



Social status, values, and support for reform in education

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ABSTRACT

Using a survey of Ohio and Indiana residents, we analyze the extent to which public support for school vouchers and school finance reform is structured by the same socioeconomic interests and values (equality, humanitarianism, individualism, and limited government) as is public support for contentious welfare policies. Disadvantaged individuals and individuals who live in disadvantaged communities are more likely to support vouchers but social status has a more ambiguous influence on support for finance reform. Values cannot explain the effect of social status on support for these education policies, but they exert independent effects. We speculate that disadvantaged individuals are more likely to see vouchers as in their interests than are advantaged individuals because voucher advocates have allied themselves with social movements and organizations representing clear constituencies (religious conservatives, low-income urban parents). On the other hand, we suggest that finance reform is more of an abstract issue because its advocates have mostly concentrated on intragovernmental litigation, and thus cleavages based on social status tend to be more obscured.

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1. Introduction

Public schools, beset by long-lasting class and racial gaps in student learning, are challenged by growing concerns that they are unable to provide equal educational opportunities. Traditionally, activists concerned with unequal educational opportunities advocated for government action to devote more resources to schools, especially low-resource ones serving disadvantaged families (for example, Kozol, 1991). The most significant attempts to improve resources for schools serving disadvantaged students have resulted in battles waged in state courthouses since the 1970s over school finance reform. Not all proposed policy interventions to reduce

educational inequality rely on the hand of the state to redistribute resources, however. In recent years a key proposal to use market incentives to ameliorate education inequality—school vouchers—has emerged on the national educational policy agenda. In this complicated policy landscape, it is important to study how Americans think about these education reforms—not just whether they support them, but also how they link these reforms to their values and to their interests.

We investigate the extent to which these proposals engender cleavages based on social status and values, which are consequential for their political survival and implementation. Policies conflicting with values embedded in American political culture, or provoking resentment against highly visible disadvantaged groups, tend to be most at risk for cuts, which is why cash assistance for the poor is politically vulnerable while Social Security is insulated from attacks (Cook & Barrett, 1992; Gilens, 1999). We

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extend the analytic framework used to study support for welfare policies to understand support for these two education reforms. Vouchers and finance reform are similar to welfare policies in that their goal is to remedy class and racial inequalities; they are different in that they target inequalities in opportunities, not outcomes.

Using data on public opinion in Indiana and Ohio, we analyze attitudes towards these education reforms that can dramatically change the way public schools operate and are funded. These two states present important variation in educational politics. Ohio is home to the publicly-financed voucher program started in Cleveland. During the time of our survey, it was also experiencing a contentious school reform lawsuit brought by a group of school districts against the state. On the other hand, Indiana does not have a publicly supported voucher program nor had it experienced any challenge to its school finance system.¹

2. Background

2.1. Overview of policies

Vouchers are scholarships parents use to send their children to a private school of their choice. While initial proponents (Friedman, 1955) envisioned replacing public schools with a voucher system, more recent advocates propose limited voucher programs targeting low-income families (Grafton & Permaloff, 2008; Moe, 2001). In their view, this would expand educational opportunities for disadvantaged children and motivate public schools to improve.

School finance reform targets more funds at resource-poor districts. School funding has a large local component based on the district's property wealth, which is related to socioeconomic composition (Corcoran, Evans, Godwin, Murray, & Schwab, 2004). This often entails "leveling up", or increasing expenditures for low-resource districts, as opposed to "leveling-down" reforms that redistribute revenue from high-resource to low-resource districts, which have been tried in only a few states such as New Jersey and Texas and have been very contentious (Carr & Fuhrman, 1999).

2.2. Public opinion and educational policies

People of higher social status, in terms of race and income, are more likely to adhere to beliefs justifying existing patterns of inequality. This pattern, called the "underdog principle" by Robinson and Bell (1978), has been attributed to self-interests (believing that existing inequality benefits them personally) or group interests (believing that existing inequality benefits people like them, without necessarily perceiving a personal benefit)

(Bobo & Kluegel, 1993). Whites and high-income Americans tend to espouse individualistic and conservative views, emphasizing the role individuals play in their own success, and that unregulated market processes produce optimal outcomes. Consequently, high-status individuals also tend to oppose inequality-ameliorating policies, such as income assistance to poor people or policies targeted at Blacks (Bobo & Kluegel, 1993; Davis, 2005; Feldman, 1988; Kinder & Winter, 2001; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Sanchez, Goodin, Rouse, & Santos, 2010). People from subordinate groups—non-Whites and people who have low incomes—tend to value equality and support policies that lessen inequalities in income and social status. Recent research (Feldman & Steenbergen, 2001) suggests that while advantaged groups and individuals are less likely to embrace equality, they are more likely to promote a humanitarian approach to dealing with deprivation. Humanitarianism does not support radical government intervention in market processes or the redistribution of income, but it is associated with support for government efforts to alleviate poverty.

What do these findings suggest about support for educational policies? One implication is that advantaged individuals (Whites and high-income individuals) tend to oppose policies improving educational opportunities for the disadvantaged. Another is that individuals valuing equality and humanitarianism are more likely to favor expanding educational opportunities for the disadvantaged, while individuals who espouse individualism and free-market values are less likely to see expansion of educational opportunities as the government's responsibility.

There are differences in the politics of the two policies that raise the possibility that the "underdog principle" is stronger for one policy than the other. It is plausible that the underdog principle works primarily for finance reform. Finance reform entails directly targeting resources at schools serving disadvantaged communities, drawing support for low-status individuals and repelling high-status ones. Vouchers' use of market process to ostensibly expand educational opportunities may be just as appealing to people of high status as to people low status. Thus, the underdog principle may be less operative for vouchers.

On the other hand, there are also some reasons to believe group cleavages based on status will be stronger for vouchers because, we believe, vouchers will be viewed less abstractly than finance reform by the public. First, vouchers have been more nationally prominent than has finance reform. Republican presidential administrations since Reagan have advocated for vouchers (Moe, 2001), and the controversy intensified in 2001 when the Bush II administration proposed adding a voucher component to No Child Left Behind. On the other hand, in the 1960s reformers pursued litigation to make school finance more equitable, but national avenues for this goal were halted in 1973 by the U.S. Supreme Court in its *San Antonio v. Rodriguez* decision which declared that the U.S. Constitution does not guarantee any right to an education. Consequently, advocates of school finance reform have pursued their goals solely at the state level, usually by initiating litigation against state governments (Carr & Fuhrman, 1999).

¹ Four years after our survey was conducted, Indiana did experience a lawsuit (*Bronner v. Daniels*) filed by parents challenging its system of school finance, but three years later the challenge was dismissed. In contrast, Ohio's legal challenge (*DeRolph v. State of Ohio*) was much more drawn out and contentious (the suit was filed in 1991 and was heard by the Ohio Supreme Court five times; in 2003 the Court removed itself from school finance issues).

Second, and relatedly, the two issues have different patterns of mobilization. Starting in the 1990s voucher advocates made common cause with African American parents dissatisfied with the schools in urban areas (Apple & Pedroni, 2005; d'Entremont & Huerta, 2007; Forman, 2007; Moe, 2001; Pedroni, 2007). The mobilization of Black families was seen as key to the implementation of the nation's first two voucher programs, in Milwaukee in 1990 and Cleveland in 1996. The voucher program in Cleveland was the initiative of the Republican governor and educational entrepreneurs, who enlisted the support of spokespeople for disadvantaged families. They were so successful that a state legislator representing a poor district in Cleveland led a contingent of hundreds of African American parents to Ohio's state capital to agitate for vouchers (Asongwed, 2005). In 2000, activists formed a nationwide pro-voucher organization with an African American constituency, the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO).

Grassroots mobilization tends to have a minor role in school finance struggles (Carr & Fuhrman, 1999; Paris, 2010). Many times finance reform struggles are initiated by low-resource school districts suing their state government (as in Ohio), and thus become an intragovernmental conflict. Paris (2010) argues that many finance reform advocates pursue a legalistic approach and neglect politics, sometimes to their detriment. In Ohio, a coalition of rural and urban school districts serving low-income communities sued the state over its school finance system (*DeRolph v. State of Ohio*), putting them in conflict with the Republican governor and state legislature (McKinley, 2005). In McKinley's account of the long, protracted *DeRolph* saga, there is no mention of the mobilization of other groups, other than coalitions of school districts and the executive and legislative arms of the state government. The implication is suppression of race and class cleavages in support for finance reform but not for vouchers, because people find it easier to connect their stand on vouchers to their advantaged or disadvantaged status.

This is the first study to directly compare cleavages for these two policies. Analyses of public opinion on education reform have been conducted in separate studies, which suggest the underdog principle works for both to varying degrees. For vouchers, Blacks are more likely to favor vouchers than Whites (Hochschild & Scott, 1998; Leal, 2004; Moe, 2001) and people with low incomes and low levels of education were more likely to favor vouchers than high-income individuals (Moe, 2001).

Previous research on finance equalization produces mixed findings. It does appear that minorities and low-income individuals are more likely to support finance equalization in states where it has been a contentious, protracted struggle, such as in New Jersey (Firestone, Goertz, & Natriello 1997; Paris, 2010) and Texas (Alemán, 2007), where poor and (disproportionately minority) school districts and rich (and disproportionately White) school districts were pitted against each other. In states where (like Ohio) finance reform was less controversial and where grassroots mobilization was minimal, as in Connecticut (Horton, 1991), Kentucky (Paris, 2010), and Tennessee (Reed, 2001b), cleavages based on race and income are minimal to nonexistent (Reed, 2001a, 2001b; Tedin, 1994).

There is reason to believe that individual's education level will have an ambiguous effect on support for educational reforms. Multiple studies, using different samples and measures, find that the highly educated are less likely to believe that inequality is functional for society or that individuals are responsible for their successes and failures, but they are also less likely to desire greater equality in incomes or believe that there are structural barriers that make it harder for some people to be successful in life (Bobo, 1991; Eitle & Steffens, 2009; Feldman, 1988; Hunt, 2004; Kluegel & Smith, 1986). While the highly educated are more likely to oppose policies that explicitly call for reducing inequality (Feldman & Steenbergen, 2001; Kluegel & Smith, 1986), educational background has an ambiguous relationship to support for policies that are less radical but alleviate deprivation, with some studies showing that higher education has no effect (Gilens, 1999) or leads to greater support (Kluegel & Smith, 1986) or opposition (Bobo, 1991; Bobo & Kluegel, 1993; Feldman & Steenbergen, 2001). Robinson and Bell (1978) argue that the ambiguous effects of education reflect that education is part of social status but it also has an "enlightenment" effect as well, where the highly educated are exposed to information that contradicts pervasive individualism in American society.

Jackman (1978) criticizes the idea that the highly educated are genuinely enlightened; she argues that they are more likely to only superficially endorse democratic norms such as equality. The highly educated espouse these norms in the abstract, but their support for putting these values into practice is similar to that of the less educated. This is consistent with the fact the highly educated are more likely to support greater spending on education when they are asked if the United States is "spending too much, too little, or just the right amount" of money on the nation's educational system (Plutzer & Berkman, 2005), but in states experiencing contentious battles over finance reform, the highly educated are more likely to oppose greater spending on low-resource schools (Reed, 2001a, 2001b; Tedin, 1994). We could test this by determining if the effects of education differ by state; to the extent that education leads to superficial support for the expansion of educational opportunities, the effect should be greater in a state like Indiana which has not been the site of controversies over school finance reform or vouchers, and this effect should be suppressed in a state like Ohio which has had battles over these issues.

So far, we have applied theories of public opinion towards welfare policies to educational reforms. However, since public education receives a large portion of its funding from local taxes and is a public, collective good that serves communities, not individuals, individual social status may not be the most important factor in support for educational policies. Instead, community social status may be just as important. Using the logic of the underdog principle, it is expected that individuals living in advantaged communities (either in terms of the socioeconomic composition of the community, or in terms of the performance of the local school district) are more likely to oppose reforms than individuals living in disadvantaged communities.

Education issues also may be especially salient for parents who currently have their children attending public

school, and the effects of social status and community social status may be especially large for this group of individuals. In other words, racial minorities, low-income individuals, and individuals living in disadvantaged communities may be especially more likely to support education reforms promising to expand opportunities if they are public school parents.

This study builds on the public opinion research of Reed (2001a, 2001b) and Tedin (1994), which look at support for finance reform, and Moe's (2001) and Leal's (2004) studies looking at support for vouchers. Of these four authors, only Tedin analyzed the effects of values, and his study was limited only to equality, individualism, and a crude measure of limited government, and his sample was limited to White residents in two school districts in Texas. There has been no research on vouchers considering the role of general sociopolitical values in shaping individuals' support for vouchers. Moreover, Moe used a survey conducted in 1995, and Leal used a survey conducted in 1999, before vouchers became a prominent part of the national debate. We use public opinion data collected during 2002, after the voucher issue became more prominent as a result of the advocacy of the second Bush administration.

3. Data and methods

Our data come from a random digit-dialing survey of 1515 residents of Indiana and Ohio (584 men and 931 women; 757 Ohio residents and 758 Indiana residents; ages of respondents ranged 18–90) conducted in the spring and early summer of 2002. While our sample reflects the racial breakdown of adults in Indiana and Ohio, women, the highly educated, and the affluent are overrepresented.² To deal with this, we constructed sampling weights based on respondents' state, gender, race, age, educational attainment, and income. The weights were constructed based on the 2000 5-percent Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), which is detailed data collected during the decennial census on individuals who were part of the randomly sampled 5 percent of all households in the United States. For all analyses presented in this article the cases are weighted to compensate for the underrepresentation of men, the less-educated, and low-income respondents. Our results do not differ substantially if we use weights or not.

We asked respondents for their address to identify their school district. For the 25 percent of respondents who did not reveal their address, we use a dummy indicator for cases with unknown districts and we set district variables at their mean for such individuals. Our results do not differ substantially if we drop cases with unknown addresses. We dropped 44 respondents whose race was something other than Black, Latino, or White, or who were parents of both public-school and private-school children.

² In the sample we analyzed, 62 percent of our respondents are women, while in Ohio and Indiana 52 percent of the adult population are women. The median household incomes for adults in our sample is 50,000 dollars, while according to the PUMS in the two states the median household income for adults is about 46,000 dollars. In our sample, about a third of the respondents have a baccalaureate degree or higher, while in the two states only 18 percents of adults do.

Table 1
Summary statistics.^a

Variable name	Pooled sample Proportion	
Dependent variables		
Voucher support		
Strongly oppose	0.18	
Somewhat oppose	0.20	
Somewhat support	0.34	
Strongly support	0.28	
Finance reform support		
Willing to pay taxes	0.73	
Variable name	Pooled sample	
	M	SD
Independent variables		
Race		
White (ref) ^b	0.88	–
Black ^b	0.09	–
Latino ^b	0.02	–
Household income (\$ 10,000s)	4.63	2.87
Education		
High school or less ^b	0.51	–
Some college (ref) ^b	0.29	–
College education ^b	0.20	–
District affluence	2.39	0.79
District performance	0.01	0.97
Equality	2.57	0.99
Individualism	3.47	0.99
Limited government	2.02	1.00
Humanitarianism	4.82	0.98
Conservatism	0.00	1.02
Party		
Democrat (ref) ^b	0.31	–
Republican ^b	0.34	–
Other party/independent ^b	0.35	–
Public school ideology	4.44	0.96
Age (10s of years)	4.58	1.68
Parent status		
No school-aged children (ref) ^b	0.68	–
Public-school parent ^b	0.27	–
Private-school parent ^b	0.04	–
Religion		
Mainline Protestant ^b	0.28	–
Black Protestant ^b	0.05	–
Catholic ^b	0.19	–
Evangelical Protestant ^b	0.32	–
None/other ^b	0.16	–
Male ^b	0.47	–
State		
Ohio (ref) ^b	0.50	–
Indiana ^b	0.50	–
Location unknown	0.23	–

^a Summary statistics were calculated using sample weights.

^b Variable is dummy-coded (takes on values of 0 and 1); the calculated mean represents the proportion of respondents who fall into that category.

We dropped another 153 respondents due to missing values, leaving us with 1318 cases. Summary statistics of all variables are presented in Table 1.

Dependent variables. We examine two different outcomes: support for vouchers and support for finance reform. For both outcomes, we sought to use statements that were as general as possible but were also accurate as far as these policies have been implemented. To measure support for vouchers, we asked respondents whether they support or oppose programs giving “parents

government-funded school vouchers that they can use to send their children to the private, public, or religious school of their choice.”³ Respondents could say they “strongly support”, “somewhat support”, “somewhat oppose”, or “strongly oppose” vouchers. We analyze this outcome with ordered logistic regression. For school finance reform, we asked respondents to “imagine that the state is considering a policy that would provide poorer school districts with the same amount of funding per student as schools in wealthier districts.” We then ask if they would “be willing to pay more taxes if doing so could make spending on schools more equal?” with a yes/no response format.⁴ We analyze this outcome with binary logistic regression.

Independent variables—social status. We measure respondents’ race with two dummy variables for “Black” and “Hispanic”, with Whites representing the reference category.⁵ Education is measured with two dummy variables for “high school or less” and “four-year college or more”, with respondents having some post-secondary education but no baccalaureate degree representing the reference category. Income is measured as a continuous variable, in tens of thousands of dollars.

We use two measures of community social status: the affluence of the residents of the school district and the academic performance of the school district. Affluence is measured by an additive scale of three indicators taken from the 2000 Census school district tabulations: median household income; the percent of employed civilians working in managerial and professional occupations; and the percent of residents aged 25 or older who have at least a baccalaureate degree (all three indicators are z-transformed; the Cronbach’s alpha for the three standardized items is 0.88). To measure district performance, we use data on pass rates for every single available test in both Indiana and Ohio for the 2001–2002 school year. Because at the time testing was done at the discretion of the states, Indiana and Ohio tested its students in different subjects and different grades. In Indiana, we have the percent of students passing English and Math in grades 3, 6, 8, and 10 (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.92); in Ohio, we have the percent of students passing citizenship, math, reading, writing, and science in grades 4, 6, 9, and 10 (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.96). We acknowledge that we do not have true measures of student ability or school performance that are comparable across the two states because the two states tested for different subjects in different grades; even for tests in the same subject and grade, such as math in grades 6 and 10, our measures are still not comparable because different tests were used. Rather, we think that our measures

are comparable in terms of *public perception of test scores*, since we are using all of the data that was publicly available at the time. Both district affluence and district performance are rescaled to have a standard deviation of 1.⁶

Values. We test for the effects of different values on support for funding equalization and vouchers. We examine the effects of conservatism which was measured by a self-reported rating on a seven-point continuum going from “extremely liberal” to “extremely conservative”. Party identification is measured with two dummy variables for “Republican” and “independent/other party”, with Democrat being the reference category.

We examine various beliefs about inequality and the role of government in ameliorating it. We construct scales of equality, individualism, limited government, and humanitarianism using questions from the American National Election Studies (ANES). ANES surveys are conducted every election year in the United States and are the major source of data for academic studies on Americans’ political attitudes and voting behaviors. The measures of values were created by using additive scales. Most of our measures consisted of a statement to which respondents could strongly agree (coded as 3), somewhat agree (coded as 2), somewhat disagree (coded as 1), or strongly disagree (coded as 0). To measure *equality*, we used items tapping into the sentiment that the United States has not achieved a desired level of equality of opportunity (alpha = 0.50):

- One of the big problems in this country is that we don’t give everyone an equal chance.
- If people were treated more equally in this country we would have fewer problems.
- We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country (reverse-coded).
- This country would be better off if we worry less about how equal people are (reverse-coded).

Humanitarianism was measured with items asking about being concerned about the well-being of other people (alpha = 0.37):

- One should always find ways to help others less fortunate than one’s self.
- One of the problems of today’s society is that we are often too kind to people who don’t deserve it (reverse-coded).
- A person should always be concerned about the well-being of others.

The items used to measure *individualism* represent the idea that hard work is sufficient to achieve economic success (alpha = 0.45):

- Most people who don’t get ahead should not blame the system; they have only themselves to blame.

³ In Cleveland voucher program, the vouchers could indeed be used at any private, religious, or out-of-district-public school that would accept them, even though few schools other than Catholic ones did so.

⁴ In this question we were confronting respondents with a typical “leveling-up” strategy of finance reform that would add more revenue to resource-poor schools without taking away money from resource-rich schools, which would in all likelihood entail some sort of tax increase.

⁵ Making “White” the reference group ensures that the effect of “Black” will represent the Black-White difference in the likelihood of supporting a policy, and the effect of “Hispanic” will represent the Hispanic-white difference in the likelihood of supporting a policy.

⁶ District affluence was rescaled using data on school districts for the entire nation. Since there is less variation in district affluence in Indiana and Ohio than there is in the nation as a whole, the standard deviation for this variable is somewhat smaller than 1.

- Any person who is willing to work hard has a good chance at succeeding.
- Most people who do not get ahead in life probably work as hard as people who do (reverse-coded).

Unlike these other values, *limited government* was measured with items that give respondents two competing statements about the role of government and asking to indicate which statement comes closer to their views⁷:

- “The less government the better” versus “There are more things that government should be doing”.
- “We need a strong government to handle today’s complex economic problems” versus “The free market can handle these problems without government being involved”.
- “The main reason that government has gotten bigger over the years is because it has gotten involved in things that people should do for themselves” versus “Government has gotten bigger because the problems we face have been getting bigger”.

We did include one agree-disagree item in our measure of limited government:

- We would have fewer poor people in the United States and a healthier economy if the government were less involved in economic affairs.

The alpha for all four limited government items was 0.60.

We control for *public school ideology*, which Moe (2001: 87) defines as a “normative attachment to the public schools—and an affective inclination to see the public schools in a sympathetic light.” Moe found that public school ideology was an important determinant of opposition to vouchers. We measured it with four items asking respondents about how important various purposes are for having public schools (alpha = 0.79). For each purpose, subjects could rank the importance on a scale from 1 (not at all important) to 7 (extremely important). The four purposes were:

- preparing responsible citizens,
- promoting cultural unity,
- increasing social equality,
- helping students get the best job possible.

All of our continuous measures of values were rescaled to have a standard deviation of 1. Because of the relatively poor reliabilities of the socio-economic values, we reran our analyses where we included each of the values as separate variables. These results, which are consistent

with the main ones presented in this paper, are included in Appendix A.

Independent variables—Controls. Age is measured in tens of years.⁸ Informed by Steensland et al.’s (2000) work on measuring religious affiliation, we use four dummy variables to classify respondents’ religions (Black Protestant, Catholic, Evangelical Protestant, none/other, with Mainline Protestant the reference category). We use two dummy variables to measure whether or not the respondent has a child in a public school or a private school, with the reference category being a respondent who does not have a child attending either kind of school. We also use dummy variables to measure respondent’s sex (1 = male; 0 = female) and state location (1 = Indiana; 0 = Ohio).

4. Findings and discussion

Before turning to our statistical analyses we note that both vouchers and finance reform receive high levels of support as shown in Table 1. Around 62 percent of our respondents support vouchers, and 73 percent support finance reform. There is a great deal of overlap between supporters of vouchers and supporters of finance reform. Of our entire sample, 45 percent support both policies. While proponents of these policies see them as competing with the other (Moe, 2001), this is not the case among the mass public.

We present our multivariate analyses for support for vouchers and funding equalization in Table 2. In Model 1, we regress the outcome on measures of social status as well as our control variables. In Model 2, our “Social Status + Values” model, we control for values as well. For Model 2, we present the change in the predicted probability of supporting the policy that corresponds to a mean-centered unit change in the independent variable, with all other predictors held at their means. In Table 3, we present regression models testing the idea that social status may be especially important for parents of public school children. The models in Table 3 include all variables that were controlled for in the Social Status Model presented in Table 2.

Both vouchers and finance reform are appealing to certain disadvantaged groups, as expected from Robinson and Bell’s (1978) underdog principle. However, the underdog principle applies more to vouchers, which are more appealing to Blacks (who are 14 percentage points more likely to support them than Whites) and low-income people (a mean-centered increase of \$10,000 in household income decreases the chances of supporting vouchers by 1 percentage point). Table 3 shows that these racial and income cleavages are strongest among public school parents and weaker among other individuals (although the interactions with race are not significant).

If we turn our attention to finance reform, we see that contrary to the underdog principle, low-income

⁷ To maintain consistency with our coding of the agree-disagree questions, we coded the more free-market statement as 2.5 (between “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree”); the less free-market statement as 0.5 (between “strongly disagree” and “somewhat disagree”); and subjects who volunteered “it depends” were coded as 1.5 (the exact midpoint).

⁸ By rescaling age, the coefficient for age will represent the change in the likelihood of supporting a policy given a 10-year increase in age. We believe this is more informative than reporting the change in the likelihood of supporting a policy given a single year increase in age. Rescaling variables only matters for interpreting effects; it never affects the substantive results of regression analyses.

Table 2
Regression analysis of support for vouchers and school finance reform (N = 1318).

	Vouchers			Finance reform		
	Model 1	Model 2	ΔProb	Model 1	Model 2	ΔProb
Black	0.40 (1.66)	0.65 [*] (2.47)	0.14	0.44 (1.14)	0.07 (0.19)	0.01
Latino	-0.08 (-0.23)	-0.09 (-0.23)	-0.02	1.42 [*] (2.54)	1.48 [*] (2.38)	0.17
High school education or less	0.03 (0.23)	0.09 (0.63)	0.02	0.12 (0.69)	0.08 (0.42)	0.01
Bachelor's	-0.44 ^{**} (-3.07)	-0.44 ^{**} (-2.96)	-0.10	0.59 ^{**} (3.25)	0.63 ^{**} (3.25)	0.11
Household income (\$10,000s)	-0.04 (-1.45)	-0.06 [*] (-2.38)	-0.01	-0.04 (-1.39)	-0.02 (-0.48)	0.00
District affluence ^a	0.12 (1.29)	0.11 (1.22)	0.03	-0.13 (-1.11)	-0.12 (-0.98)	-0.02
District performance ^a	-0.19 ^{**} (-2.97)	-0.20 ^{**} (-3.14)	-0.05	-0.07 (-0.76)	-0.05 (-0.50)	-0.01
Egalitarianism ^a		0.07 (0.81)	0.02		0.19 [*] (2.13)	0.04
Individualism ^a		0.05 (0.74)	0.01		-0.16 (-1.73)	-0.03
Limited government ^a		0.19 ^{**} (2.80)	0.04		-0.18 [*] (-2.01)	-0.03
Humanitarianism ^a		0.23 ^{***} (3.33)	0.05		0.34 ^{***} (3.95)	0.06
Conservatism ^a		0.13 (1.53)	0.03		-0.05 (-0.50)	-0.01
Republican		0.55 ^{**} (3.10)	0.13		-0.17 (-0.70)	-0.03
Independent/other party		0.44 ^{**} (2.61)	0.10		-0.11 (-0.48)	-0.02
Public school ideology ^a		-0.13 [*] (-1.99)	-0.03		0.38 ^{***} (4.57)	0.07
Age (10s)	-0.18 ^{***} (-4.43)	-0.19 ^{***} (-4.46)	-0.04	-0.08 (-1.60)	-0.11 [*] (-2.02)	-0.02
Public-school parent	-0.07 (-0.53)	-0.08 (-0.58)	-0.02	-0.33 (-1.80)	-0.36 (-1.85)	-0.07
Private-school parent	0.75 [*] (2.26)	0.64 [*] (1.97)	0.14	-0.66 (-1.88)	-0.54 (-1.38)	-0.11
Black Protestant	-0.06 (-0.20)	0.15 (0.46)	0.03	0.04 (0.07)	-0.09 (-0.16)	-0.02
Catholic	0.68 ^{***} (4.03)	0.76 ^{***} (4.56)	0.17	-0.40 (-1.85)	-0.46 [*] (-1.99)	-0.09
Evangelical Protestant	0.09 (0.58)	0.07 (0.45)	0.02	-0.35 (-1.83)	-0.37 (-1.78)	-0.07
No religion/other	0.11 (0.55)	0.26 (1.15)	0.06	0.32 (1.21)	0.30 (1.14)	0.05
Male	0.06 (0.49)	0.02 (0.16)	0.01	-0.50 ^{**} (-3.14)	-0.18 (-1.01)	-0.03
Indiana	0.12 (0.94)	0.11 (0.91)	0.03	0.25 (1.69)	-0.18 (-1.01)	0.04
Location unknown	0.29 (1.86)	0.25 (1.58)	0.06	-0.40 [*] (-2.32)	-0.34 (-1.83)	-0.06
Nagelkerke R ²	0.03	0.05		0.05	0.12	

Note: Ordered logistic regression used to model support for vouchers; binary logistic regression used to model support for finance reform. Logit coefficients are reported; z-scores are reported in parentheses. Change in predicted probabilities are calculated from Model 2 and represent the change in the predicted probability of supporting the policy corresponding to a mean-centered unit change in the predictor with all other predictors held at their mean.

^a Variable has been scaled so that its units are standard deviations.

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.

*** $p < 0.001$.

individuals are just as likely to support finance reform as are high-income individuals. On the other hand, consistent with the underdog hypothesis, finance reform is appealing to Latinos, who are 17 percentage points more likely to support this policy than are Whites. The relative lack of enthusiasm of African Americans for funding equalization is notable (Blacks are only 1 percentage point more likely

to support equalization than Whites, a difference that is statistically insignificant). Unfortunately, we did not have a big enough Hispanic sample to run interactions between being Hispanic and parental status, so we do not know if the racial gap between Hispanics on the one hand and Whites and Blacks on the other is more pronounced among public school parents.

Table 3
Regression analysis of effects of social and community status interacted with parenthood (N = 1318).

Variable	Vouchers				Financial reform			
	Model 1 Race interactions	Model 2 Education interactions	Model 3 Income interactions	Model 4 District interactions	Model 1 Race interactions	Model 2 Education interactions	Model 3 Income interactions	Model 4 District interactions
Public-school parent	-0.15 (-1.03)	-0.13 (-0.66)	0.59 (1.56)	0.35 (0.68)	-0.30 (-1.59)	-0.26 (-0.98)	-0.61 (-1.30)	-0.91 (-1.37)
Private-school parent	0.78* (2.29)	0.53 (1.04)	0.64 (0.79)	2.67* (2.43)	-0.65 (-1.88)	-0.87 (-1.90)	-1.69* (-2.14)	-1.40 (-1.18)
Black	0.22 (0.83)				0.55 (1.28)			
Black × Public-school parent	0.81 (1.88)				-0.39 (-0.64)			
Black × Private-school parent	-0.43 (-0.30)							
Latino	-0.12 (-0.26)				1.41* (2.53)			
Latino × Public-school parent	0.17 (0.22)							
Latino × Private-school parent	-0.36 (-0.12)							
High school education or less		-0.04 (-0.20)				0.19 (0.90)		
High school or less × Public-school parent		0.19 (0.64)				-0.25 (-0.66)		
High school or less × Private-school parent		0.15 (0.16)				-0.01 (-0.01)		
Bachelor's		-0.43* (-2.42)				0.46* (2.08)		
Bachelor's × Public-school parent		-0.20 (-0.64)				0.33 (0.83)		
Bachelor's × Private-school parent		0.41 (0.62)				0.70 (1.07)		
Household income			-0.01 (-0.27)				-0.07* (-2.02)	
HH income × Public-school parent			-0.13* (-2.09)				0.05 (0.69)	
HH income × Private-school parent			0.012 (0.13)				0.18 (1.50)	
District affluence ^a				0.23 (1.83)				-0.20 (-1.40)
District affluence × Public-school parent				-0.19 (-1.01)				0.20 (0.82)
District affluence × Private-school parent				-0.66 (-1.77)				0.33 (0.81)
District performance ^a				-0.21** (-2.74)				-0.02 (-0.23)
District performance × Public-school parent				-0.08 (-0.63)				-0.31 (-1.58)
District performance × Private-school parent				.47* (2.26)				0.20 (0.75)
Nagelkerke R ²	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.06

Note: Ordered logistic regression used to model support for vouchers; binary logistic regression used to model support for finance reform. Logit coefficients are reported; z-scores are reported in parentheses. All models include controls for race, educational attainment, household income, district affluence, district performance, religion, age, gender, and state.

^a Variable has been scaled so that its units are standard deviations.

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.

Since the funding and control of public education has a strong local component, we test the idea that individuals' support for vouchers and finance reform is grounded in community social status, although we show only limited support for this idea. People living in poorly performing districts are more likely to support vouchers, but district performance or affluence has no effect on support for finance reform. Our results presented in Table 3 suggest that cleavages based on community social status are for the most part just as strong among public school parents, private school parents, and individuals who are not parents of school-aged children (the only exception is that private-school parents in poorly performing districts are more likely to oppose vouchers than their public-school parent and non-parent counterparts). This suggests that the effects of community social status we document here are for the most part the effects of a group interest (or a "community interest"), and not individual self-interest.

As shown in Table 2, the highly educated are more supportive of finance reform (the college-educated are 11 percentage points more likely to support this policy than are those with some college education) and more hostile to vouchers (the college-educated are 10 percentage points less likely to support vouchers than are those with some college education). Table 3 indicates that there is no evidence that the effect of educational attainment varies by parent status, suggesting that the college-educated's support for finance reform and opposition to vouchers is not rooted in self-interest.

By comparing the coefficients of our measures of social status across Models 1 and 2 in Table 2, we can see how much values explain the effects of social status. The magnitude of the effects of social status barely change (or in fact become stronger) from Model 1 to Model 2, indicating that we cannot explain these racial, income, educational, and community cleavages by pointing to group differences in the values we used in this study. The social status cleavages we document here probably reflect differences in perceived individual interests and group interests.

While values may not explain social status cleavages in support for educational reforms, our result demonstrate that values exert an independent effect. We are especially interested in the effects of equality, humanitarianism, individualism, and limited government. People who adhere to equality and humanitarianism are more likely to support finance reform, while proponents of limited government and individualism are less likely to support finance reform (the effect for individualism is marginally significant). Our findings showing a humanitarian foundation for finance reform suggest that there are limits to the mass public's tolerance for this policy. Reforms involving redistributing resources across communities would in all likelihood alienate people who adhere to the value of humanitarianism but not equality.

Turning to the effects of values on voucher support, we see that voucher supporters ground their enthusiasm for this proposal in humanitarian and limited government values, but not the values of equality (nor individualism for that matter). This suggests that spokespersons for vouchers have not been very successful in convincing people of the alleged equitable outcomes of voucher policies, even

Table 4Regression analysis of effects of education interacted with state ($N=1318$).

	Vouchers	Finance reform
High school or less	0.04 (0.20)	0.70 (0.29)
High school or less × Indiana	−0.01 (−0.05)	0.11 (0.32)
Bachelor's	−0.55* (−2.53)	0.22 (0.89)
Bachelor's × Indiana	0.22 (0.79)	0.89* (2.51)
Black	0.40 (1.69)	0.44 (1.12)
Hispanic	−0.09 (−0.25)	1.40* (2.52)
Household income (\$10,000s)	−0.04 (−1.45)	−0.04 (−1.37)
District affluence ^a	0.12 (1.30)	−0.13 (−1.12)
District performance ^a	−0.19** (−2.97)	−0.07 (−0.77)
Age	−0.18*** (−4.43)	−0.08 (−1.61)
Public-school parent	−0.07 (−0.52)	−0.33 (−1.79)
Private-school parent	0.76* (2.30)	−0.62 (−1.77)
Black Protestant	−0.07 (−0.21)	0.03 (0.06)
Catholic	0.69*** (4.07)	−0.37 (−1.73)
Evangelical Protestant	0.10 (0.62)	−0.34 (−1.74)
None/other religion	0.11 (0.57)	0.32 (1.24)
Male	0.06 (0.49)	−0.50** (−3.15)
Indiana	0.08 (0.41)	0.05 (0.21)
Location unknown	0.30 (1.87)	−0.40* (−2.34)
Nagelkerke R^2	0.03	0.05

Note: Ordered logistic regression used to model support for vouchers; binary logistic regression used to model support for finance reform. Logit coefficients are reported; z-scores are reported in parentheses.

^a Variable has been scaled so that its units are standard deviations.

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.

*** $p < 0.001$.

though this has been a major tenet of voucher supporters since the late 1980s when they began to push for voucher policies in disadvantaged urban contexts.

Our results for party affiliation, political ideology, public school ideology and our control variables are in line with our expectations and are worth a passing comment. Republicans are more likely to support vouchers than are Democrats. Adherence to public school ideology has a strong positive effect on support for finance reform and a significantly negative effect on support for vouchers. Religion and parental status also shape voucher support; private-school parents and Catholics are more likely to support vouchers. We do not see a significant effect of religion or parental status on support for finance reform. The fact that our results show that public-school parents are just as likely as private-school parents and non-parents to support finance reform suggests that

self-interest plays a minimal role in structuring support for this policy.

Our finding that the highly educated support finance reform is at odds with Reed's (2001a, 2001b) and Tedin's (1994) analyses suggesting that there are either null or negative effects of educational attainment on supporting finance reform. In our own analyses, we have two states, one with a protracted reform effort (Ohio) and another completely lacking a finance reform effort (Indiana). When we run the "Social Status" model for finance reform with interactions between state location and the education indicators (Table 4), we see that the effect of having a college education is significantly different across the two states. In Indiana, the highly educated are significantly more likely to support finance reform than those with some postsecondary training (according to a model where Indiana is the reference group); this gap is much reduced (and is insignificant) in Ohio. No such interactions are significant when it comes to vouchers. This finding is in line with the argument of Jackman (1978) that the highly educated are more likely to support democratic values such as tolerance and equality in the abstract, but this "enlightenment" effect vanishes (or is greatly reduced) when the highly educated are confronted with a concrete practice that implements these values.

5. Conclusion

In this study we used data on Indiana and Ohio residents' opinions towards vouchers and school finance reform. We gauged the extent to which Robinson and Bell's (1978) underdog principle apply to support for educational reforms, and the extent to which general social values explain the effects of social status and have independent effects of their own.

According to the underdog hypothesis, people of disadvantaged social status are more likely to support welfare and racial policies that ameliorate inequality. From this, we argued that policies perceived to expand educational opportunities to disadvantaged children should receive more support from people of low social status. We laid out alternative hypotheses suggesting the underdog principle would work for one policy more than the other: the underdog principle could be more operative for finance reform since vouchers uses market mechanisms; alternatively, the underdog principle could be more operative for vouchers because mobilization for this policy on behalf of disadvantaged constituencies has been more prominent, on the national stage, than has mobilization for finance reform, which has often manifested as an intragovernmental struggle involving school districts, state courts, and the state executive and legislative branches. Our results are much more consistent with the latter hypothesis than the former: cleavages based on race, income, and education are stronger for vouchers than they are for funding equalization.

While our study cannot prove that national prominence and mobilization activities shapes group cleavages in public opinion, our results are consistent with this idea. The underdog principle has more explanatory power for

vouchers than for finance reform. People of advantaged social status, in terms of race, income, education, and community, are unambiguously more likely to oppose vouchers. For finance reform, social status has more ambiguous effects. We see that Latinos (but not Blacks) are more likely than Whites to support this policy. Income has no relationship to supporting or opposing finance reform, and people with college degrees are more likely to support it.

The broader implication of this speculation is that group cleavages on educational issues are not immutable but are influenced by the mobilization of activists and opinion leaders. Future research needs to be done (a) systematically surveying individuals in different state contexts and asking them about their support for various educational reforms to truly test and refine this hypothesis and (b) systematically measuring mobilization activity around educational reforms and (c) examining the association between mobilization and public opinion. Reed's (2001b) analyses of polling data from different states is a step in the right direction, but we note that his purpose was not to compare and contrast states but rather to make generalizations about public opinion towards school finance for the whole nation; moreover his polling data were collected by different polling organizations which used different questions.

Yet another (albeit unproven) implication is that all else being equal, the devolution of social provisioning (such as education) to lower units of government suppresses group conflict. Consider the integration of schools: in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) the United States Supreme Court ruled de jure racial segregation unconstitutional, and from the 1950s through the 1970s the civil rights movement clashed with White supremacists and governments to uphold the right of Black schoolchildren to attend integrated schools; this same period saw a robust Black-White gap in support of government efforts to forcibly integrate schools (Kinder & Winter, 2001). Yet we see no such racial gap with regards to school finance equalization, which some consider to be a continuation of the struggle over racial integration (Kozol, 1991; Reed, 2001b), and we believe this is a consequence of the US Supreme Court's decision in 1973 that there is no constitutional right to an education. Given calls for the federal government to cut back on social welfare spending, the states' role in welfare provisioning could increase. If states become the arena for welfare policy struggles—as they have for finance reform—we imagine that group cleavages in public opinion towards these policies could be attenuated.

One mystery we cannot explain is that the highly educated (those with a bachelor's degree or higher) oppose vouchers but support finance equalization. One possible explanation for this effect is that the highly educated have some kind of unmeasured commitment to public education. However, our results show that education leads to supporting finance equalization in Indiana—where the issue is non-existent and thus abstract—but education has no effect on supporting this policy in Ohio—where the issue was real at the time we conducted our study. This suggests to us that the commitment of the highly

educated to public schools is just as abstract and superficial as Jackman (1978) paints their commitment to other democratic norms. Alternatively, it could be that the highly educated see vouchers as threatening to their interests in a way that they do not see finance reform. Perhaps they oppose vouchers because they potentially could be used to pay for low-income and minority children to attend private or public schools serving advantaged families. This is an issue future research should address.

We also tested to see how general social values, such as equality, humanitarianism, individualism, and limited government, affect support for finance reform and vouchers. While these values do not explain racial, income, educational, or community cleavages in support for these policies, they do exert independent effects. We are struck by two findings. First, the value of humanitarianism structures support for both finance reform and vouchers. This suggests that many people favor these policies because they want to remedy educational deprivation. If these policies went further (such as engaging in redistributing resources from affluent schools to poorer schools, or paying all of the tuition at highly expensive private schools) they perhaps would alienate humanitarian supporters. Second, we also note the fact that the value of equality structures support for finance reform but not vouchers. While our results overall suggest that voucher advocates have been successful in portraying their policy as in the interests of disadvantaged groups and alleviating deprivation, they have not been as successful in creating, in the public's view, a connection between their favored policy and achieving greater equality.

Our findings remind us that to understand schools we need to look beyond schools. An important challenge for future research is to more fully understand the political and social processes that shape the educational opportunities Americans provide their citizens. We show broad support for vouchers and finance reform, two educational reforms promising to expand opportunities to disadvantaged children. This support is based in part on values which are embedded in American political culture, but our study also shows fissures based on race, income, and community context. Whether or not these cleavages will prevent the expansion of educational opportunities is an issue that should be addressed in future research.

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Appendix A.

See Table A1.

Table A1

Regression analysis of support for vouchers and school finance reform, with social values measured by individual items ($N = 1318$).

	Vouchers			Finance reform		
	Model 1	Model 2	Δ Prob	Model 1	Model 2	Δ Prob
Black	0.40	0.65*	0.14	0.44	0.08	0.02
Latino	-0.08	-0.12	-0.03	1.42*	1.52*	0.18
High school education or less	0.03	0.08	0.02	0.12	0.09	0.02
Bachelor's	-0.44**	-0.39**	-0.09	0.59**	0.60**	0.10
Household income (\$10,000s)	-0.04	-0.06*	-0.01	-0.04	-0.004	0.00
District affluence ^a	0.12	0.12	0.03	-0.13	-0.092	-0.02
District performance ^a	-0.19**	-0.20**	-0.05	-0.07	-0.05	-0.01
Egalitarianism						
Equality pushed too far (disagree) ^a		-0.02	-0.01		0.27**	0.05
Lack of equality a big problem ^a		0.17*	0.04		0.02	0.00
Should worry less about equality (disagree) ^a		0.06	0.02		-0.16	-0.03
Fewer problems if more equality ^a		-0.10	-0.02		0.14	0.02
Wald test ($df = 4$) ^b		5.22			14.42	
Wald p		0.27			<0.001	
Individualism						
Blame people for not getting ahead ^a		0.02	0.01		-0.10	-0.02
Those who don't get ahead work hard (disagree) ^a		0.04	0.01		-0.08	-0.01
Hard work means good chance of success ^a		0.02	0.00		-0.10	-0.02
Wald test ($df = 3$) ^c		0.80			4.72	
Wald p		0.85			0.19	
Limited government						
Less government the better ^a		0.07	0.02		-0.10	-0.02
Less government means better economy ^a		0.14	0.03		-0.14	-0.02
Gov't involved in things people should do themselves ^a		-0.01	0.00		-0.04	-0.01
Free market can handle problems ^a		0.05	0.01		-0.01	0.00
Wald test ($df = 4$) ^d		8.00			5.45	

Table A1 (Continued)

	Vouchers			Finance reform		
	Model 1	Model 2	ΔProb	Model 1	Model 2	ΔProb
Wald p		0.09			0.24	
Humanitarianism						
One should help others ^a		0.15 ⁺	0.03		0.18 ⁺	0.03
We are too kind to less deserving (disagree) ^a		0.08	0.02		0.15	0.03
One should be concerned about others' well-being ^a		0.13	0.03		0.16	0.03
Wald test (df=3) ^e		15.38			18.11	
Wald p		<0.01			<0.001	
Conservatism ^a		0.13	0.03		-0.03	-0.01
Republican		0.56 ^{**}	0.13		-0.17	-0.03
Independent/other party		0.47 ^{**}	0.11		-0.07	-0.01
Public school ideology ^a		-0.15 ⁺	-0.03		0.37 ^{***}	0.07
Age (10s)	-0.18 ^{***}	-0.18 ^{***}	-0.04	-0.08	-0.10	-0.02
Public-school parent	-0.07	-0.09	-0.02	-0.33	-0.36	-0.06
Private-school parent	0.75 ⁺	0.57	0.12	-0.66	-0.57	-0.10
Black Protestant	-0.06	0.13	0.03	0.04	-0.11	-0.02
Catholic	0.68 ^{***}	0.75 ^{***}	0.16	-0.40	-0.46 ⁺	-0.08
Evangelical Protestant	0.09	0.05	0.01	-0.35	-0.37	-0.07
No religion/other	0.11	0.23	0.05	0.32	0.25	0.05
Male	0.06	0.04	0.01	-0.50 ^{**}	-0.15	-0.03
Indiana	0.12	0.13	0.03	0.25	0.21	0.04
Location unknown	0.29	0.25	0.06	-0.40 ⁺	-0.32	-0.06
Nagelkerke R ²	0.03	0.06		0.05	0.13	

Note: Ordered logistic regression used to model support for vouchers; binary logistic regression used to model support for finance reform. Logit coefficients are reported; z-scores are reported in parentheses.

Change in predicted probabilities are calculated from Model 2 and represent the change in the predicted probability corresponding to a mean-centered unit change in the predictor with all other predictors held at their mean.

- ^a Variable has been scaled so that its units are standard deviations.
- ^b Tests null hypothesis that all egalitarian attitudes have no effect.
- ^c Tests null hypothesis that all individualistic attitudes have no effect.
- ^d Tests null hypothesis that all limited government attitudes have no effect.
- ^e Tests null hypothesis that all humanitarian attitudes have no effect.
- ⁺ p < 0.05.
- ^{**} p < 0.01.
- ^{***} p < 0.001.

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