Saving and Educational Asset-Building within a Community-Driven CSA Program: The Case of Promise Indiana

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Preface

By William Elliott

In the Preface I would like to make what I see as an important distinction emerging in the field of Children's Savings Interventions, between CSA Account Interventions and CSA Program Interventions. Michael Sherraden (1991) introduced the concept of Children's Savings Accounts (CSAs), what he called Child Development Accounts, in his seminal book, *Assets and the Poor*. Delivered through a financial instrument, CSAs or CDAs usually incorporate initial seed deposits, savings matches, and/or benchmark incentives (e.g., Goldberg, 2005; Sherraden, 1991). From my perspective, Children's Savings Accounts are a necessary component of any CSA intervention. That is, in order for an intervention to be classified as a CSA Intervention, an account must be part of it.

CSA Account Interventions are built on institutional theory that posits that institutions determine savings outcomes. From this perspective, institutional mechanisms that induce asset accumulation are the key to improving the well-being of low-income individuals and families (Sherraden, 1991). In recent years, this institutional theory has evolved somewhat to center less on accumulation and more on account ownership itself as the key lever of change. My research on the academic and psychological effects of small-dollar education accounts (e.g., Elliott, 2013) has certainly contributed to this shift in some small part. Importantly, Sherraden (1991) also posited that multiple economic and psychological effects are associated with owning assets. Specifically, he theorized that assets improve household stability, increase personal efficacy and political participation, create an orientation toward the future, enable focus or specialization, and provide a foundation for risk taking. This theoretical outline informed my initial research examining the potential effects of small-dollar education savings accounts and catalyzed a new field of asset-based welfare policy. Today, research coming out of CSA Account Interventions typically focuses on how asset accumulation or account ownership influence outcomes such as parents' and children's educational expectations, savings behavior, and/or overall well-being.

The SEED for Oklahoma Kids (SEED OK) experiment, designed and led by the Center for Social Development (CSD) at Washington University in St. Louis, is a CSA Account Intervention built on institutional theory. As such, it has very few programmatic components (i.e., it is low-touch, communicating with treatment participants only by mail); the account itself is the intervention. In the CSA field, experimental data are only available from SEED OK. SEED OK provides strong impact evidence, from when children were about four years old, that account ownership itself can have important effects on mothers' educational expectations (Kim, Sherraden, Huang, and Clancy, 2015) and children's socioemotional well-being (Huang, Sherraden, Kim, & Clancy, 2014), both of which other research has linked to educational attainment (see Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011, re: social and emotional health; see Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2004 and Redd, Buzman, Lippman, Scott, & Matthews, 2004among others, re: parents' educational expectations). This evidence, and the work in this area by CSD, has been instrumental to the evolution of the CSA field. As the children in the SEED OK experiment age and reach new milestones, it is of the utmost importance that SEED OK research is continued into the foreseeable future. It provides clarity for policymakers today that having an account can bring real value to families, clarity that does not yet exist in the case of CSA Program Interventions. SEED OK research may ultimately provide definitive evidence that CSAs can yield the improvements in long-term outcomes that have motivated their replication in many contexts, and that American children so need.

CSA Program Interventions include accounts but also have a number of other programmatic components such as mentoring, college visits, college and career planning, and media campaigns. Programs adopt these components based on a variety of different theories drawn from fields of education, sociology, and economics about such things as children's academic achievement, child development, and family functioning. They differ according to different beliefs about things such as whether parents or children themselves are the key to changing children's outcomes, for example. CSA Program Interventions also adopt different approaches as a result of the different backgrounds from which people come to CSAs, different emphases of funders, different systems in which CSAs operate in (e.g., schools, local governments, community-based organizations, etc.), and the different values they hold. Research related to these programs aims, as part of its agenda, to understand the influence of CSA program components on asset accumulation and account ownership, in addition to the influence of asset accumulation and account

ownership on identified outcomes of importance. There are grounds for this. Existing research suggests a virtuous circle where assets and account ownership influence outcomes (such as educational expectations) and these outcomes influence asset accumulation and ownership (Elliott, Choi, Destin, & Kim, 2011; Yadama & Sherraden, 1996). It is not clear, however, which CSA program components may be most important within programs or across programs. We also do not yet understand whether what is important in order to induce these outcomes varies by such factors as geographic location or child's age. Therefore, I suggest that more research is needed on CSA programs like Promise Indiana. Finding out answers to these and other related questions are important for CSA program design, if not for a national policy on CSAs. Because, while it is important to continue to examine the effects of assets on shaping equality, America has a long history of inequality that children have spent years experiencing. Therefore, shifts in asset distribution as a result of CSAs, for example, may not immediately address all of the academic deficits a child faces at the moment this wealth distribution changes. And so, part of what I see in CSA Program Interventions are responses to how to address academic and other deficits that have arisen as a result of our long history with asset inequality, and, quite frankly, racial inequality, which is hopelessly entangled with asset inequality. This does not diminish the importance of research on CSA Account Interventions. I think it actually might grow in importance as CSA programs move toward designs that also include a Promise (e.g., placing scholarship money into CSA accounts), because of the possibility for CSA designs to include wealth transfers on a scale not yet seen (e.g., several programs combining CSAs with Promise or early commitment Scholarship Programs). It simply suggests other research is also needed.

A problem with conducting research on CSA Program Interventions is that, to date, none of them have been started for the purpose of research. They have seldom even been designed with the prospect of research in mind but, instead, motivated by architects' sense that something urgently needed to be done to help children in their areas. Therefore, they do not easily lend themselves to investigation using more rigorous designs such as the Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) design. While I believe that RCTs are extremely important, and SEED OK is the gold standard in the field of CSAs for research rigor, researchers have long understood that there are many other valid forms of evidence that should be used to inform programs and policy. However, it is a natural progression in the beginning for fields of new inquiry to use quasi-experimental designs and secondary data to inform program design and to develop testable hypotheses, after which the field will often move toward RCTs, if possible. This emergence of evidence from RCTs does not, however, invalidate or make meaningless earlier findings or those using other, less rigorous designs. Instead, ideally it confirms other findings, strengthening confidence in them, while also bolstering the RCT's findings because it is the overall body of evidence—pulled from a variety of methods and samples and by different researchers—that gives us confidence in those findings. Arguably, we have seen this evolution in the case of CSA Account Interventions, largely through the research facilitated by CSD along with CFED.

The development of research of any kind has been slower in the case of CSA Program Interventions. In part, this is because secondary data cannot be used as easily to investigate programmatic components; the researcher is primarily limited to program and/or administrative data. However, primary data from CSA Program Interventions have been in short supply, due in part to the relative newness of most of these programs but also because of the sense that non-RCT data is of little value in the field at this time because of the existence of an RCT. However, increasingly there are opportunities to begin conducting analysis on these programs and to yield insights related to CSA design and replication. As is common in the history of social science, the examination of CSA Program Interventions is starting by testing associations with less than perfect data. These less rigorous designs are good starting points, however, because, while expensive, they typically are a lot cheaper to carry out than RCTs. Moreover, there is a lot less evidence on the different programmatic components being used by the very different CSA Program Interventions that now exist, making it hard to assess which components (or programs) may be most worth testing in a RCT. This lack of evidence also precludes the field from being able to say with any certainty that any one CSA Program Intervention is better than another. Gaining some clarity about which program components may represent "best practices", if you will, over the next year or two seems important to the field. It might be, with regard to national policy that such clarity may never exist or might only exist with regard to a small subset of programmatic components. It might be that there is no one best practice for a national CSA Program Intervention. Here, the policy clarity might be to allow programs/local communities/states freedom to develop their own set of programmatic components. Still, there is great value in conducting research on these programs because some of them are the oldest, largest, and most visible CSA programs in

the country. As such, many observers, including policymakers and philanthropists and those controlling key elements of the education and financial aid systems, want evidence on these CSA programs before they make decisions about moving forward with CSAs as a policy option. Further, the programs, local communities, and even states have a stake in better understanding which programmatic components might work best with their CSA programs in order to move toward the outcomes that give not only the CSA field, but also the children in these programs, the very best chance.

In this spirit of appreciation for the limitations of these three studies, but also their potential for generating important learning's that AEDI presents three separate but complementary studies in this report that analyze data from the Promise Indiana CSA Program Intervention. First, analysis of a survey conducted by Promise Indiana staff with families in the Promise Indiana target population examines attributes associated with knowledge and ownership of 529 accounts. Second, analysis of savings data collected by Ascensus College Savings on behalf of Promise Indiana considers patterns of deposits, asset accumulation, and account ownership by families who have opened CollegeChoice 529 accounts through Promise Indiana. Third, findings from interviews with a subsample of parents whose children have 529 CollegeChoice accounts opened through Promise Indiana are shared to provide some qualitative context for parental perceptions about college savings within this community-driven CSA program.

Sincerely,

William Elliott III
Director, Center on Assets, Education, and Inclusion
Associate Professor, University of Kansas, School of Social Welfare

Study 1: Promise Indiana Children's Savings Account Intervention Data on Awareness and Participation in 529 Plans

Key Findings

- Survey data reveal that 21% of respondents report having a 529 account. The subsample reporting 529 account ownership is more highly-educated and higher-income than the overall population responding.
- Exposure to the Promise Indiana intervention, which includes an invitation to open an Indiana CollegeChoice 529 account, financial incentives for college saving, and college- and career-preparation activities for children[1], is associated with an increase in the odds of reporting having heard of a 529 account by more than six times.
- Exposure to the Promise Plus is associated with an increase in the odds of reporting owning a 529 account by more than 3.75 times within this sample.

Introduction

Authorized in the Internal Revenue Code since 2001 and named after the section of the tax code that created them, 529 plans are tax-preferred vehicles for post-secondary education saving, administered by states, usually through contractual agreements with private financial institutions (Boshara, Clancy, Newville, & Sherraden, 2009; Clancy, Lassar, & Taake, 2010). Promise Indiana's CSAs are administered using Indiana's direct-sold (not advisor or CD) state 529 plan, known as CollegeChoice. Families opening CollegeChoice 529 accounts through Promise Indiana are given options for their investment allocation, as are all individuals opening CollegeChoice accounts. For those who are part of Promise Indiana, however, the shortened enrollment form used to ease sign-up defaults to 100% in CollegeChoice's age-based investment portfolio, five-year returns for which have ranged between 2.37% and 7.72% (CollegeChoice Direct, 2016). Accounts that hold the savings incentives offered by Promise Indiana mirror the investment choices selected by the accountholder for the primary account. In study one we use survey data from parents in counties where Promise Indiana has been implemented to examine whether exposure to Promise Indiana (by virtue of living in a participating county) is related to awareness (i.e., are you more likely to know about 529s) of the CollegeChoice 529 Plan. Sallie Mae (2015) suggests that utilization of 529 accounts by college-saving families may have remained relatively stable (around 27%) over the past several years because so few families have heard of 529s. In the Sallie Mae survey, among those not utilizing 529 plans, only 39% were aware they even existed. This is similar to findings about awareness in 2014 (39%) and 2013 (37%) and does not account for confusion or uncertainty among some of those who have heard of 529s but may not understand them well enough to see them as viable and valuable channels for their own college saving. Other recent survey research has underscored gaps in Americans' understanding of 529 college savings accounts. In a survey this year, only approximately 72% of Americans could identify 529s as a college savings tool, from a menu of dropdown choices, although those earning more than $100,000 per year were more than twice as likely to correctly identify 529s as those earning less than $35,000 (Edward Jones, 2016).

Study one next considers whether exposure to the Promise Indiana program is associated with reporting owning any 529 college savings account. Across the U.S. population, 529s have not widely penetrated household finances, with an estimated only 2.5% of all families having 529 college savings accounts in 2013, a somewhat smaller percentage, even, than in 2007 Hannon, Moore, Schmeiser, & Stefanesea, 2016. Recent years have seen growth in 529 plans, however; the College Savings Plan Network reports that, at the end of 2015, there were 12.5 million active 529 accounts in the U.S. (CSPN, 2016), compared to 10.1 million in 2009 (College Board, 2015). According to Sallie Mae (2015), 27% of college savers report having a 529 account, with utilization more than twice as likely (49%) among high-income as middle-income (20%) or low-income (17%) families. Deposit savings accounts are still the most common financial vehicle for families' college saving, and many families never transition to 529 accounts (Sallie Mae, 2015).

[1] As described below, this intervention 'package' is termed Promise Plus.

Consistent with the patterns of 529 ownership discussed above, in 2013, only 0.3% of households in the bottom half of the wealth distribution had 529 accounts, while more than 11% of those in the top 5% of wealth had 529 accounts (Hannon, et al., 2016).

Research Review: College Saving in State 529s

States have the flexibility to design many features of their own 529 plans, and many have used this power to offer savings incentives, particularly through the provision of state tax deductions for contributions (Newville et al., 2009). As of 2015, 14 states provided initial deposits and/or matches within their 529 plans—7 of them universally—while 3 states, including Indiana, offered tax credits for saving in 529 accounts and others sought to reduce savings barriers by reducing the minimum initial deposit required and/or reducing fees to accountholders (CFED, 2016). While these efforts have undoubtedly served to increase utilization of 529 plans by those seeking these rewards, there is little evidence that they are inducing significant new saving (Ifill & McPherson, 2004), particularly among low-income households.

Instead, 529s overwhelmingly serve as savings vehicles for those likely to save for college anyway. In 2010, while only 11% of dependent college students had incomes over $150,000, close to half (47%) of families with a 529 account reported annual incomes over $150,000 (College Board, 2015). The General Accounting Office (GAO) found that families with 529 college savings accounts have three times the median income and 25 times the median assets of those without accounts (Government Accounting Office, 2012). While similar data are not available for every state, analysis of publicly-available data suggests skewed account ownership in 529 plans, with a resulting concentration of tax benefits among the already economically privileged. For example, in Kansas in 2007, 37% of tax deductions for 529 account contributions accrued to the top 1% of tax filers (Aldeman, 2011). Despite the inequity in the distribution of resources within the existing 529 system, many who are committed to improving educational outcomes for low-income students point to elements of the 529 plan structure as "especially well-suited" for delivering inclusive, progressive children's savings accounts (Clancy, Sherraden, & Beverly, 2015, p. 1; for a discussion of some of the advantages and disadvantages of using 529s as a platform for CSAs, see Elliott, Lewis, Poore, & Clarke, 2015).

Amount Saved in 529s

The College Savings Plans Network's (2016) annual report indicates that about 55% of accountholders made contributions to their 529 account in 2015, for $25.7 billion in total deposits. There is considerable variance in deposit size and resulting balance, both within and across income groups (Hannon, et al., 2016). The average balance in a 529 plan as of December 31, 2015 was $20,190 (College Savings Plans Network, 2016). In 2002, it was $9,688. Nationally, there has been sizable aggregate growth in 529 holdings, which rose from $8.2 billion (in 2014 dollars) in 1999 to $247.6 billion in 2014, despite substantial losses during the 2008 recession (College Board, 2016). Despite this balance growth, 529 account disbursements are very small relative compared to other sources of college funding (Hannon, et al., 2016), likely a reflection of the relative youth of these accounts and their limited uptake among the majority of college students. However, in nominal terms, 529 plans' disbursements grew from less than $2 billion in 2004 to about $16 billion in 2014 (Hannon, et al., 2016). Possibly reflecting both differences in the initial positions of the two groups and the different rates of return offered by the products, families saving for college within 529s have greater total accumulation than those saving in traditional savings accounts (Sallie Mae, 2015).

Barriers to College Saving

National surveys point to inadequate money from which to save as the biggest reason for lack of college saving; tellingly, even 45% of upper-income non-savers identify insufficient resources as a barrier (Sallie Mae, 2015). To counter this, families develop strategies to generate enough money to begin saving for college, such as asking friends and family to donate to their children's college savings accounts (Sallie Mae, 2015). Income is not the only contributor to savings outcomes, however. Other research has found such factors as financial socialization—from parent to child (Friedline, 2012; Friedline, Elliott, & Nam, 2012) or within the larger family dynamic (Payne, et al., 2014)—help to determine the likelihood and extent of individual saving. Complementing the existing evidence base drawing on neoclassical, sociological, and behavioral economic explanations for saving and asset accumulation is increasing

attention to the importance of institutional factors in encouraging saving (see Beverly & Sherraden, 1999). Here, features such as access to savings opportunities, information about products and services, appropriate and meaningful incentives, and useful restrictions that protect deposits are theorized—and, in some cases, independently validated—as helping to shape savings outcomes. Critically, absent the intervention of the CSA, 529s may perform poorly as institutions catalyzing saving, particularly among economically-disadvantaged households. For example, despite the advances referenced above, minimum initial deposit requirements, complex disclosures, lack of language-accessible guidance for limited English speakers, and unavailability of cash or in-person deposits may serve as barriers to savings engagement among some populations (Mercer, 2015), while available incentives flow disproportionately to those whose wealth makes tax-based benefits particularly valuable (Levin, 2014).

Research Questions

Study one asks:

- Are Promise Indiana programmatic components (measured using the Promise Plus variable) associated with an increase in the odds of parents reporting having heard about Indiana's CollegeChoice 529 plan?
- Are Promise Indiana programmatic components associated with an increase in the odds of parents reporting having a 529 account?

The Promise Plus variable is a proxy for Promise Indiana's programmatic components. It consists of the following programmatic components: a marketing campaign encouraging families to open CollegeChoice accounts, school activities related to college- and career-awareness, information about engaging champions, trip to a university, and the opportunity to open a CollegeChoice 529 account through Promise Indiana. More information on the Promise Plus variable can be found in the methods section of this study.

Methods

This study compares survey results from two cross-sectional samples, rather than a longitudinal design; that is, it does not track the same individuals over time. Rather, the study uses information from the population of interest before and after the Promise Indiana program intervention. Therefore, the key assumption for the quantitative analysis is that the survey respondents before and after the Promise Indiana intervention are similar. To test this, we conduct two-tailed t-tests on a host of measures among the respondents before and after the intervention. These include parental education, income, marital status, family structure, parental age, child gender, child race, and grade level. Only one difference is statistically significant ($p<0.05$): grade level of the student. Parents are surveyed in the spring before the intervention and the fall after the intervention. The students who received the intervention have moved up a grade in school. Thus the higher grade level could reflect the higher number of respondents in the fall compared to the spring.

Data for this study come from the *College and Career Planning Questionnaire*, an anonymous 21-item paper-and-pencil survey. The Indiana Education Savings Authority (IESA) commissioned a statewide survey to gather information about college expectations and savings knowledge and activities that the Promise Indiana team then modified, creating survey items that aligned with what IESA was already measuring to deploy specifically in the participating Promise Indiana communities. The Questionnaire includes questions about family demographics, educational expectations, and perceived barriers to secondary education, as well as savings behaviors and knowledge specifically about 529 savings accounts. The study sample was comprised of parents of children in kindergarten, 1st grade, 2nd grade, and 3rd grade who attended schools in Wabash, LaGrange, Noble, and Whitley Counties. Pre-test questionnaires were administered in the spring semester of the academic year, prior to the summer rollout of the Promise Indiana marketing campaign and program. Post-test questionnaires were administered in the fall semester immediately following this campaign. Families of 3rd graders surveyed in the spring (pre) were not surveyed in the fall (post) because those students had been promoted to 4th grade. The final sample consisted of 3,504 families.

The College and Career Planning Questionnaire was sent home with students. Wabash, LaGrange, and Noble counties surveyed all children in grades Kindergarten through third, while Whitley County surveyed only K and 1st grade as their target cohorts for the Promise Indiana intervention. A Promise Indiana representative delivered the surveys to the schools and school personnel distributed the surveys to each child, to be taken home and completed by parents. The survey packet contained a short explanatory note to families about the purpose of the survey and an empty envelope labeled "Wabash County Promise" (with the county name altered appropriately in other counties) for parents to return the survey.

Limitations

One potential limitation of examining a community-based intervention is violation of the stable unit treatment value assumption (SUTVA). That is, while statistical models assume that cases are independent or that the treatment of one individual does not influence that of another, in this case, individuals exposed to Promise Indiana could have encouraged others to open a 529 account or discussed college savings within their community contexts. Because we provide a reduced form estimate of the relationship between the Promise Indiana program and savings behaviors, these spillovers do not bias our results. Compared to other CSA research, however, they could slightly change the meaning of our estimates. In other words, while most CSA research estimates the individual effects of receiving a CSA, we are estimating the relationship between exposure to a community-based program and ownership of a 529 account. This estimate could include parental communication and encouragement within the community, which may be absent from some CSA programs.

Further, with regard to having a 529 account, because the survey only indicates whether or not families report having a 529, it is not clear whether they opened this account as part of Promise Indiana or had signed up for it prior. However, there is some evidence to suggest that most of the parents in this study likely opened their 529 accounts as a result of the Promise Plus, as only 9% of respondents report having a 529 account before Promise Indiana, compared to 34% after. Still, the relatively low proportion reporting a 529 account raises another possible limitation of this study. The savings data from Ascensus College Savings, the state-selected 529 plan manager, shows that more than 3,200 families opened a CollegeChoice 529 account through the Promise Indiana campaign in the four-county area (Jones-Layman, 2015). The utilization of a unique link for account creation through Promise Indiana provides confidence in the validity and reliability of these figures, already more reliable than self-reported data. Therefore, despite the marked increase from 9% to 34%, far fewer survey participants report having a 529 account than the actual savings records indicate. This may be because of the low response rates to the survey, which are another limitation of this study. Or it may be that some respondents were not entirely clear about the name of the CollegeChoice 529 accounts, the relationships between the 529 system and what they know as Promise Indiana, or some other aspect of identification of the account they own, either at the point of survey completion, during the process of CollegeChoice 529 account opening through Promise Indiana, or both. As a result of these factors, the true effects of Promise Indiana may be underestimated here.

Variable descriptions

Outcome Variables

Whether someone has heard of the CollegeChoice 529. Participants were asked, "Have you heard of the CollegeChoice 529 Plan?" and asked to indicate yes or no.

529 Account Status. 529 Account Status was coded as an indicator for those who report having any 529 account versus all others (i.e., those reporting no college savings account and those reporting having savings for college but not in a 529).

> If respondents answered affirmatively the question, "Are you currently saving or investing for any of your child's college education?" they were then asked to indicate which, from a list of 10 options, they have used to save for their child's education. The options were: (1) savings, money market accounts, or CDs; (2) retirement savings accounts such as 401(k) or IRA; (3) Coverdell Education Savings Account; (4) Uniform Gift to Minors Act/Uniform Tran; (5) a prepaid or

guaranteed college savings plan; (6) a 529 college savings plan; (7) stocks or bonds; (8) mutual Fund; (9) other (please specify); (10) don't know.

What should be clear from this is that respondents were not asked whether or not they opened their 529 account as part of the Promise Indiana Program, or even whether the 529 account they own is an Indiana CollegeChoice 529 account, as are those opened through Promise Indiana. Given this, 529 Account Status does not measure whether or not respondents have a Promise Indiana Children's Savings Account but whether or not they have a 529 account. This is because the *College and Career Planning Questionnaire* was not designed specifically for the Promise Indiana Program but for general use in schools; Promise Indiana's modification of the instrument to serve program purposes was minor, in keeping with the original intent of the survey.

Variables of interest

Promise Plus. The Promise Plus variable is the indicator for the post-survey (0 = pre-survey; 1 = post-survey). Over the summer of 2013, Promise Indiana launched a marketing campaign in Wabash County, then initial enrollment in Promise Indiana occurred during school registrations July 29 through August 2, 2013 in Wabash County. The marketing campaign, school activities, information about engaging champions, trip to a university, and the opportunity to open a CollegeChoice 529 account through Promise Indiana is what is referred to in this study as Promise Plus. Then, in the fall of 2013, the post-survey was administered in Wabash County. The other counties followed a similar timeline, but in 2014.

Covariates

Parental Education. Parents were asked, "What is the highest level of formal schooling attained in your household?" Options were: some high school; high school graduate/GED; professional certification; some college, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, or masters or professional degree. Using this information, we created two measures of parental education: 1) at least one parent had a bachelor degree or higher, compared to all other education levels; and 2) at least one parent had any college education, including those with some college, an associate's degree, a bachelor's degree, or a masters or professional degree, compared to those with less education.

Family Income level. Parent report of annual household income was recoded from 3 response options (less than $50,000; $50,000 - $100,000; or more than $100,000) to a dichotomous variable (less than $50,000 and $50,000 or more). We chose the cut point of less than $50,000 because these families may have lower expectations for their children and face more financial burdens than those with higher incomes.
Family Structure. Family structure is measured as a single variable with the response options: child's parents are married, single parent, grandparents, and other. Based on these responses, we create an indicator for whether or not the child's parents are married.

Parental Age. Parent report of age was recoded from a three-level variable (18 – 34; 35 – 54; 55 and older) into a dichotomous variable, including parents ages 18 – 34 compared to all others. We chose the cut point of ages 18 – 34 because younger parents may struggle more than older parents, who tend to enjoy greater financial stability, may be more educated, and may hold higher expectations for their children.

Child's Gender. Gender was coded with females as the reference group (i.e. the omitted category in regressions).

Race and Ethnicity of Child. The race/ethnicity variable was coded as white and nonwhite with nonwhites as the reference group. Nonwhites were combined into a single group because there were small numbers of nonwhites in the sample (white, 86 percent; Hispanic/Latino, nine percent; African American, less than one percent; Asian or Pacific Islander, less than one percent; other, one percent).

Child's Grade Level. Parents were asked, "Which of the following grade levels is your child currently attending?" Parents could choose from: kindergarten; 1st grade; 2nd grade; and 3rd grade. Kindergarten is the reference group.

County. Families from this study come from one of four counties in Indiana: Wabash; LaGrange; Noble; and Whitley Counties. Wabash is the reference group.

Analysis Plan
The anonymous nature of the data collection precluded tracking for follow-up. As a result, we are forced to examine group effects rather than effects on specific individuals and are unable to take advantage of the longitudinal nature of the data.

Frequencies were calculated for the overall sample and by subgroups based on self-reports of CollegeChoice 529 plan familiarity and self-report of any 529 account ownership. Logistic regression models were used to predict familiarity with 529s and to predict 529 account ownership while accounting for variation in parental and child characteristics. We also include county-level fixed effects to adjust for potential county-level differences (StataCorp, 2013). This analytical approach and the models in which it is applied increase the robustness of the study's findings. However, statistical models assume that cases are independent or that the treatment of one individual does not influence that of another, while, in practice, there are often overlapping interactions. Because we provide a reduced-form estimate of the relationship between Promise Indiana and 529 account awareness and ownership, these spillovers do not bias our results. However, while most CSA research estimates the individual effects of receiving a CSA, we are estimating the relationship between exposure to a community-based program and 529 account awareness and ownership, which could include parental communication and encouragement within the community.

Sensitivity Analysis
In many social sciences, sensitivity analysis is implemented to study how uncertainty in a model is adjusted in different variable input (Saltelli, 2002). It is highly recommended prior to building a model, since it enhances credibility and supports quality assurance. In that sense, the purpose of sensitivity analysis in this study is to predict whether the logistic regression outcomes show similar pictures even with a more restricted sample. Thus, a sample of parents whose children did not participate in either the pre- or post-survey are excluded. Specifically, third graders in the spring survey and kindergarteners in the fall survey have been ruled out. Appendix A, Table 3 contains sensitivity analysis results.

Results

Overall, 54% of survey respondents lived in a Promise Indiana county (as indicated by the Promise Plus variable). Compared to before Promise Plus, where only 9% of respondents reported having any 529 account, 31% reported having any 529 account after Promise Plus. Before Promise Plus, nearly one-third of respondents (32%) reported having heard of CollegeChoice 529 accounts, compared to almost two-thirds following Promise Plus (61%).

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for the overall sample (N = 3,504) and subgroups 'have heard of CollegeChoice 529' (n = 1,673) and '529 account owner' (n = 729). Of those who reported having heard of CollegeChoice 529s, 43% were also 529 account owners. As expected, of the 729 individuals reporting that they are 529 account owners, nearly all (99%) reported having heard about CollegeChoice 529s. The subgroup of respondents who reported having heard of CollegeChoice 529s were not notably different from the overall sample on measures of education, income, marital status, race, age, or county of residence. Considering the subgroup reporting to be 529 account owners compared to the overall sample, this subgroup is more highly-educated, with almost twice the rate of a Bachelor's degree or higher level of education. They also represent a higher income bracket, with 72% reporting household incomes over $50,000, compared to 52% of the overall sample.

Results for Model 1: Having Heard of CollegeChoice 529Accounts
Model 1 examines the relationship between the likelihood of having heard of CollegeChoice 529 accounts and factors such as exposure to the Promise Plus, parental education level, family income level, marital status, age, child's gender, child's race, grade level, and county of residence. The following covariates are significant in Model 1: Parent with BA or higher degree, high-income household, married, young parents and white parents (see Table 2). If parents have a bachelor's degree or higher, they are about five times more likely to report having heard of CollegeChoice 529 accounts than if they have less than a bachelor's degree (*odds ratio* = 5.278, $p < 0.01$). Parents with income of $50,000 or higher are approximately 67%

Table 1. Promise Indiana Survey Descriptive Statistics

Categorical Variables	All	Have Heard of CollegeChoice 529	Have not Heard of CollegeChoice 529	Has Any 529 Account	Does not have 529 Account
	N = 3,504	n =1,673	n =1,662	n = 729	n = 2,606
Has Any 529	22%	43%	0.42%	--	---
Have heard of CollegeChoice 529	50%	---	---	99%	36%
Parent has a BA or higher	27%	43%	11%	55%	19%
Income $50,000 or more	52%	63%	42%	72%	47%
Parents Married	72%	77%	67%	83%	69%
Parent Age 18-34	52%	45%	59%	39%	55%
Child Male	52%	53%	50%	53%	51%
Child White	87%	92%	82%	93%	85%
Child Grade Level					
Kindergarten	36%	34%	37%	31%	37%
1st grade	26%	26%	27%	30%	25%
2nd grade	24%	23%	25%	22%	25%
3rd grade	14%	17%	11%	17%	13%
County					
Wabash County	22%	30%	14%	36%	18%
LaGrange County	28%	23%	34%	22%	30%
Noble County	39%	33%	45%	27%	42%
Whitley County	11%	15%	7%	14%	10%

more likely to report having heard of CollegeChoice 529 accounts than parents with income below $50,000 (*odds ratio* = 1.673, $p < 0.01$). Parents who are married are close to 24% more likely to report having heard of CollegeChoice 529 accounts than parents who are not married (*odds ratio* = 1.244, $p < 0.05$). If children are white, parents are two times more likely to report having heard of CollegeChoice 529 accounts (*odds ratio* = 2.219, $p < 0.01$) than parents of other race children. Some covariates have a negative relationship (i.e., decrease the odds of having heard of a CollegeChoice 529 account) with the odds of parents' familiarity with these accounts. Parents from LaGrange and Noble counties are less likely (71% and 53%, respectively), to report having heard of CollegeChoice 529 accounts than parents from Wabash County (LaGrange: *odds ratio* = 0.286, $p < 0.01$, Noble: *odds ratio*= 0.472, $p<0.01$), while parents from Whitley County are 73% more likely to report having heard of CollegeChoice 529 accounts (Whitley: *odds ratio*=1.732, $p < 0.01$) than those in Wabash County. Also, parents ages 18 to 34 are nearly 29% less likely to report having heard of CollegeChoice 529 accounts than older parents (*odds ratio* = 0.713, $p < 0.01$). The variable of interest, Promise Plus, is also significant. Findings indicate that the odds of parents reporting having heard of a CollegeChoice 529 account increase by more than six times if they are exposed to Promise Plus than if they are not, after controlling for all other factors (*odds ratio* = 6.046, $p < 0.01$). In the sensitivity analysis, kindergarteners at pre-test and 4th graders at post-test are excluded. Results are similar to those in the main model reported in Table 2. There is one exception; family income does not remain significant (see Appendix A for full results).

Results for Model 2: Predicting 529 Account Ownership

Controlling for the same covariates as Model 1, the second model examines the likelihood of reporting owning any 529 account. The results predicting whether parents report owning any 529 account are

presented in Model 2 (see Table 2). Significant covariates in all ($p < 0.01$) are as follow: parent with BA or higher, parent with income $50,000 or more, married parents, young parent, white parent, and all participating counties (LaGrange, Noble, Whitley). Meanwhile, child gender and grade level are not significant.

The results show that parents with a bachelor's degree are four times more likely to report owning any 529 account than parents without a bachelor's degree (*odds ratio* = 4.088, $p < 0.01$). Parents with high income are 83% more likely to report having a 529 account than low-income parents (*odds ratio* = 1.825, $p<0.01$). Married parents are 44% more likely to report owning any 529 account (*odds ratio* = 1.441, $p < 0.01$) than not married parents. Parents of white children are 65% more likely to report having a 529 account than their non-white counterparts (*odds ratio* = 1.654, $p < 0.01$). However, there are variables that show negative relationships. Young parents are 35% less likely to report having a 529 account (*odds ratio* = 0.651, $p < 0.01$). Parents from LaGrange County are 67% less likely to report having a 529 account (*odds ratio* = 0.335, $p < 0.01$) compared to parents from Wabash County. Parents from Noble and Whitley counties are also less likely (59% and 42%, respectively) to report having a 529 account, when compared with parents from Wabash County (Noble: *odds ratio* = 0.416, $p < 0.01$, Whitley: *odds ratio* = 0.588, $p < 0.01$).
The variable of interest, Promise Plus, is significant. Parents exposed to Promise Plus are almost seven times more likely to report owning any 529 account than those who are not exposed to the Promise Plus, after controlling for all other factors (*odds ratio* = 6.740, $p < 0.01$).

Table 2. Promise Indiana Survey Logistic Regression Results

	Model 1: Heard of CollegeChoice 529			**Model 2: Has Any 529 Account**		
Variable Name	**B**	**Robust S.E**	**Odds Ratio**	**B**	**Robust S.E.**	**Odds Ratio**
Promise Plus	1.799**	0.099	6.046	1.908**	0.122	6.740
Parent Has a BA or	1.664**	0.119	5.278	1.408**	0.115	4.088
Income $50,000 or more	0.515**	0.101	1.673	0.601**	0.123	1.825
Parents Married	0.218*	0.105	1.244	0.365**	0.138	1.441
Parent Age 18-34	-0.339**	0.091	0.713	-0.429**	0.106	0.651
Child Male	0.076	0.088	---	0.021	0.102	---
Child White	0.797**	0.139	2.219	0.503**	0.184	1.654
Child Grade Level	0.04	0.044	---	-0.087	0.051	---
Wabash County (Reference)						
LaGrange County	-1.25**	0.132	0.286	-1.094**	0.143	0.335
Noble County	-0.75**	0.119	0.472	-0.877**	0.131	0.416
Whitley County	0.549**	0.181	1.732	-0.531**	0.184	0.588
Constant	-1.733**	0.206	0.177	-3.100**	0.259	0.045
Observations	2,993			2,993		

Note: B is regression coefficients. SE is standard error. BA= Bachelor Degree. Child grade level is ordinal with 0= kindergarten, 1= first grade, 2= second grade and so forth.
In sensitivity analysis, odds ratio for Promise Plus variable in Model 2 is 9.16; however, it is statistically significant at 0.01 level
** p<0.01, *<0.05, + p<0.1

Discussion and Policy Implications

According to the self-reported survey data, penetration of CollegeChoice 529 account ownership is greater in Promise counties (22%) than national data suggest is the case for American households overall (3-6%, depending on dataset). These figures suggest that relatively more families of young children own 529 college savings accounts in Promise Indiana's target populations than might otherwise have taken this step, absent the Promise Plus intervention. Still, absent automatic enrollment, it appears that even the most

robust engagement approaches may be insufficient to ensure equitable distribution of college savings plan ownership. Specifically, findings suggest that families that are older, more educated, higher-income, and married are more likely to report having 529s in the samples investigated in this study. However, some caution is needed with regard to these survey data. As reported above in the limitations section, far fewer survey participants report having a 529 account (31%) than the actual savings records from Ascensus College Savings indicate (60% opening a CollegeChoice 529 account in 2013 alone). This may be due to low survey response rates and/or confusion about the names of the particular college savings accounts that individuals report owning (e.g. Promise Indiana, CollegeChoice, 529). These are important limitations, for example, when trying to assess the actual percentage of low-income or college-educated families that have CollegeChoice 529 accounts through Promise Indiana. Therefore, we suggest more research is needed to better understand the extent to which Promise Indiana may or may not be helping to reduce the disparities in 529 account ownership seen in national trends. Future investigations will deploy revised survey instruments better able to control for possible confusion about the identification of specific types of college savings accounts, as well as collection of participant demographic information at the point of account initiation. Moreover, Promise Indiana will facilitate some linkage of these indicators with data provided by Ascensus College Savings.

The fact that these patterns from the survey data are similar to the patterns seen in account ownership in other CSA initiatives, anywhere that families are required to initiate their own account opening, provides us with additional confidence in these findings, despite limitations. For example, prior to initiating automatic enrollment in 2014, Clancy and Sherraden (2014) report that in the Harold Alfond College Challenge, "....parents in Maine with more education, other investments, and a financial advisor" were more likely to enroll than their counterparts. Similarly, in SEED OK's social experiment, where automatic account opening is used but parents must open a separate account in order to make their own deposits, children whose mothers are older and more educated are more likely to open these separate, parent-owned accounts (Nam, Hole, Sherraden, & Clancy, 2014). Exposure to the Promise Plus intervention—facilitated 529 account opening, exposure to higher educational institutions, and Promise Indiana marketing— increases one's odds of reporting having a 529 account more than three-fold in this study, although more research is needed. As a result, the larger proportion of Indiana families who now have CollegeChoice 529 accounts for college saving may represent more democratic participation in this system than in other parts of the country.

Inclusion is essential, if CSAs are to be the transformative asset ownership experiences that research suggests possible (Elliott, 2013; Elliott, 2013a; Sherraden, 2014; Huang, Sherraden, Kim, & Clancy, 2014; Williams Shanks & Destin, 2009, Sherraden, 1991), and that American children so clearly need. However, while much of the talk about inclusion to date has necessarily focused on providing all children with a college savings account, as discussed in the preface, growing emphasis on expanding the notion of the CSA intervention to include other programmatic components beyond accounts has heightened the need to begin to examine, with the data currently available, whether these additional components are of relevance to the inclusion discussion. Importantly, in Promise Indiana, for example, while CollegeChoice 529 account ownership and receipt of the associated financial incentives requires parents to 'opt in', delivery of the accompanying CSA Program components—college and career discovery, marketing, financial education, cultivation of college-bound identities—is already universal within schools participating in the Promise. From these admittedly limited data, it appears that Promise Indiana programmatic components may be associated with higher parental expectations (Rasucher et al., 2016) and greater odds of having a 529 account. Therefore, we suggest that it is important to conduct additional research using more rigorous data and methods on programs like Promise Indiana in order to better understand whether or not and which programmatic components actually complement account ownership, in pursuit of CSAs' potential effects.

Study 2: Promise Indiana Savings Outcomes

Key Findings

- In 2013, approximately 63% of eligible kindergarten children opened Indiana CollegeChoice 529 accounts through Promise Indiana; these figures were 44% in 2014 and 28% in 2015.
- Forty-four percent of families who opened an Indiana CollegeChoice 529 account through Promise Indiana have made deposits to their accounts from their own resources and/or by securing champion contributions.
- Family and champion deposits constitute 45% of total account value in CollegeChoice 529 accounts opened through Promise Indiana. Many families are saving steadily. Average quarterly savings are $25; the median is $5 per quarter.
- With an average tenure of 24 months, Promise Indiana CollegeChoice 529 accounts have an average balance of $134; considering only savers (those who have made their own deposit or secured a direct champion deposit), the average balance is $274.

Introduction

The second study in this report examines administrative savings data from Promise Indiana accountholders, secured via agreements with Promise Indiana and Ascensus College Savings, the state-selected manager for Indiana's CollegeChoice 529 plan. The research questions considered are:

- What proportion of eligible students opened CollegeChoice 529 accounts through Promise Indiana each year since implementation?
- What is the total value of CollegeChoice 529 accounts opened through Promise Indiana?
- How is this total value achieved (i.e., with account-opening incentives, match, family and/or champion contributions)?

Promise Indiana Project Description

Promise Indiana is a "state-supported and community-driven" (Kugler, 2015) Children's Savings Account program. During the period examined in this paper, Promise Indiana included three principal components:

- Facilitated enrollment in Indiana CollegeChoice 529 college savings account
- Financial incentives for family saving, including initial seed deposits, savings matches, and champion contributions
- College and career planning activities, integrated into participating schools

The Wabash County YMCA launched what was originally known as the Wabash County Promise in 2013 in response to perceived low utilization of the state's CollegeChoice 529 plan and concerns with findings from a community assessment that showed little college-bound orientation (Elliott & Lewis, 2015). The Wabash County YMCA leadership secured seed money from local philanthropists to finance the development and initial operation of activities to support families in the community as college savers. They also received assistance from the financial institution that manages Indiana's CollegeChoice 529 (formerly, UPromise, now, Ascensus College Savings) and the Indiana Education Savings Authority (IESA), the state entity responsible for overseeing CollegeChoice and that hired Ascensus College Savings as the 529 plan manager. Ascensus College Savings agreed to streamline the enrollment process required to open a CollegeChoice account, for those families entering through Promise Indiana, specifically by creating a unique link to direct online enrollment and a simplified, two-page, paper enrollment form. IESA and Ascensus College Savings also redirected a small portion of their marketing dollars to the Promise, money used to finance promotional materials that encouraged families to open CollegeChoice 529 accounts. IESA has also been a partner in the effort to launch the CSA model in 14 communities around the state of Indiana, as of Fall 2016.

From the beginning, Promise Indiana has incorporated CollegeChoice 529 account opening into school registration, particularly at kindergarten enrollment. For children in grades kindergarten through third, Promise Indiana also seeds all accounts with a $25 initial deposit, the amount required to open a CollegeChoice account, provided by a local or regional sponsor. Families are notified of this offer through such mechanisms as billboards, social media postings, letters and phone calls from school personnel, and presentations at school- and community-related events.[2] After opening an account, if families deposit at least $25—from their own funds or money they secure from a family member, friend, neighbor, or other 'community champion'—the Promise contributes another $75, again from money raised locally or regionally. This, too, is part of the communication families receive about Promise Indiana, even before they open a CollegeChoice 529 account themselves. Families' deposits can be made online through the CollegeChoice 529 website or in person, at Promise Indiana events or at participating schools. Champions' deposits can be contributed directly to a child's CollegeChoice account or collected by the parents and then deposited. In some communities that have launched CSAs under the growing Promise Indiana umbrella, families receive additional matches or incentives as rewards for saving or other, desired behaviors. For example, the Community Foundation of Wabash County will launch the Wabash County Promise Scholarship program in Fall 2016, which will enable children who have CollegeChoice 529 accounts to receive up to $150 in additional deposits in the 4th, 6th, and 8th grades, after completing required saving, learning, or college-going preparation activities.[3] At this point, there is no firm maximum cap on such incentives, so the $100 outlined above should be considered a floor, not a ceiling, even though, in most Promise Indiana communities today, families can only count on these $100 in incentives.

The differences in the experience of owning a CollegeChoice 529 account through Promise Indiana and outside of the CSA structure do not end at enrollment, or even at the point of award of the savings incentives. Families participating in Promise Indiana have a dual-account structure, with a primary CollegeChoice 529 account opened and owned by the family and a match account, created by Promise Indiana if the student is in a grade cohort eligible for matches. The primary account is subject to the same penalties for unqualified withdrawal as any other CollegeChoice 529 direct plan account, while the match account has additional restrictions that could result in forfeiture of the match dollars (but not families' own deposits). The ongoing communication around the account is different, as well, for families who are part of the Promise Indiana program. For example, Ascensus College Savings is only required, by regulation, to send account statements annually to account owners. However, they normally send these statements quarterly to CollegeChoice account owners, and Promise Indiana has leveraged the mailings of these statements to also send a newsletter-type insert to accountholders who are participants in Promise Indiana. That material is designed to provide information about Indiana's tax credit for CollegeChoice contributions, to direct families to online portals where they can check their account information, and to incorporate other elements of Promise Indiana, such as the classroom activities that support college and career planning, the college visits, and the champion process. These items are in addition to standard communication about investment returns, deposits, and fees, transmitted by Ascensus College Savings, in the mail.

All children in participating Promise Indiana schools receive the college and career planning component of the CSA model, whether or not they have a CollegeChoice 529 account or any college savings at all. In the fall of 2013, Promise Indiana hosted its first Walk Into My Future event, a campus visit for kindergarten through third grade students at Manchester University in Wabash County. These events are repeated every year in partnership with different postsecondary educational institutions around the state. Students prepare for these visits, which include learning activities and interaction with college students and faculty, by engaging in classroom discussions about higher education, career goals, and their own academic futures. Communities can innovate their own approaches to this element of the Promise; in some cases, this

[2] The precise outreach and engagement strategies used vary by participating Promise Indiana county. This is intentional; Promise Indiana communication speaks of 'launch' in subsequent counties, after Wabash County, not 'replication'. Communities are encouraged to modify elements such as outreach to best suit their community context and available resources. There is also some variation in incentives, primarily dependent on the local community's ability to raise funds. For example, LaGrange County provides a $100 match to accountholders, after surpassing their fundraising goal, while Jay County conservatively budgeted $50 in match, per account.

[3] For more information about this program, known formally as the Promise Early Distribution Scholarship Program, see: http://www.cfwabash.org/uncategorised/announcing-the-new-promise-scholarship-program.

includes students taking a 'college-going pledge' in the morning, taking photos of themselves with posters outlining their future careers, and/or having guest speakers come to classrooms to highlight their own careers and educational backgrounds.

Research Review: Savings in Children's Savings Account Programs

Savings outcomes are only one of the benchmarks by which CSAs should be judged. At the same time, the theory of change animating the CSA field incorporates savings objectives as goods in themselves and as catalysts of other positive outcomes. CSAs seek to alter the institutions through which families save for college and to cultivate financial practices associated with economic security and upward mobility (re: saving and mobility, see Cramer, O'Brien, Cooper, & Luengo-Prado, 2009). Evaluating the success of a CSA such as Promise Indiana in realizing these aims must consider the context in which such saving occurs. This includes individuals' characteristics and their previous savings experiences, as well as design features of CSAs that may influence savings outcomes. National data suggest that many CSA accountholders would be unlikely to engage in college saving absent a CSA intervention. While examining savings performance within the instrument selected by Promise Indiana—a 529 college savings plan—is an important dimension, then, understanding the effects of the Promise Indiana model requires also juxtaposing Promise Indiana with other children's asset-building efforts. Critically, while understanding of the ways in which particular CSA components influence savings is still evolving, substantial differences between the designs and target populations of CSA programs in the field makes direct comparisons of savings outcomes unwise. Different CSAs emphasize family savings behavior to different extents and attempt to engage families and communities with different types and degrees of savings barriers and through different savings vehicles. Additionally, the research and analysis methods employed are not equivalent, and differences in sample sizes, analytical rigor, and data access make findings imperfectly comparable. Finally, temporal differences may also be salient, as CSA savings outcomes may vary in different macroeconomic cycles and/or at different points in the evolution of a particular CSA program. Nonetheless, a review of literature on savings participation within children's asset-building programs still provides additional context to aid in understanding what Promise Indiana has realized and what CSAs have demonstrated in terms of savings outcomes, both in terms of particular models, and as a field.

College Savings Account Take-Up Rates in CSAs

While, to observers, the incentives and support offered through progressive asset interventions such as Children's Savings Accounts seem almost too good to be true, CSA programs have often struggled to enroll participants, absent an automated process for opening accounts. For example, before shifting to universal and automatic accounts, take up of Maine's Harold Alfond College Challenge's (HACC), which provides a $500 investment financed by private philanthropy, was never higher than 53%, even during an intensive local pilot; participation dropped to 40% when spread statewide (Nam, Hole, Sherraden, & Clancy, 2014). Michigan's implementation of the Savings for Education, Enterpreneurship, and Downpayment (SEED) demonstration[4] used active recruitment, including home visits, and had a relatively large ($800) initial seed enticement, but secured participation of only 62% of the target population (Marks, Rhodes, Engelhardt, Scheffler, & Wallace, 2009). Even automatic account opening does not always eliminate the challenges associated with recruitment, as some structures require parents to open their own account for household saving. For example, in SEED for Oklahoma Kids (SEED OK), a large CSA experiment with random assignment and probability sampling from a full state population (Clancy, Beverly, Sherraden, & Huang, 2016), parents in the treatment group are automatically enrolled in the state 529 plan and granted a $1,000 initial deposit, unless they take the explicit step of opting out. However, families cannot make their own deposits into the state's 529 plan without completing the paperwork to open a separate, 'parent-owned' account. In SEED OK, after about 7 years, children who received an automatic CSA are fifteen times more

[4] SEED is a multifaceted initiative to test the efficacy of savings accounts for children and youth, in order to inform policy for a national system of such asset-building accounts (Sherraden & Stevens, 2010). More than 1,171 children and their families in 12 states and communities opened SEED accounts in programs that used different design features, including initial deposits (of various amounts), savings matches (with various parameters), and enrollment approaches. Multi-method research accompanied SEED's programming. Subsequent publications have included findings from in-depth interviews with youth, examination of savings data from programs, and the large, statewide, randomized control trial in SEED for Oklahoma Kids (Sherraden & Stevens, 2010).

likely to also have a parent-opened 529 account than those in the control group (Clancy, Beverly, Sherraden, & Huang, 2016), and the intervention has been found to increase predicted probability of 529 account holding by 20% (Nam, et al., 2013). However, after about 7 years, only 17% of children in the treatment group had a parent-opened account (Clancy, Beverly, Sherraden & Huang, 2016). This low uptake is likely due in part to very low baseline levels of 529 account holding, as described above; in the SEED OK control group, only 3% of children were named as OK 529 beneficiaries at the time the CSA intervention began (Clancy, Beverly, Sherraden, & Huang, 2016), so there was a steep hill to climb. In Maine, which has a similar, dual-account, structure after the shift to automatic granting of the Harold Alfond College Challenge, approximately 30% of families have opened their own 529 accounts (see Lewis & Elliott, 2015) after receiving the HACC grant. It is recognition of these challenges and their resistance, often, to even extensive outreach efforts, which has fueled the rise in automatic CSA enrollment mechanisms. Here, account ownership rates can dramatically outpace the status quo, as in SEED OK, where only one household opted out, resulting in 99.9% 529 account ownership after about 7 years (Clancy, Beverly, & Sherraden, 2016).

Savings Rates, Amounts, and Asset Accumulation

Opening the Children's Savings Account only opens the door to saving. Metrics related to deposit frequency and amounts, as well as total asset accumulation, provide a more complete picture of savings outcomes in CSAs. While, again, direct comparison is complicated by differences in program design and target populations, a review of existing literature from the field reveals that savings participation in CSAs has mostly been modest. Overall, 57% of participants in the Savings for Education, Entrepreneurship, and Downpayment (SEED) demonstration saved their own funds (Mason, et al., 2010). Importantly, most SEED sites were relatively small-scale, community-based projects, enrolling between 67-82 accountholders (Sherraden & Stevens, 2010). Since participants self-selected into these programs and, in many cases, received considerable support and encouragement toward their savings goals, these factors should be taken into account in considering savings outcomes. After about seven years of enrollment, eight percent of parents whose children received the SEED OK intervention (treatment group) had personal savings in an OK 529 college savings account, a figure simultaneously significantly greater than among the control group (Clancy, Beverly, & Sherraden, 2016; Clancy, Beverly, Sherraden, & Huang, 2016) and, still, relatively low. In Michigan's SEED demonstration, 31% of the 495 participants made deposits to their accounts (Loke, Clancy, & Zager, 2009).

While, as discussed below, many factors help to predict savings, the small deposits realized by many CSA savers are likely due in large part to low incomes that leave few resources to dedicate to long-term asset accumulation. Compared to other savings vehicles, CSA programs serve a higher percentage of lower-income families, and this population faces considerable savings obstacles, as detailed in the Sallie Mae survey (2015), where 65% of low-income families reported that inadequate income is a barrier to saving for college, and in qualitative examination of CSA participants' savings experiences (see Gray, et al., 2012). While savings figures captured at a particular moment in time can shift, sometimes dramatically and particularly in programs with relatively small rosters, review of administrative savings data from different incentivized savings initiatives underscores the small scale of many families' deposits. In Michigan's SEED program, for example, average quarterly net savings were $19 (Loke, Clancy, & Zager, 2009). Monthly net savings in the American Dream Demonstration, which field tested Sherraden's (1991) vision of asset-building accounts to help individuals leave poverty, averaged $9.83 (Schreiner, Clancy, & Sherraden, 2002). Median quarterly savings in SEED, nationally, were $7, with an average net quarterly contribution of $30 per participant (Mason, et al., 2010). Average quarterly savings in SEED grew as enrollment tenure lengthened, but at a declining rate of growth over time (Mason, et al., 2009), suggesting that savings outcomes are dynamic, even within a given program model.

Significantly, these savings can contribute to more substantial asset holdings over time, particularly when augmented by robust and progressive incentives. Even considering only savers' own deposits, the long tenures of account ownership in some CSA programs can still facilitate larger balances. For example, in SEED OK, average savings in parent-opened accounts for treatment children are $261 (Beverly, Clancy, Huang, & Sherraden, 2015) over seven years of the CSA intervention. As in other wealth-building systems, however, asset accumulation in Children's Savings Accounts does not hinge entirely—or, in some cases, even primarily—on families' own savings effort. Instead, initial seed deposits, savings matches, and

investment earnings can contribute substantially to total asset ownership. Perhaps the most compelling example of this asset accumulation potential is the SEED OK social experiment, where the average value of Oklahoma 529 assets held by children in the treatment group is $1,851--$1,000 of which comes from the automatic initial seed (Beverly, Clancy, Huang, & Sherraden, 2015). Median investment earnings contribute another $426 to this total while, for families who have opened their own accounts for college saving, another $100 in the initial opening incentive was deposited, as well (Beverly, Clancy, Huang, & Sherraden, 2015). Significantly, Children's Savings Account programs administered through 529 plans have shown stronger asset accumulation than those utilizing deposit accounts, a finding particularly noteworthy since accounts delivered through 529s do face investment risk, especially acute during the period straddling the Great Recession. For example, SEED OK realized a 40% growth in the initial $1,000 seed over seven years (Clancy, Beverly, & Sherraden, 2016), despite the Great Recession. Accumulation outcomes from other children's savings interventions similarly underscore the significance of using levers other than family savings to catalyze asset building; in Michigan's SEED program, initial program deposits accounted for 53% of total asset accumulation, with matches and earnings further amplifying family saving (Loke, Clancy, & Zager, 2009). Median accumulation across the SEED sites was $1,093, with initial program seed deposits accounting for approximately 50% of this figure (Mason, et al., 2009).

Factors that Predict Saving and Asset Accumulation

Although neoclassical savings theories emphasize the importance of income in predicting saving and asset accumulation, other research, including much from the field of asset building for low-income Americans, has found income less determinant of these outcomes (see Curley, Ssewamala, & Sherraden, 2005). While, certainly, insufficient income is a real constraint on many families' savings, the literature points to other factors, perhaps more amenable to manipulation through CSA design, that also influence savings performance and overall accumulation. These include information and knowledge about how to save (Lusardi, 2003) and institutional features (Han & Sherraden, 2007) such as restricted access to account balances (Curley, Ssewamala, & Sherraden, 2005) and subsidies such as savings matches (Mason, et al., 2009). Consistent with other findings that information matters for saving (Lusardi, 2008), understanding the features of the Children's Savings Account program may contribute to savings engagement (Nam, Hole, Sherraden, & Clancy, 2014). This includes comprehending and being able to navigate often-complex rules regarding account ownership and available incentives and may also require at least some level of comfort with the financial instrument, as well. Therefore, outreach and communication efforts may be particularly salient determinants of savings outcomes. In SEED OK, those who understood that the program did not require an initial household deposit were significantly more likely to take up an account (27% versus 11%) and also had larger balances ($132, compared to $120) (Nam, Hole, Sherraden, & Clancy, 2014).

Toward this end, program knowledge in SEED OK appears to lag for people of color (Nam, Hole, Sherraden, & Clancy, 2014), a finding that underscores racial and other disparities in savings outcomes. Michigan's SEED demonstration saw poorer savings participation among African Americans (Marks, et al., 2009), while, for the overall SEED project, Latinos, Native Americans, and African Americans had smaller deposits and less accumulation than Asian or White accountholders (Mason, et al., 2009). Those with college degrees also saved more in SEED, while not-married parents saved less (Mason, et al., 2010). Other evaluation has similarly found that higher savers in incentivized programs were Caucasian, more highly-educated, and homeowners (Grinstein-Weiss, Wagner, & Ssemawala, 2006). In SEED OK, children whose mothers are older and more educated are more likely to open their own account for college saving and have larger deposits (Nam, Hole, Sherraden, & Clancy, 2014), while larger household sizes are associated with reduced savings outcomes (Nam, et al., 2013).

Family demographics such as children's ages may also influence saving. Nationally, while Sallie Mae's survey finds slightly higher rates of college saving among families with children ages birth to six years, average annual deposits peak when children are ages 13 to 17 (Sallie Mae, 2015) and college appears imminent. High-income families tend to begin saving for their children's college education during kindergarten, while middle- and low-income families are likely to wait until secondary school, leaving less time for savings to accrue (Hillman et al., 2015). Children's Savings Account programs seek to activate families as college savers on a different timeline than might otherwise occur, usually at birth or kindergarten; therefore, a reason for the relatively low savings rates within CSA programs might be

because of the age of participating children. Indeed, even within CSA programs, account ownership may increase as children age. Qualitatively, some parents in CSAs report that the length of time until their children will begin college is a barrier to their college saving (Gray, et al., 2012).

While, at this point, parents are considered the accountholders in Promise Indiana and understood to be the primary source of family-generated deposits, the model's emphasis on children as emerging 'college savers' makes literature from the field of youth-focused savings interventions also relevant. Here, some research has found greater success engaging and sustaining younger youth as savers (Johnson, et al., 2015; Johnson, et al., 2016) before the financial pressures of adolescence infringe on their long-term savings goals. Youth report utilizing strategies that increase their savings success, including saving at home to experience the satisfaction of watching money accumulate, as well as enlisting their parents for financial and psychological support (Wheeler-Brooks & Scanlon, 2009).

Barriers and Strategies

Quantitative and qualitative research has contributed to knowledge regarding barriers families face to saving in CSAs and strategies used to overcome these obstacles. Interviews with mothers whose children have SEED OK accounts reveal widespread financial constraints, with inadequate income and high debt obligations constraining saving (Gray, et al., 2012). While these mothers report a strong desire to save and to qualify for the match, often, all income goes to essentials, hindering deposits (Gray, et al., 2012). Information gaps, confusion about account features and rules, and language barriers (Gray, et al., 2012) also make it difficult for some parents to navigate savings opportunities. Other CSA evaluation has identified poverty, housing costs, and social network demands as among the barriers that can interfere with families' savings (Beverly & Barton, 2006). These and other savings barriers may become more acute and more visible as account ownership is democratized and those with financial disadvantages are more equitably included among accountholders, and, then, among those whose savings challenges are directly observed (Clancy, Beverly, Sherraden, & Huang, 2016).

CSA strategies, including many utilized by Promise Indiana, seek to help households overcome savings barriers. Financial incentives are critical (Clancy, Johnson, & Schreiner, 2001; McKernan, et al., 2007; Schreiner & Sherraden, 2007) and can exert differential effects on discrete savings outcomes. Evidence from SEED reveals that savings matches serve as significant motivators for household savings, while initial deposits fuel overall asset accumulation (Mason, et al., 2009). Specifically, higher match rates appear to increase account opening, although there are more mixed effects on savings amounts, while increasing the amount of household savings subject to the match (the match cap) has been found to increase deposits (Nam, et al., 2013). Other institutional features CSA program participants see as valuable savings supports include availability of direct deposit (Scanlon, Buford, & Dawn, 2009) and restrictions on withdrawals (Wheeler-Brooks & Scanlon, 2009). Some of Promise Indiana's approaches to encouraging savings engagement are relatively novel in the domestic children's savings field. For example, many Promise Indiana sites accept family deposits at the school, an approach to financial inclusion and institutional access utilized in some developing countries and shown to increase frequency and amount of deposits (see Johnson, et al., 2015), more than relying solely on marketing and outreach (Lee, et al., 2015). The Promise Indiana model also includes a financial education component, a dimension some research has found associated with increased monthly savings, greater savings effort (as measured by percent of income saved), and more frequent deposits (Grinstein-Weiss, Guo, Reinertson, & Russell, 2015). Evaluation of Individual Development Account programs has found that targeted financial education interventions—particularly those that increase low-income households' future orientation and ability to cope with stresses—can increase savings effort, even after the structured savings opportunity ends (Loibl, Grinstein-Weiss, Zhan, & Red Bird, 2010). Significantly, SEED OK research shows that overall financial knowledge was positively related to account ownership only in the treatment group (Huang, Nam, & Sherraden, 2013), suggesting that access to savings vehicles—not just information—is critical for improving savings outcomes.

Research Questions

Using administrative savings data, study two asks:

- What proportion of eligible students opened CollegeChoice 529 accounts through Promise Indiana each year since implementation?
- What is the total value of CollegeChoice 529 accounts owned by Promise Indiana participants?
- How is this total value achieved (i.e., with account-opening incentives, match, family and/or champion contributions)?

Methods

In Fall 2013, the Wabash County Promise was piloted with students in Kindergarten through 3rd grade at four public elementary and two private schools in Wabash County, Indiana. This initial implementation was preceded by a marketing push via word of mouth, community social and service club meetings, and informational flyers. These efforts also ran concurrently through October 2013, with the addition of a radio spot to promote the champion component, press releases to recognize sponsors, and a newspaper insert to highlight the Walk into My Future event. Siblings and students outside the target grade cohorts or who attended different schools were allowed to open CollegeChoice 529 accounts and likely exposed to the marketing and publicity components but did not receive assistance opening CollegeChoice 529 accounts or any financial incentives or match for doing so. For this reason, those students are not included in analyses presented here.

Enrollment Procedure. While all children enrolled in participating schools receive the Promise Indiana CSA program elements related to college and career exposure and financial education, actual enrollment in the CollegeChoice 529 account occurred during school registration prior to the fall semester. Before registration, families received a flyer describing the Promise Indiana program and requirements for CollegeChoice 529 account opening (i.e., requires the child's Social Security Number). While representatives of Ascensus College Savings attended some of these events in order to observe the process, each school relied on a contingent of trained volunteers to educate families about Promise Indiana and encourage them to sign up, particularly at kindergarten registration. Parents were not required to sign up at the school registration or back-to-school night in order to be eligible for the $25 incentive. They could instead take the packet home and do it later. However, Ascensus College Savings created a unique website for direct enrollment via the Promise, a process outside the normal 529 enrollment and featuring fewer steps; similarly, the paper-based enrollment form used by Promise Indiana to open CollegeChoice 529 accounts was only two pages, significantly shorter than the standard CollegeChoice form.

Upon signing up for a CollegeChoice 529 account, each child received an enrollment certificate with his or her name and a statement from community sponsors of their commitment to make the first $25 investment into the child's account. During the initial pilot year (2013), enrollment efforts were directed equally toward the entire target grade cohorts of Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade students. In subsequent years, however, enrollment efforts were geared mainly toward incoming Kindergarten students.

Sample. The quantitative data analysis in study two focuses on Promise Indiana accountholders within the target grade cohorts at six pilot schools (Four public schools: Manchester Elementary, MetroNorth Elementary, OJ Neighbours Elementary, and Southwood Elementary; and two private schools, Wabash Emmanuel Christian School and Wabash St. Bernard Catholic School).

Savings Data. Data on savings activities were obtained from Promise Indiana via Ascensus College Savings, the program manager for the Indiana CollegeChoice 529 plan. Variables from Ascensus College Savings included date of account set up[5], accountholder date of birth and current age, county of residence, school and grade level at enrollment, and date, type, and amount of each transaction (family/champion contribution, match, or incentive). Promise Indiana program staff added current school and grade level.

Transaction Types are categorized into three groups. Family/Champion Contribution deposits are made by the accountholders or by champions directly to the account. Accounts are also eligible for up to $325 in

[5] Given Patriot Act requirements to verify account owners' information, there is some lag between families' 529 account opening, onsite, and the establishment of the account within Ascensus College Savings' system.

Sponsored Contributions. These are broken down into two categories: incentive and match. Promise Indiana community sponsors provide start-up incentives of $25. Accounts are eligible to receive a 3:1 match of up to $75 each year if the family/champion deposits total $25 by October 31st (approximately 2-3 months after account is opened). Due to the short tenure of account ownership and minimal appreciation or depreciation to date, earnings on contributions are not included in the current analysis, although historic returns suggest these could be considerable over the life of the accounts.

Results

Enrollment Data. Table 4 displays 529 CollegeChoice account opening rates through Promise Indiana for the four public schools by grade and year. Only overall take-up rates are reported for the two private schools due to small sample sizes. The percentage opening accounts is based on total number who signed up for an account, divided by the total enrollment values from the Indiana Department of Education for the four public schools, and from school administrative data for the two private schools. In order to ascertain the proportion of newly-eligible accounts, the number of accountholders from the previous grade cohort was subtracted from the next grade cohort. For example, in 2013, 410 kindergarten students enrolled for kindergarten in the four public schools and 258 (62.9%) kindergarten students signed up for Promise Indiana accounts. In the following year (2014), 407 students enrolled in first grade and 48 signed up for accounts. However, since many of these students had already signed up for accounts in kindergarten, using the full sample of first graders would underestimate the proportion of new accountholders. Therefore, we subtracted the number of kindergarten accountholders in 2013 (N=258) from the number of students enrolled in first grade in 2014 (N=407) and used this value (N=152) as the denominator. This resulted in a new enrollee rate for first graders in 2014 of 31.6%.

During the first year of Promise Indiana, nearly 60% of eligible students signed up for accounts, with take-up rates equally distributed across grades. In subsequent years, we see a decline in percent of newly-eligible students signing up for accounts (34% in 2014 and 18% in 2015). However, looking at enrollment trends by grade, we see that among Kindergarten students, new enrollments remained higher across the board. This is likely a reflection of the increased focus on Kindergarten students by Promise Indiana in subsequent years after 2013.

Table 4. Promise Indiana Account Take-Up in Public Schools by Year and Grade.

	Year			
	2013	**2014**	**2015**	**Total**
Percent Newly Opening Accounts				
K	62.9%	44.2%	27.8%	45.0%
1st	53.1%	31.6%	12.7%	38.4%
2nd	62.8%	17.9%	7.7%	40.5%
3rd	56.3%	32.8%	5.7%	38.3%
Total	58.6%	33.0%	17.6%	41.2%
Private Schools	38.3%	13.5%	6.5%	23.4%

Account and Savings Data. After closed, frozen, or otherwise not activated accounts (n = 193), duplicate cases (n = 3), and cases outside the target grade cohorts (n = 16), were removed, the final data set included account data for 1,424 children (account beneficiaries) and 1,149 account owners (generally a parent or legal guardian). Since 67% of all accounts were opened in 2013, the average length of time since account opening was 24 months (ranging from 3 to 36 months). The majority of account owners (79%) were the owner of only one account; 19% owned two accounts; and 2% were account owners for 3 or more children. Table 5 displays savings data for the sample overall and broken down by savers and non-savers. The average account beneficiary has $134 in his/her account. This includes incentives, match, and family and champion contributions. Forty-four percent of participants have made a deposit of their own or had a champion make a deposit, denoted as "savers". When only savers are included, the average balance rises to $274. Among savers, 60% have contributions of $1 - $50 and at the high end, 11% have contributions that

total $301 and above. On average, Family/Champion contributions make up 45% of the account value, followed by match (31%), and incentives (24%). Family/champion contributions for these 610 accounts average $8 per month (ranging from less than $1 to over $800 per month; median $3) with average quarterly savings ranging from $1 to $2,500 (average $25, median $5).

Table 5. Savings Summary for Promise Indiana All Accountholders. N = 1,419**

	Total Sample N = 1,419**	**Savers* n=610** 43%**
Total Value of Account with Incentives/Match	Mean $134; Median $45; Range $25-$6,200	Mean $274; Median $140; Range $25-$6,200
Total Lifetime Match	Mean $31; Median $0; Range $0-$225	Mean $66; Median $75; Range $0-$225
Total Family/Champion Contribution among All Accountholders (no incentive or match)	Mean $79; Median $0 Mode $0 Range $0-$6,025	Mean $183 Median $50 Mode $25 Range $.98-$6,025
Total Family Contribution Grouped		
$0	57.0%	--
$1-$50	25.7%	59.8%
$51-$100	7.8%	18.0%
$101-$200	3.4%	7.9%
$201-$300	1.3%	3.1%
$301 and above	4.8%	11.1%
Average Quarterly Contributions		
3rd quarter 2013		$25.00
4th quarter 2013		$75.63
1st quarter 2014		$123.64
2nd quarter 2014		$186.21
3rd quarter 2014		$47.71
4th quarter 2014		$134.19
1st quarter 2015		$39.56
2nd quarter 2015		$29.63
3rd quarter 2015		$47.66
4th quarter 2015		$121.84
1st quarter 2016		$39.79
Overall Quarterly Average		$25.38

Note. Source of all data is Promise Indiana via Ascensus College Savings.
*Savers defined as accounts with at least one contribution after the initial $25 incentive or with at least one family/champion contribution if did not receive $25 incentive. The value does not include incentive or match.
**Removed 5 outliers with total family contributions above $10,000.

As mentioned previously, 1,149 account owners represent the 1,424 account beneficiaries. Among these, 511 (45%) are saver families, meaning that for at least one account, the account owner or a champion contributed money above and beyond the incentives or match (9% of the 247 saver families with two or more account beneficiaries saved for one but not another). Average savings per account owner (among saver families) is $197 (n =507 after removal of outliers with > $10,000 per account owner).

Discussion and Policy Implications

The discussion and policy section of this study makes some comparisons between savings outcomes in Promise Indiana and other CSA programs. This is done to provide the reader with some context for understanding these findings. However, these are not 'apples to apples' comparisons. The programs differ

in many important ways such as characteristics of populations served, size of participant pool, amount of initial deposits, match amount and structure, years of operation, and so forth. So, if one program's savings rate differs from another's, it does not imply that it is doing better or worse; it simply provides some context for understanding the findings and direction for future research.

At its peak during the first year of Promise Indiana implementation, 63% of eligible kindergarteners opened 529 accounts. This figure declined in 2014 to 44% and in 2015 to 28%. The challenge of securing widespread account opening as the start of a Children's Savings Account initiative is not confined to Promise Indiana. Similarly, according to Clancy and Sherraden (2014), about 40% of eligible children had enrolled and received the $500 grant in Maine's Harold Alfond College Challenge in 2013, prior to shifting to automatic enrollment in 2014. Declines in account take-up in Promise Indiana may have been prompted by reductions in the intensity of the marketing, volunteer recruitment, and outreach campaigns that accompanied the Promise, particularly as key architects worked to launch Promise Indiana beyond its initial geographic footprint and necessarily redirected some of their energies from local implementation to scaling. Promise Indiana's approach to embedding much of the outreach and engagement within school systems may mitigate some of the expense associated with family engagement, but such efforts may still be logistically complicated to coordinate and personnel-intensive. Promise Indiana staff specifically note that in the first year they relied much more heavily on word of mouth and volunteers working the room at school registration but, in later years, relied more on such avenues as Facebook and flyers. More research is needed to understand the cause of the decline in account take-up, the extent to which these changes in the outreach approach are implicated, and whether they will bounce back over time. As such, while Promise Indiana's account take-up figures reveal demand for college saving opportunities among parents of young children and measurable success in encouraging them to take steps to save for college even when higher education is in the distant future, they may also point to the need for structures such as automatic enrollment, if CSAs are to permeate the entire population with a scalable design, which will require avoiding potentially resource-intensive investments in outreach. This was the conclusion reached by decision makers regarding the Harold Alfond College Challenge in Maine, where a desire to focus resources more directly on children's asset-building and a commitment to ensure that all Maine babies actually receive the account with the $500 grant were key factors in pivoting to automatic account opening in 2014 (Clancy & Sherraden, 2014; Powell, 2014).

The use of automatic enrollment as a preferred method for creating inclusivity has been powerfully demonstrated in SEED for Oklahoma Kids (SEED OK) (Clancy, Beverly, Sherraden, & Huang, 2016). Only one parent opted out of the OK 529 college savings account opened automatically for children in the treatment group. Thus, after about seven years, 99.9% of children in the treatment group have an OK 529 account, compared to fewer than 4% of children in the control group (Clancy, Beverly, Sherraden, & Huang, 2016). In Promise Indiana, the limitations of anything short of automatic enrollment are underscored by the laudable collective attention and collaboration around college savings evidenced, which some communities may struggle to emulate. While Promise Indiana's peak take-up was higher than that seen in any other opt-in CSA programs, perhaps a reflection of the strong community support generated by the Promise, difficulty sustaining what still amounted to less than full inclusion points to the importance of completely inclusive policy.

However, it is important to point out, that even when automatic CSA enrollment is used today, where families are required to take an action in order to open an account into which they can save, it is often difficult to induce this action. For example, Clancy et al., (2016) report that, in SEED OK, about 17% of families take this action and open up their own account after automatically receiving $1,000 in a state-owned account for their child. It might be that distributing information by mail—a design decision to decrease the likelihood that control group members are exposed to the treatment of outreach about the state 529 college savings plan—may have constrained uptake of the parent-owned 529 accounts (Gray, Clancy, Sherraden, Wagner, & Miller-Cribbs, 2012). In pursuit of full inclusion, then, CSAs may need policy changes to 529s that eliminate the need for parents to act by opening up their own account in order to save (Elliott, Lewis, Poore, & Clarke, 2015), in order to give all families access not just to an account, but also to opportunities to save.

We suggest that the balances seen in Promise Indiana 529 CollegeChoice accounts should be considered in light of relatively modest initial seed, at $25, compared to seeds provided by some other Children's Savings

Account programs. Even the total available CSA incentives possible at the point of collection of the savings data ($100) is not that significant in light of total college costs, which the Indiana College Cost Calculator places at $7,579, on average, for a year of in-state tuition at an Indiana university in 2015-2016.[6] While families open Promise Indiana accounts when their children are somewhat older than in some other CSAs—some of which open and seed accounts at birth—Promise Indiana children are still young. Therefore, the Promise Indiana accounts observed here will have at least 9 more years of potential balance growth before children reach the point of college enrollment. With many accounts open for less than a year, they have $134 in average account balance for the total enrolled population and $274 in average balances for savers. Average quarterly savings, at $25, also compare favorably with savings outcomes realized in some other Children's Savings Account programs (see e.g., Loke, Clancy, & Zager, 2009; Mason et al., 2010).

Forty-four percent of Promise Indiana accountholders have made contributions to their own accounts and/or secured champion contributions directly to their accounts. This is a lower rate of savings than in SEED demonstrations (Mason, et al., 2010; Loke, Clancy, & Zager), although Promise Indiana's comparatively large size increases the likelihood of accounts opened by families not likely to save, or to save much. Additionally, findings from other CSA programs suggest that the percentage of Promise Indiana participants who have made at least one deposit—the definition of 'saving' in SEED evaluations—will increase as account ownership tenure grows beyond today's average of 24 months (Mason, et al., 2009). At this point, Promise Indiana's savings rate is greater than the percentage of families saving their own funds in SEED OK. These comparisons should also be considered in light of the significantly smaller financial incentives available in Promise Indiana, instruments that have been found, in other research (see Clancy, Johnson, & Schreiner, 2001; McKernan, et al., 2007), to encourage behavior such as account opening and family deposits. Promise Indiana has adopted innovations associated in other research with greater savings engagement, such as facilitation of deposits through the school system (Johnson, et al., 2015), restrictions on balance usage (Wheeler-Brooks & Scanlon, 2009), and financial education (Grinstein-Weiss, et al., 2015), and these may be catalyzing families' relatively strong savings performance.

Review of Promise Indiana's savings figures also reveals the extent to which contributions from families—from their own funds and/or from those they secure from their own social networks, which are comingled in Promise Indiana's accounting—constitute total balances in the Promise accounts. Promise Indiana's accounts are seeded with only $25, while in CSAs with larger initial seeds this initial incentive makes up a sizable portion of account holders' asset accumulation. Promise Indiana's use of the Indiana CollegeChoice 529 plan portends potentially significant future investment earnings, but, in these early years of the CSA, families are responsible for 45% of the value of their accounts. Indeed, given relatively robust savings engagement, vesting Promise Indiana accounts with more generous financial incentives, on par with the SEED OK policy demonstration and CSAs such as Maine's Harold Alfond College Challenge, could amplify the intervention's asset-building potency.

[6] More detailed information on college costs (public and private) in Indiana is available from: http://www.indianacollegecosts.org/explore-indiana-colleges/indiana-college-costs-list.

Study 3: Parental Perceptions about Savings in Promise Indiana

Key Findings

- Parents interviewed about their experiences as savers within Promise Indiana display evidence of emerging college-saver identities, including dimensions of salience, normalization of difficulty, and group congruence, understood to collectively animate Identity-Based Motivation, as described by Oyserman and colleagues (Oyserman, 2007; Oyserman, 2013; Oyserman, 2015; Oyserman & Destin, 2010).
- Qualitative data suggest that parents' emerging identities as college savers may support saving by making college seem a more urgent financial priority and by framing even small deposits as valuable steps on the path to college financing.
- Parent interviews include descriptions of obstacles faced in attempting to save for college, including financial constraints, and strategies used to overcome these challenges, including how dimensions of the Promise Indiana CSA (such as facilitated enrollment and savings matches) encourage their saving.

Introduction

Qualitative research has made important contributions to understanding of savings experiences within asset-building programs (Sherraden, et al., 2012). This qualitative study, designed as a complement to quantitative investigations of outcomes in the Promise Indiana Children's Savings Account program, seeks to learn from parents' sharing of their experiences of saving within Promise Indiana. Using an Identity-Based Motivation framework as an underlying theoretical base (see Oyserman, 2007; Oyserman, 2013; Oyserman, 2015; Oyserman & Destin, 2010; also, Rauscher, et al., 2016; Elliott, 2013), we explore these parents' reflections on and aspirations for their college saving, and how saving in a CollegeChoice 529 account through Promise Indiana may relate to development of college-saver identities, as the CSA field is coming to understand them.

Theory: Identity-Based Motivation and College-Saver Identities among Parents

Here we build on discussion of the theoretical foundation of Identity-Based Motivation (IBM), researched extensively by Dr. Daphna Oyserman and her colleagues (e.g., Oyserman, 2007), as applied to the cultivation and activation of college-saver identities. Similar to the idea of children forming a college-saver identity discussed by Elliott (2013), we suggest parents may also form a college-saver identity where they identify savings as a strategy for helping their child pay for college and perceive that their child is college-bound.

IBM , a concept extensively studied by Dr. Oyserman and colleagues, has three different components: (1) identity salience, (2) difficulty as normal, and (3) congruence with group identity (see Oyserman, 2007; Oyserman, 2013). In this context, identity salience is the idea that a parent is more likely to work toward the goal of his/her child attending college—including opening a Children's Savings Account and beginning to save—when images of the child's future self are at the forefront of the mind.

Interpreting difficulty as normal refers to a parent's means for normalizing and overcoming obstacles related to his/her child going to college, particularly related to challenges in college saving and the perception that Promise Indiana provides meaningful assistance in meeting those challenges. It also encompasses a recognition that asset-based financial aid, unlike student debt or other just-in-time mechanisms, is designed not only to help parents pay for their child's education but to help sustain their child's persistence to and through higher education.

Parents who have developed college-saver identities (see Elliott, et al., 2015) may not necessarily act in ways congruent with this sense of self. Instead, parents are likely to act as college savers, according to IBM theory, when acting feels identity-congruent. Congruence with group identity occurs when an image of the self feels tied to ideas about relevant social groups (e.g., friends, family, cultural groups, geographic community, and/or participants in a CSA program) (Oyserman & Destin, 2010; Oyserman, 2013). This may, in turn, be encouraged among parents who know others also saving for college and see the champion deposits as evidence that others support them in college saving. Additionally, because group congruence is also shaped by the context in which an identity develops (see Oyserman & Destin, 2010), observation of college-saver identity development and activation in Promise Indiana must also be considered in light of the particular social, economic, cultural, and political milieu of the communities where Promise Indiana has been implemented.

Research Questions

Study three uses an Identity-Based Motivation framework to better understand the savings behaviors of a small number of participants, drawing on qualitative data from interviews with parents in Wabash, LaGrange, and Jay counties, each of which represent different phases of Promise Indiana implementation.[7] These in-depth interviews explored such questions as:

- For those who have become savers, what Promise Indiana program features activate college-saver identities among parents?
- What strategies do parents employ to help them save?
- What barriers do parents identify to college saving, within or in spite of the Promise Indiana intervention?

Methods

After receiving training in the interview guides, including background information on Promise Indiana, 529 college saving plans, and the theory behind Identity-Based Motivation and its constructs, AEDI staff and graduate research assistants conducted standardized, open-ended interviews to collect qualitative data from 25 Promise Indiana parent participants in Wabash, LaGrange, and Jay counties whose children have CollegeChoice 529 college savings accounts through Promise Indiana. The sample was conceived purposively, with specific grades within target schools identified. AEDI then worked with Promise Indiana staff to gain the cooperation of these participating schools and to communicate to school personnel those who had opened CollegeChoice 529 accounts through Promise Indiana and, therefore, were eligible to be included in the sampling pool for this study. Saver status, in terms of whether or not families had made a deposit into their account, was not a criterion for inclusion in the sample; Promise Indiana communicates with participating schools about which children have opened accounts, but no individual-level information about deposit activity is transmitted to schools. Then, interviews were conducted with those individuals willing to come to mutually agreed upon locations in the counties of participants' residence to be interviewed. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' permission. All interviews were transcribed and then analyzed using Microsoft Word. Two researchers used the interview guides, review of transcripts, and process notes to create a preliminary code list, which was then tested on three transcripts and subsequently revised. The revised code list was applied to another transcript by both researchers, who then produced a final code list for the research team to apply to all transcripts. Based on initial coding experiences, themes were identified and excerpts related to those themes were grouped in matrices to enable constant comparative analysis, as described by Padgett (2008). Researchers then synthesized the data and began writing the analysis. During this iterative process, researchers returned frequently to the transcripts to review the context, consulted with each other about unclear passages or conflicting findings, and integrated the theoretical base to make sense of the data. By analyzing in teams, gathering demographic and other information from a brief parent/guardian survey, and considering the quantitative savings data alongside the qualitative findings, the research team was able to triangulate data and incorporate context, in order to enhance confirmability. Additionally, as suggested by Patton (2002), the team looked for

[7] Jay County started Promise Indiana in 2015-16, one year after LaGrange and Noble counties' initiation.

alternative explanations to themes and linkages, as well as evidence to support these negative cases, in order to increase credibility.

Limitations

Promise Indiana did not collect demographic information on families, at baseline, when they opened CollegeChoice 529 accounts through the program. Therefore, AEDI was limited in the ability to construct a diverse sample for the qualitative interviews. For example, while schools have information on students' eligibility for free and reduced lunch, this was not information available to Promise Indiana or to AEDI at the individual level at the time when the sample was constructed and interviews conducted. Schools were asked to consider that dimension as a criterion in sample construction, but AEDI was not able to independently verify participants' socioeconomic status until after parents had completed the demographic form that accompanied their interview. Information on parents' education level was not known to the school or to Promise Indiana at the time of sample construction. These limitations are exacerbated by the relative homogeneity of the entire population of Promise Indiana accountholders on some variables, particularly race and ethnicity. Additionally, the fact that parents had to be willing to come for an interview, with only $25 in compensation as a participation incentive, likely further compromised the representativeness of the sample, since it is possible that individuals who would face greater barriers in doing so might also have characteristics that would affect their experiences saving for their children's college educations, such as lower-status jobs that make it more difficult to plan schedules, insufficient transportation or childcare, and/or unfamiliarity with educational and cultural institutions. Efforts were made to mitigate these barriers, including scheduling interviews during evening as well as daytime hours, using locations known to community members, and providing childcare during the interviews, but it is still quite possible that those interviewed are not representative of the overall Promise Indiana accountholder population. Additionally, while individuals were recruited for interviews without regard to their status as a 'saver' in Promise Indiana, all but three of the parents interviewed had made at least one family contribution to their children's CollegeChoice 529 accounts, precluding comparisons between savers and non-savers, within this sample. These limitations are further amplified by Promise Indiana's opt-in design, which means that those who agreed to be interviewed are a select group of an already-select group. Given this, findings are not meant to be conclusive of parental perceptions about saving in Promise Indiana. However, they do provide some of the best data to date and should inform future research on potential areas that may warrant additional investigation.

Results

As illustrated in Table 6, the parents sampled for the qualitative component of this research are highly-educated, racially homogenous, and relatively high-income. More than 90% have at least some college credits and 54% have household incomes above $60,000. Nonetheless, these demographic indicators still suggest some economic vulnerability, with more than half of parents reporting at least some difficulty meeting household expenses at some point during the year.

Activating College-Saver Identities: Salience

For many of the interviewed parents in Promise Indiana, their children's enrollment in a CSA catalyzed the family's college savings activity, providing a spark that activated a latent desire to set money aside for postsecondary education. This is salience, a core component of Identity-Based Motivation (Oyserman, 2007; Oyserman & Destin, 2010), and it is evidenced in the statements of 19 of the 25 parents interviewed. Critically, these parents speak of Promise Indiana's effects as not only making college something necessitating preparation urgently, but also in terms of making the act of opening a college savings account and beginning to save a more immediate priority. Promise Indiana serves not as much to initially interest parents in college saving—for the most part, this seems to be a concept that parents already valued—but to activate them, spurring behavioral changes ranging from account initiation to, in some cases, regular deposits. The savings strategies employed by families, discussed below, appear to stem from the increased urgency around college saving. At the same time, these strategies may also foster greater salience, as

Table 6. Selected socio-demographic characteristics of interviewed Promise Indiana accountholders (N=25).

	Total N=25	<$60,000 Household Income n=11	$60,000 or more Household Income n=14
Accountholder Demographics			
White	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Female	84.0%	82.0%	85.7%
Marital Status			
Married Spouse Present	72.0%	36.4%	100.0%
Married-Spouse Absent	12.0%	27.3%	0
Separated/Divorced	16.0%	36.4%	0
Relationship to Child			
Parent	92.0%	81.8%	100.0%
Grandparent or Step-parent	8.0%	18.2	0
Education Level			
High School Graduate or Less	8.0%	18.2%	0
Some College Credits	28.0%	36.4%	21.4%
Two-Year College Degree	8.0%	9.1%	7.1%
4-Year College Degree	36.0%	36.4%	35.7%
Graduate School	20.0%	0	35.7%
Economic Conditions			
Full-Time Employment	72.0%	63.6%	78.6%
Difficulty Meeting Monthly Bills			
Every Month	16.0%	36.4%	0
Every 2-3 Months	16.0%	18.2%	14.3%
1-2 times per year	20.0%	18.2%	21.4%
Never	48.0%	27.3%	64.3%
Household Income			
$0 - $14,999	4.2%		
$15,000 - $19,999	0		
$20,000 - $29,999	12.5%		
$30,000 - $39,999	0		
$40,000 - $49,999	8.3%		
$50,000 - $59,999	20.8%		
$60,000 - $74,999	16.7%		
$75,000 - $99,999	12.5%		
$100,000 - $149,000	25.0%		
$150,000 or more	0%		
Housing Status			
Own Home	70.8%	50.0%	85.7%
Rent Home	20.8%	30.0%	14.3%
Other	8.3%	20.0%	0

incorporating saving into families' daily finances keeps college saving 'front of mind'. The qualitative data suggest four primary ways in which Promise Indiana makes college saving more salient:

1. Promise Indiana puts college saving right in front of parents, using frequent reminders, regular communication, and the context of existing relationships through the schools to make the concept almost unavoidable.
2. Promise Indiana reduces the effort needed to open a college savings account by shortening the enrollment process and providing assistance onsite, essentially changing the 'default' by doing much of the heavy lifting, even though Promise Indiana is ostensibly still an 'opt-in' program requiring some parent initiative.

3. Promise Indiana's incentives and matches increase the return on college saving, making the prospect of opening a 529 account more valuable. Additionally, because parents perceive of the desirable match as an opportunity they could miss, they may feel an imperative to take quick action.
4. The timing of Promise Indiana's initiation, coming at the point when children begin kindergarten, aligns with a developmental moment when parents are primed to think about their children's educational futures.

For many families, Promise Indiana activates salience on more than one of these dimensions. For example, Marcie, a 35-year-old mother in Jay County whose family earns between $100,000 and $149,999 per year, described her introduction to Promise Indiana this way. *"We got started because we got the phone calls and the letters that if you start this up, Portland Foundation is going to give you this amount of money. So, we said, "Why not?" and just jumpstarted our savings for the kids."* For Marcie's family, the arrival of the Promise Indiana opportunity also aligned with their plan for how to generate the money necessary to deposit. *"We had been talking about saving for quite some time and we had savings accounts for them and we would put money in every now and again, but we made a promise to ourselves, even before the Jay County Promise came about, that when our son started kindergarten, we would no longer be paying for daycare or anything, so we are going to start putting money back for them for college. Well, then the Promise came and we are like, "Perfect, we can get this set up. Portland Foundation is going to give us the money to start it, as well." So, every month, we have it deducted out of our account."* After one year of CollegeChoice 529 account ownership through Promise Indiana, Marcie's family has already 'jumpstarted' their saving to such an extent that each of her two children have $775 in their accounts.

Parents interviewed speak of Promise Indiana as decreasing the effort needed to establish a college savings account for their children. Dad Richard, a 39-year-old from Wabash County whose family earns between $50,000 and $59,999 per year, described Promise Indiana as *"the simplest way to start a college savings account for kids. I had looked into them online prior to this program and there are so many websites and so much information it was overwhelming, but then I got to school registration one day and they said here, sign up your kid and we'll give you 25 dollars or whatever and it was simple."* Mom Sharon, in Jay County, works as an educator and lives in a fairly low-income household, earning between $40,000 and $49,999 per year. She explained salience effects in detail:

> *I guess I liked it that they sent it right home to us and like, "Fill this out and send it right back." Because my brother- and sister-in-law, they knew about this program. Their kids are younger than mine and they have already got them signed up for this thing [a 529]. I had heard about it and it was kind of like, my preschooler, as like, "Oh yeah, one of these days I need to do that." But, when it gets sent home from school and he brings the piggy bank home, it is like, "Of course, we just need to sign it send it back and it is twenty-five bucks and we are good to go." To me, it made it more immediate and like, "Here it is. Get it done." It puts it right to the top of your priority list, because he is sitting there with his piggy bank like, "Okay, Mom. I want you to do this." Of course, I want to, but it puts it right in front of your face.*

Susan, a mother in Wabash County whose kindergartener and third grader both have Promise accounts and whose family earns between $60,000 and $74,999 per year, experienced this facilitation as a significant influence on her participation, *"…We've heard about the 529s and had procrastinated about doing it, and there were incentives and they had everything there laid out for us and so we didn't even have to hunt anything to do it and so it made it really easy, and so we signed both of the kids up the day we registered them for school this summer."* Susan has only deposited $60 between her two children's accounts so far, but her saving has begun.

Lindsay, who has two children with Promise Indiana accounts, spoke about salience at various points during her interview. She has worked in education previously and her family earns between $100,000 and $149,999 annually. When asked why she opened a Promise account, she spoke of the ease of entry. *"They had it right at registration and basically said, "Here, we're going to do this for you. We've put money into [it] and matching." It was just enticing and easy. It was right there. That's kind of why we started."* Rachel, a mother in Wabash County, acknowledged that she had been slow to activate as a college saver

prior to the Promise, despite working in education herself and earning between $75,000 and $99,999 per year. *"My husband and I have been talking for a long time about we need to get this going and the 529's the best way to do it, and we just hadn't done it. So having the information sent home through the school has made the process easier because it was like, here, it's all laid out for us. We just have to do it."* With only $30 saved so far, it is not clear that Rachel has fully activated as a college saver, but she evidently thinks of college saving as more of an urgent priority than she did previously. Connie, a 38-year-old mother interviewed in LaGrange County, similarly emphasized the sense of urgency cultivated by Promise Indiana. *"Somebody being right in my face going, "Don't wait until tomorrow. Here, we are putting…" They set up in the elementary school right outside of the computer lab, grabbed parents that were interested, talked to them about it, sat them at a computer. Now. Now is the time. That was it."* Connie's child's CollegeChoice 529 account now has $800 two years after encouragement from Promise Indiana pushed her to take the step of account opening.

Some parents describe this activation in somewhat ambivalent terms, seeing the outreach as rather pushy, but even these parents appear mostly grateful for the impetus to save. Kristen, a 34-year-old mother in Jay County whose family is low income (earning between $20,000 and $29,999 per year) and who now has $200 in accounts for her two children, explained:

> Kristen: *Okay, honestly, well, I do want to save for my kids' college.*
> Interviewer: *Okay.*
> Kristen: *But I got papers shoved in my face.*
> Interviewer: *Okay.*
> Kristen: *I've gotten, I don't know how many phone calls from the superintendent –*
> Interviewer: *Oh, wow.*
> Kristen: *Really pushing it and not that I don't want to do it. It's just right…there in your face.*
> Interviewer: *Okay.*
> Kristen: *Which is fine because the match is – you can't pass up free money.*

Salience is not just about account initiation, however. Features of Promise Indiana may also serve to reinforce this aspect of college-saver identity on an ongoing basis. Regular account statements, issued by Ascensus College Savings with additional information provided by Promise Indiana, play a role in keeping college savings 'front of mind' (see Oyserman & Destin, 2010). Richard in Wabash County values the reminders of available match, which he says remind him that he *"should be putting [his] own money in there too."* Promise Indiana serves to keep families *"more focused"* on college, explains Sarah, a 46-year-old mother in Wabash County. As a result, Sarah's child's Promise Indiana account has seen more than $200 in family deposits, for an account balance of $375 so far. Speaking of her grandson's Promise account, Elizabeth noted that she *"got his statement the other day and [she] thought, "I need to put money in there." It is like, I get my tax refund here pretty soon, hopefully, and I can put some money in there."* Consistent with this orientation, the account has seen $175 in family deposits, even though Elizabeth earns less than $30,000 per year. Shelly, a mother in Wabash County, has an annual household income between $75,000 and $99,999. She made a $25 deposit shortly after opening her child's Promise Indiana account and described the Promise as *"making us more conscious that we do need to start know to start saving. That college is expensive and if they really want to go, we really needed to start at a young age, so that they will be prepared for it."*

As further evidence of the Promise's potential potency as a catalyst for college saving, some parents of children too young to enroll in Promise Indiana reported having failed to open 529 accounts for these children, although they have an ambition to do so. Sharon's two older children have CollegeChoice 529 accounts through Promise Indiana with a total of $1,200 in college savings. However, as Sharon described, her preschooler does not have a 529 account yet. As she relates: *"The youngest is kind of... I have got papers to do it. It has been on my to-do list, but it is at the bottom. I just haven't…"* Indeed, only six parents describe saving for college in any vehicle outside the Promise.

Even for families that already had college savings accounts, Promise Indiana may change how they engage as savers. Ann, a mother in LaGrange County whose children already had 529s, works in education and has an annual household income between $100,000 and $149,999. She has made approximately $155 in family deposits to her child's CollegeChoice 529 account. She described activation this way:

> …*"I think it made me talk to him* [her son] *more about it because he didn't – he was two years old when we started and we didn't really talk about it. It just automatically comes out of your account and goes over there…So now that we have the Promise one, I mean last year when he joined we talked about it all the time. You know you've got this money going in and you're going to save it for college."*

Connie's older child also has a 529 account, established by a grandparent. So, for her, Promise Indiana may be cultivating an identity as a college saver, even if it was not what first facilitated her family's ownership of a 529 account. Connie's experience, then, illustrates how even the nominally same experience—owning educational assets—can take on a different character for those with activated college-saver identities.

> *The match was a motivator. It really, really was. It made me learn about it. It made me understand the benefits of it and it made me become hands-on as a parent with it. Whereas, my daughter's account was set up by her grandfather. I had no idea what type of account it was. Because he was able to put that in her name with him being on the account, somehow it bypassed the parent. Which is fine, I just knew nothing about it. It could have been a savings account for all I knew. I had no idea what it was…I think that doing it through LaGrange County Promise made the parents aware directly of what the benefits were.*

One of the primary ways in which parents live their 'activation' as college savers—an outcome cultivated by their development of college-saver identities—is through the implementation of strategies, both individual and institutional, that foster savings success. Significantly, some of these strategies may also complement other aspects of Identity-Based Motivation, serving to make the difficulties associated with college saving seem less daunting, for example, and/or to present college saving as aligned with one's group identity. The approaches mentioned by parents include:

- reducing their spending, in order to free up additional dollars
- utilizing structural supports that facilitate saving, such as direct deposit
- taking advantage of sporadic infusions of additional dollars, such as tax refunds
- leveraging contributions from family members and others in their social networks

Consistent with research that finds that those using automatic mechanisms are more likely to save (Schreiner & Sherraden, 2005), Shelly credits direct deposit with helping her to surmount savings obstacles. "*We have already got it budgeted in. So, what is there is there and that is what we have promised to give, so that is what we are sticking with."* Similarly, Sharon has money transferred automatically from her checking account to the Promise Indiana account. She hopes that her contributions will increase to more than $25 per month now that she is working full-time again and says that, with the automatic deductions, *"You don't even see that money, so you don't miss it."* Laura, a mom in LaGrange County from a household earning between $50,000 and $59,999 per year, concurs, *"I really like direct deposit. I think there is…when you aren't making the move to put it in, it is easier to not miss it."* This approach is still conceptual for Rachel, who says, *"It's* [our saving] *been really irregular right now. Like I said, my husband and I have just been having this conversation like all right, maybe we need to think about paying it like a bill each month, we just put this much money in. So we haven't really gotten to that point yet. But conversations that we've had."*

Some parents count on others to help them rise to the challenge of saving for college. Janet, age 36 and earning between $40,000 and $49,999 per year, recently made a $25 deposit into her child's Promise Indiana account. Her description of the account's effects on her children's educational trajectories speaks to CSAs' potency as repositories of future saving, by parents and others in their social milieu:

> Interviewer: *What obstacles might your children encounter on their way to reaching these expectations?*
> Janet: *Financial issues.*
> Interviewer: *If they're potentially going to encounter those types of issues, what might help them overcome that?*

> Janet: *Setting it up ahead of time for them. I know personally for us we have you know, we don't have the greatest finances, but we have other people in our family who are going to contribute to them and they're doing the littlest things to just say, "This is what I'm doing for you and your future. You're going to have this money that's going to help you."*

Some Promise Indiana parents report friends, church members, or other community contacts have invested in their children's Promise accounts. Mary in Wabash County finds the scheduled match periods, when Promise Indiana publicly encourages champion contributions, to be prime occasions to solicit these deposits. Ann uses the champion cards created by Promise Indiana and provided by the LaGrange County Promise to help her son approach potential supporters.

> *Well, I helped him get the card – we had little cards that we took out and he went and talked to grandma and grandpas, aunts and uncles.* [My husband] *and I helped him kind of know what to say to them, and say 'help me save for my future education' and that stuff. That was last year when he was in 3rd grade. I guess I just keep track of everything too…They were cards that we could put his name and account number on, and you could give them to people. Then they could go online and donate to your account, or send a check with the card back so you could – they had us turn it in. I think this year, of course he's in 4th grade this year and 4th grade didn't get to participate, but I think this year that everybody had to do it online. But by having those cards my husband gave it to some people at work, some salesmen that came in. He actually had some salesmen that gave him some money.*

Lucy and Brett, parents interviewed together in Wabash County and earning between $50,000 and $59,999 collectively, credit their child's school with positioning them for success with the championing, suggesting a potential synergy between home, community, and institution. Their child's account received $25 family deposits in each of the fourth quarters of 2014 and 2015. Lucy said:

> *My parents have done that* [champion deposits]. *I think they,* [principal]*, does a really good job promoting that. They send letters home once they start school about that. That has been well communicated, I think. I love that idea. It takes a village. I love that they ask family members, if you can do five dollars, if you can do a hundred dollars.*

Harold, age 32, is a father in Jay County who earns more than $100,000 per year. To supplement his own efforts during this first year of program participation, he has asked his family for contributions to the Promise Indiana account instead of gifts for the children. Each of his two children's CollegeChoice 529 accounts have $100 balances. Susan made soliciting champions explicitly her children's obligation. They approached five extended family members, three of whom made deposits. Shelly's child similarly received deposits from his grandmother, who *"decided that she would just donate to his Promise Indiana account. She felt that that was more beneficial to him in the long run than buying cookies or a pie or whatever it happened to be. So, she went that route instead and we were fine with it.* [Her son] *was excited about it, too."*

Activating College-Saver Identities: Normalization of Difficulty

Salience is not the only dimension of Identity-Based Motivation around college saving evidenced by parents interviewed. These parents' statements also reflect a sense that participation in Promise Indiana—and, specifically, their own saving through the program—will help them to confront a significant obstacle they perceive in their children's path to higher education: the high and rising cost of a college degree (see Elliott, Sherraden, Johnson, & Guo, 2010 re: savings as strategy to pay for college). While, as shown in Table 6, many parents earn middle-class incomes, higher education costs loom large. Bill, a father in LaGrange County whose family earns between $50,000 and $59,999 per year and whose two children each have $275 in their CollegeChoice 529 accounts, has this prominently on his mind:

> *I don't know what the future brings. I was hoping for that Powerball the other day. That fell through, I don't know….I think ultimately the money could be an obstacle. We'll find a way to make it happen; that's what my parents did, that's what my wife's parents did. We just finished paying on her school loans this year…I think money will be an obstacle, but I don't think there's*

> *many people, at least in this community, where money won't be. That's the big concern from a parent's point of view.*

Melissa, a mother in Jay County who works in education and earns between $60,000 and $74,999 per year, expressed concern about student debt. "*I don't want them* [her children] *to graduate and be a hundred thousand dollars in debt."* Parents frequently cited high costs as significant barriers to postsecondary education; critically, they also see Promise Indiana as a resource with which to confront these costs. In Wabash County, 45 year-old Mary is low-income, earning between $20,000 and $29,999 per year, from which she has managed to deposit $145 for her second-grade son's college education. Mary describes Promise Indiana as *"a college savings plan to help offset the cost of college once they decide they are going to wherever."* Charlotte, whose low-income household earned between $10,000 and $14,999 last year, speaks of normalizing difficulty in the context of providing 'hope': *"It's just given me hope that financially, they're able to go to college, compared to now."* With incentives provided by Promise Indiana, Charlotte's $25 in family deposits have yielded a balance of $150, so far, in her child's CollegeChoice 529 account.

She further elaborates in a more lengthy exchange:

> Interviewer: *What obstacles do you think your child might encounter in trying to reach that level of education?*
> Charlotte: *Just the financial end…*
> Interviewer: *What are your conversations like when you talk* [with your child] *about those obstacles?*
> Charlotte: *Well, just telling that I cannot afford to do it…That with the Indiana plan, that that is what we need to do and so they can save.*

For Jennifer, a 37 year-old mother in LaGrange County, financial constraints are similarly prominent. Jennifer's family earns between $50,000 and $59,999 per year. While Jennifer has not yet become a Promise Indiana saver, her comments suggest that she does see college saving as a tool with which to confront the costs of college.

> Interviewer: *What obstacles do you envision that your child might encounter in trying to reach this level of education?*
> Jennifer: *Financial, number one. Honestly, that is the biggest thing, financial.*
> Interviewer: *What might help your child to overcome that specific obstacle?*
> Jennifer: *To save. To start saving.*

Some of these Promise Indiana parents' perceptions of higher education and its cost appear to be colored by their own experiences, particularly with student debt. Marcie, from Jay County, talked about the obstacles her children may face in their journey to a college degree.

> *It is really hard to say; anything can happen, but college is so expensive. I don't want them having to worry about paying for their school loans years later like we are. That is one of the biggest things. We want to be able to give them as much as we possibly can for their tuition, because we didn't have that when we went to school.*

Despite the daunting task with which they are faced, most of these parents express considerable optimism, not necessarily that they will be able to save enough to pay for their children's college educations but, nonetheless, that their saving will be meaningful and useful, and that they are on track, in some significant way, for their saving to be a valuable tool for their children (see Oyserman, 2015 re: difficulty as normal, not insurmountable). This aligns with other research, which suggests that CSAs' positive outcomes may not depend on the actual dollar amount in the accounts, but, instead, that even small-dollar accounts may be potent forces for improving children's likelihood of enrolling in and completing higher education (Elliott, 2013a). Significantly, parents in Promise Indiana are mostly adopting savings behaviors capable of realizing positive balances: starting early and committing themselves to saving what they can, taking advantage of available incentives, and leveraging support from community champions. As Shelly summarized at the end of her interview, *"… Even if it is just a little bit here and there, it is going to all add*

up in the end for the child. So, I think it is great. I really do." There is remarkably little evidence in these interviews that other programs available to children in Indiana, even generous financial aid instruments like the 21st Century Scholars[8], are playing a similar role in calming parents' anxieties about paying for college. Indeed, no parents mentioned 21st Century Scholars by name. This may be because the low-income eligibility criteria mean that relatively few of these families will qualify, or perhaps these supports still seem distant to these parents of younger children. These families may not be alone in this, however; statewide, only one-third of Indiana 8th graders eligible in the 2014-2015 school year enrolled in 21st Century Scholars (Slagter, 2015). Here, only six parents spoke of financial aid, and one of these referenced scholarships in concern, expressing doubt that her daughter could qualify for merit-based academic aid. Charlotte may be speaking for many, then, when she says, *"other than the Promise Indiana, that's all we have."* Cathy, a mother in Wabash County, evidences some of this when she describes Promise Indiana as "*an absolutely amazing thing. Sometimes we think, "I don't know if we can pay for college." And this comes along and we get some of it paid for."* She expands later in the interview that Promise Indiana, "*Gave us the opportunity to help pay for his college with what we made. Thought that we may not be able to."*

Belief that the CSA represents a dramatic infusion of outside dollars may be unjustified, given the scale of incentives within the current design of Promise Indiana. The robustness of this positivity, then, may at least partly reflect the function of CSAs as a sort of placeholder for intended future saving, in the way that individuals may, even unconsciously, overestimate their own likelihood of future success. This optimism may turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy (see Koehler & Poon, 2006). This does not mean, however, that parents are unrealistic about the cost of education or the balances they can build through Promise Indiana. Bill says, *"The community match money is nice. It's nice to know that there is at least something there that can pay for half of a book, at least that's a start."*

For at least some of these families, Promise Indiana's use of the Indiana CollegeChoice 529 plan may help to reduce the perceived difficulty of college saving. Forty-six-year-old Kim in LaGrange County, who earns between $100,000 and $149,999 per year and has accumulated $150 in her child's CollegeChoice 529 account so far, appreciates that contributions to the 529 grow tax-free, as do parents Lucy and Brett, interviewed together in Wabash County and earning between $50,000 and $59,999 per year.

> Interviewer: *Now I would like to start learning about the Wabash County Promise and your involvement in the program. Can you tell me how you would describe the program to someone who knows nothing about it?*
> Brett: *Well, a 529… Are we talking about the same thing?...If I were to describe a 529, I would tell someone the contributions have to go towards school expenses and if they are pulled early or not for school expenses, they are tax. So, it is a good savings tool. Wabash County Promise has deposited extra funds just for signing up; which is a benefit.*
> Lucy: *And you can get twenty percent return, take that off of your taxes up to five thousand dollars a year. So, that is money earned.*
> Brett: *Depending on your contribution.*

Elizabeth, also in Wabash County, appreciates the return on investment possible in the 529, viewing the instrument as preferable to other options. *"It is a good investment. You can't save in a savings account or even a CD for the investment it is."*

Experiencing difficulty as 'normal' does not negate the reality of savings challenges. College saving is not effortless for these families, and many are not where they would like to be in preparing financially for college. Cathy, age 34, works in education in Wabash County and has an annual family income between $60,000 and $74,999. Cathy's strategy for saving is to *"scrape."* She reports taking money from her penny jar to transfer to her child's account, willing herself to save. Cathy's child's Promise Indiana account has $85 in family contributions, for a total balance of $185 so far. Despite earning considerably more, Lindsay expressed similar struggles. *"I make us do it* [save] *no matter if it's a tight month or not because it's auto,*

[8] 21st Century Scholars is a need- and merit-based scholarship available to students in Indiana and can pay for up to four years of higher education in the state. For more information, see: http://www.in.gov/21stcenturyscholars/.

but you know, things pop up, cars need new tires, Christmas. So you just have to find different ways to scrimp on other things so that the money still goes into the account and you're still okay."
Charlotte does not hesitate when asked about obstacles to her saving:

> Interviewer: *Are there any challenges that you face when it comes to saving money for the account or –*
> Charlotte: *Oh, yes. [laughter]*
> Charlotte: *Oh, definitely, yes, yes, due to my wages, yes.*

Jennifer in LaGrange County lives *"paycheck to paycheck",* as do Lucy and Brett in Wabash County. This makes saving difficult. As families with young children, several Promise Indiana households have one parent out of the full-time labor market, and economic conditions in the largely rural communities where the Promise is operating are also adverse for many. Kristen says that with *"only one income coming in, there's not always a lot left."*

Activating College-Saver Identities: Group Congruence

The final element of Identity-Based Motivation, group congruence, influences the likelihood that individuals act on their developing college-saver identities (see Oyserman & Destin, 2010). As such, it may be particularly important as an encouragement to sustained savings engagement. Of the dimensions of IBM, however, group congruence is the sparsest for parents interviewed. This may be because programming within the Promise Indiana model is mostly delivered through the schools and directed at children; in most Promise Indiana counties, there are few activities that seek to cultivate parents' identification as part of a group of college savers. In interviews, parents describe relatively little in the way of 'participation' in Promise Indiana, beyond their deposits. Richard said, *"As of right now it's mainly just a bank account but I track a couple times a year to see how it's performing and how much money is in there. There's not a lot else to it, at least not for me."* Laura, a mother in LaGrange County, has a similarly narrow view of her role in Promise Indiana, which she describes as, *"The only thing we would do would be put money into it. There really isn't anything else required of you. And that is not even required. Once you do your initial set up, it is not even required that you do anything further than that."* Here, the use of the conditional 'would do' may reflect the fact that Laura's family has yet to make a deposit into her child's CollegeChoice 529 account. Jennifer, in LaGrange County, described her experience as a parent in Promise Indiana, *"To sign up, they were there to explain what it is all about, which was great. But after that, I haven't really heard much more about it."* Parents interviewed express appreciation for their connection to Promise Indiana staff and being able to turn to school officials for assistance with the accounts, but this has only rarely translated into the cultivation of peer-to-peer savings engagement.

Some parents, such as Rachel, a mother of two children in the Promise in Wabash County, expressed a wish that the model would evolve to include more parental engagement, what she envisions as *"meetings or something that they can go to learn a little bit more about what this* [Promise Indiana] *means and what options and opportunities there are for their kids."* Others seem satisfied with their own, relatively individualistic, participation. Mike sees his family's college saving as a mostly isolated act: *"...We know other couples who are in a similar situation as us, but we haven't had any lengthy conversations and it doesn't seem like there's been an intentional effort to connect us with other parents like us."* Somewhat counter intuitively, the one-stop enrollment process may actually inhibit the development of group identity, as parents may see little reason to exchange information informally when their needs are met through official structures. Also, since most parents are at the same 'point' in their college saving, having enrolled their children around the same time, there may not be many opportunities for peer mentoring. Exceptions may be found in cases like Ann, who had CollegeChoice 529 accounts for her older children prior to the Promise and who reports, *"Well, I've talked to other parents that I work with and that didn't maybe understand what a 529 account was all about, and tried to get them involved and tell them how important it is. Especially having the experience of already having two kids in college and having that, because that I guess let me let them know how important it really was, because you don't have to panic there at the end and say, 'I don't have any money.'"*

In contrast, some parents explicitly reject the idea of Promise Indiana involving them in something larger than their families, stating that they do not feel comfortable asking others to contribute to their children's

accounts, for example, or that they would not initiate peer conversations about college saving. Nine of the 25 parents interviewed report soliciting champions—most commonly only extended family members—while six spoke of intentionally declining to utilize that component of the Promise Indiana model. Janet says that asking for support from champions other than her child's grandparents is *"not our personality."* Melissa echoes this reluctance, *"We did not feel comfortable asking anyone. So, we just did it ourselves."* Her family has deposited $25 of their own funds in the account so far, for a total balance of $100. Charlotte appreciates the match contributed by area businesses but, when asked about soliciting championship from those in her own circles, she is more hesitant:

> *…I guess I don't feel like it's their responsibility. As a parent, it's mine, so I guess I'm trying to do what I can by enrolling her into this program because I know financially, I can't provide that so trying to take the steps now to help…get her there.*

There is some evidence, however, that the community matching component crafts some semblance of a group identity as part of a community committed to college preparation. Laura suggests this is the case for her.

> Laura: *I think that getting support from our community is important and they have shown that nurturing the younger generation is important.*
> Interviewer: *How did they show that?*
> Laura: *I think through the match, the twenty-five dollar match. Investing in our kids, I think, makes a big difference.*

Elizabeth reiterates, *"I think it is great that the community is investing in the kids."* Qualitative research in other CSA programs has shown similar findings (see Gray, et al., 2012). Even if parents do not evidence strong identification as a group of savers, then, the experience of having other individuals and institutions invest in your child's future education may cultivate effects analogous to the concept of group congruence by making the act of college saving consistent with community identity. This effect may be weakened, however, by some parents' lack of clarity about the details of the community championing process. Charlotte is not alone in expressing uncertainty. She says, *"I know that there's other contributions. If I put the $25 in, then another, I don't know if it's Indiana Promise, that they're putting money into the account or if it's coming from somewhere else, but I know money will be added to what I contribute."* Still, Promise Indiana has at least laid the foundation on which this approach to group congruence—if not in relation to other savers, then as part of a community that views college saving as a collective responsibility—could rest.

Effects of Promise Indiana Design on Parental Saving

Examination of the Promise Indiana design reveals ways in which elements foster college-saver identities, often on multiple fronts. However, there are also some ongoing challenges to solidifying families as college savers, including some that may explain some families' weaker or absent college-saver identities. First, six families described some confusion at the point of CollegeChoice 529 account opening and/or difficulty routinely accessing understandable information about the features of the Promise Indiana program and/or the CollegeChoice 529 account itself. Jennifer, for example, explained: *"I would just wish we had a little bit more information. They kind of gave us the information to start off with and then after that it was fend for yourself. We didn't get anything in the mail. We didn't… So, just kind of lost a little bit…"*
Harold has questions about both Promise Indiana and the CollegeChoice 529 plan it utilizes. Asked how he would explain Promise Indiana, Harold expressed uncertainty about Promise Indiana rules for asset transfer and disbursement, dimensions of CSAs often fairly complex and difficult for participants to understand. He also has questions that pertain more specifically to the CollegeChoice 529 plan, including about investment choices.

> *… It hasn't been explained that well to us as parents. I do know it is a savings plan for the children to have when they go to college. I have brought up some questions to some people in the school administrations and also to some other financial advisors about, "What happens if my child doesn't go to college?" I haven't gotten a clear answer from anybody. So, I am not sure where that money goes. I have also asked what markets that money is invested in. I haven't got a*

> *straight answer either. So, I understand it is a savings plan and that the monies in that savings plan will be invested in the stock market somewhere, whether it is bonds, stocks, currencies, commodities… I am not sure where that money goes…So, to answer your question, how do I manage it? I guess I don't.*

He later elaborates; again, he is uncertain about elements of both the Promise Indiana CSA program and the CollegeChoice 529 account:

> *I would just like to be more educated on actually the money side of it. What happens when that goes in to the account? Who manages it? How is it invested? What is the return?...What would be the consequences of a child not being able to use that after high school? Does that then become property back of the parents or, like I said, with the champions, what if they donate and the child doesn't go? Do they get their money back? Are all the donations tracked so it is dispersed back? I know it is a tax benefit, so you probably take taxes back out of it when it is re-dispersed. Just the nuts and bolts of how that works. That is really what I would want to know.*

Most families, however, find that Promise Indiana eases their entrance into the world of college saving. Indeed, 8 of the 25 parents interviewed used the term 'easy' to describe process of 529 CollegeChoice account opening through Promise Indiana. While 529s are often critiqued as overly complex and off-putting to those not financially sophisticated, these parents, at least, seemed rather undaunted by Promise Indiana's use of the CollegeChoice 529 plan. Rachel, for example, described Promise Indiana as *"a really easy opportunity to start saving for your child's education. I had something wrong with* [her daughter's] *account. I didn't even realize it because we hadn't put money in it for a while, or hadn't even initially – I thought we'd gotten it set up then we just hadn't really gotten going with it. So I called and they were awesome about getting it set up because we were then at the point where we're like, okay we need to start doing this. So they were wonderful about that. I had no problems, got things going, and got the account justified and correct and everything. So it was good."* Mike explicitly attributes this ease to Promise Indiana's support. *"They* [Promise Indiana] *made, they make it relatively easy too, sending home the paperwork and letting you know what the steps, necessary steps to take, to open up that account."* This does not mean that all parents found the processes of navigating Promise Indiana and opening CollegeChoice 529 accounts seamless. Laura, in LaGrange County, was not alone in finding enrolling at kindergarten registration overwhelming.

> *When we signed up for it, we were at registration or Meet the Teacher night and we used the computer lab for our school. There were so many parents trying to do it. I didn't understand a lot of the program to get my child signed up. I didn't have all the information that I needed. I was trying to hurry, because people were waiting on the computer. It was a little bit frazzled at first and I haven't spent the energy to find out more and actually do a whole lot more to work with it…Our principals were there and trying to help people as much as they could. There was a lady from the community foundation there, but there was five hundred parents there.*

Considering the effects of other aspects of the Promise Indiana design on family savings, there is clear evidence that the financial incentives are significant. The initial seed motivated many parents' account opening. One father said, *"Part of you feels kind of stupid if you don't take the free money."* The account opening incentive is implicated, then, in salience, triggering families to take the step of CSA take up when they might otherwise have hesitated or at least waited. Shelly spoke to this:

> *I think it is amazing, because they* [Promise Indiana] *tell you that if you hit twenty-five dollars, then a community partner will match that. So, you really work really hard to get that twenty-five dollars, because you know that that twenty-five is going to turn into fifty. We work really hard to make sure that he gets at least the twenty-five, so we know that that is being matched.*

Matches can also support normalization of difficulty by making it easier for families to grow sizable balances. By incorporating community champions, Promise Indiana's approach to match may also foster group congruence, as discussed above. However, there is evidence in these interviews that the match may not function entirely positively as a force on families' savings, as the $25 in savings required to qualify for the $75 match may be perceived as a savings goal, a finding consistent with literature that suggest that

matches bring people into savings programs but may constrain saving effort (Schreiner & Sherraden, 2005), unless the cap is set fairly high. Melissa, a mother in Jay County, described her savings effort as trailing off after meeting the threshold, a pattern evidenced in her family's savings records, as well. *"Then, they* [children] *got a piggy bank to collect money. That is when we sent the twenty-five dollars in…Sent the money in and that is when all the matching and everything started. Now, I get statements in the mail every month. I have not done a whole lot with them. I will be honest."* Savings data from Ascensus College Savings only somewhat bear this out; 32% of savers deposited exactly $25, a higher proportion than what might be expected if the match cap was calibrated differently, but, as 61% have saved more than $25, this does not appear to be a significant damper on most participants' saving.

Consistent with findings from other asset development interventions (Schreiner & Sherraden, 2005, Gray et al, 2012; Sherraden, M. S., Peters, C., Wagner, K., Clancy, M., & Guo, B., 2013), some parents describe the limits on unapproved withdrawals imposed by both the CollegeChoice 529 plan and Promise Indiana as a support to their savings. Parents interviewed evidence understanding of the financial penalties associated with these CollegeChoice 529 accounts, including forfeiture of match and negative tax consequences. And all parents who mention these restrictions speak of them as positive influences on their saving. Even those who are low-income and, then, presumably could use the money accumulating in their children's accounts for other purposes, value the savings discipline imposed by these rules. For example, mom Kristen explains, *"It's not like I'm putting money in a savings account, and it's staring at me when there's other thousands of things that we could…do with it."* Elizabeth echoed this:

> *It has given me a little bit of incentive to… It is something that I can't just go to the bank when I am short of money and say, "Hey, I need fifty bucks." It is in a place where I can't get to it. It is a lot easier to just ignore it. It is not there. It is a lot better than having access to it. So, yes, it is money that…I am not able to put a lot in, but when I can, it is nice to be able to. Like, usually when I get my tax refund, I try to put some in there for him.*

Discussion and Policy Implications

Identity-Based Motivation theory and its application to the consideration of the development of college-saver identities suggest that a given Children's Savings Account program and its respective features need to activate college saving along three dimensions in order for individuals to fully claim and, then, act on their vision of themselves as someone who saves for college. Importantly, this does not mean that CSA program interventions need to separately design for salience, normalization of difficulty, and group congruence. There are ways that these components can be fostered alongside each other; indeed, some Promise Indiana features may work across all these fronts simultaneously. For example, parent interviews suggest that Promise Indiana's design of the community champion matches may make saving seem more urgent and, therefore salient, while also reducing the perceived difficulty of accumulating college savings and cultivating a sense that others in the community share the burden of college financing. CSA program interventions may, however, be comparatively strong in one aspect of college-saver identity cultivation or may change emphasis as the program evolves. Here, then, we consider the qualitative evidence from Promise Indiana parents on each component of Identity-Based Motivation somewhat separately. Considering salience, there is evidence in these interviews that participation in a Children's Savings Account program may, for some parents, activate their latent desire to save, rather than convince them that they should save for college or, even, plant the idea for the first time. Wabash County parents Susan and Richard, for example, both separately acknowledge that they considered and even investigated college saving—including in the CollegeChoice 529 plan—but that, still, they did not open accounts or begin to save until Promise Indiana streamlined the process and brought college saving to them. This does not mean, however, that CSA programs cannot create a desire to save where no desire existed. It is likely that both types of parents exist, parents that have a latent desire to save and parents who have no desire to save and the CSA program creates the desire to save. If other CSA program research points to similar findings, this may influence how programs design their outreach materials and the relative emphasis they put, for example, on outreach and activation.

Some of the features of Promise Indiana that these interviews suggest help to cultivate salience mirror those seen as significant influences on family saving in other qualitative CSA research, as well. For example, 60% of mothers interviewed in SEED OK said that the savings match incentive prompted them to open a

participant-owned account (Gray, et al., 2012), while, for parents in Promise Indiana, the availability of a time-limited savings incentive seems to have made college saving an urgent task, as well. Similarly, when Promise Indiana mom Sarah describes the regular account statements as keeping her *"more focused"* on college saving, language which aligns with the concept of salience, her comments echo reflections of mothers in SEED OK, many of whom say that account statements "prompt them to think about saving" (Gray, et al., 2012, p. 10).

Other aspects of Promise Indiana's CSA program that may affect salience are relatively novel. Specifically, the active outreach experienced by parents such as Kristen, who received "*I don't know how many phone calls from the superintendent"* encouraging her to open a CollegeChoice 529 account, takes initiating a college savings account off parents' metaphorical backburner and makes it a harder-to-ignore priority. The inclusion of account initiation as part of an activity already central to families' educational process—registering their children for kindergarten—also may make college saving more salient. As described by mom Connie, the invitation extended by Promise Indiana is distinct from many other CSAs' approaches to recruitment and enrollment: *"Somebody being right in my face going, "Don't wait until tomorrow. Here, we are putting…" They set up in the elementary school right outside of the computer lab, grabbed parents that were interested, talked to them about it, sat them at a computer. Now. Now is the time. That was it."* This perhaps points to a need for additional research to investigate how community-based efforts may help to make college saving salient for even young parents, even as complements to institutional savings structures, as well as where other opportunities to embed CSAs in existing infrastructure—such as schools—may exist.

Providing some further confirmation of the utility of Identity-Based Motivation constructs for understanding college saving, for parents interviewed in Promise Indiana, there may be a mutually-reinforcing cycle between the savings strategies they use and the salience of the act of college saving. Specifically, and consistent with the virtuous cycle of assets' financial and psychological effects described by Yadama & Sherraden (1996), having saving at the front of their minds may push parents to find strategies through which to realize this aim, as when Elizabeth talked about the account statements prompting her to think about applying her tax refund to her grandson's CollegeChoice 529 account, while use of some savings strategies may help to keep college saving a regular part of families' financial practices and, then, thinking.

Normalization of difficulty is fostered through Promise Indiana's utilization of CSA program intervention elements both widespread and, again, relatively less common. Among the former are the provision of initial deposit and match incentives which, while smaller in Promise Indiana than in many other CSAs, are nonetheless appreciated by parents interviewed here as supports to their educational asset accumulation. Among the latter is the explicit encouragement of small-dollar deposits through marketing materials and design features, such as agreement from Ascensus College Savings to accept small deposits and recruitment of school partnership to accept even cash deposits for transfer to families' CollegeChoice 529 accounts. Mom Shelly is speaking of college saving as something difficult but definitely possible when she says, *"… Even if it is just a little bit here and there, it is going to all add up in the end for the child."* Significantly, the act of opening the CollegeChoice 529 account and initiating saving when children are still in primary school may itself serve to make the task of college saving less daunting, as even relatively modest deposits will be able to grow into more sizable balances over time. This is underscored by these parents' reliance on institutional features to help them save, many of which were already in the CollegeChoice 529 apparatus but not 'availabile' to these families until Promise Indiana initiated their account ownership. For example, the built-in restrictions on unauthorized withdrawals from the CollegeChoice 529 plan appear to aid families' asset accumulation.

As in SEED OK, where mothers appreciated that they *"can't touch* [the account] *right now"* (Gray, et al., 2012), parents interviewed here who mentioned the restrictions on withdrawals all did so positively, as in the case of mom Kristen, who contrasts her saving within Promise Indiana with money held in other vehicles. *"It's not like I'm putting money in a savings account, and it's staring at me when there's other thousands of things that we could…do with it."* Other parents spoke of direct deposit and asking family members for gift deposits, both also regular features of Indiana's 529 plan. There are other indications here that also suggest, consistent with research from SEED OK (e.g., Beverly, Clancy, & Sherraden, 2016), that state 529 college savings plans may be leveraged to fulfill CSA programs' objectives, including the

encouragement and sustenance of college-saver identities. In particular, there is some evidence in these interviews that the relatively greater earning potential of these investments and their tax-preferred treatment by the state of Indiana may help to normalize the difficulty associated with college saving by amplifying returns. The support of a state sponsor such as the Indiana Education Savings Authority may contribute to group congruence by legitimizing the encouragement of college saving as a priority for government, school, and community partners. While evidence of group congruence is less prominent in these interviews than statements demonstrating salience or normalization of difficulty, it is also possible that these families need less 'nudge' to see a college-saver identity as congruent with their group memberships than might some other Children's Savings Account participants, representing, as they do, an entirely white, mostly highly-educated, and mostly not low-income population.

Compared to populations participating in some other CSA programs, the parents interviewed here may face fewer, or less severe, barriers to their saving. However, national data reveal that inadequate college saving is endemic (Sallie Mae, 2015), suggesting that many, maybe even most, American households, could benefit from development of college-saver identities and the opportunities provided by institutions such as Children's Savings Accounts. In these interviews, parents do express that financial constraints make it difficult for them to save—at all, or, at least, as much as they would like—for their children's college educations, even though these families' demographic profiles do not evidence as much financial strain as, for example, some of the low-income mothers interviewed for SEED OK (Gray, et al., 2012) or in New Mexico's Prosperity Kids community-based Children's Savings Account program (Lewis, et al., forthcoming). It may be that the ubiquity of college financing challenges may help to normalize the difficulty of this task; here, parents from all income levels referenced some sense that paying for college would be hard, although these concerns were more acute for many of the low-income parents.

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APPENDIX A: Sensitivity Analysis Results

Table 3. Sensitivity Analysis Results

	Model 1: Heard of 529s			Model 2: Has 529 Account		
Variable Name	**B**	**Robust S.E**	**Odds Ratio**	**B**	**Robust S.E.**	**Odds Ratio**
Promise Plus	1.841**	0.127	6.305	2.215**	0.155	9.16
Parent Has a BA or Higher	1.66**	0.127	5.257	1.465**	0.128	4.327
Income $50,000 or more	0.424**	0.111	1.528	0.368**	0.135	1.445
Parents Married	0.266*	0.116	1.304	0.505**	0.155	1.656
Parent Age 18-34	-0.362**	0.099	0.696	-0.5**	0.12	0.606
Child Male	0.127	0.097	---	0.02	0.114	---
Child White	0.785**	0.155	2.193	0.403*	0.202	1.497
Child Grade Level	0.031	0.062	---	-0.227**	0.075	0.797
Wabash County (Reference)						
LaGrange County	-1.23**	0.147	0.292	-1.06**	0.158	0.346
Noble County	-0.624**	0.132	0.536	-0.741**	0.146	0.477
Whitley County	0.625**	0.201	1.868	-0.42+	0.22	0.657
Constant	-1.766**	0.23	0.171	-3.00**	0.29	0.05
Observations	2,472			2,574		

Note: B is regression coefficients. SE is standard error. BA= Bachelor Degree. Child grade level is ordinal with 0= kindergarten, 1= first grade, 2= second grade and so forth.
** p<0.01, *<0.05, + p<0.1