for a mechanism of providing public goods—in this case education—to be adequately allocated, it is essential to construct a system to reveal each individual’s true preferences and then charge according to those preferences. Such an instrument does not exist. Tiebout’s theory stated that if one was not satisfied with the services afforded to them where they resided they could simply pick up and relocate to a different area where the delivery for the taxes paid were ample and adequate for the payer. This theory assumed that families had the mobility to pick up and relocate. This is not always the case. Recognizing that many families cannot afford to relocate to increase their prospects for heightened governmental services, a public choice option in

the form of vouchers, choice, and magnet options was emphasized to promote a heightened degree of social equity. Rose-Ackerman's (1992) proxy shopping paradigm comes close to a solution to this dilemma as the less well-off tend to have lower degrees of mobility and this is a way for them to make an appropriate choice. This is presumed to occur because those who are paying for the full service are more mobile; the disadvantaged then have a method of ensuring a higher quality service.

This dissertation, with an underlying focus on citizen satisfaction, the market model, school choice, and the efficiency-versus-quality argument, heightens the degree of information that policymakers use to decide how, when, and why to act to better service a vulnerable and disadvantaged population. Moreover, it provides parents—Florida residents—interested in the McKay Scholarship Program with a detailed analysis so that they may indeed make more appropriate—and rapid—informed decisions. The following section discusses the larger umbrella and thought of public choice theory as school choice frameworks are derived from this theoretical construct. It is extremely important that the public choice element not be overlooked since the origination of modern school choice policies has been devised with this economic model in mind.

Public Choice

Friedman (1955, 1962) argued that the conversion of public funding to private institutions through the use of educational vouchers could permit and lead to improvements in the school quality and overall school effectiveness. In this light, the utilization and conversion of funding implies that choice, through the mechanics of rationality and self-interest, would naturally spawn a more efficient and effective educational system in America. Subsequently, Friedman (1955) argued that school

choice through the use of educational vouchers could potentially alter and quell the stranglehold on government to provide educational services. Cookson (1994) maintained that “Friedman laid the groundwork for an alternative model of school governance that emphasized parental choice and the belief that markets are better arbiters of personal and social good than are state-mandated regulations” (p. 28). Friedman’s (1955) work on educational vouchers—mainly hypothetical at the time—allowed for policymakers and scholars in academia to focus greater attention on the possibility of a future market where vouchers could be a means for keeping quality and price in check (Good & Braden, 2000). Understanding the massive contemporary push for educational school choice programs must be seen in light of this conceptual framework for public choice economics and social policies.

In a rather broad sense, West (1997) maintained that a voucher system that is tax-funded, as most school vouchers are, is a government payment to the school selected by the parental unit for the pupil needing educational service. These vouchers most often finance all—or most—of what the school charges. The voucher system has instituted and encouraged a form of “competition among public schools and between public and private schools; and it enables schools to offer diverse educational packages to meet the different preferences of parents” (West, 1997, p. 83).

Public choice economics is a guiding philosophical underpinning of the educational voucher, school choice framework. The literature on public choice theories often decries the role of politics and government in market affairs. Public choice theorists tend to turn down any argument for a public, governmental enterprise in contemporary American society (Kelman, 1987). The public choice approach

emphasizes that the “market” will work out the inefficient and symptomatic elements naturally through market mechanics and little regulation need be imposed. Kelman (1987) asserted that the exception is when public choice theorists consider programs and/or services that are rooted in self-interested tendencies for increasing the welfare, or utility, of non-political members of society.

Some scholars are critical of public choice policies and programs (Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier, 1994; Trebilcock, 1994). Public choice theory does not adhere to the idea that societal assumptions and inferences hold significant power to persuade the public to choose one policy over another (Trebilcock, 1994). These often misconstrued attempts by political groups and advocacy coalitions (Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier, 1994) often produce an effect of adverse selection (Chade & Schlee, 2012). Making improper decisions on such a mass, societal scale does not produce the necessary and requisite information and knowledge required for the public to make a prudent, rational, and methodological decision. Thus, public choice theory might not be a true expression of representative democratic thought and could—in the case of providing government goods and services—lead to a market that is less efficient and at greater risk for failure. A contemporary example of this quandary can be seen in the privatization of essential public goods and services. The privatization option is apparent in choice systems, which encourages free market models, which might have been selected or chosen by a particular coalition and/or advocacy group (Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier, 1994) to further or advance their political agenda, ideological preferences, and bureaucratic potency. Subsequently, Stigler (1971) posited that “the idealistic view of public regulation is deeply imbedded in

professional economic thought” (p. 17), inferring that many groups desire limited regulation by government bodies.

Public choice theorists often postulate about the effect of interest groups and coalitions in the agenda-setting process (Tulluck, 1970). The bureaucratic framework of the American political and economic systems allows for these formations to provide an arena where collective issues about problematic economic—and social—elements can be voiced and consequently heard. It is evident that citizens—whether in a collective capacity or not—often depend on government and bureaucracy to protect and expand opportunities for the enlargement of the common pool of resources. The process of devolution and subsequent privatization, which has been a major policy approach for the past several decades and emphasizes transferring power to state and local governmental entities, can be viewed as a by-product of these sometimes adversely selected options that elected officials, business, and community elite often imply are the proper route to take. The assets that comprise these resources include all aspects of economic life with little differentiation among the public and private spheres.

Government, by design, has mechanisms in place to quell and/or cure symptomatic elements among private market places. This is to ensure that market failure and subsequent disorganization and panic does not set in. In light of these problematic issues it is necessary for government to expand constantly its common pool of available resources to meet the demands and desires of the amounting populace. Market inadequacies along with constantly fluctuating sources of wealth have given rise to interest groups that seek—in a rational sense—to maintain their positions in societal affairs. After reviewing the literature on public choice and interest group politics

(Ferejohn, 1974; Friedman, 1955, 1962; Kelman, 1987; Moe, 2001; Peltzman, 1976; Posner, 1974; Stigler, 1961, 1971; Stiglitz, 1979; Trebilcock, 1994), these theories offer a mode of analysis for understanding the primary functions of public economics. Yet, there are weaknesses in terms of defining and highlighting how effective these theories are in explaining how other elements of public economics—such as policy implementation, elementary budgeting, and finance inquires—are all necessary precursors for education voucher planning and the construction of various choice arrangements.

Through the extensive scope of the public choice framework, consumer-citizens are often, whether in an individual or collective sense, not represented fully by participatory processes embedded in democratic principles and practices. The budget allocated for services, in this case for educational services, is a major source of contention and is a required legal document that states where funds will be allocated (McCue & Gianakis, 2001). The political arena surrounding the public financing process is highly turbulent and subject to ideological preferences and demands as well as desires. Since scarce resources are the topic of much contention among coalitions, corporations, and individuals, existing institutional provisions and bureaucratic contrivances are seen as being in constant flux. This is due to incremental tendencies to constantly experiment with and tweak the mechanics that yield increased utility (utility in the case could imply many different mediums) and political maximization of that particular coalition or interest group.

Many scholars contend that the primary economic paradigm of interest-group theory lies within the “Chicago School” of political and economic thought (Ahmed,

2012). The Chicago School of Thought often is associated with such well-known public choice theorists as Milton Friedman (1955, 1962), George Stigler (1971) and Richard Posner (1974). Their primary inquiries were to identify and understand how regulatory systems, imposed by government on certain market transactions, are created by bureaucratic officials intermingling and exchanging political might. The exchanges—both monetary and political—occur through the support from those contributors in the form of backing, votes, and campaign assistance. The Chicago School of Thought laid a heavy emphasis on the need to adequately analyze politics and government in a behavioral, economic sense. Regulation is but one of the tactics used to control the behavior of those involved in various societal activities. Principal-agent theory further applies these behavioral economic modes of analysis to determine how, in fact, the principals control the behaviors of the agents (Behn, 1995; Denhardt, 2001; Russell, 2011).

Stigler's (1971) work, "The Theory of Economic Regulation," analyzed both demand and supply side economics in relation to federal regulatory policy. His study examined how the conceivable usages of public resources are used to enhance the strength of certain economic groups. Posner (1974), following in line with Stigler (1971), offered an interesting examination of multiple theories that attempt to explain causal patterns among government regulation and the broader economic effects that accompany, in his "Theories of Economic Regulation." Posner (1974) maintained that these "include the 'public interest' theory and several versions, proposed either by political scientists or by economists, of the 'interest group' or 'capture' theory" (p. 335). Peltzman (1976, 1990) studied voting behavior and its linkages and connections to

economic public choice. The self-interested rational diagnosis of power relations within government often is analyzed through the scope of the principle-agent model as most of the literature suggests (Peltzman, 1976).

It is quite clear that the educational voucher movement has been propagated by those groups, coalitions, and lobbying factions that desire a leaner government, which is, for the most part, decentralized. The liberalist and neo-conservative mentality espouses to just that: create a market for governmental goods and services and then let the so-called invisible hand work out the kinks that inevitably will arise. The education complex, which has historically been centralized and maintained around common public good principles, has shaped the environment in which all of American society sources and decides on the educational setting that is right for them. The voucher movement and the groups that have influenced and pushed for this type of educational programming either firmly believe that business and market principles can services an ever-growing population or that there is interest in creating a new market where profit can be made.

The public choice movement sought to infuse these philosophically, ideological fundamentals into every aspect of society. Yes, the idea of choice is appealing to most as any consumer in American society can pick and choose freely among non-public goods as they see fit. Some common factors that the average consumer analyzes when considering and/or deciding upon a certain good or service is price and quality among various other more micro, economic, and social details. This rather simple notion is the backbone of the school choice movement as most—if not all—the public choice principles are the center point or fuselage for its continued penetration into everyday life.

Education is a societal element that is, hopefully, with no opposition—a part of everyday life for every American.

Further, these pressure groups that devote a great deal of time to pushing the school voucher approach for educational servicing have greater means to promote their respective interests to the public as government is burdened by the responsibility to the citizenry and to ensuring that their collective tax monies are put to optimal use for the whole of society. Therefore, government does not have the ability—either financially or informally—to compete in trying to capture the public audience and devote more resources to constantly outdoing business and market thinking when it comes to developing stratagem for attracting more public attention. The corporate world knows this fact all too well. This is why it is possible and rational for them to attempt to create a new, vibrant education marketplace where there is a guaranteed steady means of accumulating wealth. The next section of this chapter discusses the origins and influence of these pressure groups, which are most often referred to in the policy and administrative literature as interest groups and coalitions.

Interest Group Politics

In general, members of the Chicago School argued that interest group theory envisages that elected officials will utilize their power over public resources to, in effect, transfer wealth from those who do not possess adequate political strength to those who have greater political girth (Buchanan, 1975; Buchanan & Tullock, 1962; Ferejohn, 1974; Friedman, 1955; Peltzman, 1976; Posner, 1974; Stigler, 1971). To further add to—and complicate—the economic dilemma of the interest-group framework, Ferejohn (1974) analyzed the diffused and concentrated interests of economic groups and control of the

political process via transfer of income from weak to strong political actors. This is at the core of public choice thought as individuals can gain membership by espousing their political and economic support to support the political actor who maintains the same ideological stance and position.

Political participation is another area that economists make use of and apply to describe interest group affairs. This area has an extreme importance in relation to the practice of public administration, the maintenance of democracy, and the preservation of a quasi-equilibrium in public economics. This is premised on the assumption that individuals who espouse to a particular group by becoming a “member” simply will have more resources to promote a particular agenda by garnishing more support for certain policies. Olson’s (1965) theory of collective action was used by economists to further explain economic group interest and the policy process. Olson and Zeckhauser (1966) argued that private costs are imposed upon citizens in the participation processes, yet the original intentions were to create a political environment that would not exclude those members of society who are at a clear economic and social disadvantage. The conception of the principle of non-excludability has assisted in increasing the issue of the “free-rider” and subsequent manipulation of the larger societal spectrum by small, economically-interested groups (Olson, 1965).

Issues raised within both a public choice and pluralistic context are evident in the school choice literature. School choice theory falls within a subset of the larger framework of public choice and the ideological contestations similarly are apparent in the school choice literature as partisanship has guided the debate on school choice since its infancy. The entirety of the political spectrum seeks to influence national, state, and local

policy with regard to the provision of educational services. Every political election usually brings to the fore how that particular political administration vying for office will attempt to tackle the deficiencies in the educational complex.

The more conservative individuals and groups desire an educational scheme that is guided by market forces that, as it is presumed by conservative and neo-conservative leaders, will lead to greater productivity and fiscal health of the larger and broader education market (Smith & Meier, 1995). R. H. Henig (1994) argued that “[w]hen proponents of market-based policies see signs of vitality and enthusiasm associated with school choice, they attribute them to the spontaneous eruption of healthful impulses previously buried under layers of government, regulation, and imperious professionals” (p. 100). Contrarily, the less conservative and more modern liberal individuals, often assembled in groups and coalitions, seek to maintain a guiding educational framework that is entrenched with bureaucratic control mechanisms to regulate and monitor the education state to ensure accountability to taxpayers.

Cookson (1994) saw the national lobbying infrastructure of school choice as one that includes many private school organizations. These organizations strongly advocate creating markets within the education complex. Accordingly, Cookson pointed out that there are many groups and coalitions that vehemently argue for school choice; these include prominent powerful actors such as the Council for American Private Education and the National Association of Independent Schools (p. 31). These advocacy groups are funded heavily and receive tremendous political support. Often, their libertarian views are injected into the national policy debate on school choice, which, in turn, introduces and instills these values into school districts, which form the national education complex

around the country. This is primarily what has created a narrative that parents, policymakers, and politicians often follow. In other words, the lobbying power that private schools—and their shareholders—have is much greater than that of the associations that advocate a rigid and centralized national education policy. This is the central argument of how interest groups can infuse values into society and distort policy: merely by forming advocacy groups with the financial means to induce change in legislation and subsequent policy outcomes.

School Choice

The theoretical underpinnings of the market model and the private sector profit motive are central to the contemporary quasi-market system in which educational outlays (i.e., voucher and choice arrangements) exist. Subsequently, the school choice debate has been a tumultuous argument for several decades (Fowler, 2003; Moe, 2008). This underpinnings and facets of the school choice debate should be considered when examining Florida's McKay Scholarship program. A major aspect of school choice theory is the market model, which purports that school choice should blur sectors, thus improving competition and overall efficiency. A heavy underlying theoretical component of the McKay Scholarship Program is the idea—and the paradigm—of school choice. School choice theory (Brasington & Hite, 2014; Carlson, 2014; Dahan, 2011; Hanushek & Yilmaz, 2013; Kane, 2009; Lange, Ysseldyke, & James, 1998; Onur, 2010; Schneider et al., 2000; Schneider et al., 1997; Smrekar, 1996; Walberg, 2000; Weiss, 1998; West, 1997; Wood, 2007) is a sub-theory of the larger and broader public choice debate (Black, 1948; Buchanan, 1975; Buchanan & Tullock, 1962; Friedman, 1955; Mueller, 1976; Olson, 1965; Tullock, 1970).

Organizations and institutions often are assembled and maintained on the premise that choice will lead to efficient market equilibriums (Kelman, 1987; Olson, 1965; Rosen & Gayer, 2009; Trebilcock, 1994). For that reason, if consumers of public goods and services are given adequate mechanisms—and means—to choose what they prefer, the market will work naturally to subdue the inefficient and non-viable options within the broader and larger system. Ravitch (2010) plainly argued, “[m]arket reforms have a certain appeal to some of those who are accustomed to ‘seeing like a state.’ There is something comforting about the belief that the invisible hand of the market, as Adam Smith called it, will bring improvements through some unknown force” (p. 11).

R. H. Henig (1994), in *Rethinking School Choice: Limits of the Market Metaphor*, maintained that education in an era of privatization has forced educational institutions to follow suit within this context. Stone (1998) pointed out that metaphors often are installed and introduced into the public’s collective cognition to either promote or inhibit certain activity. As R. H. Henig (1994) aptly put it,

Americans feel toward their government the way many adolescents feel toward their parents: deep-seated feelings of love, respect, and dependence complete with—and often overwhelmed by—immediate resentments over chafing restrictions and nettling intrusions. Not only in the United States, but in much of the world, dissatisfaction with the growing apparatus of government has sparked a privatization movement. Its goals are to shrink the public sector by selling government-owned assets and contracting with private firms to provide public services, and to replace large social-welfare helping agencies with simpler voucher-type programs that encourage recipients to help themselves. (p. 5)

Weiss (1998) looked at the major theories guiding school choice policy and focused heavily on the argument that seeks to change and/or alter the behavior of individuals falling within the targeted population, similar to that of any other public policy. Proposed policy should anticipate the desired improvements in that particular policy and then the construction of policies to reach these desired objectives and outcomes should occur. Weiss asserted that the three underlying theories of school choice are intervention; poor educational performance, which often is due to administrative mismanagement; and parental rights. These three theories expanded upon by Weiss require a coupling effect for a coherent argument for school choice to emerge and come to fruition. This is similar to the multi-streams approach (Kingdon, 1984; Sabatier, 1991) of policy understanding and interpretation. Often it is left up to the determination of the school's administrative apparatus to decide what parental perceptions are (Weiss, 1998). In contrast, school choice theory seeks to allow parents to intervene in the educational process so as not to rely solely on the school administration for proper and necessary intervention.

Schneider et al. (1997) examined the theoretical assumption that public sector reform efforts to enhance offerings and expand choice are assumed to induce several benefits relating to the private marketplace. It was proposed that this—in part—increased the amount and the breadth of citizen incentives to seek out information about the quality of public sector services (Schneider et al., 2000; Schneider et al., 1997). Schneider et al. (1997) argued both sides of the school choice argument. First, they maintained that networked arrangements could “provide valuable shortcuts to the information necessary to participate in this expanded market for public goods” (p. 1201).

Second, they noted that choice arrangements will increase and intensify the already present inequalities by heightening the degree of “stratification by education and income and racial segregation” (Schneider et al., 1997). Schnieder et al. (2000) concluded that although there is a widespread assumption and belief that those parents who fall into lower socioeconomic statuses and those of minority status would “value different aspects of education” (p. 264), it simply is not the case; it actually is the opposite. Further, Schiender et al. (2000) contended that “school choice may indeed led to differences along class and racial lines in the selection of schools” (p. 264). However, the authors argued that this was not the foremost reasoning for their opposition to school choice provisions. These contending arguments have encompassed the longstanding debate on school choice.

To test out this theoretical postulation, Schneider et al. (1997) analyzed the following hypothesis:

The quality of networks in school districts with choice is hypothesized to be higher than in school districts without choice and to increase with parental education levels. Networks are also hypothesized to be segregated by race. In addition, differences in networks as a function of education and the segregation of networks by race may be greater in choice districts than in districts with no or little choice. (p. 1201)

A two-staged generalized least square regression technique was utilized to examine the quality of districts with and without choice programs as well as the racial configurations in educational networks. Schneider et al. (1997) statistically controlled for the issue of nonrandom assignment that is built into various levels of parental

engagement and involvement within the broader school choice framework. The results of the Schneider et al. analysis indicated that parents with a higher socioeconomic status are more likely to be involved in better quality education networks. Further, the school choice networks displayed an elevated degree of racial segregation and incentives from institutional arrangements “do not markedly affect the nature of information networks about education” (Schneider et al., 1997, p. 1203). Although institutional incentives did not appear to have an effect on information variables, there were some inferences and correlations that could be made about information incentives, quality, socioeconomic status, and racial segregation (Lubienski, 2005; Schneider et al., 1997).

Schneider et al. (1998) put forth an interesting theoretical argument on school choice. The underlying premise of their line of reasoning is rooted in the theory that market-like reforms (e.g., school choice programs) are capable of operating efficiently and effectively even when low levels of information are found among citizens and/or consumers. Four hypotheses were put forth and analyzed. Through the use of a multiple regression analysis, Schneider et al. (1998) tested the following hypotheses:

- (1) parental knowledge of school characteristics is a function of ability, incentives, and whether parents believe a particular school attribute to be important; (2) parents will select schools for their children that rate high on the dimensions that they value; (3) the “marginal consumer” will be more knowledgeable about schools than other parents; and (4) marginal consumers will have more accurate information on dimensions that they value and are more likely to select schools for their children that rate high on these dimensions. (p. 776)

The findings of the Schneider et al. (1998) study suggest that lower income parents obtain and consider relatively small amounts of information about actual conditions in schools. Although this factor was apparent in their examination, it was also “evidence of a matching process in which children are enrolled in schools that are higher on the dimensions of education that their parents think are important” (Schneider et al., 1998, p. 776). This is precisely the allocative efficiency argument put forth by Schneider, Marshall, Roch, and Teske (1999) that elucidates the idea that choice coupled with better matching processes will lead to heightened efficiency. Schneider et al. (1998) then moved their analysis away from the behavioral factors affecting the mean—or average—parent and attempted to identify and examine perceptions of parents who were considered informed in regard to school conditions. The Schneider et al. findings infer that there is a closer match in relation to the attainment of information on school conditions among parents who fell into the subset of more informed consumers and, consequently, the conditions of these schools were more on par with what parents wanted, demanded, and desired.

Proxy Shopping and Beyond

In 1992 Rose-Ackerman put forth the idea of “proxy shopping” in her book *Rethinking the Progressive Agenda: The Reform of the American Regulatory State* to hopefully better grasp the fundamental frameworks for social service vouchers—education being one of them. The origin of the proxy shopping framework came from Havighurst’s (1970) application to medical care. During this time, the early 1990s, there was a major push for the “reinvention of government” (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992, p. 47) through various mechanics that sought to promote and encourage new ways to deliver

public services. The idea of proxy shopping is rather straight-forward: government agencies that fund voucher programs reimburse the suppliers for the delivery of public services by setting a rate that is “equal to the amount paid by unsubsidized customers for the same services” (Rose-Ackerman, 1992, p. 87). To simplify, if a disadvantaged child were to use a voucher to attend a participating private or not-for-profit school the rate of reimbursement would be equal to what self-paying clients of that school pay for similar services.

Rose-Ackerman (1992) argued that organizations responsible for the delivery of government subsidized services to the disadvantaged are often “discouraged from competing with one another” (p. 97). The policy paradox (Stone, 1998) here is that voucher schematics encourage a heavy competition among service delivery organizations to increase quality and keep prices as low as possible. It often is thought that when these government-subsidized organizations compete it will lead to a strained system that lacks coordination, flexibility, and responsiveness. Through economic analysis of market fundamentals the idea of vouchers emerged.

The proxy shopping voucher framework proposes that disadvantaged clients can use vouchers to purchase services from any of the qualified and subsidized providers. Rose-Ackerman (1992) focused on the notion of proxy shopping to control for quality while eliminating threats of duplication and waste, which often are elements argued by voucher opponents as the underlying externalities produced by this type of set up. Interestingly, Bell (2005) asserted that due to the myriad factors involved in choosing schools parents might make a rational, calculated decision and end up choosing a school for their child that is not a good fit. This is primarily due to social strata into which the

parents fall (Borman & Dowling, 2003; Coleman, 1966) and the social network with which the parents are affiliated (Bell, 2005).

Voucher strategies are an accepted practice for injecting market forces into the provision of critical social services (Rose-Ackerman, 1992). In the most fundamental and elementary sense, and in line with market model ideologies, suppliers of government-subsidized social services would have to contend with the same market pressures as those entities that provide unsubsidized services. It is logical to deduce that “[a] subsidized customer who is dissatisfied with the price-quality combinations offered by a supplier is free to search for another who can provide higher-quality goods or lower prices” (Rose-Ackerman, 1992, p. 98). In an economic context, this competition would—and should—lead to an arrangement where clients would demand the highest possible quality offered at the lowest price necessary to cover suppliers’ marginal cost (Rose-Ackerman, 1992).

To guarantee such a framework myriad elements must be considered and taken into account by policymakers. The ability for individual clients to make informed decisions about quality and price often are not that high due to lack of knowledge of service providing organizations and the cost incurred by suppliers of subsidized services. As a result, the central premise behind a voucher setup in its purest form “is that informed market decisions by recipients of services will ensure optimal quality” (Rose-Ackerman, 1992, p. 109). Viewing vouchers in this light, a central paradox arises: vouchers are intended for disadvantaged populations that generally have less ability (i.e., less information, capital, time, etc.) to determine such quality-price arrangements.

This dilemma is exacerbated because these choices would have to be made by the people (i.e., parent and/or guardian) who care for this disadvantaged population. Rose-

Ackerman (1992) contended that if these needy beneficiaries do not have guardians to make these decisions for them, vouchers are of no use at all. This is why understanding and determining the satisfaction levels and perceptions of the caretakers of these children with disabilities are of chief importance for achieving a political, social, and economic accord—so to speak—of the quality-price rudiments of voucher planning and programming. Rose-Ackerman postulated that “[e]ven if most dependent people do have parents or family members who can be charged with spending the voucher, the funding agency [which subsidizes the voucher] may believe that these people will not adequately represent the beneficiaries’ interests” (pp. 99-100).

Rose-Ackerman (1992) progressed to show the relationship between that of proxy shopping and voucher planning in the realm of education—seen as a social service. Her analysis began with discussing the origins of the voucher movement, starting with Friedman’s (1962) *Capitalism and Freedom*. Since the time of Friedman’s publication, numerous academics associated with all political and economic mindsets have proposed voucher plans in hopes of allocating choice to parents, limiting bureaucratization, increasing organizational elements, and promoting an enhanced family-school relationship (Chubb & Hanushek, 1990; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Rose-Ackerman, 1992; Schnieder et al., 2000). Within the voucher framework it is presupposed and assumed that “the mobility of consumers is an essential prerequisite to ensuring the distribution of high-quality social services” (Rose-Ackerman, 1992, p. 114). If mobility is not present the consumer of the subsidized service cannot make a prudent choice based on quality and price. Mobility has been identified as an issue with the McKay Scholarship Program as parents who opt to use the voucher to take their child out of their attending public

school and either place them at another public school or enroll them at a private or not-for-profit school must make accommodations for their child to be transported to and from school. Some parents might not have the abilities to transport due to the hardship placed onto them (i.e., financial and transactional). Therefore, there is no real mechanism to monitor and/or regulate the quality of institutions offering the subsidized services.

Rose-Ackerman (1992) argued, under her proposed proxy shopping model, that the socioeconomically disadvantaged tend to exhibit higher levels of immobility, while parents who pay for most—if not all—of their child’s education are completely mobile. Still, when immobile parents are afforded a subsidy (i.e., the McKay Scholarship) they can become as mobile as paying parents and “the nonpaying consumers will be assured high-quality service” (Rose-Ackerman, 1992, p. 115). An interesting point made by Rose-Ackerman is that under these conditions, subsidized social services such as nursing home care and deinstitutionalization arrangements for the intellectually disabled would be feasible. Yet, since education is subsidized by the state for all children, it would not be feasible due to the constraints imposed by the mobility issue. Rose-Ackerman postulated that, due to the intricate nature of public education and differing levels of mobility,

High-income [more affluent] parents do not face the entire opportunity cost of their choices. Even if well-off parents are permitted to use their own funds to supplement the public subsidy, their choices may not be a reliable guide to quality. Neither vouchers nor proxy shopping can be viable mechanisms for regulating quality without substantial continuing public regulation. (p. 115)

Goldring and Phillips (2008) postulated that “[o]f those parents that participate in school choice, some parents may choose schools in an attempt to increase their satisfaction with their children’s schools” (p. 212). Participation in school choice among the public, private, and non-profit realms might occur because parents are dissatisfied with the previous school their child attended. It is argued that parents who do participate in school choice programs are, in fact, choosing away from a particular school (Martinez, Thomas, & Kremerer, 1994). Accordingly, Goldring and Phillips (2008) highlighted several academic studies (Bosetti 2004; Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1992; Driscoll, 1992; Martinez et al., 1994); Witte, 1996) that confirm and demonstrate “that parents tend to be more satisfied with the school their child attends if they are able to choose the school when compared to parents who are assigned to a school” (p. 212) according to the district in which they reside. Thus, having the option to choose—in accordance with public choice theory—will heighten satisfaction among education consumers simply by allowing choice.

Progressing beyond the rather rudimentary reason of simply having a choice, there are other reasons why parents might feel greater satisfaction when participating in school choice programs. Goldring and Phillips (2008) highlighted two central arguments. The first is that parents would feel greater satisfaction for having the freedom to make a rational and calculated decision about the myriad factors considered in choosing schools. Second, the investment of time and energy, coupled with heightened transaction and opportunity costs, will lead parents to think they made a proper and prudent choice. With these reasons for perceived heightened satisfaction, Goldring and Phillips speculated

“that parents who are more dissatisfied with their public schools would be more likely to choose a private school over a public magnet school” (p. 212).

School Choice and the John M. McKay Scholarship Program

Viewing the McKay Scholarship Program through a systemic lens, many factors and components such as funding, management, parental choice, and educational planning are all interrelated. Funding and parental choice are at the crux of this program and all other components depend on the amount of money allocated to the program. If funding is increased on a per child basis, a heightened and increased concentration of funds can be allocated to the educational planning. If there is less funding and, therefore, a decrease in participating schools, parents will have fewer options from which to choose.

The management and implementation of the McKay Scholarship Program closely parallels the “garbage-can model of choice” (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972, p. 2) Like the garbage-can model, many factors are injected and infused into this program’s parameters and subsequent procedures, processes, and practices then are spit out, forming outputs that contribute to the construction of policy. These outcomes comprise the formulation and structural foundations for the maintenance, operation, and evaluation of the McKay Scholarship Program. Cookson (1994) argued that within the school choice framework, the “garbage-can theory of decision making” (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972) assumes that policies are chosen for conflicting reasons and because it is a viable and available policy that fits well into the organization’s short-term objectives (pp. 8-9). The conflicting values that arise in the school choice model for decision making are that of autonomy, competition, and individualism. These values play a primary role in the formulation and implementation of policy that focuses on increasing market and choice

objectives while balancing democratic and social elements. From an organizational perspective, planning and evaluation, from a systems level approach must occur in order to prudently articulate future planning and policy approaches. Interestingly, an incorporation of citizen perceptions often is not taken into account—except for the few studies that have attempted to gauge perceptions of parental units who have their child enrolled in a private school under the McKay Scholarship (Weidner & Herrington, 2006; Winters & Green, 2011), further adding to the significance of this dissertation.

Allocative and Productive Efficiency

School choice initiatives that are devised, installed, and implemented through public choice mechanics are grounded in the preconception that allowing consumers to have a choice in the public or private nature of the service will lead to a more efficient and effective allocation of services. That being said, it is frequently and habitually assumed that the private sector can perform more efficiently than the public sector (Connell, 2013; Dobson, 2008; McLaughlin, 2005; Prasch & Sheth, 2000). This is a central paradigm that can be seen when analyzing the construction and installation of the McKay Scholarship Program, primarily due to the sensitive and disadvantaged population that it services. The market model—based on principles of supply and demand, public choice mechanics, and overall efficiency—is apparent in the analysis of educational vouchers and, more specifically, of the McKay Scholarship Program. Schneider et al. (2000) maintained that in regard to education reform the demand side of the reforms are “just as important as the supply side. However, much less is known about the demand-side of schools reforms” (p. 57). Applying this logic to market metaphor, there are numerous elements found in education that make the nature of its service

provision different than “many other services sold in private markets” (Schneider et al., 2000, p. 57). Schneider et al. saw education as partly a public good. This quasi-public good then is transformed into an arrangement where there is a direct payment for services rendered, which differentiates education services from other private goods primarily because there is “the ability to withhold payment” (Schneider et al., 2000, p. 57). Therefore, the demand side must be as important as the supply side primarily because the fundamental principles of the market metaphor have been tweaked and circumnavigated to create a market for the provision of an imperative quasi-public good. It is important to note that the “the quality of parent choice helps structure the quality of the quasi-market for schools that choice creates” (Schneider et al., 2000, p. 89).

Vandenberghe (1999) examined the institutional arrangements that exist in education in Western democratic countries. The author made it evident that economic analysis is indispensable in understanding the coordination of these institutional arrangements. The contemporary institutional outlays for education have pushed for an extended progression and gradation of choice that aims to create a “competitive environment for schools and teachers” (Vandenberghe, 1999, p. 271). From an economic perspective, creating competition among schools and teachers should create an atmosphere that increases equity and efficiency in the provision of educational services. The push for market reforms in Western countries is at odds with the bureaucratic structures that are central to maintenance of democratic administration and thought. Vandenberghe focused mainly on the analysis of how these institutional arrangements encourage market mechanics in education and how relevant they are economically. The central argument of Vandenberghe’s thesis, which is considered the apex of the push for

school choice reforms, is that a combination of both bureaucratic control and market models could create an education complex in Western countries that increases educational outputs and overall efficiency while decreasing the effects that threaten the larger and broader functioning and coordination of educational arrangements. The injection of market-based reforms would, as argued by many, create a superlative educational system (Arsen & Ni, 2011; Lubeinski, 2006). In this light, the educational complex no longer can be seen as purely heightening a country's human capital (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961). Rather, it is directly related to how well the overall system functions and now is based on individual decisions that were once a responsibility of society on the whole.

Schneider et al. (2000) put forth an interesting argument about how extending choice in the educational arena enhances efficiency in both an allocational and productive sense. Schneider et al. pointed out that in education systems—which are seen partly a public good—characterize schooling “by only an indirect link between the payment for and the receipt of the service, which blunts some of the power consumers have over private goods, such as the ability to withhold payment” (p. 58). Allocative efficiency is increased by choice, in this regard, when a better match exists among what parents—as consumers—want and what they get. This matching process is essential to a choice system primarily because this is the underlying motive of the market-based model for vouchers systems. Additionally, productive efficiency is enhanced when educational institutions that are charged with supplying the goods and services associated with public education “fall under competitive pressure to improve the quality of their product to attract and retain parent-consumers” (Schneider et al., 2000, p. 164). These two

arguments are the root of school choice planning and programming since the overall goal is to create a system that runs off these market paradigms for increased production and administration of educational goods and services. The next section discusses the elements associated with information asymmetry in regard to choosing schools and as a form of market failure.

Information Asymmetry

The argument of information asymmetries is well-known and documented as a cause of market failure. Asymmetry of information often materializes from inadequate information sharing and has the possibility of resulting in negative consequences for both the information poor and the information rich. Information asymmetry has been “insufficiently studied as a possible cause of underdevelopment and inequality” (Clarkson, Jacobsen, & Batcheller, 2007, p. 827). Schneider et al. (2000) argued since government and public institutions are responsible for ensuring that these failures do not occur, it is necessary to understand the complexities of how available information is used by parent-consumers in the process of matching children and schools to increase efficiency. Arguing that the injection of market forces into education never could be a truly plausible and viable option, Viteritti (2010) highlighted the foremost problem: that most markets do not possess ample mechanics to correct their deficiencies. This was an evident feature in the recent American recession. Therefore, Viteritti maintained,

Since markets are incapable of self-correction, government intervention is required to address the resulting distress when markets fail. This is not to say that the political process has been responsive to the educational needs of the most disadvantaged students either. It has produced a public school system that

provides more resources to the advantaged than the disadvantaged; and the artificial limits it imposes on voucher and charter programs has resulted in a system of education by chance rather than a system of education by choice. (p. 203)

Within this context, information simply is more readily available to those who are more advantaged and involved in the appropriate networks where information can be disseminated and shared so parents ultimately can reach a rational and practical decision about school setting, quality, and cost.

In the realm of political science, accurately measuring the amount of information citizens receive before making an informed—and rational—decision is an arduous task. Some scholars (Iyengar, 1989; Lupia, 1994; Popkin, 1991; Prasch & Sheth, 2000; Sniderman, Brody, & Tetlock, 1991; Zaller, 1992) have argued that, regardless of the relatively low levels of information obtained and deciphered, citizens still can acquire sufficient information to make suitable and semi-prudent decisions—although it might take a much longer time for these decisions to come to fruition than for those who have ample information readily available. The cost of searching for information (i.e., from an economic perspective) could be one explanation for the relatively low levels of citizen information (Schneider et al., 2000). Couple this problem with the many facets of school choice and the task of accurately identifying and choosing a school that will suffice according to preference is complicated further.

Alexander (2012) looked at the issues of information asymmetry, choice, and vouchers. As discussed earlier in this dissertation, the voucher movement is indeed a mechanism to create a marketplace for education whereby increasing the overall

efficiency of the educational complex where competition would enhance the quality of schools. From a public finance perspective, for this to work there would have to be the appearance and maintenance of a “perfect market” where the consumers of the service were rational actors and had all—perfect—information to make a choice. Alexander postulated that, according to the economic theories, this is referred to as the “rational expectations hypothesis” or the “efficient markets hypothesis” (p. 170). Parental choice applies to the efficient market hypothesis because it is supposed that parents will utilize a type of prudence and wisdom in their decision making and will send their children to private schools through the use of public funding instead of forfeiting payment through individual or family resources. In order for a market not to have the potential of failing, it must be perfect, where information flows freely to the consumer and where irrelevant elements—in this case educational elements—are not present as to distort the rational choosing by the parent. According to Alexander, “[i]f parental choice is not based on quality education and instead the school choices are rooted in race, religion, wealth, ethnicity, etc., then you will have ‘imperfect competition.’ Imperfect competition would result in the overall decline in the quality of education” (p. 170). For the voucher, parental choice movement to work parents must have enough information to develop a rational expectation that accounts for all factors such as quality, academic excellence, demographic composition, and fundamental pedagogy.

In 2012, Stiglitz put forth his recognition that the idea—or paradigm—of rational markets in establishing choice schemes has hurt the country pervasively as political elements have increased economic inefficiency and equality. This is due to one reason: markets cannot be “perfect” and no consumer of public or private goods and services can

have all the information necessary to make a proper and appropriate decision. When looking at the American education complex it appears that many parents simply rely on networks to make critically decisive decisions on how their personal proportion of public dollars, through voucher mechanics, should be spent.

Schnieder et al. (2000) examined the multi-faceted manners in which parents search for information and, more importantly, whether these ways of searching changed with the availability and accessibility of choice. They were overly concerned about the way parents sought out information and established networks of information about schools. Prior studies confirmed by their own research and evidence, “showed how important talking to parents, neighbors, and school officials can be in the flow of information” (Schnieder et al., 2000, p. 264). Since lack of information for both the consumer and supplier can lead to market failures it was applicable and appropriate for Schnieder et al. to determine what kind of parent—based on demographic information—obtained information about schools and how they received the information.

Consequently, Schnieder et al. determined:

more highly educated parents can rely on their friends, neighbors, and other parents to gather information about schools, who, not surprisingly, are also highly educated. Since these more highly educated discussants are also somewhat more likely to have better information about certain aspects of the schools, highly educated parents can gather information about the schools as part of their normal daily rounds. In contrast, less educated parents cast their net more widely in the search for information, expending more time and energy seeking out sources of information that are sometimes less reliable. (p. 265)

From a transaction perspective, it is more costly and less efficient—in terms of monetary and opportunity cost—for those with less education to expend this time and energy either to search for what can be considered reliable information or to find a parental network where this information is readily accessible. Hence, a major contention of Schnieder et al. (2000) was that information levels among citizens often is very low due to the cost associated with searching and seeking out information. A major tenet of public policy, administration, and bureaucracy is principles of organization, which encompass decision making processes. When citizens attempt to make decisions, there are benefits and costs that are taken into consideration before a decision based on a prudent calculation can occur. The benefits of decision making are that decision accuracy leads to a better, more appropriate decision; the costs often are associated with the cognitive effort expended in attempting to make a rationally calculated decision (Schnieder et al., 2000, p. 48). Therefore, as individuals, citizens often are seen as “cognitive misers” (Schnieder et al., 2000, p. 48) who seek to maximize reward while limiting the associated costs related to reaching that particular benefit (Sniderman et al., 1991). Economists from all academic and ideological backgrounds have realized that “education has distinctive features that imply that market provision may lead to lower levels of educational attainment in a population than would maximize societal welfare” (Mitch, 2008, p. 136). Both Cowen (1988) and Bator (1958) have called this, in a formal economic sense, market failure.

Ferreya and Liang (2012) developed a theoretical model of school choice and achievement that takes into account information asymmetries in the delivery of educational services through a computational configuration. The premise of their model

is that households—focused on parents—and policymakers do not have a mechanism to measure school effort and quality. With this in mind, schools have an economic incentive “to under provide effort” (Ferreyra & Liang, 2012, p. 237). Moral hazard subsequently arises and places certain burdens onto both public and private schools. Ferreyra and Lian argued that public schools are laden with additional distortion “because of limited competition and fixed funding” (p. 237).

A proposed method to mitigate the moral hazard placed upon these schools is for households to monitor the efforts of schools. Yet, the free-rider problem will be evident in these processes. It is virtually impossible for all stakeholders to monitor the effort that both public and private schools assert in the provision of education services given that many households do not have children in school and those who do might not have the economic capacities to monitor how effective a given school is. Ferreyra and Liang (2012) employed a calibrated model to examine two central elements of the provision of education: private school vouchers and monitoring of the public school systems. Their findings suggest that monitoring at a certain level of households will mitigate the distortions by inducing preference. Theoretically, if the majority of households do monitor all the sectors that provide educational services (i.e., public, private, and not-for-profit), it then is possible to mitigate any information asymmetries that arise and thereby create an equilibrium through monitoring school effort and quality.

Goldring and Phillips (2008) determined that parental choice is largely a process of two elements. The first strand of parental choice surrounds understanding parental decisions to place their children in a private school while the second is focused on parents’ reasoning for choosing among public schools. The literature shows that parents

choose private schools for academic achievement purposes in addition to the discipline and safety that such schools offer (Bauch, 1988, Goldring & Phillips, 2008; Kraushaar, 1972). The second strand of parental choice focuses on the public school and institutional arrangements in both intra-district and inter-district choice programming (Goldring & Phillips, 2008; Hamilton & Guin, 2006; Smrekar & Goldring, 1999; Wells & Crain, 1997). The literature on parental choice among private schools suggests “that social class creaming takes place as parents with wider social networks and more access to information are more likely to participate in the choice process” (Goldring & Phillips, 2008, p. 210).

Wells and Crain (1997) studied this idea of creaming (Belfield & Levin, 2002; Figlio & Stone, 2001; Lacireno-Paquet, Holyoke, Moser, & Henig, 2002) determined that cultural capital is greater among higher status groups that undoubtedly have less market constraints imposed upon their decision gathering and making processes. This is an advantage that the higher status groups have over those with lower socio-economic status. Following Rose-Ackerman’s (1992) proxy shopping argument, those who fall into a lower status group have a way of gaining this valuable information by following the decisions and actions—or choices—of parents who pay for their children’s educational services.

Goldring and Hausman (1999) explored the information seeking behaviors of parents who were considered non-choosers primarily because their child attended the school that they were zoned for according to the location of their residence. Further, these non-choosers simply did not choose to stay in the zoned school; they also did not seek out any information about other school options. Goldring and Hausman found that

these non-choosing parents generally were satisfied with the public schools in their neighborhood and that most came from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Similarly, Wells and Crain (1997) found that parents of higher socioeconomic status preferred to analyze options and participate in choice programs. The Goldring and Hausman (1999) study also found that those ‘active’ choosers—who tend to be the more dissatisfied population of parents in their communities—have great family incomes and limited concern for conveniences such as proximity of school.

Demographic Influence

There are several demographic variances that differentiate parents and the decisions that they make when choosing schools. Coleman and Hoffer (1987) examined educational attainment among parents and found that parents with a higher degree—or more education—tend to have a heightened level of interest in the education system. Accordingly, parents with more education place a greater “emphasis on the importance of education, and they are more likely to seek out information on the varieties of educational choices” (Goldring & Phillips, 2008, p. 211) available to them. The literature on parents’ education and school choice—through empirical analysis—indicates a positive and consistent relationship among the educational attainment of parents and the probability that those parents will choose to send their child to a private school (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Goldring & Phillips, 2008; Lankford & Wyckoff, 1992; Noell, 1982).

Family or household income is another demographic indicator that exhibits a positive relationship when parents choose schools (Goldring & Phillips, 2008). Yang and Kayaardi (2004) saw family income as a resource that parents have both to gather information and to make a choice. Notwithstanding parents’ financial resources, there

are other resource constrictions (e.g., time, mobility, etc.) that typically make it more difficult for parents to make factually informed and financially prudent decisions with regard to their children's schooling and educational environment. Therefore, more income, alone, means a greater probability that a family can afford a private education for their children and/or subsidize the remaining balance of the cost of attendance. This is a major argument in the school choice debate primarily due to the principles of social equity and overall fairness in education.

Schneider, Schiller, and Coleman (1996) determined that the greater income a family has, the more likely they are to send their child to a private school in comparison with those families with less resources who cannot afford to do so. Interestingly, Smrekar and Goldring (1999) concluded that in the realm of public school choice, magnet schools—which promote a certain and specified curriculum—tend to enroll students of a higher socioeconomic status. Higher income, therefore, plays a critical role in determining which networks parents have—or can become involved in—and this leads to a heightened degree of information in regard to several determinates that parents use when choosing among the vast array schools that vary in their demographic compositions, academic excellence, curriculum, and secular affiliation.

Goldring and Phillips (2008) posited that “[t]he choice literature also identifies a child’s race as an important predictor of school choice, though the results are often inconclusive” (p. 212). Goldring and Phillips pointed to two studies (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore, 1982) that determined that Hispanics and Black students—as compared to White students—are underrepresented in private schools. When the researchers controlled for religion they concluded that Black students “were

just as likely as white students to attend a private school” (Goldring & Phillips, 2008, p. 212). Conversely, Long and Toma (1988) determined that White students were generally more likely to attend private, religious schools. A central component of the race argument in school choice centers around the idea that while “racial minorities on average possess fewer resources than whites, we expect that all else held constant, parents of black children will be less likely to consider private schools than parents of white children and will be more likely to apply to magnet schools” (Goldring & Phillips, 2008, p. 212) in the public school arena. This is primarily because magnet schools have various enrollment policies to keep a racial balance (Goldring & Phillips, 2008).

Politics and Choice

According to Moe (2001), at the beginning of the twentieth century the most controversial issue in the realm of education was school vouchers. Moe suggested that this is a rather simple idea with not such a simple answer. The heart and soul of the voucher movement is the proposition that “government should expand the choices of parents by providing them with publicly funded grants, or vouchers, that they can apply toward tuition at private schools” (Moe, 2001, p. 1). The contested education voucher initiatives are two-sided with a hard dose of partisan politics and intertwined with philosophical, political, and economic ideologies. Later, Viteritti (2010) emphasized that politics in the education “market” triumphs that of the tried-and-true modes of economic analysis. This is the winning narrative—the fact that market mechanics have emerged as the political, economic, and social storyline in the policy framework for educational vouchers.

Moe (2001) maintained that the “[l]eaders of the voucher movement see the public school system as a stagnant bureaucracy that does not and cannot provide the nation’s children with quality educations” (p. 1). With this guiding philosophy in mind, the voucher push is legitimized because its proponents purport that vouchers would produce a competitive education market on which government currently has a monopoly. Additionally, choice advocates argue that supporting and promoting the possibility for parents to choose their desired school will increase student achievement and parental involvement as well as give the current educational complex a healthy thrust toward excellence (Cookson, 1994; Hausman & Goldring, 2000; Nathan, 1989; Raywid, 1989). Some see the vouchers movement as a conduit to spur advantageous competition that would “promote higher student achievement, and bring about significant improvements in social equity for the disadvantaged” (Moe, 2001, p. 1). Thus, according to Schenider et al. (2000), a system for education constructed around principles of market fundamentalism would lay emphasis on “decentralization, competition, and consumer sovereignty through choice” (p. 262). Cookson (1994) further emphasized the relation between market reforms, political ideology, and choice affiliations by placing school choice in what he considers the “new paradigm” (p. 34). Accordingly,

Market-oriented reforms draw ideological support from a group of young conservative thinkers who are extremely well placed in the Republican [P]arty. These are the advocates of self-help, or the ‘New Paradigm’—actually a very old paradigm, whose origins can be traced to the market philosophy of Adam Smith. Essentially, the New Paradigm hypothesizes that state intervention to resolve social problems in fact creates more problems because it robs individuals of their

freedom of choice, their integrity, and their capacity to influence markets as consumers. (Cookson, 1994, p. 34)

Surely, this idea strikes at the core of American economic thinking. Yet, when one considers education as a societal public good it is quite difficult to draw a conclusion and derive public policies based simply on these core ideological beliefs. The American bipartisan political environment is even more fervent today than when Cookson wrote this statement in 1994.

On the contrary, those who oppose the injection of market forces into public education argue that “this power has been used to isolate schools, teachers, and educational administrators from the legitimate demands of the communities supposedly served by the schools” (Schneider et al., 2000, p. 262). Opponents see the voucher debate much differently. The view from the opposition’s side is that public education complex is doing just fine “given the burdens under which they operate, and they need more political support rather than less” (Moe, 2001, p. 1). Vouchers, as it is argued by education voucher opponents, will divert resources and children out of the public system (Oplatka, 2007), thereby creating havoc, chaos, and a greater burden on the public school systems—possibly leading to bankruptcies (Chriss, Nash, & Stern, 1992; Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Merrifield, 2002). Opponents see the problem with school choice mechanics as a simple one—the public school system cannot improve under these market based prescriptions primarily because schools and educational institutions do not operate, perform, and behave as markets do (Fusarelli, 2002).

As resources and students are being diverted away from the public school system, vouchers have “undermine[d] cherished values that the public school system has long

stood for—common schooling, equal opportunities, democratic control—and create a system driven by private interests” (Moe, 2001, p. 1), and one that is subject to the fundamental market mechanics. Further, public schools that are affected by market pressures are susceptible not only to losing students but the funding that accompanies public school enrollment; consequently, public schools are left with less experienced teachers because of the lack of resources to pay them what is on par with their private sector counterparts (Cullen, Jacob, & Levitt, 2005).

These elements contribute to the framework put forth by the opposition as the totality of negative elements lead to social and economic inequalities among schools; as a result, these inequalities trickle down to the student population (Howe, Eisenhart, & Betebenner, 2001). The main elements of the market model are those of the principles associated with supply and demand and it is often thought that these characteristics would hamper the development of educational arrangements that should be focused on promoting and constantly bettering the delivery and maintenance of a vital “quasi-public” good. Since local government is the primary supplier of education, proponents argue that choice lessens the power and control of schooling bureaucracies at the local, county level. Mead (2010) aptly summarized this argument by stating that,

Policymakers must take steps to expand education options for children with disabilities and make it easier for their parents to access needed services. But special education vouchers are not the best way to do this; they create other, adverse consequences, such as further segregating or perpetuating double standards for children with disabilities and creating perverse incentives for parents and educators. (p. 10)

Secular Institutions and School Choice

Sutton and King (2011) explored the legal scrutiny surrounding school choice mechanics. The legality of school choice programs, including the inclusion of private secular or parochial schools, exists in a highly turbulent political environment. Religion undoubtedly is a “flashpoint of conflict in the national struggle over vouchers (Moe, 2001, p. 194). The primary contention for the incorporation of religious affiliated schools into the larger voucher framework is not the mere fact that public dollars are being used to fund school choice programming but that these funds are being used to pay for a child’s education in a religious environment.

Advocates for the integration of religious schools into school choice planning argue that if secular schools are allowed to generate revenue from these government expenditures, then not allowing religious affiliated schools to participate would violate their rights to equal protection (Sutton & King, 2011). The school choice framework, according to proponents, would spur a healthy competition among public and private schools thus leading a market where costs are reduced and quality is heightened (Carnoy, 2000; Dahan, 2011; Kane, 2009; Sutton & King, 2011; Schneider et al., 1998; Schneider et al., 1997; Walberg, 2000; Weiss, 1998; Wood, 2007). Moe (2001) saw a vital linkage between competition and religiosity among those that support vouchers:

[b]ecause the vast majority of private schools are now religious, vouchers would give parents very few choices in the private sector if only nonreligious schools were allowed to participate. For the near future, many parents wanting to leave the public schools would find it impossible to do so. Desirable schools would

quickly be filled, and desirable schools in both sectors would continue to attract ‘support’ even if performing poorly. (p. 295)

Subsequently, the reasoning behind school choice programs would be challenged and unstable due to the competitive pressures placed on schools in both sectors to perform effectively (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Moe, 2001; Viteritti, 1999).

Opponents of school choice see the conversion of taxpayer dollars to push further a libertarian agenda where privatization of a critical public service is a chief objective. Further, those that oppose school choice mechanics—which divert public dollars to both secular and non-secular institutions—will “foster government entanglement with churches” (Sutton & King, 2011, p. 245) while serving as a medium for public school re-segregation. The fundamental issue of school choice—as a form of public choice economic thought—goes beyond the context of converting federal and state funding for education into private, for-profit money and it strikes at the heart of the division—separation—of church and state. Accordingly, Moe (2001) argued that:

Voucher opponents are strident in wanting religious schools excluded. But here too there are mixed motives at work. Some, like the teachers unions, have a direct stake in preventing children and money from flowing into the private sector, and excluding religious schools from any voucher plan is an obvious means of eliminating most of the exit options. For the other opponents, the antagonism to religious schools is more visceral: they simply don’t like religion and don’t want public money being used to promote it. (p. 295)

A large proportion of children who attend private schools in America attend a parochial school (Cohen-Zada & Sanders, 2008). The argument and debate surrounding

school choice and voucher programs is that public money—through taxes—is being used to fund student attendance at private, parochial schools. Proponents of school choice often infer that heightening consumer choice will allow for a more efficient and less-constrained educational system even if parents decide to use their voucher money at a private religious school. This debate is not new to the area of education and since the creation of the common public school system, which followed constitutional provisions for the separation of church and state, it has been a constant struggle to resist temptation to utilize public funding at religious institutions for educational purposes (Ravitch, 1974).

The perplexing issues in regard to the scope, availability, and location of services provided to special education services imply that there are many advantages and disadvantages for public schools to provide educational services through private or parochial schools (Huefner & Huefner, 1992; Katsiyannis & Maag, 1998; Osborne, 1994). Katsiyannis and Maag (1998) argued that “[t]he issue of children with disabilities who attend private or parochial schools could potentially redefine public school districts’ responsibilities under IDEA. Historically, extensive financial support has been committed to establish special education programs within public schools” (p. 287). The establishment of cooperation among public schools and parochial institutions came in the wake of public school efforts to resist the temptation to contract these services out to private, for-profit agencies. Many of the agencies sought to provide residential services to this vulnerable population. The IDEA mandate set a foreground for the establishment of a cooperation where students with diagnosed disabilities could receive services that were growing beyond the span of what the public school system could provide.

Friedman's (1955, 1962) framework for an educational voucher system established a base for the integration of private, religious schools into choice mechanics. There are many reasons why parents might choose to take their child out of the public school system and use a voucher, chit, or tuition waiver to place their child into a parochial school. These core choices revolve around the various market metaphors that comprise the contemporary voucher system: the idea that parents should be able to educate their child the best way they see fit, and "to help preserve a religious identity and instill religious values" (Cohen-Zada, 2006, p. 85).

Ji and Boyatt (2007) studied the fundamental reasons why parents choose parochial schools and whether these parents are likely to favor educational vouchers. Ji and Boyatt examined parents' religiosity through an analysis of five large Protestant affiliated schools in Los Angeles, California. The findings of the Ji and Boyatt study suggest that parents whose children are enrolled in the Protestant schools tend to be more financially secure and have a higher educational status than parents whose children are enrolled in public schools. Additionally, the parochial schools examined tend to "attract religious parents with strong doctrinal beliefs and regular religious practices" (Ji & Boyatt, 2007, p. 149). These parents tended to go above and beyond when seeking the right school as they have the desire to place their child in an educational environment that is conducive to their personal belief systems and expected schools to emphasize the religious element in the educational curriculum. Importance also was placed on academics and safety. Interestingly, Ji and Boyatt discovered that these parents tended to take a neutral stance towards school vouchers and that there might be "reason to doubt the claim that urban parents endorse the proposal for school vouchers primarily due to

their aspiration for academic quality and safe and drug-free schools” (p. 149). All in all, these parochial parents tended to perceive school vouchers through the position in which the church takes and this significance placed on vouchers by the church was held in higher regard than other factors such as academic excellence, safety, and drug-free environments.

It is relevant to assume that the more importance parents place on religion in choosing schools, the more policymakers would be inclined to devise programs that allow parents to utilize public funding for parochial education. After all, the curriculum and core structure of pedagogy would differ greatly for a child who stays in the public school system. Sianjina (1999) argued that the controversy and debate surrounding school choice programs is “more complicated than the question of governmental establishment of religion. It involves parental choices and rights, freedom of religious exercise, and the role of the state in fostering an educated citizenry” (p. 110).

Accordingly, is it right to say that if a large proportion of parents desire an education for their child that is sectarian, should government allow for the conversion and allocation of public funds to religious schools for the primary purpose of increasing the overall effectiveness of the entire education system? Does parental involvement increase if parents are allowed to send their child to a religious school rather than staying in the common public system? What about student achievement and parental choice? Choice and freedom to exercise religion are at the core of the school choice debate. Previous in the literature review it was pointed out that politics, economics, and social desires all are evident in the body of literature on school choice. A major contention is that public funds are being comingled with religious establishments, thus circumnavigating the

separation of church and state. Proponents of school vouchers contend that if parents desire a sectarian education for their child, then the state should allow them to take the money earmarked for their child's education and put it towards the cost of tuition at a private, religious school.

If only some of the tuition is covered at the private, religious school, then how can the voucher system be considered equitable if the remainder of costs must be covered by the parent. This idea leads to a principal of exclusion of some parents who have the financial and economic means to subsidize the remainder of the tuition. Even if the educational voucher covered the entire cost of attendance, there could be other hindrances that would bar some parents from placing their child in the religious school of their choice. For example, wealthier parents have the means to transport and better compare the services that would be offered at a given school. Further, do parents of different socio-economic statuses have the same networks due to their religious affiliation?

The following section explores the various elements of mobility from both a transactional and a monetary perspective, and highlights the various elements that might hinder or persuade parents to opt into choice programs. The focus is on the burden placed upon parents to transport their child to the school of their choice as this is an underlying precursor to participation in the McKay Scholarship Program.

School Choice and Mobility

Much like Tiebout's (1956) model, the McKay Scholarship Program assumes that parents have the mobility to send their child to a public, private, or not-for-profit school outside of their assigned neighborhood school. According to the John McKay

Scholarship for Students with Disabilities Fact Sheet for Parents which was distributed to all Exceptional Student Education (ESE) parents in the Miami Dade County Public School System (MDCPS, 2014) in March of 2014, parents who choose to send their child to a private school must provide transportation. If a parent chooses the public option, there are a limited number of public schools from which the parent may choose that will provide transportation to students outside of the district in which they reside; this is a major influencer when deciding on the public or private option of the McKay Scholarship Program. This fact—mobility—hinders the ability of parents with less means (i.e., time and money) to choose a school that would best fit or match their child’s educational needs and objectives set forth in their IEP.

Traditionally, a portion of property tax dollars went to local schools to provide residents with public schools among the various other bundles of local public goods and services. Residents—not only property owners—pay taxes to fund their neighborhood schools. Renters pay as well since the property owner most likely is factoring the cost of property taxes into the rent. Property tax dollars are the primary mode of funding public education establishments. Teibout (1956) argued the idea of voting with your feet; this model for obtaining governmental services that best fit one’s expectations is built around the assumption that residents of a particular area have the means to move to another area where they believe government will provide these expected goods and services.

The McKay Scholarship Program also has this assumption of mobility built in as it is up to the parents who chose a school outside of district to provide transportation to and from school. As stated earlier, the public option does provide transportation to some schools outside of the assigned neighborhood school if the parent decides to remain in the

public school system. An interesting future examination could revolve around whether private and not-for-profit schools that service McKay recipients offer modes of transportation to relieve parents of this financial and transactional burden as there are transactional costs associated with transportation as well as lost opportunity costs.

Rose-Ackerman's (1992) "proxy shopping" model fits well into the school choice framework. Simply put, she argued that parents do have the means to determine an appropriate cost-quality relationship simply by following the parents who fully subsidize their children's education. Thus, if parents pay out-of-pocket for education, it is rational to suppose that the relationship among cost and quality is high. Similar to Tiebout's (1956) framework, Rose-Ackerman's (1992) proposal also assumes that parents do indeed have a means of sourcing schools with a high quality to cost ratio. But do they have the capacity and mobility to follow through on what one would think is a prudent decision?

In economic terms, the heightening of transaction costs and diminishing of opportunity costs might deter a parent from making a well-informed decision on the school that their child should attend. As a result, utility is lost when parents have to refrain from making a prudent and financially sound decision. This is a conundrum that long has been emphasized in all areas of public administration, yet it is especially important when it has negative effects on social policy and, more particularly, on educational arrangements.

To reinforce further the relationship among socioeconomic forces and properly choosing schools, it is important to highlight research regarding the relationship among housing and education vouchers. DeLuca and Dayton (2009) complimented previous

research on the effects of housing and school voucher programs by studying the social outcomes of students who changed schools—and neighborhood—settings. The authors found that “[s]chool voucher programs have helped disadvantaged youth attend higher-performing private schools in less segregated environments with more middle-class peers” (DeLuca & Dayton, 2009, p. 457). Analyzing social outcomes of both housing policies and school voucher programs, Deluca and Dayton concluded that there are some positive effects of changing schools through choice mechanics, although previous research and the body of knowledge on the subject has not shown strong correlations and relationships among school programs and enhancement of social outcomes for families. The authors suggested that to better determine the various facets and components of housing and school voucher programs, it is necessary to depend less on the statistical modeling methods traditionally used and more on systemic and structural analysis, which should depict an enhanced picture in regard to the mobility aspect of social policy programs including school choice programming. The broader, more macro depiction of household mobility should be incorporated, with a greater focus on the fact that some families simply cannot be involved in transporting their children, into policies that attempt to produce positive externalities in choice programs.

Housing and education appear to go hand-in-hand as they are both critical components of the provision of local public goods and service make up. Brunner, Cho, and Reback (2012) looked at theoretical residential sorting models since a location of a particular household “is closely linked to its demand for local public services, such as schooling” (p. 604). The authors’ key argument was that school choice programs diminish the relationship between household location and options for schooling. These

diminished relationships likely can have an effect on choices of where one resides and on property values. This appears to be a fundamental argument and I maintain that although choice is a prevalent means of choosing a school with a good quality to cost ratio, residents essentially are getting billed more if they opt to attend a school where supplemental costs are required for enrollment. This is not different than when parents choose to enroll their child in a private school and subsidize the full cost of their education because they are now paying property taxes and tuition. Reverting back to the theoretical modeling put forth by Brunner et al (2012), the “computable general equilibrium models suggest these effects could be large, but there is limited empirical evidence concerning whether they actually occur” (p. 604). The authors concluded, through the development of an advanced econometric paper, that state adopted inter-district choice programs—such as the McKay Scholarship Program—distinctly enhance enrollment in desirable districts.

Turner (2004) researched parental involvement in a Midwestern inner city school. The main finding from this study is that parents of children of inner city schools do not fall into the norms of understanding parental involvement, which are, in general, geared toward the more affluent suburban and middle class parents. Turner also found that various involvement measures such as completing and returning forms, taking surveys to gauge numerous issues pertaining to this population, and attending parent-teacher or parent-administrator conferences were a means of increasing parental involvement among inner city parents. The findings of the Turner study suggest that other issues such as poverty, crime, illness, drugs, and alcohol have long been identified as issues affecting inner city communities. From this perspective, it is quite logical to deduce that inner city

parents might not have the appropriate social networks in place, the necessary information, and the means to make a prudent and cost-to-quality calculation when choosing schools as compared to more affluent parents who do possess adequate means to obtain and decipher information in regard to choosing an optimal school for their children.

In regard to the McKay Scholarship Program, it becomes evident that inner city parents might not have the means to transport their children to competing public, private, and not-for-profit schools or, for that matter, to adequately choose a public, private, or non-profit school that would be able to effectively accommodate their children. This is an issue that is relevant to all choice programs and leaves these inner city parents not only at a disadvantage but also susceptible to making a decision that is not based on the vary factors that school choice programs are supposed to encourage in communities. Again, this is a public dilemma that needs to be addressed by local, state, and federal policymakers.

Hanushek and Yilmez (2013) conducted a study that looked at the many contending arguments that surround how public finance policies do not take into consideration why various households respond differently to these policies and how they can be altered to attract and target different residential locations. By incorporating several well-known theories surrounding school choice, Hanushek and Yilmez explained that “[a] unique feature of the U.S. education system is the high degree of both funding and control granted to local governments. As a result, school choice is inextricably tied to residential location decisions” (p. 829). The main contention of their analysis was to show that school choice does not operate differently than other public choice programs

but it is a system of distributing a public good (i.e., education) that is inextricably intertwined with other areas where public choice mechanics play a large role.

Notwithstanding education, public choice models can be seen, at the local level, in “workplace choice, residential choice, and political choice at tax and expendable level (Hanushek & Yilmez, 2013, p. 829).” Hanushek and Yilmez (2013) looked at these factors in a local, metropolitan area. In an attempt to put forward a general equilibrium or balance among school, work, and residential choice, Hanushek and Yilmez found that school choice mechanics were praised for their ability to increase accountability levels while at the same time these choice options have been criticized for tying funding decisions to ability to pay in regard to a specific locale. In this regard, the macro picture and viability of school choice is put into question because one element can affect the other aspects of the public choice framework. For example, a school choice policy aimed at increasing school satisfaction and overall student achievement may have an effect both on choice residence and choice of work. Tiebout (1956) emphasized the understanding that at the local level those who have chosen to relocate due to governmental services provided. With the model put forth by Hanushek and Yilmez (2013), it becomes apparent that without these mechanisms such as the premise of Tiebout’s (1956) theory, the entire local level set up is entangled and further complicated because it is more difficult to understand exactly what citizens want and demand from their local governments.

In regard to the McKay Scholarship program, the Hanushek and Yilmez (2013) argument holds weight. First and foremost is that it is nearly impossible to develop a general equilibrium not only for school choice but the various other public choice models

that exist at the local level. The idea behind the McKay Scholarship Program is to allow for parents to make calculated and informed decisions about the appropriateness of their child's education. At first, and in line with Moe (2001), choosing schools seems like a rather simple concept. Once the school choice scheme is coupled with other public goods and vouchers such as housing, work, and overarching tax framework, the idea gets vastly more complicated.

Main Arguments in the School Choice Debate

This section will discuss the main arguments for and against education vouchers. It is important to understand these contending values and ideological views to better understand the intricacies of voucher models and the broader arguments in regard to school choice. Moe (2001) pointed out that these competing sides make the “simple” idea of school choice vastly complicated due to ideological differences and contesting value systems. The political aspect is animate as both proponents and opponents of education vouchers are most likely affiliated and/or believe in either a more conservative or a more liberal political philosophy. According to Ravitch (2010), the political aspects of choosing sides in the school choice debate highlight the fundamental guiding philosophies that each party—which comprise our bipartisan political system—holds dear. In line with this mode of analysis, Ravitch contended,

The new thinking [regarding school vouchers]—now ensconced in both parties—saw the public school system as obsolete, because it is controlled by the government and burdened by bureaucracy. Government-run schools, said a new generation of reformers, are ineffective because they are a monopoly; as such, they have no incentive to do better, and they serve the interests of adults who

work in the system, not children. Democrats saw an opportunity to reinvent government; Republicans, a chance to diminish the power of the teachers' unions, which, in their view, protect jobs and pensions while blocking effective management and innovation. (p. 9)

Moe (2001) posited that the framework for educational vouchers originally was put forth and argued "in the 1950s by libertarian economist Milton Friedman, and since then the leading figures in the [voucher] movement have tended to be conservatives and Republicans" (p. 2). Support for vouchers also has been advocated for by religious organizations "who object to strictly secular moral climate of the public schools" (Moe, 2001, p. 2) and view voucher planning and programming as a conduit for permitting and empowering families to "pursue a more religious based education for their children in the private sector" (Moe, 2001, p. 2).

A major element and contemporary push within the school choice framework is vouchers. Florida's McKay Scholarship Program is a prime example of this method for choosing schools as many of the recipients require individualized and/or specialized care and educational planning. Cookson (1994) summed up the concept of school vouchers:

School vouchers—publicly funded chits or checks that allow families to enroll their children in a private or public school of their choice—have been proposed as a way of reforming education by some policy analysts since at least the 1950's . If there is one issue that unites the public school establishment, it is vouchers. According to most teachers' unions and other public service organizations, a school voucher program would destroy the public school system because it would remove funds from public schools and allow the best students to opt out of the

public school system. Free-market conservatives are taken with vouchers because they believe in the market-place as a mechanism for reform and are philosophically committed to public policies that lessen the authority of the state. (p. 64-65)

Connell (2013) argued that market reforms, pursued mainly through the neo-liberal political agenda, are the dominant thought process of contemporary education mechanics. The market model, according to this agenda, has produced inequality because, in order “[t]o create markets in education, services and resources have to be rationed, so inequality is built in” (Connell, 2013, p. 279). Market metaphors (Stone, 1998) are seen throughout the underpinnings of school choice paradigms as efficiency has become a central concern for consumers, education professionals, and companies that seek to turn a profit. Connell (2013) asserted that the international embracement of the neo-liberal ideology has led to income disparities that unquestionably threaten the viability of redistributive mechanics. Reverting back to the idea that a public good is a good considered not to have properties of rivalry and excludability, the neo-liberal market “logic” has taken what was once a core and basic public good and turned it into a market where rivalry and exclusion are key economic, social, and political principles.

The political contestation generally is argued and fought out at the highest rungs of American politics. The elitist debate involves both sides of the voucher argument and is rich in political appeal that strikes at the core of democratic foundations and subsequent processes. Moe (2001) put forth an interesting argument on the elite perspective approached through democratic processes and practices:

The democratic roots of this elite-level struggle [regarding vouchers], however, cannot help but run deep. For in the American political system, there is a strong connection between what happens at the upper reaches of politics—the strategies and powers of elites, who wins and who loses, what policies are adopted—and the opinions of ordinary people in the population at large. Public opinion matters. Most Americans may not participate in the battle over vouchers, and they may not know much about the issue. But as the struggle plays itself out, and as advocates and opponents at the elite level compete aggressively to gain public support, the opinions of the American people will have a great deal to do with how much power each side can successfully wield in democratic politics—and whether, in the end, vouchers will prove to be a passing fancy, a revolution, or something in-between. (p. 4)

The next chapter of this dissertation discusses the methodology employed and the overall research design. The research design encompasses the sample population included in this study, how the data were collected, the hypotheses being analyzed, variables used in the analysis, and the potential threats to the study.

CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The underlying questions of this study sought to examine whether our market-based presumptions are supported. More specifically, whether the use of vouchers for the aforementioned population of Florida's citizens results in greater parental satisfaction with their choice of school. This is the crux of the school choice movement and through an exploratory analysis of the John M. McKay Scholarship Program conclusions can be drawn about the current school choice system and whether parents are satisfied with their choice of school and the educational services provided to the population being studied. In doing so, it is necessary to examine satisfaction levels of parents of students enrolled in the public, not-for-profit, and private options of the McKay Scholarship Program.

Since the McKay Scholarship Program is considered to be a voucher program, choice must be analyzed to determine the primary reasons for parents' decision to place their child in a private, not-for-profit, or public school. In a theoretical sense, and primarily in regard to public choice mechanics, the McKay Scholarship Program provides a contemporary example of a program that aims to do just that—provide choice for educational services. The framework for providing educational services through the use of education vouchers clearly promotes the market-based prescriptions of individual choice. This analysis, through a theoretical overview and exploratory survey, examined whether these presumptions and preconceived notions are supported and hold merit for the further development of programs that are structured similarly to Florida's McKay Scholarship Program.

Research Design

This dissertation aimed to analyze perceptions and satisfaction levels of parents of McKay Scholarship Program recipients who have used the funds from the program to attend a private or not-for-profit institution as well as the perceptions and satisfaction levels of those parents who have opted to keep their child enrolled in the public school system. Therefore, this examination takes a more in-depth look into this through the use of a survey on parents' satisfaction in Miami-Dade County, Florida. Miami-Dade County was chosen for examination because it is the county that receives the most state dollars and has the largest population of McKay Scholarship Program recipients.

Utilizing a methodology to induce information (Creswell, 2009) on choice and satisfaction in regard to the perceptions and satisfaction levels of parents served as a guiding methodological undertaking and allowed me to unearth the perceptions and satisfaction levels among parents of private, not-for-profit, and public school McKay Scholarship recipients. The parental-satisfaction survey (Appendix A) allowed for the collection of data necessary to understand the relationships between these parents' perceptions—specifically satisfaction—and school choice.

Citizen satisfaction surveys (Lyons, Lowery, & DeHoog, 1992; Van Ryzin, 2004; Van Ryzin & Immerwhar, 2007), as a method to understanding satisfaction in the delivery of governmental (public) goods and services, were used to guide the parental satisfaction survey (Charbonneau & Van Ryzin, 2012; Livingstone, 2008) so as to compare and contrast perceptions of parents whose are children enrolled under the McKay Scholarship Program in private, not-for-profit, and public school settings. Using the notions of satisfaction, perception, and choice as dependent variables allowed

for various statistical analyses to be performed in order to determine what factors influenced parental choice and satisfaction.

Some questions in the survey sought to gather further information through written responses (i.e., parental feedback in the form of qualitative data) as to why the parent chose the McKay Scholarship. The two open-ended questions are listed and discussed in Chapter 5. Therefore, this research methodology could be considered a mixed method approach as the qualitative input from the two survey questions attempt to reinforce findings of perception and reasoning for utilizing the McKay Scholarship. This information then was analyzed with other information obtained to determine reasoning for the parents' choice. From there, it then was possible to factor or group together the independent variables that showed a strong/weak and positive/negative relationship to the dependent variables (satisfaction and choice).

The methodology and main objective of this research was to inquire about parental perceptions and satisfaction levels of those parents who have chosen to take their children out of the public school system and place them in a McKay Scholarship certified private or not-for-profit institution. This study also sought to gain input from parents who have opted to stay in the public school system. For the analysis, survey data were gathered on elements of choice, school quality, convenience, and reasons that led parents to make certain decisions.

Data Collection

A necessary precursor of this study was to contact both the administrative body that administers and monitors the McKay Scholarship Program—the Florida Department of Education—and the Miami-Dade County Public School System (MDCPS). After the

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was granted by Florida Atlantic University (Appendix B), I then applied to the research review board at MDCPS and in November, 2013, was granted permission to perform the study (Appendix C). Following that, a comprehensive list of principals and directors who service current McKay Scholarship participants who are enrolled in private, not-for-profit, and public settings were gathered as the potential sample of the survey. The Florida Department of Education provided me with a list of private and non-profit schools in Miami-Dade County that service 10 or more McKay recipients. The names and email address for the public school principals were gathered individually as MDCPS would not provide this information.

Upon obtaining that information, my original plan in terms of the methodology was to email parents the online survey via an MDCPS list serve. Parents would receive a link in the email cover letter that contained a link to the e-survey linking them to a SurveyMonkey webpage to complete the survey (SurveyMonkey, 2015). SurveyMonkey software was chosen due to its compatibility with various personal computing devices (i.e., personal computers, laptops, tablets, and smartphones) and ease of use by the survey taker. The email cover letter to schools explaining the study (Appendices D and E) and the letter to parents explaining the importance of participation (Appendices F and G) served as informed consent.

Through the use of this online survey instrument it was thought to be possible to compare and contrast satisfaction rates among parents of McKay Scholarship recipients in private, not-for-profit, and public schools to determine which groups of parents were more satisfied with the current service delivery arrangement of the schools their child was attending. In order to receive a maximum response rate, a follow-up email to

complete the survey was sent out approximately two weeks after the original email, followed by a second follow-up email three weeks later. A “disqualifying” question was added to the survey: Is your child attending this school using a McKay Scholarship? If this question was answered “no,” the parent taking the survey was directed to the end of the survey. If this question was answered “yes,” the parent was directed to the next question to complete the remainder of the survey questions.

During the course of this study, the intended methodology outlined previously was changed due to unforeseen problems with the collection of parents’ contact information. The original methodology for data collection was premised on the assumption that MDCPS and/or the FLDOE had a list serve of parents’ email addresses, and the online survey instrument was to be sent via email to those addresses. Due to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and guidelines (U.S. Department of Education, 2014) and for the protection of anonymity, the Miami Dade County Public School System would not grant access to parents’ email addresses and the School Board refused to assist in the distribution of the recruitment letter to McKay Scholarship Program parents. After being informed that this information was not going to be made available, the data collection methodology changed and revisions then were submitted for a second IRB approval at Florida Atlantic University (Appendix H), which was granted. Accordingly, I applied for a research extension by the MDCPS research review board and was granted permission to continue the data collection (Appendix I).

In order to get the survey out to parents, the recruitment method was dramatically changed. The FLDOE had provided me with a list of private and not-for-profit school directors in Miami-Dade County that serviced 10 or more McKay Scholarship recipients,

which included 110 private and not-for-profit schools in the county with school name, director, director's email address, and corresponding phone numbers. With respect to the public schools, MDCPS granted me research approval to contact each principal of receiving schools that service McKay Scholarship recipients under the public option. There are 168 public schools in Miami-Dade County that service McKay recipients. When the total number of private, not-for-profit, and public schools in Miami-Dade County that service McKay recipients were combined, the total number of schools was 278.

Following this new method, recruitment letters were sent out to directors and principals of private and not-for profit schools as well to directors and principals of public schools. The aim of the recruitment email was to ask for the assistance of directors and principals to forward my contact information either via email or in paper form to parents of McKay Scholarship Program recipients so that they could contact me if they desired to participate in the study. Participation by the public school principals and directors of private and not-for-profit schools was solely at their discretion. The informed consent for parents did not change, only the recruitment method to seek out parents or guardians of current McKay recipients who desired to participate in the study was changed.

Individualized emails and four follow-up emails then were sent to each of the private, not-for-profit, and public school principals and directors. After much frustration and diligence in trying to get administrator buy-in, I contacted both the school board of MDCPS and the Coalition of McKay Schools to inquire if they had the capacity to assist me in reaching a larger number of parents in order to get survey response from a

representative population. I also thought the assistance of the parent teacher association at MDCPS would be helpful, but after three phone calls (left on voicemail) and two emails, I did not receive a response. I then composed a list of email addresses of school principals in the MDCPS system (i.e., the school system's online community portal) and forwarded it to the school board. I requested that they send an email out to the principals of public schools to encourage them to forward my contact information and/or informed consent with the survey link to parents of McKay recipients. This request was denied.

The Coalition of McKay Schools said that they would help me in any way they could and would advise the private and not-for-profit school directors that it would be beneficial for the McKay Scholarship Program if current academic work was completed on the topic and parental perceptions of the program could be analyzed. While the list provided by the FLDOE was limited to private and not-for-profit schools with 10 or more attending McKay Scholarship Program recipients, the list of schools provided by the Coalition totaled 170 schools on record in Miami-Dade County. The Coalition of McKay Schools sent the email out to schools encouraging participation; I was not privy to the name of those schools. The total number of schools that the Coalition emailed was different from that of the FLDOE because the Coalition incorporated all schools, not just those with ten or more students. Therefore, the coalition sent the email to schools that service less than ten as well as more than ten students in Miami-Dade County.

Methodology for Data Analysis and Overview of Survey Instrument

The primary method for analyzing the completed survey responses was to first code the data and prepare it for statistical analysis and examination. The data was then entered into SPSS in order to code and pinpoint the missing values for statistical analysis.

The survey questions were mapped to the theoretical constructs analyzed in this research. Table 1 lists the variables along with the corresponding survey questions. Appendix J shows the coding sheet for the coding and style of question responses.

Sample Population

Due to the change in the recruitment method utilized in this study, the sample population was premised and derived from the number of schools that directly responded they would forward the informed consent with survey link or my contact information to their McKay parents. After 10 months of data collection that included sending out a total of five emails to all McKay schools (i.e., private, public, and not-for-profit) as well as a phone call to each school, the sample population included individuals from the FLDOE document that gave the names of private and not-for-profit schools in Miami Dade County with 10 or more McKay Scholarship recipients and from the MDCPS county document that showed the number of McKay students attending public schools.

Each school that responded was given an identification number because I had ensured schools that the name of school would not be shown in the study; this was an attempt to heighten the response rate and to provide schools with anonymity. Nineteen private and not-for-profit schools responded that they would definitely participate in the study by contacting their McKay Scholarship parents. There was at least 190 parents that were asked by the directors of their school—private and not-for-profit—to take part in the study. For the public schools a total of seven schools responded that they would participate. According to the transfer code document provided by the MDCPS school board, this comprised a total of 29 parents who were forwarded the survey. Combining the number of parents from all three sectors, the total sample population equated to at

least 219 parents. A total of 68 responses were received, making for a response rate of 31.05%.

Table 1

Variables and Corresponding Survey Questions

Variable	Corresponding Survey Questions
Satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, how satisfied are you with the school your child currently attends? • How satisfied are you that your child's school meets your child's needs? • Would you recommend the school your child attends to others? • How much of a sense of belonging does your child feel at his or her school? • Do you feel that your child's school is a good match for your child's cultural background? • To what extent do you think that children enjoy going to your child's school? • How motivating are the classroom lessons at your child's school? • How well do administrators at your child's school create a school environment that helps children learn? • Do school reports give clear feedback about your child's progress? • At your child's school, how well does the overall approach to discipline work for your child? • How are incidences of bullying noticed and dealt with at your child's school?
Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did you choose to enroll your child in the McKay Scholarship Program? • How important was religion in your decision of choosing a particular school? • How confident are you in your ability to make choices about your child's schooling?
Demographic Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your child's age in years? • What is your child's gender? • Who is/are the primary caretaker(s) of this child? • This child's mother/female legal guardian's gender is? • This child's father/male legal guardian's gender is? • Which race/ethnicity best describes your child? • Who is completing this survey? • What is the highest level of education of this child's mother/female legal guardian? • What is the highest level of education of this child's father/male legal guardian? • Your family/household annual income (in dollars) is? • What is the primary language spoken in your childhood home? • What religion best describes your child and/or family?

Table 1 *continued*

Variable	Corresponding Survey Questions
Parental Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How often do you meet in person with teachers at your child's school? • In the past year, how often have you discussed your child's school with other parents from the school? • In the past year, how often have you talked with the school about how they can help your child learn? • In the past year, how often have you discussed your child's social needs with adults at his/her school? • In the past year, how often have you visited your child's school? • In the past year, how often have you communicated with the school about ways that you can help your child's learning at home? • How involved have you been in fundraising efforts at your child's school? • How often do you help your child engage in activities which are educational outside the home? • How involved have you been with a parent groups at your child's school? • How confident are you in your ability to connect with other parents? • To what extent do you know how your child is doing socially at school? • How did you originally find out about the McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities? • What was the level of difficulty in applying for the McKay Scholarship Program? • Did you at any time move your child from one McKay School to another? If so, please explain why.
Supplemental Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the school that your child is attending asked you to pay for any supplemental costs? If you answered "Yes" please specify amounts in dollars. • Is your child's cost of attendance fully funded by the McKay Scholarship?
School Setting and Length of Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of school does this child attend? • Is your child attending this school using a McKay Scholarship? (Disqualification Question) • How long has this child attended his/her current school? • How long has this child been using a McKay Scholarship? • How close does your child live from the school he or she attends? • How does your child get to and from school? • Does your child receive therapeutic services at his or her school?
Disability / Severity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is this child's primary area of disability? • According to your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP), how would you describe the level of this child's special needs?

Table 2 shows the breakdown of public schools by ID number and the number of McKay recipients they have. For the private and not-for-profit schools, the number of students at the schools that responded provided a sample size of at least 10 students. These schools potentially could have more than 10. These numbers were based on the document provided by the FLDOE that afforded me the school names and contact information for school directors that service at least 10 students in Miami Dade County, Florida. Private and not-for-profit schools that have less than 10 students were not contacted due to lack of information provided to the researcher by state and county administrative bodies.

Table 2

Public School ID Numbers and Number of Students

School ID#	Number of Students* (n=29)
1	3
2	2
3	2
4	5
5	7
6	9
7	1

Note. *Number of students enrolled in public schools who responded they would participate.

Interestingly, the sample population was consistent with the demographic information provided by the FLDOE (see Chapter 5). In terms of child gender, ethnicity, private and not-for-profit schools in the state, and IEP classification, the sample population of this study of Miami Dade County parents and schools was close to that of

the demographic information provided by the FLDOE in regard to the statewide demographic layout of students using a McKay Scholarship in the State of Florida as outlined in Chapter 2.

Hypotheses

This dissertation concentrated on the following seven hypotheses. These hypotheses sought to assist in answering the main research questions that guided this research. The hypothesis were concentrated around the parents' choice of school and their overall and perceived levels of satisfaction with the McKay Scholarship Program.

- H(1). The more involved parents are in their child's education, the more satisfied they will be with the school.
- H(2). A greater level of importance placed on religion in regard to schooling will affect the parents' degree of satisfaction with the current school.
- H(3). The longer a child has attended a particular school, the more satisfied the parents will be with the school.
- H(4). The greater the level of services (i.e., therapeutic services and school feedback) provided to the student, the more satisfied parents will be with the school.
- H(5). More affluent parents will be more satisfied with their choice of school.
- H(6). The higher the level of education the parents have attained, the more satisfied they will be with their choice of school.
- H(7). As the child's age increases, the parents' level of satisfaction will increase.

Variables Used in the Statistical Analysis

This section discusses the main dependent and independent variables used in the multiple regression analysis. The dependent variable for all seven hypotheses was satisfaction with child's school. This is a scalar variable where respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 0 to 100 how satisfied they are with their child's school. This made it possible to perform the multiple regression analysis.

The independent variables were broken down into different aspects of school choice and included measuring services provided to the child, parental involvement, religiosity, and demographics. These variables were used to perform the multiple regression technique and were tested to determine if relationships and significance of relationships exist among the independent variables utilized in the multiple regression model. Hypothesis 2 had an independent variable that was indexed by combining multiple independent variables relating to parental involvement into one variable for reasons of simplification and for accuracy in the regression model. The hypotheses and the independent variables used to compose the multiple regression model with satisfaction with child's school as the main dependent variable for all hypotheses were:

H(1). The more involved parents are in their child's education, the more satisfied they will be with their school.

Independent Variables:

1. Parents discussed school with other parents
2. Parents talked to school about ways to help their child learn
3. Parents discussed child's social needs with school
4. Parents visited child's school (ordinal)

5. How involved parents are in fundraising efforts
6. How involved parents are in parent groups

Data from these six independent variables then were combined through SPSS to make one indexed or additive sum independent variable: parent involvement (ordinal).

- H(2). A greater level of importance placed on religion in regard to schooling will affect the parents' degree of satisfaction with the current school.

Independent Variable:

1. Importance of religion in school choice (ordinal)

- H(3). The longer a child has attended a particular school, the more satisfied the parents will be with the school.

Independent Variable:

1. Length of attendance (nominal)

- H(4). The greater the level of services (i.e., therapeutic services and school feedback) provided to the student, the more satisfied parents will be with the school.

Independent Variables:

1. Receive therapeutic services (ordinal)
2. School feedback (ordinal)

- H(5). More affluent parents will be more satisfied with their choice of school.

Independent Variable:

1. Family/household income (nominal)

H(6). The higher the level of education the parents have attained, the more satisfied they will be with their choice of school.

Independent Variables:

1. Mother's highest level of education (nominal)
2. Father's highest level of education (nominal)

H(7). As the child's age increases, the parents' level of satisfaction will increase.

Independent Variable:

1. Child's age (nominal)

Potential Threats to the Study and Validity

This study was limited to those school principals, school directors, and parents of McKay Scholarship recipients who desired to participate in this study. Obtaining administrative participation on behalf of principals of public schools and directors of private and not-for-profit schools further complicated and added to the potential threats to validity and viability of the study. Accordingly, parental e-mail addresses on file with the school that their child attends might have changed and/or the parents may not have updated their new email address with the school. As well, e-surveys tend to receive a lower response rate due to several factors including interest, time, and access to the Internet.

When analyzing education surveys, Nulty (2008) concluded that, after a thorough literature review, the mean response rates for paper surveys is around 56%. For web-based surveys it is far less, at around 33% with a tendency for even lower response rates. For Internet surveys, the general consensus is that response rates can vary anywhere from 0% to 85.3% (Vaux & Briggs, 2006, p. 190). Obtaining an adequate sample size is a

potential threat since the parents received the recruitment e-mail through the school that agreed to participate in dispersing the survey information to parents. This dissertation analyzed a rather small sample size but this was because the size of the sample was dependent upon the schools that said they would definitely participate by informing parents of the survey. Although, according to Marshall (1996), “[q]uantitative researchers often fail to understand the usefulness of studying small samples” (p. 523).

Therefore, a low response rate was anticipated from the very beginning of this study due to the multi-step recruitment method employed. Language issues also might have lowered the response rate since Miami-Dade County is an extraordinarily multicultural county, and the study was administered in English due to limited funding and available resources. Maturation (Salkind, 2005) also was a viable threat as either the parent and/or student could have moved, became ill, or passed away due to various causes.

Schneider et al. (2000) discovered a potential threat to their study discussed earlier in the literature and theoretical review. They contended that since school choice—voucher programs—are considered to be a system that functions on the option-demand principle, it makes parents “self-selecting” in choice processes. Therefore, this self-selection “can create serious biases in statistical analysis because the parents who are choosing to choose may not be (and in fact most likely are not) randomly drawn from the population, creating a ‘nonrandom selection’ problem” (Schneider et al., 2000, p. 81). This bias might be evident in the analysis of this dissertation because the population being sampled were indeed those parents who had chosen to choose, with the exception of the small percentage of parents surveyed who responded that they kept their child at

their neighborhood school. The statistical analysis attempted to control for this, although it should be noted that the population being examined were those parents who had exercised their choice options under the McKay Scholarship Program.

Response bias also was an issue with this study. According to Creswell (2009), response bias occurs when non-respondents can dramatically change the outcome of the study and subsequent inferences about the analysis. This was a potential threat due to the lack of various schools that decided not to participate by forwarding my contact information to their parents.

This chapter outlined the research design and methodology employed in this study by describing the hypotheses to be tested, data collection, the sample population, instrumentation, and the potential threats to validity.

Chapter 5 provides an explanation of the statistical methods utilized, findings of the statistical analysis and corresponding results, and an analysis of the qualitative responses gained through open-ended questions on the survey.

CHAPTER 5. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

The following descriptive statistics are laid out in this chapter to give the reader an overview of the sample population of survey respondents. In order to make better sense of the quantitative analysis section of this chapter, it is important first to understand the basic statistical findings of the survey. Therefore, the descriptive statistics were laid out by their respective categories.

Parental Satisfaction

Respondents were asked to rate their levels of satisfaction on a scale from 1 to 100; following are the satisfaction descriptive statistics as they relate to the scale questions regarding satisfaction.

Table 3 shows the frequencies and descriptive statistics for the variables/questions relating to satisfaction. Sixty one respondents responded to the questions that asked them to rate their degrees of satisfaction on a scale from 1 to 100, with 60 respondents answering the question about satisfaction with the school's physical condition. The first four variables in the table show that parents whose child is enrolled in the McKay Scholarship Program in public, private, and not-for-profit sectors are generally satisfied with the school their child attends. Parents also expressed high degrees of satisfaction with the school they chose meeting their child's needs, with the school's administration, and with the school's physical condition. The mean for overall satisfaction with the child's school was a 92.28 and the median was 95.00, with a range of 50 to 100 and

standard deviation of 10.917. The mean for satisfaction that the school meets child's needs was 87.16 and a median of 95.00, with a range of 0 to 100 with a standard deviation of 18.732. The mean for satisfaction with the school's administration was 92.21 and a median of 100.00, with a range of 30 to 100 and a standard deviation of 13.790. The mean for satisfaction with the school's physical condition was 86.53 and a median of 95.00, with a range of 30 to 100 with a standard deviation of 17.024.

Table 3

Frequencies for Scale Satisfaction Variables

Satisfaction Variables	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	Median	<i>SD</i>	Variance	Range
Satisfaction with child's school (main dependent variable)	61	92.28	95.00	10.917	119.171	50
Satisfaction that school meets child's needs	61	87.16	95.00	18.732	350.906	100
Satisfaction with school administration	61	92.21	100.00	13.790	190.170	70
Satisfaction with school's physical condition	60	86.53	95.00	17.024	289.812	70

Satisfaction with the child's school was used as the primary and only dependent variable in the multiple regression model, which is discussed later in the chapter.

Choice of School

Table 4 shows the percentage of respondents who indicated what type of school their child attends. This variable was important to determine whether the school was private as well as whether the school was religious associated. The primary choice of school in which parents enrolled their child was private religious schools, with 50.8% of the respondents indicating that their child attended a private religious school. Since the

question involved other choice (such as private not-for-profit schools), the choice of school question was broken down into a variable that was either religious or non-religious.

Table 4

Frequencies for Choice of School Variable

Type of School	Valid Percentage (<i>n</i> =63)
Public (neighborhood)	3.2
Public (assigned through IEP)	7.9
Not-for-profit (non-religious)	6.3
Not-for-profit (religious)	4.8
Private (non-religious)	27.0
Private (religious)	50.8
Total	100.0

Table 5 describes the valid percentage of whether the child attends a religious or non-religious school. A total of 55.6% of parents surveyed in this study stated that their child attends a religious affiliated school, while 44.4% indicated that their child does not attend a religious affiliated school.

Table 5

Percentage of Students in Religious and Non-Religious Schools

Type of School	Valid Percentage (<i>n</i> =63)
Religious Affiliated School	55.6
Non-Religious Affiliated School	44.4
Total	100.0

Table 6 describes the frequency of whether a student attends a private or non-private school. This variable was used in the multiple regression analysis. As shown, 77.6% of respondents in this study indicated that their child attends a private school, while 22.2% responded that their child attends a public or not-for-profit school.

Table 6

Percentage in Private or Non-Private School

Type of School	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Non-Private	14	22.2
Private	49	77.8
Total	63	100.0

Table 7 describes how long the child has attended their current school. A total of 25% of parents indicated that their child has been at their current school less than 1 year, 20.3% indicated that their child has been at their current school for 1-2 years, 21.9% responded that their child has been at current school for 2-3 years, and 32.8% stated that their child has been at current school for more than three years. This variable was used as an independent variable in the multiple regression model. It is expected that the longer the child is at a given school, the more satisfied parents will be with that school.

Table 7

Child's Length of Attendance at Current School

Length of Attendance	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Less than 1 year	16	25.0
1-2 years	13	20.3
2-3 years	14	21.9
More than 3 years	21	32.8
Total	64	100.0

Parental Participation and Involvement

Question 25 was a multi-faceted question, which attempted to induce information about how participatory parents are in their child's education. This question sought to understand parental involvement among McKay parents to better understand how often they communicate with the child's school in regard to helping their child learn, their child's social needs, and if the school offered ways or methods to parents to assist their child with learning at home. Also, parents were asked how often they visited their child's school. Table 8 shows the percentage of how often parents partook in the various activities.

Table 8

Parental Involvement in Their Child's Education

Level of Involvement	Percentage of Type of Involvement				
	Parent met with child's teacher (n=58)	Parent talked to school about ways to help child learn (n=57)	Parent discussed child's social needs with school (n=57)	Parent visited child's school (n=56)	Parent communicated with school about ways for child to learn at home (n=57)
Almost never	3.4	10.5	24.6	1.8	12.3
Once or twice per year	17.2	14	15.8	3.6	10.5
Every few months	41.4	35.1	28.1	25	33.3
Monthly	15.5	26.3	24.6	19.6	24.6
Weekly or more	22.4	14	7	50	19.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Question 26 was a two part question that asked parents to state how involved they are in fundraising efforts and in parent groups at their child's school, and the results are outlined in Table 9. This information, coupled with the previous section on parental participation, can be used to understand the various networks that exist with parents whose child is enrolled in the McKay Scholarship Program.

Table 9

Parental Involvement in Fundraising and Parent Groups

Level of Involvement	Percentage of Type of Involvement	
	How involved parent is with fundraising efforts (n=56)	How involved parent is in parent groups (n=56)
Not at all involved	19.6	32.1
A little involved	21.4	25
Somewhat involved	23.2	19.6
Quite involved	19.6	10.7
Extremely involved	16.1	12.5
Total	100	100

The last question in regard to parental participation and involvement was focused around how their child is doing socially at school. Table 10 shows how much the parents think they know about how their child is doing socially by percentage of survey respondents.

Table 10

Parental Knowledge of Child's Social Situation at School

Parental Knowledge	Valid Percentage (n=59)
A little bit	6.8
Somewhat	16.9
Quite a bit	44.1
A tremendous amount	32.2
Total	100.0

Demographics

There was a total of 59 responses ($n=59$) to the demographic questions (30-41) of the survey, with the exception of Question 30, which had 60 responses ($n=60$).

Question 30 of the survey asked parents about their child's age. There was a total of 60 responses for this question, with percentage of 5% (3-6 years old), 15.25% (7-9 years old), 27.12% (10-12 years old), 22.03% (13-15 years old), 23.73% (16-18 years old), and 6.78% (19-22 years old). Table 11 shows the age of the child by valid percent analyzed in this study. The variable of child's age was used in the multiple regression analysis as an independent variable. The child's age was chosen since the theoretical expectation was that as the child ages, the more satisfied the parents would become with the school.

Table 11

Age of Child

Age	Frequency	Valid Percentage
3-6 years old	2	3.4
7-9 years old	10	16.9
10-12 years old	16	27.1
13-15 years old	13	22.0
16-18 years old	14	23.7
19-22 years old	4	6.8
Total	59	100

Question 31 asked parents to state their child's gender; 66.10% are male and 32.20% are female. One respondent, 1.69%, preferred not to answer. Question 32 asked parents who the primary caretaker of the child was. The composition of this variable

consisted of mother and father (64.41%), mother only (25.42%), father only (1.69%), and grandparent (3.39%). Three respondents (5.08%) selected the “other” option and revealed the following: one respondent stated “2 fathers;” one respondent stated “mother and grandmother;” and one respondent stated “two moms, divorced but sharing custody and co-parenting 50/50.”

Question 33 inquired about the race of the child’s mother or female legal guardian, with the resulting percentages of 32.20% (White, non-Hispanic), 10.17% (African American), and 50.85% (Hispanic). The race of father’s in this sample population were predominantly Hispanic, therefore many of these families have a mixed race parental unit which is not surprising given the large hispanic population in Miami-Dade County, Florida. Three respondents (5.08%) answered “other” and their responses were as follows: one respondent indicated “none,” one respondent indicated “Haitian,” and one respondent indicated “Haitian-American.” One respondent (1.69%) indicated that they preferred not to answer.

Question 34 inquired about the race of the child’s father or male legal guardian. The composition of parents in this study consisted of the following: 27.12% (White, non-Hispanic), 11.86% (African American), and 47.46% (Hispanic). One respondent preferred not to answer (1.69%). Six respondents (10.17%) answered “other” and their responses were as follows:

1. “no father, child adopted,”
2. “Scottish and Hispanic,”
3. “Haitian,”

4. “Hispanic is not a race. It’s a culture. We (my daughters’ parents) are White, from South America,”
5. “Trinidadian,” and
6. “Both Moms are African American.”

Question 35 asked which race/ethnicity best described the respondent’s child.

The responses were 35.60% (White, non-Hispanic), 11.86% (African American), 42.37% (Hispanic), and 1.69% (multi-racial). One respondent preferred not to answer (1.69%).

Four respondents (6.78%) answered “other” and their responses are as follows:

1. “Guatemalan,”
2. “Cuban American,”
3. “Haitian American,” and
4. “Haitian-Trinidadian-American.”

Question 36 asked respondents who was completing the survey. Fifty respondents (84.75%) stated that the mother of the child was completing the survey, seven respondents (11.86%) stated that the father was completing the survey, and two respondents (3.39%) indicated that a grandparent of the child was completing the survey.

Questions 37 and 38 asked respondents about the highest level of education attained of the mother and father. Question 37 inquired about the mother’s education and question 38 about the father’s. These two variables were used in the multiple regression model.

Table 12 discusses the frequencies for both mothers’ and fathers’ highest levels of education. This variable was used as an independent variable in the multiple regression model. As you can see, the majority of parents have a college degree: 45.76% for

mothers' highest level of education and 32.20% for fathers' highest level of education for both variables in regard to highest education of the child's parents.

Table 12

Level of Education for Mother and Father

Level of Education	Mother/Female Legal Guardian Percentage (n=59)	Father/Male Legal Guardian Percentage (n=59)
8 th grade or less	1.69	0
Some high school	0	5.08
GED	0	3.39
High school diploma	6.78	8.47
Vocational School	3.39	10.17
Some college	18.64	15.25
College graduate	45.76	32.20
Postgraduate	20.34	18.64
Preferred no to answer	1.69	1.69
Other	1.69	1.69

For both questions 37 and 38, there was one respondent who indicated "other." For question 37, one indicated that their child was "n/a adopted" and for question 38, a respondent stated that there was "no father."

Question 39 inquired about the annual income of the household. There was one respondent who answered "other" and stated that their household income "fluctuates greatly." Table 13 breaks down the family/household income demographic by valid percentage. This variable was used in the multiple regression analysis.

Table 13

Family/Household Income

Income	Valid Percent (n=59)
\$0-\$9,999	1.69
\$10,000-\$24,999	1.69
\$25,000-\$34,999	6.78
\$35,000-\$49,999	8.47
\$50,000-\$74,999	18.64
Over \$75,000	38.98
Preferred not to answer	22.03
Other	1.69
Total	100

Question 40 asked respondents to state what language was spoken at home; 79.66% responded that English was the primary language spoken at home. This was followed by 15.25% stating that Spanish was the primary language spoken in the home. One respondent (1.69%) indicated that French was the primary language spoken in the home, one respondent (1.69%) preferred not to answer, and one respondent (1.69%) stated “other” and indicated that Portuguese was the primary language spoken in the home.

Question 41 asked what religion best described the child and family; 54.24% of respondents stated that they affiliate with the Catholic religion, followed by Christian (20.34%), preferred not to answer (6.78%), Jewish (5.08%), no religion (5.08%), other (5.08%), and Protestant (3.39%). Table 14 shows religious affiliation by valid percent of respondents.

Table 14

Religious Affiliation

Religious Affiliation	Percentage of Respondents (<i>n</i> =59)
Catholic	54.24
Christian	20.34
Protestant	3.39
Jewish	5.08
No religion	5.08
Preferred not to answer	6.78
Other	5.08

There were three respondents (5.08%) who answered “other.” The “other” responses were:

1. “We believe that there is a God,”
2. “Mother: Catholic / Father: Atheist / Daughter: undecided,” and
3. “Baptist.”

Supplemental Frequencies

The following section highlights some of the supplemental data attained through the survey instrument. This information is not only pertinent to doing an accurate evaluation of the McKay Scholarship Program, but it is also important information for policymakers, education professionals, and parents. Tables 15-21 cover several aspects of the program including difficulty in the application process, whether parents would recommend a school to others, how the child gets to and from school, how parents originally found out about the program, if parents moved their child from one McKay school to another, if the school asked parents to pay any supplemental costs, and whether

the cost of attendance at the parents' choice of school was fully funded. This information collected from the sample population could shed light on some of the facets of the program that might be overlooked.

Regarding difficulty in applying for the McKay Scholarship Program, parents were asked to rate on a scale of 1-10 how difficult the application process was for enrolling their child in the McKay Program, with 1 labeled extremely easy and 10 labeled extremely difficult. There was a range of 1 to 7. Table 15 illustrates the frequency table for this variable.

Table 15

Difficulty in Applying for McKay Scholarship Program

Level of Difficulty*	Frequency	Valid Percent
1	26	43.3
2	8	13.3
3	6	10.0
4	1	1.7
5	14	23.3
6	2	3.3
7	3	5.0
Total	60	100.0

Note. *1=easiest to 7=most difficult.

The next descriptive statistic looked at whether the parents would recommend their child's school to others; 89.7% of respondents said "yes" and 10.3% said "maybe." There were no respondents who said they would not recommend their child's school. Table 16 shows, by valid percent, whether parents would, maybe, or would not recommend their child's school to others.

Table 16

Recommendation of Child's School to Others

Recommendation	Frequency	Valid Percent
Yes	52	89.7
Maybe	6	10.3
No	0	0
Total	58	100.0

A key finding of this dissertation and one that gets at the core of transactional costs and obligations is how the child gets to and from school; 90.6% of respondents indicated that they drive their child to and from school. On the other hand, 4.7% responded that they take the school bus (these are students who attend public schools) and 4.7% take a public bus to get to and from school. Table 17 shows how the child gets to and from school by valid percentage of respondents.

Table 17

How Child Gets To and From School

Mode of Transport	Frequency	Valid Percent
Parent's car	58	90.6
School bus	3	4.7
Public bus	3	4.7
Total	64	100.0

Table 18 highlights how the parent found out about the McKay Scholarship Program. Exactly half (50.0%) of respondents indicated that they were referred by an educational professional; 29.6% responded that they were referred by other parents. This

descriptive statistic is important especially when looking at network aspects involved in school choice as argued primarily by Schneider et al. (2000).

Table 18

How Parent Originally Learned About McKay Scholarship Program

Method	Frequency	Valid Percent
Referred by other parent	16	29.6
Referred by educational professional	27	50.0
Referred by school district	5	9.3
McKay Scholarship Website	6	11.1
Total	54	100.0

Parents were asked whether they moved their child from one McKay certified school to another at any point in time while using the voucher. As shown in Table 19, 77.2% of respondents stated “no” and 22.8% indicated that they have moved their child to a different school. This question sought to gain insight into how parents found the school their child currently attends.

Table 19

Moved Child from One McKay School to Another

School Change	Frequency	Valid Percent
No	44	77.2
Yes	13	22.8
Total	57	100.0

Table 20 shows responses to the question that asked parents if the school that their child currently attends under the scholarship has asked them to pay any supplemental

costs. A total of 27.7% answered “no” while 72.3% indicated that the school has asked them to pay supplemental costs. For example, some parents indicated that they were responsible for items such as uniforms and books while other parents indicated that they were responsible for paying a large portion of the tuition that is not subsidized.

Table 20

School Asked Parent to Pay Supplemental Costs

Supplemental Costs	Frequency	Valid Percent
No	13	27.7
Yes	34	72.3
Total	47	100.0

Parents also were asked if the cost of attendance was fully funded or not. This question is in relation to the supplemental cost question but was meant to inquire more about tuition than supplemental costs. Similarly, 77.4% said that the cost of attendance was not fully covered while 22.6% indicated that it was, as illustrated in Table 21.

Table 21

Cost of Attendance Fully Funded or Not

Funding	Frequency	Valid Percent
No	41	77.4
Yes	12	22.6
Total	53	100.0

Table 22 shows whether the child received any form of therapeutic services at the school. This variable was utilized in the multiple regression model. Since there were too many missing cases for the severity element due to parents not knowing (i.e., into what

matrix does their child fall according to their IEP), this variable is extremely important for incorporation into the regression model because it assists in gauging the severity of the child’s disability. As shown, 81.1% of respondents in this study stated that their child does not receive therapeutic services while 18.9% do receive some sort of therapeutic service(s).

Table 22

Child Receives Therapeutic Services

Therapeutic Services	Frequency	Valid Percent
No	43	81.1
Yes	10	18.9
Total	53	100.0

Comparison of Sample Population to Statewide Demographics of Program

Table 23 shows the comparison of statewide demographics of the student population compared to the sample population utilized in this analysis in regards to the Individual Education plan (IEP) matrices. It is imperative to point out that statewide figures were used in this study—in this instance to compare sample percentages—due to the lack of statistical information for Miami-Dade County. This information is provided in the findings section to add to the validity of the study as the demographic information yielded from the survey is more or less on par with the information provided by the state of Florida in their 2012-2013 Fact Sheet (FDOE, 2013a).

Table 23

Comparison of Statewide Population of McKay Students and Sample Population Included in Study by Individual Education Plan (IEP) Matrices

IEP Matrix	Percentage of Statewide Demographics (<i>n</i> =26,611)	Percentage of Sample Population Demographics (<i>n</i> =45)
Matrix 251-252 (mildly disabled)	50	42.2
Matrix 253 (moderately disabled)	24	26.7
Matrix 254 (severely disabled)	7	17.8
Matrix 255 (very-severe)	2	2.2
504 Plan	6	11.1
Total	100	100

Note. (a) State-wide demographics for the 2012-2013 academic school year. (b) Sample population based on percentage of parents reporting these figures. (c) State-wide demographics utilized because county-wide statistics not available.

Table 24 offers a comparison of statewide demographics of the program and the sample used in this analysis in regards to student gender. The percentages are roughly similar, which should add extra validity to this analysis.

Table 24

Comparison of Statewide Population of McKay Students and Sample Population Included in Study by Student's Gender

Gender	Percentage of Statewide Demographics (n=26,611)	Percentage of Sample Population Demographics (n=58)
Male	69	67.2
Female	31	32.8
Total	100	100

Note. (a). State-wide demographics for the 2012-2013 academic school year. (b) Sample population based on percentage of parents reporting these figures. (c) State-wide demographics utilized because county-wide statistics not available.

Table 25 shows a comparison of statewide population of McKay students and sample population included in study by student's race/ethnicity utilized in this analysis. It is important to point out that Miami-Dade County has a very large Hispanic population.

Table 25

Comparison of Statewide Population of McKay Students and Sample Population Included in Study by Student's Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Percentage of Statewide Demographics (n=26,611)	Percentage of Sample Population Demographics (n=58)
White (Non-Hispanic)	47	36.2
African-American	25	12.1
Hispanic	24	43.1
Other	4	8.6
Total	100	100

Note. (a). State-wide demographics for the 2012-2013 academic school year. (b) Sample population based on percentage of parents reporting these figures. (c) Miami-Dade County serves the largest Hispanic populations of students enrolled in the state of Florida. (d) State-wide demographics utilized because county-wide statistics not available.

Table 26 breaks down the statewide population of McKay students and sample population included in the study by religious or non-religious school affiliation. This descriptive statistic is very important as 64% of McKay certified schools across the state of Florida are religious affiliates. The sample employed in this analysis was 55.6% who attend a private or not-for-profit religious institution and 44.4% who do not.

Table 26

Comparison of Statewide Population of McKay Students and Sample Population Included in Study by Religious or Non-Religious School Affiliation

School Affiliation	Percentage of Statewide Demographics (n=26,611)	Percentage of Sample Population Demographics (n=58)
Religious (Private and Non-Profit)	64	55.6
Non-Religious (Private and Non-Profit)	36	44.4
Total	100	100

Note. (a). State-wide demographics for the 2012-2013 academic school year. (b) Sample population based on percentage of parents reporting these figures. (c) State-wide demographics utilized because county-wide statistics not available.

Results and Findings of Statistical Analysis

This section summarizes the statistical findings unearthed through the parental satisfaction survey. The main statistical test used in this analysis was a multiple regression technique that incorporated 10 independent variables and the dependent variable of overall satisfaction with child's school, which is a scale question from 0 to 100. Variables then were broken up in three main categories. The first category looked at school choice and contained the following independent variables: (a) parental involvement, (b) importance of religion in regard to schooling, (c) whether the school is

private or public, and (d) child's length of attendance at the school. The second category constructed was services provided. This category included the two independent variables: (a) if the child received therapeutic services (this was a yes or no question); and (b) how parents felt about school feedback. The third category was demographic variables; the demographic independent variables used in the multiple regression model were: (a) household income, (b) mother's education, (c) father's education, and (d) child's age.

Table 27 will show the variables and their corresponding survey questions utilized in the multiple regression model. The survey question number in regard to each variable is listed on the far right column of the table. The coding sheet in the appendices indicates how each variable was coded.

Each hypothesis was accepted or rejected according to the multiple regression statistical output. Table 28 shows the results of the multiple regression model used in this study. As can be seen, the R square was 0.563 and the adjusted R square was 0.417, making this model both significant and suitable for hypothesis testing. The size of the population incorporated into the multiple regression analysis was 37. To compensate for the small population analyzed in the model, I attempted to replace the missing case values in the regression model with the mean of each variable. A bivariate correlation matrix (Appendix K) shows the correlations in conjunction with the multiple regression output. Once missing cases were replaced, the size of the population became 64 and the model changed only slightly. I then decided to use the original multiple regression model with a population of 37 because I felt it was a more realistic depiction of the sample population.

Table 27

Descriptive Statistics of the Independent Variables Used in the Ordinary Least Square Multiple Regression Analysis

Independent Variables	N	M	Median	Mode	SD	Min	Max	Survey Questions and Possible Responses
Parent Involvement	55	23.44	23.00	21.00	6.40	9.00	34.00	This variable is the additive sum of the six survey questions that were measured on a 5-point scale: Q25 (a, b, c, & d), Q26 (a & b).
Importance of Religion	59	2.51	3.00	1	1.22	1	4	This variable was measured on a 4-point scale (Q19).
Private or Public	63	.778	1.00	1	0.42	0	1	This variable was constructed in SPSS and based on the type of school child attends. (Q1). 0=Public 1=Private
Length of Attendance	64	2.63	3	4	1.19	1	4	The variable was measured on a 4-point scale (Q3).
Therapeutic Services	53	.19	.19	0	0.39	0	1	The variable was a yes or no answer (Q15) school?
School Feedback	59	2.59	3	3	0.64	0	3	This variable was measured on a 5-point scale (Q16).
Household Income	45	5.07	6	6	1.25	1	6	This variable was measured on a 6-point scale with “6” being the greatest (Q39).
Mother’s Education	57	6.63	7	7	1.30	1	8	This variable was measured on an 8-point scale with “8” being highest degree attained (Q37).
Father’s Education	56	6.14	7	7	1.68	2	8	This variable was measured on an 8-point scale with “8” being highest degree attained (Q38).
Child’s Age	59	3.66	4	3	1.29	1	6	This variable was measured on a 6-point scale with “6” being the oldest (Q30).

Table 28

OLS Regression of Factors Affecting Parental Satisfaction

Independent Variables	Theoretical Expectation	Unstandardized Coefficient (Std. Error)	Standardized Coefficient	VIF
<u>School Choice</u>				
Parental Involvement	+	.71(.37)*	.369	2.204
Importance of Religion	+	3.33 (1.59)**	.331	1.519
Private or Public	+	2.56 (4.51)	.090	1.512
Length of Attendance	+	-2.94 (1.66)*	-.291	1.625
<u>Services Provided</u>				
Therapeutic Services	+	-11.64 (3.98)***	-.409	1.178
School Feedback	+	3.95 (2.42)	.233	1.229
<u>Demographics</u>				
Household Income	+	.83 (1.46)	.080	1.175
Mother's Education	+	1.08 (1.33)	.125	1.427
Father's Education	+	-.52 (1.10)	-.072	1.379
Child's Age	+	3.22 (1.68)*	.375	2.291
<u>Constant</u>				
R Square	.563			
Adjusted R Square	.417			
Unstandardized Coefficients (Std. Error)	46.74 (15.40)			
N	37			

Note. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction with child's school. Significance: * $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

The multiple regression model was utilized to accept or reject hypotheses and determine which elements adequately predicted parental satisfaction (for all hypotheses the dependent variable was satisfaction with the child's school and this was the dependent variable utilized in the multiple regression model). The theoretical expectation (either +/-) is included in included in the table to show what was thought to be the logical outcome of each variable in the model while holding the other variables constant. For

example, whether the child received therapeutic services, which was a variable incorporated into the regression model, showed a strong negative relationship. These findings from the model are discussed per the multiple regression output by explaining the positive or negative associations and which variables showed significance.

Hypothesis 1

This hypothesis stated that the more involved parents are in their child's education, the more satisfied they will be with their school, with parental involvement (compilation of independent variables or parental involvement) the independent variable.

The parent involvement independent variable used in the model was the additive sum of the following six survey questions/variables (all on a 5-point scale):

1. Parents discussed school with other parents,
2. Parents talked to school about ways to help child learn,
3. Parents discussed child's social needs with school,
4. Parents visited child's school,
5. How involved parents are in fundraising efforts, and
6. How involved parents are in parent groups.

This process allowed for a more complete depiction of the degree of parental involvement by combining and adding up the values of each variable, thus transforming it into a very powerful predictor of satisfaction.

According to this multiple regression model, the B value for the parental involvement was .715, and the model revealed a Beta value of .369 with a significance of .065. This variable, while holding the other variables constant, was found to be statistically significant at the $p < .01$. This finding suggests that the more involved parents

are in their child's education, the more satisfied overall they are with the school that they chose. It is logical to deduce that the more involved parents are in their child's education, the more of a channel parents would have when seeking out the right school for their child. This finding further adds to the argument that parental involvement leads parents to be more informed not only when seeking out a school but also once they have found and placed their child at a given school. Since there is a positive relationship among parental involvement and satisfaction revealed through the multiple regression model and the significance is relatively high and significant, this hypothesis was accepted.

Hypothesis 2

This hypothesis stated that a greater level of importance placed on religion in regard to schooling will affect the parents' degree of satisfaction with current school; important of religion in schooling (ordinal) was the independent variable.

The multiple regression model revealed that there was a B value of 3.332 and a Beta of .331 with a significance of .047 while holding the other variables fixed. This is a major finding of this study that relates to the literature on religion and school choice (Cohen-Zada & Sanders, 2008; Huefner & Huefner, 1992; Katsiyannis & Maag, 1998; Osborne, 1994; Sutton & King, 2011).

Since roughly 64% of private schools that participate in the McKay Scholarship Program in Florida are religious affiliated, this finding was thought to be a major influencer of satisfaction and choice.

It appears that by allowing religious institutions to participate in the education marketplace parents exhibit higher degrees of satisfaction with the school their child attends. This argument supports that of Moe (2001) who maintained that since most

schools are religious affiliated in the private sector, excluding them would leave very few choices for parents. By excluding these schools the central premise behind school choice would be challenged as parents would not have many options when seeking the school that is the best fit for their child (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Moe, 2001; Viteritti, 1999). Further, since a large proportion of private school students in America attend a parochial school (Cohen-Zada & Sanders, 2008), it would be almost impossible to seek out an appropriate school without bringing these schools into the quality to cost decision making processes. This finding suggests that parents do desire to have the option to incorporate their religious beliefs into school choice decisions, which comprises the broader school choice framework. Hence, this argument put forth by proponents was supported and the incorporation of religious schools into voucher programming (Carnoy, 2000; Dahan, 2011; Kane, 2009; Schneider et al., 1998; Schneider et al., 1997; Sutton & King, 2011; Walberg, 2000; Weiss, 1998; Wood, 2007) seems to be a viable and desirable option for many parents. Another theory supported by this study is the contestation that if voucher programs were to disallow religious schools to participate in voucher programs, then it would severely limit options for parents to exit the public school system (Moe, 2001).

This theoretical underpinning among the relationship of choice, satisfaction, and religious education was supported by the current study as parents generally are satisfied with the school their child attends and the independent variable for importance of religion in schooling was found to be highly significant at the $p < .05$ level—while holding the other variables constant. Therefore, the greater the importance parents place on religion, the greater satisfaction with their school of choice. Since the model revealed significance, and has reinforced the positive theoretical expectation, this hypothesis was accepted.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 stated that the longer a child has attended a particular school, the more satisfied the parents will be with the school; the independent variable was length of length of attendance (nominal).

According to the multiple regression analysis, there is a negative relationship for length of attendance with a B value of -2.940 and a Beta of -.291 with a significance of .088. This infers that the longer a child is at a given school the less satisfied the parent becomes with that school. Although many of the school choice arguments were supported in this study as satisfaction was shown to be relatively high, this finding could infer that parents become less satisfied over time. One can only speculate for the reasoning behind this finding. Since this study dealt with the disabled population of students, it is important to examine exactly why satisfaction decreases over time.

This finding suggests that parents may become more acquainted with the school over time and therefore realize the deficiencies and problems with the school. This finding may also relate to how the child is doing in school. If the parents do not see the progress that they thought or expected their child would be making in the school they chose, the parents might become less satisfied over time. Further, this finding is consistent with that of parents of children who are disabled and are not using the McKay Scholarship. That is, in general, the older the child becomes the less satisfied parents become with the services that they are receiving. This is primarily because the schools lack the ability to adequately work with older children that have a disability as they are tasked with preparing that child for a transition into the real world. More traditional services are generally provided to younger students but as the child ages services that are

focused on functional skills for living an independent life and as well as work related skills are needed. If the parents do not see the expected educational progression as the child ages this would, theoretically, lead them to become less satisfied with the school. The theoretical expectation for this variable, while holding other variables constant, was anticipated to exhibit a positive relationship. Since, this was not the case this hypothesis could not be accepted.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 stated that the greater the level of services provided to the student (i.e., therapeutic services), the more satisfied parents will be with the school. The two independent variables were receipt of therapeutic services (ordinal) and school feedback (ordinal).

The multiple regression output for whether the child receives any sort of therapeutic services had a B value of -11.643 and a Beta of -.409 with a significance of .007, which is statistically significant at the $p < .001$ level. This infers or suggests that if a child receives therapeutic services at school the parent is less satisfied than parents whose children do not receive these services at their school of choice. According to the multiple regression output, school feedback showed a B value of 3.951 and a Beta of .233 with a significance of .115. This finding could infer many facets of choice but also get at the severity of the issue. The therapeutic services variables, while holding other variables constant, revealed a startling negative relationship. Parents whose children receive therapeutic services are less satisfied with the school overall. Again, although the descriptive statistics for satisfaction were quite high, this finding could infer that the quality of therapeutic services are not on par with what parents expected from the school.

This finding also indicates or suggests that parents might be satisfied with the school but not so satisfied with the therapeutic services. This variable (receives therapeutic services) was found to be highly significant at the $p < .01$ level, which indicates that this study has unearthed a finding that needs much more research before adequate conclusions can be derived. The variable school feedback was not found to be statistically significant and therefore cannot be considered a predictor of parental satisfaction. Therefore, with the negative relationship among satisfaction with child's school and therapeutic services and no significance appearing in the multiple regression analysis among satisfaction of school choice and school feedback, this hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 stated that the more affluent parents will be more satisfied with their choice of school; the independent variable was family/household income (nominal).

According to the multiple regression output, family/household income had a B value of .835 and a Beta of .080 with a significance of .572. Family/household income, according to the regression multiple, cannot be accepted as a predictor of satisfaction. This is because household income did not show any significance in regard to satisfaction with the child's school. It was expected that wealthier parents would be more satisfied with their choice of school because they not only have more money to use in the school search process but also because of their networks, which are constructed around their socioeconomic status. Therefore, affluence cannot be considered an adequate predictor of satisfaction in this analysis. Since there was no significance in the multiple regression analysis, this hypothesis could not be accepted.

Hypothesis 6

Hypothesis 6 stated that the higher the level of education the parent has attained the more satisfied they will be with their choice of school. The two independent variables were mother's highest level of education (nominal) and father's highest level of education (nominal)

According to both correlation matrices for satisfaction with child's school and mother's and father's highest level of education, both exhibited a very weak and negative correlation. According to the multiple regression model, the independent variable, mother's highest level of education, had a B value of 1.079 and a Beta of .125 with a significance of .423. For the independent variable, father's highest level of education, according to the multiple regression model, there was a B value of -.522 and a Beta of -.473 with a significance of .640. Coleman and Hoffer (1997) argued that the higher the education of the parent, the more emphasis is placed on the importance of education, which then would lead to a more informed decision when choosing schools. Further, there is a consistent relationship among education of the parents and the probability of them choosing private school (Coleman & Hoffer, 1997). This study did not indicate any significance or relationship to support this assumption. Since no significance was revealed in the regression model, this hypothesis could not be accepted.

Hypothesis 7

Hypothesis 7 states that as the child's age increases, the parents' level of satisfaction will become greater; the independent variable is child's age.

According to the multiple regression model, the B value was 3.223 and it exhibited a Beta of .375 with significance at the .066 level. This infers that as the child's

age increases, the satisfaction level of the parents also increase, making child's age a good predictor of parental satisfaction. Although this is quite contradictory to the negative relationship among length of attendance and satisfaction with school, this finding supports its theoretical expectation. As the child's age increases, satisfaction with the school increases. This could infer that the parents become more acquainted with the McKay Scholarship Program and therefore become more aware of the bureaucracy that exists. Parents also might perceive that the school is doing a satisfactory job as they see educational progression and/or other elements that would lead to higher satisfaction with their choice of school. Therefore, this hypothesis was accepted.

Table 29 shows whether the hypotheses were accepted or rejected based on the multiple regression model.

Parental Feedback to Open-Ended Questions

This section discusses the two open-ended questions and the accompanying feedback provided by parents. By incorporating these responses into the analysis, it allows for a better picture to be drawn from the sample so that inferences can be made, in this case, perceptions, choice, and degree of satisfaction with the McKay Scholarship Program. Questions 18 and 42 asked survey respondents why they chose to use the McKay Scholarship; question 42 also asked parents to provide any additional comments they might want to add.

Table 29

Accepted Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Findings
H(1). The more involved parents are in their child's education, the more satisfied they will be with their school.	Accepted
H(2). The greater the level of importance placed on religion in regard to schooling will affect the parents' degree of satisfaction with current school.	Accepted
H(3). The longer a child has attended a particular school, the more satisfied the parents will be with the school.	Not Statistically Significant
H(4). The greater the level of services provided to the student (i.e., therapeutic services), the more satisfied parents will be with the school.	Not Statistically Significant
H(5). More affluent parents will be more satisfied with their choice of school.	Not Statistically Significant
H(6). The higher the level of education the parents have attained, the more satisfied they will be with their choice of school.	Not Statistically Significant
H(7). As the child's age increases, the parents' level of satisfaction will become greater.	Accepted

Question 18 asked parents for valuable input into why they chose to utilize the McKay Scholarship resource; 58 ($n=58$) parents responded. The responses were broken down into four sections/elements identified by survey respondents; funding, religiosity, disappointment with the public school system, and desire to have their child attend a private school. The responses provided by respondents do confirm much of the literature on school choice. Since this survey looked at sentiments of satisfaction and choice

among parents with children with a broad array of disabilities, it seems critical to review this valuable input. Following is a brief synopsis of each element, how it fits into the literature, and responses provided by parents.

Issues revolving around funding are a central component to the larger systemic framework of school choice. Since vouchers allow for the conversion of public funding to fully or partially subsidize a private or not-for-profit education, it seems logical that parents were influenced by the prospect of getting money to cover, or partially cover, the cost of an education outside the public school system and allow for their child to attend a religious based school. The following input was gained from question 18, which sought to gain information on why parents chose to use the McKay Scholarship:

- “Because it helps pay the tuition for the Private school he is attending and I otherwise could not afford it.”
- “Because extra help was needed.”
- “I do not like public education and McKay helps to pay for the school I like.”
- “To pay private tuition.”
- “Helps pay the tuition towards a private school that we need for our child.”
- “Funding.”
- “To be able to receive help for him financially at a private school and better help for him at this school.”
- “Would not have been able to afford it.”
- “Because I don’t have the financial means to place him in a school for his type of needs. Also, due to the school boundaries that exist, hinders the ability to choose what’s best for my child.”

- “Because with his medication and tutoring costs we had no other choice.”
- “We need the money to help us pay for a school with a special program.”
- “It help to pay the tuition.”
- “Because tuition for learning disabilities more than 30k a year.”
- “So he could attend a private school which was better than the public school he was in.”
- “We would not have been able to afford the school tuition otherwise.”
- “Our son’s educational needs were not being adequately met in the public school setting.
- “We would have been unable to afford the more appropriate private setting without the McKay scholarship.”
- “I felt a specialized school would be the only way he could learn and achieve to potential but could not otherwise afford it.”

As can be seen from this feedback, funding was an overarching reason why parents chose to utilize the voucher program. Some parents indicated that it would help subsidize a more expensive private school education, which then feeds into the other findings of this feedback. Parents expressed that the funding has helped them both exit the public school system and/or use the funding to attend a parochial school. Reverting back to the regression model, there is a private/non-private dummy variable that exhibited no significance in terms of satisfaction. Also, financial issues were not examined in the model except for household income, which showed no significance in regard to satisfaction with current school. Therefore, this feedback is supplemental in nature and is intended to relay reasoning for seeking out and utilizing the voucher

program. The same can be inferred for the following elements revealed by the open-ended feedback.

The incorporation of religious schools into the school voucher debate is central to both proponent and opponent arguments. The multiple regression model revealed positive significance among satisfaction and importance placed on religion. Many parents responding to question 18 indicated that they decided to use the McKay Scholarship because of their religious and belief systems as well as the ability to use funding to attend a parochial school. Coupled with the significance and positive relationship among importance of religion and satisfaction with the parents' choice of school exhibited in the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) multiple regression output, this is a key finding of this study. It appears that many parents indicated that incorporating a religious base and pedagogy into their child's education would be beneficial to their individual and academic development. Therefore, the importance of religion in the home can lead parents to incorporate these values into their decisions when choosing schools. This is where the religiosity element comes into play as parents who espouse to certain beliefs have used the McKay Scholarship Program to place their children in religious schools. Besides the religiosity component, other parents indicated that the religious schools were a more viable option due to student to teacher ratios and the schools' ability to better service their children's unique needs. Here are their comments:

- “Due to lack of small classroom group at the Public school, at Kindergarten we experience 30 kids in one classroom. Besides the religion restrictions at the public school.”

- “We chose to do so because the scholarship made it possible for send him to a Catholic school, which is quite important to us.”
- “A gift of Lord.”
- “Because I felt that the Public School System would not be satisfactory to meet her needs, both educational and spiritual; so I looked to the private sector. The McKay scholarship program is a great help to assist us in paying for the school.”
- “I enrolled my boys in the McKay Scholarship program so they can attend a private, Catholic school.”
- “I wanted a school that meet his educational needs at his own pace. The Christian value is extremely important; therefore, I have seen a tremendous change in his behavior. He learned & study the bible which has a tremendous impact in his life and his grades are also on a positive note, he is eager to learn & look forward to go school meet new friends. His acting out or sometimes inability to concentrate is not use as a punishment or comments to belittle him, it’s used as a learning opportunity for growth. Our family attends Sunday school at his school & he learns about the consequences of things to prevent some repeated behavior. I am extremely pleased with the decision, the school staffs, and grateful to the therapist suggestion. It’s a small school everyone knows each other we felt a sense of family there. He is much so welcome into the school.”

Throughout the literature review and theoretical framework for this study was the idea that a battle among proponents and opponents exists in the school choice debate. It

is apparent that proponents see market methods as a way to deal with the inefficiencies in the government's provision and delivery of education services. Proponents see school vouchers as a way to alleviate the burden placed upon government to provide these services. Additionally, it is thought that market mechanics (i.e., choice programs) will improve the quality of education while keeping cost down.

The theoretical framework discussed the larger umbrella of public choice and how school choice is a derivative of this overall approach. By allowing choice, it is assumed that those participants would benefit by being allowed to make a prudent and sensible decision when choosing a school. Many responses that accompanied question 18 revolved around the notion that many parents were disappointed with the public school that their child was attending. Bearing in mind that this analysis deals with a specific population of students (i.e., those students with diagnosed and documented disabilities), many parents simply felt that the public school their child was attending could not meet the unique educational needs of their children. The following qualitative responses to question #18 dealt with the belief that public schools were not doing a satisfactory job and therefore parents experienced disappointment with their previous public school where their child previously attended:

- “It was a better fit than public school.”
- “I wanted him to have a better education than what public school could offer him.”
- “Was not satisfied with our public school.”
- “My child needed it.”
- “I do not like public education and McKay helps to pay for the school I like.”

- “Because my son is entitled to this wonderful resource and it is a great tool that my family actually need[s] to provide him with a good educational environment that will push him forward to reach his maximum academic potential. A kid like mine, in the wrong environment would completely fail school and it may affect him irreversible in the academic and emotional aspect. I am deeply thankful.”
- “Not happy with my neighborhood school and was told McKay scholarship was available to children with disabilities.”
- “We need help for our son and the McKay was a great option when we needed the right fit for him in a school that met his special needs.”
- “We has previously tried public school and my child was not progressing and the level of care was not where we would like it to be.”
- “He was being bullied & teased in the public school setting. I also felt that smaller class sizes would benefit him.”
- “Because I didn’t feel my child would have gotten the same attention, and assistance in a public school setting.”
- “Because public schools do not offer any or a full program for student with disability and teachers in public schools does not had the training and patience to deal with disable children’s.”
- “The public school did not have adequate teacher ratio to provide him the help he needs (1 teacher for 30+ cases/iep).”
- “I was discouraged with the public school atmosphere.”

- “Because my son needed the help, he was falling behind in public school where there are a lot more students in the classrooms. I could see he was embarrassed to ask for help and he had no confidence in himself. He had problems understanding what he reads and could not communicate what the story or passage was about. I tried everything, even Sylvan Learning because I thought they could help. I didn’t know it was a disability he had.”
- “Our son’s educational needs were not being adequately met in the public school setting. We would have been unable to afford the more appropriate private setting without the McKay scholarship.”
- “Because her services could not be met in the public school. The child is not at any extreme exceptionality so she was middle ground and got lost in the system. The child could not speak correctly yet the bottom-line standards for the public school system did not qualify her for speech therapy in the system. The child was placed in a setting with SEVERE exceptionalities and she acquired ‘habits’ from other exceptionalities. Based on a neuropsychological evaluation the child was going to only learn based on small class instruction and individual, emotional responses not available in public school setting.”
- “His teachers are very patient with his disability and are well trained to handle kids with ADHD versus public school.”
- “My child was not learning at the rate or level of the age group the class due to health reasons.”

Many parents indicated that they desired their child to be placed in a private or not-for-profit school setting where classes generally have a smaller ratio of students to

teachers. These parents were wanted to place their child in a smaller school and, in essence, escape the public school bureaucracy. The McKay Scholarship Program was a means for these parents to convert funding into private dollars while exercising their desire to be able to choose where and how their child should be educated. Following are the qualitative responses for question 18 provided by parents in regard to the desire to have their child attend a non-public school as the reasoning behind utilizing the McKay Scholarship Program:

- “Provided an option for a different school setting (i.e., private school for a smaller teacher/child ratio).”
- “We knew early on that he would need more support than the Public system could provide and although they aren’t supposed to tell us this at the IEP meeting at the end of the year the team suggested that a Private School would be able to provide more personal attention than they could from Kindergarten and above.”
- “I wanted her to attend the private school she is in. She has a 1:12 ratio, with regular curriculum and few modifications.”
- “To make sure he was able to attend this school and not be turned down when requesting a transfer.”
- “I wanted the opportunity to allow my son to go to a smaller school than our large home school.”
- “We knew he would need special education for his entire school career.”
- “Because he has the opportunity to go to a private school where the classroom is small and he can be better followed for the teachers.”

The final item on the survey instrument asked parents if they would like to add any additional comments. There were a total of 17 responses to this optional question. Many parents expressed great satisfaction with the program and were somewhat appreciative that the program existed. Parents also indicated the program has helped their child develop the appropriate skills and intellect. A few parents expressed concern with the decrease in per student funding over the past several years. Some parents also expressed concern with the IEP process. Not surprisingly, as the idea of religiosity has been a key finding in this study, many parents commented on the positive aspect of being able to attend a religious school. Also, a few parents pointed out that participating in more studies such as this dissertation should occur so that information and recognition of the program can be more widespread. Parents generally took the opportunity to praise the program and desire it to continue in the future. Question 42 was the last question of the survey and the feedback will be discussed below.

The next section of this analysis of the parental feedback discusses the second and last open-ended question, question 42. Many parents opted to answer this question for the opportunity to comment and express satisfaction with the program. These responses include elements such as services provided, religion, and overall satisfaction with being able to exit the public school system in order to find a school that could meet their child's unique needs. These are some excerpts of what some parents had to say about the program:

- “We are greatly appreciative that our son can attend a religious school & be around other children that are more than likely being raised in a similar manner.”

- “I feel that the McKay scholarship is an amazing opportunity for families who have children with special needs. In today’s public school, services are practically nonexistent and I was not happy with the general environment of the low level classes that my daughter would have to attend. In the private school setting the rules more strictly enforced and the environment is perfect for children that need that extra help.”
- “Our son is doing excellent as a result of having great parents that have cared to provide him with the help and support he has needed, but also we are thankful that the McKay has been available to him for the past 12 years. He has been in the McKay Program since Kindergarten through the present and he is starting 11th Grade and enjoying it now tremendously.”
- “The McKay scholarship has been an amazing tool to help my child. The McKay has allowed us to put my child in a school that has helped socially and academically. My child has moved half of the schedule to be included in the regular curriculum and is close to achieving 100 hours of community service. The scholarship has allowed us to afford what we would not be able to otherwise.”
- “Thanks to the McKay scholarship program, my son has a chance to better himself and hopefully be able to make it through college.”
- “The McKay scholarship has been a lifesaver for us. I learned about it from another mom when my son was still very young. I mentally filed it away, and then applied when a transition from this public setting became necessary for us.”

- “The MacKay Scholarship makes a tremendous difference and positive impact on my choices to tailor my daughter’s education to her real needs. It is a WONDERFUL program.”
- “The McKay Scholarship has made all of the difference in my ability to provide my son with the supplemental help he requires.”
- “McKay Scholarship has helped my son gain the opportunity to excel in a small school setting.”
- “The environment at my son’s school is very appealing to him. Small classrooms (max 20 students per GRADE), teachers all know him, and it feels like a large family. His major setback with his Autism is social, not academic, and this school is a perfect setting for him.”
- “I want to said thanks to McKay scholarship to help my son get the education he need for be a better person in this country and help him to get a career...”

A few parents utilized the final open-ended survey item to comment upon some of the problems or deficiencies they encountered in the qualification process for participating in the McKay Scholarship program. These included trouble with the IEP process, the programs deficiencies, and funding issues. These are some of their comments:

- “I have had to pay for his therapies, ST/OT/ABA out of pocket until I was able to get a final ASD diagnosis this past year. Unfortunately, the process is such that I would have to remove him from the private school and forfeit the McKay to go back to Public for 1 year and reapply for the McKay to get and

IEP for Autism to provide more help from the McKay. I continue to supplement out of pocket for anything not covered by McKay or insurance.”

- “I think the McKay has been helpful, however, when my son was in public school I had to take an attorney to basically fight the school and get his matrix number increased to the appropriate level. The public schools do not know or understand learning disabilities nor do they want to deal with them. The McKay helps but it’s not enough to cover tuition. Only covers 1/3 of the \$30k which does not include all of the outside therapy like OT, Speech, and Tutors etc.”
- “The McKay resource is excellent for finding a school that can provide the help needed (most private overpromise and under deliver). If I need to update his IEP I have to place him back in Public school and lose another year. It took two years or class grade to get the IEP in first place. The McKay scholarship does not cover dyslexia or its costs for tuition extremely prohibitive \$24k a year vs McKay scholarship \$5k.”
- “The amount of the McKay Scholarship has been decreased over the last few years. This places a bit of a hardship on the school in their quest to provide the best educational environment possible for their students.”

Through this qualitative inquiry it was possible to identify several themes that parents referenced in the open-ended questions. These include more funds being available for their child’s education, a desire for their child to attend a religious institution, the conceptualization that public schools are not doing a satisfactory job at

providing adequate and appropriate services, and a smaller student-to-teacher ratio in non-public schools.

Through the feedback provided by parents four main sentiments were uncovered. The first is that many parents expressed dissatisfaction with the public school system. Since, the McKay Scholarship deals with a population that requires special or enhanced services, the school the parents chose probably offers a better mix of services. Second, parents expressed that they wanted their child placed in a school with a smaller student-to-teacher ratio, which is probably an element that has led many to be dissatisfied with the public school system. Third, many parents have a strong desire to have their child attend a religious school based on their morals and values. Further, adding to the dissatisfaction of the public school element, religion might be a factor of dissatisfaction and this dissatisfaction obviously has enhanced parental satisfaction with the parochial schools that their child attends. Lastly, funding was a central issue for parents as the McKay Scholarship affords them a means to exit the public school system and utilize state allocated funds to attend a school that parents believe is a better match or fit for their child.

Chapter 5 covered the findings of this research undertaking. It looked at the descriptive statistics, sample population of the survey respondents in relation to statewide percentages, a statistical analysis of the independent and dependent variables, and an analysis of the qualitative responses gained through the survey instrument. Chapter 6 highlights the conclusions of this research by talking about the findings and the input provided by parents of McKay Scholarship recipients. This chapter also discusses some of the future research in regards to the program and the broader school choice framework.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This chapter serves as the conclusion and discussion section of this dissertation. The previous chapters highlighted the main theories guiding this research, including a literature review that encompassed past studies and the structure of the McKay Scholarship Program as well as an analysis and findings section. This concluding chapter is meant to discuss how the findings have assisted in answering the primary research questions that have guided this research. Focusing on parental satisfaction, reasoning for choice, religiosity, and other factors that have influenced both choice and satisfaction, this analysis has contributed to the literature on school choice by revealing parental perceptions and levels of satisfaction of the sample population studied. Further, the data collected can be utilized to make inferences about the quality of the McKay Scholarship Program and whether it should continue in the future. This concluding chapter attempts to integrate the literature into the findings, make clear and concise policy recommendations, identify future research, and point out the limitations of this study.

A major element of this chapter serves to identify the theories of school choice and how the intricacies of choice mechanics have been built around these theories. It is imperative to review how parents feel about this program since public funds are being utilized to subsidize the John M. McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities; arduous data collection has produced findings that have shed light on parental satisfaction and perception. This dissertation can be used as a tool for future researchers whose work involves surveying for citizen/parental input and preference

exposure as this has long been a problematic endeavor for the field of public administration, particularly in the arenas of public finance and policy.

This dissertation was premised on four research questions in regard to school choice and Florida's John M. McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities:

1. What are the reasons underlying parental choices for children on McKay scholarships? Why did parents choose to enroll their child in either a private or not-for-profit educational institution or to keep them in the public school system?
2. How satisfied are parents of McKay voucher recipients in the public, private, and/or not-for-profit school settings with regard to school quality, educational planning and progression, and quality of service delivery?
3. Are the satisfaction levels of parents of McKay voucher recipients who have placed their child into a private and/or not-for-profit religious school comparable to the satisfaction levels of parents who have opted to keep their child in a non-religious school setting?
4. What other factors affect satisfaction levels of parents of McKay voucher recipients?

The use of citizen satisfaction surveys (Charbonneau & Van Ryzin, 2012; Livingstone, 2008) or, in this case, parental satisfaction surveys, are central to understanding perceptions of public programs. They also assist institutional and organizational leaders in making more accurate and appropriate decisions in regard to future programmatic planning. Through this exploratory analysis of the John M. McKay Scholarship Program, I was able to compile data on parental satisfaction levels and

perceptions to do just that. This study utilized a parental satisfaction survey to gain greater insight into parental sentiments about the McKay Scholarship Program. Through a case study approach of the program, it was possible to relate some of the school choice theories to the findings of the survey. After more than a decade of the McKay Scholarship Program being a viable means of funding for students with disabilities this dissertation has served to expose parental preferences and perceptions of the program as well as gauge satisfaction levels.

Importance of Study

What differentiates this study on the McKay Scholarship Program from the Greene and Forester (2003) and Weidner and Herrington (2006) studies is two-fold. The first difference is this study was completed 15 years after the program's inception, at a time when it has become a staple in academic programming for students with disabilities in Florida. This has made this study significant due to the lack of research over the past decade. Second, the Greene and Forester (2003) and Weidner and Herrington (2006) studies focused on determining and appraising satisfaction levels of parents who took their child out of the public school system and placed them in a private school. Both studies revealed that parents were more satisfied with the private schools. The current study looked at all school types to determine and analyze satisfaction levels of all parents whether they decided to stay in the public school system, transferred their child to a not-for-profit institute, or placed their child in a private school. It is clear that parents are very satisfied with the school they have chosen. Satisfaction levels revealed in this study were relatively high and there was limited to no scrutiny revealed by parents about the program. Again, understanding and determining satisfaction as well the influencers of

satisfaction was a central component to answering the research questions that guided this study.

It appears from the data collected on parental satisfaction levels in regard the John M. McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities that many of the arguments put forth by school choice proponents appear evident and are supported by the findings. Several of these arguments are highlighted to show how they are reinforced through this case study.

The first major argument revealed in this analysis is that many parents desire their child to attend a religious or parochial school. There is a major contention here among both proponents and opponents as public dollars are being used to fund private, parochial education. The parental satisfaction survey instrument utilized in this study showed that many parents want their child placed in these schools even if the parents are responsible for a moderate supplemental cost. This is primarily due to the parents' values and religious beliefs and their aspiration to have their child educated in this manner. Opponents argue that this conversion of public dollars to religious educational institutions is a clear violation of the separation of church and state. Through the open-ended feedback and statistical analysis, the findings show that parents generally are satisfied with both their choice of school and the services being provided. The argument—in relation to public choice frameworks—is reinforced simply by allowing choice. Although this might be the case, more academic work should focus on the quality of services provided at these schools.

The quandary then arises because, if parents are satisfied with the services being provided at the private, parochial school and the parents feel that the services are a good

fit for their child's needs, then this study has reinforced the notion that choice—which includes the option to enroll in a parochial school—has led to higher levels of parental satisfaction. This is the primary idea or argument of allocative and productive efficiency put forth by Schneider et al. (2000). According to Schneider et al., in education reform, the demand side of the reforms are “just as important as the supply side. However, much less is known about the demand-side of schools reforms” (p. 57). Also, it might support the Ji and Boyatt (2007) study that parochial parents simply tend to understand vouchers through the stance that the church takes. Their study revealed that parents placed on vouchers offer by the church were held higher regard than other factors associated with educational and social outcomes.

This dissertation supports this notion that in order for a program such as the McKay Scholarship Program to adequately maintain an equilibrium, the efficiency element in regard to the “matching” process is important and relevant when considering or choosing a certain school. This case study has added to the literature on the demand side of the efficiency argument within the context of school choice. Most parents were highly satisfied with the school their child attends and we now have a slightly better understanding of what is demanded by parents as market participants. Further, extending choice to parents increases these efficiencies by making the quasi-market more productive.

There are several demographic factors that were found to be related to overall satisfaction, although some showed positive relationships and some exhibited negative associations. For example, the longer the child attends a given school, the less satisfied the parents become. This could be due to several reasons such as quality of education,

comparability of services provided to the child, and other factors that would influence satisfaction over a long period of time. I believe, or can infer, that this finding is particularly important for the broader school choice debate because it gets to the core of the question “Why might parents become less satisfied over a given period of time?” Hypothetically, the main argument here is that the longer the child is at a given school, the more aware parents become of the bureaucracy that exists and this may sway their satisfaction levels with the school.

The age of the child in years showed significance in the regression model, which suggests that the older the child becomes the more satisfied the parents will be with the school overall. This is a very subjective element incorporated into the model and it can imply various connotations. Parents might be more satisfied as the child gets older because they see progress being made in the educational development and advancement of the child, a physical and mental change that could be attributed to the pedagogy and curriculum, or simply because the school that was chosen by the parents purports similar moral belief systems as the family and therefore the child picks up on these beliefs. Although this is contradictory to the above finding that the longer the child attends a particular school, the less satisfied parents become, it could be argued that the same bureaucracy might be navigated more easily by parents as schools try to keep and retain students, thus making it easier for parents to participate and become more involved in the program.

School choice theory (Brasington & Hite, 2014; Carlson, 2014; Carnoy, 2000; Dahan, 2011; Hanushek & Yilmez, 2013; Kane, 2009; Onur, 2010; Schneider et al., 1998; Schneider et al., 1997; Unger, 1999; Walberg, 2000; Weiss, 1998; West, 1997;

Wood, 2007) is an attempt to increase and infuse market mechanics into the educational complex. Following the market model, the central premise is to infuse a healthy competition among private, not-for-profit, and public schools so that the quality of education servicing can be increased while keeping the cost of these services at reasonable and sustainable levels. According to Creswell (2009), the main objective of statistical analysis in social science research is to make inferences based on the findings. In the case of the McKay Scholarship Program, it appears that increasing parental options and infusing market methods into the choice programming have led to high levels of satisfaction among parents whose child is currently enrolled under the program. This inference reinforces the study by Greene and Forester (2003), which examined parental perceptions of the program after the inception of program. Their main findings were that parents of children who were enrolled under the McKay program were indeed satisfied with the new choice arrangements being offered to them. This case study—through exploratory analysis—reinforces these findings.

Laitsch (2002) maintained that policymakers in Florida consider that the market model and injection of competitive forces in education will serve as a conduit to greater education equality, although they still are apprehensive of equity concerns. This analysis of the McKay Scholarship Program reinforces this notion that market forces have indeed created an environment where parents of children with disabilities can seek out more funding and a better school—in terms of fit—for what they deem to be an appropriate environment for their child. This does indeed increase equity, both economically and socially, for all parents as income, or socioeconomic status, was not found to be a significant indicator of how satisfied these parents are with their choice of school. In

looking at this study in terms of equity, there are many theoretical paradigms that do hold weight when looking at specific choice programs.

To add to the information asymmetry argument (Clarkson et al., 2007; Iyengar, 1989; Lupia, 1994; Popkin, 1991; Prasch & Sheth, 2000; Schneider et al., 2000; Sniderman et al., 1991; Viteritti, 2010; Zaller, 1992), there were a large percentage of parents who did not know into what matrix their child falls. Of the total survey respondents sampled, 25% of the total sample population indicated that they did not know what their child's matrix classification was in regard to their IEP. The child's matrix classification is determined primarily by gauging the severity of the child's disability and the services that they require. It also serves as a means for the parents to seek out and find a school that can accommodate the child's disability. This key finding of this dissertation—parents' lack of understanding of their child's IEP and matrix classification is a major pitfall of the program, which could lead to a form of market failure. To properly gauge the quality-to-cost ratio and find the best fit for their child, it is necessary that parents have all the facts about their child's educational status. This finding might also demonstrate that the disability of their child might have less to do with their decision when choosing a school than other variables primarily that of choosing a private, religious based school with smaller student to teacher ratios. The lack of awareness of the child's IEP matrix classification could also indicate a breakdown in communication among educational professionals and parents—this notion of communication breakdown should not be discounted. Contrarily, many parents were not pleased with the therapeutic services offered at the school as many were asked to pay out and some were not available at the school, yet these parents remained satisfied overall.

This shows that services geared toward this population was not the most important factor in the decision when choosing a school for their child. It appears, from both the quantitative analysis and parental feedback that small, religious services was. Knowing the severity is critical for the parent to make a prudent decision in regard to the services that they receive, yet going back to the trade-off discussed previously parents' might simply be making choosing on a whim, basing it of the religious beliefs, or simply identifying with the market model and the tacit assumption that the private sector can do a better job at educating there child than that of the public school system.

In order to find the school that offers services that meet their child's needs, parents must know what their child's specific needs are. But when analyzing school choice initiatives nationwide, it would be interesting to determine what parents know—and do not know—in regard to the myriad elements that go into making a prudent decision on choice of school. Simply put, parents might have several reasons for wanting their child to attend a religious school, but in order to find the right fit—religious or secular; private, not-for-profit, or public—it is necessary to take into account these other factors. Schneider et al. (2000) maintained that having accurate and appropriate information is imperative since government and public institutions are responsible for ensuring that market failures or “quasi-market” (i.e., the education marketplace) failures do not occur. This dissertation has shed light on the fact that elements of information asymmetry in regard to the amount of information and understanding parents have about their child's IEP classification are evident and that it is necessary to examine the complexities and deficiencies so that a proper matching process between the child's needs and services can be achieved, thereby heightening program efficacy.

All in all, the major tenets of the market model in American society have played a key role in getting school choice programs to the point to where they are now. Elements of the new public management movement, which promote competition and business-like practices, seem to have become commonplace across the nation. This exploratory analysis has reinforced many of the facets associated with this model of public management. The overarching umbrella of public choice seems to be working well in the case of the McKay Scholarship Program. School choice as a derivative of public choice has proven to increase competition, satisfaction, and overall productivity as it relates to the McKay Scholarship Program. This dissertation was not meant to be all-encompassing, although the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 3 can be used to understand the fundamentals behind choice programming. Through the context of public administration and within the broader contemporary education policy framework, the main theoretical arguments can be utilized to examine and determine if certain programs are appropriate and, more importantly, if they promote equity principles.

In the case of the McKay Scholarship Program, the major principles and theories that have encompassed the school choice debate for several decades have been touched upon and are highly relevant. This analysis also has revealed several predictors of satisfaction and many of the arguments put forth by school choice advocates are supported. With this said, this analysis of the McKay Scholarship Program has shown that parents do desire the program to continue and that they are satisfied with the school that they have chosen.

Another major finding of this analysis is the negative relation among therapeutic services and parents' satisfaction with their child's school. This may indicate that

although parents are satisfied with their child's school the levels of satisfaction decrease when that school offers the therapeutic services to the child. The multiple regression model revealed negative relationships between satisfaction with the child's school and both therapeutic services offered as well as the child's length of attendance. There appears to be a "trade-off" that parents are making. For example, religiosity was a major finding of this study. I can deduce from the findings that parents are making a decision to choose away from the public school system and place their child in smaller mostly religious affiliated schools. The trade-off occurs when parents decide that having their child attend a smaller private or not-for-profit school is more important than therapeutic services offered. The funding that could be used for services to help the child's development appears to be absorbed by the school chosen by the parent and then the funding is absorbed by the cost of attendance. So it comes as no surprise that satisfaction decreases over time in regard to therapeutic services. Consequently, the longer the child attends a given school, once they have existed the public school system, satisfaction decreases over time because parents might have not made an appropriate choice and have only take a few variables into account such as religion and smaller student to teacher ratios. Further, as the child ages different services need to be provided in order to acquaint them with the skills and abilities in order to compete in the real world. It appears that school are not providing these services as expected by parents. This is discussed further in the future research section of this chapter, with a recommendation that this element be studied to see if these schools are providing the services that are promised to parents. Due to high levels of satisfaction, the program appears to be assisting families who do not have the means to properly provide the services that their

child needs. Other states that do not have established programs similar to the McKay Scholarship Program (i.e., choice programs for students with disabilities) should attempt to create similar choice mechanics so that parents can seek out a school that is a better fit for their child.

Future Research and Limitation to the Study

There appears to be a lack of research on the issue of mobility associated with school vouchers and choice mechanics. The mobility dilemma—highlighted in 1956 by Tiebout in his theory of local competition—can be seen from a transactional standpoint in regard to how children get to school. Parents who opt for the private option most likely have the obligation to transport their children to and from their school of choice. As the underlying factor of mobility in parents' decision making process is not yet understood, it would be interesting to look at schools that do offer transportation and analyze the parental satisfaction levels of children who attend those schools and receive those transportation services. How strong of an influence does this mobility issue have on parents' decision to participate in voucher programs? Parents who do not have the means (i.e., sufficient time and financial resources) may be inhibited and constrained from making an informed decision with regard to their choice of schooling for their child enrolled under the McKay Scholarship Program.

A second major finding of this dissertation where limited research exists is the relationship between school choice and the provision of therapeutic services. This notion is limited to programs that are geared toward the population studied in this analysis, although the findings that suggest a negative relationship between school satisfaction and the provision of these services should be examined further, as it would heighten

information to parents and influence current and future voucher programming. Since a strong negative relationship exists, it raises the question about the quality of therapeutic services offered by McKay schools.

The most important variable utilized in the multiple regression mode was that of the importance of religion placed on schooling. It appears that many parents are basing their decisions—or choice—off of this element. Therefore, as religion is not related directly to the quality of education the child would receive at the school parents appear to not be informed as to what the quality of education is that their child will be receiving. On the other hand, maybe they are informed and are simply willing to accept the status quo of what the school offers. Do to this very important findings, parents will then be more reluctant to change their child's school. This is a major finding and the conjecture put forth should be studied by both special education academics and administrators responsible for the management of broader voucher programs.

As stated previously, this study also found that many parents do not know their child's classification per the matrix that their child falls into according to their IEP. It is important for public administrators and education practitioners to acknowledge and understanding this shortcoming in the parental school choice mechanics. How do parents make appropriate, informed choices if they do not know the severity of their child's primary education needs? How do parents and policymakers properly account for cost, quality, and services in their decision-making mental models generated from and encouraged by choice programs?

Accountability, as a main pillar in public administration, should be researched heavily within the subject of school voucher programs. This is primarily because public

dollars are being diverted away from the public sphere and used to fund private organizations. How the private organizations report and account for these funds would be an interesting study to expand on the existing literature. In addition, it would improve upon the literature to study whether these funds are being used for the precise purposes outlined in the voucher plan, which can change dramatically on a state-by-state basis.

The 504 plan, initiated in 2011, is means by which parents can take the exact amount of funding which their child would have received in the public school system and use this money at any public, not-for-profit, or out of district public school. It is interesting to note that students do not have to have a disability in the traditional way that we think about disabilities to be on a 504 plan. The 504 plan is named after section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act. The dilemma with this program is one that revolves around social equity and excludability. For example, parents that are better-off can afford to subsidize the remaining portion of tuition at a private or not-for-profit school. Many parents do not have these funds and it can be inferred that many families are therefore excluded in choosing schools as the money allocated through the 504 plan is less than what a student with a mild disability would receive on the McKay Scholarship. The principles of social equity are decreased as more affluent parents have the networks to both obtain and seek-out schools that are best for their children. In my opinion, the 504 plan should act separately from the McKay Scholarship for two reasons. The first is that the 504 plan is not the same as IEPs that are for students that have life-long disabilities. This is contradictory to a core tenant and precursor for McKay funding. Secondly, to ensure accountability of funds and promote social equity and inclusion more accountability should be placed on schools that accept these funds. More research on this

plan should encompass these elements as it is evident that many parents have the ability to seek out these funds and exist the public school system while other might not be able. Therefore an interesting study would look at the networked arrangements and this plan.

From a public policy perspective, it would be noteworthy to look into which advocacy coalitions and lobbying groups are involved in the voucher processes. From a broader systemic perspective, understanding the coalitions that push choice agendas could shed more light on how these programs are developed. Once this information is established, correlations can be drawn from what curriculum is being taught, who the controlling bodies of these institutions are, and what types of pedagogy have been implemented. Private enterprises that fund these specific organizations often contribute in hopes of pushing specific agendas. Therefore, a principal area of research for education and public administration scholars should be a thorough analysis of what these enterprises are doing with these public funds once they are transferred to the private sector.

The parental involvement expressed by the sample population revealed a rather high percentage of parental involvement. It would be interesting to look at whether a certain degree of parental involvement is required by the private or not-for-profit schools as a condition of enrollment. Further, since the parental involvement was rather high it would be interesting to compare and contrast with students that have disabilities that do not receive McKay funding.

It appears that if market models are the dominant force in the school choice movement, there may be incentives (outside the realm of increasing competition to improve quality) that could adversely affect a student's diagnosis when dealing with

special education program vouchers. These incentives are primarily monetary. This is because more money accompanies certain disabilities (i.e., more severe disabilities). It follows that administrators in the public sector who deal with special education students may see the voucher movement as a way of alleviating the burden to provide services that are difficult to acquire. However, an alternate and probably concurrent outcome is that private administrators may try to diagnose students at increased levels of severity, thereby increasing their profit for services provided.

The original conceptual framework for this study was to gauge perception of parents who have stayed in the public school system with those who have opted to take their voucher dollars outside of the public school system. Due to the lack of participation by public school parents, the original framework was implausible. Therefore, it was not feasible to explore these findings because they would not have yielded any significance. I believe that, due to the relatively limited research on the public school option, this would make for an interesting study as it is important to unearth the reasoning behind parents' choice for their child to remain in the public school system. These findings could alter the current voucher schematics—not only for special education but for vouchers in general. A comparative analysis of the rate of parents' perceptions and satisfaction rates between those who have used the voucher program to place their child in a private or not-for-profit institution and those who have opted to stay in the public school system could shed significant light on parental preference.

In order for a study of this magnitude to be possible and more efficient in future research it would be optimal for the researcher to work in collaboration with federal, state, and local education entities. This would make the laborious task of data collection

easier and would heighten the validity of the findings. This collaborative approach is imperative for the findings to be substantiated, although I do not want to discourage researchers from such an undertaking. It is essential that cooperation from the entities being studied is arranged and established from the inception of the research plan. I encountered difficulties when I was verbally informed that assistance would be given; and then learned, in retrospect, that I should have obtained confirmation of participation in writing. Had greater cooperation been provided, a larger sample of parents could have been attained and a greater geographic span of parental input could have been analyzed.

Several elements of this study, particularly in the statistical analysis section, raise many questions that should be studied in the future. For example, this study has shown that parents of a child who receives therapeutic services at school tend to be less satisfied with the school overall. Again, one can only speculate about the reasons for this; but it is extremely important to understand why this exhibited a strong, negative association. This could be a good topic for a researcher studying special education and parental perception of therapeutic services offered in-house by a given school. In another example, the longer a child attends a given school, the less satisfied the parents become. I briefly touched upon some of the possible explanations in the previous section, but a more rigorous exploratory analysis into these elements could further illuminate the major facets and intricacies of parental choice within school choice programs.

Such potential studies as indicated in the concluding and future research sections could enrich the literature on school choice. Increased research should be attempted to assist parents and policy-makers to make better, more informed decisions in regards to

voucher programming and subsequent decisions made by parents in the process of choosing schools.

APPENDICES

Appendix A
Survey Instrument

John M. McKay Scholarship Survey												
<p>*1. What kind of school does your child attend?</p> <table style="width: 100%;"><tr><td><input type="radio"/> Public – neighborhood</td><td><input type="radio"/> Not-for-profit (non-religious)</td><td><input type="radio"/> Private – religious</td></tr><tr><td><input type="radio"/> Public – assigned through IEP</td><td><input type="radio"/> Not-for-profit (religious)</td><td><input type="radio"/> I prefer not to answer</td></tr><tr><td><input type="radio"/> Public – magnet</td><td><input type="radio"/> Private – non-religious</td><td></td></tr><tr><td><input type="radio"/> Other (please specify)</td><td></td><td></td></tr></table> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; height: 15px; width: 60%; margin-top: 5px;"></div>	<input type="radio"/> Public – neighborhood	<input type="radio"/> Not-for-profit (non-religious)	<input type="radio"/> Private – religious	<input type="radio"/> Public – assigned through IEP	<input type="radio"/> Not-for-profit (religious)	<input type="radio"/> I prefer not to answer	<input type="radio"/> Public – magnet	<input type="radio"/> Private – non-religious		<input type="radio"/> Other (please specify)		
<input type="radio"/> Public – neighborhood	<input type="radio"/> Not-for-profit (non-religious)	<input type="radio"/> Private – religious										
<input type="radio"/> Public – assigned through IEP	<input type="radio"/> Not-for-profit (religious)	<input type="radio"/> I prefer not to answer										
<input type="radio"/> Public – magnet	<input type="radio"/> Private – non-religious											
<input type="radio"/> Other (please specify)												
<p>*2. Is your child attending this school using a McKay Scholarship?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p> <p><input type="radio"/> I prefer not to answer</p>												
<p>*3. How long has your child attended his/her current school?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Less than 1 year</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1-2 years</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 2-3 years</p> <p><input type="radio"/> More than 3 years</p> <p><input type="radio"/> I prefer not to answer</p>												
<p>*4. How long has your child been using a McKay Scholarship?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Less than 1 year</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1-2 years</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 2-3 years</p> <p><input type="radio"/> More than 3 years</p> <p><input type="radio"/> I prefer not to answer</p>												
<p>*5. How close does your child live from the school he or she attends?</p> <table style="width: 100%;"><tr><td><input type="radio"/> 0-3 miles</td><td><input type="radio"/> 6-9 miles</td><td><input type="radio"/> More than 12 miles</td></tr><tr><td><input type="radio"/> 3-6 miles</td><td><input type="radio"/> 9-12 miles</td><td><input type="radio"/> I prefer not to answer</td></tr></table>	<input type="radio"/> 0-3 miles	<input type="radio"/> 6-9 miles	<input type="radio"/> More than 12 miles	<input type="radio"/> 3-6 miles	<input type="radio"/> 9-12 miles	<input type="radio"/> I prefer not to answer						
<input type="radio"/> 0-3 miles	<input type="radio"/> 6-9 miles	<input type="radio"/> More than 12 miles										
<input type="radio"/> 3-6 miles	<input type="radio"/> 9-12 miles	<input type="radio"/> I prefer not to answer										

John M. McKay Scholarship Survey

*6. How does your child get to and from school?

- ☐ Parents car
- ☐ Public bus
- ☐ Biking
- ☐ School bus
- ☐ Walking
- ☐ I prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other (please specify)

*7. What is your child's primary area of disability?

- ☐ Autism
- ☐ Speech Impaired
- ☐ Severely Emotionally Handicap
- ☐ Developmentally Delayed
- ☐ Specific Learning Disabled
- ☐ Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- ☐ Educable Mentally Handicap
- ☐ Traumatic Brain Injured
- ☐ Dual Sensory Impaired
- ☐ Trainable Mentally Handicap
- ☐ Intellectually Disabled
- ☐ Visually Impaired/ Blind
- ☐ Profoundly Mentally Handicap
- ☐ Orthopedically Impaired
- ☐ I prefer not to answer
- ☐ Language Impaired
- ☐ Emotionally Handicap
- ☐ Other (please specify)

*8. According to your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP), how would you describe the level of your child's special needs?

- ☐ Mild (Matrix 251-252)
- ☐ Moderate (Matrix 253)
- ☐ Severe (Matrix 254)
- ☐ Very severe (Matrix 255)
- ☐ 504 Plan
- ☐ Do Not Know
- ☐ I prefer not to answer

John M. McKay Scholarship Survey

***9. On a scale of 0-100% (with 100% being extremely satisfied), please rate your satisfaction level for each of the following:**

Satisfaction with your child's school	<input type="text"/>
Satisfaction that your child's school meets your child's needs	<input type="text"/>
Satisfaction with the school's administrators	<input type="text"/>
Satisfaction with the school's physical condition	<input type="text"/>

***10. Would you recommend the school your child attends to others?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Probably Not
- ☐ No
- ☐ Do not know
- ☐ I prefer not to answer

***11. In your opinion, how much of a sense of belonging does your child feel at his/her school?**

- ☐ A tremendous amount of belonging
- ☐ Quite a bit of belonging
- ☐ Some belonging
- ☐ A little bit of belonging
- ☐ No belonging at all
- ☐ I prefer not to answer

***12. Do you feel that your child's school is a good match for his/her cultural background?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Unable to judge
- ☐ I prefer not to answer

John M. McKay Scholarship Survey

***13. To what extent do you think that children enjoy going to your child's school?**

- ☐ A tremendous amount
- ☐ Quite a bit
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ A little bit
- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ I prefer not to answer

***14. On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being extremely motivating), how motivating are the classroom lessons at your child's school?**

1				5						10	I prefer not answer
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

***15. Does your child receive therapeutic services at his or her school (check all that apply)?**

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (Occupational Therapy) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (Physical Therapy) | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (Speech Therapy) | <input type="checkbox"/> I prefer not to answer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | |

***16. Do school reports give clear feedback about your child's progress?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Mostly
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Not Usually
- ☐ No
- ☐ Do not know
- ☐ I prefer not to answer

John M. McKay Scholarship Survey

*17. How did you originally find out about the McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities?

- ☐ Referred by parent
- ☐ Referred by education professional
- ☐ Referred by school district
- ☐ McKay Scholarship Website
- ☐ School Website
- ☐ I prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other (please specify)

18. Why did you choose to enroll your child in the McKay Scholarship Program?

*19. How important was religion in your decision of choosing a particular school?

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Somewhat Important
- ☐ Neither important or not important
- ☐ Not important
- ☐ I prefer not to answer

20. What was the level of difficulty in applying for the McKay Scholarship Program?

Very Easy					Typical													Extremely	I prefer not
																		Difficult	to answer
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

John M. McKay Scholarship Survey

***21. Did you at any time move your child from one McKay School to another?**

If so, please explain why.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I prefer not to answer

If you answered "Yes" (please specify)

***22. Has the school which your child is attending asked you to pay for any supplemental costs? If you answer "yes", please enter the dollar amount.**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Do not know
- ☐ I prefer not to answer

If you answered "yes", please specify the dollar amount

***23. Is your child's cost of attendance fully funded by the McKay Scholarship?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Do not know
- ☐ I prefer not to answer

John M. McKay Scholarship Survey

*24. How often do you meet in person with teachers at your child's school?

- ☐ Almost never
- ☐ Once or twice per year
- ☐ Every few months
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Weekly or more
- ☐ I prefer not to answer

*25. In the past year, how often has the following occurred?

	Weekly or more	Monthly	Every few months	Once or twice	Almost never	I prefer not to answer
Discussed your child's school with other parents from the school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talked with the school about how they can help your child learn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discussed your child's social needs with adults at his/her school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visited your child's school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communicated with the school about ways that you can help your child's learning at home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helped your child engage in activities which are educational outside the home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*26. How involved have you been with the following?

	Extremely involved	Quite involved	Somewhat involved	A little involved	Not at all involved	I prefer not to answer
Fundraising efforts at your child's school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parent groups at your child's school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

John M. McKay Scholarship Survey

*27. To what extent do you know how your child is doing socially at school?

- ☐ A tremendous amount
- ☐ Quite a bit
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ A little bit
- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ I prefer not to answer

28. On a scale from 0-100% (with 100% being extremely confident), please rate your level of confidence for the following:

Confidence in your ability to make choices about your child's schooling

Confidence in your ability to connect with other parents

*29. At you child's school, how well do you believe that:

	Extremely well	Quite well	Fairly well	Not so well	Not well at all	Unable to judge	I prefer not to answer
Administrators create a school environment that helps children learn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The overall approach to discipline works for your child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Incidences of bullying are dealt with	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The activities offered match his/her interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

John M. McKay Scholarship Survey

***30. What is your child's age in years? If you have more than one (1) child on the McKay Scholarship please indicated this in the "other" box.**

- ☐ 3-6 years old
- ☐ 7-9 years old
- ☐ 10-12 years old
- ☐ 13-15 years old
- ☐ 16-18 years old
- ☐ 19-22 years old
- ☐ I prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other (please specify)

***31. What is your child's gender?**

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ I prefer not to answer

***32. Who is/are the primary caretaker(s) of this child?**

- ☐ Mother and Father
- ☐ Mother only
- ☐ Father only
- ☐ Grandparent(s)
- ☐ Other relative
- ☐ I prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other (please specify)

John M. McKay Scholarship Survey

***33. The race of the child's mother/female legal guardian?**

- ☐ White, non-Hispanic
- ☐ African-American
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Multi-racial
- ☐ I prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other (please specify)

***34. The race of the child's father/male legal guardian?**

- ☐ White, non-Hispanic
- ☐ African-American
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Multi-racial
- ☐ I prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other (please specify)

***35. Which race/ethnicity best describes your child?**

- ☐ White, non-Hispanic
- ☐ African-American
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Multi-racial
- ☐ I prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other (please specify)

John M. McKay Scholarship Survey

***36. Who is completing this survey?**

- ☐ Mother of child
- ☐ Father of child
- ☐ Grandparent of child
- ☐ Other relative
- ☐ I prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other (please specify)

***37. What is the highest level of education of this child's mother/female legal guardian?**

- ☐ 8th grade or less
- ☐ Some high school
- ☐ GED
- ☐ High school diploma
- ☐ Vocational school
- ☐ Some College
- ☐ College Graduate
- ☐ Postgraduate
- ☐ I prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other (please specify)

***38. What is the highest level of education of this child's father/male legal guardian?**

- ☐ 8th grade or less
- ☐ Some high school
- ☐ GED
- ☐ High school diploma
- ☐ Vocational school
- ☐ Some College
- ☐ College Graduate
- ☐ Postgraduate
- ☐ I prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other (please specify)

John M. McKay Scholarship Survey

***39. Your family/household annual income (in dollars) is?**

- ☐ \$0 – \$9,999
- ☐ \$10,000– \$24,999
- ☐ \$25,000 – \$34,999
- ☐ \$35,000– \$44,999
- ☐ \$50,000 - \$74,999
- ☐ Over \$75,000
- ☐ I prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other (please specify)

***40. What is the primary language spoken in your child's home?**

- ☐ English
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Creole
- ☐ Other (please specify)
- ☐ French
- ☐ German
- ☐ Italian
- ☐ Russian
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ I prefer not to answer

***41. What religion best describes your child and/or family?**

- ☐ Catholic
- ☐ Christian
- ☐ Protestant
- ☐ Other (please specify)
- ☐ Jewish
- ☐ No religion
- ☐ I prefer not to answer

42. Please provide any other comments that you would like to share? (This question is optional)

John M. McKay Scholarship Survey

Thank you for completing this survey! Your participation is greatly appreciated and it will be invaluable to this research. If you know of any other parents whose child is attending a school in Miami-Dade County under the John M. McKay Scholarship for Students with Disabilities you may forward the e-mail containing the informed consent and survey link to them. Again, thank you for your participation!

Appendix B

IRB Approval/Exemption



Institutional Review Board

Mailing Address:
Division of Research

77 Glades
Rd., Bldg.
80, Rm. 106
Boca Raton,
FL 33431

7

FLORIDA
ATLANTIC
UNIVERSITY

Tel: 561.297.0777 Fax: 561.297.2573

<http://www.fau.edu/research/researchint>

Michael Whitehurst, Ed.D., Chair

DATE: October 11, 2013

TO: Alka Sapat, Ph.D.

FROM: Florida Atlantic University Social, Behavioral and Educational
Research IRB

IRBNET ID #: 491919-2

PROTOCOL TITLE: [491919-2] "School Choice and Florida's McKay Scholarship:
A Cross-Sector Citizen Satisfaction Survey."

SUBMISSION TYPE: Response/Follow-Up

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # A3

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 11, 2013

Thank you for your submission of Response/Follow-Up materials for this research study.
The Florida

Atlantic University Social, Behavioral and Educational Research IRB has determined this project is

EXEMPT FROM FEDERAL REGULATIONS.

Please submit the detailed letter of cooperation from Miami-Dade County Public Schools to the IRB, once secured.

We will keep a copy of this correspondence on file in our office. Please keep the IRB informed of any substantive change in your procedures or if you encounter any problem involving human subjects.

If you have any questions or comments about this correspondence, please contact Elisa Gaucher at:

Institutional Review Board

Research Integrity/Division of Research

Florida Atlantic University

Bldg. 80, Rm. 106

Boca Raton, FL

33431 Phone: 561-

297-0777

* Please include your protocol number and title in all correspondence with this office.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within our records.

Appendix C

Research Approval by MDCPS



Miami-Dade County Public Schools

giving our students the world

Superintendent of Schools
Alberto M. Carvalho

Assessment, Research, and Data Analysis

Miami-Dade County School Board
Perla Tabares Hantman, Chair
Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman, Vice Chair
Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall
Susie V. Castillo
Carlos L. Curbelo
Dr. Wilbert "Tee" Holloway
Dr. Martin Karp
Dr. Maria Pérez
Raquel A. Regalado

November 27, 2013

Mr. David Black
17800 N.E. 13th Avenue
North Miami, Florida 33162

Dear Mr. Black:

I am pleased to inform you that the Research Review Committee (RRC) of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) has granted you approval for your request to conduct the study: "School Choice and Florida's McKay Scholarship: A Cross-Section Citizen Satisfaction Survey" in order to fulfill the requirement of your dissertation at Florida Atlantic University.

The approval is granted with the following conditions:

1. Participation of the school/offices targeted in this study is at the sole discretion of the principal/administrator.

NOTE: Even with the approval of the RRC, it is still the responsibility of the Principal as the gatekeeper of the school to decide whether to participate or not. As stated in the Board rule, "... the principal of the individual school has the privilege of deciding if RRC-approved research will be conducted within his/her school."

A copy of this approval letter must be presented/and or shared with the principal/administrator of the targeted school/office.

2. This research project is conducted to fulfill the requirements of a doctoral dissertation. The study will involve surveying parents of students who benefitted from the McKay Scholarship program.
3. The participation of all subjects is completely **voluntary**. The anonymity and/or confidentiality of all subjects must be assured.
4. Consent forms must be obtained and secured before the participants can engage in the study.
5. Disruption of the school's routine by the data collection activities of the study must be kept at a minimum. Data collection activities must not interfere with the district's testing schedule.
6. All research and data collection activities must be done with the knowledge and approval of the principal of the school site.

Office name • School Board Administration Building • 1450 N.E. 2nd Ave. • Suite xxx • Miami, FL 33132
305-995-xxxx • 305-995-xxxx (FAX) • www.dadeschools.net

6. Permission granted does not include permission for electronic copying and distribution of AWHONN (or NAACOG) copyrighted material, which permission must be sought separately.
7. The data from your research will be provided to AWHONN at no charge, including validity and reliability testing.
8. You will need to purchase copies of Assessment and Care of the Late Preterm Infant, 2010 for your small group study.
9. Signature of requester or responsible party indicating acceptance of these conditions:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

F. Onyejiro

2/17/12

Appendix D

Recruitment E-mail to Public School Principals

Dear Principal,

My name is David B. Black and I am from Florida Atlantic University. I am currently conducting research on the John M. McKay Scholarship for Students with Disabilities. As a principal of a school that services McKay Scholarship recipients your name and e-mail address was provided by Miami-Dade County Public Schools. The purpose of this research is to analyze and determine parental involvement and perception in regard to the McKay Scholarship Program. This will be done through the use of an online survey instrument sent directly to parents/guardians to gather information about their involvement and perception of the program.

To assist me in this research, would you please forward this email to parents/guardians of McKay Scholarship recipients at your school with my contact information so they may contact me if they wish to participate in this study? This research is being conducted with the approval of Florida Atlantic University and Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Please see the attached research approval confirmation and extension from the MDCPS Office of Research. If you would please forward this email to parents/guardians so that they can contact me to participate it would be greatly appreciated.

If you or any parents have questions please feel free to contact me by e-mail at dblack13@fau.edu or by phone at [305-898-9529](tel:305-898-9529).

Thank you kindly,

--

David B. Black, MPA
Instructor
College for Design and Social Inquiry
School of Public Administration
PhD Candidate in Public Administration
Office: SO 118
dblack13@fau.edu

Appendix E

Recruitment E-mail to Private and Non-profit School Directors

Dear School Director,

My name is David B. Black and I am a researcher from Florida Atlantic University. I am currently conducting research on the John M. McKay Scholarship for Students with Disabilities. As a director of a school that services ten (10) or more McKay Scholarship recipients your name and email address was provided by the Florida Department of Education. The purpose of this research is to analyze and determine parental involvement in regard to the McKay Scholarship Program. This will be done through the use of an online survey instrument sent directly to parents/guardians to gather information about their involvement and perception of the program.

To assist me in this research, would you please forward this email to parents/guardians of McKay Scholarship recipients at your school with my contact information so they may contact me if they wish to participate in this study? This research is being conducted with the approval of Florida Atlantic University and Miami-Dade County Public Schools and with the support of the Florida Department of Education and the Coalition of McKay Schools. If you would please forward this email to parents/guardians so that they can contact me to participate it would be greatly appreciated.

If you or any parents have questions please feel free to contact me by email at dblack13@fau.edu or by phone at [305-898-9529](tel:305-898-9529).

Thank you in advance,

--

David B. Black, MPA
Instructor
College for Design and Social Inquiry
School of Public Administration
PhD Candidate in Public Administration
Office: SO 118
dblack13@fau.edu

Appendix F

Informed Consent with Survey Link (Public Schools)

Dear Parent and/or Guardian,

My name is David B. Black and I am currently working on my doctorate in Public Administration at Florida Atlantic University. I am conducting a research study on the perceptions of parents and guardians whose children are enrolled under the John M. McKay Scholarship Program for my dissertation requirement. The focus of the study is geared towards parents and guardians of students who have chosen to use a McKay Scholarship for Students with Disabilities. With this said, limited research of this sort has been conducted in the past decade on the McKay Program and your participation will help to increase attention as well as heighten the effectiveness of the program.

To participate in this study, you will complete a 42-item survey on your perceptions relating to the Florida McKay Scholarship. The survey will take about 10 to 20 minutes to complete. You will be asked to answer questions about your satisfaction with the program, family background, and other demographic data (such as race, age, gender, etc.). You may skip any question that makes you uncomfortable by checking "I prefer not to answer." For the questions that do not have an "I prefer not to answer" option you may skip the question if you do not feel comfortable answering. Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey by clicking on the attached link below as soon as possible.

Your assistance and participation is invaluable to this research and would be greatly appreciated. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and will be anonymous. Survey responses will be compiled and aggregated for data analysis and future publication. There is no need to place your name or your child's name on any portion of this online survey. If you desire, you may request an aggregate report once data is compiled and disseminated.

By completing this online survey via Survey Monkey, your consent to participate in this study is implied. Therefore, by clicking on the link below you imply consent to participate. Your participation in this study is your choice. For related problems and/or questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the Florida Atlantic University Division of Research at (561) 297-0777. For other questions about the study, you should call the principal investigator Dr. Alka Sapat at (561) 297-2316 or you may contact me at 305-898-9529 or at dblack13@fau.edu. Please read the consent statement below to participate in the study.

Sincerely,

David B. Black, MPA
Doctoral Candidate, Public Administration
Florida Atlantic University
[305-898-9529](tel:305-898-9529)
Dblack13@fau.edu

Consent Statement: I have read the information describing this study. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am 18 years of age or older and freely consent to participate. I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. I have printed a copy of this consent form for my records. By clicking the link below, I am giving my consent to participate in this research study.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/McKay_Survey

Appendix G

Informed Consent with Survey Link (Non-public)

Dear Parent and/or Guardian,

My name is David B. Black and I am currently working on my doctorate degree in Public Administration at Florida Atlantic University. I am conducting a research study on the perceptions of parents and guardians whose children are enrolled under the John M. McKay Scholarship Program for my dissertation requirement. The focus of the study is geared towards parents and guardians of students who have chosen to use a McKay Scholarship for Students with Disabilities. With this said, limited research of this sort has been conducted in the past decade on the McKay Program and your participation will help to increase attention as well as heighten the effectiveness of the program.

To participate in this study, you will complete a 42-item survey on your perceptions relating to the Florida McKay Scholarship. The survey will take about 10 to 20 minutes to complete. You will be asked to answer questions about your satisfaction with the program, family background, and other demographic data (such as race, age, gender, etc.). You may skip any question that makes you uncomfortable by checking "I prefer not to answer." For the questions that do not have an "I prefer not to answer" option you may skip the question if you do not feel comfortable answering. Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey by clicking on the attached link below as soon as possible.

Your assistance and participation is invaluable to this research and would be greatly appreciated. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and will be anonymous. Survey responses will be compiled and aggregated for data analysis and future publication. There is no need to place your name or your child's name on any portion of this online survey. If you desire, you may request an aggregate report once data is compiled and disseminated.

By completing this online survey via *Survey Monkey*, your consent to participate in this study is implied. Therefore, by clicking on the link below you imply consent to participate. Your participation in this study is your choice. For related problems and/or questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the Florida Atlantic University Division of Research at (561) 297-0777. For other questions about the study, you should call the principal investigator Dr. Alka Sapat at (561) 297-2316 or you may contact me at [305-898-9529](tel:305-898-9529) or at dblack13@fau.edu. Please read the consent statement below to participate in the study.

Sincerely,

David B. Black, MPA
Doctoral Candidate, Public Administration
Florida Atlantic University
[305-898-9529](tel:305-898-9529)
Dblack13@fau.edu

Consent Statement: I have read the information describing this study. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am 18 years of age or older and freely consent to participate. I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. I have printed a copy of this consent form for my records. By clicking the link below, I am giving my consent to participate in this research study.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/McKay_Survey

Appendix H

IRB Approval/Exemption for Change in Recruitment Method



Institutional Review Board

Mailing Address:
Division of Research

77 Glades
Rd., Bldg.
80, Rm. 106
Boca Raton,
FL 33431

7

FLORIDA
ATLANTIC
UNIVERSITY

Tel: 561.297.0777 Fax: 561.297.2573

<http://www.fau.edu/research/researchint>

Michael Whitehurst, Ed.D., Chair

DATE: February 11, 2014

TO: Alka Sapat, Ph.D.

FROM: Florida Atlantic University Social, Behavioral and Educational
Research IRB

PROTOCOL #: 491919-4

PROTOCOL TITLE: [491919-4] "School Choice and Florida's McKay Scholarship:
A Cross-Sector Citizen Satisfaction Survey."

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED

EFFECTIVE DATE: February 11, 2014

Thank you for your submission of Amendment materials for this research protocol. The Florida Atlantic University IRB has approved your request to modify your protocol as outlined below:

- Change recruitment method. Researchers will ask cooperating principals to forward study information to parents instead of researchers contacting parents directly.
- Use paper and telephone survey method as alternative survey methods; use verbal script for telephone survey method.
- Update survey questions.

This study continues to qualify for exempt status provided no identifiers are recorded as part of data collection or associated with participant responses.

Please use the stamped, revised consent, recruitment material, and instrument that accompany this approval letter.

If you have any questions or comments about this correspondence, please contact Angela Clear at:

Institutional Review Board
Research Integrity/Division of Research
Florida Atlantic University
Bldg. 80, Rm. 106
Boca Raton,
FL 33431
Phone: 561-
297-0777

* Please include your protocol number and title in all correspondence with this office.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within our records.

Appendix I

Research Approval Extension by MDCPS



Miami-Dade County Public Schools

giving our students the world

Superintendent of Schools
Albert M. Canales

Assessment, Research, and Data Analysis

Miami-Dade County School Board

Perle Thomas Hamilton, Chair
Dr. Lawrence S. Friedman, Vice Chair
Dr. Dorothy Sanders-Washington
Sue V. Castillo
Gaila L. Cuddebo
Dr. Wilbert "Doc" Holman
Dr. Martin Kemp
Dr. Mario Perez
Raquel A. Regalado

EXTENSION

July 11, 2014

Mr. David Black
17800 N.E. 13th Avenue
North Miami, Florida 33162

Dear Mr. Black:

I am pleased to inform you that the Research Review Committee (RRC) of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) has granted you approval for your request for an extension in order to continue the previously approved study, "School Choice and Florida's McKay Scholarship: A Cross-Section Citizen Satisfaction Survey" in order to fulfill the requirement of your Dissertation at Florida Atlantic University.

The approval is granted with the same conditions as those specified in your original approval letter dated November 27, 2013 (Please refer to that letter for more details).

It should be re-emphasized that the approval of the Research Review Committee does not constitute an endorsement of the study. It is simply a permission to request the voluntary cooperation in the study of individuals associated with MDCPS.

It is your responsibility to ensure that appropriate procedures are followed in requesting an individual's cooperation, and that all aspects of the study are conducted in a professional manner. As indicated in your application, please submit to the RRC an abstract of the research findings by July 2015.

If you have any questions, please call me at 305-895-7901. On behalf of the Research Review Committee, I want to wish you every success with your study.

Sincerely,

Tarek Chabbi, Ed. D.
Chairperson, Research Review Committee

APPROVAL NUMBER: 1933 (2014)

APPROVAL EXPIRES: 06/30/2015

Note: The researcher named in this letter of approval will be solely responsible and strictly accountable for any deviation from or failure to follow the research study as approved by the RRC. M-DPCS will NOT be held responsible for any claim and/or damage resulting from conducting this study.

Assessment, Research, and Data Analysis • School Board Administration Building • 1430 N.E. 2nd Ave. • Suite 209 • Miami, FL 33132
305-895-7091 • 305-895-2691 (FAX) • www.dadeschools.net

Appendix J

Data/Variable Coding Sheet

Uniform Code/Guide

995 – Other
996 – Missing Value
997 – Somewhat/unsure
998 – Do not know/Unable to Judge
999- I prefer not to answer

Q1: What kind of school does your child attend? (**typesch**)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	Public – neighborhood
2	Public – assigned through IEP
3	Not-for-profit (non-religious)
4	Not-for-profit (religious)
5	Private – non-religious
6	Private – religious
999	I prefer not to answer

Q2: Is your child attending this school using a McKay Scholarship? (Disqualifier Question)

ALL YES, Two respondents were disqualified (both from Public Schools), one respondent exited survey after this question.

Q3: How long has your child attended his/her current school? (**lengatt**)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	Less than 1 year
2	1-2 years
3	2-3 years
4	More than 3 years

Q4: How long has your child been using a McKay Scholarship? (**lengsch**)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	Less than 1 year
2	1-2 years
3	2-3 years
4	More than 3 years

Q5: How close does your child live from the school he or she attends? (**proxim**)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	0-3 miles
2	3-6 miles
3	6-9 miles
4	9-12 miles
5	More than 12 miles

Q6: How does your child get to and from school? (**modetran**)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	Parents car
2	School bus
3	Public bus

Q7: What is your child's primary area of disability? (**areadis**)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	Autism
2	Developmentally Delayed
3	Educable Mentally Handicap
4	Trainable Mentally Handicap
5	Language Impaired
6	Speech Impaired
7	Specific Learning Disabled
8	Traumatic Brain Injured
9	Orthopedically Impaired
10	Emotionally Handicap
11	Visually Impaired/ Blind
999	I prefer not to answer
995	Other (please specify)

Q8: According to your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP), how would you describe the level of your child's special needs? (**iepm**)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	Mild (Matrix 251-252)
2	Moderate (Matrix 253)
3	Severe (Matrix 254)
4	Very severe (Matrix 255)
5	504 Plan
998	Do Not Know
999	I prefer not to answer

Q9: On a scale of 0-100% (with 100% being extremely satisfied), please rate your satisfaction level for each of the following:

→ 1 through 100

Q9(a) Satisfaction with your child's school **(satsch)**

Q9(b) Satisfaction that your child's school meets your child's needs **(satneed)**

Q9(c) Satisfaction with the school's administrators **(satadmin)**

Q9(d) Satisfaction with the school's physical condition **(satcon)**

Q10: Would you recommend the school your child attends to others? **(recomm)**

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	Yes
2	Maybe
997	Unsure
999	I prefer not to answer

Q11: In your opinion, how much of a sense of belonging does your child feel at his/her school? **(belong)**

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
5	A tremendous amount of belonging
4	Quite a bit of belonging
3	Some belonging
2	A little bit of belonging
1	No belonging at all
999	I prefer not to answer

Q12: Do you feel that your child's school is a good match for his/her cultural background? **(culture)**

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	Yes
0	No
997	Somewhat
998	Unable to judge
999	I prefer not to answer

Q13: To what extent do you think that children enjoy going to your child's school?
(enjoy)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
5	A tremendous amount
4	Quite a bit
3	Somewhat
2	A little bit
1	Not at all
999	I prefer not to answer

Q14: On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being extremely motivating), how motivating are the classroom lessons at your child's school? (motivate)
➔ 1 through 10

Q15: Does your child receive therapeutic services at his or her school (check all that apply)? (therapy)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
0	No
1	Yes (all)
998	Do not know
999	I prefer not to answer
995	Other (please specify)

Q16: Do school reports give clear feedback about your child's progress? (feedback)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
3	Yes
2	Mostly
997	Unsure
1	Not Usually
0	No

Q17: How did you originally find out about the McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities? (findout)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	Referred by parent
2	Referred by education professional
3	Referred by school district
4	McKay Scholarship Website
995	Other (please specify)

Q18: Why did you choose to enroll your child in the McKay Scholarship Program?

(reason)
→ Qualitative data

Q19: How important was religion in your decision of choosing a particular school?

(religion)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
4	Very Important
3	Somewhat Important
2	Neither important or not important
1	Not important
999	I prefer not to answer

Q20: What was the level of difficulty in applying for the McKay Scholarship Program?

(diffic)

→ 1 through 10

Q21: Did you at any time move your child from one McKay School to another? If so, please explain why. (movesch)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	Yes
0	No
999	I prefer not to answer

Q22: Has the school which your child is attending asked you to pay for any supplemental costs? If you answer "yes", please enter the dollar amount. (supcost)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	Yes
0	No
998	Do not know
999	I prefer not to answer

Q23: Is your child's cost of attendance fully funded by the McKay Scholarship?

(funding)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	Yes
0	No
998	Do not know
999	I prefer not to answer

Q24: How often do you meet in person with teachers at your child's school? (meeteach)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	Almost never
2	Once or twice per year
3	Every few months
4	Monthly
5	Weekly or more
999	I prefer not to answer

Q25: In the past year, how often has the following occurred?

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
5	Weekly or more
4	Monthly
3	Every few months
2	Once or twice a year
1	Almost never
999	I prefer not to answer

- Q25(a) Discussed your child's school with other parents from the school
(**discuss**)
- Q25(b) Talked with the school about how they can help your child learn (**talked**)
- Q25(c) Discussed your child's social needs with adults at his/her school
(**socneed**)
- Q25(d) Visited your child's school (**visit**)
- Q25(e) Communicated with the school about ways that you can help your child's
learning at home (**learnhome**)
- Q25(f) Helped your child engage in activities which are educational outside the
home (**engage**)

Q26: How involved have you been with the following?

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
5	Extremely involved
4	Quite involved
3	Somewhat involved
2	A little involved
1	Not at all involved
999	I prefer not to answer

- Q26(a) Fundraising efforts at your child's school A little involved (**fundras**)
- Q25(b) Parent groups at your child's school Not at all involved (**pargroup**)

Q27: To what extent do you know how your child is doing socially at school? (**social**)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
4	A tremendous amount
3	Quite a bit
2	Somewhat
1	A little bit

Q28: On a scale from 0-100% (with 100% being extremely confident), please rate your level of confidence for the following:

→ **1through 100**

Q28(a) Confidence in your ability to make choices about your child's schooling
(**conchoice**)

Q28(b) Confidence in your ability to connect with other parents (**conpar**)

Q29: At your child's school, how well do you believe that:

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
5	Extremely well
4	Quite well
3	fairly well
2	Not so well
1	Not well at all
998	Unable to judge
999	I prefer not to answer

Q29(a) Administrators create a school environment that helps children learn
(**admevr**)

Q29(b) The overall approach to discipline works for your child (**discipl**)

Q29(c) Incidences of bullying are dealt with (**bully**)

Q29(d) The activities offered match his/her interests (**activity**)

Q30: What is your child's age in years? If you have more than one (1) child on the McKay Scholarship please indicated this in the "other" box. (**age**)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	3-6 years old
2	7-9 years old
3	10-12 years old
4	13-15 years old
5	16-18 years old
6	19-22 years old

Q31: What is your child's gender? (**gender**)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
0	Male
1	Female
999	I prefer not to answer

Q32: Who is/are the primary caretaker(s) of this child? (**pricare**)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	Mother and Father
2	Mother only
3	Father only
4	Grandparent(s)
995	Other

Q36: Who is completing this survey? (**compsur**)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	Mother of child
2	Father of child
3	Grandparent of child

Q33: The race of the child's mother/female legal guardian? (**racemom**)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	White, non-Hispanic
2	African-American
3	Hispanic
4	Other (please specify)
999	I prefer not to answer

Q34: The race of the child's father/male legal guardian? (**racedad**)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	White, non-Hispanic
2	African-American
3	Hispanic
4	Other (please specify)
999	I prefer not to answer

Q35: Which race/ethnicity best describes your child? (**racecld**)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	White, non-Hispanic
2	African-American
3	Hispanic
999	I prefer not to answer
4	Multi-racial
5	Other (please specify)

Q37: What is the highest level of education of this child's mother/female legal guardian?
(edumom)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	8th grade or less
2	Some high school
3	GED
4	High school diploma
5	Vocational school
6	Some College
7	College Graduate
8	Postgraduate
999	I prefer not to answer
995	Other

Q38: What is the highest level of education of this child's father/male legal guardian?
(edudad)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	8th grade or less
2	Some high school
3	GED
4	High school diploma
5	Vocational school
6	Some College
7	College Graduate
8	Postgraduate
999	I prefer not to answer
995	Other

Q39: Your family/household annual income (in dollars) is? (**income**)

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	\$0 – \$9,999
2	\$10,000– \$24,999
3	\$25,000 – \$34,999
4	\$35,000– \$44,999
5	\$50,000 - \$74,999
6	Over \$75,000
999	I prefer not to answer
995	Other (please specify)

Q40: What is the primary language spoken in your child's home? **(lang)**

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	English
2	Spanish
3	French
999	I prefer not to answer
995	Other

Q41: What religion best describes your child and/or family? **(regaff)**

<u>CODE</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	Catholic
2	Christian
3	Protestant
4	Jewish
5	No religion
999	I prefer not to answer
995	Other (please specify)

Q42: Please provide any other comments that you would like to share? (This question is optional) **(addcom)**

➔ Qualitative data

Appendix K

Bivariate Correlations of All Variables Used in OLS

		Correlations									
Variables	Kendall's tau_b	Parent involvement	Importance of religion in school choice	Private or not	Length of attendance	Receive therapeutic services	School feedback	Family/ household income	Mother's highest level of education	Father's highest level of education	Satisfaction with child's school
		55	54	54	55	48	54	44	54	53	55
Parent involvement	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.152	-.125	-.122	.161	.037	.272*	.100	.225*	-.457**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.153	.282	.246	.190	.743	.023	.346	.031	.000
	N	55	54	54	55	48	54	44	54	53	55
Importance of religion in school choice	Correlation Coefficient	-.152	1.000	.270*	.059	-.059	.077	-.112	-.089	.062	.264*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.153	.	.026	.592	.645	.518	.383	.434	.580	.016
	N	54	59	58	59	52	58	45	56	55	59
Private or not	Correlation Coefficient	-.125	.270*	1.000	.098	-.039	.170	-.104	.117	.045	.241*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.282	.026	.	.397	.777	.188	.465	.346	.714	.043
	N	54	58	63	63	53	58	44	56	55	60
Length of attendance	Correlation Coefficient	-.122	.059	.098	1.000	.224	.060	-.088	-.015	-.081	.336**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.246	.592	.397	.	.077	.611	.492	.897	.462	.002
	N	55	59	63	64	53	59	45	57	56	61
Receive therapeutic services	Correlation Coefficient	.161	-.059	-.039	.224	1.000	-.063	.031	.165	.153	-.262*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.190	.645	.777	.077	.	.646	.834	.212	.235	.784
	N	48	52	53	53	53	52	40	50	49	53

School feedback	Correlation Coefficient	.037	.077	.170	.060	-.063	1.000	.072	.032	.000	.164	.374**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.743	.518	.188	.611	.646	.	.601	.792	1.000	.159	.001
	N	54	58	58	59	52	59	44	56	56	58	59
Family/household income	Correlation Coefficient	.272*	-.112	-.104	-.088	.031	.072	1.000	.175	.284*	-.097	-.065
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	.383	.465	.492	.834	.601	.	.181	.026	.438	.611
	N	44	45	44	45	40	44	45	44	44	45	45
Mother's highest level of education	Correlation Coefficient	.100	-.089	.117	-.015	.165	.032	.175	1.000	.241*	.044	-.015
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.346	.434	.346	.897	.212	.792	.181	.	.032	.689	.894
	N	54	56	56	57	50	56	44	57	55	57	57
Father's highest level of education	Correlation Coefficient	.225*	.062	.045	-.081	.153	.000	.284*	.241*	1.000	-.087	-.033
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	.580	.714	.462	.235	1.000	.026	.032	.	.423	.763
	N	53	55	55	56	49	56	44	55	56	56	56
Child's age	Correlation Coefficient	-.457**	-.002	.241*	.336**	-.034	.164	-.097	.044	-.087	1.000	.072
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.983	.043	.002	.784	.159	.438	.689	.423	.	.502
	N	55	58	58	59	52	58	45	57	56	59	59
Satisfaction with child's school	Correlation Coefficient	.001	.264*	.270*	-.096	-.262*	.374**	-.065	-.015	-.033	.072	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.994	.016	.022	.371	.038	.001	.611	.894	.763	.502	.
	N	55	59	60	61	53	59	45	57	56	59	61

Note. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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