

**AN EVALUATION OF THE  
BASIC FUND SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM  
IN THE  
SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, CALIFORNIA**

by

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# **An Evaluation of the Basic Fund Scholarship Program in the San Francisco Bay Area, California**

## **(Executive Summary)**

In 1998, the Bay Area Scholarships for Inner-city Children (BASIC) Fund was created to give low-income families scholarships to attend registered private schools in Marin, San Francisco, or San Mateo County. This evaluation presents the results of a survey of BASIC Fund scholarship parents and students who moved from public schools to private schools. Their responses to questions about their child's educational experiences are compared with the responses to similar questions of those who applied for a BASIC Fund scholarship but who for one reason or another remained in San Francisco public schools. The responses of BASIC Fund families are also compared with the responses given by a national sample of low-income families living in large central cities.

The main findings are as follows:

- Both parents and students in families receiving scholarships are more satisfied with their schools than are applicant parents and students who remained in San Francisco public schools and low-income parents and students in central-city public schools nationwide. For example, 58 percent of the parents of BASIC Fund scholarship recipients gave their school an "A", while only 16 percent of the parents remaining in San Francisco public schools gave their school this grade. Twenty-six percent of low-income parents nationwide gave their school an "A." Similarly, 66 percent of BASIC Fund parents say they are "very satisfied" with the academic quality of their school, as compared to 21 percent and 48 percent of the other two groups of parents, respectively.
- Fewer recipient parents than applicants who remained in San Francisco public schools report that fighting, cheating, stealing and racial conflict are very serious problems at their child's school. For example, 17 percent of BASIC Fund recipients say that "fighting" was a "very serious problem" at their school, as compared to 41 percent of the parents remaining in San Francisco public schools and 31 percent of low-income, inner-city parents nationwide.
- BASIC Fund recipients attend schools with more limited facilities and a smaller number of special programs than do either those remaining in San Francisco public schools or in inner-city schools nationwide. For example, only 44 percent of students using BASIC Fund scholarships attend schools with a nurse's office, whereas 71 percent and 95 percent of the other two groups of students, respectively, attend schools with this facility. Similarly, BASIC Fund recipients are less likely to attend schools that have a cafeteria, a guidance counselor, and special programs for students with learning problems.

- There are few demographic differences between scholarship recipients and those who applied to the program but remained in public schools. However, the mothers of BASIC Fund recipients have more education and attend church more frequently. More differences are found between BASIC Fund recipients and low-income families nationwide. When compared to inner-city families nationwide, mothers in homes receiving BASIC Fund scholarships are more educated, attend church more often, are more likely to work full time outside of the home, are more likely to be Catholic, and are more often “born again” Christians. They also have a higher income, are slightly older, and have lived longer in their current homes.
- Scholarship recipients are more likely to cite academic quality as a primary reason for choosing their child’s school (59%) than are both applicants who remained in public schools (26%) and a national sample of low-income families (17%). Nineteen percent of recipients indicate that religion is the most important reason for selecting their child’s school.
- Almost all (92%) BASIC Fund scholarship recipients gained admission to their preferred school. Of those students who remained in San Francisco public schools, 61% of their parents say that they were in a preferred school.
- The private schools attended by BASIC Fund recipients have an average of 296 students, as compared to an average of 445 students in schools attended by those who remained in San Francisco public schools, and an average of 490 students in public schools attended by low-income, inner-city families nationwide. However, the size of the typical class attended by BASIC Fund students is only slightly smaller than the size of the classes attended by the other two groups of students.
- On the whole, recipients of BASIC Fund scholarships are marginally less likely to attend a school that is racially or ethnically integrated than public-school students either in the Bay Area or nationwide.
- Recipient students are given more homework than applicants remaining in San Francisco public schools and students in inner-city public schools nationwide, as reported by both parents and students.
- Recipient parents are very engaged in their children’s schools, as measured by attendance at parent-teacher conferences, voluntarism in the school, talking with parents of children in the same school, and teacher-parent communication. For none of these measures, though, was there a significant difference between recipients and applicants who did not leave the San Francisco public schools. However, both groups in San Francisco reported more communication with their school than did low-income, inner-city parents nationally.

- There is no statistically significant difference between recipients and applicants who remained in public schools in the percentage of students suspended by their schools (6% versus 11%), although almost the same gap is significant when the comparison is made with the larger national sample (6% versus 12%).
- Recipient students are more likely to expect to attend more school after college than either comparison group, 40% versus 20%.
- Students in recipient households attend religious services and participate in religious youth groups more frequently than applicant students remaining in San Francisco public schools and students in the national sample. They are slightly less likely to be involved in scouting than students nationwide but more likely to participate in team sports.
- There are no significant differences in political tolerance between recipients and those remaining in San Francisco public schools. Nationwide, inner-city public-school students express slightly less political tolerance than BASIC Fund recipients.

## **An Evaluation of the BASIC Fund Scholarship Program In the San Francisco Bay Area, California**

Paul E. Peterson, David E. Campbell, and Martin R. West

The Bay Area Scholarships for Inner-city Children (BASIC) Fund was established in 1998 on the principle that “if families are empowered with the ability to choose the best school for their children, then their children's education will improve.”<sup>1</sup> Consistent with this principle, the BASIC Fund established a program that gave students from low-income families who were entering grades K through 8 scholarships to attend any registered private school located in Marin, San Francisco, or San Mateo County. To be eligible, families had to qualify for the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program. The vast majority of the students participating in the program live in San Francisco.

In the spring of 1999, 670 families and nearly one thousand students were offered scholarships of up to a maximum of \$1,500 annually. The scholarships generally cover anywhere from 25 to 75 percent of the cost of attending the schools families have selected, and are guaranteed for four years or until the students graduate from 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Scholarships were offered without regard to religious or academic criteria. Initial recipients were selected from the pool of applicants by lottery; eventually, sufficient funds became available so that all students who had initially applied were offered a scholarship. However, many of the students

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<sup>1</sup> The BASIC Fund, "Program Overview," Pamphlet, no date. Support for this evaluation was provided by a grant from the BASIC Fund to the Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG) at Harvard University prior to the beginning of the research. PEPG agreed to undertake the evaluation on the condition that it be given complete discretion in the collection, analysis, and reporting of the data. The findings and interpretations are the authors' own and not necessarily those of the BASIC Fund. The authors wish to thank Lavois Hooks of the BASIC Fund for providing contact information used to reach parents and students who had applied for a BASIC Fund scholarship. William Howell assisted with data collection and analysis. Jay Greene and Caroline Minter Hoxby helped design the survey instruments. Special thanks are also given to Mark Wescott of Knowledge Networks and Lisa Famularo of Taylor Nelson Sofres Intersearch.

offered the scholarship did not make use of it but remained in public schools, usually in San Francisco.<sup>2</sup>

This evaluation is based on a telephone survey of parents and students who had been offered the opportunity to move from public to private school beginning in the fall of 1999. The survey was conducted in the summer of 2000, one year after the switch from a public to a private school would have occurred. The evaluation compares the responses of families who made use of the scholarship to move from a public to a private school with those who applied for the program but ultimately remained in public schools. We also compare the responses of families who used a BASIC Fund scholarship to change to a private school with the responses of all low-income, public-school families living in central cities of 200,000 or more. Unless otherwise indicated, results for each of the groups are adjusted to control for differences in family income, mother's education, mother's religious affiliation, mother's religious practice, and mother's participation in the labor market.

Our findings indicate that BASIC Fund parents are similar in most respects to those who were offered the scholarship but remained in San Francisco public schools. However, mothers of BASIC Fund students were more likely to be college educated and religiously observant. When asked about their child's school, BASIC Fund parents report lower levels of conflict and disorder within the school, more homework, more extensive communication with the school, and smaller-sized schools. They consistently report higher levels of satisfaction with their school than do similar parents whose children remained in public schools.

However, BASIC Fund parents do not report higher-quality physical facilities or smaller

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<sup>2</sup> To simplify the presentation of results we shall refer to these students as those remaining in San Francisco public schools.

classes. BASIC Fund students also report more satisfactory experiences in school than do similar students who remained in public schools in San Francisco and other large cities.

### **Sample Design and Research Methodology**

Applicants for BASIC Fund scholarships—both parents and students—were surveyed by telephone during the summer following the 1999-2000 school year.<sup>3</sup> Interviews were conducted with both the families who made use of the scholarship to move to private schools and those who, for one reason or another, did not make use of the scholarship and remained in San Francisco public schools. By comparing the responses of the two groups, one can ascertain any differences in the perceptions of school life between those families who switched to a private school and those who remained in public school.

Parents were asked a number of questions concerning the school attended by one of their children. In families with more than one child in grades 1 through 8, the parent responding to the survey provided information about the child who was next to have a birthday. As a result, the child about whom questions were asked was chosen at random from within the family. If that child was in grades 4 through 8, the student was interviewed as well. Because this evaluation includes reports by students as well as by their parents, it offers an important but often-neglected perspective on education—young people with first-hand experience in the schools.

A similar questionnaire was administered over the Internet to a representative sample of all low income American families living in central cities.<sup>4</sup> This sample consisted of parents

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<sup>3</sup> Taylor Nelson Sofres Intersearch, Inc. administered the telephone survey of parents and students in San Francisco.

<sup>4</sup> Knowledge Networks, Inc. has constructed a representative sample of households nationwide that can be accessed over the internet by providing them with “Web TV” (a device that connects a television to the internet) and free access to the internet in exchange for participation in surveys. Because households are given a tangible reward for participating in surveys, response rates are much higher than those obtained by most telephone surveys. However, this technique can only be used for groups distributed across the United States as a whole,

of children attending public school in grades 1-8 who also (a) live in a city of 200,000 or more; and (b) have a household income of \$40,000 or less. If the child was in grades 4-8, the student was also asked to complete a separate survey. Information from this sample allows us to compare the experiences of BASIC Fund scholarship recipients with those of all low-income families living in central cities throughout the United States.<sup>5</sup>

In sum, the evaluation compares the responses of the following groups of parents and students:

1. BASIC Fund Scholarship Recipients: families who were offered a BASIC Fund scholarship and made use of it to attend a private school.<sup>6</sup>
2. BASIC Fund Applicants Who Remained in Public Schools: families who were offered a BASIC Fund scholarship, who did not use it, and who remained in public schools, almost always within San Francisco.<sup>7</sup>
3. Low-income, Central City Families in Public Schools Nationwide: low-income families in central cities of 200,000 or more with children in public schools.

By comparing the responses of groups one and two, we can ascertain the extent to which BASIC Fund scholarship recipients' experiences differ from those applicants who

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such as all low-income families living in cities over 200,000, not a more delimited population, such as BASIC Fund applicants in San Francisco for which we used the standard telephone interview.

<sup>5</sup> In addition, representative samples of two other populations were surveyed. The first population consists of all U. S. families with children in public school in grades 1-8, regardless of their income or their residential location. The second population consists of all families with children in private school in grades 1-8, regardless of their income or residential location. Results from these surveys will be reported separately.

<sup>6</sup> Occasionally, respondents did not answer a question, and so for some items the number of responses is less than the number of surveys received. BASIC Fund recipients are defined as everyone who said they were offered a scholarship and their child attended a private school last year. All families offered a scholarship were called but telephone changes, no-answers, and other communication problems precluded interviews with the others, despite repeated efforts to contact them.

<sup>7</sup> Those remaining in San Francisco public schools are defined as respondents who were recorded by BASIC Fund as having received a scholarship offer but whose child attended a public school last year. Because almost



remained in San Francisco public schools. By comparing the responses of groups one and three, we can determine the extent to which BASIC Fund scholarship recipients' experiences differ from those of low income families whose children attend public school in central cities throughout the United States. We can also ascertain the kinds of families who are likely to seek out school scholarships when they are offered.

The number of respondents to the phone survey in San Francisco is quite low. Even under the best of circumstances, it is difficult to reach a low-income population by phone, as families move frequently and may not have continuous telephone service. In our case, the list that was available was almost one year old, which compounded the difficulty in contacting respondents. Of the 670 families who were offered a BASIC Fund scholarship, 355 parents could not be reached or spoke a language other than English or Spanish.

Very few of those families asked to participate in the survey actually declined. Only 58 adult respondents who were contacted chose not to participate, and just 2 began but did not complete the survey. Seventy-four respondents reported that they did not have children in the appropriate age range. Thus, 181 parents completed the questionnaire. Only children in fourth grade and higher were asked to participate; no children were interviewed without their parents' permission. Seventy-four children from the two San Francisco groups completed the survey.

When samples are small, observed differences must be large before they become statistically significant. Unless a difference is statistically significant, we cannot reject the possibility that it was due simply to chance. As a result, any impact of the BASIC Fund program can be detected only if it is quite substantial. This high hurdle notwithstanding, many of the observed differences were sufficiently large that they survived conventional tests of

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all of these families were attending public schools in San Francisco, we shall refer to them as those who remained in San Francisco public schools.

statistical significance. In the tables, we give a difference between two groups one star if a difference of that magnitude would have occurred by chance only 1 time out of 10, two stars if it would have occurred by chance only one time out of 20, and three stars if it would have occurred by chance only one time out of 100.

Unless otherwise indicated, the responses of BASIC Fund scholarship users in private school are given in column one; the responses of those who remained in San Francisco public schools are presented in column 2. If the differences between columns one and two are statistically significant, this is indicated by the presence of one or more stars in column 2. Column 3 provides similar information from the survey of low-income families in all U. S. cities over 200,000. If the responses of this group differ significantly from those of BASIC Fund families, this fact is once again denoted through the use of one or more stars.

Because we had more than 420 parent respondents and 210 student respondents in the national sample of low-income families living in large central cities, smaller differences between the BASIC Fund recipients and this group are statistically significant. The reader is thus encouraged to consider both the size of the differences between groups as well as whether they are statistically significant. To put it another way, the casual reader of our tables who wants only to stargaze can quickly grasp the overall picture, but the reader who is interested in the nuances should take a look at specific percentages as well.

### **Family Background Characteristics**

An important issue in the school-choice debate concerns the composition of those who would leave public schools if scholarships to attend private schools were made generally available. Critics of school choice have argued that choice programs would not offer low-income families a viable choice of schools. In the words of educational sociologist Amy

Wells, “White and higher-SES [socioeconomic status] families will no doubt be in a position to take greater advantage of the educational market.”<sup>8</sup> The president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Sandra Feldman, has claimed that vouchers for private schools take “money away from inner city schools so a few selected children can get vouchers to attend private schools, while the majority of equally deserving kids, who remain in the public schools, are ignored.”<sup>9</sup> But evaluations of a New York City scholarship program, as well as the evaluation of similar programs in Cleveland and San Antonio, indicated that those who made use of a scholarship did not differ sharply from those who were offered a scholarship but did not use it.<sup>10</sup>

The BASIC Fund scholarship program allows us to examine this issue in the California context. Table 1 shows how the family background characteristics of those students who used a BASIC Fund scholarship to attend a private school compare with the characteristics of those who were offered a scholarship but remained in San Francisco public schools.<sup>11</sup>

The family background characteristics of BASIC Fund private school families are quite similar in most respects to those applicants who remained in public schools. The two groups

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<sup>8</sup> Amy Stuart Wells, “African-American Students’ View of School Choice,” in Bruce Fuller, Richard F. Elmore, and Gary Orfield, eds., *Who Chooses? Who Loses? Culture, Institutions, and the Unequal Effects of School Choice* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1996), p. 47.

<sup>9</sup> Sandra Feldman, “Let’s Tell the Truth,” *New York Times*, November 2, 1997, p. 7 (Advertisement).

<sup>10</sup> Paul E. Peterson, David Myers, Josh Haimson, and William G. Howell, “Initial Findings from the Evaluation of the New York School Choice Scholarships Program,” Occasional Paper, Harvard University, Program on Education Policy and Governance, November 1997; Jay P. Greene, William G. Howell, and Paul E. Peterson, “Lessons from the Cleveland Scholarship Program,” in Paul E. Peterson and Bryan C. Hassel., eds., *Learning from School Choice* (Washington, D. C.: Brookings, 1998), pp. 357-94; Paul E. Peterson, David Myers and William G. Howell, “An Evaluation of the Horizon Scholarship Program in the Edgewood Independent School District, San Antonio, Texas: The First Year,” Occasional Paper, Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard University, Cambridge MA, October, 1999.

<sup>11</sup> Because the existing literature suggests that the characteristics of the mother are most important in explaining educational performance, the survey inquired about the characteristics and, where appropriate, the behavior of the child’s mother or female guardian—regardless of who responded to the questionnaire. In other words, a father responding to the survey was asked about the education of the child’s mother. This technique allowed us to maximize both the number of completed surveys and the comparability across families. In those few cases where there was no mother or female guardian in the home, questions were asked about the male guardian. Since the

do not differ significantly on any of the following measures: household income, the age of the mother, the length of the time the family had lived at their current residence, the percentage of mothers working full time, the percentage of mothers who were African American, the percentage of mothers who were Hispanic, the percentage living in two-parent households, the percentage saying they were Catholic, the percentage saying they were born again Christians, and the percentage of students with learning disabilities. In other words, with respect to each of these characteristics, the scholarships were used by a representative cross-section of the families who applied for them.

However, the two groups do differ in two relevant respects. Mothers of BASIC Fund scholarship recipients are more likely to be college educated. While 29 percent of BASIC Fund takers have a college degree or more, only 17 percent of those remaining in San Francisco public schools do. The second difference is in the frequency of attendance of religious services: 71 percent of BASIC Fund takers attend religious services at least once a week, compared to 44 percent of those remaining in San Francisco public schools.

In short, mothers with more education and those who were religiously observant were more likely to take advantage of the opportunity the scholarship offer provided. Otherwise, differences in the demographic profiles of the two groups were minor and statistically insignificant.

When comparing BASIC Fund takers to low-income families in central cities throughout the country, more statistically significant differences are observed. Mothers of scholarship recipients are once again more likely to be college educated and religiously observant. In addition, mothers of recipients are also more likely than a cross-section of low-

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overwhelming number of responses to this item referred to the child's mother, the text, to simplify the presentation, discusses them as such.

income city dwellers to have a larger household income, to be older, to work full time, to have remained for a longer period of time in their current residence, to be Catholic, to say they have been born again, and to state their ethnic identification as Hispanic. However, BASIC Fund recipients are statistically no more likely than the national sample to be African American.

Some of these differences are probably a function of the special characteristics of the Bay area. For example, San Francisco is wealthier than most urban areas, which may account for the higher average income of both groups of San Francisco families than their counterparts in other cities. Also, the Bay area has a higher percentage of Hispanics than the country at large. But in other respects, these differences do suggest that the applicants to the BASIC Fund program are a somewhat selected population. They are more likely to be college educated, residentially stable, religiously observant, and members of denominations that offer private school alternatives (such as the Catholic church). Mothers are likely to be somewhat older and more likely to be part of the labor force.

Because of the various differences between the groups we adjust statistically for demographic characteristics when comparing the responses of BASIC Fund scholarship recipients to those of the other two groups of families.<sup>12</sup>

### **Choosing a School**

The school selection process involves both the family and the school. Families have many different reasons for choosing a particular school for their child to attend. At the same time, the cost of tuition and the number of spaces available at different schools vary widely.

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<sup>12</sup> Specifically, each item was regressed on variables for family income, mother's education, mother's religious affiliation (Catholic/non-Catholic), mother's frequency of church attendance, and whether the mother is employed full-time outside of the home. When comparing scholarship recipients and applicants who remained in the public schools, a dichotomous variable to distinguish them was included. The resulting coefficients were then set to the mean values for scholarship recipients to produce an estimated value of the dependent variable for someone with those characteristics. Monte Carlo simulation was used to generate estimates of the uncertainty of the predicted value for the dependent variable.

Parental responses provide some insight into the way in which the two sides of this process interact to determine the school a child attends.

Some critics of school choice have expressed the concern that under a voucher system parents would choose schools for other than academic reasons. They argue that low-income families are more concerned about location, sports programs, or religious instruction than about academic quality per se.<sup>13</sup> For example, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has claimed that "when parents do select another school, academic concerns often are not central to the decision."<sup>14</sup> Similarly, an American Federation of Teachers' report on the Cleveland voucher program suggests that parents sought scholarships not because of "'failing' public schools" but "for religious reasons or because they already had a child attending the same school."<sup>15</sup> Disputing these contentions, supporters of school choice claim that low-income parents, like other parents, place the highest priority on the educational quality of the school.

To examine this question, PEPG asked respondents to indicate the most important reason they chose the school their child attended in the 1999-2000 school year. Table 2 displays the results for the three groups of parents. When compared to those who remained in San Francisco public schools, BASIC Fund scholarship recipients are more likely to report that they chose their child's school on the basis of academic quality—59 percent, as compared to 26 percent of those remaining in San Francisco public schools and 17 percent of low-income, central-city, public-school parents nationwide.

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<sup>13</sup> Dan Murphy, F. Howard Nelson and Bella Rosenberg, "The Cleveland Voucher Program: Who Chooses? Who Gets Chosen? Who Pays?" (New York: American Federation of Teachers, 1997), p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, *School Choice: A Special Report* Princeton, New Jersey: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1992), p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> Nicholas Lemann, "A False Panacea," *Atlantic* (January 1991), p. 104, as quoted in Abigail Thernstrom, *School Choice in Massachusetts* (Boston: Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research, 1991), p. 40.

For low-income, inner-city families with students in public school nationwide, location was the most important reason given for selecting a school. This reason was given as most important by no less than 55 percent of the national sample of low-income parents, perhaps because public school by-laws typically require attendance at the neighborhood school. Location was also the reason most frequently given by the low income families who remained in San Francisco public schools; 37 percent of these families said location was the primary basis for picking their child's school. By comparison, only 5 percent of the BASIC Fund parents gave this response.

Much the same pattern emerged when parents were given the option of saying they had only one choice of school. As can be seen in Table 2, 19 percent of the national low-income sample said they had only one choice of school, and 26 percent of the San Francisco parents in public school gave this response. Only 2 percent of the BASIC Fund scholarship recipients indicated that they felt similarly constrained.

Religion was the other respect in which the responses of the three groups differed sharply. As might be expected, none of the families whose children were attending public school gave this as a reason. But for 19 percent of the BASIC Fund scholarship recipients, religion was listed as the primary consideration. Given the religious affiliation of many private schools, the importance of religious considerations in the BASIC Fund recipients' choice of schools is hardly surprising. Table 3 shows that 66 per cent of the students receiving a Basic Fund scholarship attended a Catholic school, while another 19 percent attended a religious school affiliated with another religious tradition.

## **Obtaining One's Choice of School**

Table 4 shows that 92 percent of BASIC Fund recipients were able to gain admission for their child at the school the family wanted their child to attend, compared to only 61 percent of those who remained in public school. Quite clearly, the BASIC Fund scholarship increased the chances that a low-income family would be able to send their child to their preferred school. Still, many of those remaining in public schools also said their child was attending the school the family preferred. Apparently, many of the families who declined a BASIC Fund scholarship and remained in public school did so in part because they decided that the school their child was attending was satisfactory.

For those San Francisco public-school families who said they were not attending the school of their choice, we asked them the reason. Thirty percent said they could not afford the cost, despite the availability of a BASIC Fund scholarship. Another 30 percent said it was because of an admissions test.<sup>16</sup> And 24 percent said no space was available. When asked the reason, 27 percent chose "other", so for a significant number of families, we are unable to identify the critical factor for their decision to decline a BASIC Fund scholarship and remain in public school.

## **Parental and Student Satisfaction**

Many economists think that customer satisfaction is the best measure of the quality of any product, public and private schools quite included. Parents' satisfaction with their children's educational experiences represents, for some, strong evidence that schools are doing their job effectively. Most studies of scholarship programs for low-income minority families

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<sup>16</sup> The wording of the question makes it impossible to determine whether the child took and failed a test, or did not take the test in anticipation of failing.



have found that families using scholarships are much more satisfied with their schooling than are families who remain in public schools.<sup>17</sup>

The results from San Francisco regarding parental satisfaction are very similar to results from other cities. BASIC Fund parents were much more satisfied than were the parents in San Francisco who applied for a scholarship but who remained in public school. As can be seen in Table 5, 58 percent of the BASIC Fund parents gave their child's school an "A", while only 16 percent of the San Francisco public-school parents gave their child's school a grade this high. The average grade Basic Fund parents assigned their school, calculated on a standard GPA (Grade Point Average) scale (A=4.0), was a 3.4, as compared to 2.6 in the comparison group.

In general, student response to this question paralleled parental reports, with BASIC Fund students expressing high levels of satisfaction relative to their counterparts who remained in the public sector. As can be seen in Table 5, 62 percent of BASIC Fund students gave their school an "A", as compared to 37 percent of those who remained in San Francisco public schools, and just 12 percent of those in central-city public schools nationwide. Converted into a GPA, the average scores received by the three groups of schools were 3.5, 3.1, and 2.6, respectively. When asked if they liked school a lot, 58 percent of BASIC Fund students said they did, as compared to 22 percent of the national sample of inner-city students. Students remaining in San Francisco public schools, however, were almost equally likely to say they liked school a lot.

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<sup>17</sup> A summary of findings from earlier studies is available in Paul E. Peterson, "School Choice: A Report Card," in Peterson and Hassel, *Learning from School Choice*, p. 18. Mark Schneider, Paul Teske, Melissa Marschall, and Christine Roch, "Tiebout, School Choice, Allocative and Productive Efficiency," paper prepared for annual meetings of the American Political Science Association, 1998, finds higher levels of parental satisfaction within New York City public schools, when parents are given a choice of school.

Parents were also asked how satisfied they were with five aspects of their child's current school: academic quality, safety, discipline, teaching values, and location.<sup>18</sup> Parents could choose "very satisfied", "satisfied", "dissatisfied", or "very dissatisfied." Table 6 presents the percentage of parents choosing "very satisfied" for the first four of these items. When compared to parents of students who remained in San Francisco public schools, BASIC Fund takers were more satisfied with every aspect of their child's school about which they were asked. Sixty-six percent of the BASIC Fund recipients said they were "very satisfied" with the academic quality of their school, as compared to 25 percent of the San Francisco comparison group. Similar large differences in the level of satisfaction were observed for school safety, school discipline and the teaching of values.

BASIC Fund parents, like parents participating in other scholarship programs, thus express much higher levels of satisfaction with their child's school than do those who applied for the program but ultimately remained in public school. However, similar findings have been questioned by critics who point out that the group of parents with whom the scholarship recipients are being compared are families who had already signaled dissatisfaction with the public schools by applying for a scholarship in the first place. The real test, these critics argue, is whether BASIC Fund parents are more satisfied with their school than the typical low-income, inner-city parent with a child in a public school.

Fortunately, it is possible to examine this question by comparing the responses of BASIC Fund parents with a cross-section of all low-income, central-city, public-school parents living in cities with a population of 200,000 or more. When this comparison is made, it becomes clear that choice does in fact increase parental satisfaction, though the differences are not as great as when BASIC Fund recipients are compared to the applicants who did not

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<sup>18</sup> In order to adjust for possible question-ordering effects, the list was randomized for each interview.

receive the scholarship. Table 5 shows that only 26 percent of the national group of low-income families with children in public school gave their school an "A", less than half the percentage of BASIC Fund parents who gave this response. Converted into GPA, the average scores assigned to their schools by Basic Fund parents and the national sample were 3.4 and 2.9, respectively. Meanwhile, Table 6 reveals that only 47 percent of all low-income parents are very satisfied with the academic quality of their central-city public school, as compared to 65 percent of the BASIC Fund parents. The patterns are essentially the same for school safety, school discipline and the teaching of school values.

The difference narrowed somewhat when parents were asked about school location. As can be seen in Table 7, 57 percent of the BASIC Fund scholarship parents were "very satisfied" with the location of their child's school, but so were 40 percent of those remaining in San Francisco public schools. When parents nationally were asked about school location, 52 percent said they were very satisfied, a response not materially different from the one provided by BASIC Fund parents. The time it took for students to get to school was actually lower for inner-city families nationwide than for the BASIC Fund students. 70 percent of all low-income families said their child could get to school in ten minutes or less, whereas this was true for only 47 percent of the BASIC Fund students and 36 percent of those remaining in San Francisco public schools. Apparently, schools are not as conveniently located for families in San Francisco as elsewhere in the country.

Both parents and students were also asked about the pride they felt in their school. The wording varied slightly, as parents were asked the extent to which they felt pride in their child's school, while the youths were asked whether students in general are proud to go to their school. As can be seen in Table 6, the percentage of BASIC Fund parents who say they feel

"very proud" of their child's school is nearly double the percentage of inner-city parents who give this response (58 percent, as compared to 31 percent). Only 21 percent of the parents with children in San Francisco public schools gave this response.

Similar results were obtained when students were asked if they agreed that "students are proud" to go to their school. As shown in Table 6, 68 percent of BASIC Fund students said students were proud to go to their school, while 37 percent of those remaining in San Francisco public schools, and only 10 percent of inner-city students nationwide gave this response.

### **School Discipline**

Parents were also asked whether they thought the following problems are "very serious", "somewhat serious", or "not serious" at their child's school: fighting, cheating, stealing, gangs, racial conflict, guns, and drugs.<sup>19</sup> Table 8 displays the percentage of parents reporting that each problem is either very or somewhat serious. Far more of the San Francisco public-school parents than BASIC Fund parents feel that fighting, cheating, stealing, racial conflict, and guns are serious problems in their child's school. Forty-one percent of the public-school parents in San Francisco said fighting was a serious or very serious problem, but only 17 percent of the BASIC Fund parents gave one of these responses. For cheating the percentages for the two groups were 24 percent and 8 percent, respectively. Thirty-one percent of San Francisco public-school parents felt racial conflict was a problem, as compared to 15 percent reported by the BASIC Fund parents. The same percentages for stealing were 30 percent and 10 percent. However, the two groups did not report significant differences in the severity of gang, guns, and drug problems.

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<sup>19</sup> Once again, to adjust for possible question-ordering effects, this list was randomized for each interview.

When the experiences reported by BASIC Fund parents are compared to all inner-city families nationwide, similar patterns emerge. Thirty-one percent of the low-income families in cities nationwide report that fighting is a serious problem at their child's school, as compared to 17 percent of BASIC Fund parents. Stealing is a serious problem for 28 percent of public-school families nationwide, but just 15 percent for BASIC Fund families. Racial conflict is a serious problem in their child's school, say 21 percent of the parents nationwide, as compared to 15 percent of BASIC Fund parents. Inner-city, low-income parents nationwide also are more likely to say that cheating, gangs, guns and drugs are serious problems at their child's school.

Student responses concerning the state of discipline in their schools are generally consistent with their parents' impressions. When asked whether other students "often disrupt class", only 57 percent of Basic Fund recipients respond affirmatively, as compared with 93 percent of the students remaining in San Francisco and 87 percent of students in inner-city public schools nationwide. Students in San Francisco public schools are also more likely to say that "teachers ignore cheating", with 41 percent giving this response, as compared to just 15 percent of the BASIC Fund students. The average number of the student's four best friends who "get in trouble with their teachers" is smaller for Basic Fund recipients than for the national comparison group and also smaller than for San Francisco public-school students, although the latter difference was not statistically significant. However, there are no significant differences between the three groups with respect to the percentage of students who "do not feel safe at school"—less than 10 percent of the students in each of the three groups give this response.

In sum, the BASIC Fund scholarship gives low-income families an opportunity to avoid many of the most serious problems young people are likely to encounter when they go to school in the inner city. Both when compared to applicant families who remained in San Francisco public schools, and when compared to similar public-school families nationwide, the incidence of serious disturbances at school as perceived by parents and students alike is substantially reduced.

### **School Facilities and Programs**

The enhanced satisfaction and improved atmosphere at the schools attended by BASIC Fund students is not due to better facilities or extensive special programs. On the contrary, the private schools attended by BASIC Fund families are less likely to have many of the material resources common in the public schools of San Francisco and other central-city public school systems. Table 9 shows that private schools attended by BASIC Fund students are less likely to have a nurse's office, a cafeteria, special programs for advanced learners, special programs for students with learning problems, and a guidance counselor. As compared to inner city schools nationwide, they are also less likely to have a music program or individual tutors. In short, the programs and facilities available to BASIC Fund students lag behind those available in most inner-city schools.

Our data suggest that these facilities and programs are not the criteria parents use when assessing their satisfaction with their children's schools. As noted previously, BASIC Fund parents are more satisfied with their schools than low-income parents in inner-city public schools, despite the more limited facilities and programs available to their children.

## Special Education

In the debate over school choice, special education has received a good deal of attention. Critics of school choice say that private schools ignore the needs of students with physical and mental disabilities. For example, Laura Rothstein says that "choice programs often operate in a way that is either directly or indirectly exclusionary" of those with disabilities.<sup>20</sup> Defenders of school choice often claim that many of those diagnosed as disabled can learn in regular classrooms and that special arrangements can be made for others.

Because only a small percentage of families who applied for scholarships had special education needs, we cannot address this issue in a definitive way. However, there is no evidence that Bay area private schools excluded students from their schools because they had a learning disability. As shown in Table 1, as many as 13 percent of those who accepted the BASIC Fund scholarship and made use of it said their child had a learning disability. This did not differ significantly from the percentage of parents who applied for a scholarship but who remained in San Francisco public schools. In central cities nationwide, only 9 percent of low-income families say their child has a learning disability. In other words, it appears as if the BASIC Fund program was as likely to attract applications from families with a child with a learning disability as from families without such a child.

Parents in all groups who reported that their child did have a learning disability were then asked whether the school attended to their child's particular learning needs "very well", "adequately", or "poorly". Nationwide, 56 percent of low-income families said their child's inner city school was attending to the learning disability adequately or very well (Table 9). By comparison, 74 percent of BASIC Fund parents gave this response, an indication that private

schools are organized in such a way that they can address the needs of many children with learning disabilities more adequately than the public schools—despite the fact that they are less likely to have formal programs particularly designed for this purpose. This finding must be considered tentative, however, because of the small number of families in the sample with learning disabilities.

### **Class and School Size**

One explanation, perhaps, for the high rating parents give the private schools attended by BASIC Fund students is their relatively small size (Table 10). According to parents, the average size of these schools was just short of 300 students, as compared to an average size of 445 students of the schools attended by those who remained in San Francisco public schools, and an average size of nearly 500 students of those schools attended by low-income students in central cities nationwide. In other words, BASIC Fund schools were, on average, just three-fifths the size of public schools.

Much attention has been given to class size in recent discussion of alternative ways to reform urban education. It is thus of interest that the average class size reported by parents of BASIC Fund students did not differ significantly from the average class size of those students who remained in public school in San Francisco; for both groups, the typical class had just under 23 students (Table 11). Nationwide, the average class size attended by low-income students living in central cities was just one student more. Therefore, parents are also considering factors other than class size when reporting much higher level of satisfaction with BASIC Fund schools than with the public schools in San Francisco.

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<sup>20</sup> Laura F. Rothstein, "School Choice and Students with Disabilities," in Stephen D. Sugarman and Frank R. Kemerer, eds., *School Choice and Social Controversy*, (Washington, D. C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1999) p.



## Relationships with Teachers

Little is known about the relationships between teachers, pupils, and parents in inner-city public and private schools. Some have argued that private schools are snobbish and exclusive. Others have argued that public school teachers are more concerned about rights and prerogatives than communicating with students and families. To find out if student-teacher and parent-teacher relationships differed between public and private schools, a variety of questions exploring this topic were asked of both parents and students.

Parents were asked how often their child's principal and teachers showed respect for them: always, most of the time, some of the time, or never. As reported in Table 12, 84 percent of BASIC Fund parents said teachers and principals always showed respect, as compared to 74 percent of all inner-city, public-school parents and 66 percent of parents in San Francisco public-school parents.

BASIC Fund students also make strongly positive statements concerning their relationships with their teachers. Table 12 also shows that nearly 95 percent of them report that "teachers really listen" to what they have to say, as compared to 78 percent of the national sample of students attending inner-city public schools. However, the response of those remaining in San Francisco schools does not differ significantly from the response of the BASIC Fund students. Fourteen percent of Basic Fund students say that in class they often feel "put down" by their teachers, as compared to 24 percent of the students who remained in San Francisco public schools, although this difference is not large enough to achieve statistical significance. Only 13 percent of the national sample report feeling "put down" in class.

But if BASIC Fund students are comfortable with their teachers, it is not because they are given an easy pass. Over half say the rules at their school are strict, as compared to 33

percent of those who remained in San Francisco public schools and 14 percent of inner-city, low-income students nationwide.

### **Ethnic Integration**

One concern raised by critics of school choice is that expanding school choice will ultimately lead to increased ethnic and racial segregation in education.<sup>21</sup> Although the BASIC Fund program does seem to have marginally reduced the degree of ethnic integration in the schools attended by those students receiving scholarships, the evidence is not conclusive. On the one hand, Basic Fund students attend schools that are less racially integrated than those remaining in San Francisco public schools. As can be seen in Table 13, 21 percent of BASIC Fund students are reported by parents to be in schools that were predominantly (over 90 percent) minority; only 9 percent of those who remained in San Francisco public schools were. On the other hand, BASIC Fund students were no more likely to be attending predominantly white schools (90 percent or more white) than were the students remaining in San Francisco schools.

When compared to inner-city parents nationwide, BASIC Fund students were slightly less likely to be in a predominantly minority school. Twenty-one percent of the BASIC Fund students attended predominantly minority schools, while 26 percent of all low-income, public-school students in central cities nationwide report attending such schools. On the other hand, 32 percent of the BASIC Fund students were in predominantly white schools, as compared to 22 percent of the national sample.

Student reports on ethnic integration are fairly consistent with those provided by the parents. When students were asked whether they ate lunch with children of other races all or most of the time, 72 percent of BASIC Fund students said that they did, but 77 percent of

those remaining in San Francisco public schools and 96 percent of inner-city, public school children nationwide gave this response. BASIC Fund students also reported having the same number of close friends of a different race as those remaining in San Francisco public schools, but slightly fewer close friends of a different race than inner-city students nationwide—an average of 1.7 friends as compared to 1.8 friends.

In short, the BASIC Fund scholarship program seems to have had a marginally adverse effect on the degree of ethnic integration in school. In some comparisons, no significant differences are observed, but where significant differences are observed BASIC Fund students seem to be in a somewhat less integrated environment.

### **Homework, Classwork, and Television**

Students using BASIC Fund scholarships have more homework assigned to them than students who remained in San Francisco public schools. As displayed in Table 14, 61 percent of BASIC Fund students indicated that their children do at least one to two hours of homework per night, as compared to 39 percent of those remaining in public schools in both San Francisco and 41 percent in central-city schools nationwide. Clearly, private schools are expecting children from low-income families to work on their school assignments outside school more frequently than are public schools. BASIC Fund students confirm parental reports about the amount of homework they are asked to do. Two-thirds of the BASIC Fund students say they do one to two hours of homework each night, as compared to about 30 percent of those remaining in San Francisco public schools, and about 50 percent of those in inner-city schools nationwide.

Of particular interest is the fact that BASIC Fund students report that they receive enough help in class to do a good job on their homework. As compared to inner-city students

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<sup>21</sup> Michael Kelly, "Dangerous Minds," *New Republic*, December 20, 1996.

nationwide, BASIC Fund students were less likely to say that "class work was hard to learn," that they "had trouble keeping up with the homework," and that they "would read much better if I had more help." Similar differences distinguish BASIC Fund students from those remaining in San Francisco public schools, but the small size of the samples prevents these differences from reaching conventional levels of statistical significance. Nonetheless, BASIC Fund students seem to be saying that their heavy homework assignments are well supported by classroom instruction.

Because of the long-standing suspicion that increased television viewing leads to decreased academic achievement, PEPG asked students to report the amount of time they spend per day watching TV or videos or playing video games. Basic Fund students said they watched about one less hour a day of television than did the national sample of inner-city students, 2.3 hours instead of 3.3 hours (see table 14). However, the students remaining in San Francisco public schools reported about the same amount of television watching as the BASIC Fund students.

### **Parental Involvement in Child's Education**

School choice proponents often claim that private schools, dependent on continuing parental support for their long-term financial survival, will make greater efforts to establish close connections with parents. Survey information is consistent with these claims. When BASIC Fund families were asked a series of questions that sought to determine the amount of communication between school and family, BASIC Fund parents were more likely than inner-city parents nationwide to be involved with their school. As can be seen in Table 15, 71 percent of the BASIC Fund parents said they attended three or more parent-teacher conferences during the past year, as compared to 55 percent of inner-city parents nationwide.

Similar differences were observed when parents were asked if they had volunteered for at least one hour a week at their child's school, if they talked often with other families about the school, and also if they had spoken with their child's teacher or principal five times or more in the past year.

Some of these differences between the two families may be due to the fact that applicants for BASIC Fund scholarships were a particularly engaged group of parents. When BASIC Fund recipients were compared to those parents who applied for a BASIC Fund scholarship but who remained in a San Francisco public school, the difference between the two groups was significant only in the case of volunteering at school.

Student responses suggest that BASIC Fund parents are more informed about their child's experiences in school than are parents of students remaining in public schools. As can be seen in Table 14, 95 percent of BASIC Fund students say their parents know a lot about school, whereas only about 75 percent of public-school parents, both nationally and in San Francisco, give this response. Similarly, BASIC Fund students are more likely than the other two groups of students to say that they "talk to their parents almost every day" about school matters.

### **Suspension Rates**

Many critics of scholarship programs have raised questions about the readiness of private schools to expel students who do not "fit in."<sup>22</sup> But other empirical studies have found that students from low-income families who have received a scholarship are actually more

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<sup>22</sup> Murphy, Nelson, and Rosenberg, *The Cleveland Voucher Program: Who Chooses? Who Gets Chosen? Who Pays?*

likely than public school students to remain in the same school throughout the school year and from one year to the next.<sup>23</sup>

In the case of the BASIC Fund program, we find little evidence that scholarship recipients entering private schools face an increased risk of expulsion. As can be seen in Table 16, 6 percent of the students in the program had been suspended during the first year, significantly less than the 12 percent of low-income students suspended in inner city public schools, and also less than the 11 percent of those who remained in San Francisco public schools—though the latter difference is once again not statistically significant due to the size of the two groups.

### **Educational Expectations**

Many educators feel that performance in school is enhanced if students can imagine themselves completing college and obtaining a post-graduate professional degree. If this is so, then the different responses of students to questions about their future education are among the most interesting to emerge from the student survey. As can be seen in Table 17, nearly 40 percent of BASIC Fund students are more likely to imagine themselves completing college and obtaining further education, as compared to 20 percent of inner-city public-school students nationwide, and 20 percent of the students of the students remaining in San Francisco public schools.<sup>24</sup> While we are hesitant to attribute these differences to attending a private school alone, we do note that this difference appears in spite of controlling for the level of mother's

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<sup>23</sup> Jay P. Greene, William G. Howell, and Paul E. Peterson, "Lessons from the Cleveland Scholarship Program," in Peterson and Hassel, eds., *Learning from School Choice*, pp. 376-80.

<sup>24</sup> The vast majority of students in all three groups indicate that they plan to graduate from college; meaningful variation occurs only regarding expectations for post-graduate education. Due to the small number of cases, the percentage with post-graduate ambitions reported for San Francisco public-school students is not significantly different in statistical terms from the percentage reported by BASIC Fund students. Nevertheless, the similarity between the results for this group and for students in public schools nationwide is striking.

education and family income, two factors contributing to the likelihood that a child will attend college.

### **Peer Group Relations**

Adjusting socially to the environment of a new school can be very difficult for some students.<sup>25</sup> Since the BASIC Fund students included in this evaluation moved from a public to a private school during the school year prior to the survey, a period of adjustment might be expected. Somewhat surprisingly, we found little evidence of this. As indicated in Table 18, 90 percent of BASIC Fund students said that students in their school "get along well with others", as compared to approximately 75 percent of the students in the public schools, both nationwide and in San Francisco. When asked whether other students "made fun of" them, 27 percent of BASIC Fund students gave a positive response, less than the 34 percent of the national inner-city students who gave this response and 46 percent of the San Francisco students remaining in public school.

### **Religious and other Group Activity**

BASIC Fund students are much more likely to attend church and participate in religious youth groups than students attending public schools, either nationwide or in San Francisco. Table 19 shows that about two-thirds of the BASIC Fund students say they attend church regularly, whereas less than 20 percent of the students in public-school give this response. About half the BASIC Fund students say they participate in youth groups that have a religious affiliation, whereas less than 10 percent of the other two groups of students give this response. BASIC Fund students are also more likely than the national sample of inner-city students to participate in team sports but less likely to participate in scouting.

## Political Tolerance

A major concern of critics of increased school choice involves its potential impact on civil society. Even if students learn to read, write, and calculate more effectively by means of a scholarship program, these gains will be more than offset, it is argued, by the polarization and balkanization of our society that necessarily accompany greater parental choice in education. In the words of commentator Michael Kelley, "public money is shared money, and it is to be used for the furtherance of shared values, in the interests of *e pluribus unum*. Charter schools and their like . . . take from the *pluribus* to destroy the *unum*."<sup>26</sup> Amy Gutmann, the Princeton political theorist, makes much the same argument, if in less colorful prose: "Public, not private, schooling is . . . the primary means by which citizens can morally educate future citizens."<sup>27</sup>

Given the concern that private schools serve to fragment America's sense of civic community, PEPG also asked students three questions modeled on a battery of items social scientists have long used to gauge political tolerance:

1. *Some people have views that you oppose very strongly. Do you think these people should be able to come to your school and give a speech? Yes, no, or maybe.*
2. *Should these people be allowed to live in your neighborhood? Yes, no, or maybe.*
3. *Should these people be allowed to run for president? Yes, no, or maybe.*

On the whole, BASIC Fund students, when responding to these questions, gave answers that were just as tolerant as the answers provided by those remaining in San Francisco public schools and more tolerant than the students in the national sample. As can be seen in table 20,

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<sup>25</sup> Patrick J. Wolf, William G. Howell, and Paul E. Peterson, "School Choice in Washington, D. C.: An Evaluation After One Year," Report 00-08, Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard University, February 2000.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Kelly, "Dangerous Minds," *New Republic*, December 20, 1996.

<sup>27</sup> Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 70.



nearly 80 percent of BASIC Fund students would allow someone they disagree with to live in their neighborhood, but only about 40 percent of the national sample said they would. The percentages willing to let such a person run for president were 65 percent and 36 percent for the two groups, respectively.

### **Conclusion**

We must warn the reader that we should be cautious in attributing any differences reported here, statistically significant or not, to the “effect” of attending a private school. Other research methodologies, preferably a randomized experiment, would be required to make such a causal inference. However, we must also note that there are many similarities between these results and the data collected in evaluations of randomized experiments with scholarships.

It is also important to emphasize that the results from a small, privately-funded scholarship program may or may not be an indication of what would happen under a more extensive system of school choice. We therefore urge caution in extrapolating these findings to large-scale voucher interventions.

Notwithstanding these caveats, the data we have collected to evaluate the BASIC Fund scholarship program certainly suggest that both parents and students who have received scholarships have benefited in a number of ways. Only time will tell if these benefits persist—although there is no reason to think that they won’t. And only further research into the use of school scholarships will tell if these results would hold in different contexts—although results from this study are remarkably consistent with those obtained from evaluations of other, similar programs.

**Table 1 - Demographic Characteristics**

|   | <b>Basic Fund<br/>Scholarship<br/>Recipients</b> | <b>Basic Fund<br/>Applicants<br/>Who Remained<br/>in Public<br/>Schools</b> | <b>Low-Income,<br/>Central-City<br/>Families in<br/>Public Schools<br/>Nationwide</b> |
|---|--|---|---|
|   | (1)  | (2)   | (3)   |
| <b>Percent of mothers who:</b>                          |  |   |   |
| Have a college degree                                   | 29   | 17**  | 8***  |
| Attend church at least once a week                      | 71   | 44***   | 36***   |
| Work full time  | 64   | 65  | 52**  |
| <b>Average household income</b>                         | \$30,300   | \$31,800  | \$22,700***   |
| <b>Mother's age</b>                                     | 37.3   | 37.2  | 35.5*   |
| <b>Mother's years at current residence</b>              | 3.8  | 3.9   | 3.5***  |
| <b>Mother's Ethnicity:</b>                              |  |   |   |
| Percent African-American                                | 31   | 26  | 23  |
| Percent Hispanic  | 33   | 39  | 28**  |
| <b>Percent living in two parent, married households</b> | 38   | 36  | 40  |
| <b>Mother's Religious Affiliation:</b>                  |  |   |   |
| Percent Catholic  | 58   | 48  | 30***   |
| Percent "Born Again" Christian                          | 19   | 18  | 6***  |
| <b>Percent students with learning disabilities</b>      | 13   | 18  | 11  |
| <b>(N)</b>  | 78-85  | 72-84   | 375-422   |

N is actual number of observations. \* = difference significant at  $p < .1$ , \*\* = significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* = significant at  $p < .01$ ; two-tailed test.

**Table 2 – School Selection**

| People have different reasons for choosing a school. What was the most important reason for choosing the school your child attends now? | Basic Fund Scholarship Recipients | Basic Fund Applicants Who Remained in Public Schools | Low-Income, Central-City Families in Public Schools Nationwide |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|--|
|   | (1)                               | (2)  | (3)  |
| <b>Cited as the single most important reasons why parent chose school<sup>1</sup>:</b>  |                                   |  |  |
| Academic quality  | 59%                               | 26%***   | 17%***   |
| Location  | 5                                 | 37***  | 55***  |
| Only choice   | 2                                 | 26***  | 19***  |
| Religion  | 19 <sup>2</sup>                   | 0***   | 0***   |
| Discipline  | 3                                 | 1  | <1***  |
| Safety  | 3                                 | 2  | 1***   |
| Other   | 6                                 | 2*   | 2***   |
| (N)   | 78                                | 74   | 383  |

Percentages are adjusted. N is actual number of observations. \* = difference significant at  $p < .1$ , \*\* = significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* = significant at  $p < .01$ ; two-tailed test.

<sup>1</sup> Figures do not total to 100% due to statistical adjustment.

<sup>2</sup> Because only recipients selected this category, this figure is unadjusted.

**Table 3 – Religious Affiliation of Recipients' Schools**

|   | <b>Basic Fund<br/>Scholarship Recipients</b> |
|---|--|
|   | (1)  |
| <b>Percent attending Catholic schools</b>               | 66   |
| <b>Percent attending non-Catholic religious schools</b> | 19   |
| <b>Percent attending non-religious schools</b>          | 15   |
| <b>Total</b>  | 100%   |
| <b>(N)</b>  | 78   |

N is actual number of observations.

**Table 4 – Attending a Preferred School**

| For the 1999-2000 school year, did your child gain admission to the school you wanted him/her to attend? | Basic Fund Scholarship Recipients | Basic Fund Applicants Who Remained in Public Schools |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|
|  | (1)                               | (2)  |
| <b>Percent who gained admission to their preferred school</b>  | 92                                | 61***  |
| (N)  | 85                                | 84   |
| <b>Reasons why child did not gain admission to preferred school (decliners only):<sup>3</sup></b>        |                                   |  |
| Could not afford the cost of school  |                                   | 30%  |
| Admissions test  |                                   | 30   |
| No more space available at the school  |                                   | 24   |
| Had to attend neighborhood school  |                                   | 9  |
| Family moved away from school  |                                   | 3  |
| Other reason   |                                   | 27   |
| (N)  |                                   | 33   |

Percentages are adjusted. N is actual number of observations. \* = difference significant at  $p < .1$ , \*\* = significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* = significant at  $p < .01$ ; two-tailed test.

<sup>3</sup> Respondents were allowed to give multiple responses. As only seven respondents in the recipient group did not gain admission to a preferred school, responses are reported only for applicants who remained in public schools.

**Table 5 – Parent and Student Grades for School**

| Schools give their students grades from A to F. What overall grade would you give your child's current school, an A, B, C, D, or F? | Basic Fund Scholarship Recipients | Basic Fund Applicants Who Remained in Public Schools | Low-Income, Central-City Families in Public Schools Nationwide |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|--|
|   | (1)                               | (2)  | (3)  |
| <b>Overall grade parents give their school<sup>4</sup>:</b>   |                                   |  |  |
| A   | 58%                               | 16%***   | 26%***   |
| B   | 31                                | 44   | 48***  |
| C   | 10                                | 28**   | 17***  |
| D   | 0                                 | 4***   | 6***   |
| F   | 4                                 | 14   | 1***   |
| <b>Average grade parents give their school<sup>5</sup></b>  | 3.4                               | 2.6***   | 2.9***   |
| (N)   | 78                                | 73   | 386  |
| <b>Overall grade students give their school:</b>  |                                   |  |  |
| A   | 62%                               | 37%*   | 12%***   |
| B   | 28                                | 39   | 49***  |
| C   | 7                                 | 18   | 28**   |
| D   | 0                                 | 0  | 3***   |
| F   | 0                                 | 3 <sup>6</sup>                                       | 8***   |
| <b>Average grade students give their school</b>   | 3.5                               | 3.1**  | 2.6***   |
| <b>Percent of students who "like school a lot"</b>  | 58                                | 54   | 22***  |
| (N)   | 33                                | 30   | 210  |

Percentages are adjusted. N is actual number of observations. \* = difference significant at  $p < .1$ , \*\* = significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* = significant at  $p < .01$ ; two-tailed test.

<sup>4</sup> Overall grades do not sum to 100% due to statistical adjustment.

<sup>5</sup> Average grades estimated using Ordinary Least Squares regression (OLS) and a standard GPA scale (A = 4.0, B = 3.0, C = 2.0, D = 1.0, F = 0).

<sup>6</sup> This figure is unadjusted.

**Table 6 – Satisfaction with School**

|  | <b>Basic Fund<br/>Scholarship<br/>Recipients</b> | <b>Basic Fund<br/>Applicants<br/>Who Remained<br/>in Public<br/>Schools</b> | <b>Low-Income,<br/>Central-City<br/>Families in<br/>Public Schools<br/>Nationwide</b> |
|--|--|---|---|
|  | (1)  | (2)   | (3)   |
| <b>Percent of parents "very satisfied" with:</b>                                     |  |   |   |
| Academic Quality   | 66   | 25***   | 47**  |
| Safety   | 58   | 21***   | 48***   |
| Discipline   | 57   | 15***   | 43***   |
| Teaching Values  | 68   | 27***   | 42***   |
| <b>Percent of parents who feel "very proud"<br/>of child's school</b>                | 58   | 21***   | 31***   |
| (N)  | 78   | 72-74   | 381-382   |
| <b>Percent of students who agree "students<br/>are proud" to attend their school</b> | 68   | 37**  | 10***   |
| (N)  | 33   | 30  | 209   |

Percentages are adjusted. N is actual number of observations. \* = difference significant at  $p < .1$ , \*\* = significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* = significant at  $p < .01$ ; two-tailed test.

**Table 7 – School Location**

|   | <b>Basic Fund<br/>Scholarship<br/>Recipients</b> | <b>Basic Fund<br/>Applicants<br/>Who Remained<br/>in Public<br/>Schools</b> | <b>Low-Income,<br/>Central-City<br/>Families in<br/>Public Schools<br/>Nationwide</b> |
|---|--|---|---|
|   | (1)  | (2)   | (3)   |
| <b>Percent of parents "very satisfied" with<br/>the location of their child's school</b>                                    | 57   | 40*   | 52**  |
| <b>Percent of students who get from home to<br/>school each morning in ten minutes or less<br/>(as reported by parents)</b> | 47   | 36  | 70***   |
| <b>(N)</b>  | 78   | 72-74   | 381-382   |

Percentages are adjusted. N is actual number of observations. \* = difference significant at  $p < .1$ , \*\* = significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* = significant at  $p < .01$ ; two-tailed test.



**Table 8 – School Discipline**

| How serious are the following problems as your child's school? Very serious, somewhat serious, or not serious? | Basic Fund Scholarship Recipients | Basic Fund Applicants Who Remained in Public Schools | Low-Income, Central-City Families in Public Schools Nationwide |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|--|
|  | (1)                               | (2)  | (3)  |
| <b>Percent of parents rating the following problem as "somewhat" or "very serious":</b>                        |                                   |  |  |
| Fighting   | 17                                | 41***  | 31***  |
| Cheating   | 8                                 | 24***  | 15***  |
| Stealing   | 10                                | 30***  | 28***  |
| Gangs  | 7                                 | 12.1   | 14.1***  |
| Racial Conflict  | 15                                | 31**   | 21***  |
| Guns   | 7                                 | 12   | 15***  |
| Drugs  | 6                                 | 8  | 19***  |
| (N)  | 75-78                             | 60-74  | 269-359  |
| <b>Percent of students who "agree" or "strongly agree" with the following statements about their school:</b>   |                                   |  |  |
| "Other students often disrupt class."  | 57                                | 93***  | 87***  |
| "Some teachers ignore cheating when they see it."  | 15                                | 41**   | 13***  |
| "I do not feel safe at school"   | 8                                 | 5  | 9  |
| <b>Average number of student's four best friends who "get in trouble with their teachers"<sup>7</sup></b>      | .76                               | 1.0  | .83***   |
| (N)  | 33                                | 29-31  | 209  |

Percentages are adjusted. N is actual number of observations. \* = difference significant at  $p < .1$ , \*\* = significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* = significant at  $p < .01$ ; two-tailed test.

<sup>7</sup> Calculated using OLS.

**Table 9 – School Facilities and Programs**

| At the school your child attends, which of the following programs or facilities are available to students?            | Basic Fund Scholarship Recipients | Basic Fund Applicants Who Remained in Public Schools | Low-Income, Central-City Families in Public Schools Nationwide |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|--|
|   | (1)                               | (2)  | (3)  |
| <b>Percent of percents reporting the following resources at their child's school:</b>                                 |                                   |  |  |
| Nurse's Office  | 44                                | 71***  | 95***  |
| Cafeteria   | 61                                | 82   | 99***  |
| Special programs for advanced learners  | 53                                | 61   | 91***  |
| Special programs for students with learning problems  | 57                                | 93***  | 93***  |
| Guidance counselor  | 75                                | 73   | 95***  |
| Music program   | 77                                | 74   | 93***  |
| Individual tutors   | 58                                | 40*  | 73***  |
| After-school program  | 83                                | 76   | 92***  |
| (N)   | 64-77                             | 62-73  | 275-381  |
| <b>Of parents of students with learning disabilities:</b>   |                                   |  |  |
| Percent who report that their child's school attends to his/her particular learning needs "adequately" or "very well" | 74                                | 47   | 56***  |
| (N)   | 11                                | 15   | 60   |

Percentages are adjusted. N is actual number of observations. \* = difference significant at  $p < .1$ , \*\* = significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* = significant at  $p < .01$ ; two-tailed test.

**Table 10 – Size of School**

| Approximately how many students attend your child's school?        | Basic Fund Scholarship Recipients | Basic Fund Applicants Who Remained in Public Schools | Low-Income, Central-City Families in Public Schools Nationwide |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|--|
|  | (1)                               | (2)  | (3)  |
| <b>Size of school (as reported by parents)<sup>8</sup>:</b>        |                                   |  |  |
| 150 or fewer   | 20%                               | 2%***  | 12%***   |
| 151-300  | 42                                | 24*  | 19***  |
| 301-450  | 6                                 | 24***  | 15***  |
| 451-600  | 12                                | 31**   | 21***  |
| Over 600   | 14                                | 19   | 41***  |
| <b>Average size of school (as reported by parents)<sup>9</sup></b> | 296                               | 445***   | 490***   |
| <b>(N)</b>   | 72                                | 47   | 282  |

Percentages are adjusted. N is actual number of observations. \* = difference significant at  $p < .1$ , \*\* = significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* = significant at  $p < .01$ ; two-tailed test.

<sup>8</sup> Figures do not total to 100% due to statistical adjustment.

<sup>9</sup> Average size of school estimated using OLS with each category coded at its midpoint. Responses in the largest category (over 600) were assigned a value of 675.

**Table 11 – Class Size**

| Approximately how many students are in your child's classroom?  | Basic Fund Scholarship Recipients | Basic Fund Applicants Who Remained in Public Schools | Low-Income, Central-City Families in Public Schools Nationwide |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|--|
|   | (1)                               | (2)  | (3)  |
| <b>Class size (as reported by parents)<sup>10</sup>:</b>        |                                   |  |  |
| 15 or fewer   | 11%                               | 3%***  | 5%***  |
| 16-25   | 48                                | 61   | 47***  |
| Over 25   | 33                                | 34   | 46***  |
| <b>Average Class Size (as reported by parents)<sup>11</sup></b> | 22.5                              | 22.6   | 23.8***  |
| (N)   | 77                                | 73   | 370  |

Percentages are adjusted. N is actual number of observations. \* = difference significant at  $p < .1$ , \*\* = significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* = significant at  $p < .01$ ; two-tailed test.

<sup>10</sup> Figures do not total to 100% due to statistical adjustment.

<sup>11</sup> Average class size estimated using OLS with each category coded at its midpoint. Responses in the highest category (over 40) were assigned a value of 43.

**Table 12 – Relationships with Teachers**

|   | <b>Basic Fund<br/>Scholarship<br/>Recipients</b> | <b>Basic Fund<br/>Applicants<br/>Who Remained<br/>in Public<br/>Schools</b> | <b>Low-Income,<br/>Central-City<br/>Families in<br/>Public Schools<br/>Nationwide</b> |
|---|--|---|---|
|   | (1)  | (2)   | (3)   |
| <b>Percent of parents reporting teachers<br/>“always” show them respect</b>                       | 84   | 66**  | 74***   |
| (N)   | 77   | 73  | 384   |
| <b>Percent of students who “agree” or<br/>"strongly agree" with the following<br/>statements:</b> |  |   |   |
| "Most of my teachers really listen to what I<br>have to say." <sup>12</sup>                       | 94   | 88  | 78**  |
| "In class, I often feel 'put down' by my<br>teachers."  | 14   | 24  | 13*   |
| "Rules for behavior at my school are strict."   | 52   | 33  | 14***   |
| (N)   | 33-34  | 29-32   | 208-209   |

Percentages are adjusted. N is actual number of observations. \* = difference significant at  $p < .1$ , \*\* = significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* = significant at  $p < .01$ ; two-tailed test.

<sup>12</sup> Because all Catholics and Hispanics in the sample reported that their teachers listen to what they say, it is impossible to use these characteristics for a statistical adjustment. Therefore, figures for this question are unadjusted.

**Table 13 – Ethnic Integration**

|   | <b>Basic Fund<br/>Scholarship<br/>Recipients</b> | <b>Basic Fund<br/>Applicants<br/>Who Remained<br/>in Public<br/>Schools</b> | <b>Low-Income,<br/>Central-City<br/>Families in<br/>Public Schools<br/>Nationwide</b> |
|---|--|---|---|
|   | <b>(1)</b>                                       | <b>(2)</b>  | <b>(3)</b>  |
| <b>Percent of students attending schools with the following percentage of minorities (as reported by parents):</b>      |  |   |   |
| Under 10%   | 32   | 31  | 22***   |
| 10% to 50%  | 24   | 19  | 23***   |
| 50% to 90%  | 21   | 42**  | 23***   |
| Over 90%  | 21   | 9**   | 26***   |
| <b>(N)</b>  | 75   | 70  | 342   |
| <b>Percent of students who report eating lunch with students of other races "all of the time" or "most of the time"</b> | 72   | 77  | 96***   |
| <b>Average number of four best friends who are of a different race (as reported by students)<sup>13</sup></b>           | 1.7  | 1.6   | 1.8***  |
| <b>(N)</b>  | 32-33  | 26-29   | 209   |

Percentages are adjusted. N is actual number of observations. \* = difference significant at  $p < .1$ , \*\* = significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* = significant at  $p < .01$ ; two-tailed test.

<sup>13</sup> Estimated using OLS.

**Table 14 – Homework, Classwork, and Television**

|   | <b>Basic Fund Scholarship Recipients</b> | <b>Basic Fund Applicants Who Remained in Public Schools</b> | <b>Low-Income, Central-City Families in Public Schools Nationwide</b> |
|---|--|---|---|
|   | (1)                                      | (2)   | (3)   |
| <b>Percent of parents reporting child does "one to two hours" or more of homework each night:</b> | 61                                       | 39***   | 41***   |
| (N)   | 78                                       | 74  | 380   |
| <b>Percent of students reporting they do "one to two hours" or more of homework each night</b>    | 67                                       | 29***   | 47***   |
| <b>Percent of students who agree with the following statements about their work:</b>              |  |   |   |
| "Class work is hard to learn"   | 28                                       | 41  | 37***   |
| "I had trouble keeping up with the work"  | 26                                       | 34  | 31***   |
| "I would do much better if I had more help"   | 42                                       | 58  | 47***   |
| <b>Average hours each day spent watching TV or videos or playing video games<sup>14</sup></b>     | 2.3                                      | 2.4   | 3.3***  |
| (N)   | 33                                       | 29-32   | 210-211   |

Percentages are adjusted. N is actual number of observations. \* = difference significant at  $p < .1$ , \*\* = significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* = significant at  $p < .01$ ; two-tailed test.

<sup>14</sup> Estimated using OLS with each category coded at its midpoint. Responses in the highest category (over 5) were assigned a value of 5.5.

**Table 15 – Parental Involvement**

|   | <b>Basic Fund Scholarship Recipients</b> | <b>Basic Fund Applicants Who Remained in Public Schools</b> | <b>Low-Income, Central-City Families in Public Schools Nationwide</b> |
|---|--|---|---|
|   | <b>(1)</b>                               | <b>(2)</b>  | <b>(3)</b>  |
| <b>Percent of parents who report that they or someone else in the child's family:</b>     |  |   |   |
| Attended 3 or more parent-teacher conferences in the child's school this year             | 71                                       | 69  | 55***   |
| Volunteered at least one hour in the child's school in the past month                     | 72                                       | 47***   | 33***   |
| Talks with other parents of children in the same school "often" or "very often"           | 75                                       | 66  | 58***   |
| Spoke with the child's teacher or principal on the phone five or more times this year     | 34                                       | 42  | 15***   |
| <b>(N)</b>  | 77-78                                    | 73-74   | 384   |
| <b>Percent of students reporting that:</b>  |  |   |   |
| Their parents "know a lot" about their school   | 95                                       | 76**  | 74***   |
| They talk to their parents about school "almost every day"                                | 82                                       | 59*   | 69***   |
| <b>Average number of student's four best friends his or her parent knows<sup>15</sup></b> | 3.3                                      | 3.3   | 2.8***  |
| <b>(N)</b>  | 33                                       | 29-31   | 208   |

Percentages are adjusted. N is actual number of observations. \* = difference significant at  $p < .1$ , \*\* = significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* = significant at  $p < .01$ ; two-tailed test.

<sup>15</sup> Calculated using OLS.



**Table 16 – Suspension Rates**

| During this past year, was your child ever suspended for disciplinary reasons? | Basic Fund Scholarship Recipients | Basic Fund Applicants Who Remained in Public Schools | Low-Income, Central-City Families in Public Schools Nationwide |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|--|
|  | (1)                               | (2)  | (3)  |
| <b>Percent of students suspended</b>   | 6                                 | 11   | 12***  |
| <b>(N)</b>   | 78                                | 73   | 383  |

Percentages are adjusted. N is actual number of observations. \* = difference significant at  $p < .1$ , \*\* = significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* = significant at  $p < .01$ ; two-tailed test.

**Table 17 – Educational Expectations**

| How far in school do you intend to go: probably won't graduate from college, will graduate from high school, will go to college but might not graduate, will go to more school after college? | Basic Fund Scholarship Recipients | Basic Fund Applicants Who Remained in Public Schools | Low-Income, Central-City Families in Public Schools Nationwide |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|--|
|   | (1)                               | (2)  | (3)  |
| <b>Percent of students who expect to attend more school after college</b>   | 39                                | 20   | 20**   |
| <b>(N)</b>  | 33                                | 29   | 194  |

Percentages are adjusted. N is actual number of observations. \* = difference significant at  $p < .1$ , \*\* = significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* = significant at  $p < .01$ ; two-tailed test.

**Table 18 – Peer Group Relations**

|  | <b>Basic Fund<br/>Scholarship<br/>Recipients</b> | <b>Basic Fund<br/>Applicants<br/>Who Remained<br/>in Public<br/>Schools</b> | <b>Low-Income,<br/>Central-City<br/>Families in<br/>Public Schools<br/>Nationwide</b> |
|--|--|---|---|
|  | (1)  | (2)   | (3)   |
| <b>Percent of students who “agree” or<br/>"strongly agree" that in their school:</b> |  |   |   |
| "Students get along well with others"  | 90   | 75*   | 74***   |
| “Other students make fun of me”  | 27   | 46  | 34***   |
| (N)  | 32-33  | 29  | 208-209   |

Percentages are adjusted. N is actual number of observations. \* = difference significant at  $p < .1$ , \*\* = significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* = significant at  $p < .01$ ; two-tailed test.

**Table 19 – Student Activities**

|   | <b>Basic Fund<br/>Scholarship<br/>Recipients</b> | <b>Basic Fund<br/>Applicants<br/>Who Remained<br/>in Public<br/>Schools</b> | <b>Low-Income,<br/>Central-City<br/>Families in<br/>Public Schools<br/>Nationwide</b> |
|---|--|---|---|
|   | (1)  | (2)   | (3)   |
| <b>Percent of students who report doing the following activities “a lot”:</b> |  |   |   |
| "Attend church or religious services outside of school"                       | 65   | 17***   | 19***   |
| "Participate in church or religious youth groups"                             | 48   | 5***  | 9***  |
| "Participate in scouting (Cub Scouts, Brownies)"                              | 3  | 3   | 7***  |
| "Play team sports (like Little League)"                                       | 65   | 58  | 32***   |
| <b>(N)</b>  | 33   | 30  | 208-210   |

Percentages are adjusted. N is actual number of observations. \* = difference significant at  $p < .1$ , \*\* = significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* = significant at  $p < .01$ ; two-tailed test.

**Table 20 – Political Tolerance**

| Some people have views that you oppose very strongly. Do you think these people should be allowed to...? | Basic Fund Scholarship Recipients | Basic Fund Applicants Who Remained in Public Schools | Low-Income, Central-City Families in Public Schools Nationwide |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|--|
|  | (1)                               | (2)  | (3)  |
| <b>Percent of students who think those with opposing views should be allowed to:</b>                     |                                   |  |  |
| "Come to your school and give a speech"  | 42                                | 37   | 43   |
| "Live in your neighborhood"  | 79                                | 65   | 42***  |
| "Run for president"  | 65                                | 49   | 36***  |
| <b>Index of Political Tolerance<sup>16</sup></b>   | 1.8                               | 1.5  | 1.2***   |
| <b>(N)</b>   | 33                                | 30   | 209-210  |

Percentages are adjusted. N is actual number of observations. \* = difference significant at  $p < .1$ , \*\* = significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* = significant at  $p < .01$ ; two-tailed test.

<sup>16</sup> Calculated using OLS. The index represents the additive score of the three tolerance items.