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Public and Voucher School Graduation Outcomes between 2011-2015 in a Southwestern State

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2020

Abstract

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by

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MPA, Texas Southern University, 1996

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

In 1995, Texas created its first charter schools, which consisted of open enrollment schools of choice, as part of education initiative/reform. However, low graduation rates among public schools in the state persisted. The purpose of this study was to explore factors that might contribute to students who received vouchers to attend private or high-performing public schools not graduating at a higher rate than traditional public schools' students. I used the rational choice theory (RCT) as the theoretical framework to examine whether students awarded vouchers for attending private schools graduated higher than students attending traditional public schools. The study covered 2010 – 2015 and was conducted in a Southwestern state. I collected data from a dataset of student records of choice schools and public schools' students maintained by the state education agency. I gathered a sample of 500 students who graduated from public and voucher schools from each school format were for analysis. I examined variables that included parental socioeconomic status and the availability of transportation. I used a chi-square statistical test to calculate the difference of means of two populations in carrying out this statistical comparison of the graduation rate of voucher students and non-voucher students. Findings included results that showed that students in conventional public schools graduated at a rate comparable to charter/voucher schools. Positive social change implications from this study would consist of expanding the voucher scheme to benefit a larger population of students that would ordinarily not qualify.

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Dedication

I dedicate this Doctor of Philosophy degree to my entire family – my lovely wife, Augusta, and my children, Obinna, Chisolm, and Pearl Ugonna, for their continued support throughout this journey. Many thanks go to Obinna and Pearl Ugonna for their support and guidance when technology issues became a problem. Whenever I had a software or hardware problem during this journey, both Obinna and Pearl Ugonna would jump into action to rescue me. Special thanks go to my wife, who always told me to keep pushing, and never to give up. I cannot forget all the help I also got from my second son, Chisolm. Although Chisolm did not live with the rest of the family because he was attending college far away from home, he would use his engineering skills to proffer his much-needed advice of technical nature whenever he was around.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The contemporary debate over educational vouchers in the United States primarily rests on the 1955 proposal by economist Friedman, who called for giving parents vouchers that they could use to send their children to school, public or private (Friedman, 1955). In 1995, Texas created its first charter schools, consisting of open enrollment schools of choice, as part of education initiatives/reform. However, low graduation rates persisted, even when choice schools designed to improve the situation began to lag public schools. The study's purpose was to determine whether students awarded vouchers to transfer to private or high-performing public schools graduated at a higher rate than those in public schools in the Texas education system. Friedman's call received the support it needed when a Presidential Commission on Excellence in Education released its report entitled *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform, April 1983* (U.S. Department of Education, 1983). The report highlighted the extent to which the United States public education system was lagging the education systems in many industrialized nations of the world, especially in the critical subject areas of mathematics and sciences (Gardner, 1983). The report's release generated calls from concerned citizens for concerted action from everyone involved in improving the United States education system (Gardner, 1983).

In 2000, the industrialized nations of Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Hungary, South Korea, and Japan all graduated a higher percentage of students from upper secondary school – high school – at the typical age of 18 years than

the United States (Stanley, 2007). The United States was not at the top of this list of graduation rates among industrialized nations, but rather, the United States high school students' graduation rate continued to lag. However, since the release of the report on the *Nation at Risk*, there have been unprecedented efforts on the part of education providers all over the United States that have resulted in improved graduation rates among the United States high school students (Stanley, 2007). The improved graduation rates were the outcome of multiple factors, including, but not limited to, a greater emphasis on educators' training in subject areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education (Stanley, 2007). This increased STEM training occurred among the United States high school teachers during 2001 following the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 (Dee & Brian, 2010). NCLB was the first law for K–12 general education in the United States from 2002 to 2015, (Dee & Brian, 2010). The NCLB law held schools accountable for how children learned and achieved. The NCLB was the law designed to measure schools based on if children learned and progressed. NCLB was controversial because the law penalized schools that did not show improvement based on the law's standards of measurement (Braun et al., 2006).

The release of the report on the *Nation at Risk* brought together concerted efforts on the part of education providers that have resulted in a reversion of mediocrity's trend on the part of the U.S. high school students' performances (Gardner, 1983). In addition to allocating funds for increased training, the release of the report, *Nation at Risk*, also resulted in a reversal of the low graduation on the part of the United States high school students (Gardner, 1983). The United States Department of Education data showed that

students completing geometry and chemistry had gone up 70% and 88% from 1990 to 2009 against 49% and 64% in the previous 10-year period (Bohrnstedt, 2013). However, in the international arena, the United States continued to perform below such countries as South Korea, Japan, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia (Bohrnstedt, 2013). In 2013, Bohrnstedt reviewed International Student Assessment results and found that in 2009, the United States students ranked 14th in reading and 17th in science compared to other industrialized nations (Bohrnstedt, 2013). However, recently, there have been improved results on U.S. high school students (Fuller et al., 2007).

According to DeSilver (2015), who analyzed a 2011 study conducted for Pew Research, using data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The researcher's analysis revealed that U.S. students' academic achievement still lagged that of their peers in many other countries internationally. DeSilver (2015) blamed the dismal result on nonrigorous curricula that did not emphasize STEM education. According to DeSilver (2015), the U.S.'s high school students had average scores in science, math, and reading. The DeSilver's (2015) analysis revealed the following results: between 2009 and 2015, on a scale of 0 to 300, the average scores of 8th grade students went up from 150 to 154 12th grade, the average score remained at 150.

Meanwhile, (Molnar (Ed.); Rice et al., 2014), noted that the basis for the report on *A Nation at Risk* was on a theory of free-market economics capitalism. Friedman (1956) was the first to propose that the government award vouchers to low-income students transfer to private or high-performing public schools. Friedman's proposal, which he expanded upon in a 1962 book summarizing his free-market economic beliefs, was that

an educational market would allocate more efficient education resources than government-run schools (Friedman, 1962). Friedman (1962) relied on the economic principles of freedom of choice to advocate that low-income families should receive vouchers from the government to send their children to private or public schools.

Additionally, Friedman (1955) added that an enterprise operated by the private sector is more efficient than businesses managed by the government. Conversely, schools run by the government may not be as active as schools managed by the private sector. He further argued that the only solution to the present situation where the government controls the public education system was to add parental choice via vouchers (Friedman, 1962). In their book, Chubb and Moe (1990) argued for ending government control of the public education system. In echoing the sentiment expressed by Chubb and Moe, Lips (2007) added that competition among private schools would lead to an efficient and effective public education system.

When Mr. Trump became the President of the United States in 2016, the voucher phenomenon resurrected in earnest. It followed a Secretary of Education appointment, Betsy DeVos, who vowed to pursue education vouchers' policy. DeVos's nomination as Secretary of Education added another dimension to the voucher debate. The Secretary of Education recently announced the administration's support for publicly funded charter schools and private school choice (Kamenetz, 2017). From all indications, the administration was ready to bring the voucher issue again to the limelight.

Background

High school graduation was one of the essential and fundamental cornerstones of the United States' education system. High school graduation was the gateway to a college education, and the value of graduating, which the society sees as preparing students for entry into a larger workforce. In 1900, 6.4% of the population graduated from high school, and, by 1940, approximately 50% of students graduated from high school (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2010). By the 1970s, high school graduation rates reached 77% but declined slightly for 30 years. The first decade of the 21st -century brought a significant rise in graduation rates. The national graduation rates reached 81% in 2013, the highest level since states adopted a new uniform way of calculating graduation rates in 2010 (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Among the highly debated proposals to improve public education in the United States is to expand schooling options available to parents in school choice (Nichols & Ozek, 2010). There was an underlying belief that private schools respond to competition in ways public schools do not, and consequently are superior to public schools in providing educational services (Figlio & Stone, 1997). Numerous researchers have found that increasing parental choice increases equality opportunity (Goertz et al., 2001). Consequently, increasing parental choice served to level the playing field regarding access to high-quality education for disadvantaged students, especially if the parents of these underprivileged students could not otherwise afford higher-quality schooling options (Nichols & Ozek, 2010).

School vouchers' public policy implication was the continued push by supporters of the voucher concept to persuade policymakers to adopt voucher programs nationwide as an alternative to the current public education system and use vouchers to revamp the public education system. Researchers have empirically evaluated the effect of vouchers on students' academic performance (Abdulkadiroglu et al., 2015; Chingos & West, 2014; Egalite, 2014; Ladd, 2002; Rouse, 1998; Wolf et al., 2003). Existing literature on primary and secondary school vouchers typically focused on the voucher's short-run effect on test scores (Angrist et al., 2015). A study conducted by Chingos and West (2014) found that students who received vouchers performed better than their public-school counterparts in one or two subject areas of science and mathematics education. Researchers examined data from the New York School Choice Scholarships Foundation Program (SCSF) on school vouchers effects on college enrollment. They found that voucher recipients were more likely to graduate from high school and enroll in a four-year college than their traditional public-school counterparts (Chingos & Peterson, 2012).

However, recent studies have examined Louisiana's vouchers (Abdulkadiroglu et al., 2015) and Indiana voucher programs (Waddington & Berends, 2016). The researchers found that public school students who received vouchers to attend private schools scored lower on reading and math tests. Their overall academic performances at the low end, and they graduated at a low rate compared to similar students who remained in public schools. (Waddington & Berends, 2016). Conversely, another study found that public school students improved their overall academic performance when faced with competition from voucher schools. Zimmer et al. (2003) found that public school students

improved their overall academic performance when faced with competition from voucher schools. Therefore, the aim of this quantitative study was to examine whether voucher school students' graduation outcomes differ from those of public schools' students.

School choice programs, such as vouchers, allow parents to choose what schools their children would attend, public or private, using public funds (Forster, 2016). In 1990, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, became the first governmental entity in the United States public education system to introduce the new school voucher program (Anderson & Ford, 2016; Molnar, 2001). Vouchers gave parents the freedom to choose private or high-performing public schools for their children, using all or part of the federal funding set aside for their children's education (Egalite, 2014).

Vouchers come in different types; each type depended on the purpose set by the awarding entity. However, school vouchers to reform the public education system and boost the graduation rates of low-income high school inner-city students did not produce the desired result (Witte, 2000). Under a voucher program, funds typically expended by a school district would be allocated to a participating family in the form of a voucher to pay partial or full tuition for their child's transfer to private or high-performing public schools religious and non-religious options (Vevea, 2016). Under this arrangement, schools where the student was emigrating must have been designated as failing (Vevea, 2016). There was the direct cash award type of voucher program, which gave the money in the form of coupons to parents to redeem at the school of their choice. Others allowed the state to reimburse schools that accepted voucher students (Forester, 2014).

The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program provided vouchers to families of lower and moderate-income schoolchildren to transfer to any voucher-participating private or public schools. Under this voucher program, the awarding entity issued coupons to parents for money they would have spent to educate their child in a low-performing public school. Families received a coupon from public funds and used the coupon to send their school-age students to private or public school in another school district or within their school district (Witte, 2000). For example, in Nevada, voucher families were required to wait for the first 100 days of school before the voucher money was disbursed (Whitaker, 2015). Most often, under an agreement with the voucher participating school, the amount would cover the student's entire education expenses without requiring the family to augment for other costs not covered by the voucher amount. By accepting the vouchers, participating schools agreed to the face value of the vouchers.

Other types of vouchers in force included the Louisiana Scholarship Program, the Washington DC Opportunity Scholarship Program, and the New York Choice Scholarship Foundation Program – a privately awarding scholarship program – and a host of others. These types of voucher programs awarded recipients a scholarship to use at any school of their choosing. Agencies awarding vouchers to prospective recipients in the Louisiana Scholarship and the Washington DC Opportunity Scholarship Program predetermined the selection criteria. Under this voucher program, the entity that awarded the scholarship established the award criteria based on several factors. Some of these variables include socioeconomic status, household income, the number of school-age children in the family (Loeb et al., 2011). These variables would form the nucleus of the

variables for the study. For example, the agency that awarded the DC Opportunity Scholarship set household income at or below 185 percent of the Federal poverty line (Wolf, 2006). In the New York scholarship program, eligibility requirements, among others, were that students enroll in kindergarten through fourth grade (Chingos & Peterson, 2015).

Like any issue that had the potential for social change, the school voucher programs have supporters and opponents that argued for or against the concept. Supporters of the idea, such as Friedman, argued that the voucher system should be an alternative for improving the nation's educational system. Supporters continued to claim that the school system could improve if the government gave low-income families the opportunity of availing themselves of high quality and decent education system. According to these supporters, low-income families could accomplish this improvement by awarding them vouchers to enroll their school-age students in any school of their choice (Friedman Foundation, 2016). On the other hand, opponents argued that the school voucher's idea infringed on the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, including some states (Molnar, 2011).

More importantly, the award of vouchers to a specific group of students would tantamount to taking away public education funds and handing them over to private institutions (Molnar, 2001). Other opponents argued that governments do not hold private schools that received vouchers the same degree of scrutiny as public schools in mandatory testing of their students and qualified teachers' recruitment. Opponents also argued that because states do not regulate private schools, it took away the public's and

lawmakers' ability to define what teachers should teach in these voucher schools (Molnar, 2001).

Statement of the Problem

The problem was that school vouchers that proponents argued as one of the means of reforming the public education system and boosting the graduation rates of low-income inner-city high school students had not consistently led to students' graduation as supports of vouchers hoped. High school students who received school vouchers and transferred to private or high performing public schools were not graduating at a rate higher than students attending public schools. The problem lay with the non-consistent graduation of voucher students, which had cast doubt on the argument advanced by supporters in favor of the voucher program. Additionally, the non-graduation of voucher students had been the argument opponents of the concept used to call for the total discontinuation in its entirety.

Researchers have found conflicting evidence on the effectiveness of vouchers in schools relating to students' performance and graduation (Chingos & West, 2014). Warren (2011) found differences in vouchers and public-school students in their academic performance and graduation. An evaluation of the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) and the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) conducted by Warren (2011) found that students from MPCP schools recorded a higher rate of graduation compared to MPS students. However, only a few studies have included students' graduation in their studies of the impact of vouchers in general on students' academic performance (Chingos & West, 2014; Warren 2011). Qualified low-income families

received public funds for tuition payments at private schools (Abdulkadiroglu et al., 2015).

The problem with this type of education reform was that voucher schools' graduation rates did not surpass their public-school counterparts. The strategy was to bolster the argument for using vouchers as the alternative to the current public education system. For example, Wolf et al. (2014) evaluated the Washington DC Opportunity Scholarship Program and found that vouchers did not affect high school graduation. Instead, public and voucher students graduated at a higher or lower rates year after year (Wolf et al., 2014). Researchers carried out numerous studies on the voucher's competition effect on students' performance (Belfield & Levin, 2002; Chingos & Peterson, 2012; Egalite, 2014; Wolf et al., 2013). However, few researchers have specifically devoted resources to examining school vouchers' impact on students' graduation rates in enrolling voucher recipients. Researchers' omission to include the graduation component in their respective studies of voucher students' academic performance is one of the gaps in the existing literature that this study sought to fill.

There was evidence of academic performance from various studies on the part of voucher students in some states, such as Wisconsin, Louisiana, and California (Egalite, 2014; Wolf, 2014; Zimmer et al., 2003). However, these studies' researchers examined academic performance based on test scores without considering factors that might contribute to poor academic performance, such as socioeconomic (Egalite, 2014). Other confounding variables, such as teacher quality, teacher-student ratio, and class size, also did not receive any considerations. The aim of this study was to fill the void created by

the shortage of studies devoted solely to examining voucher students' graduation rates. In so doing, I compared the graduation rates in public and voucher schools in one Southwestern state to determine the impact of vouchers on students' graduation outcomes.

Purpose of the Study

The study's purpose was to determine whether students who received vouchers to transfer to private or high-performing public schools graduated at a higher rate than students in public schools in one Southwestern state education system. The study examined the following variables: total family annual income, families' socioeconomic status, parental education level, and the availability of transportation. This quantitative study's primary focus focused on the state of Texas education system for the 2011 – 2015 school years. Additionally, I examined whether private and charter formats differ from those of public schools and, if so, identify how voucher schools' compositions in a selected voucher, private, charter, and public schools may influence these high graduation rates.

I used selected schools in the State of Texas education system to examine both the voucher's graduation records of the voucher and the traditional public schools' students. In addition to comparing the graduation rates of voucher schools and those of public schools, I examined the perceived reasons for the differences in the graduation rates between the two categories of schools.

Research Questions

A study's research questions are the pillars of its design. According to Maxwell (2012), the research questions should inform and guide all the study elements. Additionally, Maxwell added that the research questions should seek information that addresses the study's purpose (Maxwell, 2013).

The primary research question was: Given the rational choice theory of the human decision-making process, how would low-income families use a voucher award to maximize their school choice?

The secondary research questions were as follows:

1. Is there any mitigating circumstance that makes low-income students using a voucher to attend private schools not graduate at higher rates than their public-school counterparts?
2. Do variables that include socioeconomic status and transportation availability impact the graduation rate of voucher students compared to their public-school counterparts?
3. What impact does the award of vouchers make on low-income students' overall educational performance with an emphasis on graduation compared to their public-school counterparts?

Research Hypothesis/Alternative Hypothesis

Ho:1: An award of a voucher to a student had no statistically significant effect on the student graduating from school.

Ha:1: An award of a voucher to a student had a statistically significant effect on the student graduating from school.

Ho:2: An award of a voucher did not have a statistically significant effect on low-income students' graduation rates.

Ha:2: An award of the voucher had a statistically significant effect on low-income students' graduation rates.

Theoretical Framework

Rational Choice Theory (RCT)

I used the RCT as the main theoretical framework, supported by behavior economic theory (BET) and public choice theory (PCT), to carry out this study. The study sought to determine whether students who received vouchers to attend private schools graduated at a higher rate than students attending public schools over a five-years from 2010 to 2015 in a Southwestern state. The RCT was most widely used by researchers to understand what motivated people to choose a product over other available options (Ogu, 2013). The RCT, also known as choice theory, was a framework for understanding and often formally modeling social behavior (Ogu, 2013a). Based on behavioral psychology and extended to other fields, the RCT suggests that individuals premeditate their actions to their most significant advantage (Ogu, 2013b). The RCT started with the idea that individuals have preferences and chose according to those preferences. It informed most school choice plans. The RCT suggested that parents were utility maximizers who made decisions from clear value preferences based on

calculations of the costs, benefits, and probabilities of success of various options (Bosetti, 2004).

The connection between academic quality and school choice followed the principles laid out by RCT. The RCT began with considering individual decision-making units' choice behavior, mostly the basic economic consumer. There were many different influences on RCT, including utilitarian economics such as Weber, Pareto, and recent North American and European theorists (Coleman & Farro, (1992). These authors collectively represent a rational choice theory. Their espoused theories used standard microeconomic theory to analyze individuals' decisions. Whether to join an organization for collective action showed that one often should expect rational individuals to be free riders even when they would have been better off had they all joined an organization (Boudon, 2003).

Behavioral Economics Theory (BET)

Another economic theory that theorists used when discussing human economic behavior relative to school choice – ostensibly, which school to enroll their children is the BET. Behavioral economics was the branch of economics, which studies how individuals and organizations made financial decisions. BET is different from RCT (Carrillo, 2013). Conversely, rational choice theorists consider how individuals made economic decisions based on their limited resources (Samson & Voyer, 2014). While RCT assumes that people act with rationality when facing a financial decision, behavioral economics showed that human beings did not operate with rationality. People have limited cognitive abilities that pose as obstacles on their way. For this reason, Samson and Voyer (2014)

explained that people must understand human minds relative to the environment in which they evolve.

BET suggested that the human environment shaped their individual experiences and what they considered most important. Contrary to rational choice theorists' belief, behavioral economics theorists believed in differences in what people perceived as best based on their environment and experiences. Because of these differences, parents who applied for school vouchers exercised their respective individual judgments in making their own decisions. Behavioral Economist Schwartz, and his colleagues, made one of the exciting findings in the maximizing-satisficing literature. According to Schwartz et al. (2011), *satisficers* were more likely to experience higher satisfaction, happiness, and self-esteem after deciding on alternatives, whereas maximizing individuals are more prone to regret after making their decision. In this vein, Friedman (1962) echoed his earlier argument for governments to issue vouchers to low-income families. Friedman also argued that rather than paying public schools to educate the students in their districts, the government should provide parents with vouchers t to choose whatever school their school-age child would attend (Friedman, 1962). Friedman (1962) went further to explain his voucher proposal by citing various examples. He argued that the City of New York spends about $1,500 annually for every child enrolled at its public elementary and secondary schools. Parents who send their child to a private school that costs less would save the city about $1,500 (Friedman, 1983). However, New York gets no benefit from doing so. The fundamental reform would be for the city to give such parents a voucher for $1,500 to pay for their child (and for no other purpose). It would not relieve them of

the burden of taxes; instead, it would merely give parents a choice of the form they would take to schooling their child that the city had obligated itself to provide. Parents could be permitted to use the vouchers in private schools and other public schools to widen the range of choice — not just in schools in their district, city, or state but in any school that was willing to accept their child. The concept would involve giving every parent a voucher and requiring public schools to finance themselves by charging tuition (Friedman, 1997). The public schools would have to compete with one another and private schools (Friedman, 1997).

School choice policies had two essential features: First, on the demand side, they give parents more options about the schools their children could attend. With the introduction of choice schools, the state's power to assign children to school declined, and parents' ability to choose their children's school correspondingly increased (Lips, 2015). Second, school choice policies produced an explicit or implicit competition among schools for students and revenues (Lips, 2015). The choice concept also exerted competitive pressure on traditional public schools to improve, resulting in school improvement (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Friedman, 1962; Hoxby, 2001).

Friedman argued that the use of school vouchers in the public education system would spur public schools to operate as private institutions to foster competition, which would usher an unprecedented efficiency (Friedman, 1962). Friedman believed that vouchers would promote competition among schools. Competition for students would improve public education quality by driving down costs and creating a more dynamic education system. In echoing the sentiment espoused by Freidman et al. (1990), argued

that in a market-based system, schools would no longer be the custodian of the education system and would no longer be under the control of bureaucratic politics. Instead, schools would be democratically controlled and accountable to parents and students (Chubb & Moe, 1990a). The above argument and more like it would be plausible if the voucher program were also leading to a higher graduation rate. However, studies had not correlated the argument advanced by proponents of the school voucher that the use of vouchers assured high graduation rates on the part of voucher recipients.

Public Choice Theory (PCT)

PCT also took the same principles that economists used to analyze actions in the marketplace and applied them to people's collective decision-making activities (Buchanan & Tullock, 1962). In general, in utilitarian economics, such models assume that economic actors were rational and sought to maximize their utilities or benefits (Turner, 1998). Accordingly, these economic models usually began with individuals with a set of preferences (income, individuals who did not have unlimited resources but faced constraints in the form of time, revenue, and a set of prices that they could not individually influence).

Public Choice Theorists have used the PCT as a basis for investing in education to increase the individual's socio-economic status (Frederickson, 2010; Glaser et al., 2015), and the public's willingness to commit additional government resources to help improve disadvantaged citizens (Glaser et al., 2011). The instrumental approach to action took values as given and focused instead on the efficient choice of means to reach such goals (Holton, 1996). Other individuals associated with RCT were Homans and Blau. These

writers examined social exchange and the benefits and costs of alternative action (Adams & Sydie, 2002). Their concerns paralleled economic issues but focused on social rather than an economic exchange, with social behavior as an exchange of activity. For instance, economists who studied behavior in the private marketplace assumed that people were motivated mainly by self-interest, especially when their self-interest appeared to be their goal (Gwartney & Stroup, 1992). In discussing the merits/demerits of public choice theory as it affected an individual legislator during legislative proceedings leading to lawmaking, individual legislators were the primary or dominant motivator for legislative action (Quinn, 2014).

A study conducted by Chingos and West (2014) found that a student who received vouchers performed better than their public-school counterparts in one or two subject areas of science and mathematics education. Chingos and Peterson (2012) examined data from the New York School Choice Scholarships Foundation Program (SCSF) on school vouchers' effects on college enrollment. They found that voucher recipients were more likely to graduate from high school and enroll in a four-year college than their traditional public-school counterparts Chingos and Peterson (2012). A quantitative research approach was suitable for this study because data would come from existing secondary sources. Rather than employing any other form of research approaches such as the qualitative approach, which would involve interacting with high school students that might run counter to student confidentiality law, I chose the quantitative approach. I collected data from students' records maintained in a secure environment. The

data collection would follow data analysis, focusing on whether vouchers' award a student-led high graduation rate.

Nature of the Study

I employed a quantitative research design to carry out the study. The quantitative method was suitable for researching because the exercise involved the use of secondary data. The rationale for the selection was because data came from an existing dataset maintained by a trusted government entity. In carrying out the investigation, I focused on finding the relationship between variables and determining which variable might be significant enough that resulted in a higher student graduation rate. There were independent and dependent variables. The study's independent variable was voucher – voucher students - and the dependent variable was graduation rate - high or low. Other variables include families' socio-economic status, parental level of education, availability of transportation.

Researchers based the data on students graduating from voucher schools and those graduating from traditional public schools in selected districts in a Southwestern states' education system. The comparative analysis of the individual students 'collected data and their results sought to identify vouchers effect on vouchers and non-voucher students on graduation outcomes. I completed all the inferential statistical analyses using statistical computer software. Data on academic performance and students' graduation emanated from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) responsible for maintaining Texas students' academic and graduation records. I utilized data set on individual student kept by the Texas School Project (TSP) at the University of Texas at Austin. The TSP

database contained students' Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) and Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) data for all students attending Texas public schools, including publicly funded voucher schools.

Data on students in the 9th grade were pertinent to this study because students in this category in 2011 – 2015 academic years were the ones that the survey looked at their graduation outcome at the end of their four-year completion of high school education. I used the graduation report of students in this cohort to answer the research question of whether the graduation rates of voucher students were higher than those of their public-school counterparts.

Key Study Variables

The critical study variables for this study are:

1. Voucher.
2. Graduation.

Definitions

I provided the following definitions to ensure uniformity and understanding of these terms throughout the study:

Graduation: An evidence of completion of a secondary (high school) leading to the award of a diploma (Maloney, 2005a).

Low performance: The minimum level of performance a school achieved (Rebollo et al., 2007).

Socioeconomic Status: – The level of an individual's economic situation measured various economic indicators (variables), such as income, education (Baker, 2014).

Voucher: A coupon (in the form of a monetary instrument) given to a low-income family to cover a voucher recipient's tuition to enroll in a private or public school that agrees to participate in the voucher program. A voucher allows parents to use public funds to pay for some of their whole child's private school tuition (Vevea, 2016).

Assumptions

An assumption in research is a realistic expectation that is believed to be true (Baron, 2013). It is incumbent on the researcher to explain how to preserve anonymity and confidentiality; to assume that participants will answer honestly and that the volunteers may withdraw from the study without ramifications (Simon, 2011). For this study, the assumption was that data collected from various sources were accurate, thereby maintaining the research's integrity and the openness of its findings. Consequently, the belief was that the state of TEA and other data sources, the Texas School Project (TSP), kept accurate, archival records, including the graduation records of the voucher and traditional public schools' students. The truthfulness assumption was highlighted by the statutes that govern the confidentiality of students' records held by the TEA and other institutions (TEC – EDUC § 28.025. High School Diploma and Certificate; Academic Achievement Record).

The assumption also was that data from the TEA and other agencies were valid and reliable. Additionally, the assumption was that the TEA used the same testing instrument to test the traditional public-school students to examine the voucher students.

Scopes and Delimitations

The survey boundaries were delimited by other issues such as decisions to include other variables such as voucher students' socioeconomic status. Delimitations of a study were those characteristics that arose from the limitation of the research scope that defined the boundaries and the conscious decisions made during the development of the study plan. Delimitations result from specific choices made by the researcher (Simon & Goes, 2013). Another delimitation of the study was that it focused primarily on vouchers and public schools.

Generalizability

I generalized that students who received vouchers and enrolled in charter/voucher schools graduated higher than traditional public schools. This generalizability was the focus of this study. The study was interested in knowing if students who received vouchers and transferred to charter/voucher schools graduated higher than their public schools' counterparts. Analysis of data collected for this study proved or disproved this generalizability.

Limitations

Limitations are factors, influences, and shortcomings, usually beyond the researcher's, that may affect the study results or interpret the study (Baron, 2013). Limitations often flow from methodology and study design choices. Identifying limitations or weaknesses is essential; hence, research findings should be reliable and transferable (Simon & Goes, 2013). I utilized a quantitative approach to collect and analyze data. Additionally, I envisaged that the research data collection might impose

some problems because gathering data from the TEA might not be easily accessible due to students' records confidentiality law. Other limitations included the time of the data collection, the type of school vouchers, and the formula each school used in calculating the graduation rates of their students.

I also utilized the quantitative secondary data collected on voucher students to analyze public-school students' uniformity. This statement meant that there was no difference in the data for vouchers and public-school students.

Significance

The study's importance was that high schools' graduation rate was a critical indicator of high school performance and graduation (Maloney, 2005a). Several studies reported that school vouchers affect students' academic performance either at a high or low end; however, there was little research on the graduation rates of voucher students across Texas. In Texas, graduation rates were a part of high schools' accountability required by the NCLB of 2001 (Maloney, 2005). Additionally, graduation rates were a requirement in the NCLB. States must include the percentage of students who graduated from secondary school with a required diploma in a standard number of years (NCLB 111(b)(2) (C) (vi) when assessing the progress of high schools (Maloney, 2005a). Besides, school accountability concerns graduation outcomes are an essential gauge of school performance because of their positive relationship to economic variables, such as employment and wage rates. Policymakers might use the study result to decide whether vouchers would be an alternative to the current public education system.

I examined the graduation rates of selected voucher schools and compared them to the graduation rates of selected public schools in the Texas education system. In so doing, I determined whether voucher schools might become a viable alternative to traditional public schools for low-income students attending low-performing schools. I also evaluated the argument by voucher supporters like Milton Friedman. Most recently, the United States Secretary of Education, that the provision of school vouchers would increase competition for students between schools, and that the competition would lead to greater efficiency in all schools (Messerli, 2012). Additionally, Jeynes (2012) asserted that based on meta-analytic research and the examination of national datasets, school choice programs could reduce the achievement gap by 25 percent.

It was observed by Fung and Lam (2011) that giving parents more power to choose schools was a powerful rallying cry for reform. Proponents of private school vouchers argued that vouchers would empower low-income families and raise poor children's academic achievement. According to vouchers supporters, students' use of vouchers would improve performance by forcing public schools to compete in an educational marketplace where poor parents hold the power of the purse (Molnar, 2001). Furthermore, I evaluated the argument that low-income students who emigrated from their low-performing neighborhood schools to voucher schools graduated at a higher rate than was otherwise. The higher graduation rate would translate into a positive social change that would benefit the students and their parents and help the entire community because higher graduation rates led to a desire to attend college and become productive citizens.

Implications for Social Change

Positive social change implications from this study included expanding the voucher scheme to benefit a larger population of students who would ordinarily not qualify for a voucher award. Therefore, the voucher concept should be a part of school reform measures advocated by voucher proponents such as Friedman. Voucher advocates predicted that if low-income families were awarded vouchers for use by their school-age children, millions of school-age children would benefit. The program would spur an unprecedented social change of enormous proportion.

Summary

Chapter 1 introduced the study to compare the graduation rate of voucher students to their traditional public-school counterparts. It stated the origins of the theoretical arguments for the provision of vouchers (using variables such as socioeconomic status, college enrollment acceptability, and college completion) to low-income families enrolling their school-age children in a private or public-school choice. I presented the research problem as voucher students failing to graduate at a higher rate than do their public schools' counterparts'.

The chapter presented the research questions and the study's significance: high school graduation rates were a critical indicator of high school performance. Chapter 2 showed the research literature related to voucher students' graduation rates compared to traditional public-school students' graduation rates. Chapter 3 described the study methodology, and chapters 4 and 5 discussed the research findings and conclusions, respectively.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The problem was that school vouchers as a means of reforming the public education system and boosting the graduation rates of low-income inner-city high school students did not consistently lead to higher student graduation as supporters of the voucher concept argued. The purpose of this study was to determine whether students who received vouchers to transfer to private or high-performing public-schools graduated at a rate higher than students in public schools in a southwestern state education system.

The literature review began with school choice. It affected traditional public schools on students' academic achievement, competitive effect of choice schools, and the graduation rates of choice (voucher) schools compared to conventional public schools. The review of the literature described the competitive effects of school vouchers as a catalyst for school improvement. The review examined various studies on school choice, peer-reviewed articles, scholarly dissertations, archived documents from the TEA, and other relevant documents on the school choice scheme. Additionally, the literature on school vouchers came from the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG), Harvard University, Heritage Foundation, Open Access Dissertations, and a host of others.

The idea of a voucher and other school choice forms had witnessed philosophical debate for and against for many years. There were many studies for over twenty years of choice experimentation nationally; researchers and policymakers have the data to back up their respective positions. Although there were numerous data on school vouchers, they

were minimal compared to other school choice forms because the voucher phenomenon was relatively new to the education world; hence, research on the vouchers' impact on students' graduation was limited (Lowe, 2013). Before open enrollment became nationally accepted, parents had little choice but to enroll their child in whatever neighborhood school they lived. Unless they could afford private school tuition and transportation, the public schools were the only option. Proponents of school choice, such as a school voucher, noted that the entire educational system would benefit from the school choice scheme's competition to attract and retain students (Lowe, 2013).

School choice included homeschooling, open enrollment, magnet, and charter, alternative and online, and vouchers available as the alternative to the public schools' system. The chapter reviewed previous research and literature on school choice policies, especially school vouchers, and on decentralization and privatization reforms in education. The chapter discussed the school voucher scheme and examining the research on voucher schools' outcomes and attributes relevant to this dissertation's analysis. The chapter began with an overview of voucher schools nationally and looked at the different voucher schools' formats. The following section of the chapter reviewed the current research on voucher schools' and students' graduation rates, the voucher scheme's effect on the various school districts, and the voucher schools' competitive effect on the public education system. The final section of the chapter discussed the value of high school graduation as an indication of academic achievement.

Although numerous data on school vouchers existed, they were minimal compared to data from the other forms of school choice because the voucher concept was

relatively a new phenomenon; hence, research on the impact of the voucher on students' graduation was limited. Increased competition and higher education quality correlated positively with each other (Belfield & Levin, 2002). However, opponents of school choice quickly pointed out that it was not that simple when dealing with educational issues (Lowe, 2013).

Literature Search Strategy

This study used public policy and education policy's confluence to review pertinent literature from the two subject areas. Before open enrollment became the norm, parents had little choice but to enroll their child at the school in whatever district they lived. This practice became the arrangement in the state of Texas and many other states in the country. Unless they could afford private school tuition and transportation, public schools were the only option. Because of this arrangement of assigning students to districts where they lived, parents used it as a catalyst to shop for homes in neighborhoods with a quality local public school (Lowe, 2013). The primary literature search strategy was to conduct a comprehensive examination of all available resources on choice/voucher schools and review several types of records, including researched, archival, and seminal materials. The following databases from the Walden University Library contributed to the literature search: SAGE Premier, Political Science Complete. Education Research. Also, within the Walden library system is the National Center for Education Statistics 2006 survey.

Throughout the search, I used the following keywords: *Voucher, socioeconomic, low-income, low-performing, inner-city, award, school grading*, and *graduation*.

Additionally, I used these keywords connected to rational choice and used by Friedman: *deregulation, competition,* and *parental demand*.

Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this section was to discuss the three theories that guide the study: rational choice theory (RCT), behavior economic theory (BET), and public choice theory (PCB) as they relate to school choice. I discussed each of these theories in detail below.

Rational Choice Theory (RCT)

The theoretical framework for this study was the combination of RCT, BET, and PCT. The RCT was most widely used by researchers to understand what motivated people to choose a product over other options. The RCT was also an approach used by a social scientist to understand human behavior (Ogu, 2013). According to the theory, individuals are motivated by their wants and goals and driven by personal desires (Ogu, 2013). However, since individuals could not attain all the various things they wanted, they must make choices relating to their goals and the means for achieving them. Individuals must anticipate the outcomes of alternatives and calculate which options would be best under these circumstances. In the final analysis, rational individuals choose the course of action that would likely give them greater satisfaction than ever.

Although the origins of RCT may be a bit murky, its new roots stem from the age of reason (Ogu, 2013). Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651) secured its central intellectual position. Hobbes tried to explain the basic functioning of political institutions via individuals' choices. The RCT further assumed that people had preferences among the available alternatives that allowed them to state which option they would prefer.

Because of competition and limited resources available to individuals in any given real-life situation, recipients of the school voucher through their parents/guardians did have the right to choose any school they felt would fulfill their educational needs. Incidentally, it led to the term *satisficing* by Simon (1956). According to Simon, the key to the simplification of the choice process was the replacement of the goal of maximizing to satisficing, of finding a course of action that was good enough and choosing an alternative which was not the best solution but was a solution which is good enough (Bazerman & Moore, 2002). Simon (1956) first used the term satisficing by positing that individuals served themselves best by accepting the good-enough solution rather than searching indefinitely for the best option. Goode (2007) criticized the RCT by explaining that people may not always maximize material goods or money.

Some critics found fault with the assumptions of rational choice theory by asking:

1. Are people rational?
2. Do people optimize in market settings (Cherry, 2015)?

Chubb and Moe (1990) used the RCT to argue that humans sought to maximize academic quality. Schneider et al. (2000) attempted to build on the work of Chubb and Moe (1990) by describing a more detailed choice process. The researchers proposed as follows:

1. Parents have a set of preferences about education and schooling.
2. Parents gather information about the collection of schools available to their children.
3. Parents make trade-offs between the attributes of these schools.

4. Parents chose the school that best fits their preference.

The researchers used the process to study parents' choice patterns and found differences in selection considerations based on race and education. I used the rational choice theory to test these variables as they relate to school choice:

1. Income levels of families awarded school vouchers to determine if low-income status was the primary determinant of parents who applied and received a voucher for their schoolchildren.
2. Voucher schools' academic performance as determined by the state of Texas annual school ranking.
3. The racial composition of voucher schools to which voucher students were transferring.

Parents used the concept of satisficing - a term used to accept an available option as satisfactory - to decide whether to receive the voucher to transfer their children to a high-performing private school or leave their children to attend the neighborhood schools zoned. Despite these differences, academic achievement and teacher quality were still the highest-ranked concerns for parents as they considered vouchers/charter schools to enroll their children (Schneider et al., 2000). The connection between academic quality and school choice followed the principles laid out by the RCT.

However, Schneider et al. (2000) used teacher quality and academic achievement to represent higher graduation records. Bosetti (2007) attempted to use the rational choice theory to understand how parents selected schools. Bosetti had parents rank their most

crucial school choice reasons and disaggregated them based on school type. The exercise obtained the following results from parents' ranking of their school choice reasons:

1. Smaller class sizes.
2. Nonreligious private schools.
3. Shared values/beliefs when choosing religious schools.
4. Proximity from their home when choosing public schools.
5. Desire for a healthy academic reputation/teaching style when choosing alternative schools.

The researcher suggested that other theories, such as BET, PCT, and RCT, might be needed to properly explore and explain why the differences in primary considerations between the different types of schools.

Behavioral Economics Theory (BET)

Another economic theory that theorists used when discussing human economic behavior relative to school choice – ostensibly, which school to enroll their children was BET. Behavioral economics is the branch of economics, which studies how individuals and organizations make economic decisions. BET is different from RCT (Carrillo, 2013). Conversely, rational choice theorists consider how individuals make economic decisions based on their limited resources (Samson and Voyer, 2014). While RCT assumes that people act with rationality when facing an economic decision, behavioral economics shows that human beings do not respond with rationality. People have limited cognitive abilities that pose as obstacles on their way. Samson (2014) advised researchers to understand the human mind relative to the environment in which they evolve.

BET suggests that the social environment shapes their individual experiences and what they consider most important. Contrary to rational choice theorists' beliefs, behavioral economics theorists base their belief in what people perceive as best on their environment and experiences. Because of these differences, parents who applied for school vouchers exercised their respective individual judgments to make their own decisions. Schwartz et al. (2002) made one of the exciting findings in the maximizing-satisficing literature. According to Schwartz et al. (2002), satisficers were more likely to experience higher satisfaction, happiness, and self-esteem after deciding on alternatives, whereas maximizing individuals is more prone to regret after making their choice. Friedman continued his position for governments to issue vouchers to low-income families when he argued that vouchers give a higher educational opportunity to the poor (Friedman 1962).

Public Choice Theory (PCT)

In discussing the merits/demerits of public choice theory as it affects an individual legislator during legislative proceedings leading to law-making, individual legislators' self-interest is the primary or dominant motivator for legislative action (Quinn, 2014). The above argument aligned with Friedman's argument that, rather than paying public schools to educate the students in their districts, the government should provide parents with vouchers to choose whatever school their school-age child would attend (Friedman, 1962).

Friedman went further to explain his voucher proposal by citing various examples. He argued that the City of New York spent about $1,500 annually for every

child enrolled at its public elementary and secondary schools. Parents who send their child to a private school that costs less would save the city about $1,500 (Friedman, 1983). However, New York gets no benefit from doing so. The essential reform would be for the city to give such parents a voucher for $1,500 to pay for their child (and for no other purpose). It would not relieve them of the burden of taxes; instead, it would merely give parents a choice of the form they would take to schooling their child that the city has obligated itself to provide. Parents could be permitted to use the vouchers in private schools and other public schools to widen the range of choice — not only in schools in their district, city, or state but in any school that is willing to accept their child. The arrangement would involve giving every parent a voucher and requiring or permitting public schools to finance themselves by charging tuition. The public schools would have to compete with one another and private schools (Friedman, 1997).

School choice policies have two essential features: First, on the demand side, they give parents more options about the schools their children can attend. With their introduction, the state's power to assign children to a school declines, and parents' ability to choose their children's school correspondingly increases. Second, school choice policies produce an explicit or implicit competition among schools for students and revenues (Lips, 2015). It would also exert competitive pressure on traditional public schools to improve, resulting in school improvement (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Friedman, 1962; Hoxby, 2011).

Friedman argued that the use of school vouchers in the public education system would spur public schools to operate as private institutions to foster competition, which

would usher in efficiency (Friedman, 1962). Friedman believed that vouchers would promote competition among schools for students. That competition would improve public education quality by driving down costs and creating a more dynamic education system. In echoing the sentiment espoused by Freidman et al. (1990) argued that in a market-based system, schools would no longer be the custodian of the education system and would no longer be under the control of bureaucratic politics. Instead, schools would be democratically controlled and accountable to parents and students (Chubb & Moe, 1990a). The above argument and more like it would be plausible if the voucher program were also leading to a higher graduation rate. However, studies have not correlated the argument advanced by proponents of the school voucher that the use of vouchers assures high graduation rates on the part of voucher recipients.

The School Voucher Debate

The National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL, 2012), outlined the arguments on both sides of the voucher debate. One famous case for school choice policies was that public schools would improve their education when faced with competition for students (Figlio & Hart, 2010). Proponents of school choice suggest that the system provided opportunities that were more educational for low-income students. At the same time, vouchers would create an incentive for public schools to improve because of competition with parochial and private schools (Lowe, 2013). Proponents further argued that the entire educational system would benefit from the competition to attract and keep students and found that increased competition and higher education quality are positively correlated (Belfield & Levin, 2002). Crucial to the argument is that

vouchers will spur competition between public and private campuses, make school more responsive to families and students, increase student achievement, including graduation, and improve all schools (Ladd, 2002).

Friedman argued that if schools faced the threat of losing students — and the state funds attached to those students — to private schools, the schools should have the incentive to cultivate customer (parental) satisfaction by operating efficiently and effectively of improving the outcomes valued by students and parents (Friedman, (1962). Proponents believed that vouchers would result in a better education for students. Choice schools would reduce the bureaucratic influence, and parents would gain power and control in educational decision-making. The introduction of a voucher system would improve competition for students. Such competition proponents argued, would increase achievement by forcing public schools to become productive (Ladd, 2002). On the other side of the debate, opponents claimed that vouchers serve to weaken public schools by diverting much-needed funds from traditional public schools. Opponents argued that states allocate those funds to private schools with little or no accountability attached to how the receiving entities would spend the resources. Some opponents argued that vouchers' amount of money was insufficient to ensure real equality educational access because voucher allocations covered only a fraction of the tuition cost.

There were extensive studies on the school voucher debate. Researchers (Ni & Arsen, 2011) carried out numerous studies on school choice and competition in Michigan for several years. The researchers explained that those for school choice believed that if they tied funding to enrollment, traditional public schools would have the incentive to

compete and increase their effectiveness and efficiency by working harder and implementing educational improvements (Ni & Arsen, 2011).

Voucher schools were private schools that accepted government-issued coupons for educating public school students who received the vouchers to transfer to either private or public (choice) school their parents chose. Federal funded individual school choice programs were currently operating in twenty states plus the District of Columbia (Frendewey et al., 2015). The school voucher program is one of those choices or means-tested programs that students from low-income families use to attend the school of their parents' choice. A student is qualified to receive a voucher to transfer to any private or public school if their parents chose and met eligibility criteria.

Voucher programs existed in Indiana, Louisiana, North Carolina, Ohio, and Wisconsin (Frendewey et al., 2015). In Milwaukee, public opinion, bi-partisan support, criticism of the Milwaukee Public School (MPS) system, along with high dropout figures and low achievement statistics, drove federal policymakers to adopt the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) in 1990 (Percy & Maier, 2000).

The Milwaukee Parental School Choice became the first voucher program in the United States (Wolf, 2012). Under the Milwaukee voucher system, qualifying schools chose to participate and agreed to accept students randomly. They received accreditation from an agency approved as stated in the Wisconsin State Statutes, agreed to the maximum amount of the voucher as full payment, and met other fiscal and academic criteria (Kava, 2013). Private or public schools accepting education vouchers had different curricular outside of public schools. They were not required to take state-

mandated tests and might not need their students to take admission tests (Percy & Maier, 2000). This study would mention charter schools because they are choice schools and an innovative education system that proponents view as an alternative to the public education system.

The total number of choice programs that were in operation nationwide increased from 32 to 39 in the 2013-2014 school years alone, and there were ten unique types of choice schools (Egalite, 2014). These voucher types include voucher schools, public school choice, open-enrollment charter schools, education savings account, homeschooling, individual tuition, course choice, magnet schools, scholarship tax credit, virtual schools (Frendewey et al., 2015). These different school choice programs offered parents a wide selection of various schools they believed would serve their children according to their schools' perception. For this study, the emphasis focused on two distinct schools: voucher/charter and public schools.

Vouchers Schools

The brief explanation below discussed the school choice models currently in practice in Texas and the nation. School voucher programs, the paradigm of market-based education reform, allowed families to direct public funds toward tuition payments at private schools (Abdulkadiroglu et al., 2015). Individual school choice policies correspond to alternatives that free choice to parents and students beyond public schools' management authority. Families received public funds for expanding their range of options across the public and private sectors (Feinberg & Lubienski, 2008). Correspondingly, students could attend a public or private school of their parents' choice,

always retaining the public funding with them, no matter where they go. One of the most known private school choice options refers to voucher schemes. Voucher schools were private or public schools accepting a student who received a voucher from the public funds to transfer to any school of their parents' choice.

Schoolchildren were not assigned to schools by attendance zones or any other criteria of the education system. Instead, vouchers enabled parents to select a school for their children, public or private, among any eligible and participating schools (West, 1997). Vouchers came in different forms and for various purposes, depending on the awarding agency's criteria. The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, for example, that came into existence in the early 1990s, was one of the oldest publicly funded voucher programs in the US (Rouse & Barrow, 2008). Some states adopted different criteria for the award of vouchers. For example, the state of Louisiana awarded vouchers to public schools that received failing grades of "C" "D" "F" or classified as low-performing schools (Egalite 2014).

Other vouchers awarding agencies used income as one of the eligibility criteria. School vouchers were not the only mechanism for broadening the publicly funded schooling choices available to families. The Houston Independent School District, for example, had operated magnet schools and implemented open enrollment plans for decades. In recent times, families had the option of charter schools (Rouse & Barrow, 2008).

Charter Schools

Charter schools are another form of alternative to the public education system. Charter schools were independent schools of choice that received public funds but operated outside traditional structures (Maloney, 2005). The National Education Association (NEA) defined charter schools as publicly funded elementary or secondary schools exempt from some of the rules, regulations, and statutes that apply to other public schools (NEA, 2015). Charter schools were not to charge tuition or discriminate in their admissions policies and held publicly accountable for results. In 1991, Minnesota passed the first charter school legislation following the 1998 book by Ray Brouseudde entitled *Education by Charter: Restructuring School Districts*. Persons or groups interested in establishing a charter school would apply to a government authority for a "charter" or contract to operate a school. The charter defined the school's program, clarified accountability standards, and identified applicable sanctions if the school failed to meet the terms of its letter (Maloney, 2005).

A charter school management organization (CMO) could apply for and hold more than one permit, and each license granted could cover multiple campuses. The arrangement fell in the same manner as the traditional public-school districts that could include various school campuses. In Texas, charter schools received per-pupil school revenues for the students they enrolled and were exempt from varying degrees of state and local schools' regulations. There was a variety of charter schools, and each operating according to its enabling Act. In Texas, the legislature, through the Texas Education Code (TEC) §12.002, provided three charter schools.

There were open-enrollment charters, campus charters, and home-rule charters (Maloney. 2005). A brief commentary on charter schools was mentioned in this study because there had been extensive studies dealing with charter schools' effect on students' performance, but small reviews on voucher schools graduation rates (Wolf et al., 2014).

Additionally, supporters have seen charter schools as the best alternative to the traditional public education system.

Choice Public Schools

School choice gave parents the option to choose the schools their children could attend. With their introduction, the state's power to assign children to schools declined, and parents' ability to choose their children's school correspondingly increased (Plank & Sykes, 2003). Choice public schools were those traditional public schools that accept students outside of their school boundaries. Under these kinds of schools, public choice schools may not reject any student based on known or perceived disability. Although these schools, by law, would not charge tuition, they may use other forms to admit students. Usually, these schools use different entry tests at various stages of students' admission processes. Still, each student must demonstrate their ability to secure admission by passing the stipulated tests. In schools under Baltimore city jurisdiction, high schools with entrance criteria required a minimum composite score for consideration for admission (Center for Education Reform (2010)). Some of these choice public schools used written tests for the initial stage of the admission process and then followed a written and oral interview.

Choice Public schools got their authority through Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the NCLB of 2001 (Maloney, 2005). The legislation gave parents of students enrolled in Title I schools identified for school improvement, corrective actions. The restructuring and other variables were necessary because these schools had not met state achievement targets, the opportunity to transfer their children to a public school that had not been so identified (NCLB, 2001). NCLB was the law that, among others, intended to improve the academic achievement of all students attending public schools in the United States, focusing on children of low-income families (Great Schools, 2016). Under NCLB, parents might choose to send their children to another public school if there was a safety concern that might jeopardize the child's general health and welfare. Additionally, the NCLB supported the growth of independent charter schools while requiring that states and local school authorities provide information to help parents make informed choices (US Department of Education, 2007).

During the implementation stage of the NCLB Act, criticisms abound on the provisions of the law as the law affected states' ability to carry out the intent. Critics charge that the law was unclear in describing what states must do to receive federal funds. Critics also leveled criticisms by contending that the NCLB Act had resulted in billions of dollars of unfunded mandates, that the Act forced teachers to "teach to the test" to get students to pass standardized tests (Whitney & Candelaria, 2016). As criticisms continued to mount from states to carry out the law, the Obama administration

decided to reform it under the Elementary & Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The changes included:

1. Improving teacher and principal effectiveness to ensure that every classroom had a great teacher, and every school had a great leader.
2. Providing information to families helps them enhance their children's schools and educators to improve their students' learning.
3. Implementing college-and-career-ready standards and developing improved assessments aligned with those criteria.
4. Improving student learning and achievement in America's lowest-performing schools by providing intensive support and effective interventions (US Department of Education, 2014).

However, the Obama administration's education policy did not consider reauthorizing the DC Opportunity Scholarship, which provided voucher funds to low-income families. Instead, the government opted to discontinue funding.

The current administration's education policy showed that the administration was interested in resurrecting the school choice program. The move followed the non-reauthorization of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program from the previous administration. The reason for non-reauthorization was the poor performance of the federal-funded DCOSP regarding students' academic performance, including students' graduation. The current administration budgeted $1.4B to fund the school choice program.

Open Enrollment Charter Schools

Open enrollment charter schools were public schools created by eligible entities, such as individuals, nonprofit organizations, higher institutions, and some local government entities (Maloney, 2005). Most public-school choice typically began with open enrollment, which negated the traditional boundary markers between school districts. When the boundary lines no longer existed, students could attend any school for which they had transportation. The open-enrollment charter schools, by law, may not charge tuition but must provide transportation as do traditional public schools (Maloney, 2005). Before open enrollment became the norm, parents had little choice but to attend the school in whatever district they lived in; unless they could afford private school tuition and transportation, the public-school system was the only option. That was how many families shopped for housing. They chose to live in a school district based on the local public schools' quality and found that 80% of school-age children in 1993 attended the school assigned to them. However, in 2003, only 74% attended their accredited schools (Maloney, 2005).

One feature of the open-enrollment charter schools was that they received government funding without many of the regulatory restrictions the traditional public schools must operate. Except for the NCLB for teachers in core subject areas, open-enrollment charter schools that received federal funds had little or no restrictions in their hiring of school employees (Baude et al., 2014). In Texas, the State Board of Education awarded the open-enrollment charter. The board acted as the primary overseer for these types of schools. As with the traditional public schools, open-enrollment charter schools

received state funds based on their students' enrollment (TEC) §§12.101-12.109 (Maloney, 2005).

Education Savings Account (ESA)

An education savings account was a future education expense that allowed an individual to deposit up to $2,000 each year for an eligible beneficiary, usually a child, as per 529 of the Internal Revenue Code (Malkus, Peshek, & Robinson, 2017). Pioneered in Arizona, the Education Savings Account (ESA) became operational in 2011 when the state governor signed it into law creating the Arizona Empowerment Accounts (Burke, 2011). The empowerment Account would allow parents of special needs children to remove their children from the public-school system and receive the money the state would have spent on them in the parents' education savings account. Texas was among the other states that operated the parents' education savings account (Lindsey, B.2013).

Homeschooling

Homeschooling was another type of choice school. Students in homeschool received their education from their parents or private tutors, sometimes through online programs. The present-day homeschooling movement began sometime around the midcentury as a liberal, rather than a conservative, alternative to public education (Moreau, 2012). The motivation for homeschooling varies among different households as to why they would elect to homeschool their children. Parents choosing to homeschool had various reasons for doing so. Some opt for homeschool because of religious ideas; others worry about the public-school environment. Some states-imposed oversight of homeschooling while others do not.

As individuals from different perspectives were about homeschooling, a survey by Phi Delta Kappa Gallup showed that homeschooling had become a more socially acceptable alternative to public schools (Moreau, 2012). For example, public school enrollment in the United States reached an all-time high in 2008, "Enrollment trends" (Bagwell, 2010). Researchers predicted that homeschooling would increase dramatically based on the expected increase in the total student population. Based on this projection, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) estimated a healthy growth – 29 to 30 percent in the number of homeschooled students between 1999 and 2003 (Bagwell, 2010).

Proprietary Schools

Proprietary schools were private for-profit-run schools, which provided vocational education and training. Among these schools' features were that an elected board of trustees did not run them. Therefore, as in public schools, the elected board does not manage these schools' day-to-day activities. Operators of this kind of school based their tuition on the perception of the quality of the services they provided. Proprietary schools in the state of North Carolina, for example, operated under a license issued under the General Statutes of the state government (NC Community Colleges, 2016).

Parochial Schools

Parochial or non-secular schools were church-related schools. These kinds of schools were owned and operated by church organizations. They include Catholic dioceses or the Protestant denominations. The schools of this type were private. Therefore, they were fee-paying schools. Schoolchildren attending this school might or

might not belong to the religious faith, but they could be required to participate in religious education and prayer services. Parochial schools could admit students of other denominations outside of theirs if their parents perceive their study curriculum quality as meeting their needs.

Magnet Schools

Magnet schools were public schools created by school districts to provide instructions to a select group of students under their programs. They might specialize in an area. Magnet schools were highly competitive in structure, and they were highly selective. Prospective students entering these schools were subjected to rigorous admission testing requirements, both written and oral. The Houston Independence School District, for example, created several magnet schools. These magnet schools include DeBakey high school for health professionals, the high school for the performing and visual arts, Carnegie vanguard high school, the high school for law enforcement, the high school for engineering studies, and high school for aeronautic studies, and a host of others. These magnet schools require the use of admission test and other rigorous admission processes to admit their first-year students.

Scholarship Tax Credit

A scholarship tax credit was a tax credit given to individuals or corporations that donate to a nonprofit scholarship-funding organization (Hart, 2011). Persons or companies could deduct whatever amount they gave to the scholarship-funding organization from their state's income tax. Each state sets the rules for administering the scholarship tax credit; otherwise, the Internal Revenue Service sets the laws governing

the entire country (Hart, 2011). The State of Florida had a scholarship tax credit. The Florida Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship Program, later called Florida Tax Credit Scholarships, became law in 2001 and came into effect in the 2002-2003 school year (Hart, 2011). The program provided corporations with tax credits for donations that they make to scholarship-funding organizations. These organizations, in turn, give scholarships to students who qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. The program was open to students who attended a Florida public school for the full school year before program entry or who were entering kindergarten-grade or first grade (Figlio & Hart, 2010).

Virtual Schools

Virtual schools were those learning arrangements that primarily used the online method to deliver instructions. The most significant feature of virtual schools was that the process was void of teacher-student interaction Dipietro et al. (2008). The agreement, in effect, meant that the physical interaction between students and teachers was non-existent. The idea of virtual schools stated in 2006 with the State of Michigan becoming the first state in the United States to require that all Michigan students complete some form of an online learning experience to graduate from high school (Tonks et at., 2013). Because astronomical of these schools' astronomical growth, Christensen et al. (2008) predicted that most of the K-12 education in the future would be delivered using online learning.

Previous Literature

The review of the literature described the competitive effects of school vouchers as a catalyst for school improvement. The idea of a voucher and other school choice forms had witnessed philosophical debate for and against for many years. The rational choice was the most widely used theory in education literature to understand school selection patterns (Wilson, 2016). Chubb and Moe (1990) were the first to link rational choice theory to school choice ideas. As stated earlier on the rational choice theory, two concepts emerged. First, parents wanted the best school for their child, which many describe as academic quality (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Lubienski & Lubienski, 2014). Second, parents considered all possible alternatives and then made an informed choice. The rational choice theory assumed parents and students were consumers in an educational marketplace (Kelly, 2007). Given many school options, parents would desire and then select the highest educational alternative for their child. The ideas laid out by Chubb and Moe (1990) provided the basis for most researchers and policymakers to understand school selection patterns. Although data on school vouchers were minimal compared to the other forms of school choice because the voucher phenomenon was relatively new to the education world; hence, research on the impact of the voucher on students' graduation was limited (Lowe, 2013).

Researchers conducted studies on school vouchers' effect on college enrollment (Chingos & Peterson, 2013); others were on the effectiveness of vouchers in schools relative to students' performance and graduation (Chingos & West, 2014; Warren 2011); on the competitive effects of the Louisiana Scholarship program on public school

performance (Egalite, 2014). The evidence was available in studies of the school voucher's consequences on student academic achievement and the school's overall performance vis-à-vis the traditional public education system (Creswell, 2008; Howell et al., 2002; Green et al., 1998; Peterson et al., 1999; Rouse, 1998; Witte, 2000; Wolf et al., 2008).

However, none of the studies devoted resources to examining the graduation rates of voucher schools against traditional public schools. There have been 19 published studies of competitive effects from vouchers; all showed results that ranged from neutral to positive outcomes (Egalite, 2014). Most of these studies occurred in Florida (nine studies), Milwaukee, and Wisconsin (five studies). There were also studies done on the voucher's competition effect on students' performance (Belfield & Levin, 2002; Chingos & Peterson, 2013; Egalite, 2014; Wolf et al., 2013). Again, these studies failed to examine the graduation rate of voucher schools to determine any difference in public-school students' graduation rates. It was this gap in the research literature that this study hoped to fill.

Most choice evaluations focused on student educational outcomes such as test scores and college enrollment rates (Booker et al., 2011; CREDO, 2013). Other evaluations measured the success of programs as in boosting parent satisfaction and promoting social goals, such as reducing achievement gaps, increasing racial integration, and improving civic values (Betts et al., 2006; Bifulco & Ladd, 2007; Wolf, 2008; Zimmer et al., 2009). Researchers argued that schools had a responsibility beyond what was measured, such as test scores (Macedo & Wolf, 2003; Lawton et al., 2004; Zimmer

et al., 2009). These test scores only measured students' cognitive abilities (Egalite et al., 2014; Hitt & Trivitt, 2013; Hitt et al., 2014). Access to quality schools or school choices, in general, could have social benefits.

Research on School Vouchers

The Milwaukee Parental Choice (MPCP) Evaluation Report #5

The idea of a voucher and other school choice forms had witnessed extensive debates for and against for many years (Lowe, 2013). The literature review looked at the competitive effects of school vouchers as a catalyst for school improvement. In 1990, the MPCP became the first voucher program established in the United States (Witte et al., 2008). The baseline report of the MPCP found the following similarities and differences in both the MPCP and the MPS school systems. The report found that the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examinations (WKCE) math and reading scores for MPCP students in grades 3-5 were slightly lower at baseline than those of a random sample of the Milwaukee Public School (MPS) students. These differences might be the result of a variety of factors unexplored in this baseline report; WKCE math and reading scores for MPCP students in grades 6 to 8 did not differ from the scores of the MPS students; benchmark test for 9th graders was also similar between the two groups (Witte et al., 2008).

In 2011, Warren found differences in vouchers and public-school students' academic performance and graduation (Warren, 2011). Researchers evaluated the MPS and MPCP and found that students from MPCP schools recorded a higher rate of graduation than MPS students (Warren, 2011). Subsequently, Greene et al. (1999) studied

the MPCP in the first five years of its inception. The evaluation and others that followed showed that, compared to their public-school counterparts, the MPCP did not outperform their public-school peers in academic achievement as would have been expected (Greene et al., 1999). Although the voucher program intended to manifest innovation in education; however, voucher schools that offered unique designs and conduct their affairs with autonomous operational control had not significantly outperformed traditional district schools regarding student achievement. Greene and Marsh (2009) found that Milwaukee students fared better academically than their public-school counterparts when they had free private options through the voucher program.

The findings of Greene and Marsh (2009) showed a variation from other studies that considered students' achievement aspect of the voucher program (Lubienski et al., 2009; Rouse & Barrow, 2009).

If the previous studies' findings were to show that the MPCP student consistently achieved higher academic performance than their public schools' counterparts, researchers would have supported the expansion of the voucher scheme, and their support justified. Although vouchers had not demonstrated overall success as reported in the MPCP evaluation, advocates continue to believe the vouchers' use was the panacea to the weak results in the present-day education system. However, opponents used the dismal results of students that used the voucher as a weapon to continue their argument that vouchers did not do what supporters had all along been saying: that vouchers were an alternative to education reform. Subsequently, Green et al. (1990) reported that the Milwaukee choice experiment suggested that privatization in education might result in

efficiency gains. Additionally, the evaluation indicated that students receiving a voucher and transferring to private schools showed a high graduation rate of about 12 percentage points. In other assessments of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program, researchers discovered that no evidence showed that the voucher program improved student achievement, either wholly for all students or for subgroups of students, especially students from schools that needed improvement. There have been extensive studies that examined the competition responses in traditional public schools resulting from a private school choice program such as a voucher program. A survey conducted on Florida vouchers' competitive effect in 2010 found that all four competition measures relate positively and significantly (MPS) students. These differences may be the result of a variety of factors unexplored in this baseline report; WKCE math and reading scores for MPCP students in grades 6-8 did not differ from the scores of the MPS students; benchmark test for 9th graders was also similar between the two groups (Witte et al., 2008).

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The findings of Greene and Marsh (2009) showed a variation from other studies that considered students' achievement aspect of the voucher program (Lubienski et al., 2009; Rouse & Barrow, 2009).

The study looked at the distance between the public school and the closest private school accepting vouchers. The authors found that every mile closer to the private school increased the public-school performance in math and reading by at least 0.014 of a standard deviation. In a similar instance, an increase in the number of private schools near a voucher school correlated to a rise in test scores (Lowe, 2013).

The Louisiana Scholarship Program

Following the inception of the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Parental Choice Program, many other entities, such as Louisiana, cities, such as Dayton, Cleveland Ohio, and non-governmental organizations, such as the New York City, began to experiment with the voucher concept. Some of these entities got their authority through various legislations. In 2008, Louisiana launched its first voucher program in New Orleans, known then as Student Scholarship for Education Excellence (Wolf & Mills, 2016). The Louisiana Scholarship Program stood out among other scholarship programs to disallow selective admissions criteria for scholarship schools. It also stood out by holding schools

accountable to a high academic standard. As was the case with other voucher initiatives, the LSP goal was to enable low-income minority students to attend low-performing schools to receive a high-quality education from private schools at the state's expense (White, 2014).

These measures ensured equity for the students and their families. The initiative, the first of its kind in the state's school voucher program, was later renamed the Louisiana Scholarship Program, aiming to serve low-income minority students in low-performing public schools (Louisiana Department of Education, 2010). In the year 2012, the state legislature approved the expansion of the program statewide.

The Literature on Charter Schools: Effectiveness and Graduation

There was extensive research on the impact of charter schools' competition with public schools on students' academic achievement, whether competition from charter schools caused public schools to improve their academic performance. A study of charter school's performance in California in comparison with district schools found that students of both schools' format performed about the same on standardized tests (Zimmer et al., 2003). Specifically, the researchers found no statistically significant difference in test scores between charter and traditional public schools (Zimmer et al.,2003). In separate studies of charter school students' achievement in Michigan (Bettinger, 2006) and North Carolina (Bifulco & Ladd, 2004), charter schools' academic performance as measured by their test scores, undoubtedly lagged their traditional public-school counterparts.

Other studies of charter schools' academic performance in Arizona and Texas found that charter schools showed an unfortunate first-year effect (Gronberg & Jensen, 2001; Hanushek et al., Kain & Rivkin, 2002; Solomon et al., 2001). These students improved their test scores performances as they got settled and enrolled (Maloney, 2005). However, this study's literature review found no specific research addressing charter schools' graduation outcomes (Maloney, 2005). RAND Education, observed in its 2011 review of charter school research, highlighted the importance of examining whether charter schools were effective in high school graduation as they raised test scores (Maloney, 2005). Not all these studies had painted a fascinating picture of the charter school syndrome, as evidenced by the different studies. Instead, charter schools provided districts with a potential channel to exit students that were difficult or troublesome to serve. If charter schools readily accepted these students, they alleviated district schools' pressure to improve, undermining charter school initiatives (RAND Education, 2011).

High school graduation rates did not receive serious consideration in previous studies of the charter school program. Researchers have overlooked graduation rates' performance indicators and students' academic achievement in the various reviews on charter schools (Maloney, 2005). In students' graduation as one of the educational performance measures, charter schools had not fared exceptionally well than their traditional school counterparts (Maloney, 2005).

The Literature on Voucher: Effectiveness and Graduation

The TEA, which was responsible for K-12 education policies and programs for the state of Texas, defined high school graduation as the percentage of students from a

class of starting ninth-graders who graduated by their anticipated graduation date or within four years of beginning ninth grade (Texas Education Agency, 2014). A study of charter schools in Texas found that charter schools' presence positively affected student test performance for the students who remained in public schools (Booker et al., 2008). The researchers found that school choice (vouchers and charter schools) had resulted in systemic gains. However, the study was not precise whether the same benefits would be feasible from the institution of broader choice systems as in school voucher programs.

Researchers analyzed Milwaukee's voucher system's competitive effect and Michigan's and Arizona's charter school programs on achievement, including student graduation in districts where students attended vouchers or charter schools (Hoxby, 2002). Using changes in mean test scores before and after choice schools, Hoxby (2002) found that regular public schools boosted their achievement when exposed to each program's competition. However, Hoxby (2002) did not consider how district schools' student composition might have changed when charter schools began drawing students; districts had higher average test scores because their lowest-performing students transferred to charter schools. Nevertheless, test scores were not the only, or even the best, a measure of school performance. Schools that could retain and educate students until they complete their secondary education program can improve the life chances of the students they serve. It is a well-known fact that high school graduates were more likely than non-graduates to earn a higher income, enjoy higher employment rates, and were less likely to be on public assistance (Evans & Schwab, 2003. NCES, 2005a). These high school students also had lower arrest and incarceration rates (Thornberry et al.,

2002; Wald & Losen, 2003) and were less likely to become single parents or to smoke or take drugs (Kaufman et al., 2004; Mensch & Kaadel, 2001).

Currently, standardized tests were the primary means of assessing and reporting student achievement in American public education. It was not particularly surprising. Test scores were readily available, easily understood, and accepted as reliable measures for students' academic achievement. From a research point of view, test scores were valuable because these tests were standardized, and more importantly, they permitted comparison across different types of schools and students. One of the voucher critiques, among others, was that vouchers would lead to segregated anti-social schools (West, 1997). However, evidence supplied by Witte's evaluation of the Milwaukee program did not support the contention (Witte et al. 1995).

The student bodies of participating (voucher) schools vary from schools with almost all one-minority race to racially integrated schools that had used the choice program to diversify their nearly all-white student bodies (Witte et al., 1995). If, for example, the study had broadened beyond the sample frame, the result obtained would have been different, thereby casting serious doubt on the conclusion drawn from the above research. Witte et al. (2011) studied the Milwaukee's school voucher program and found that voucher students were outperforming public school students in reading and graduation rates. As Witte et al. (2011) explained, the researchers' method was as follows: we picked the baseline group in 2006 and followed the students five years later. "We did a random sample of voucher students, then chose a control group in the Milwaukee Public Schools by matching the vouchers student to public school students.

Similarly, in neighborhoods and baseline test scores of 2006, we considered their gender and race - things that cannot be measured very well" (Witte et al. 2011).

The report showed that students in the voucher program graduated from high school and attended four-year colleges at higher rates than their public-school counterparts. Another study conducted for the Heritage Foundation on the graduation rates of voucher students in the DCOSP—District of Columbus Opportunity Scholarship Program—found that voucher-using students achieved a graduation rate of 91 percent, compared to 70 percent non-voucher students (Richwine, 2010).

Meanwhile, Friedman (1962) continued his argument by positing that rather than paying public schools to educate the students in their districts, the government should provide parents with vouchers to allow them to choose what school each child would attend. School choice policies had two essential features (Lips, 2015). First, they give parents more options about the schools their children could attend on the demand side. With their introduction, the state's power to assign children to schools declined, and parents' ability to choose their children's school correspondingly increased. Second, school choice policies produced an explicit or implicit competition among schools for students and revenues (Lips,2015).

It would also exert competitive pressure on traditional public schools to improve, resulting in school improvement (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Friedman, 1962; Hoxby, 2001). Friedman (1962) argued for the use of school vouchers in the public education system. That public schools should operate as a private institution to foster competition, which would usher in efficiency (Friedman, 1962). That vouchers would promote competition

among schools for students. Competition for students would improve public education equality by driving down costs and creating a more dynamic education system (Freidman, 1962). In echoing the sentiment espoused by Freidman et al. (1990), argued that in a market-based system, schools would no longer be the custodian of the education system and would no longer be under the control of bureaucratic politics. Instead, schools would be democratically controlled and accountable to parents and students (Chubb & Moe, 1990a). The above argument and more like it would be plausible if the voucher program also led to students' graduation. Studies had not correlated the argument advanced by proponents of the school voucher that vouchers assured high graduation rates on voucher recipients.

Summary

The preceding chapter provided an overview of the voucher schools concept. It reviewed various studies relevant to voucher schools' graduation vis-à-vis the traditional public school about this dissertation's discussions and analyses. Additionally, the chapter touched on rational choice theory as the theoretical framework underlying the study. The study discussed the gap in the existing literature. The reason was that previous studies failed to devote extensive discussion on how the voucher scheme helped students who were awarded vouchers graduated at a higher rate than their traditional public-school counterparts.

Chapter 3 presented the research methods and included the plan of action directing the study. The section started with the research design and the rationale for selecting the approach appropriate research design. It contained the research questions

and the role of the researcher. It also included the methodology, sampling selection, and strategy used to collect and analyze data.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine whether students who received vouchers to transfer to private or high-performing public-schools graduated at a higher rate than their public-school counterparts.

Research Design

The research design for the survey was the quantitative methods approach. The study collected and analyzed secondary data from the TEA database on students' graduation records. TEA defined graduation as a student who entered the 9th grade each year, stayed, and graduated with their cohort after the 12th grade (Texas Education Agency, 2014). In Texas and other states in the nation, standardized tests are the primary means of assessing and reporting student academic achievement and graduation.

Research Design and Rationale

As stated, I chose the Texas education system as the focus of the research for two reasons:

1. The Texas education system had many public, charter, and voucher schools.
2. There was an enormous amount of data on the Texas education system, including a significant amount on charter and voucher schools.
3. Additionally, the TEA had an excellent website that made raw data available to the public: http://tea.us.tx.gov. Any interested party can access this site to find information on disaggregated, downloadable reports going back to

several years. These reports were user friendly and useful to any user who wanted to know more about the effect of voucher/charter schools in Texas.

As explained above, I chose Texas state because of the abundance of choice schools and a mixture of poor and wealthy school districts in the entire state. My study focused on schools within the TEA boundaries because of the extensive data on charter and voucher schools maintained by the Agency. I obtained data from the TEA for the Austin, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio school districts that constitute Texas's four largest school districts. The above-listed school districts represent the source of the bulk of data necessary for this study.

Research Questions

A study's research questions are the pillars of its design. The research questions should inform and guide all elements of the survey (Maxwell, 2012). Additionally, Maxwell added that the research question variables should seek information that addresses the study's purpose (Maxwell, 2012).

The primary research question was: Given the rational choice theory of the human decision-making process, how would low-income families use a voucher award to maximize their school choice?

The secondary research questions were as follows:

1. Is there any mitigating circumstance that makes low-income students using a voucher to attend private schools not graduate at higher rates than their public-school counterparts?

2. Do variables that include socioeconomic status and transportation availability impact the graduation rate of voucher students compared to their public-school counterparts?
3. What impact does the award of vouchers make on low-income students' overall educational performance with an emphasis on graduation compared to their public-school counterparts?

Research Hypothesis

Ho:1: An award of a voucher to a student had no statistically significant effect on the student graduating from school.

Ha:1: An award of a voucher to a student had a statistically significant effect on the student graduating from school.

Ho:2: An award of a voucher did not have a statistically significant effect on low-income students' graduation rates.

Ha:2: An award of the voucher had a statistically significant effect on low-income students' graduation rates.

Sample Population

A sample is a segment of the population selected for investigation; it is also a subset of the population (Bryman, 2008). I based the method of selection on a probability or non-probability approach. A probability sample is a sample selected using a random selection so that each unit in the population has a known chance of being selected (Creswell et al., 2011). Probability sampling aims at keeping the sampling error to a minimum (Bryman, 2008). A nonprobability sample is a sample not selected using a

random selection method. Necessarily, this implies that some units in the population are more likely than others to be chosen.

Sample Size

For this study, the sample size came from high schools' target population in Texas's four largest school districts, as identified by the TEA. Eight schools were chosen from the list (two each from each school district), forming a Texas school district representative. Therefore, the study selected 80 students from each school district (50 from each school). A total of 2000 students' graduation records from the TEA were selected and analyzed. These graduation records included vouchers and public-school students. Arguments for and against the voucher have been discussed extensively in the previous chapters. Supporters of the voucher have argued that voucher was the only means students of low-economic families could receive a quality education by awarding those parents vouchers to enroll their children in private or high-performing public schools (Wolf and Hoople, 2006). However, opponents of the voucher system argued that vouchers would take away funds meant for educating every school child in a public school. Above all, that voucher was a violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and several states' constitutions. The research began by separating voucher-using students and non-voucher using students and running a simple t-test: paired two-sample for means. For this study, the independent variable was vouchers, while the dependent variable was graduation. I employed the ordinal scale measurement. This test would determine if each group had a statistically significant change between vouchers and non-vouchers students.

The methods chapter illustrated the plan of action needed to carry out the research. The chapter began with the reason for selecting the approach to use, whether a quantitative, a qualitative, or a mixed-method, and why the chosen strategy and the rationale.

After I carefully analyzed the three criteria, I chose the quantitative approach to determine which public schools' graduation rates equaled or surpassed the graduation rates of voucher schools in deciding which side of the voucher debate the pendulum was swinging, public or voucher schools. The study also planned to ascertain the measures taken by public schools to discourage students from leaving their schools for voucher schools. In turn, the study considered why some students who applied and won vouchers refused to use them. With these goals in mind, my study focused on the following research questions and sub-questions:

Central Concepts of the Study

The research study's central concept was to determine whether students awarded vouchers to transfer from low-performing public schools to private or high-performing public record a higher graduation rate than their public-school counterparts. There had been a strong move by supporters of choice schools, which included a voucher for education reform by awarding vouchers to low-income students to enable them to achieve educational parity. However, voucher opponents argued that a voucher would accomplish the opposite. According to opponents of the voucher scheme, vouchers are nothing but a way for the (Somers, Zhu, & Wong, 2011).

Data Collection and Instrumentation

The purpose of the study was to determine whether students that received vouchers to transfer to private or high-performing public schools graduated at a higher rate than students in public schools in the State of Texas education system. I employed a t-test to separate voucher students from non-voucher students and run a simple t-test: two-tail sample for means. This test helped determine if each group of students had a statistically significant difference between the voucher and non-voucher students' graduation between 2011 when they enrolled in ninth grade and 2015 when they completed their high school and graduated. When holding constant other variables such as economic status, ethnicity, parents' level of education, number of children in the household, single or dual-parent household, is the award of vouchers determined to be a statistically significant predictor of students' graduation? From the statistical analysis carried out, there was no convincing evidence to show that a voucher's award had any statically substantial impact on students' graduation outcomes.

The TEA defined graduation as a student who entered the 9th grade each year, stayed, and graduated with their cohort after the 12th grade (Texas Education Agency, 2014). In Texas and other states in the nation, standardized tests are the primary means of assessing and reporting student academic achievement and graduation. The TEA used the same criteria to calculate students' academic achievement in public school systems and charter schools under its jurisdiction. It was not surprising that test scores are easily accessible and accepted as reliable students' educational performance measures. Private schools that received voucher students are not under the control of the TEA. For example,

each year, the TEA uses the STAAR test, administered from grades 3rd through 11th, to assess students' performances (Maloney 2005). In the high school graduation component of the STAAR, for students entering 9th grade from 2014-2015 until 2017, every student was expected to have completed four English language courses, three mathematics courses, three science courses, and four social studies courses (Maloney 2005). Texas students take these courses between the 9th and 11th grades. Only students that failed any of these courses started in their 9th grade may be required to complete the failed course by their 12th -grade year. Results obtained from these STAAR tests stayed in the custody of the TEA for up to seven years before they were stored away permanently. Therefore, the results of students' graduation were always available to researchers for research.

These results included those of the traditional public schools, state charter/voucher schools. For a study such as this one that was seeking to compare the graduation rate of public schools and voucher schools, data from the states' education departments are, by no means, readily available. Unless otherwise unforeseen, there should not be anything to impede in acquiring data from the TEA, Austin, Dallas, Houston, or San Antonio school districts if the TEA resolved the issue relating to students' confidentiality records.

Variables and Their Measurements

The independent variable for this quantitative research was the award of a voucher. The dependent variable was the students' graduation outcome, whether students using vouchers graduated at a higher rate than their public-school counterparts. I considered students' ethnicity and economic status as secondary control variables.

This research aimed at determining if students awarded vouchers, who enrolled in another public or private school, graduated at a higher rate than those at the schools they emigrated. Therefore, other variables, such as the minority population, expenditures per pupil, were not considered because they fell outside the study's boundary. The study employed logistic regression to analyze the quantitative data collected. Logistic regression was suitable for this quantitative research because a student using voucher graduated answered dichotomously with yes or no. Measurement of the variables utilized the four measurement levels of ratio, interval, ordinal, and nominal scale. Variables such as students' sex – male or female – were included as a categorical variable. I did not measure variables such as household income because of the non-availability of the data from the data host organization.

Archival Records

Examining archival material was another means of collecting information for a quantitative study because multiple sources of evidence lend credibility to the research (Yin, 2014). Thus, to explain the differences in the voucher's graduation rates and the traditional public-school students, I reviewed data maintained by the TEA. The data-centered on graduation rates. A review of secondary facts collected from voucher schools provided information not generated by the primary data sources, particularly statistical reports on the voucher programs' effectiveness. Although quantitative methods may classify most secondary data, Yin (2014) suggested that this process might be necessary if relevant. In this inquiry, I was primarily concerned with figures relating to voucher

students' graduation to compare them to public-school students. Additionally, most of the data that the TEA collected relate to students' graduation records.

Data Management and Analysis

At the core of the data management and analysis were the research questions that serve as the foundation for categorizing the data collected (Maxwell, 2013).Quantitative data analysis is different from the qualitative data analysis because the researcher did not need to establish a framework for the inquiry (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). I handled the process using computer-aided software like SPSS or STATA, which was particularly suited for this endeavor. However, managing and analyzing quantitative study data gathered from the secondary data source could be challenging, mostly if they involved high volume data (Yin, 2014).

Trustworthiness Considerations

The study's purpose was to determine whether students who received vouchers to transfer to private or high-performing public schools graduated at a higher rate than students in public schools in a southwestern state education system. In any given research inquiry, the expectation was that the researcher would develop useful techniques that addressed the authenticity and reliability of research findings (Yin, 2014). It was necessary to account for possible internal and external threats to validity that are most often associated with quantitative studies but sometimes suggested in qualitative research (Maxwell, 2013).

Thus, it became incumbent on the researcher to address the process of reliability in quantitative analysis to ensure that the researcher evaluated all considerations of the

trustworthiness of data gathering and processing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, Denzin and Lincoln (2008) asserted that the process was critical in a quantitative inquiry to assure the reader of the objectivity that existed during the research findings' design, implementation, and reporting phase. For this reason, the researcher should develop strategies that would safeguard trustworthiness. These strategies should include credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shank, 2006).

Credibility

The study's purpose was to determine whether students awarded vouchers to transfer to private or high-performing public schools graduated at a higher rate than students in public schools in a southwestern state education system. To assure the credibility of any inquiry rests on the researcher to demonstrate the data collectivity and reporting process (Yin, 2014). Reliability refers to the consistency and cohesiveness of the data gathered (Shank, 2006). Also, using multiple sources of evidence or triangulation is another method for assuring credibility (Shank, 2006). Rudestam and Newton (2015) noted that during the data collection and analysis phases, the researcher should engage other non-related parties to review the process and make objective comments as a form of member checking to confirm the research protocol's accuracy. Maintaining the chain of evidence of data collected is another method for creating research findings (Yin, 2014).

Transferability

The study's purpose was to determine whether students who received vouchers to transfer to private or high-performing public schools graduated at a rate higher rate than

students in public schools in a southwestern state education system. Transferability refers to determining the trustworthiness of the inquiry (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). The external threat to validity can impede transferability to the extent that the findings would apply to other populations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Although researchers may view transferability differently, there is a consensus that by providing a comprehensive description of all the processes of evidence gathering and reporting, other researchers can determine to what extent to replicate the study (Shank, 2006). In this manner, it would be possible to establish the validity and reliability of the research findings.

Confirmability

The fourth step in the research process assures trustworthiness and confirmability through each of the strategies mentioned (Maxwell, 2013). Confirmability, like credibility, focuses on minimizing bias that could arise during the study. It centers on the suitability of the selected methodologies for the research. It also focuses on some processes, such as establishing an audit trail that explains how data was categorized and analyzed (Shank, 2006). Additionally, using self-appraisal through each stage of data gathering and analysis would help to heighten confirmability. This step would also ensure that other researchers could, in the future.

Threats to Validity

The threat to validity in this research was a regression to the mean. The best control for this threat was to compare the graduation rates of would-be voucher students in the traditional public schools and the graduation rates of voucher schools the vouchers students would complete their high school education and graduate. The study began with

t-tests on test results obtained from the TEA for each of the schools included. It allowed the investigation to compare traditional public schools' graduation rates before the voucher students left the school and the voucher students in their new voucher schools.

With the observed abundance of data on students' graduation that was available for collection from the TEA and the districts where this study primarily occurred, there were minimal, if any, threats to validity. When the time came to control for internal validity, there would be efforts to hold in check confounding variables, such as students' family income, that might invalidate the study's result. Additionally, the study endeavored to guard against the intrusion of unneeded data for the research.

Ethical Considerations

The study's purpose was to determine whether students awarded vouchers to transfer to private or high-performing public schools graduated at a higher rate than students in public schools in a southwestern state education system. Although Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) is the first party responsible for scholars conducting dissertation research ethically, it was also one of the researcher's primary duties to inspect the investigation ethically. Recognizing that bias is inevitable, Yin (2014) advised researchers to understand their proposed study's context. For this reason, I endeavored to eschew any acts of omission or commission that might produce any sense of personal biases that might interfere with acquiring and processing data for the study by engaging the third party in assembling the data. To achieve this, I used a third-party to cross-check data generated for the survey before utilizing the investigation data. The study used secondary data devoid of human contact; therefore, I received an expedited

review from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) IRB Approval #05-09-19-03825 because my research did not involve human contact.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine whether students who received the voucher to transfer to private or high-performing public schools graduated at a rate higher rate than students in public schools in a southwestern state education system. The preceding chapter provided an overview of the plan of action needed to study the impact of vouchers on high school graduation compared to the traditional public-school students' graduation rates. It began with the reason for selecting which approach to use, such as quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approaches, and the rationale for choosing which design. The chapter further analyzed which public schools' graduation rates equaled or surpassed voucher schools' graduation rates to ascertain where the pendulum was swinging, public or voucher schools.

I considered why some students who applied and received voucher award letters failed to enroll in voucher schools. The research questions were the core of data management and analysis. The process involved using computer-aided software like IBM SPSS and STATA to analyze a significant amount of data pertinent to the study (Wright et al., 2015). While examining collected evidence, the researcher was obligated to manage personal bias and ensure trustworthiness. This process could be demonstrated through the dependability, transferability, and confirmability of the whole process (Wright et al., 2015). The method of triangulation or using multiple sources to collect data could also provide credibility to the study.

Chapter 4 presented the research findings from examining the TEA's archival records and the local school districts involved in the survey. The preceding chapter 3 laid out the methodology for conducting the research; chapters 4 and 5 reported the findings and conclusions. Specifically, chapter 4 dwelt on the results, while chapter 5 discussed the outcome.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine whether students awarded vouchers to transfer to private or high-performing public schools graduated at a higher rate than students in public schools in the Texas education system. I organized the chapter to present the data collection processes and the results obtained from the investigation. The arrangement of this section as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Primary Research Question
3. Secondary Research Questions
4. Theoretical Framework
5. Research Hypothesis
6. Data Collection
7. Interpretation

The result of the study aligned with the research questions.

Primary Research Question

The following formed the central research question for this study: Given the rational choice theory of the human decision-making process, how would low-income families use a voucher award to maximize their school choice?

The following theories formed the theories that this study anchored:

1. Rational Choice Theory (RCT).
2. Behavioral Economics Theory (BET).

3. Public Choice Theory (PCT).

The Impact of the Theoretical Framework on the Research and Secondary Research Questions

Rational Choice Theory. The rational choice theory (RCT) is the most widely used by researchers to understand the school choice process (Wilson, 2016). Based on behavioral psychology and extended to other fields, the rational choice theory suggests that individuals premeditate their actions to their most significant advantage. Most individuals premeditate their efforts by comparing the cost and benefit of their everyday decision-making. Herrnstein (1989) describes the rational choice theory in the context of school choice. According to Herrnstein (1989), the choice theory requires parents to be active participants in the school choice process. Supporters of the rational choice theory believe parents seek out the best school for their child based on academic quality (Chubb & Moe, 1990). Having settled with seeking out the best school, parents then consider a wide range of schools and filter through information to find and select the school with the highest academic quality (Kelly et al., 2007).

Behavioral Economics Theory (BET). The second theory used to analyze how parents selected charter/voucher schools is the behavioral economics theory. In 1956, Simon challenged the ideas laid out by rational choice theory. He argued for bounded rationality, the concept that limitations prevent an individual from a rational choice. These limitations force people to "satisfice;" that is, these individuals consider only enough alternatives to make a good selection. The strategy could lead to individuals not selecting the optimal choice (Simon, 1956). Consequently, people applied behavioral

economics to the school selection process. Parents "satisfice"; that is, pick the first reasonable school based on their expectations.

Unlike rational choice theory, these expectations may or may not be academic quality because they shape parents' experiences and environment (Samson, 2014). Researchers saw both the rational choice and behavioral choice theories to have played prominently in parents' decision-making to accept or not accept school vouchers when offered to them.

Public Choice Theory (PCT). Public choice theory is the intersection of economics and politics (Quinn, 2014). It uses the tools of economics to examine collective decisions. Public choice takes the same principles that economists use to analyze people's activities in the marketplace and apply them to people's joint decision-making activities. In discussing the merits/demerits of public choice theory as it affects an individual legislator during legislative proceedings leading to law-making, individual legislators' self-interest was the primary or dominant motivator for legislative action (Quinn, 2014).

Although most people base some of their actions on their concern for others, their activities' dominant motive was a concern for themselves. Public choice economists assumed that although people acting in the political marketplace have some consideration for others, their primary reason, whether they are voters, politicians, lobbyists, or bureaucrats, is self-interest (Gwartney & Stroup, 1992). Parents enrolling their students in tuition-charging schools instead of "free public" schools were further evidence that private schools provide a higher-quality education at a lower total cost.

Secondary Research Questions (i) and (ii)

The following were the first two secondary research questions:

i. Is there any mitigating circumstance that makes low-income students using a voucher to attend private schools not to graduate at higher rates than their public-school counterparts?

ii. Do variables that include socioeconomic status, parental education level, annual parental income, and transportation impact the graduation rate of voucher students compared to their public-schools' counterparts?

The impact of socioeconomic status on voucher students' academic achievement/ graduation

Researchers identified students' low-socioeconomic conditions all over as one of the factors standing in the way of academic achievement in public and charter/voucher schools. Research has shown that children from low socio-economic status households and communities tend to develop academic skills slower than children from higher socio-economic status groups (Morgan et al., 2009). For example, low socio-economic status in childhood is related to poor cognitive development, language, memory, socioemotional processing, and inadequate income and health issues in adulthood. The school systems in low socioeconomic status communities are often under-resourced, negatively affecting students' academic progress and outcomes (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). Inadequate education and increased dropout rates affect children's academic achievement, thereby exacerbating the community's low socioeconomic status. Improving school systems and early and clearly intervention programs may help to reduce some of these risk factors.

The impact of parental education level on the graduation rate of voucher students compared to their public-schools' counterparts

The present study did not attempt at answering this secondary research question (ii) on the impact of parental level because my data host organization, TEA, did not aggregate the study data based on parental education level. Because of data's non-availability, my research did not have the necessary information to answer the secondary research question (ii).

The impact of Family Income on voucher student's graduation

Research on the link between family income and school choice showed a mixed result. Several studies showed no relationship between family income and school choice, while others showed a direct connection. Family income is complicated because embedded in "income" are parents' education, home location, employment status, socioeconomic status, and other issues.

Researchers using evidence from existing survey data, Plank, Schiller, Schneider, & Coleman (1993) concluded that low-income families would take advantage of expanded choice if they received an opportunity. In a study on the effects of income on school choice, Darling-Hammond & Kirby (1985, 1988) found that low-income parents were more likely than higher-income parents to consider alternatives to their local public schools. Upper-income parents had less reason to consider options because of their access to better schools. On the average, Strate and Wilson (1991) found Detroit's low-income families favored school choice policies.

However, the researchers did not test family income as a variable in this study because the data host organization did not aggregate data on family income.

The effect of transportation on voucher student's academic achievement/ graduation

With the proliferation of public voucher/charter schools, school districts have adjusted their transportation operations to accommodate students from a state-approved charter/voucher school. What this means is that students would follow the same guidelines that govern students that attend public school. However, the day-to-day management of student transportation is another source of concern among district administrators. Transportation managers dislike the inefficiency of having so many of their transportation issues managed in one centralized location when responding to daily requests for routing changes and other logistical problems. Even with the expressed discontent among transportation managers, the question of students' transportation persisted. Students and parents sign memoranda on "Rules for conduct for all bus riders." Transportation managers viewed students' general conduct while in school buses with great concern; so do students, families, and administrators (Burgoyne-Allen & Schiess, 2017). Because of the disorderliness on the part of students on the school bus, most parents opted to transport their children to voucher schools in fee-paying private school buses, even if there was free public-school transportation. Texas provides transportation for students attending magnet or Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools, but not to students attending a charter or private school (TEA, 2017). I found

that 91% of voucher school students attending voucher schools were transported to school by a family member. Conversely, 87% of public-school students did likewise.

Secondary Research Question (iii)

What impact does the award of vouchers have on low-income students' overall educational performance emphasizing graduation compared to their public-school counterparts?

This secondary research question (iii) was to determine the impact of vouchers on students' overall graduation in Texas public and voucher schools. I analyzed the graduation outcomes of the two groups of students – public and voucher – and found that both groups of students did not show any statistically significant difference in their graduation outcomes for 2011-2015. The years' data for the study were collected and analyzed. The study's data analysis also showed that voucher's use by either public/voucher students had no impact on either group's graduation outcome.

Research Hypothesis/Alternative Hypothesis

The following hypotheses follow the study research questions:

1. *Ho:* An award of a voucher to a student has no statistically significant impact on the student graduating from school.
2. *Ha:* An award of a voucher to a student has a statistically significant impact on the student graduating from school.

Data Collection

Upon obtaining approval from Walden's IRB (IRB Approval #05-09-19-0382556), I sought and collected data for the study from the TEA. I started by contacting

the TEA via email communication as the study data host (Appendix 'A') for approval to generate data from its dataset to carry out the research. The TEA is an arm of the Texas Board of Education. The Texas Board of Education is responsible for all matters relating to education in the state of Texas. The TEA is responsible for conducting all sorts of assessments for all students up to 12th grade. It took a very long time for the data to be made available. When I inquired why it took so long a time for the data to be made available, the answer I received was that the agency had never handled in a single request a high volume of data that my study was seeking. For this study, the data collection covered the 2011 – 2015 school years. Although the agency finally released a large amount of data for the research, it took months before it became available.

The dataset I received from the TEA was enormous. It covered over 500,000 students from the four major Texas cities with significant enrollment figures in public and charter (voucher) schools' students who graduated from 2011 – 2015. Using a systematic methodology (Center for Research Quality, 2019), creating and aggregating data for the study from such a vast dataset became manageable. While I made tremendous efforts in creating data for the research from the dataset received from the TEA, the integrity of the generated data became paramount throughout the entire exercise. I employed a random selection method and screened for outliers/anomalies and used third-party checking in computing for reliability estimates to pinpoint any problems that might surface. In creating data for the study, I methodically aggregated the data received from the TEA because of the enormity of the original data. I arranged the data in two different categories of charter (voucher) schools and public schools. I further

separated the data to cover the four largest school districts in Texas since the study centered on the major urban school districts. These major urban school districts are Austin, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio.

I generated information on five thousand (5000) graduated students from the four urban school districts, which amounted to five hundred students from each school district. Out of the 5000 students shortlisted from the vast dataset, I statistically and randomly selected two thousand students. Using the IBM SPSS to code the variables collected from the one thousand study subjects' datasets, I took an extraordinary care not to mask students' identities whose statistics, e.g., their graduation records, were the study's focus. The coding of the study variables was as follows:

Coding Study Variables

School groups:

0 = Public Schools

1 = Charter Schools

Ethnicity:

1 = White

2 = Black

3 = Hispanic

4 = Asian

5 = Other

Gender:

1 = Male

2 = Female

Graduation Status:

1 = Graduated

2 = Did Not Graduate

Statistical Analysis of Study Findings

With an (M = 1.14; SD = 0.347) for public school students graduation vs. (M = 1,18. SD = 0.381) for charter (voucher) school students, with Standard Error Mean of 0.016 and 0.017 respectively, there was no statistical difference in the graduation rate of either public or charter (voucher) schools.

Interpretation

I assessed a 2 x 2 experimental design using a factorial ANOVA to answer the research question of whether students using vouchers graduate at a higher rate than their counterparts in public schools. The study found that students who used the voucher (charter school students) (M = 1.14 SD = 0.347) did graduate at a rate comparable to students who did not use the voucher (public school students) (M = 1.18; SD = 0.381). Thus, I found no statistical difference in graduation rates between voucher students and non-voucher students.

Table 1

Comparison of students' graduation outcome: Public vs. Charter (Voucher) Schools

Graduation Status	No.	Total Graduated	% Graduated	Did Not Graduate	% Did Not Graduate
Public Schools	500	430	86	70	14
Charter/Voucher Schools	500	412	82	88	18

Primary Research Question

The primary research question was: Given the rational choice theory of the human decision-making process, how would low-income families use a voucher award to maximize their school choice?

I collected students' graduation data from both charter/voucher and public schools. The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS since the purpose of the survey was to determine which school format, charter or public school, graduated students at a higher rate than the other. I used chi-square statistics to compute the differences in graduation outcomes between the two school formats.

Table 2

One-Sample Test (T-Test)

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0					
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Graduation Status of Students in Public School	73.391	499	.000	1.140	1.11	1.17
Graduation Status of Students in Charter School	68.982	499	.000	1.176	1.14	1.21

The above One-Sample Test shows no statistical difference for public school students and charter (voucher) school students. The result of the t test was almost identical, with a little difference of 4.4. The degree of freedom was similar at 4.99 each. The Mean Difference was < 0.04. A < 0.04 and a 95% Confidence Interval, the difference was also equal to 1.140 and 1.176, respectively. The graphs that follow show

students' graduation status in public school, students' ethnicity in public, and students' gender, respectively.

Table 3

Public school data - Graduation status of students in public school

PUBLIC SCHOOL DATA

Graduation Status of Students in Public School

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Graduated	430	86.0	86.0	86.0
	Did Not Graduate	70	14.0	14.0	100.0
	Total	500	100.0	100.0	

Table 4

The Ethnicity of students in public school

The Ethnicity of Students in Public School

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	White	71	14.2	14.2	14.2
	Black	95	19.0	19.0	33.2
	Hispanic	324	64.8	64.8	98.0
	Asian	8	1.6	1.6	99.6
	Other	2	.4	.4	100.0
	Total	500	100.0	100.0	

Table 5

Gender of students in public school

Gender of Students in Public School

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	243	48.6	48.6	48.6
	Female	257	51.4	51.4	100.0
	Total	500	100.0	100.0	

Table 6

Charter school data - Graduation status of students in charter school

CHARTER SCHOOL DATA

Graduation Status of Students in Charter School

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Graduated	412	82.4	82.4	82.4
	Did Not Graduate	88	17.6	17.6	100.0
	Total	500	100.0	100.0	

Table 7

The ethnicity of students in charter school

The Ethnicity of Students in Charter School

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	White	26	5.2	5.2	5.2
	Black	118	23.6	23.6	28.8
	Hispanic	354	70.8	70.8	99.6
	Asian	2	.4	.4	100.0
	Total	500	100.0	100.0	

Table 8

Gender of students in charter school

Gender of Students in Charter School

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	246	49.2	49.2	49.2
	Female	254	50.8	50.8	100.0
	Total	500	100.0	100.0	

The ethnicity of Students in Voucher/Charter Schools and Public Schools Students

I analyzed data on students' composition in both school formats – voucher/charter and public schools - to ascertain why low-income families were more likely to enroll their children in voucher/charter schools than in traditional public schools. Tables 3a and 3b display in a linear form of the ethnicity of both public and charter schools. The linear

graph displayed an accurate public and charter schools' students' ethnicity, which confirmed that low-income students were more likely to enroll in vouchers/charter schools than other students.

Although this had been the trend, it did not mean that low-income students were no longer enrolling in public schools; it said that parents wanted to utilize their rational choice options by registering their children in voucher schools. However, voucher opponents had premised that voucher schools could not replace traditional schools because voucher schools lack the necessary equipment to handle the complexities of teaching every student as public schools. Another argument was that voucher schools, through their admission tests, rejected many students that public schools would, under normal circumstances, admit that the law required them to accept all students' categories. Given this scenario, there have been other arguments that low-income students enrolled in both charter/voucher schools, and they did in public schools.

Table 9

Chi-square Data for Public Schools Ethnicity x Graduation

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.414[a]	1	.520		
Continuity Correction[b]	.265	1	.607		
Likelihood Ratio	.414	1	.520		
Fisher's Exact Test				.525	.304
Linear-by-Linear Association	.413	1	.521		
N of Valid Cases	502				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 34.51.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Graphic Representation of students' graduation outcomes

Figures 1a and 1b represent the graduation outcomes of schools in two categories: public and voucher schools.

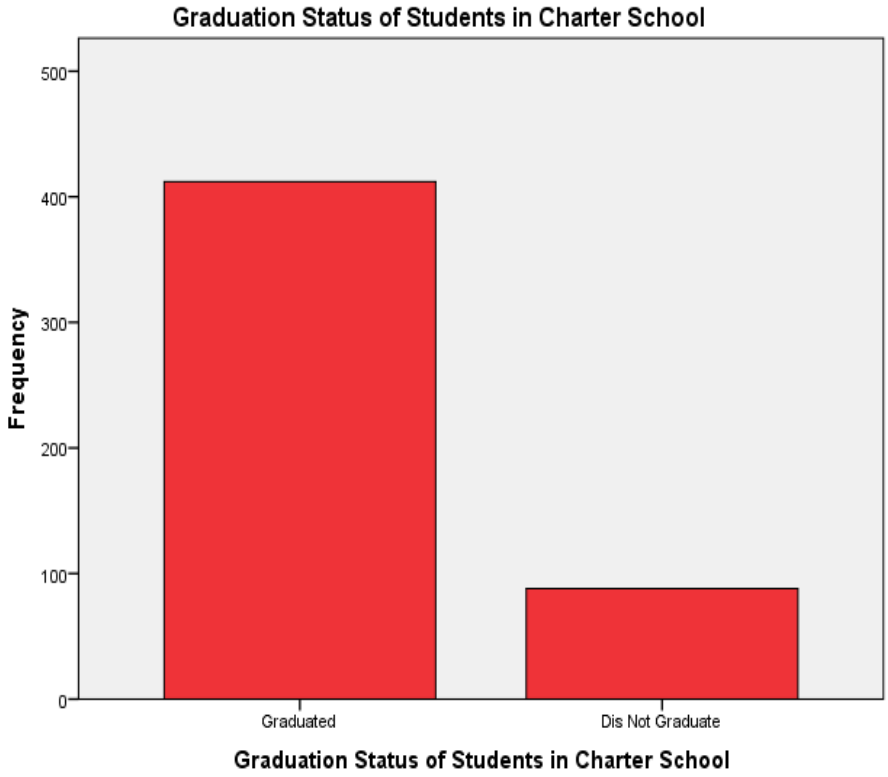

Figure 1a. Graduation status of students in charter school.

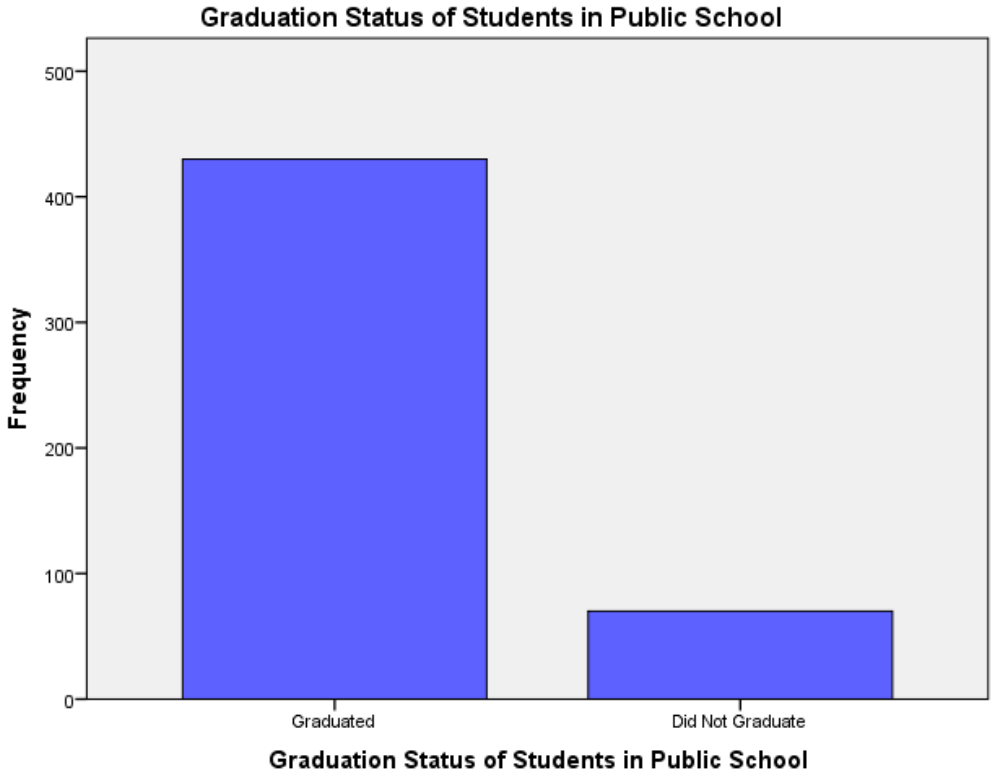

Figure 1b. Graduation status of students in public school.

Figures 1a and 1b are displayed in a graphic form to show the graduation public and charter schools' graduation statuses. The graphs showed an accurate picture of graduation comparisons, which confirm the research alternative hypothesis that a voucher's award had no statistical differences between public and charter school students.

The following pie charts show the graduation status of students in both public and charter schools. Similarly, figures 2a and 2b show the graduation outcomes of public and voucher schools in a circular form.

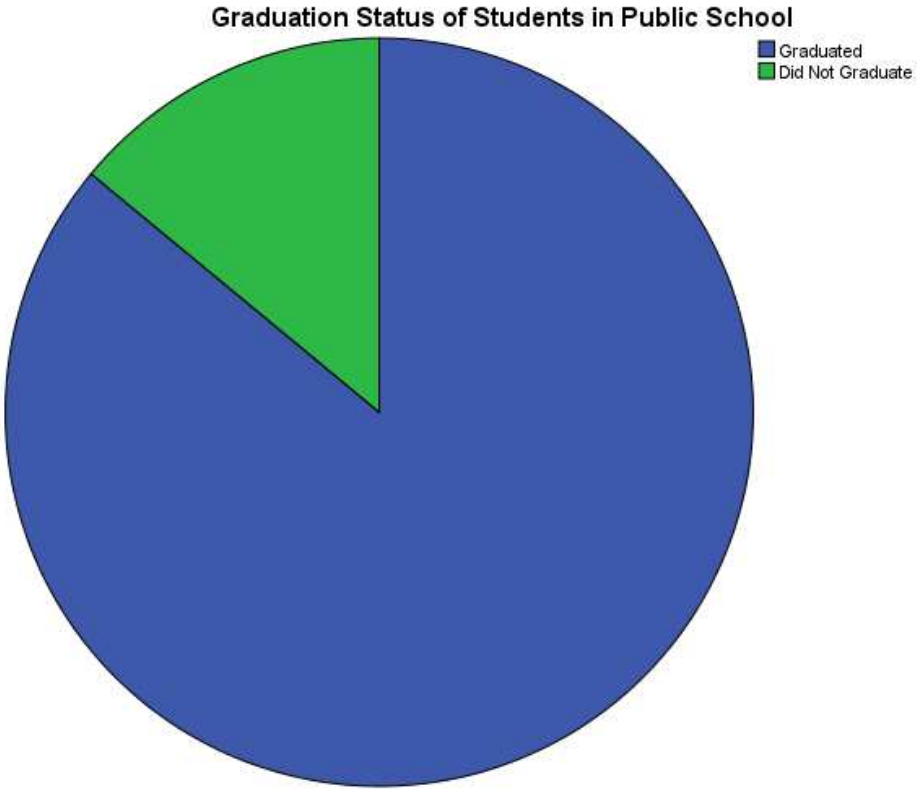

Figure 2a. Pie chart on graduation status of students in public school.

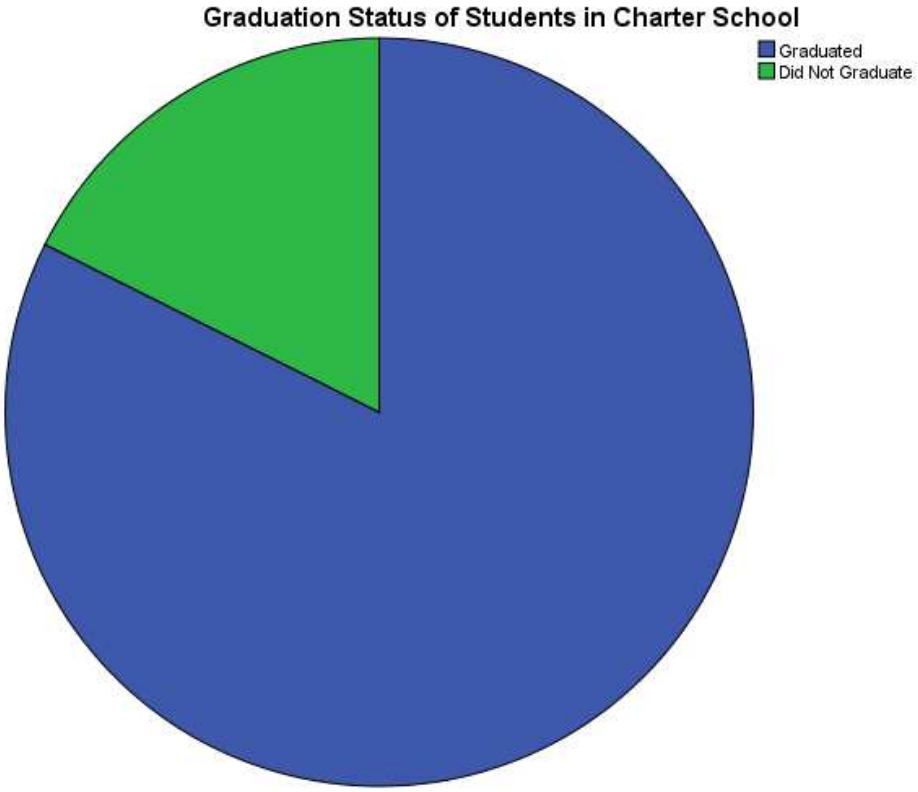

Figure 2b. Pie charts on graduation status of in charter school.

Figures 2a and 2b show in circle graph the graduation statuses of students in public and charter schools. The graphs consistently demonstrated, as other analytical outputs have revealed, that there was no difference in the graduation outcomes of both public and charter schools. The pie charts show that 86% of public-school students graduated, while 14% did not graduate the period covered by the present study. Similarly, 82% of charter students graduated, while 18% did not graduate at the corresponding period covered by the survey.

Secondary Research Question (i)

Is there any mitigating circumstance that makes low-income students using a voucher to attend charter (voucher) not graduate at higher rates than their public schools' counterparts?

I looked at the secondary research question (i) above. In doing so, I sought to find out the role of equity in school. Researchers define equity in education in many ways: equity in education is design seen through two dimensions: fairness and inclusion (Field et al., 2007). Equity, as fairness, implies that personal or socioeconomic circumstances, such as gender, ethnic origin, or family background, are not obstacles to educational success (Field et al., 2007). Equity as inclusion means ensuring all students reach at least a necessary minimum of skills, including graduation. In the context of learning, equity allows individuals to take full advantage of their education and training irrespective of their background (Faubert, 2012; Field et al., 2007; Woessmann & Schütz, 2006).

There was much evidence showing that students' experience impacted their academic achievement in terms of fairness. While closely related to concepts like equality or impartiality, it assumes that students would have an equal opportunity regardless of their circumstances and benefit from the same provisions. Still, it failed to conclude the secondary research question (i) about what motivated low-income students in the voucher/charter from graduating at a higher rate. I established no statistical difference in students' graduation rates in public and charter schools from analyzing data collected for the study.

Secondary Research Question (ii)

Do variables that include socioeconomic status, parental education, and public transportation impact vouchers' graduation rates compared to their public-school counterparts?

I found that socioeconomic status and transportation availability, among others, had some impact on parental acceptance of vouchers to enroll their child/children in charter schools and high-performing public schools. However, the study found that charter and public-school students were graduating at an equal level. Therefore, the result of this study's data analysis did not support the contention or argument by charter (voucher) supporters that voucher/charter school students were graduating at a higher rate than their public schools' counterparts.

Secondary Research Question (iii)

What impact does the award of vouchers make on low-income students' overall education performance with an emphasis on graduation compared to their public-school counterpart?

I both charter and public schools' graduation rates to analyze low-income students' overall education performance. The analysis, based on the overall graduation of both schools' format, concluded that low-income students, whether they used vouchers or not, were achieving high performance in their education for the following reasons:

1. public schools have realized that charter (voucher) schools now exist to compete for students from public or traditional schools; hence, they have placed more emphasis directly on rigorous curricula than used to be the case.

2. Charter (voucher) schools have, on the one hand, tried to maintain strict instructions that made them the envy of parents who continued to believe in them for their children's academic goals.

Research Hypothesis/Alternative Hypothesis

The following were the assumptions made by the research null and alternate hypotheses:

1. *Ho:* An award of a voucher to a student had no statistically significant effect on the student graduating from school.
2. *Ha:* An award of a voucher to a student had a statistically significant effect on the student graduating from school.

However, after analyzing the study data, the result showed that the alternative hypothesis was strong. The alternative hypothesis's heavy influence stated that there was no significant effect that the award of a voucher to a student had a statistical significance that the students would graduate from high school be accepted. In contrast, the alternative hypothesis stated that an award of a voucher to a student had a statistically significant effect on a student graduating. For this reason, therefore, I reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis.

Summary

Chapter 4 listed the primary research and three secondary research questions and discussed how the primary and secondary research questions guided the study. The chapter discussed the theoretical framework, detailing the principal theory, rational choice theory, and the other two theories, behavioral economic and public choice theories

that supplemented the rational choice theory. The chapter discussed the method used to collect data and the source of data. The chapter also discussed methods used to analyze the data and provided the interpretation of the study results. Chapter 5 discussed the summary of the study findings, included the conclusion, and offered recommendations.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine whether students who received vouchers to transfer to private or high-performing public schools graduated at a higher rate than their counterparts in public schools in the state of Texas education system. The study's focus was primarily to determine if charter/voucher schools in a southwestern state graduated at a higher rate by comparing differences in student graduation outcomes to those of traditional public schools. I divided the chapter as follows:

1. Primary Research Question
2. Secondary Research Questions
3. Key Findings
4. The result of the study relative to the hypothesis
5. Limitations of the study
6. Conclusion
7. Recommendation
8. Implications for Social Change.

I employed the study's primary research question as follows: Given the rational choice theory of the human decision-making process, how would low-income families use a voucher award to maximize their school choice? I harvested archival data for the study spanning five years between 2011 and 2015 from Texas schools from the TEA. The harvested data captured students' attributes, such as graduation, demographic information, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity, from the bulk of the data. I analyzed the

study data using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to determine differences between the charter/voucher's graduation rates and traditional public schools.

The data analysis included the descriptive measures of mean and the variables. I also performed an analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine whether statistical significance existed between charter and traditional public schools. The analyzed dependent/independent variables – voucher and graduation showed a statistical difference in the graduation outcomes between students awarded vouchers and public-school students. The analysis also showed the standard deviations, school type – charter, or traditional public schools. When I found a statistical significance at the 0.05 confidence level, it used the eta-squared to determine the mean values' difference. I used one research question and three secondary research questions to compare four educational attributes between Texas voucher/charter and traditional public schools from 2011 to 2015.

A study's research questions are the pillars of its design (Maxwell, 2012). According to Maxwell (2012), the research questions should inform and guide all study elements. The research questions should seek information that addresses the study's purpose (Maxwell, 2012). The present study examined the following research questions.

Primary Research Question

Given the rational choice theory of the human decision-making process, how would low-income families use a voucher award to maximize their school choice?

Secondary Research Questions

i. Is there any mitigating circumstance that makes low-income students using a voucher to attend private schools not to graduate at higher rates than their public-school counterparts?

ii. Do variables that include socioeconomic status, parental education level, and transportation impact the graduation rate of voucher students compared to their public-schools' counterparts?

The impact of socioeconomic status on voucher student's academic achievement/ graduation

Researchers identified students' low-socioeconomic statuses worldwide (public schools/voucher schools) as factors that have stood between students in public and voucher schools. Several studies have shown that children from low-socioeconomic status (SES) households and communities tend to develop academic skills slower than children from higher socioeconomic status groups (Morgan et al., 2009). For example, low socio-economic status in childhood is related to poor cognitive development, language, memory, socioemotional processing, and inadequate income and health issues in adulthood. The school systems in low socio-economic status communities are often under-resourced, negatively affecting students' academic progress and outcomes (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). Studies indicate that school conditions contribute to socioeconomic differences in learning rates more than family characteristics (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). Researchers added that the classroom environment plays an essential role in outcomes. For example, students randomly assigned to a higher-quality classroom in grades K-3

earned more, were more likely to attend college, saved more for retirement, and lived in better neighborhoods (Raj et al., 2011). Inadequate education and increased dropout rates affect children's academic achievement, thereby exacerbating the community's low socioeconomic status. Improving school systems and early and clearly intervention programs may reduce some of these risk factors; therefore, increased research on the correlation between socioeconomic and education is essential.

I employed the quantitative method for this research rather than the qualitative design because the quantitative design allowed for collecting secondary data. It would have compelled me, the researcher, to pursue students who had graduated more than ten years ago and were scattered all over the country and beyond. Quantitative data for the research was readily available from the TEA, and they were made available upon request.

The impact of parental income on voucher student's academic achievement/graduation

Due to the non-availability of data on parental income for this study, I did not attempt to answer this subsection of secondary research question ii because my data host organization did not aggregate data on parental income.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was the rational choice theory. In this study, the theoretical framework of two other theories– behavioral economic theory and the public choice theory supplemented the principal theoretical framework. The rational choice theory assumes that all individuals act in ways that would benefit them. The approach assumes that every individual is most likely to undertake courses of action that

they perceive to be the best possible option. Their effects would immensely be to their advantage, and that the activities of the individual are concerned entirely with their welfare (Ogu, 2013). The result obtained from the study validated the rational choice theory.

Key Findings

The study's primary research question was: Given the rational choice theory of the human decision-making process, how would low-income families use a voucher award to maximize their school choice? Therefore, it was necessary to gather data from public and voucher schools and analyze why low-income families were interested in maximizing their rational choice. The data were collected and analyzed to understand the incentive low-income families found appealing that propelled them to opt for voucher schools instead of traditional public schools.

Secondary Research Question (i)

Is there any mitigating circumstance that makes low-income students using vouchers to attend private schools not graduate at higher rates than their public-school counterparts?

The study data collected to test secondary research questions (i) to check if any mitigating circumstance made low-income students using vouchers to attend private schools not graduating at a higher rate than their public-school counterparts. The analysis found that low-income students using vouchers to attend school graduated at a rate comparable to their public-school counterparts. The findings, among others, included that

low-income students who participated in either charter/voucher or public schools have recorded a high graduation rate for the period under review.

Secondary Research Question (ii)

Do variables that include socioeconomic status, parental education level, and transportation impact vouchers' graduation rates compared to their public-schools' counterparts?

I did not receive data from my data host, the TEA, on socioeconomic status because it did not maintain such data. The data host organization did not aggregate data based on socioeconomic status because researchers classified most students who used the voucher as low socioeconomic students.

Table 10

Graduation status of students in charter school and ethnicity of students in charter school

Graduation Status of Students in Charter School * Ethnicity of Students in Charter School Crosstabulation

			Ethnicity of Students in Charter School				
			White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Total
Graduation Status of Students in Charter School	Graduated	Count	16	99	295	2	412
		Expected Count	21.4	97.2	291.7	1.6	412.0
	Dis Not Graduate	Count	10	19	59	0	88
		Expected Count	4.6	20.8	62.3	.4	88.0
Total		Count	26	118	354	2	500
		Expected Count	26.0	118.0	354.0	2.0	500.0

As seen above, the chart showed that 472 out of 500 were classified as low socioeconomic students, while only 28 students were not.

Secondary Research Question (iii)

What impact does the award of a voucher make on low-income students' overall educational performance with an emphasis on graduation?

I analyzed the overall educational performance of low-socioeconomic students, emphasizing graduation, and found that low socioeconomic students who benefited from the voucher program graduated comparably to their public schools' counterparts. The analysis showed that 394 students out of a total of 472, 82% graduated, while 78 or 18% of the students did not graduate. For each of the secondary research questions, the study calculated the mean and standard deviation and performed ANOVA. Because statistically significant differences existed at the 0.05 confidence level for two of the three secondary research questions and used the effect sizes from the chi-square procedures for those findings. I used the eta squared to determine the effect size and determine the percent of variance accounted for by the dependent variable's relationship on the independent variable. Descriptive statistical comparisons were made, which indicated higher or better than average means for all values compared for the two schools' formats.

According to descriptive statistical analysis, charter schools had a higher percentage of students based on the higher mean values of diverse ethnicities than traditional public schools. On the other hand, traditional public schools have a higher enrollment of white students and students identified as gifted and talented. Low-income students tend to enroll in charter schools compared to their enrollment in public schools. Overall, charter schools enrolled more low-income students than public schools, even though both school formats were tuition-free. The object driving the trend, according to

supporters, had been that charter schools outperform public schools in academic performance and graduation (Simon, 2013).

There have been controversies surrounding the graduation rates of the charter/voucher schools' students, vis-à-vis their public schools' counterpart (Ballou et al., 2006; In recent times the exponential growth of charter/voucher schools throughout the nation, particularly in urban environments, has increased questions regarding their academic effectiveness and overall student graduation. However, the present study results showed no statistically significant difference between public and charter schools' graduation outcomes.

Result of the Study Relative to the Hypotheses

Research Hypothesis

An award of a voucher to a student has no statistically significant effect on the student graduating.

Alternative Hypothesis

An award of a voucher to a student has a statistically significant effect on the student graduating.

I meticulously analyzed the collected data from the TEA for the research, using the above research hypothesis. The analysis showed no statistically significant difference in students' graduation rates using vouchers and students not using vouchers as in figures 5a -5b; and 6a – 6b indicated. Because of the non-correlation of the two study variables, vouchers, and graduation, I reject the research hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis.

Limitations of the Study

As stated in chapter one of the study, the study encountered some limitations ranging from data collection and generalization of study findings. Data collection from my host organization – the TEA, was not easily accessible. As data for the research involved students' confidential records, it became difficult to harvest data for the study project. Due to the restrictions imposed by students' confidentiality on data acquisition, the effort extended beyond the time allotted for data gathering and cleaning. A similar problem arose during data analysis. Using IBM SPSS, the analysis of the study data collected became stressful as my computer hardware was said to have been incompatible with the IBM SPSS software. Because of this setback, it took a longer time than necessary to continue coding the data.

Another limitation was the ability of the study to generalize its findings. As stated in chapter 3 of this study, research was limited to Texas's four largest school districts: Austin, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio. The limited number of areas where the study collected data excluded all the smaller school districts that would otherwise be a part of the investigation. The exclusion of these small school districts in gathering data for the research made data collection skewed, thereby unbalanced. As a result of the non-inclusion of these smaller districts, a generalization of the finds became problematic. However, there was a justification for excluding these small school districts from data collection. These smaller school districts do not meet the requirement set up for inclusion in data collection. One of the requirements, among others, was that school districts that

would qualify for inclusion must run both school types – public, charter/voucher schools. Because of these requirements, I excluded a large percentage of small school districts.

Recommendations

The present study was conducted in Texas, using public and charter/voucher schools under the TEA's control. There were limitations inherent in conducting research, such as the current one. The reason was that Texas had many students that graduated from high school each year. Because many students graduated each year from Texas schools, the study's data acquisition became challenging. To reduce the volume of data needed for the review, I selected the four largest urban school districts in Texas. This election was because conducting research involving all graduating high school students in Texas posed a severe problem with data gathering. The TEA provided enormous data from the four largest school districts used for the study. The study would recommend that further studies be necessary to expand the survey's boundary so that data would come from smaller school districts in the Texas education system. In the end, the results obtained from the study could be generalized.

Implications for Social Change

Positive social change implications from this study would include expanding the voucher scheme to benefit a larger population of students who would ordinarily not qualify for a voucher award. I suggest that the voucher concept be a part of school reform measures that proponents of the voucher, such as Friedman. Friedman advocated that if low-income families received vouchers from either the government or organizations to send their school-age children to any school of their choice, millions of school-age

children would benefit. The program would spur an unprecedented social change of enormous proportion.

Conclusion

As stated, the purpose of this study was to determine whether students that received vouchers to transfer to private or high-performing public schools graduated at a higher rate than their counterparts in public schools in the state of Texas education system. The study utilized the rational choice theory to show how families leverage their individual choice preferences to decide on whether to enroll their school-age children or transfer their students already in public schools to charter (voucher) schools. The study requested from the TEA and received a vast dataset of students' graduating from public and charter/voucher schools for analysis. I spent enormous efforts to aggregate the data collected for the study. The data were subsequently analyzed using the SPSS software. The result showed no statistical difference in the public schools' graduation outcomes and voucher/charter school students at the end of the analysis. The study obtained results that showed no significant difference in the graduation outcomes of public schools' students and their charter school counterparts. The investigation revealed that low-income families were more likely to enroll their school-age children in voucher/charter schools than public schools. The drive behind the trend was that voucher/charter school students were perceived by voucher supporters to graduate higher than public school students. However, an analysis of the study data did not support this contention. Therefore, the study's result did not support the hypothesis that voucher students

graduated at a higher rate than public school students. Based on this result, I reject the null hypothesis.

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Appendix A

PERMISSION TO USE TEA DATA ON STUDENTS' GRADUATION FOR A DOCTORAL STUDY

Tue 4/16/2019 2:58 PM
Letter to TEA for Study Data.docx
14 KB
Dear Sir/madam:
This request is being submitted for the release of Texas students' graduation records for my doctoral study. As a PhD student at Walden University, my proposed study seeks to determine thus:
"What impact do vouchers have on students' graduation? Analysis of graduation outcomes of public and voucher schools."
An email received from Ms. Taylor on the above subject matter is being attached. Also being attached is the original letter that bore this request.

Raymond O. Ibeh

Appendix B

Sent: Tuesday, May 28, 2019 2:08 PM
Subject: PIR # 38375 Receipt Acknowledgement

Public Information Request
Receipt Acknowledgement
May 28, 2019

TEA PIR #3837

Thank you for contacting the Texas Education Agency. I want to acknowledge receipt of your request. Your request number is PIR # 38375.
Our Public Information Request Coordinators are processing your request in coordination with the area(s) that may have the responsive information/data. A response to your request should be provided on or before 10 business days: June 11, 2019. Should you not receive a response within this timeline, please do not hesitate to contact our office and ask to speak to one of our Coordinators.
If you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter further, please contact me at (512) 463-3464 or by email.
Sincerely,

Jenny Eaton
Public Information Coordinator

Enclosure: Original Request

Appendix C

Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2019 7:32 PM
To: IRB
Subject: Re: PIR # 37834 Receipt Acknowledgement

I am forwarding an email I received from my host organization - Texas Education Agency on my request. As per the email, it is projected that a response to my request would be communicated to me on or before April 30, 2019.
I am hereby assuring you that as soon as I receive a response from Office of Public Information Request of Texas Education Agency, I will forward the information.
Thanks
(Signed)

Appendix D

RE: PIR # 37834 Receipt Acknowledgement
Forward More actions
Thu 4/18/2019 4:54 PM
Thank you for this update. Please forward that response once received.

Sincerely,

Research Ethics Support Specialist
Office of Research Ethics and Compliance
Walden University
100 Washington Avenue South, Suite 900
Minneapolis, MN 55401
Phone: (612) 312-1283
Fax: (626) 605-0472

Appendix E

IRB Materials Approved -
Thu 5/9/2019 3:26 PM

This email is to notify you that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) confirms that your doctoral capstone entitled,
"The Impact of School Vouchers on Public and Voucher School Graduation Outcomes 2011-2015: In a Southwestern State"
meets Walden University's ethical standards. Since this project will serve as a Walden doctoral capstone, the Walden IRB will oversee your capstone data analysis and results reporting.

Your IRB approval number is 05-09-19-0382556.

This confirmation is contingent upon your adherence to the exact procedures described in the final version of the documents that have been submitted to IRB@mail.waldenu.edu as of this date. This includes maintaining your current status with the university and the oversight relationship is only valid while you are an actively enrolled student at Walden University. If you need to take a leave of absence or are otherwise unable to remain actively enrolled, this is suspended.

If you need to make any changes to the project staff or procedures, you must obtain IRB approval by submitting the IRB Request for Change in Procedures Form. You will receive confirmation with a status update of the request within 10 business days of submitting the change request form and are not permitted to implement changes prior to receiving approval. Please note that Walden University does not accept responsibility or liability for research activities conducted without the IRB's approval, and the University will not accept or grant credit for student work that fails to comply with the policies and procedures related to ethical standards in research.

When you submitted your IRB materials, you made a commitment to communicate both discrete adverse events and general problems to the IRB within 1 week of their occurrence/realization. Failure to do so may result in invalidation of data, loss of academic credit, and/or loss of legal protections otherwise available to the researcher.

Both the Adverse Event Reporting form and Request for Change in Procedures form can be obtained at the Documents & FAQs section of the Walden web site:
http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/researchcenter/orec

You are expected to keep detailed records of your capstone activities for the same period of time you retain the original data. If, in the future, you require copies of the originally submitted IRB materials, you may request them from Institutional Review Board.

Both students and faculty are invited to provide feedback on this IRB experience at the link below:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=qHBJzkJMUx43pZegKlmdiQ_3d_3d

Sincerely,

Research Ethics Support Specialist
Office of Research Ethics and Compliance
Walden University
100 Washington Avenue South, Suite 900
Minneapolis, MN 55401
Phone: (612) 312-1283
Fax: (626) 605-0472

Appendix F

From: PIR
Sent: Monday, May 6, 2019 4:00 PM

Subject: PIR # 37834 Programming and/or Manipulation of Data Statement of Cost Estimate
Public Information Request
Programming and/or Manipulation of Data
Statement of Cost Estimate

May 6, 2019
Raymond Ibeh
TEA PIR #37834

On April 16, 2019, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) received your request for public information.
Data Specifications:
We have reviewed your communications and the available data, and we have determined that we can provide the following information responsive to your request:

We will include statewide files for all graduates (minus those whose records are masked to comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act [FERPA]) for 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15 (separate file for each year)

We will include the following fields: district number, district name, charter status, economically disadvantaged status (Yes/No), gender, ethnicity

Cost Estimate:

Because the cost to fulfill your request will exceed $100.00 and requires programming and/or manipulation of data, TEA must provide an itemized statement of estimated charges that may be included in your final Invoice Statement.

The Statement of Cost Estimate for your request is enclosed. Please note that full payment is not due at this time only the deposit amount.
Less Costly Alternatives and Format.

On the enclosed cost estimate, please indicate the method by which you wish to receive the information. TEA must provide you the information in its original format. However, if TEA has the technology to do so, it will provide you the information in other formats.

There are less expensive ways for you to obtain this information. These charges may be reduced if you narrow or clarify the scope of your request (reduce data fields, timeline, etc.). Additionally, other alternative options for less costly or no-cost way of accessing the information, such as TEA website or in person inspection, may be described in this letter, if available.

Anticipated date on which your records/data will be released to you is indicated on the enclosed statement (based on 15 business days to complete the work) and it is recalculated from the date the agency receives your payment of the deposit, as work will not begin on the request until the minimum 50% deposit is received.

Deposit

TEA requires a deposit before beginning to retrieve and prepare the information for you to review or receive. The deposit is required when costs to make the information available exceeds $100.00, or the information is older than five (5) years old, or the information will fill six (6) archival boxes and more than five hours is estimated to make the information available. This deposit amount will be 50% of the entire estimated amount and will be reflected in the enclosed cost estimate.
Adjustment to Estimated Cost.

Occasionally, after starting the work, but before making the information available to you, TEA may find that the actual cost will exceed the initial estimate. In this case, if the cost estimate exceeds more than 20% above the estimated amount, TEA will issue a new cost estimate for approval. You must respond to the adjusted statement within 30 business days or your request will be considered withdrawn. If the actual cost is below or it exceeds the estimated amount, but by no more than 20%, the cost will be adjusted in the invoice.

Confidential or Excepted Information

If the records or data you are requesting includes student identifying information or social security numbers of a living person, TEA will withhold this information by masking or removing it from the record before releasing it to you. TEA must protect this information under the Texas Public Information Act and is authorized to do so without requesting a decision from the Texas Attorney General. (Open Records Decision No. 634 (1995); Government Code §552.114 and §552.147)

If there are other types of information TEA wishes to withhold, you will find a form called "Consent to Withhold Information" enclosed with this letter. You may give permission for TEA to withhold certain information without having to request a decision from the Texas Attorney General. If TEA does not have your permission, TEA will request a decision from the Texas Attorney General. The Texas Attorney General will issue a decision within 45 business days. Upon receipt, TEA will follow the decision.

Important 30-day Timeline

So that your request is not automatically withdrawn, you must respond to TEA about the cost estimate within 30 business days from the date this estimate is sent to you.

On the enclosed cost estimate, you must indicate whether:

1. You accept the charges and submit payment of the required deposit amount;
2. You have attached a modified request and request another estimate;
3. You withdraw your request entirely; or
4. You filed a complaint with the Cost Rules Administrator, Office of Attorney General; and provided a copy of your complaint to the Public Information Coordination Office, TEA Legal Services [§552.2615 of the Government Code].

Return your Cost Estimate within 30 business days to:

Modified Request or Denied Cost Estimate: Cost Estimate with Deposit Payment:

TEA - Public Information Coordinator TEA – PIR 37834
1701 North Congress Avenue P.O. Box 13717
Austin, Texas 78701-1494 Austin, TX 78711-3717
FAX: (512) 463-1022

Accepted payment methods by mail are money orders and checks; in-person payment methods are money orders, checks, and cash. We do not accept credit card or online payments at this time. Please include your PIR number with your payment.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter further, please contact me at (512) 463-3464 or by email.

Sincerely,

Jenny Eaton
Public Information Coordinator

Appendix G

From:
Sent: Wednesday, May 8, 2019 10:28 AM
To: PIR
Subject: Re: PIR # 37834 Programming and/or Manipulation of Data Statement of Cost Estimate
The Coordinator
PIR
TEA, Texas

Dear Coordinator:

In reply to your email dated May 6, 2019, I downloaded and completed the cost estimate and enclosed a personal check for $60.30 for half payment of the cost of document production. However, I erroneously mailed the completed form with the check to:

> Modified Request or Denied Cost Estimate
> TEA - Public Information Coordinator
> 1701 North Congress Avenue
> Austin, Texas 78701-1494
>
> INSTEAD OF:
> Cost Estimate with Deposit Payment:
> TEA – PIR 37834
> P.O. Box 13717
> Austin, TX 78711-3717

The error is regretted. Hopefully the error will not impede further action on my application!

Thanks,
Raymond O. Ibeh

Appendix H

Fri, May 10, 2019 at 10:31 AM
From: PIR
Sent: Wednesday, May 8, 2019 11:30 AM

To:
Subject: RE: PIR # 37834 Programming and/or Manipulation of Data Statement of Cost Estimate

Good Morning,
Thank you for letting us know that you accept the cost estimate and that your payment has been mailed. I don't believe there will be an issue since the first address listed below is our site address.
We do not typically notify requestors when payments are received/processed, but you are welcome to check on the status of your request or payment and we will respond to your inquiry.
Thank You,
Jenny Eaton
Public Information Coordinator
Office of Legal Services
Texas Education Agency
512-463-3464 Phone
512-463-1020 Fax

Appendix I

PIR # 38375 Release Documents at No Charge
You replied on Mon 7/8/2019 5:14 PM
PIR
Wed 7/3/2019 2:39 PM
To:
STUDY DATA FROM TEA
24 KB
38375 TEA Responsive Documents.zip
987 KB
2 attachments (1,011 KB) Download all Save all to OneDrive - Laureate Education - ACAD
Public Information Request
Release Documents at No Charge
July 3, 2019

TEA PIR #38375

On May 28, 2019, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) received your request for public information. To the extent it exists, the requested information is provided to you with this letter and includes a copy of the original request. Additionally, there are no charges for fulfilling this request and PIR # 38375 is considered closed.

Please note that some rows were dropped/removed to comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Pursuant to the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. Section 1232g, TEA is required to withhold from public disclosure personally identifiable information in education records. Additionally, in Open Records Decision No. 634 (1995), the Texas attorney general authorizes TEA to withhold any information requested under the Public Information Act that TEA determines is confidential under FERPA without the necessity of seeking a determination from the attorney general under Section §552.301 of the Government Code.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter further, please contact me at (512) 463-3464 or by email.

Sincerely,

Jenny Eaton
Public Information Coordinator
Enclosures:

Fwd.: PIR # 37834 Programming and/or Manipulation of Data Statement of Cost Estimate