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ABSTRACT

A study and analysis was done of the contributions that open-admissions at City University of New York (CUNY) have made to the development and growth of a college educated class of men and women, especially minorities. In particular the analysis examined the marital, education, and economic contexts in which the children of participants in open-admissions CUNY are living and considered the implications of these contexts for their life chances. The study used data from a longitudinal research effort launched when open admissions started at CUNY in the fall of 1970. Large samples of the first three freshman classes to enter after the program began were surveyed by questionnaire with response rates as follows: 1970, 43 percent of 31,596 entrants; 1971, 24 percent of 35,639 entrants; and 1972, 36 percent of 35,545 entrants. Survey data were integrated with students' official academic records including high school background, academic performance at CUNY, and graduation as of spring 1975. Results of the analysis produced an incomplete picture though data did indicate that often opportunities created by open admissions were used to advantage. However, open admissions did not erase the effects of prior disadvantage or subsequent institutional constraints. Overall results showed that social policies are often constrained by larger circles of disadvantage. (41 references) (JB)

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Higher Educational Opportunity, Marriage, and the Formation of a College Educated Class: Consolidating the Gains of An Open-Admissions Policy

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Introduction*

More than twenty years ago the nation's largest urban university, the 17 campus system of the City University of New York (CUNY), initiated a policy of open admissions that, arguably, represented the most ambitious effort to expand educational opportunity ever attempted in American higher education.[1] The policy guaranteed a place in the institution for all high school graduates in New York City. It aimed especially to provide access to higher education for large proportions of economically and educationally disadvantaged minority students, primarily blacks and Hispanics, who otherwise would have had no opportunity for college. Ultimately, it was intended that such a broadened educational pathway would improve socioeconomic life chances among disadvantaged students, thereby helping to narrow inequalities of income and status that separated minority and white communities.

Open admissions brought about huge increases in enrollments among both whites and minorities. In the program's first three years, 1970-72, freshmen classes averaged over 34,000, almost double the size of the 1969 class, the last to enter before open admissions began. The proportion of entering blacks and Hispanics increased from 10 percent to 25 percent, and their numbers nearly quintupled, jumping from about 1,700 to more than 8,000 annually.

A long-term study of open admissions' outcomes has shown that although the policy helped to augment educational attainments, it was not able to erase entirely the effects of prior economic and educational disadvantage that especially hindered minority students. Their rates of BA and postgraduate degree attainment were substantially below those of whites (Lavin and Crook 1990).

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Nonetheless, the opportunity that the program created was especially critical to the chances of minority students. It more than tripled the number of BA degrees earned by blacks, and it doubled those awarded to Hispanics. Overall, it more than doubled the number of postgraduate degrees (MA's and advanced degrees) received by them.

Gains in educational attainment translated into improved standing in the labor market: though blacks and Hispanics were not doing as well at work as whites, and women were earning less than men, substantial proportions of former students, especially minority ones, held jobs of higher status and were earning more than they would have without the opportunity that open admissions provided (Hyllegard and Lavin, in press; Lavin and Hyllegard 1991).[2]

Because open admissions helped to boost educational attainments and subsequently added to occupational status attainment and earnings, it was an intervention that succeeded, at least partly, in interrupting the inheritance of disadvantage that was endemic in minority communities. But the ramifications of the open-admissions policy extend beyond the results for its immediate beneficiaries, the students who entered after the program was initiated in 1970.

Indeed, the benefits of open admissions for them could be thought of as just a starting point. The heavy majority of the students it attracted were the first generation in their families to attend college. By extending a collegiate opportunity to them, the program aimed, at least implicitly, to create an educational momentum that would carry over to their children. In effect, it was intended that the gains to individual students would consolidate across generations, so that a self-sustaining critical mass of college-educated men and women would tend to develop in heretofore educationally disadvantaged communities.

Such a result would be consistent with a quarter-century of research on status attainment. This work teaches us that although there is considerable

social mobility in American society, the intergenerational transmission of status remains substantial (Blau and Duncan 1967; Featherman and Hauser 1979). Of great importance is that the inheritance of status occurs mostly through educational attainment: the children of higher status families typically attain more education than those of lower status. Subsequently, their higher educational credentials translate into greater rewards in the labor market. So, even in the face of a considerable degree of social mobility, there is visible reproduction of inequality. Ironically then, interventions such as the open-admissions policy, which arose in part from a perception that broader educational opportunity could help to interrupt the inheritance of disadvantage, may also be seen as an effort to capitalize on the fact of social reproduction to increase the likelihood that its beneficiaries' newly won advantages would translate into a more optimistic set of life chances among their children.

In this paper we present a preliminary analysis of the contributions that open-admissions may have made to the development and growth of a college-educated class of men and women, especially among those of minority origin. In examining this issue, we shall focus upon the children of our respondents, the former students who entered CUNY in the early 1970s. We shall assess the marital, educational, and economic contexts in which these children were living and we shall consider the implications of these contexts for their life chances. We shall begin by looking at ethnic and gender differences in marital status, examining the proportions of respondents who were married, divorced, separated, or who had never married. Then we shall consider how, for each ethnic and gender group, children were distributed across these marital contexts. That is, what proportions were living with both parents, with parents whose marriages had terminated, or belonged to single parents who had never been married? We shall examine also how parents' marital status and educational attainments are associated with family income. In looking at how children are distributed among

various configurations of marriage, parental educational level, and household economic resources, our interest is to provide a sketch of the likely consequences for their life chances.

Data and Methods.

When CUNY's 17 senior and community colleges began the open-admissions policy in the fall of 1970, a longitudinal research effort was initiated to evaluate its results. As part of the study, large samples of the first three freshman classes to enter after the program began--the 1970, 1971, and 1972 entrants--were surveyed by questionnaire. The response rates for each year and the size of the corresponding populations are as follows: 1970, 43 percent of 31,596 entrants; 1971, 24 percent of 35,639 entrants; 1972, 36 percent of 35,545 entrants. The survey data included information on race and ethnic group membership, gender, age, family income at entry to CUNY, parental educational attainments, and educational aspirations. These survey data were integrated with students' official academic records including high school background, academic performance at CUNY, and graduation as of spring 1975. These samples have been shown to provide good representations of the populations and have been the basis for a number of studies that describe and analyze various outcomes of the open-admissions policy (Alba and Lavin 1981; Lavin et. al. 1979, 1981).

To ascertain students' further educational attainments (at CUNY and elsewhere), labor market experiences, marital status, and number of dependent children, we conducted a follow-up survey in 1984 of the 34,507 respondents who were members of the original 1970-72 cohort samples. This survey yielded approximately 5,000 respondents. The follow-up data were merged with the original files and the three freshman cohorts were combined to form a single subsample. The resulting integrated data set forms the point of departure for the analyses that follow.

Since we are working with a subsample, we compared it with the aggregated original sample from which it was drawn, using a large number of variables common to both. These comparisons showed that the follow-up sample differs from the mother sample in certain respects. Most notably, CUNY graduation rates as of 1975 are higher in the follow-up sample, implying that subsequent educational attainments (and most likely occupational attainments such as earnings) in this subsample would exceed those in the mother sample. To adjust the subsample for nonresponse bias, we developed a weighting procedure.[3] It produced adjusted values for variables in the subsample that closely matched those in the original sample.

The variables we shall use in the analyses to follow include: gender; race/ethnicity (black, Hispanic, white); educational attainment 14 years after college entry (high school diploma, some college, AA degree, BA, MA, professional and advanced degrees); earnings in 1984; marital status (married, separated, divorced, widowed, never married); number of dependent children; for those who were married, spouse's employment status and salary; respondent attitudes toward and satisfaction with various aspects of their life situations, such as their income, their job, their apartment or house, neighborhood, schools, and the like.

In some ways our respondents comprise an appropriate group for the assessments we shall be making. They were mostly in their early thirties when we followed them up, an age which undoubtedly provides a fairly good--though certainly not complete--picture of marriage propensities.[4] Moreover, though they had not completed their child-bearing careers, they were far enough into their reproductive years to provide a sense of the family contexts in which their children found themselves.

Nonetheless, it is best to acknowledge at the outset the speculative nature of the analyses that follow. We do not have all of the data needed to

explore fully the questions we have raised. Although we know who was married, who was divorced or separated, and who had never been married, we do not know when either the marriages or the separations occurred. We know the employment status and earnings of our married respondents' spouses, but we don't know their educational attainments, so that we are unable to characterize family educational levels as precisely as we would like. Most important, though we know whether our respondents have children and how many they have, we don't know when they were born, or their gender, and we have no information on any aspect of their early educational experiences. Even if we had this schooling information, the children generally were quite young in 1984. Certainly, they could not have been old enough to allow an assessment of their entry to- or accomplishments within higher education. Consequently, we can only speculate about the influence of parental marital status, educational level, and family income on children's success in school. But quite a bit is known about the impact of such variables on children's achievements, and so, in attempting to provide a broad picture of the social consequences of the open-admissions policy, it makes sense to consider what these effects might be for our respondents' offspring.

A word is in order here about our data analyses. In discussion about cross-tabulations, we do not allude to differences unless they are statistically significant, as determined by difference-in-proportion tests for all key comparisons of interest (Blalock 1979).

The Influence of Marital, Economic, and Educational Contexts.

A substantial body of research indicates that children from single-parent families, typically female-headed households, are disadvantaged relative to children from two-parent households (Jaynes and Willliams 1989: 523-26; McClanahan 1985). Offspring from single-parent homes complete fewer years of schooling and have lower economic attainments. There is, however, not so much agreement

as to what it is about family contexts that contributes to such inequalities. Different explanations have been proposed.

One sees the absence of a parent, generally the father, as detrimental, because it weakens control over children's behavior: the supervisory activities of the single parent may be diluted by competing responsibilities such as full-time employment (Astone and McLanahan 1991). Less time allocated to parental supervision may lead to school difficulties, such as disruptive behavior and suspensions, cutting classes, and the like. Such problem behavior no doubt accounts for part of lower test scores, grades, and increased high school drop-out rates among children from one-parent families (for discussion see McClanahan 1985; Mulkey, et. al. 1992). Moreover, socialization theory suggests that father absence diminishes achievement motivation and interferes with psychosexual development, leading to poorer academic performance and lower educational attainment.

Another explanation sees negative effects on children's school performance as stemming less from parent absence than from the stress that often accompanies and follows in the aftermath of marital disruption itself. Feelings of anger, loss, and lowered self esteem engendered by family breakup can lead to behavior problems in school and lower academic performance. Such consequences may grow weaker over time as the marital dissolution recedes into the past, and of course, there might be no such negative effects among children in families headed by single parents who have never been married.

A third view emphasizes the economic deprivation that is often associated with single-parent families. In effect their negative influence on children is seen, not as a consequence of family structure itself, but of low income. There are numerous reasons why the typically superior economic resources of intact families might add to children's educational chances and eventual earnings. Parents with more income may be able to live in neighborhoods with public

schools of stronger quality or they may be able to send children to private schools. They may be better able to afford tutoring if children are having school difficulties or to help prepare them for college admissions tests (e.g. the Scholastic Aptitude Test). As family income increases, so too does access to cultural commodities such as books, magazines, computers, and interesting vacations or trips. Money can help assure that students are able to remain out of the labor market, thus helping them to complete secondary school and college in a timely fashion. Overall, then, higher family income is associated with higher levels of children's educational attainments and, subsequently, greater occupational rewards.

These different views about the influence of family context are not necessarily in opposition. Each may, to a greater or lesser extent, influence children's life chances. The important point is that whatever the specifics of the process, children in single-parent situations are subject to disadvantages. As we said earlier, we do not have data on children's eventual educational and economic outcomes. Nonetheless, our information on marriage, family income, and parental education does allow us to consider some important aspects of the family configurations in which children were living.

The Distribution of Children Across Marital Contexts

Our assessment of socialization contexts begins with an examination of marital status. About half or slightly more than half of our male respondents were married (table 1). Whites were more likely to be married than blacks and Hispanics, but differences were not very large. The marriages of some had ended in divorce or separation. This was most likely to have occurred among Hispanics (17 percent were separated or divorced), and it was least likely among whites (7 percent). Blacks were in the middle. Between 35-40 percent of men had never married.

Among women there are very large ethnic variations in marital status. Consistent with what is generally known about differences among women (Farley 1984; Wilson 1987; Schoen and Kluegel 1988; Mare and Winship 1991), whites were, by far, the most likely to be married. Indeed, as table 1 shows, the proportion of married whites exceeded that of blacks by almost 2 to 1 (60 percent vs. 32 percent) and was substantially beyond that of Hispanics (44 percent were married). Because a higher percentage of black women had never married and also because their marriages more often ended in divorce or separation (a few were widowed), over two-thirds of black women were unmarried, compared with only 40 percent of white women. Hispanic women fell in between (55 percent were unmarried).

These ethnic differences in women's marital status have received much attention from researchers, especially because marriage rates have been falling. One reason advanced for the decline has been the growing economic independence of women, reflecting greater labor force participation and increases in wages relative to men, particularly in the case of black women (Mare and Winship 1991). As a result, it is argued, women have less economic incentive to marry. A second view about the decline of marriage focuses upon schooling. Since longer periods of school enrollment delay marriage and since educational attainment is increasing, this could account in part for lower rates. Another interpretation of falling marriage rates, especially for the case of black women, has been provided by Wilson (1987). According to the theory, their low rates are due largely to a low ratio of employed black men to black women in the same age group. This ratio, called the "male marriageable pool index," is an indicator of the supply of economically attractive men; that is, men in stable economic situations who are, by virtue of this, in a position to support or help support a family. In the 25-34 age group in 1980 there were 58 eligible black males for every 100 black females; among whites there were 88 eligible males (Wilson 1987:

97, table 4.1). This huge disparity, a consequence of higher rates of joblessness, incarceration, and mortality among black males, is undoubtedly responsible in part for the diminished marriage possibilities of black women relative to white women (undoubtedly it also helps to explain the lower marriage rates of Hispanic women).[5]

Because of falling marriage rates, the historical increase in rates of marital dissolution, and growth in the number of never-married invididuals who become parents, the proportion of single-parent families has been rising, especially those headed by women. The trend is apparent among both whites and minorities, but it has been especially pronounced among the latter, particularly among blacks (Jaynes and Williams 1989).

Ethnic differences corresponding to this picture are apparent among our respondents (table 2). Although married persons were generally the most likely to be parents, among those who were divorced or separated (shown in the table as "separate"), substantial percentages also had children. Minority individuals whose marriages had dissolved were much more likely to have them than whites, and minority women were especially likely: three quarters or more were mothers, compared with a quarter of white women. Among those who had never married, minority men and women were more likely than whites to be parents. The proportion of never-married black women with children was strikingly high: 40 percent were mothers; over a fifth of Hispanic women were also, compared with only a tiny fraction of never-married white women. Across every category of marital status, blacks and Hispanics were more likely to have children than were whites. Overall, among those who were single--that is, who had never married or whose marriages had terminated--minorities, particularly women, were especially likely to be parents.

As these findings imply, the offspring of minority respondents far more often were living with a single parent. We can gain a better sense of this if

we shift our emphasis from the marital status of respondents to how their children were distributed among marital categories (table 3). Overall, hardly any of the children born to whites (5 percent) were living with only one parent. Black children were eight times more likely to be doing so, and Hispanic children were five times more likely. The major part of this ethnic disparity is accounted for by single minority women, since they were much more often parents than were single minority men. Indeed, 60 percent of black women's children, but only 10 percent of the offspring of black men were living in single-parent households. Among Hispanic children the comparable figures were 37 percent and 10 percent. Though the table does not show it directly, of all the black children in single parent households, 90 percent were living with their mothers, and among Hispanic children, the figure was 85 percent.

Economic Consequences of Marital Contexts.

As we said earlier, the literature suggests that economic deprivation associated with single-parent status, particularly among single mothers, may be an important factor in the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage. Whether as a consequence of out-of-wedlock births or marital dissolution, single-parent families are likely to be far worse off in terms of economic well-being (Farley 1984; Jaynes and Williams 1989; Mare and Winship 1991; Weiss 1984; Wilson 1987). Indeed, increases over the past 30 years in female-headed families appear to be a major reason for the rise in the proportion of children living in poverty (Wilson 1987).

Intact families typically have higher income largely because of the two-wage earner potential of married couples. Nationally, for over half of the children living with father and mother, both parents were employed (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1991). The picture is similar in our data (table 4). For 70 percent of black children and half of Hispanic ones, both parents were working;

in a large proportion of these families, both spouses held full time jobs. Even among whites, where parents were least likely to be dual wage earners, 40 percent of children lived in a family where both spouses were working.

Differences in marital status are associated with very large disparities in income. Nationally, the mean income in 1984 for intact families was about $30,000, while for single mothers it was only about $9,900, and for the few single fathers it was around $20,000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1985).[6] This pattern is visible for white, black, and Hispanic groups. Our data are broadly consistent with the national picture (though incomes of our respondents are higher largely because of their generally higher educational levels), as can be seen in Table 5 which compares the household incomes of parents who are married with those who are single.[7] In all cases, but especially among women, the advantage to those who are married seems stunning. As an example, among black female-headed families, average income was only a little over $18,000, while among black women who were married, it was almost $43,000. Looked at in a slightly different way, the family income of black and also Hispanic single mothers was only 43 percent that of married couples. White single mothers were even worse off relative to married ones: their income was only 37 percent of that for couples. Although inequalities separating married and single men were not as great, they were still very substantial: incomes of white single fathers were only 56 percent of married ones; the figure for blacks was 58 percent and for Hispanics, it was 48 percent.

The income differences we have been reviewing could be exaggerated if fewer people share income in single-parent families. The absence of a spouse is one obvious reason why this might be the case. Another is that single-parent families tend to have fewer children. We took account of differences in family size by using a measure of per capita income.[8] When we did this, single-parent households were still worse off. For example, among black and Hispanic women,

there was a difference of close to $4,000 in per capita income separating married from female-headed households. Among white women the disparity in per capita income was greater, exceeding $6,700.

Another aspect of married couples' earnings sheds further light on the question of economic well-being in families. Research and theory in the sociology of the family teach us that a principle of homogamy is an important basis of mate selection. According to this principle, people are more likely to marry others who are similar to them in characteristics such as ethnicity, social class background, religion, and educational attainment. Much evidence points to educational homogamy as a primary factor in mate selection and suggests that its role has been increasing (Kalmijn 1991; Mare, 1991). There may be a number of reasons why people who marry tend to be similar in their educational attainments. In part highly credentialled individuals may be attracted by each other's labor market prospects. But also, educational level may signify the acquisition of tastes, styles, ways of thinking and values. Similarities in such cultural capital are likely to provide fertile soil for the growth of intimacy (Dimaggio and Mohr 1985).[9] Because educational homogamy is an important basis of mate selection, an additional economic influence of open admissions may have occurred among those who married: since educational attainment is associated with earnings, if respondents' marriage partners had educational attainments similar to their own, then the higher the level of one's credentials, the greater will be the earnings of one's spouse (if he or she is working, of course). In effect, then, a higher educational level "buys" a higher income spouse.

Though we have no data on the educational attainments of respondents' spouses, we used information on their earnings to examine the association between respondent's educational attainment and spouse's salary. We focussed the analysis on two-wage earner couples, where both held full-time jobs.

Broadly speaking, we found that the higher a person's educational attainment, the higher was the spouse's salary. Among Hispanics, for example, women who never received any college degree had spouses who earned an average salary of about $21,750. It rose to over $25,000 among the husbands whose wives had completed an AA, and for the women who earned a BA degree or higher, spouse's earnings were near $29,000. Black women who did not succeed in earning a college degree had husbands who earned an average of more than $21,650, while the spouses of those who completed a BA or more earned over $25,300. This relationship appeared also among men, but probably because earnings increments to educational attainment are more modest for women, increases in men's educational attainments did not produce as much benefit from their wives' earnings as women's attainments did from their husbands'.[10] These findings suggest an unanticipated benefit of the open admissions policy: those who used the opportunity that it provided to increase their level of educational achievement received a bonus in the form of a more economically valuable mate, thus augmenting family income. The principle of educational homogamy may also have reinforced similarities in cultural capital within families, a point which we shall address shortly.

In summary, then, the economic well-being of families was strongly associated with marital status and with ethnicit . Children in single-parent families were considerably worse off than those living with both parents. Because minority parents were far more likely than whites to be single, either because they had never married or because their marriages had ended, the burdens of lower income fell most heavily on minority children. In addition, other costs that have been identified in the research literature as consequences of father absence and the stress of marital disruption also would have affected them disproportionately. Moreover, as a result of educational homogamy, greater educational attainments added leverage to the earning power of intact families.

Since the educational attainment of white couples was typically greater than that of minority couples, white children were advantaged in this respect.

Of course, we have no direct information about the effects of economic differences between single and two-parent families on actual living standards--for example, on the amount of space in peoples' apartments or houses, or on the kinds of neighborhoods in which they could afford to live. However, we were able to make a further assessment, albeit a somewhat indirect one. For persons with children, we examined the association between marital status and satisfaction with facets of respondents' lives that, on the face of it, seemed dependent to an important extent on economic resources. For example we asked how satisfied people were with their income, their home or apartment, the neighborhood in which they lived, and the schools in their community. Among men and women of every ethnic group, single parents were more likely to be dissatisfied with each of these than were married couples.[11]

Education and Cultural Resources

Whether children live within an intact family or with a single parent is not the only aspect of the domestic context that may affect their life chances. The educational attainments of their parents, by influencing family cultural resources, including expectations for educational attainment, can also make a difference. Better educated parents can provide resources that contribute to school success. They are more likely to read to their children, probably giving them some edge when they begin reading in school. Typically, they are better able to help with school assignments. They may instill better work habits, a characteristic of students that teachers reward with higher grades (Farkas, et. al. 1990). Partly because of their higher educational status, they are likely to feel more comfortable with teachers than are parents with less education, and as a result they interact with them more frequently and effectively on behalf of

their children (Lareau 1989). The linguistic styles in families with more educated parents may articulate well with the structure of discourse most rewarded within schools, thus resulting in better academic evaluations (for a review of home-school language issues, see Mehan 1992). In general, college-educated parents are likely to possess more information and cultural knowledge that will allow children to feel comfortable with the curricular demands of school and in interaction with teachers. In effect, their offspring are better able to exchange cultural capital for good grades (Bourdieu 1973; Dimaggio 1982).

As a result of greater opportunities to know people (relatives, neighbors) who have been to college, and because of easier access to those (e.g., college counselors) who can help them translate aspirations into appropriate activities (e.g., how to choose colleges and how to apply), children of more educated parents also develop a clearer picture of the educational ladder to be climbed and how to go about climbing it (see Swidler 1986, on the notion of "cultural tool kits"). Undoubtedly, they more often come to see expectations for higher education as a "natural" part of the life course.

It is not entirely clear just what thresholds of parental attainment have the greatest potency for affecting children's educational careers. Certainly in terms of eventual entry to higher education, it is arguable that the most strategic distinction is between parents who have- and have not had college experience--that any taste of college, even a brief sojourn at a two-year or four-year school, without the completion of any degree--is the critical event that makes the college entry of one's children likely. Since everyone among our respondents has had at least a brush with higher education, this implies that there should not be wide differences among offspring in this respect.

But mere college entry is too crude an indicator. There is also the question of how far children will go in higher education. As is now widely understood, level of entry--to a four-year college or to a two-year school--can

influence ultimate educational attainment, job status, and earnings (Brint and Karabel 1989; Dougherty 1987; Lavin and Crook 1990; Lavin and Hyllegard 1991; Monk-Turner 1990). And college quality--from highly selective, prestigious institutions to more accessible ones of lesser status--may make a difference for careers (Karabel and McClelland 1987; Karen 1991; Useem and Karabel 1986). We think that having a parent or parents whose educational attainment is at the BA level or higher adds the most to children's chances of starting in a selective four-year school and of going far in higher education. The liberal arts curricula of BA programs generally provide their graduates with more cultural capital than is provided by community college vocational programs or the truncated liberal arts curricula in these institutions. Partly as a result, we think the children of parents with BA's gain an edge in their primary and secondary schooling that adds to their chances in higher education.[12]

To gain a sense of the family educational contexts in which children found themselves, we begin with an overview of how they were distributed according to their parents' attainments. Table 6 reveals sharp disparities separating white from minority children. What is most striking overall is that half of white children but less than 30 percent of minority offspring belonged to parents with BA degrees or higher. If white children had a parent with a college degree it was far more likely to be a BA or advanced degree than an AA. On the other hand, the credentialled parent of a minority child was about as likely to have an AA as a BA. At the other end, only a third of white children but close to half of minority ones had parents who never received any college degree. These results are not unexpected, since they reflect in large part the greater educational attainment of whites (reviewed in Lavin and Crook 1990). But since individuals at the low end of the educational scale (without a degree or with an AA) had more children on average than those at the upper end (BA or higher), ethnic inequalities in our respondents' educational attainments are amplified in the

distribution of their children across educational contexts. Of course, these are not final results: part of the reason for the smaller average number of offspring among those with higher credentials is that they were in school longer. Subsequently, it is possible that they may have narrowed the fertility gap.[13]

Notwithstanding the ethnic inequalities in exposure to college-educated parents, there is little doubt that open admissions made an important difference for our minority respondents' children. Since the policy tripled the number of BA's that blacks earned, and doubled those awarded to Hispanics (Lavin and Crook 1990, table 12), their children were, overall, experiencing a more favorable set of family educational environments than they otherwise would have.

The potential influence of family educational environments cannot be fully appreciated in isolation from the marital contexts that we discussed earlier. How marriage and parental educational attainments might jointly affect children's life chances can be considered by examining table 7 which shows how children are distributed among different marital and educational configurations. It distinguishes three levels of parental educational attainment: no college degree, AA degree, and BA or higher. It also distinguishes two categories of marital status, married and single (in which the never married are combined with those who are separated, divorced or widowed). Earlier discussion implies that the optimal context for children's life chances is the one where both parents live together and hold at least a BA degree.[14] White and minority children have vastly different probabilities of being in this context. Half of white children are found here, and, indeed, it is their modal configuration. Partly as a consequence of minority parents' lesser educational attainments and partly because they were more likely than whites to be single parents, only about a fifth of minority children were living in this situation. Overall, almost two-thirds of all white children were in an intact family context where parents held

a college degree of some kind (AA or BA). The same could be said for only one-third of black parents' children and about 40 percent of Hispanic offspring.

If an intact family with educational attainment at the BA level or higher is the configuration with the most optimistic potential for children's life chances, then the household of the single parent without any college credential is the least favorable one. Children in such households would seem triply disadvantaged: their well being is diminished by the more meager cultural resources that most likely are a consequence of their parent's truncated exposure to college, and by lower income that results from both single-parent status and the absence of college credentials. Only a small fraction of white children (3 percent) lived in this context, but a substantial minority of black children, 21 percent, and over 10 percent of Hispanic ones were found there. Among black female respondents this configuration is the modal one, containing a third of their children. Indeed, the children of single mothers suffer an additional disadvantage imposed by the lower earnings potential of women relative to men. And, of course, the economic well-being of the children belonging to single black or Hispanic mothers is even further diminished by the dollar penalty that is associated with minority status.[15]

Conclusion

In this analysis of family and educational contexts in which the offspring of former CUNY students found themselves, the picture is incomplete. Marriage still lay ahead for some never-married individuals, the marriages of others were undoubtedly headed for dissolution, some divorced or separated persons would remarry or reconcile with a former spouse, and the members of the respondent cohort had not yet passed through their child-bearing years. Partly as a consequence of these events, some children who had been living in a single parent household would find themselves in a reconstituted family and others who

were living with both parents would end up in one headed by a single parent. But even though the processes of marital formation, dissolution and childbearing were still occurring, the picture contains enough detail so that inferences about its consequences may reasonably be made.

In many different ways the opportunities created by open admissions were used to advantage. Many students were able to capitalize on their college opportunity to earn credentials that undoubtedly they would not otherwise have received. Indeed, open admissions boosted attainments at all rungs of the higher education ladder--especially so in the case of minority students. It more than tripled the number of bachelor's degrees going to black students, and it doubled those to Hispanics. It doubled as well the number of postgraduate degrees going to minorities. These educational attainments translated into gains in the labor market in the form of better earnings, higher occupational status and access to jobs that provided more complex, challenging work.

But open admissions was not able to erase the effects of prior disadvantage or of subsequent institutional constraints: relative to whites, minority students received poorer high school academic preparation, and they more often came from impoverished economic circumstances, both of which hindered their efforts in college. Their disproportionate placement in community colleges further diminished their eventual educational attainments. In the labor market, their greater tendency to work in public sector jobs and the likely occurrence of employer discrimination acted as a drag on their earnings. In short, the demonstrable benefits of open admissions were, nevertheless, constrained by a process of cumulative disadvantage rooted in students' socioeconomic and educational backgrounds and in the labor market itself.

In assessing the extent to which life chances might be raised among the children of former CUNY students, analogous constraints are at work. There can be little doubt that many children faced a better future because of the advan-

tages that open admissions made possible for their parents. But the way marital status is configured with educational attainment can enhance or dilute the benefits of that policy. Among those who hold the more valuable credentials (BA's or more), marriage can intensify cultural and economic benefits. That is, the cultural capital that individuals acquired as a part of the college experience is probably a more influential resource for children when it is shared by a couple with similar educational background. And the economic benefits of their parents' greater educational attainments add further to children's well being. Most likely, single parents with comparable educational credentials cannot do as much for their children. Being single will likely diminish the influence of parental educational attainment on children's school success, and the economic penalty typical of the one-parent family can hardly offset the additional earning power conferred by their credentials. This is especially the case among the single mothers who account for 90 percent of all single-parent children.

Thus, our examination of marriage, educational attainment, and parenthood provides a further demonstration of the ways in which the benefits of social policies are often constrained by a larger circle of disadvantage. On the one hand, educational opportunity led to greater educational attainment and this in turn added to the chances of many children. But at the same time, even among those with the most valuable educational credentials, minorities, particularly women, were disadvantaged by a marriage market and other factors that increased their chances of being single parents, thus diminishing the benefits of their attainments for their offspring. In short the lower probabilities of marriage and the greater chances of marital dissolution among minorities may have diluted some of the leverage that open admissions provided for their children. But this should not lead one to think that patterns of family formation and marital stability entirely neutralized the effects of the program. On the contrary, the policy added to the numbers of college-educated minority men and women who mar-

ried and had children. In this way it helped to consolidate educational and economic gains across generations.

Notes

1. Though open-access policies have a long tradition in this society, the CUNY model contained elements not seen in other systems. It was designed not simply to broaden access to college, but more precisely, to create wider opportunity for baccalaureate completion. Its admissions plan produced far less racial sorting between four-year and two-year colleges than did other open-access systems, most notably, California's. Also in accord with the baccalaureate emphasis, there was a close articulation between the community and senior college tiers of the CUNY system: graduates of the two-year schools were guaranteed admission to four-year colleges with full credit. The University's concept of opportunity embraced not only access but also outcome. Its board of trustees stated that opportunity would be merely an illusion if access were followed by a high proportion of student failure. Accordingly, the university developed large programs of remediation, counseling and related services that were designed to enhance students' academic chances. Overarching the open-admissions program was a financial aid policy that had been in place since the institution's founding in the nineteenth century: free tuition. More detailed accounts of the origins of open admissions and its early results may be found in Lavin et. al. (1979, 1981).

2. Much of labor market inequality separating whites and minorities was explained by ethnic disparities in educational attainment, but some was accounted for by differences in employment sector: minority workers were more often found in the public sector than were whites, and public sector jobs paid less well than those in the private sector. We also found substantial gender inequality in earnings.

3. Our weighting procedure was based on a strategy suggested by Berk (1983). This involves predicting the likelihood that a given individual would have responded to the survey, based on what we know about the characteristics of those who did respond. We used logistic regression, where the dependent variable is the log odds that someone from the original sample would respond to the follow-up survey. We looked at the contribution of a number of sociodemographic and academic variables that we expected to affect the odds of being in the follow-up. These included race, age, gender, income, high school average, entry cohort, level of entry to CUNY (senior or community college), number of credits earned at CUNY, and graduation from CUNY. After estimating the regression equation, we converted the log odds into probability levels and weighted individuals in the follow-up sample by the inverse of these probabilities.

4. The median age at first marriage in the U.S. in 1984 was just over 25 for men and 23 for women (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1991). Probably the age of marriage among our respondents is somewhat higher than this, since they were above average in educational attainment and higher levels of attainment appear to be associated with delayed marriage.

5. Though other influences on low marriage rates, such as women's increasing economic independence cannot be discounted, Lichter, et. al. (1991), in a recent study, state that their results clearly reinforce the view that the supply of economically attractive men plays a large role in defining young women's marriage prospects.

6. Of course, these disparities are not due entirely to the influence of marital status. Differences in educational attainment between married and

single parents could also have an influence, but it is unlikely that all or even most of the gap could be explained by factors other than the number of wage earners.

7. In both the national data we have cited and our own records, family income includes earnings of husband and/or wife, but not other adults living in the household who might be contributing income. Moreover, family income does not include other sources, for example, public assistance. Though these omissions lead to some understatement of income, it seems unlikely that they affect our conclusions about economic differences between single and two-parent families. Bianchi (1981), for example, included all sources of household income (both earned and from other sources) and found married couple/single head of household income ratios similar to the ones we have reported. Single mothers have been increasingly likely to provide for their children without the aid of additional household adult wage earners. For example, in 1960 almost 40 percent of black female householders with children had earnings from others in the household. By 1976, this had fallen to just under 20 percent (Bianchi 1981, 64-65).

1984 data indicate that among children living with both mother and father, 16 percent of whites, 23 percent of blacks and 22 percent of Hispanics were in households that also included other adults (relatives and/or unrelated individuals). Among children living with mother only, the analogous figures were 35 percent for whites, 40 percent for blacks, and 36 percent for Hispanics. Among black and Hispanic children belonging to never-married mothers, the majority lived in households that did not include other adults (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1985, Table 9). According to Hofferth (1984), black female-headed families are less likely to receive money from extended kin networks than are white female-headed families.

8. Per capita income was calculated by dividing family income by the sum of the number of children and the number of parents present (one or two).

9. A good introduction to the concept of cultural capital may be seen in an article by David Swartz (in Dougherty and Hammack 1991, 70-80).

10. Among black male respondents we found no association between their educational attainments and the earnings of their wives.

11. For example, 45 percent of single mothers were dissatisfied with their income compared with 25 percent among married mothers. Analogous figures for fathers were 28 percent and 18 percent. Twenty-six percent of single mothers were not satisfied with the neighborhood in which they lived, compared with only 8 percent of married mothers. For fathers the percentages were 34 and 11.

12. Our analyses of educational attainment and occupational status (Lavin and Hyllegard 1991) show that the BA degree typically provides a more substantial boost to occupational status relative to what the AA degree adds over the high school diploma. That is, occupations typical of BA holders are more clearly demarcated from those held by AA recipients than the latter are from the jobs of those with only high school diplomas. Moreover, it may be that friendship circles tend to be bounded in the sense that people draw their friends from a pool of those with comparable educational attainments and occupational levels. Among those in the occupational categories associated with BA or higher credentials, high educational expectations are more likely to be normative--held not

only within the family but reinforced through friends and neighborhoods.

13. Whites with a high school diploma had an average of 0.83 children, those with an AA an average of 0.78, and those with a BA or higher, an average of 0.55. Analogous figures for blacks are 1.13, 1.08, and 0.86. For Hispanics they are 1.00, 1.05, and 0.78.

14. Although we have no information on the educational attainments of our respondents' spouses, the principle of educational homogamy in mate selection and our previous analysis of spouse earnings in relation to respondent's educational attainment lead us to think that there is, in general, similarity in the credentials held by spouses.

15. Although the BA level married couple is a configuration that seems to have clearly different implications for children's outcomes than the single parent with no college credential, not all configurations are so easily contrasted. For example, if we compare the children of married couples having no degree with the offspring of single parents who have a BA or higher, the implications are not easily apparent. The relative weight of parent absence versus parents' educational attainment in influencing various outcomes such as school grades, test scores, school dropout, college entry, ultimate educational attainment, and earnings, is not well understood.

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Table 1*
Marital Status by Gender and Ethnicity

Marital Status:	Males			Females		
	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic
Married	56%	50%	48%	60%	32%	44%
Widowed	0	0	0	0	2	1
Divorced	5	6	10	9	12	17
Separated	2	4	7	2	11	4
Never Married	38	40	35	29	42	33
% Not Married[a]	45	50	52	40	67	55
N (unweighted)	1591	260	181	1873	477	291

Source: CUNY Study of the Social Consequences of Open Admissions.

*Columns may not total to 100% due to rounding.
[a] Includes those who were never married, separated, divorced, or widowed.

Table 2

Percent Having One or More Children By Marital Status, Gender and Ethnicity

Marital Status:	Males			Females			Total		
	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic
Married	58	83	78	65	76	77	62	80	77
Separate[a]	12	43	21	26	80	74	20	72	56
Never Married	1	9	7	2	41	23	1	30	16

Source: CUNY Study of the Social Consequences of Open Admissions.

[a]Includes those who were separated, divorced, or widowed.

Table 3

How Children are Distributed According to Marital Status by Gender and Ethnicity*

Marital Status:	Males			Females			Total		
	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic
Married	97%	90%	90%	93%	43%	63%	95%	60%	73%
Separate[a]	2	6	6	6	37	27	4	25	19
Never Married	1	4	4	1	21	10	1	15	8
N of Children	812	241	146	1282	452	248	2094	693	394

Source: CUNY Study of the Social Consequences of Open Admissions.

*Columns may not total 100% due to rounding.
[a]Includes those who were separated, divorced, or widowed.

Table 4

Percent of Married Parents in Which Both Spouses are Employed
By Gender and Ethnicity of Respondent

	Males			Females			Total		
	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic
%Employed	35	70	37	44	72	59	40	71	50
% Employed Full-time	17	56	28	20	57	43	18	56	36
N (unweighted)	484	104	68	710	111	102	1194	206	170

Source: CUNY Study of the Social Consequences of Open Admissions.

Table 5

Family Income for Respondents With Children
by Marital Status, Gender, and Ethnicity

Marital Status:	Males			Females			Total		
	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic
Married	$47,918	$43,218	$40,769	$49,256	$42,799	$39,236	$48,576	$42,904	$39,813
	(351)	(78)	(36)	(520)	(85)	(70)	(871)	(163)	(106)
Not Married[a]	26,809	25,183	18,826	18,093	18,353	16,725	20,570	19,307	16,877
	(15)	(19)	(7)	(46)	(136)	(45)	(61)	(155	(52)
Income Ratio: Not Married/ Married	.56	.58	.46	.37	.43	.43	.42	.45	.43
Per Capita Income:									
Married	14,758	12,237	11,845	14,626	12,161	11,926	14,678	12,149	11,898
Not Married[a]	11,604	10,719	7,186	7,869	8,247	8,195	8,595	8,550	8,043

Source: CUNY Study of the Social Consequences of Open Admissions.

[a]Includes those who were separated, divorced, widowed, or never married.

Table 6

How Children Are Distributed According to Parent's Educational Attainment, Gender, and Ethnicity.*

Parent's Educational Attainment:	Males			Females			Total		
	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic
H.S. Diploma	15%	21%	29%	11%	24%	18%	13%	23%	23%
Some College	19	26	24	22	24	20	20	24	23
AA degree	15	23	16	15	26	35	15	24	27
BA or higher	51	31	31	52	26	27	51	28	28

Source: CUNY Study of the Social Consequences of Open Admissions.

*Columns may not total 100% due to rounding.

Table 7

Percent of Children in Each Category of Marital Status and Educational Attainment By Gender and Ethnicity.

Category of Marital Status and Education	Males			Females			Total		
	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic
Married:									
No Degree	33	45	48	29	17	24	31	27	33
AA	15	20	12	13	12	23	14	14	20
BA or above	49	24	29	51	14	16	50	18	21
Not Married:									
No Degree	1	4	6	4	33	14	3	21	11
AA	0	2	3	2	12	12	1	9	8
BA or above	2	5	2	1	13	11	1	10	7
N of Children	812	241	146	1282	452	248	2094	693	394

Source: CUNY Study of the Social Consequences of Open Admissions.

*Columns may not total 100% due to rounding.