

# A Qualitative Examination of the Political and Policy Development of Indiana's School Scholarship Act (House Bill 1003)

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**This research investigation examines the policy context of Indiana's School Scholarship Act. John Kingdon's work on agenda setting will serve as the conceptual framework for analyzing the problems, policies, and politics that arose prior to and during the passage of this legislation. The goal of this study is to identify specific social, economic, and political problems that drew attention to the need for this Act as well as to understand of the political behaviors and decision-making of stakeholders during the legislation's drafting. This cross-sectional qualitative study will use multiple in-depth interviews conducted with key stakeholders in addition document analyses in order to understand this phenomenon. Unfortunately due to time restraints, interviews were not conducted and only press releases and public statements made by stakeholders were coded to discern thematic opinions and behaviors. This investigation found that the document analysis supports the literature on this subject. Concepts that emerged include: civic capacity, equal opportunity, and quality of education. The conclusion is drawn that political parties struggled to define vouchers and charters as a solution to Indiana's educational issues. Overall, the state Republican Party had more agenda setting power and greater influence than Democrats and thus was able to gain wider support for vouchers. Implications of this research are such that political endeavor may not directly support the education of children. Recommendations for corrective actions are discussed. Limitations of this research are discussed.**

## Literature Review

### *Research Problem, Significance, and Goals*

Within the larger context of issues in education, school choice and charter schools have become a central focus of policy debate over the last fifteen years. While on the politically left end of the spectrum, Democrats are likely to argue in favor of the unique educational communities of charter schools; the right end of the continuum consists of Republicans who strongly contend the market equalizing effects of school choice and voucher programs. In 2001, Indiana became the 38<sup>th</sup> state to pass laws that authorized the opening of charter schools; this movement reflects a more liberally oriented education agenda. Nonetheless, ten years later in 2011, the state passed the School Scholarship Act, which grants the use of vouchers in school choice, a more conservatively leaning policy. Amidst the backdrop of the politicization of education in the country, this research attempts to understand the political decisions and policy developments of Indiana's recently passed School Scholarship Act (House Bill 1003) and how this legislation is meant to respond to the educational problems in the state. This research is meaningful in so much as it will investigate the development of the political support and legislative drafting for the School Scholarship Act.

The goals of this research are two-fold. The first

objective of this investigation is to develop a literature-based understanding of the School Scholarship Act. This will be accomplished through defining and reviewing the recent historical development of the legislation while paying specific attention to the political and social movements that backed it; John Kingdon's theoretical work on policy streams will serve as the conceptual framework for this analysis. Secondly, through pattern coding of interview data and various documents, this investigation will supplement the literature-based understanding of this phenomenon with qualitative and systematically collected opinions of key stakeholders. Overall, the purpose of this research is to generate a literature and research-supported hypothesis and explanation of the passage of the School Scholarship Act. This research will provide an explanation for Indiana's specific legislation but will also hopefully contribute to a greater understanding of the infusion of politics in American public schools.

### *Conceptual Framework*

John Kingdon's theoretical model for political agenda setting describes the process of how the identification of social problems leads to legislation. The framework divides the agenda setting process into three streams: problems, politics, and policies. The problem

stream concerns problem recognition and definition. It focuses on the factors and indicators that bring a particular social issue to the attention of decision makers with the suggestion that legislative action needs to be taken. In addition, this stream looks at the significance of how conditions around a social issue are construed and defined as a problem. The politics stream considers the influences of political events and actors that surround a social issue such as elections, administrative agendas, general public opinion, political ideologies of decision-makers as well as interest and advocacy groups. From an internal dynamics standpoint, this stream also looks at the processes of consensus building and bargaining among key decision-makers. This stream also differentiates between visible and hidden participants. Visible participants are those stakeholders who receive considerable press and attention such as presidents, congressman, political parties, and campaigners. Conversely, hidden participants constitute stakeholders such as academic specialists, bureaucrats, and congressional staffers (Kingdon, 1995).

The policy stream constitutes the selection process of the range of proposals that exist as a possible solution to a social issue. Generating a policy alternative can be equated to the process of natural selection in so much as the policies that are the most efficient, effective, politically feasible, and equitable are likely to be passed. Under this stream, a policy will go through the process of 'softening up' in which elements of a policy will be voted on, removed, tweaked, and combined with other policy elements until a mutually fulfilling and satisfactory policy emerges. Overall, this outlines the policy agenda setting process, from its conception as a response to a social issue to its formal development into legislation. After defining the School Scholarship Act, this policy stream framework will be applied to the development of House Bill 1003 (Kingdon, 1995).

### *Defining the School Scholarship Act*

Under the new School Scholarship Act, Indiana will establish a new voucher policy and expand upon its current tax credit scholarship program (DiPerna, 2011). Essentially, this will allow any child whose family income is less than 150% of the federal free-and reduced lunch program (or \$61,190 for a family of four) and has attended a public school for at least two semesters to be eligible to receive a scholarship to attend any pre-approved and/or accredited private school (Bast, 2011). In the first year of the program, 7,500 children will be able to utilize the school scholarship funds; in the second year of the program, this figure will double to 15,000 eligible students

and will open up to 600,000 (60% of the Indiana student population) by the program's third year (DiPerna, 2011). In practice, students who are entitled to free-and-reduced lunch will qualify to receive a voucher worth up to 90% of the per-pupil expenditure a state would normally allocate to a school (Bast, 2011).

### *Development of the School Scholarship Act* **Problem stream.**

In 2001, the state of Indiana became the 38<sup>th</sup> state to pass a charter school law, which ended a seven-year long debate on the issue. Indiana was the first state to grant mayoral control of charter schools; this allowed the mayor the authority to authorize the opening of new, publicly funded but independently governed charter schools. Within a six-year period, the mayor of Indianapolis had authorized a total of sixteen new charter schools (Smrekar, 2008). Fueled with dissatisfaction over the approach of charter schools that traditionally caters to low-income populations, Republican stakeholders began to develop support for a new school voucher program intended to serve all income populations. In January of 2011, Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels put forth that he supported a new school choice initiative that would allow not only low-income families the option to choose their school but also extend this opportunity to middle and upper income families.

Another problem that likely backed the political shift from charters to voucher programs was the public dissatisfaction of poor performance of public education in Indiana (Berends & Zottola, 2009). From 2002 to 2011, Indiana public schools have consistently underperformed and failed to meet AYP (Annual Yearly Progress) goals. By 2011, only sixty-three percent of Title I<sup>1</sup> and seventy-eight percent of non-Title I elementary schools met AYP goals. As the level of education increases, the student achievement figures become worse. Only twenty-five percent of Title I and thirty-six percent of non-Title I schools middle schools met their AYP targets. Most staggering, only fifteen percent of Title I and twenty-one percent of non-Title I high schools met AYP benchmarks; cumulatively, this indicates that only one-fifth (seventy-nine out of 386) of Indiana's public high schools were proficient in reading and mathematics. However, under the voucher law, families would have the opportunity and financial viability to opt out of low-performing public education and enroll their students in a, presumably, higher performing

<sup>1</sup> Title I schools are eligible to receive additional federal and state funding based on how much of its student population receive Free-and-Reduced-Lunch

private school (Figlio, 2009).

### **Politics stream.**

In response to the dissatisfaction with public education performance and charter schools, Robert Enlow, President of the Foundation for Educational Choice announced that his organization would spend \$500,000 campaigning in support of Governor Daniel's school choice initiative. Within a similar time frame, Indiana State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tony Bennett, publicly announced his support for this movement (Carmack, 2011, Jan 7). Only within a few weeks of Daniel's announcement, Republican stakeholders had developed a strong support base of visible and hidden participants ranging from legislators, non-profit advocacy groups as well as public education officials. In contrast, Nate Schnellenberer from the Indiana State Teacher's Association argued against this initiative claiming that this policy would potentially allow public funds to go toward a private religious education, which would violate the Establishment Clause of the first amendment (Indianapolis Star Associated Press, 2011, Jan 11). The 2002 Supreme Court Case of *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, of course, invalidates Schnellenberer's argument as the Supreme Court ruled that financial resources, in the form of a voucher, were given to *parents* and *not a religious institution*; thus voucher law did not directly respect a private religious establishment but instead respected a parent's decision to place their child in a religiously affiliated school (*Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, 2002).

To further develop support for the school choice movement, Enlow publicly released and discussed a poll survey that his organization conducted which revealed that a majority of Indiana voters, especially minority and suburban citizens, were supportive of vouchers and choosing schools for their children (Enlow, 2011, Jan 10). In another of Enlow's survey, researchers found that nearly all supporters of the school choice legislation were also in favor of opening the choice option to families of all socio-economic backgrounds. Because this policy would also appeal to the upper level socio-economic Republicans in the states, it was likely that the School Scholarship Act would be favored by both the Republican-dominated Indiana House and Senate as a viable policy solution to the education budget cuts facing Indiana (Weidenbener, 2011, Jan 10). In response to growing support of school choice, Larry Grau from the Indiana Democrats for Education Reform put forth their own survey poll that indicated the "importance of maintaining a strong network of charter schools and other public school options" (Elliot, 2011, Jan 11). In the midst of the Republican centered

rhetoric on school choice, Grau's efforts did not succeed in swaying other's political opinions. Additionally, polls from the Foundation for Educational Choice demonstrated that more than half of voters in Indiana would prefer to send their children to private school and that, generally, parents were not aware of the high costs of public education (LeFevre, 2011, Jan 12). From a social perspective, the lack of knowledge of public education funding, dissatisfaction with public schools, preference for a private education, and wide-spread socio-economic support were contributing factors that drove political actors in their support in the passage of the School Scholarship Act (DeB-ray-Pelot, Lubienski, & Scott, 2007; Hill & Jochim, 2009; Nechyba, 2009).

### **Policy stream.**

After only four months of developing political and community stakeholder support as well as combating charter school proponents, Governor Mitch Daniels finally signed the School Scholarship Act into law (PR Newswire, 2011, May 5). In terms of voting, the Senate and House Education Committees voted, respectively, in favor of the Act seven to three and eight to five. Likewise, the Senate and House Floors voted twenty-eight to twenty-two and fifty-six to forty-two (DiPerna, 2011). The relative ease and lack of excessive political deliberation in passage of this Act primarily reflects its accessibility of all families and agreement among the predominately Republican favored state population. With both a conservatively leaning House and Senate, few changes were proposed to the initial legislation except for cut off boundaries of a family's income and the amount of a voucher they would receive. Comparatively, a sole charter school policy solution could not maintain enough widespread support to remain as the dominant policy solution (PR Newswire, 2011, Nov 3).

### **Current State of the Policy**

Currently with the passage of this new policy, Indiana has the largest statewide voucher program in the country. 3,919 students, scattered among 185 school districts, have been approved to participate in the voucher program in its first year. Of the 3,919, 3,326 (or eighty-five percent) qualify for Free-and-Reduced-Lunch Program whereas the other fifteen percent are from middle-income families and qualify for a half-scholarship. The geographic disbursement of participating students is also diverse. Sixty-nine percent are from urban neighborhoods while sixteen and fifteen percent of students are, respectively, from suburban and rural towns. Over half of all scholarship recipients are of minority origin (PR Newswire, 2011, Nov 3). Given

these figures, Enlow reports:

This statewide, income-inclusive program is doing exactly what Milton Friedman envisioned. It significantly benefits low-income families but also helps middle-income families. It has broad reach across the state and significant participation from suburban and rural areas. And it helps a large number of minority children access a more effective education. I'd call that a success (PR Newswire, 2011, Nov 3).

## Methodology

### *Research Problem Restatement and Design*

Given the literature-based understanding of the School Scholarship Act, how can qualitative and systematically collected data aid and further develop an understanding of this bill's passage? The purpose of this research is to develop a hypothesis or conceptualize a working model to further understand this legislation. In order to undergo this endeavor, researchers will interview a cross-section of visible and hidden stakeholders who were directly and indirectly related to this legislation over a period of four months. This research will be cross-sectional in nature as it will only investigate the participation and role of stakeholders over a snapshot time period.

### *Sampling Strategy*

This investigation will employ non-probability sampling procedures in order to purposefully select the stakeholders who are most knowledgeable about the School Scholarship Act (Van Schaack, 28 Feb 2011). The target population of participants will broadly be defined in terms of stakeholders who are directly and indirectly associated with the School Scholarship Act. With regard to sampling strategy, three particular methods will be used. Participants will be selected on a typical case basis such that they can speak on behalf and convey the opinions of a larger, disembodied group of stakeholders of which they are a part. This form of sampling will primarily be used to select principals, teachers, and teacher union representatives who can convey their particular perspective as a typical stakeholder. Because it would be impractical to interview every principal and teacher in Indiana to understand the general opinion of these stakeholders, a few 'typical' teacher and principals will be interviewed.

Alternatively, this investigation will also question participants on a critical case basis such as stakeholders who were directly involved with the development of the legislation and who have demonstrated themselves to be the more important and influential participants; these

stakeholders will include the Governor and Mayor of Indianapolis, presidents of organizations involved in advocacy as well as Senators and Representatives who voted on the legislation. Finally, snowball or network sampling will be used to more fully understand the development of connections and relationships between various stakeholders. This sampling technique focuses on gathering the names of other important stakeholders during an interview or document analysis in an attempt to create a larger 'network' or 'rolling snowball' of potential participants (Van Schaack, 28 Feb 2011).

Additionally, this research will perform a coding-based document analysis, using the constant comparative method, of various transcribed articles such as political blogs, advocacy group statements, newspaper pieces, and political press releases. Such documents will include transcripts from legislative hearings on the School Scholarship Act, press releases from the office of the Indiana state governor, press releases from mayors, public statements made by advocacy organizations, and press releases from teachers, principals, superintendents, and teacher union leaders (Smrekar, 2008). Documents such as political blogs and advocacy group statements will have an inherent political basis that will be taken into account but will also help better shape an understanding of the political interactions and dynamics that occurred during the drafting and passage of this legislation. The variety of documents used to conduct the document analysis was as robust as possible to the extent to which articles on this limited topic were available.

### *Sample*

Based on the sampling frame and strategy, the following categories of stakeholders will be contacted for an interview: politicians, school superintendents, principal, teachers, school board members, teacher union representatives, parent group representatives, and advocacy group representatives (Smrekar, 2008). Specifically, the following prominent individual stakeholders will be interviewed: Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels, Robert Enlow (President of the Foundation of Educational Choice), Tony Benett (Indiana State Superintendent of Public Instruction), Nate Schnellenberer (Indiana State Teacher's Association), Larry Grau (Indiana Democrats for Education Reform), Indiana Representative Robert Behning, and Indiana Representative Brian Bosma. Realistically, interviewing a sample of twenty teachers and twelve principals will suffice based on the large size of their stakeholder groups in this study.

### Procedure

Participants will be asked to take part in hour-long interviews that will be audiotaped (given the consent of the participant) and transcribed verbatim. Using the grounded theory approach, interview transcripts as well as the various documents will be coded and analyzed using the constant comparative method (Boeje, 2002). The constant comparative method is an inductive research method that dictates when a new piece of text or data is coded that the researcher go back and compare the newly coded item with all previous items that had been similarly coded. This ensures consistency in the coding scheme and allows the researcher to determine if a particular item is coded incorrectly; this allows for more appropriate codes to be created to better fit the item in question (Gibbs & Taylor, 2005).

Specifically, pattern coding will be used during the coding stage in order to discern patterns of ideas, actions, and behavior among participant stakeholders (Fetterman, 1989; Yin 1989). The first step of the method is general data collection. From the data collected, the emergent themes within the data are *coded* in order to allow for the codes to be grouped together. Codes that are grouped based on similarity are known as *concepts*; this is done so that concepts can be more broadly associated with *categories*. Categories are the basis for generalizing a *theory* (or a reverse engineered hypothesis) (Patton, 2001). More particular to this research, prominent and pervasive information from the interview transcripts, field notes, and documents will be organized in order to highlight broad concepts and broad categories from the data.

#### Interview probes.

The interview questions for this investigation will mirror those of Dr. Claire Smrekar's (2008) research on the origins and implications of the role of mayoral authority in charter school authorization and accountability in Indianapolis. Interviews will be prompted with an action-word that precedes a series of items that they will be asked to discuss. Each interview will attempt to cover as many items as possible. See Appendix for the list of interview probes that will be employed (Smrekar, 2008).

#### Measures.

The following general ideas will be coded: Specific behaviors of stakeholders, short-term events, long-term activities, overt strategies or tactics, general states or conditions, an individual's interpretation or meaning-making process, participation and involvement in an endeavor, relationships and interactions as well as settings and contexts (Gibbs & Taylor, 2005). While the existing literature on the School Scholarship Act provides a strong framework for larger political movements and decisions

behind this legislation, there is a lack of knowledge about the subtleties of stakeholder interactions. The above categories were chosen to serve as behavioral measures to understand internal dynamics and processes among prominent stakeholders.

### Results

Due to time and resource limitations, only press releases, political blogs, and other related articles were available for analysis. The methodology section sets up for interviews among key participants in this legislation. With additional time, interviews and further analysis will be forthcoming. Because this research employs the constant comparative method, the results of the document analysis can easily be compared to interview data and progress on this research can be continued.

Throughout the document analyses, few common patterns in language were discerned. Having used the constant comparative method, the broadest categories include: increased civic capacity, equality of opportunity, and quality of education.

#### *Increased Civic Capacity*

Much of the literature-based document analysis revealed that Republican policymakers wanted the School Scholarship Act to pass in order to increase the role that parents played in influence their child's education; in other words, these stakeholders sought for increased civic capacity in the institution of education. Civic capacity, in this sense, is defined as the ability for an individual to impact a governmental process and put forth his/her own voice. Within the problem stream according to Kingdon's framework, Republicans framed the need for this legislation as a way to increase the say that a parent has on where their child goes to school. In a press release, Speaker Bosma stated, "This [the School Scholarship Act] is another option for parents to choose a school that best meets their child's needs... We must give families the option to provide their children with the best education" (Indiana House Republican Caucus, 2011, March 30). Similarly, Superintendent Tony Bennett reported, "HB 1003 empowers Indiana's families by allowing students to use a means-tested opportunity scholarship to attend a school that best meets their individual learning needs. This bill gives parents a voice, and it gives students a choice" (Indianan Department of Education, 2011, April 13). The civic empowerment of the School Scholarship Act extends to school-level management in so much as this legislation, "gives school leaders the freedom to innovate and provides high quality options for all students" (Bennett,

T., Indianan Department of Education, 2011, April 21). Other common ideas for this theme included terms such as *choice, empowerment, freedom, innovation, and power.*

### ***Equality of Opportunity***

Among the coding patterns, the notion of providing education to all students regardless of income level and neighborhood emerged as a rationale for the need of the School Scholarship Act. Given the inherent dissatisfaction with Indiana schools, policymakers were able to use the need for every student to have access to a quality education as a reason for the passage of House Bill 1003. In a press release, Mitch Daniels stated, “Our children will thrive in a system that provides quality options to all students regardless of their ZIP code or how much money is in the family bank account. Indiana is now at the forefront of a national movement that demands all children receive the academic tools necessary for success” (Indianan Department of Education, 2011, April 27). On a similar note, Tony Bennett put forth that, “A great education should not be an option available only to a privileged few but rather a fundamental right for all Americans... In Indiana, we are removing barriers to success and opportunity for students who have been denied equitable access for far too long.” Finally, Bennett, in a different press release, stated,

By boldly asserting every child’s right to attend a great school, the Hoosier state has taken a powerful stand in favor of equal educational opportunities for all children. Education is the civil rights issue of our generation, and I’m proud to say Indiana is leading the charge on behalf of students who have been held captive by the soft bigotry of low expectations for far too long (Indianan Department of Education, 2011, April 27)

The main codes within this category included terms such as *equality, equity, opportunity, removal of barriers, independent of zip code, and opening doors for all.*

### ***Quality of Education***

The last prominent category to emerge through this analysis was the general need for a better education system. While most of the blogs and press releases pointed toward the need for increased civic capacity and opportunity, there was considerably less rhetoric on the School Scholarship Act in terms of simply creating better schools; nonetheless, it still emerged as a noticeable category. At one point, Bennett commented, “This measure extends the right to all Indiana families. Children have unique learn-

ing needs and deserve access to high quality options to meet those needs” (Indianan Department of Education, 2011, April 21). Likewise, in a conservative blog from the Foundation for Educational Choice, a contributor wrote that, “[he/she] applauds state legislators for allowing them to choose a school that best meets their child’s individual learning needs” (Foundation for Educational Choice, 2011, Nov 3). These specific two quotations are important as they both make reference to the effective educational practice of recognizing the individual learning needs of a child. In all, terms that composed this concept included *best/high quality schools/ education, learning, and unique needs.*

A working theory of the interactions of these concepts is discussed in the next section.

## **Discussion**

### ***Conclusion***

Based on the literature review and results section, it is clear that Democrats and Republicans in Indiana underwent a traditional politicking struggle as both parties attempted to construe vouchers and charters as a solution to Indiana’s educational issues. With rallying more public support and framing the issue as one that strove for civic capacity, better education and opportunity, the Republican Party had greater agenda setting power and more influence than Democrats; this enabled them to gain wider support for vouchers. This conclusion is satisfactory in so much as it addresses the need for a better and systematic understanding of the passage of the School Scholarship Act.

### ***Implications***

Realistically, this research exemplifies the extent to which education has become a political institution that focuses more on the allocation of resources and conflict among stakeholders than the actual recipients of education: students. While on the surface politicians strive to achieve goals that are characteristic of a democratic education, such as civic capacity and equality, one must dig deeper and attempt to understand why this may be their motive. In the case of the School Scholarship Act, Robert Enlow put forth large sums of money in the name of the Foundation of Educational Choice (a conservatively leaning organization that focuses on empowering individuals and businesses as opposed to governments). Subsequently, policymakers construed the need for House Bill 1003 as a means for parents to have a choice in their child’s education and, peripherally, a way for children to receive a better education. Needless to say, civic capacity (something Enlow’s foundation specifically supports) was

at the forefront of this legislation. This situation demonstrates the political behavior of pushing for the causes of private donors while masking true intentions in the name of a public good.

On another more troubling level, one sees that this legislation was primarily parent-focused and not child-centered. It is true that the legislation was partly intended for children to attend better schools however the rhetoric of the Act focused on increasing civic capacity for parents and not directly benefitting a particular school. That is not to say that a voucher system is not an effective way to close the achievement gap but rather it is simply not directed at a particular child's learning. Unfortunately, this study cannot answer the question of what to do about the increasing politicization that is occurring in American classrooms. However, this research does serve the purpose of documenting a political phenomenon in education that was driven by private funds, which ultimately may not even academically benefit students. Ultimately, policymakers, in making education related decisions, need to make cases for their arguments based on available peer-reviewed research that at least attempts to answer the simple question, "how will policy X directly benefit the teaching and learning of students in my district?"

### Limitations

This research is in limited multiple ways, specifically with regard to researcher bias, credibility as well as the selection of documents used in the analysis. In conducting this investigation, the researcher intended to specifically look for how political support developed for the School Scholarship Act and the interactions between political parties and stakeholders. While the researcher remains politically unbiased with regard to vouchers and school choice, the specific search for political interactions and contentions may have shortsighted the emergence of other prominent themes, ideas, and contexts relevant to the passage of this legislation. Familiar to nearly all qualitative research, this report suffers from general issues of credibility. Within this investigation, credibility is defined as the extent to which the document data, the document analysis, and the supplemental conclusion are believable and trustworthy (Van Schacck, 4 Dec. 2011). Although the results of the document analysis and conclusion are similar to the findings of the literature review, the additional elements, such as the promotion of a Republican agenda as opposed to the motive of reducing the achievement gap, still hold burdens of trust and believability among critics. Given the inherent political bias of the relatively small number of documents analyzed, the conclusions

drawn suffer from issues of trustworthiness (as in, can a person trust the reliability of a particular press release given that it comes from political party X) more so than believability.

Probably the greatest limitation to this research, apart from the lack of interview data, was the limited range of documents in the document analysis. Although a variety of political blogs, advocacy group statements, newspaper pieces, and political press releases were employed in the analysis, a greater number and wider assortment of articles would have afforded a better opportunity for a more in-depth and sophisticated understanding of the incubation and growth of the School Scholarship Act.

### Recommendations

Given the limitations of the research, two specific improvements can aid future study of this subject. The timeline of this investigation was limited to a semester, or roughly 15 weeks of study. Being that qualitative research demands long, in-depth interviews, administrative tasks of coordinating interviews as well as critical reflection on collected data; the simple recommendation of more time to conduct this investigation is warranted. More specific to the methodology of this study, researchers should strive for triangulation of data sources to address issues of credibility. Triangulation refers to the comparison of results obtained from different data collection methods, such as interviews, document analyses, and natural observations. This qualitative strategy does this in an attempt to strengthen the credibility of the overall conclusion that the researcher makes. Again, conducting interviews in order to have multiple sources of data for comparison would alleviate the credibility concerns for this initial research.

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## Appendix

Interview Probes (Smrekar, 2008)

Describe:

- History of involvement in the School Scholarship Act
- Reasons for involvement
- Nature of the involvement

Identify:

- Key moments
- Key events
- Key issues
- Key stakeholders and decision makers
- Key resources
- Key relationships and alliances
- Key divisions
- Key trade-offs

Discuss: (own and others')

- Coalition members/groups
- Core ideologies (public schools, private schools, school choice, public funding toward education)
- Goals and priorities (changing and enduring)
- Conflicts (divergent goals)
- Consensus (shared goals)
- Roadblocks and sticking points
- Compromises

Explore:

- Should public funding pay for a private education?
- Expectations of school choice (competition, involvement, school improvement)
- Charter schools, private schools, and scarce public resources
- Schooling as a private good v. public good
- Public school performance
- Changes in the Indiana political landscape
- New challenges for the state and the governor
- School choice density and patterns of parent choice (magnets, vouchers, charters)