DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 394 463 HE 029 159

AUTHOR Horvat, Erin McNamara
TITLE African American Students and College Choice Decisionmaking in Social Context: The Influence of Race and Class on Educational Opportunity.
PUB DATE Apr 96
NOTE 39p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New York, NY, April 8-13, 1996).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Aspiration; *Access to Education; Affirmative Action; *Black Achievement; *College Choice; Educational Opportunities; Higher Education; High School Students; Racial Factors; *Social Influences; Sociocultural Patterns; Socioeconomic Status; Student Educational Objectives
IDENTIFIERS California

ABSTRACT

This report examines the college aspirations and decisionmaking factors gathered from 53 interviews with Black, female, college-bound students, their parents, friends, college counselors, teachers, and school staff. The goal was to reveal how the students' lives and their access to postsecondary education have been framed and structured by the influences of race and class in modern schools and society. Subjects were students at three urban California high schools. Data gathered included transcribed and coded interviews as well as extensive ethnographic observational data and documents. The schools were chosen for their ethnic and social differences: a predominantly African-American public school with predominantly lower class families; a public, racially mixed school of mixed social class composition; and a predominantly white, private, upper social class school. Findings reveal that the students chose colleges where they could see themselves in the form of other students like themselves who already attend the college; race and class defined the choices that fit a particular student. The high schools they attended acted as templates that encouraged particular kinds of action. The expectations of the students, rooted in race and class differences, created different worlds of opportunity and created different patterns of access to higher education. The data further illustrate how race did not have less importance than class in defining these students' habiti, but rather that race was a very clear marker of class membership and class distinction that greatly impacted their decisionmaking. (Contains 41 references.) (NAV)

African American Students and College Choice Decisionmaking in Social Context: The Influence of Race and Class on Educational Opportunity

Erin McNamara Horvat
Graduate School of Education and Information Studies
University of California, Los Angeles

Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association
New York, April, 1996

Comments are welcome. Please direct all correspondence to Erin McNamara Horvat at horvat@gse.ucla.edu

Introduction[1]

Kim, Lashanda and Krystal are three African-American students completing their senior year of high school. All three are hard-working high school students with above average grades. They all have roughly an A- average, and SAT scores above the national norm of African-American students of 740 that average 950. All have taken at least one honors or Advance Placement (AP) course in the last two years and are well liked by their teachers and classmates.

Despite the similarities among these three young women, all have known for some time that they want to go to college, have identified colleges that they would like to attend, have applied, and all will be going to a four-year college in the fall, there are many important differences as well. For instance, Kim is one of six African-American students in her class who has attended the Hadley school for the last six years, an elite independent girl's day school with a senior class of 85 students located in one of the most exclusive neighborhoods of a large metropolitan area. Nestled in the exclusive and monied residential neighborhood of Turmont Circle, the Hadley school is a training ground for the daughters of some of the most well-to-do and powerful families in the city. The grounds of the school are spotless and park-like with gurgling fountains and elaborate landscaping. The overwhelmingly white faculty of the school, which provide an educational program that has been described by members of this community as "second to none", are a body of 77 well educated professionals, 52 of whom hold a Masters degree and twelve of whom hold a Doctorate. Each student is individually assisted in the college application process by one of the two full-time college counselors, both of whom have previous extensive experience in college admissions having worked "on the other side of the desk" for several years as admissions representatives for selective private universities. All of Hadley's graduates go on to attend college, many of them becoming students at some of the most selective colleges in the nation.

---

[1] The names of all individuals and high schools are pseudonyms.

In contrast, for the last four years Lashanda has attended Springfield Prep, a predominantly Black high school located only about twenty minutes by car from the Hadley school in the same metropolitan area. Springfield Preparatory High School, a public high school with an enrollment of 3500 students, 85% of whom are Black and 15% of whom are Latino, is located in a low-income, predominantly Black neighborhood. The school is situated three blocks off a main thoroughfare which is lined with strip malls, fast-food stores and shopping centers. The school itself bears many of the markings of an inner city high school: graffiti which custodians paint over as quickly as they can, windows covered by a mesh metal grating and an extensive security force which is often called upon to break-up fights and keep kids in class. However, many students here choose to attend Springfield Prep instead of their neighborhood high school because of its stated emphasis on college preparation and its reputation for superior academic preparation. The school does indeed have a reputation for superior academics; it houses two magnet programs and for an inner city high school has a better-than-average record of sending its students on to college with 79% of the seniors reportedly college-bound. This reputation for academic excellence is situated in an environment which celebrates the achievements of African-Americans and racial pride goes hand-in-hand with superior academic achievement.

The students at Springfield can call on the resources of the college office and its one full-time college counselor as they prepare for the college choice process and make their way through the maze of forms that are required for admission and financial aid. Though a few exceptional students will attend elite nationally known universities and colleges such as Dartmouth or Georgetown, the majority of Springfield's students attend local community colleges, state colleges and universities and if they do leave the state, Springfield students are most likely to attend historically Black colleges and universities.

And, finally, there is the case of Krystal.Krystal has risen at 5:00 am for the last four years to catch the bus that takes her on an hour-long ride out of the city and into the suburb of Lower Ridgecrest to attend Wilson High School. This happily suburban

community of Lower Ridgecrest is home to solidly middle class families and more affluent families who have torn down the original tract homes which dotted this area to build homes on a more palatial scale. Wilson, a comprehensive public high school which is in the same school district as Springfield, is home to 3000 students, 800 of whom are Black and Latino students who, like Krystal, are bused here from the city. White students comprise 43% of the student body of this high school with other non-white "minorities", Asian, Latino, Black and Other students, making up the remaining 57% of the school population. This school suffers from many of the same urban ills that Springfield experiences: truancy, vandalism and teen pregnancy. It is also a school that educates the children of affluent Lower Ridgecrest and has a "very vocal" local constituency. The students at Wilson rely on one full-time college counselor, her part-time assistant, and the eight students who are trained peer college counselors to provide information about the college application process. The students from Wilson attend a wide variety of schools including two year community colleges, public state colleges and universities and many different private colleges all over the country, some quite selective.

The road to college attendance has been very different for each of these prototypical young women. Kim, Lashanda and Krystal each attend a different high school, come from a different family background and have experienced the college choice process each in her own distinct manner. How their road to college has differed as a result of the differences in their family and high school experiences and the race and class differences which mark theses experiences will be explored in the course of this paper. We know that both family background and school structure influence educational attainment and the college choice process specifically. This research asks: 1) How does race affect the college choice process of students? 2) How does the interaction of race and class affect the college choice process? In order to explore how a combination of racial and social class differences influence college choice, I examine the way that female African-American students from a

range of socioeconomic backgrounds experience the college choice process differently in three distinct racial and social class environments.

It is clear that our lives are affected from the day we are born by the broad and deep divisions along the lines of race and class. To the extent that our educational system serves to systematically limit opportunity for particular segments of our population based on race and class it is seriously flawed. In this paper I reveal how students' lives and their access to postsecondary education are framed and structured by the influences of race and class in our schools and society. In light of the recent abolition of race-based affirmative action at the University of California, this research which makes clear how race and class influence educational opportunity and access to higher education has a clear and vital importance as educators across the state struggle to continue to hold open the doors of opportunity for all students. This work adds to our understanding of how the American meritocratic ideal is undermined in our schools and it contributes to our theoretical understanding of race and class in educational and societal interaction.

Review of the Literature and Theoretical Framework

If educational opportunity can be seen as a way for individuals to gain access to the American opportunity structure and grant them the power to construct their own future, then the picture of Blacks in relation to educational opportunity and access is a particularly alarming one (Allen 1988). Following an increase in participation rates in higher education during the 1970's, the trend of Black participation in higher education has been reversed as the 1980's witnessed a decrease in overall participation rates of Blacks in higher education (Altbach and Lomotey 1991; The Council of Great City Schools and The College Board's Educational Equity Project 1990). Census reports (National Center for Education Statistics 1993) indicate that Black enrollment in undergraduate institutions has remained constant at 10.2% of the entire undergraduate population from 1976 to 1991 while the percentage of Hispanics almost doubled, the percentage of Asian students almost tripled and the participation of Whites rose from 32% to 41%. Additionally, Black students tend to drop

out at a higher rate and take a longer time to attain their degrees (Allen 1988; Thomas 1981).

Despite these disturbing disparities and the well documented importance of postsecondary education in the status attainment process in this country (McDonough 1991; Kingston and Smart 1990; Useem and Karabel 1986; Sewell et al 1976), there has been surprisingly little work done to help us to identify and understand the mechanisms by which students' postsecondary options are limited by race. The literature on the experiences of Black students in high school and the experiences of these same students in college are plentiful (Allen 1991, 1992; Nettles 1988; Fordham 1986; Fleming 1984). However, work chronicling how the process of planning for and making the transition to college is affected by race and how this process is also affected by the interaction of race and class is more limited and has been restricted to quantitative analysis (Horvat and McDonough 1994; Hearn 1991; Hossler et al 1989). In other words, we know that we have a problem with Black educational attainment and the general process of status attainment for Blacks in society but we do not understand the mechanisms by which the process of college choice differs for these students compared to white students and how this process contributes to the outcomes that we are faced with.

Given the global and all-encompassing nature of educational aspiration formation and college choice, the work of Pierre Bourdieu emerges as a useful theoretical tool in understanding the many influences on students' lives and their relation to postsecondary choice. One of the fundamental concepts upon which this analysis rests is that of habitus, a set of constantly reformulated and modified dispositions and preferences rooted in social class and the power relations which define groups' and individuals' relationships to one another and to the structures of our society (Bourdieu 1977). The family is the primary generator and constructor of habitus and it is through this habitus that the practices of individuals in their interactions with structures are shaped. Family influences have emerged from the literature on college choice as the most influential and far reaching so it

would seem that the Bourdieuian theory chosen to explore the college choice process in this study provides a very sound matching theoretical orientation. I also use and expand upon the new theoretical concept of organizational habitus (McDonough forthcoming) to describe the organizational dispositions, preferences, and influences of the schools to clarify their influence in the college choice process and to theoretically distinguish this organizational influence from the individual or family habitus.

Every aspect of schooling from scheduling and the organization of the curricula (Garet and DeLany 1988) to students placement within that curricula in the tracking process prevalent in most schools (Gamoran 1992; Kilgore 1991; Oakes 1985) to the type of counseling students receive and access to counseling that students have (Lee and Ekstrom 1987; McDonough 1991; Erikson 1975) structures what happens in schools. This structure is vitally important to understanding what goes on in schools regarding the preparation for college and the college choice process itself. This structure of schooling varies between high schools and varies for different students within the same school. More often than not these variations in the type of schooling organization and structure and the different ways that students experience this structure within the same school are divisions along the lines of race and class. And quite often these structures of schooling determine the way that capital which students bring with them to the school can be spent, invested or converted into other more valuable types of capital.

The notion of a kind of social capital as important to success in navigating schooling in America and which influences the life chances of the young is neither new nor novel. Several scholars have documented the ways that different kinds of schools prepare and channel students differently (Anyon 1980; Coleman 1987; Cookson and Persell 1985; Lareau 1983; McDonough 1991a and 1991b). Both the analyses of Cookson and Persell and Lareau rely on the notion of social capital and cultural capital, defined "as institutionalized i.e., widely shared, high status, cultural signals used for social exclusion" (Lamont and Lareau 1988 p. 155), as the primary mechanisms by which advantage is

reproduced and access to power in society maintained. While it might be easily argued that different school environments provide access to different kinds of cultural capital, how schools structure investment of different types of capital is less clear.

In a study that comes far closer to the present topic of the influence of race on college choice, McDonough (1991, p.159) examined how social class and high school guidance operations combine to shape a high school student's perception of her opportunities for a college education finding that "the counselor is critical in constructing the broader school climate for college expectations and planning." She found that each of the four schools in her study "presented its students a different organizational habitus, a different view of the college opportunity structure" (p. 294). This notion of organizational habitus which McDonough illustrated in her examination of social class and college choice, proves useful in an examination of the way that race influences the process.

The structure of schooling has also been shown to have serious consequences for Black students both in terms of the differences between predominantly Black schools and the different treatment of Black students not in predominantly Black schools (Oakes 1985; Orfield 1988; The Council of Great City Schools 1990). Wells and Crain (forthcoming p. 7) in their work on the long-term effects of desegregation in schools note the degree to which "the conduits of information" available to students which attend desegregated schools are different than those for students who attend largely segregated schools. They find that desegregated schools which are "filled with white and wealthy students provide greater access to information about college and careers than schools serving mostly low-income minority students." Portes and Wilson (1976) note that educational attainment for Blacks and whites is marked by "differential access of racial groupings to channels of educational attainment" (p. 430). They note that Black students move up through individual self-reliance while whites are ably assisted by the institutional machinery of the setting. The findings of Thomas and Braddock (1981) reinforce this notion that the racial context of the students' high school influences where they will attend college. However

they call for more extensive work to explore this issue further delving into the degree to which high school officials, parents, and peers influence the motivations for students' college choices.

School Structure as a Template for Investment

Scholars have noted the great degree to which school success appears to be dependent on student characteristics which originate from outside the school setting; the school merely acts as a market within which this cultural and social capital can be invested (Lareau 1989; McDonough 1991; Mehan, Hertweck et al. 1986; Persell, Catsambis et al. 1992). Lareau (1933), in her examination of family-school relationships, suggests that "social location leads them [parents and students] to construct different pathways for realizing success" (p. 82). She finds that the way that middle class parents behave in relation to their child's school experience "mirror[s] the requests of schools" (Ibid). Lareau notes that other types of cultural capital exist, such as working class cultural capital, but the investment of this capital does not seem to help a student's chances for success nor do the structure of schools seem to support its investment. Thus the structure of the school allows and may in fact encourage the investment of middle- and upper-class cultural capital which plays a large part in enhancing a child's chance for school success.

The notion of structure in schooling as a template which encourages certain patterns of interaction and investments appears to be a plausible one. School structure does not necessarily create opportunity or provide information or knowledge for high status families and children but by providing pathways for investment of societally legitimate and highly valued forms of cultural capital "our educational institutions are structured to favor those who already possess cultural capital, defined according to the criteria of the dominant hegemony" (Harker 1984 p. 118). Put another way, school structure can be seen as either an "enabling or constraining" force (Oakes 1989, p. 183). In other words, some schools enable students to learn in many different ways and other schools and/or schooling policies constrain learning and achievement.

Certainly one of the most important ways that schools foster the investment of various forms of capital in the course of students' educational careers is in the transition from high school to college. Different kinds of schools view this mission of helping students prepare for and gain entrance to college to a greater and lesser extent as part of their overall purpose and mission. The degree to which schools foster investment in higher education and in particular types of higher education can be seen in the structure of and extent of the college counseling provided in the school.

College counseling operations in different schools in many ways reinforce the development of particular tastes and preferences regarding educational attainment in general and college choice specifically. For some schools, preparation for higher education and entrance into a particular set of colleges or universities is their raison d'être and this mission is reflected in the college counseling operation at the school. The whole school and the college counseling operation works to develop particular tastes, preferences and dispositions among their students for particular colleges by inviting certain college representatives to visit and allowing students to leave class to visit with them, by arranging the curriculum so that each student is prepared to continue on to some sort of college experience, and by reinforcing those abilities and characteristics that advantage students in the admissions process at certain colleges. Not surprisingly, these schools devote significant resources to the college counseling office maintaining a low counselor to students ratio in the neighborhood of 1 to 65 (Cookson and Persell 1985) and providing institutional supports to the college counseling office in the forms of technology (computers and software) and support staff.

Most notably, at some comprehensive public high schools the purpose of education itself and schooling has absolutely no connection to the goal of preparing students for higher education. High school is seen as an end unto itself and college counseling is virtually nonexistent. Counselor to student ratios are high, in the neighborhood of 1 to 800 in the state of California (McDonough 1991), there is little in the way of institutional

support for the college counseling offices' efforts, and the office is frequently asked to perform other duties not related to college counseling such as monitoring attendance records. A preference and taste for college attendance is not cultivated among the students.

These two examples represent the two ends of a whole spectrum of high schools, their commitment to preparing students for higher education and how this commitment is manifested in the college counseling operation at the school. Most schools fall somewhere in the middle of these two extremes of a total commitment to college preparation and access and little to no attention focused on this outcome. This example does however help to illustrate the importance of the college counseling office in cultivating a taste for college among students and in ensuring access to knowledge about college attendance.

It is clear that there is a connection between schooling experience and a student's educational aspiration and further educational attainment. It appears that in many ways our society is structured to confer on those already advantaged by virtue of social class and race further advantage. This further advantage is reinforced by the structure of our schooling process and the ability of individuals to acquire and convert knowledge and resources into educational advantage. Specifically how the structure of secondary schools influences the linkages between secondary schools and colleges for students from different racial backgrounds and in schools with different racial and socioeconomic make-ups remains an unanswered question.

Methodology

The data for this ethnographic study were collected over a period of eight months from November 1994 through June 1995 at three urban California high schools. The data are comprised of 53 interviews each approximately and hour-long with college-bound, female African-American students (14), their best friends (12), their parents (14), their college counselors (4) the high school principals (3) and other teachers and school staff members (6). Extensive ethnographic observational data and documents were also collected at the three different high school sites. The ethnographic data collected includes

observations of all students who attend the school regardless of their race, gender or class. The school sites vary in terms of the race and class composition of their student bodies. Springfield Preparatory High School is a predominantly African-American public school and its students are from lower class families. The student body at the second school, Wilson High School, also public, has a mixed racial composition with no racial group dominating the school and also a mixed social class composition. The third school, Hadley, is private, predominantly white, and draws from an upper class clientele. The interviews and field notes which make up the bulk of the data were transcribed and coded. The coding scheme relied on both the theoretical framework guiding the study and the themes which emerged from the data themselves and resulted in a set of 30 codes.

School Structure, College Counseling and Course Selection: Templates in Action

Secondary schools structure access to postsecondary educatic in many ways. The type of curriculum offered, the kind of counseling students receive when they sign up for courses each semester, the type of college counseling offered and the degree to which the mission of college attendance is integrated into the curriculum and mission of the school all combine to affect the way that students futures are played out. Within this structure students exercise a degree of agency to chart their own path, however, this agency is confined by the limits imposed by the structure of the school. Few decisions are more important to the college choice process than what courses students take in high school. Whether or not students have the courses that they need to apply to a four-year college at all is of vital importance in the college choice process. How these choices get made, by whom, and in what context deserves more than a cursory glance as we examine the different ways that these students have access to higher education. The degree to which the mission of college attendance is integrated into the curriculum of the school and the organizational habitus of the school is another marker of difference among these three schools and the way that postsecondary access is structured. It also tells a great deal about

how families interact with the schools and students around present educational choices which will greatly affect the student's future.

If we think of schools and their structures as templates which allow particular types of action and interaction we can see how the organizational habitus of the schooling experience shapes students aspirations and futures. Schools act as templates presenting accepted patterns of interaction and planning as acceptable to students. These patterns or templates, which are not the same for every student nor firmly fixed without any degree of flexibility, serve as guides for students who act out their lives within their walls exercising agency and choice within their fluid boundaries. We will see how these templates are forged largely by the influences of race and class and how in turn students lives are bounded by these constructs. One of the most important ways that the patterns of interaction are governed in schools is by the stated mission of the school and the enactment of this mission in the ways that students select courses and are counseled about their future educational choices.

The college choice process at Hadley is a ritualized and shared rite of passage. This passage and the preparation for it begins either before or at the time that students are enrolled at Hadley. The parents of the students at this school expect that their daughters will attend college and for the girls themselves college attendance is, as they say, "a given." For its part, the school backs up this expectation and anticipation of college attendance by not only offering but *exclusively* offering a college preparatory curriculum.

Even the least able Hadley students who have taken the easiest courses throughout their time there will be well prepared to enter college after graduation. Moreover, most of the students go far above and beyond the average college admission requirements. This emphasis on the college preparatory nature of the curriculum reflects the quite focused mission of the Hadley School as a college training ground. These students are prepared to not only be admitted into college but to do well there and most already have their sights set on a professional career and know what they will need to do to get there. They are also

prepared to enter selective four-year schools rather than less selective colleges or two-year community colleges. What is notable about this is not just that Hadley has a college preparatory mission, part of the mission of the other two schools in the study is also college preparatory and all of the girls in the study want to be professionals. What makes the Hadley experience different is that college preparation is the exclusive or dominant mission of the school. Furthermore this mission is supported by the entire school staff and is reflected in the organizational habitus of the school.

An example of the organizational support of the college preparatory mission of the school is the way that the college counselors are integrated into the course selection process. Mrs. Rice, the head college counselor, spends the first few days of every new semester reviewing the transcripts of the upper school students (students in grades nine through twelve) to ensure that each student is enrolled in a program that is most well suited to their needs and one that will be the most advantageous when the time to apply to college rolls around. Furthermore, Mrs. Rice is a member of the main administrative committee which handles most of the curricular issues, academic concerns and planning at the school. Hers is a voice that is sought out as the school sets policy and plans for the future. The mission of the school and the mission of the college office are one in the same and support one another in the goal of ensuring that each student maximize her choices for a postsecondary education.

Certainly the goals of the staff and school as a whole at Springfield are far more diverse than that of the Hadley School. This school must meet the needs of a far more diverse population and answer to a far wider constituency. In addition to a college preparatory curriculum, the school also offers instruction in trades such as auto shop and has a whole line of coursework that will qualify students for graduation but will not prepare them for college such as cashier's math and home economics. Mrs. Forsythe, the college counselor, notes that:

> the District's requirements for graduation are different from the requirements that the colleges are asking for to get into college. So, rather

> than having two years of Algebra and a year of Geometry, some kids will get maybe two years of math -- Math 9 and high school math and whatever, or maybe Algebra 1 and that counts for three years and that's what they need to graduate from high school.

While students cannot graduate from Hadley without having all of the courses that they need to apply to a four year college, the students at Springfield can graduate without having had many college preparatory classes at all. And although she is well aware of the importance of students having the right course sequences when they apply for college, the college counselor, Mrs. Forsythe, has a more difficult time making her voice heard in relation to curricular matters at Springfield than does Mrs. Rice at Hadley.

Though she is at times involved in pre-programming when the new students arrive on campus and enroll in courses each fall, Mrs. Forsythe is often closed out of those types of activities as well. An example of the way that the needs and concerns of the college office do not appear to be integrated into the rest of the school is the scheduling of the College Night at Springfield. At most high schools, these college nights are generally held in the first months of the school year and certainly before the end of October to give parents and students ample time to make their college plans. At Springfield this year, the College Night was not held until March. Mrs. Forsythe originally had the College Night scheduled for October but it was pushed back on the school calendar by other concerns and was held well after the vast majority of college applications were due in March. The fact that this important access route for obtaining college information was postponed to the point that it was almost useless for that year's seniors unless they wanted to attend a college with open admission or a community college, is an indication of the lack of integration of the college preparatory mission of the school in the organizational habitus of the institution.

Moreover, Mrs. Forsythe notes that in this school, unlike at her last, her office is largely independent and removed, even physically by being on a different floor, from the main counseling office and the Principal's office. Although she speculates that part of the reason that she is often left out of curricular decisions and school-wide planning is that she

is thought to be, and indeed is, very busy with a counselee load of 500 seniors, she notes the effect of this independent and removed status: "Even with the seniors -- I discovered they were having a meeting in the auditorium and I crashed it. I guess it's just -- they forget me. I think I'm just forgotten and when I know about it, I should go."

At Springfield, there are several publications which outline the requirements of most colleges which are regularly distributed to students and Mrs. Forsythe has college representatives address classes of younger students as often as possible so that they will be well informed. As she notes: "I'm a strong believer that the younger we can get to them the longer we have to work with them and we could probably produce some better results." However this effort at spreading the word about college and what students need to do to get to college does not appear to be well integrated into the rest of the school. At Springfield there does not seem to be a great deal of emphasis placed on providing students who want to go to college with a curriculum that will enable them to do so. The example of Jose from my ethnographic data collection at the school will serve to illustrate the point.

Jose is a senior who has come into the college office in mid-February to go over his application for financial aid with Mrs. Forsythe. After they have reviewed his financial aid form she asks if he has gotten his classes changed and the student says that he is "still working on it." Mrs. Forsythe calls down to the counseling office where class assignments are made to try to get Jose into the classes that he needs for college. Of the six periods in the school day Jose is currently enrolled in two periods of auto mechanics and one period of service (a course where a student acts as a teacher's aide or gofer) every day. Mrs. Forsythe is told that Jose's counselor is not in at the moment but that she "don't like anyone messin' with her seniors." Mrs. Forsythe later tells me in a tired and frustrated voice that "messin' with him is what she is doin'" and that this kid wants to go to college and should be able to get the courses that he needs.

I have saved Wilson High for last in this for it appears to hold something of a middle ground. Like Springfield, Wilson is a public school with a wide constituency and a

broad mission. As at Springfield, a student can graduate from Wilson having had very few college preparatory classes. However, one of the most striking differences between Wilson and Springfield is the degree to which the college preparatory mission of the school and the college counselor herself is integrated into the organizational habitus of the school. This integration of the college counseling operation into the rest of the school is far more similar to the organizational habitus of Hadley.

An example of this integration comes from the comments made by the principal when he talks about the duties of the college counselor, Jo Harrison, at Wilson:

> The college counselor is part of working with the counselors who are programming students and also guiding students to make sure that they are taking the kinds of courses that are challenging, that have standards and have expectations to help these students -- say, "You can do it. You can achieve." In Jo's case, I not only give her because she's college counselor other duties, but try to give her duties that I feel necessary, that are relating to the total school program and how this incorporates with the instructional program and the teaching staff. The college person -- the college counselor -- can't be an island to themselves. They have to be incorporated in the total picture of the school.

Jo Harrison is an integral member of the main administrative team at Wilson as she herself notes:

> I'm a big part of it [the overall mission of the school], and I try and network to the teachers to make that happen; because, if each teacher is looking at their own curriculum and their own little world and not realizing the effect it has on other curriculum or on the kids in their progress towards college, they're not in reality. And, that could be hurting the kids.

In addition to handling the duties of college counselor for a senior class of roughly 600 seniors, Mrs. Harrison is also the Gifted Coordinator, the AP Coordinator, The California Scholarship Federation advisor, helps out with the academic decathlon team and in past years has carried the duties of Career Advisor as well. Jo likes handling these and other duties at the school as she notes: "I think the kids need to see me and I need to see them in another light other than single dimension." Like Mrs. Forsythe at Springfield, Mrs. Harrison is also aware that students' decisions regarding the courses they take early in their high school careers can have important consequences for the college planning later. To

combat the problem of students not knowing what resources are available in the college office and to get students thinking about college early, she has her peer college counselors call in groups of students to the college office, even ninth and tenth graders. In this way every student is at least brought into the college office and informed about its resources. Mrs. Harrison comments:

> They're brought into the process at that time [in ninth grade]so they cannot say, "I didn't know." We also, this year, for the first time, got those college handbooks into every kids' hand at registration. We never did that before. They can't say, "I didn't know." I don't want to sit here with a kid in the fall of their senior year seeing a hole -- seeing a math class missing or a science class missing, or a wasted summer when the information is here for them to have. Or have tears, "I wish somebody had told me. I wish I knew." I hate that. I feel guilty. I personally feel guilty when that happens. That it's my fault that kid didn't know.

Despite these efforts, Wilson is still a place where some students can and do slip through the cracks and are not prepared for the future in any way when they graduate. The college office is used more by some students than others and despite the efforts of the staff in the office some students do not use its resources. As this peer college counselor notes:

> You see the same people coming in. It's not really like a lot of different faces. It's usually the same people come in with questions, just following up on what they did before. It's not really like new people unless we're calling in students ourselves and it's like their first time ever seeing it. But, we can't make it anymore homey. We call in every senior and junior in their second semester. Yeah, we deal with the same kids, but we start with the juniors and once you become a junior you know that you can come in. It's just that some people might be embarrassed or just don't want to go to college, or I don't know. We can't do anything more. Sometimes it's so hard. You have like practically drag some people in. Go and physically...I don't know. Some of the people already have their life set. Like, "Well my dad owns X, Y and Z Company and I don't need to go to college because I have this, that and the other and I'm set." Or the other kids are just like, "I have to work. I have a kid. I don't have time to go to college." And then you have to convince them, "Well, if you take like two classes. College is not like high school. You don't have to be there from 8:00 to 3:00 every day. You can work around your schedule." Try to sell college.

This need to "sell college" to some students is in stark contrast to the expectation of college attendance for all students by everyone, faculty, administration, parents and students at Hadley. At Wilson and Springfield college attendance is not "hard wired" into the habitus

of the school or the individual habiti of all students. There are students at both Wilson and Springfield for whom, like Hadley students, college attendance is "a given." However this notion is one that comes from the family and individual habitus rather than that of the school. For the traveling population at Wilson which is Black and Latino, whose parents are less likely to be college educated and to have instilled in the students the idea that a college is a must, this lack of a hard wired path to college at the school results in different course taking patterns. The college preparatory honors and AP classes are overwhelmingly populated by local white and Asian students with at most two to three Black or Latino students in each class. When I asked a teacher at Wilson about the course selection process for these students and why there is a much lower percentage of these traveling Black and Latino students in honors and AP classes she said:

Teacher: I think that parents make assumptions and they put kids on buses. They've traveled all the way to Lower Ridgecrest... and they assume that the kid is going to get a good education and that their child will go to college. Dangerous assumptions. At the same time, you have a student who's partly responsible because the student will say things like, "Oh, is that a hard class? I don't want to take a hard class. Give me an easy class." And, many people will just give them an easy class. An easy class will not be Algebra, an easy class would be Cashier's Math or High School Math or whatever is available.

EH The kid's saying that without understanding that by saying, "I want an easy class" what the consequences are four years later?

Teacher: Right. Kid has no idea of what the consequences will be.

For every student in the study from Springfield and Wilson, individual initiative played an integral role in their college choice process. In this way, the traveling population at Wilson, who are Black and Latino, and the students at Springfield seem far more similar. For example when I asked Jamila, from Wilson, why she was different from her friends who had missed out on getting college information she responded: "I checked into it personally. I know that if I don't do it myself, no one's going to do it for me. So, I'll take a trip to the college office when I have a question or whatever." This individual initiative is a hallmark of the successful college preparatory students that I interviewed at both Wilson and Springfield. At Springfield students and parents alike believe that "it's on you,"

meaning it is your responsibility, to do something about attending college. In the following passage, a Springfield student explains how this "it's on you" attitude functions when it comes to college and the choice process:

> Nobody can do it for you. Just like I have a friend that I been knowing [sic] since 7th grade -- and, he has a 3.0 something and he hasn't done anything about college. He hasn't applied, took SAT's, nothing. He's in my calculus class. He's pretty bright. He doesn't come in. It's on him to come in and to check out about things and to make that effort to find out or just to listen to the PA's. And see what they're going to say about college or read the announcements. It's on you to go in and find out about scholarships, to take the SAT. To go get the information. She [Mrs. Forsythe] can't bring it to you because there's 500 seniors, not to mention there's like 500 juniors, sophomores and 9th graders that she has to deal with.

This need for students from Springfield and Wilson to depend largely on their own individual initiative in finding their way to college lies in stark contrast to the experience of Hadley students. At Hadley students are also responsible for many of the details of the college application process, however it is a process that is supported by the structure of the school. For instance, students are reminded to make an appointment to see their college counselor and it is the responsibility of the student to make that appointment to go over their list of colleges but if they fail to make the appointment, the counselor will notice that they have not spoken with this student and call them in. Counselors, on occasion, call students at home when they are waiting to receive letters of admission in April during the schools spring recess to offer support and guidance. The process is personalized, integrated into the school as a whole and students are certainly not left to their own devices to navigate their way.

For the girls in the study from Springfield and Wilson who have successfully completed some honors and AP classes and who are planning on attending college, this individual initiative which they have learned to take is almost always supported by someone in the background at home or at school pushing these girls to expect more from themselves and see college attendance as "a given." As this Wilson teacher notes, having a caring adult in their lives makes all the difference:

> I think it [motivation to go to college] comes from someone who cares. I think it comes from a family member, if you're lucky, and if not, then hopefully a teacher along the way or some other caring person who takes a little extra time to the student and says, "You can." I think that's the key issue. By taking the time and talking to them, saying, "I think you care. I think you can. I think you can," can make a big difference in a student's life.

When I asked students what made them different from their friends who were having babies or not planning on going to college their replies were consistently similar to this student who says:

> Like I said, I think it starts in the home. There should be people -- but you can't blame it all on school. There has to be people in schools that will push people because there are some people that may not have that push in the home, but if they come to school and someone pushes them, then they'll pursue a further education. Just basic -- do something with your life. Don't let your life go to waste hanging out on the streets and having babies and whatever. It's not going to do you any good. Do something....

or like another student who says:

> Basically. If you have somebody there to give you a push, but you have to want it. You have to want to be there, already. You have to want it then you have to have somebody there to give you that assurance and re-assurance. If you have somebody there for that, then you will go somewhere.

These passages illustrate one of the more important findings of this study. These students know that both individual effort and external organizational support are necessary components for school success and the desire and ability to continue on to postsecondary education. If we conceive of this finding in terms of the difference between agency, operationalized here as the individual initiative displayed by these students, and structure as the structure provided by families and schools, it is clear that neither agency or structure alone is a sufficient condition to ensure that these students continue on to college. For these students both agency in the form of their individual initiative and a supportive family or school structure are integral components of their school success and future orientation

towards college. In this way schools and families act as templates encouraging particular types of action and allowing students to envision certain types of futures for themselves.

At Hadley the super strong structure which supports college means that in some ways students do not need very much initiative but at Springfield individual initiative, that is to say agency, is all important. At Wilson, we can see more of the intersection of both. It is a school with a certain degree of structure supporting college aspirations but the students still must show individual initiative and what makes the difference for many of these students is the presence of a caring adult to make them believe in themselves. This notion that schools need to be places of care and support and not just learning and discipline is one that has received much attention of late (Noddings 1992). One of the strongest and loudest advocates for caring institutions, Nel Noddings, notes that in addition to institutional manifestations of care, "Personal manifestations of care are probably more important in children's lives than any particular curriculum or pattern of pedagogy" (1995 p. 676).

The Effects of School Habitus on Educational Aspirations and College Choice

Viewed as a Bourdieuian field in which different forms of knowledge compete for legitimacy, educational aspirations and more specifically, college choice appears as a process resulting from the intersection of the habitus of the student with the social space or organizational habitus of the school they attend. Each school in this study presents its students an environment or experience which must be interacted with in order for them to proceed through high school and the college choice process. The act of choosing a college, a class distinction in itself, is constructed under the conditions present in each student's world, school influences, the influence of the college counseling operation and the influences of peers and family. These worlds or habiti overlap or intersect and create a space from which and within which the student makes decisions about her future during the college choice process.

As McDonough (forthcoming) has noted "high school organizational habitus shapes student tastes for particular types of postsecondary institutions." This space created by the intersection of this school organizational habitus, and the dispositions and preferences which students themselves bring with them is, in fact, the student's habitus in the context of the college choice process. One way of thinking about habitus in relation to the decisionmaking activities of students is to think of habitus as though it were a room in a house. This room, this habitus, is your world or reality which, like a room in a house, is situated a particular distance from other rooms and has characteristics which make it unlike other rooms. For example your room or habitus might be hot or cold, sunny or dark. The conditions present in your room, your world, your habitus, give you a particular outlook on life. These conditions influence the decisions and choices that you make. For example in the present study, Springfield students know the world to be a particular kind of place. Theirs is a world where they are surrounded by other minority students and where college choice is usually limited to state public colleges and universities, private in-state colleges and historically Black colleges and universities. In contrast, Hadley students live in a world where community colleges essentially do not exist as viable options and their world of choice is skewed towards eastern private selective universities. The student's habitus bounds and constructs her choice set and the influences which create this habitus are rooted in race and class.

Viewed in another way, this notion of habitus not only creates a reality within which a student makes decisions, it also confers positionality to other members of society from other habiti. Let us return to the analogy of a room in a house. In addition to having its own characteristics such as nice southern light in the morning or an efficient heating mechanism, this room is situated in relation to the other rooms in the house. Thus your room or your habitus also gives you a positionality to other rooms in the house. This positioning effect of habitus has two results. First, your habitus might be quite close to that of an individual in another room. For instance the room next to yours might have the

same lighting and heat while a room on another floor which faces another direction might be quite different. In terms of the students in our three schools, there might be students who attend different schools but have very similar habiti in spite of this. For example the bused students at Wilson and the students at Springfield have much in common. In the college choice process both groups of students rely on their own individual initiative to find out about college and what they need to do to get there. In contrast, the local white and Asian students at Wilson and all of the students at Hadley are ably assisted by the machinery of the school towards college. These students share aspects of their habiti by virtue of their race and class backgrounds and these habiti confer a positionality on them as well. These students are uniquely positioned by their habitus to proceed through the college choice process.

These differences in positionality among these students brings to light another way that habitus affects the lives of students. These rooms or habiti not only have position in relation to one another but to the construct of college as well. In our analogy of a house, one room might be closer to the kitchen than another making it a more advantageous position in the house if you are interested in food. Similarly, these students from various habiti all have a positionality in relation to one another and also college. Habitus is what gives each person a unique outlook on life and all of its possibilities and this habitus can also be thought of in relation to other individuals' habiti and in relation to other constructs in society thus giving it the quality of positionality. In this way, an individual's habitus creates a space within which (whether their room is sunny or dark) and from which (whether it is proximally close to college and also its distance from the rooms of other individuals) students make decisions. The organizational habiti of the schools helps to construct each students habitus and therefore their outlook on college.

At each school, the college choice of a student can be viewed as occurring under the competing influences of the culture of the school, popular culture, the student's family and personal experience, and the guidance of the school college counselors. Each of these

information sources provide students with notions of what a "good" school is and what are viable choices for them to explore and pursue. Amidst this barrage of information, students weigh the authority of the different sources, eventually assigning degrees of legitimacy to each. In this process, a Bourdieuian "taste" for colleges is developed in each school environment that guides the students' final matriculation decision.

In this study, the taste for a particular set of colleges was shaped by the habitus of each student. This habitus in turn is largely influenced by the race and class-bound organizational habiti of the schools they attend. For example, at Springfield, where pride in African-American heritage is intertwined with the mission of academic excellence, students apply to historically Black colleges at a much higher rate than at the other two schools. Meanwhile, at Hadley, the combined influence of race and class works to define the college choices of the Black seniors by instilling them with the socially and academically elite Hadley sensibility which favors highly selective institutions while at the same time each Hadley student sought out a college environment that laid claim to a greater degree of racial diversity and inclusiveness than Hadley.

It is important to note that this taste is limited or bounded for each student by the realities surrounding their lives. In other words no student considers the entire universe of colleges and universities within the United States as a viable choice set. Everyone both in this study and in the real world itself has their decisions filtered through their own habitus which defines what is for them a viable choice set of schools. How this process of defining and delimiting a choice set occurs and what the influences are on students and families as they proceed through this process is what I will now explore.

At each high school there exists a relatively well established ordering of colleges to which students apply and opinions about these schools are shared by most of the members of the school. There are variations by race and social class within each school but by and large there can be said to exist an internalized sense of what the list of "good" colleges looks like for students from that high school. There is also a relatively widely shared sense

about how one goes through this process or indeed whether there is a process at all. Additionally there is a great deal of variation among the three schools and the way that students envision their futures based on race and class differences which permeate each school habitus.

For instance, at Hadley each girl goes through a highly structured and formatted process that is guided by parents and college counselors and is supported by the school as a whole. At Springfield there is a wider variety of experiences but each girl's college choice process is characterized by individual initiative and persistence and there is less of a sense that this transition from high school to college and the selection of a college is in fact a process that requires constant care and monitoring. At Springfield one simply decides where to apply and does so whereas at Hadley the process of selecting schools to which to apply could be said to be a ritualized, shared rite of passage.

Wilson students span a wider spectrum of experiences around this process which is in large part due to the race and class variation found at the school. For some students at Wilson, predominantly the white and Asian local students who are upper middle class, the act of choosing a college is very similar to that of the Hadley students where parents and counselor assist the student through a ritualized and structured process. For the predominantly Black and Latino bused students, the process is more akin to the processes of Springfield students and is characterized by little parent or counselor involvement and significant individual initiative. For Black and Latino students at Wilson, the college choice process is marked by class differences which separate them from their local white and Asian local classmates. However, given the stark contrast of the racial composition of these groups which are marked by what can be seen as largely class differences, we must question the degree to which race differences play a role in determining the type of college choice process these students experience. It seems that in some cases, race serves as a proxy for class in determining the futures that students envision for themselves and how they proceed through the process of planning their lives after high school.

The results, if you will, of this process are as varied as the process itself at each school. Below are listed the schools applied to by the primary students in the study. Those schools which received multiple applications have the number of applications received in parentheses and the schools at which students are matriculating appear in bold. Summary statistics follow theses lists of schools.

Springfield (four students)

UCLA (3)
Cal State San Diego (3)
UC Berkeley (2)
Loyola Marymount College (2)
UC Riverside (2)
UC Irvine (2)
Cal State Sonoma (2)
UC Santa Cruz
Lewis and Clark
University of La Verne
UC Santa Barbara
Cal State Dominguez Hills
U. of Southern Calif.

Wilson (four students)

Clark Atlanta (3)
Cal State Long Beach (3)
UC Santa Cruz (2)
UC Los Angeles (2)
Cal State Northridge (2)
Cal State San Diego (2)
Howard University
Prarie View
UC Riverside
U. of Southern Calif.
Pepperdine University
Santa Monica College
Spelman College
University of Arizona
University of Miami
UC Santa Barbara
Pitzer College

Hadley (six students)

Cornell University (5)
UC Los Angeles (4)
Barnard College (3)
Syracuse University (3)
Univ. of Pennsylvania (3)
UC San Diego(3)
UC Berkeley (3)
Georgetown Univ. (3)
U. of Southern Calif. (3)
UC Irvine (2)
Spelman College (2)
Emory University (2)
Stanford University (2)
Wheaton College
Boston University
Duke University
UC Davis
Boston College
Cal State San Francisco
Cal State Long Beach
Ithaca College
University of Pittsburgh
University of Michigan
UC Santa Cruz
New York University
University of Virginia
Columbia University

Application Patterns Summary Statistics for Primary Study Participants

	Springfield (4 students)	Wilson (4 students)	Hadley (6 students)
Total number of applications filed	22	25	53
Total number of colleges applied to	13	17	27
Average number of colleges applied to	5.5	6.3	8.3
Percent of applications filed at *public* institutions	77%	60%	33%
Percent of applications filed at *private* institutions	22%	40%	66%
Percent of colleges applied to *inside* California	92%	64%	33%
Percent of colleges applied to *outside* California	8%	36%	66%
Percent of colleges applied to that are two-year schools	0%	8%	0%
Percent of colleges applied to that are four-year	100%	92%	100%

A cursory look at these lists of schools and the summary statistics indicates that there are patterned differences in application and attendance patterns at these high schools. Clearly, the students at Hadley applied to more schools and they applied to more private than public schools. The students at Wilson and Springfield tend to apply to schools closer to home and schools that are less competitive in terms of admission. One of the most striking differences at Springfield is the almost total concentration on schools within the state of California. And though the students in the study from Springfield only applied to one out-of state school, the general Springfield population does apply to out-of-state schools at a higher rate. When they do go out-of-state, Springfield students more often than not apply to and attend historically Black universities. This finding is not surprising given the fact that these schools have been shown to have many perceived benefits for

Black students such as a higher rate of graduation, and better social life. The principal of Springfield clearly states her preference for historically Black colleges as she feels the smaller historically Black schools do a better job with their students: "Quite frankly, I do a lot of promoting of historically Black colleges..."

Conclusion: The Meaning of College Choice Patterns and the Theory of Big Hair

It seems as though there are at least two ways of thinking about the differences among these students and what these differences might tell us about the way that they make choices about their futures. First, and perhaps most importantly if we are concerned with issues of equality of opportunity, the notion of choice and what that means for these students is very important (Hearn 1991). For Hadley students choice in the college application process has more of a national character. Though there are no colleges from the mid-west on their list it is clear that these students see colleges from across the whole country within the realm of possibility. In fact, for these girls going away from home for college means being far away from their parents and friends and starting out in a new environment. For these girls, choice also means applying to a greater number of schools than their counterparts at Wilson and Springfield. It also means applying to a more prestigious set of schools if we take membership in the Ivy League and a higher degree of selectivity to be markers of prestige.

At Springfield, choice means applying to the University of California schools, the California State Colleges and perhaps one or two private California schools. And although these students did not consider historically Black colleges, those schools represent the bulk of applications made out of state by Springfield students in general. So choice for these students encompasses a smaller universe of schools, one that is closer to home and less prestigious. For the students from Wilson, choice includes some historically Black schools, the California State Colleges and UCs, and a slightly wider variety of private schools than Springfield students consider.

However, when we compare this list of schools to the total list of colleges that all Wilson students have been admitted to over the past three years printed in the school profile we can see that the addition of the following schools makes this list more similar to that from Hadley than Springfield.

Air Force Academy
American University
Bard College
Bennington College
Boston University
Brandeis University
Brown University
California Inst. of Tech.
Carleton College
Colgate University
Columbia University
Cornell University
Dartmouth College
Duke University
Georgetown University
Harvard University
Johns Hopkins University
MIT
Northwestern University
Oberlin College
Occidental College
Rice University
Stanford University
University of Michigan
University of Pennsylvania
University of Wisconsin
Vassar College
West Point
Williams College

This list includes a national representation of the most selective schools in the country. The difference between this list of schools for the total Wilson population and the list of schools applied to by our study participants highlights the distance these Black students experienced from the more enfranchised members of the school community - the predominantly white and Asian largely middle and upper-middle class local students. It is clear that these differences have much to do with the combined effect of race and class. At this school, to be Black almost always means that the student is bused here from the inner city, is from a low socioeconomic background and will be attending a far less selective college than their white and Asian local college-bound classmates.

Despite these differences along class and race lines, at each of these schools there is a specific set of criteria which students use to formulate the choice sets of schools they will consider. This implies that there are shared norms or senses of what are appropriate options for their futures. How these notions are developed and around what constructs they are built tells us what bounds and limits choice in each of these environments for the Black study participants. In terms of a Bourdieuian framework, this means that the dispositions acted out in the selection of these choice sets reflect the social positions of the actors within this field of interaction. These students' relationships to the educational field

of choices tells us about their relationship to this societal structure. It is through the acting out of their dispositions in this realm of college choice that we can see their social position in relation to the higher education establishment, to one another's social position, and the social position of their peers of other race and class backgrounds.

Through this process we can see the positionality of students to one another both in an organizational sense when we compare schools and in an individual sense when we look at different individuals from the same school. We can also see how this positionality plays out in terms of the race and class of students and at Wilson in their status as bused or non-bused. Race and class confer upon individuals a certain positionality and this positionality allows them access to particular kinds of capital and the ability to convert this capital in the college choice process. This access to different forms of capital and the differential abilities to convert this capital are what make this college choice process more than an interesting educational phenomenon. Viewed in this way, the college choice process is a high stakes process which allows us to see and understand how a valuable resource is contested for in society and how some individuals are uniquely positioned for this contest. Through this window of the college choice process we can see how capital is acquired, used and converted in society and how this acquisition, use and conversion of capital is affected by race and class in American society.

If we return to our analogy of a house and its various rooms which represent the habiti of the various students in the study, their relationship to one another and their proximity to the construct of college, these data show that those students who are more advantaged by virtue of their race and/or class background occupy a room or space that is proximally closer to the room in the house that holds college attendance. While the girls at Hadley may limit their exploration of college choices to colleges which have a more racially diverse climate, they all will attend a very selective four year college or university. The class advantages of their Hadley experience ensure this outcome. These students have acquired academic and cultural capital which place them in close proximity to college. For

students at Springfield, their social location by virtue of their class and race status and the influence that this status has on the organizational habitus of the school places them farther away from college. Similarly for Wilson students, we have been able to see how race and class function to position students in relation to the structures of the school which support and encourage college attendance.

In addition to thinking about these lists of schools in terms of the number and type of choices that students consider, we can also think about them in terms of notions of capital and opportunity. The connection between attendance at different kinds of institutions and status attainment is clear; those students that attend institutions of higher status tend to come from families from a higher socioeconomic background who tend to be white and they, by and large, go on to reproduce this status in their own lives (Berg 1971; Domhoff 1993; Mehan and Hertweck 1986; Useem and Karabel 1986; Horvat and McDonough 1994). Thus the differences that we see here between those students from Hadley who, by and large, come from a higher socioeconomic background and the less well-off students from Springfield and Wilson reinforces these findings. The Hadley students choice sets, which are predominantly private and more selective, confer upon them further capital in the form of educational status which will help them to accrue greater status and, most likely, economic benefits upon graduation from college. They have converted the cultural and academic capital from their schooling experiences into higher status college choices attendance. Thus if we see college attendance as means of accruing different types of capital the Hadley students are accruing a different and more valuable, in status attainment terms, kind of capital with their college choice patterns. The students from Springfield and Wilson are also accruing a type of capital which is more local and less valuable.

This taste for specific colleges and groups of colleges was something that I noted during my years as a college counselor. I was a college counselor at a school much like the Hadley school with the exception that it was co-educational. Each year I would guide students through the college choice process helping them to select and apply to a list of

colleges and then at the end of the process often assisting them in deciding which of the many schools they had gained entrance to they would choose to attend.

One of my students, Anna, was trying to decide between attending the University of Rochester and Bates College. She was discussing this decision with her best friend, a girl a year ahead of her in school who was attending Princeton. During the phone conversation the friend asked her two roommates from Princeton which school Anna should attend and in unison the three roommates shouted "Oh no, don't go to Rochester, there are big hairs there."

These three girls all had a shared perception of the kinds of girls that attend the University of Rochester and they were able to identify this type of girl by referring to them as "big hairs." Big hair, as you might guess, refers to a hairstyle that is full, or poufy and sort of stands off the top of the girl's head. However this designation of big hair also referred to a person from a particular social class and positionality. All of the girls, Anna included, understood what was meant by big hair and furthermore what this implied. They all knew that they were not big hairs, in either the figurative or literal sense and that being a big hair or being around big hairs was undesirable. All three girls knew that they did not "fit in" in an environment where big hairs prevailed. In Bourdieuian terms, they all had a shared habitus which excluded schools with these types of students and also knew that they would be excluded by big hairs.

This experience led me to develop what I jokingly refer to as the theory of big hair. This theory holds that students who attend that same or similar colleges will all look very similar in appearance and, to a certain extent, have a degree of shared experiences and values. In Bourdieuian terms, they have a partially shared habitus that allows them to feel as though they "fit in." Essentially, students want to go to schools where they see other students like themselves. They make these decisions within the context of their own habitus which is influenced by race, class and the school organizational habitus.

Both my professional experience and the results of this study indicate that students choose places where they can see themselves in the form of other students that are like them who already attend the college and they therefore see attendance as a possibility. Race and class define what choices "fit" for a particular student. This research has illustrated how a student's vision is affected by race and class influences which limit her vision to a viable set of colleges, some more valuable than others in terms of future capital accumulation.

The high schools in this study act as templates which encourage particular types of action. We can see by simply examining the habiti of these three schools the kinds of activities and outcomes that the schools themselves encourage are quite different. The organizational habitus of each school encourages a particular type of educational experience as well as particular expectations that students may have about their futures and what futures might fit. Fundamentally, these expectations of students, which are rooted in race and class differences, create different worlds of opportunity and create different patterns of access to higher education.

Furthermore, the results of this study indicate that we must increase the degree to which issues of context need to be considered in examining race and class. Race and class issues are both important in shaping these school environments which in turn influence the futures that students deem possible. Other scholars of race in America, including and most notably William Julius Wilson in his book entitled The Declining Significance of Race (1980), contend that the significance of race in determining an individual's or group's position in society has declined and class has taken center stage in American society in determining Blacks access to privilege and power. The story that these data are telling us is, however, slightly different in terms of the way that race functions to assist in determining access to privilege, ownership of the environment, and the power to shape that environment. In these schools, race is a decisive factor in determining patterns of acceptable action. However, the way that this racial influence functions most effectively is as a marker of class membership and position. These data show us that race does not have

less importance than class in defining these students' habiti but rather that race is a very clear marker of class membership. In many of the shifting contexts of these schools, race served as a proxy for class in distancing the students of color and the Black students specifically from the expectation of college attendance. Race served as another marker of class distinction. This finding prompts us to call for a re-evaluation of the way that we conceptualize racism and classism in attempts to identify both and root out their effects in educational settings.

In terms of a Bourdieuian analysis race, then, is yet another marker of the organizational habitus of the schools and of the individual habiti of the students. Far from operating solely as a marker of culture or of ethnicity, race functions as a powerful marker of membership in or exclusion from a particular social world and class.

That fact that race and class influence the American experience should certainly not come as surprising news to anyone. As noted earlier in this paper, racial differences continue to play a pivotal role in higher education in this country. We are, in many ways, not doing much better in terms of participation rates in higher education for African American students that we did in the mid-1970's. Thus this work which lays bare the way that race and the concomitant and confounding influence of class differences mark student experience in institutions which contribute students to the higher education pipeline and influence students' educational aspirations contributes to our understanding of how racial differences in higher education are perpetuated. The fluid and contextually-bounded constructs of race and class do far more than define a student's culture, ethnicity or class membership, they define their power position in this environment and their ability to influence and shape their own experience.

References

Allen, W. R. (1992). The Color of Success: African American College Student Outcomes at Predominantly White and Historically Black Public Colleges and Universities. Harvard Educational Review **62**: 26-44.

Allen, W. R., E. G. Epps, et al., Eds. (1991). College in Black and White. Albany, New York, SUNY Press.

Allen, W. R. (1983). Black Students in U.S. Higher Education: Toward Improved Access, Adjustment, and Achievement. The Urban Review **20**: 165-188.

Altbach, P. G. and K. Lomotey, Eds. (1991). The Racial Crisis in Higher Education. Albany, New York, SUNY Press.

Anyon, J. (1980). School Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work. Journal of Education **162**: 25-48.

Berg, I. (1971). Education and Jobs: The Great Training Robbery. Boston, Beacon Press.

Bourdieu, P. and J.-C. Passeron (1977). Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture. Beverly Hills, California, Sage Publications.

Coleman, J. S. and T. Hoffer (1987). Public and Private High Schools. New York, Basic Books.

Cookson, P. W. and C. H. Persell (1985). Preparing for Power: America's Elite Boarding Schools. New York, Basic Books.

Domhoff, W. G. (1983). Who Rules America Now? New York, Simon and Schuster.

Erickson, F. (1975). Gatekeeping and the Melting Pot: Interaction in Counseling Encounters. Harvard Educational Review **45**(1): 44-70.

Fleming, J. (1984). Blacks in College. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

Fordham, S. and J. U. Ogbu (1986). Black Students' School Success: Coping with the "Burden of 'Acting White'". The Urban Review **18**(3): 176-206.

Gamoran, A. (1992). The Variable Effects of High School Tracking. American Sociological Review **57**(December): 812-828.

Garet, M. and B. DeLany (1988). Students, Courses and Stratification. Sociology of Education **61**(April): 61-77.

Harker, R. K. (1984). On Reproduction, Habitus and Education. British Journal of Sociology **5**(2): 117-127.

Hearn, J. C. (1991). Academic and Nonacademic Influences on the College Destinations of 1980 High School Seniors. Sociology of Education **64**(3): 158-171.

Horvat, E. M. and P. M. McDonough (1994). Application and Attendance Patterns 1972-1991: How far Have We Come? Poster Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. New Orleans.

Hossler, D., J. Braxton, et al. (1989). The Choice Stage of Student College Choice: an Integrative Review. Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. San_Francisco.

Kilgore, S. B. (1991). The Organizational Context of Tracking in Schools. American Sociological Review **56**(April): 189-203.

Kingston, P. W. and J. C. Smart (1990). The Economic Pay-Off of Prestigious Colleges. The High-Status Track Ed. P. W. K. a. L. S. Lewis. Albany, New York, State University of New York.

Lamont, M. a. L., Annette (1988). Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Developments. Sociological Theory **6**: 153-168.

Lareau, A. (1987). Social Class Differences in Family-School Relationships: The Importnace of Cultural Capital. Sociology of Education **60**: 73-85.

Lareau, A. (1983). Home Advantage. New York, Falmer Press.

Lee, V. E. and R. B. Ekstrom (1987). Student Access to Guidance Counseling in High School. American Educational Research Journal **24**(2): 287-310.

McDonough, P. M. (Forthcoming). Structuring College Opportunities: A Cross-Case Analysis of Organizational Cultures, Climates, and Habiti. Emerging Issues in Sociology of Education: Comparative Perspectives Ed. C. Torres. Albany, SUNY Press.

McDonough, P. M. (1991). Who Goes Where ω College: Social Class and High School Organizational Context Effects on College-Choice Decisionmaking. Stanford University.

Mehan, H., A. Hertweck, et al. (1986). Handicapping the Handicapped. Stanford, Stanford University Press.

Nettles, M. T. (1988). Toward Black Undergraduate Student Equality in American Higher Education. New York, Greenwood Press.

Noddings, N. (1995). Teaching Themes of Care. Phi Delta Kappan **76**(May): 675-679.

Noddings, N. (1992). The Challenge to Care in Schools. New York, Teachers College Press.

Oakes, J. (1989). What Educational Indicators? The Case for Assessing the School Context. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis **11**(2): 181-198.

Oakes, J. (1985). Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality. New Haven, Yale University Press.

Persell, C. H., S. Catsambis, et al. (1992). Differential Asset Conversion: Class and Gendered Pathways to Selective Colleges. Sociology of Education **65**(July): 208-225.

Portes, A. and K. L. Wilson (1976). Black-White Differences in_Educational Attainment. American Sociological Review **41**: 414-431.

Sewell, W., R. Hauser, et al. (1976). Schooling and Achievement in American Society. San Francisco, Academic Press.

The Council of Great City Schools and The College Board's Educational Equity Project (1990). Minority Access to and Preparation for Higher Education. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educationa Research Association, Boston :

Thomas, G. E. (1981). Black Students in Higher Education. Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press.

Useem, M. and J. Karabel (1986). Pathways to Top Corporate Management. American Sociological Review (51): 184-200.

Wells, A. S. and R. L. Crain (Forthcoming). Perpetuation Theory and the Long-term Effects of School Desegregation.

Wilson, W. J. (1980). The Declining Significance of Race. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.