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ABSTRACT

This report examines how students choose colleges and how the college choices of students differ by race and ethnicity across four subgroups of students: African American, Asian American, Chicano, and Caucasian. It is proposed that students conceptualize their college choices differently based on how they perceive their anticipated college experiences and the conversion capacity of their college degree for further educational and occupational attainment. Data were obtained from the Cooperative Institution Research Program's 1994 Freshman Survey. Data pulled from the survey were measures of capital endowment, past capital accumulation, college choice, and anticipated capital reinvestment and conversion variables. Results indicate common patterns of capital accumulation, conversion, and investment across the groups. Attending a more selective college was associated with submitting more college applications, while reasons that emphasize the utilitarian, instrumental value of a college education were associated with less selective college attendance. In athletic department recruitment, it was found that being recruited by the school's athletic department conveyed a specific piece of cultural knowledge. Influences on the selection of college for students of color deviated from white students in specific ways, such as the impact of parental educational or financial attainment and choice of college major and later profession. Findings also imply that the student teacher relationship is important for students of color and that the nature of this relationship is related to more selective college choices. (Contains 65 references.) (NAV)

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Ethnic and Racial Differences in Selectivity of College Choice

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the
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Cultural Capital and College Choice 1

Introduction

Access to higher education and improving equity in college admissions remains a major educational policy issue given the continued underrepresentation of many racial and ethnic groups in higher education today (Minority Undergraduate Participation in Post-secondary Education, 1995). Longstanding commitments to affirmative action as a remedy to past inequities have long been controversial, but recently have been seriously eroded in the courts and hotly contested in institutional policy contexts such as the Regents of the University of California overruling university leaders, faculty, and students in eliminating special preferences for underrepresented minorities.

Yet, to achieve the goal of improving access and equity takes an understanding of the relative contributions of the enabling institutional conditions---an open and fair admissions process, availability of necessary information, and financial aid adequate to the task of facilitating relatively unconstrained choice among institutions---and an understanding of how individuals make choices about college. The latter understanding is crucial for two reasons. First, researchers have documented that admissions outcomes are primarily dependent upon students since most students get into their first-choice college (Karen, 1988; Manski and Wise, 1983), and second, the only policy impact at the individual level is through understanding influences on decisionmaking and intervention points and possibilities.

When thinking about research evidence versus research still needed in the area of access for students of color, we believe the glass can be seen as both half-empty and half-full. Here is what we know: Students of color and poor students are less likely to start or finish college (Levine and Nidiffer, 1995) and more likely to attend low prestige institutions or colleges with the

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highest dropout rates (Hearn, 1984). Underrepresented minorities were 28% of the 18-24 year old U.S. population in 1990, 24% of those enrolled in higher education, and only 13.2% of bachelor's degree recipients (Minority Undergraduate Participation in Postsecondary Education, 1995). Not only are the numbers of students of color enrolled in higher education small, but their enrollments are stratified more at the two-year college level where rates of transfer and eventual bachelor's degree attainment are far lower than for those students who attend only four-year colleges (Allen, 1992; Altbach, 1991; Brint and Karabel, 1989). African Americans, women, and low-SES students are especially likely to attend less-selective institutions, even if their ability and achievements are high (Hearn, 1984 and 1990). Independent of academic factors, upper income youth are especially likely to enter America's elite colleges (Hearn, 1990).

Holding achievement constant, background characteristics exert major influences on educational attainment with gender, race, and social class in ascending order of impact. Race appears to be more influential than gender in affecting the process of college entry for Black and white students (Thomas 1979), while Asian Americans have a strong orientation to selective colleges and are twice as likely to apply to the most competitive schools as white students (Karen, 1988). African Americans and Latinos as a group are not as likely to try to get into highly selective colleges because of their subjective assessments of the impact of their lower grades, test scores, and levels of participation in extracurricular activities (Karen, 1988). Finally, social class status exerts twice as much effect on the selectivity of a student's college choice as ethnicity or gender (Karen, 1988).

Access is also a function of students' college choices (Hearn, 1984, 1991; Manski and Wise, 1983; McDonough, 1992, 1994, 1995; Zemsky and Oedel,

1983). We know that academic achievement is a key determinant of college attendance, along with: parents' education and occupation; perceptions about financial aid; high school type; the college's size, location, reputation, and selectivity; the student's peers; and guidance counselors. The issue least well understood about students' college destinations is the causal process: understanding why students make the choices that they do (Hearn, 1988) and the role played by the web of opportunities, structural arrangements, contingencies, and timing in shaping college planning and choice at the individual level.

However, the glass is still half empty because some disturbing questions still exist. Do students of color get into their first choice colleges as often as white students? Why are students of color clustered at low-prestige, low-resource, low-selectivity institutions? What are the critical college-choice influences in the decisionmaking processes of students of color? In these times of affirmative action retrenchment, it is even more imperative that we understand the various influences on students enrollments, most particularly the way that students of color make the choices that they do and the reasons for those choices.

We are studying the processes by which students choose colleges and how the college choices of students differ by race/ethnicity across four subgroups of students: African American, Asian American, Chicano/a and white. Our analyses will point out the similarities and differences in the college choice influences of each of these populations by specifically asking: What are the influences on the college choice decisionmaking processes of African American, Asian American, Chicano/a, and white students?

College Choice Research

There have been three basic approaches to the study of college choice decisionmaking influences:

- social psychological studies, which examine 1) the impact of academic program, campus social climate, cost, location, and influence of others on students' choices, 2) students' assessment of their fit with their chosen college, and 3) the cognitive stages of college choice;
- economic studies, which view college choice as an investment decision and assumes that students 1) maximize perceived cost-benefits in their college choices, 2) have perfect information, and 3) are engaged in a process of rational choice; and
- sociological status attainment studies, which analyze the impact of the individual's social status on the development of aspirations for educational attainment, and measures inequalities in college access.

The college-choice process extends back to the earliest inculcation of college aspirations, and passes through predisposition, search, and choice stages (Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; Jackson, 1982; Litten, 1982). Beginning with a broad overview of the postsecondary educational opportunities available to them (Chapman, 1981; Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith, 1989), students narrow down their options to a single set of institutions to which they apply.

In general, influential factors in students' college choices are: race; socioeconomic status, parents; the college's size, location, academic program, reputation, prestige, selectivity and alumni; the student's peers and guidance counselor; and financial aid (Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith, 1989; Manski and Wise, 1983; Zemsky and Oedel, 1983). The kind and amount of the financial aid a student receives can critically affect the college choice process, as does the costs of college (Leslie and Fife, 1974; Manski and Wise,

1983; St. John, 1990; Tierney 1982). For students of color, the research on financial aid shows mixed results. African American students rate financial aid availability very highly in their college choice process (Sevier, 1993), and tend to be more focused on college costs than white students (Lewis and Morrison, 1975). Furthermore, St. John and Noell (1989) found that for Blacks and Latinos, grants or aid packages that mixed loans with grants were likely to promote college attendance. A survey of Chicano/a students found differential effects of estimated costs based on ethnicity and language (Post, 1990).

College choice researchers have identified which students are most likely to choose to enroll in a highly selective college or university. Those students are: male, white, from families with higher income and educational attainment, those possessing greater academic aptitude and achievement, graduates of a college preparatory curriculum in high school, and those focused on higher educational aspirations (Hearn, 1984; Jackson, 1978; Paulsen, 1990; Rosenfeld and Hearn, 1982; Tierney, 1984; Zemsky and Oedel, 1983; Zemsky, Shaman, and Berberich, 1980).

Although many models include educational aspirations in their development, what is noticeably absent in college choice models is any accounting past the actual selection of a college to attend. Yet, college is both a goal and a means: a college education has strongly documented links to occupational attainment (Smart and Pascarella, 1986; Sewell, Hauser, and Featherman, 1976). What we now offer is an integration of college choice models that incorporates the social psychological, econometric, and status attainment perspectives embedded within a theoretical framework that emphasizes the cultural, social, and economic gain that will result from the

anticipated reinvestment and future conversion potential of the college degree.

From the status attainment models we place heavy emphasis on parental socioeconomic status (SES) and status maintenance activities (e.g., visiting art museums and teachers' homes) as important cultural signifiers. Just as econometric models assume students' choices are driven by the goal of maximizing perceived cost-benefits, we see college selection as both a process of capital conversion and reinvestment. First, the college years themselves are a time when previously accrued academic and cultural capital are converted into college choices. Second, this act of conversion is done with the expectation that in the future the returns to both high school and college capital accumulation can be converted into advanced degree attainment and occupational payoffs. Finally, from the social psychological college choice models, we examine certain perceived campus characteristics (the college's academic reputation and the positioning that the college affords for good graduate school and job entrance) for their likely capital reinvestment potential. We do so because we view students as selecting a college as an investment vehicle which will maximize returns on existing cultural and scholastic capital given how the student intends to utilize her college degree. We believe that our model offers an expanded, integrated view of college choice and offers an emphasis on the important missing stages of college choice, anticipated reinvestment and conversion of academic and cultural capital.

A Bourdieuan-Based Model of College Choice

Of what influence is race, accumulated scholastic and cultural capital, and students' anticipated capital conversion strategies in students' college choices? We are proposing that students conceptualize their college choices

differently based on how they perceive their anticipated college experiences and the conversion capacity of their college degree for further educational and occupational attainment. We are utilizing a model of capital conversion and investment that looks at variations among students of different racial and ethnic statuses with respect to college choices reflecting varying degrees of prestige or social value. Two propositions guide this study:

- a student's cultural capital will affect how much and what quality of college education that student intends to acquire; and
- a student's choice of college will make sense in the context of that student's *habitus*.

Cultural capital encompasses the widely shared attitudes, preferences, and credentials used for social and cultural exclusion (Lamont and Lareau, 1988) and is a property that middle- and upper-class families transmit to their offspring which substitutes for or supplements the transmission of economic capital as a means of maintaining class status and privilege across successive generations (Bourdieu, 1977). Middle- and upper-class families highly value a college education and advanced degrees as a means of ensuring continuing economic security, in addition to whatever money or financial assets can be passed along to their offspring (Bernstein, 1977; Weber, 1978).

Cultural capital is a symbolic good which is most useful when it is converted into economic capital. Since there are 3600 possible college choices with vastly different environments and status outcomes, we are treating a college education as a status resource or symbolic good in our society. Cultural capital is of no intrinsic value other than using, manipulating, and investing it for socially valued and difficult to secure purposes and resources.

Lamont and Lareau (1988) provide important insight into the utility of cultural capital by describing Bourdieu's use of the metaphor of a card game:

Players are dealt different cards (e.g. social and cultural capital), but the outcome is dependent on not only the cards (and the rules of the game) but the skills with which individuals play their cards. Depending upon their 'investment patterns' individuals can realize different amounts of social profits from relatively similar social and cultural resources. (Lamont and Lareau, 1988: 154)

Families which possess high-status cultural capital demonstrate strategies of how much and what kind of schooling each generation should have (Cookson and Persell, 1985). In order to maximize or conserve cultural capital, students must be willing to consent to the investments of time, effort, and money that higher education requires. Parents transmit cultural capital by informing offspring of the value and the process for securing a college education and its potential for conversion in the occupational attainment contest. DiMaggio (1982) found that cultural capital not only mediates the relationship between family background and school outcomes, but it also may have its greatest impact on educational attainment by affecting the quality of college chosen for attendance. He also suggests that cultural capital possibly plays different roles in the mobility strategies of different classes and genders.

Habitus is a deeply internalized system of outlooks, experiences, and beliefs that an individual gets from her immediate environment (Bourdieu, 1977), but it is important to remember that it is a common set of subjective perceptions held by all members of the same class which shapes an individual's expectations, attitudes, and aspirations. Those aspirations are both subjective assessments of the chances for mobility and objective probabilities, which are not rational analyses, but rather are the ways that

children from different classes make sensible choices for their own aspirations (Macleod, 1987). To revisit the card game metaphor, acknowledging the differences stemming from the hands individuals are initially dealt, people from the same class would have similar strategies of which cards to hold, which to play at a given point in time, and when to fold their hand. Moreover, students will desire a particular hand or kind of collegiate education based on their family's habitus or class status.

A new, Bourdieuan approach to college choice situates high school students' college choices in their social, organizational, and cultural contexts and demonstrates the essential use of values as they are embedded in a habitus of decisions about where to go to college (McDonough, 1992, 1994, 1996). This college choice research analyzes the role of students as individuals nested in socioeconomic and geographic communities and as consumers of the organizational services of schools, which themselves are embedded in and shaped by social class environments which in turn frame students' perceptions of appropriate college choices and thereby affecting patterns of educational attainment.

Fundamentally, any Bourdieuan model of college choice needs to account for individuals' strategies in cultural reproduction by looking at institutionalized signals that are shared by cultural groups, such as high-SES students, as they convert and reinvest their existing cultural capital in the educational attainment arena, such as the cultural markers accumulated by students on a track for high-status, high selectivity colleges. Given the intense admissions competition of students attending the latter group of colleges, only those students who actively work at acquiring the right pre-college credentials are at all likely to get in.

The use of cultural capital and habitus to improve college choice models could shed light on how social origin affects individuals' investment practices and how individuals' strategies for future educational and occupational attainment affect their current investments in education. Thus, the general research question which guides this study is: What role does cultural capital and habitus play in the college choices of students who enroll in highly selective colleges as compared to students who enroll in less selective colleges? More specifically, how does acquisition, investment, and payoffs to particular types of cultural capital vary between students of different ethnic and racial backgrounds?

Methodology

We formulated our model of college choice using data drawn from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program's (CIRP) 1994 Freshman Survey, a project of the American Council on Education and the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. The data are a national sample of 237,777 first-time, full-time freshmen from a diversity of 461 U.S. colleges and universities (Astin, Korn, Sax, & Mahoney, 1994). The Freshman Survey contains questions providing data on a variety of student characteristics and experiences. While the data are a cross-sectional, they provide a unique combination of cultural capital and college choice information necessary for a Bourdieuan college choice model. Data pulled from the survey were chosen as measures of the following theoretical constructs:

Capital Endowment variables reflect those entering characteristics of students that form the basis of their college choice habitus: gender, mother's and father's educational level, family annual income, and the immigration status of their parents.

Past Capital Accumulation variables attempt to capture different types of cultural capital gathered by students while in high school. Variables in this category include four high school activities (visited an art gallery or museum, performed volunteer work, sought advice from a teacher after class, was a guest in a teacher's home), the number of years of foreign language classes taken, and two vital admissions pieces, a student's SAT scores and average grades in high school.

College Choice variables represent the resulting set of preferences and corresponding behaviors of previous capital accumulation in the college choice arena. These variables include reasons students cited to go to college, reasons cited to attend their chosen freshman institution, the total number of applications sent out to colleges, and whether or not students got into their first-choice college.

Anticipated Capital Reinvestment and Conversion Variables. Once the college is selected, students once again utilize their cultural capital, making decisions and forming expectations based on this contextual knowledge and essentially reinvesting the capital with the expectation of sustaining specific returns. Variables describing capital reinvestment and conversion include the student's chosen residence in college, the distance traveled to attend their chosen institution, the amount of financial aid they are receiving from various sources, expectations they have for their college experience, the religious affiliation of their chosen college, and the amount of drive or motivation to achieve in college they possess. This block also contains measures of what students may hope to gain from their college experience which they have attempted to shape by investing cultural and economic capital in the college choice process. This is measured by students' highest degree aspirations, career choices requiring graduate school (doctor, lawyer,

college teacher, or research scientist), and the importance of they place on goals of being very well off financially, developing a meaningful philosophy of life, and keeping up with political affairs.

Since so little is known about the college choice processes of different subgroups of students, a descriptive analysis was performed to provide an empirical comparison of African American (n=9932), Asian American (n=14477), Chicano/a (n=3804), and white students (n=175,052) nationally. Analyses were also restricted to students attending four-year institutions and so do not represent the large populations of students enrolled in two-year schools. Available sample weights were utilized for this stage of the analysis to approximate the national populations of each subgroup.¹ The resulting population sizes are listed in Table One. The complete list of independent variables are in Appendix A.

A linear regression analysis followed to examine the relationship between specific capital endowment, accumulation, and reinvestment variables and the prestige of the college eventually attended. Institutional prestige in this analysis was envisioned as being dependent on the amount of social value placed on a particular school. The degree of social value was hypothesized to vary with the difficulty of admission and was operationalized as the average freshman class SAT scores reported by an institution. Accordingly, the dependent variable in the regression analysis was coded in terms of increasing institutional SAT scores or prestige level: 1-(less than 910); 2-(between 911 and 999); 3-(between 1000 and 1099); 4-(between 1100 and 1199); and 5-(1200 or greater). The lowest category of prestige was based on the

¹See Astin, Korn, Sax, & Mahoney (1994) for a description of weighting procedures. Also note that separate analyses of students by racial classifications such as these tends to mask large within-group differences, especially with respect to gender and for Asian Americans, ethnicity and generational status

national average composite SAT score of 910 points. Levels of prestige were modeled above the national average to focus the analysis on the more contested sites of entry, the more elite institutions.

The samples used for the multivariate analyses were unweighted and did not include those not enrolled in historically Black colleges. Earlier research has indicated a number of distinct considerations associated with the process of choosing to attend a Black institution (McDonough, Antonio, & Trent, 1996), so those attenders were removed from the analysis in order to make more meaningful comparisons across subgroups. Sample sizes were considerably reduced for the regression analyses for two reasons. First, we wished to reduce the possibility of erroneously interpreting significance tests because of extremely powerful, large sample sizes (especially for the white students), and second, we wanted to facilitate between-group comparability by roughly equalizing power with approximately equal samples. To this end, random subsamples of the African American, Asian American, and white subgroups were taken to match the Chicano/a sample, resulting in sample sizes of 3776, 3804, and 3789, respectively. However, the Chicano/a sample was also reduced further due to listwise deletion of cases required for the regression procedure. The final Chicano/a sample size was 1792.

Results

Frequency Analysis

Table One contains descriptive data for the four subgroups. The Capital Endowment variables illustrate initial patterns of capital typically associated with college attendance. White and Asian American students are most likely to possess high amounts of economic capital as well as cultural capital through their parents' education. In sharp contrast are Chicano/a students who are much more likely to have less educated parents and African

Americans who tend to come from lower socioeconomic classes. Lastly, the immigrant status of students' parents varies dramatically across subgroups. Asian American students and most Chicano/a students are primarily the children of immigrants, if not immigrants themselves. The implications for this source of cultural capital are not apparent here, but may be best understood in the regression analyses.

 Insert Table One about here

In terms of Past Capital Accumulation, Asian American and white students are the most likely to accumulate the necessary academic capital for more selective college attendance, in the form of high scholastic records, test performance, and foreign language preparation. Probably the most telling of these measures are the figures that show Asian Americans taking at least three years of foreign language in high school at twice the rate of African Americans. Since higher levels of foreign language study tend to be expected for admission to more elite schools, this difference between the subgroups may reflect accumulation acts that are either more salient to Asian Americans or perceived with less conversion power by African Americans. Among the measures of cultural capital accumulation, all of the students are less likely to be engaged in activities with their teachers than visiting galleries or performing volunteer work. Comparing across subgroups, however, shows African Americans, Asian Americans, and Chicano/as to be less likely than whites to have an out-of-school relationship with a teacher, but at the same time, white students are the least likely to ask a teacher for advice after class. Finally, African American students are the least likely of all subgroups to

have engaged in the relatively higher participation accumulation activities of performing volunteer work and visiting galleries and museums.

College Choice variables provide a general picture of students' relative college preferences. All students generally report going to college to make more money, get a good job, or prepare for graduate school. White students, however, appear much less focused on preparing for graduate school than other students, and together with Asian Americans, less likely to view college-going as simply a means to make more money. In contrast, a greater proportion of African Americans report attending college for economic mobility (making more money and getting a good job) than any other subgroup, and along with Asian Americans are most likely to view the undergraduate experience as a means to further education in graduate school.

The most popular basis of choice of their undergraduate school for all students is academic reputation. This is an interesting result, considering the different patterns of capital endowment and accumulation between subgroups. By this point in the college choice game, it appears that the lore of academics and prestige reaches all students, probably through other capital transference channels not measured here. Also important for students is their view that graduates from their chosen school go to top graduate and professional schools, but similar to the pattern above, this reason is less popular for white students compared to others. White and Asian American students were also least concerned with receiving financial aid from an institution to determine choice, which is a relatively strong concern for both Chicano/a and African American students. Lastly, among the more minor bases of choice for students, more African Americans appear to place importance on being recruited as an athlete and more Chicano/as place importance on religious affiliations of institutions. The actions and results of

these college choices also differ across subgroups. White and Chicano/a students tend to submit fewer numbers of applications and are most likely to be attending their first choice colleges, while Asian American and African American students exhibit the opposite patterns.

How are students reinvesting capital in the college choice process? Among these first-time, fulltime freshmen, the majority of them live in dormitories but remain fairly close to home. Between subgroups, Chicano/a students are the least likely to live on campus and the most likely to choose to attend a religious institution. African American and Asian American students again exhibit an opposite pattern, appearing to be the most mobile subpopulations and the least attracted to religiously-affiliated schools. Economic investments for college seem to be linked to family incomes, with white and Asian American students receiving more money from their families and the least amount of money from loans compared to the other two subgroups. Chicano/a students, on the other hand, are the most likely to receive aid for college from all sources except their families.

Conversion of capital into expectations for college was fairly similar across subgroups. The majority of all students expect to be satisfied with their college experience, while about a third expect to eventually transfer to another school. However, African Americans and Asian Americans are slightly more likely to feel they will eventually transfer, which is consistent with lower satisfaction reflected in not attending their first-choice institutions, and Chicano/a students are the only group in which a majority expect to need extra time to finish their degrees. Conversion into goals and aspirations indicate that the majority of students have goals for financial success, particularly African Americans, while smaller numbers are set on getting a doctoral degree or focusing on careers requiring graduate school

(doctor, lawyer, research scientist, college teacher). Between subgroups, African Americans are the most likely to have goals of financial success and the least likely to hold goals with respect to politics. Chicano/a students, on the other hand, are the most likely to keep up with politics. In terms of educational goals, white students are less likely than all subgroups to aspire for doctoral degrees or careers requiring graduate degrees.

Regression Results

Capital Endowment. The standardized regression coefficients for the final models are listed in Table Two. What is perhaps the most striking result of this study is evident among the Capital Endowment variables. Even after all variables in the model are controlled, the classic socioeconomic status measures of father's education, mother's education, and family income remain positively associated with more selective college attendance *for white students only*. In order to learn more about why these SES variables were influential only for white students, we conducted a stepwise analysis (which in the interest of brevity we have not reported here) which showed that the effects of these SES variables disappeared after controlling for test scores and grades for Chicano/a and African American students and college choice variables for Asian Americans. In other words, once students of color convert cultural and economic capital into test scores, grades, and certain college choice preferences, socioeconomic backgrounds cease to have major influences on actually enrolling in more selective colleges and universities. The fact that parental education and income continue to be significantly associated with more selective college attendance for white students indicates that there are probably other manifestations of cultural capital associated or converted from those endowments benefiting these students that are not measured here (i.e. quality or prestige of parents' college education).

Similarly, coming from a family with two immigrant parents brings something extra to the college choice arena that influences more selective choices for all students, regardless of socioeconomic background, college choices, and capital investments. Like the other endowment variables, the effects of parents' immigrant status declined after controlling for test scores and grades, but remained essentially constant thereafter.

The adjusted R-square figures further underscore the importance of capital endowment for white students in selective college attendance relative to the other subgroups. For Chicano/a students, these same variables are virtually of no consequence, implying that capital accumulation for selective college attendance is likely based upon an habitus formed by non-SES variables.

A final result among capital endowment variables was a negative effect for African American women. This was the only gender effect in all of the analyses and actually changed sign from favoring African American women to favoring men after Past Capital Accumulation variables were controlled.

 Insert Table Two about here

Past Capital Accumulation. Past Capital Accumulation variables remaining statistically significant in the equations are those items that have the most lasting effects in the college choice process, or in a sense, the most valuable capital in terms of both conversion to selective college attendance and benefits beyond matriculation. Generally, our data demonstrate payoffs for all students to the accumulation of academic capital in high school but mixed results for the accumulation of cultural capital. All statistically significant measures of Past Capital Accumulation are positively associated with more

selective college choices and among all variables, explain the largest proportion of variance in the models.

High grades and SAT scores as well as completion of foreign language courses are positively associated with more selective college attendance for all students. Additionally accrued payoffs garnered from other cultural practices differ by subgroup. For Asian Americans, visiting an art gallery or museum and being a guest in a teacher's home is positively associated with attending more selective colleges. Interestingly, in the descriptive analyses, Asian American students were the least likely to be guests in a teacher's home, but clearly for those who do, it is a quite significant influence in the arena of college access and choice. Chicano/a students seeking more selective colleges also benefit from visiting a teacher's home, as does performing volunteer work in high school. White students, on the other hand, retain the influence of only one cultural capital variable, visiting an art gallery or museum. Similarly, African Americans are only influenced by one measure, seeking advice from a teacher.

College Choices. Among College Choice variables, there are many similar effects across racial subgroups. Students choosing to attend schools based on academic reputation or because alumni get into top graduate schools, those attending their first-choice college, and those applying to higher numbers of colleges are more likely to be attending more selective or prestigious schools. Differences between groups appear for all measures of cited reasons to pursue a college education. For white students, capital accumulation resulting in being focused on college as a way to get a better job or to prepare for graduate and professional school is associated with less selective college attendance, while for African American students only the latter has a significant (negative) effect. Asian American and Chicano/a students, on the other

hand, are not influenced by either reason for going to college. Lastly, Asian American students are the only subgroup for which stronger reasons for going to college of being able to make more money is associated with less selective college attendance.

Differences among reasons for choosing their particular schools are also evident. For white and Asian American students, financial aid offers are associated with less selective college choices, while for African Americans and Chicano/as, these financial enticements do not appear to be associated with the selectivity of their chosen college. Interestingly, whites and Asian Americans are, on the average, more affluent than other students and the least likely to place high importance on financial aid offers in choosing their schools. These results imply, then, that white and Asian American students are stratified with respect to family income and a habitus for more or less selective college choices.

Asian Americans and whites share another common effect that operates differently for African American and Chicano/a students. High salience placed on being an athletic recruit has positive associations with more selective school choices for Asian Americans and whites and less selective choices for Chicano/a students. Apparently, the white and Asian American habitus for college choice considers athletic recruitment towards the choice of more elite schools, while according to a Chicano/a student's habitus, the same consideration actually leads them away from elite schools. This analysis provides no further data to uncover why this is the case, but opens up questions on both the recruiting strategies of elite schools and the access channels afforded to Chicano/a students through athletics.

The last effect among College Choices has negative associations on more selective choices for all students except whites. African American,

Asian American, and Chicano/a students concerned about the religious affiliations of their college appear to be attracted to the low-selectivity religious schools. White students with the same concerns are just as likely to attend the more exclusive sectarian schools as these less elite privates.

Investment of Capital and Future Conversion. For all groups of students, making an investment by living on campus, traveling far from home, enrolling in a public or non-sectarian college, and taking out student loans are all associated with more selective college attendance. The differences between subgroups are many and demonstrate considerable variation among the college choice habits of these students.

Among the financial aid variables other than loans, family investments reflect higher selectivity choices for white and Asian students and no effect for the less affluent African American and Chicano/a students. In fact, outside of loans, the financial aid variables modeled here appear to have no bearing at all on the degree of selectivity of choices for Chicano/a students. Working on campus reflects higher selectivity choices for white and African American students and receiving aid from other college grants predicts more selective college attendance for African Americans and less selective college attendance for whites. This complex mixture of influences is a further indication that the college choice habits of these subgroups of students differ along many dimensions, even given similar endowment, accumulation, and college preference patterns.

Expectations for college exhibit further differential effects. Expecting to need more time to graduate is associated with less selective college attendance for Asian American and Chicano/a students, yet has no effects for whites and African Americans. However, expecting to transfer is associated with less selective college choices for African American and white students.

Furthermore, expected satisfaction with college and degree of financial concern in college only has effects (negative) for white and Chicano/a students, respectively

Goals, aspirations, and career choices reflect the potential capital conversion outlook of students. Again, results are mixed. Having a goal of being well-off financially predicts lower selectivity choices for Asian Americans and Chicano/a students and has no effect for African Americans and whites, while having a goal of keeping up with political affairs is associated with more selective college attendance for whites and Asian Americans. Lastly, upward mobility through graduate school appears most salient for African American students with more elite school choices, less so for whites and Chicano/as, and of no consequence for Asian Americans.

Discussion

Our approach to access has focused on influences which affect the selectivity of a student's college choice because of the strong links between selectivity and educational and occupational attainment (Coleman, Rainwater, and McClelland, 1978). We have developed and tested a model which adds to the previously-known power of academic achievement and socioeconomic status variables by incorporating, operationalizing, and measuring the impact of cultural capital and habitus. Our multivariate analyses provide insight into both the overall social investment and return system and the particular strategies that students of different ethnic groups find effective in playing the college access and choice mobility game.

First, the common patterns of capital accumulation, conversion, and investment across groups provide insight into the best-articulated strategies

for playing the selective college admissions game. Most well-known is the obvious accumulation of scholastic capital; students know that completing many foreign language classes and receiving high grades and SAT scores are crucial cards to hold in the selective college access game.

However, in terms of capital endowment, clearly there is some dimension that we have not been able to tap in explaining why only for white students does family education and income remain significant when Blacks, Chicano/as, and Asian Americans are not able to accrue the same payoffs to intergenerational investments in education. One speculation that we want to put forth which needs to be tested in future research would be an assessment of the prestige of the parents' education. For example, research shows that where one attends college makes a difference for the individual and it seems logical to hypothesize that where one's parents went to college has additional effects on the offspring's education above the effect of quantity of education.

The past capital accumulation variables show direct influences, regardless of race, for strong academic preparation and performance in high school. However, our analyses show that cultural capital operates differentially for different racial and ethnic groups. Although teachers are influential for more selective college attendance for all students of color, teachers are most influential for Black students when those students seek the teacher's advice after class, whereas for Asian American and Chicano/a students teachers are influential through the process of having students over to their home. These contacts with teachers represent different levels of engagement, but teachers and administrators should be made aware of the powerful positive impact they can have on students' college choices. For white students, visiting an art gallery or museum seems to be the only cultural capital variable associated with selective college attendance, while

Chicano/a students are the only students who seem to benefit from volunteering in more selective college attendance.

Reasons which emphasize the utilitarian, instrumental value of a college education -- for increasing one's job opportunities, earning power, and receiving preparation to attend graduate or professional school -- are associated with less selective college attendance. Reasons positively associated with more selective freshman colleges tend to place high importance on academic reputation and positioning for graduate schools. Here we see a fine distinction between preparing or receiving training for graduate school (a less selective college predictor) and having the knowledge that a college's graduates *get into top* graduate and professional schools (a more selective college predictor). Though both preferences can be viewed as reflective of a desire for educational and therefore social mobility, the latter recognizes a capital conversion or payoff orientation on a higher level (admission into rather than just preparation for graduate school). Why the differential effects for preparing versus positioning for graduate schools? We believe that the habitus for more selective colleges includes the knowledge that it is not so much what one learns in college but how well graduates of particular colleges fare in graduate and professional school admissions. For Chicano/a students and Asian Americans, lower selectivity choices are also associated with goals of being well-off financially, which again may reflect a sense of mobility limited to economic payoffs. Enrollment at a lower selectivity institution is strongly associated with religious colleges. The effect of the college's religious affiliation may have to do with the small number of religious colleges among the most selective colleges.

We find the results of athletic department recruitment particularly interesting. We believe that being recruited by the school's athletic

department conveys possession of a specific piece of cultural knowledge. In this case that knowledge is possibly the connection between admission and athletic team recruitment at the smaller, elite schools. Compared to the large, Division I athletic powerhouses, the small, highly selective private schools field more teams, recruit more students as athletes, and have a higher percentage of their undergraduate population involved in competitive sports (Fetter, 1995; Paul, 1995). Furthermore, Cookson and Persell (1985) show a link between Ivy League varsity team coaches and the recruitment of prospective freshmen. Are only white and Asian American students privy to this elite knowledge? Are Chicano/a students obtaining contrary information in their capital accumulation? These are very serious questions to consider in the further exploration of access and equity to elite schools.

Finally, attending a more selective college is associated with submitting more college applications. Since these are the US colleges which reject the largest numbers of students, the knowledge implied in this finding is that chances of admission are guarded but investments can be protected by filing higher numbers of applications. And once these admissions are granted, further investments made by students at more elite schools include living on campus, traveling far from home, and taking out student loans. These findings describe a habitus of heavy economic investment toward the return of a more elite college diploma.

Influences on the selectivity of college for students of color deviate from white students in several specific ways. First, students of color do not benefit from having parents with higher educational or income levels. Second, cultural capital accumulation in high school operates differently for students of color: teachers can have a positive influence on selective college attendance but arts participation does not pay off for Black and Chicano/a

students. Third, Chicano/a students demonstrate higher levels of concern for their ability to pay for college which results in their attendance at lower selectivity colleges. Finally, higher degree aspirations and more prestigious career choices are significantly associated with more selective college choices for Blacks.

The capital accumulation and investment differences across groups have the most implications to access and equity in this arena. White students are able to convert parental education and income into scholastic capital, but unlike other students these two forms of capital endowment continue to guide mobility strategies through elite college matriculation and beyond. How are access routes to the more contested sites of entry to higher education dependent upon capital endowment in such a way as to benefit white students only? We have also suggested that these endowment variables may also be carrying the influence of forms of cultural capital not modeled here that is strongly correlated to the parental income and education of white students. Future research needs to address first, additional correlates to income and selective college access for white students, and second, the admission processes of selective colleges and ways they may disproportionately favor not merely wealthy applicants, but specifically affluent white students versus affluent students of color.

The variation in the specific forms of accumulated cultural capital that appear influential in gaining access to more prestigious schools also has equity implications. The non-scholastic Past Capital Accumulation variables provide insight into the settings in which different students gather the cultural capital most consequential to access to selective schools. From a policy perspective, the important of these accumulation patterns is related to teacher-student relationships. In an earlier study, we found that teacher-

student relationships were quite consequential in the formation of an African American student preference for predominantly white institutions compared to historically black colleges (McDonough, Antonio, & Trent, 1996). The findings of this study imply that that relationship is important for other students of color, and the nature of that relationship -- in-class/out-of-class, formal/informal -- is related to an habitus influencing more selective college choices. Although we may be stretching in interpreting being a guest in a teacher's home and asking advice from a teacher after class as reflective of two different types of relationships, the findings still underscore the importance of that relationship -- whatever the nature -- in the construction of the college choice habitus of students of color. One of the major findings in Levine and Nidifer's (1996) study of college access among poor students is that individual mentors were pivotal figures in the success stories of the students in their study. Many of these mentors were teachers. The implication here is that teacher-student relationships, especially for students of color, are the sites of cultural capital transmission critical to attaining access to selective colleges. One form of this cultural capital may be that more in-depth student-teacher relationships can help teachers write better, more persuasive letters of recommendation so crucial to admissions processes at selective colleges.

Finally, this study raises implications on future directions for research on access and equity in higher education. With the use of a Bourdieuan perspective, this study provides researchers with a new lens in which to view college choice processes. In placing emphasis on valued cultural knowledge, capital endowment, accumulation, conversion, and investment, this study has brought attention to the interplay between individual strategy and structure. The result was not only general patterns of cultural knowledge reflected in capital manipulation strategies, but also large degrees of variation

or strategies exhibited across ethnic groups. This variation suggests the existence of multiple selective college choice habits that have been and are continuously honed by the interaction of individual students with the admissions structures they face. Research detailing the development of these habits for different ethnic groups is necessary to provide additional insight into the ways the selective college access game differentially pays off students by race.

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Appendix A Variable Blocks

Capital Endowment	
Gender	0-male, 1-female
Parents' immigrant status	0-native born, 1-immigrant
Mother's education	8 point scale, grammar school or less to graduate degree
Father's education	8 point scale, grammar school or less to graduate degree
Parental income	5 point scale, less than \$25000 to over \$100000
Past Capital Accumulation	
High School GPA	8 point scale, less than C- to A or A+
SAT math score	12 point scale, 200 to 800 points
SAT verbal score	12 point scale, 200 to 800 points
Years of foreign language study	7 point scale, none to 5 or more
High school activities:	3 point scale, not at all to frequently
-was a guest in a teacher's home	
-asked a teacher for advice after class	
-visited an art gallery or museum	
-performed volunteer work	
College Choices	
Reasons to go to college:	3 point scale, not important to very important
-to be able to get a better job	
-to make more money	
-to prepare for graduate school	
Reasons to choose freshman college	3 point scale, not important to very important
-graduates go to top graduate schools	
-good academic reputation	
-was offered financial aid	
-was recruited by athletic department	
-religious affiliation	
Attending 1st choice college	0-no, 1-yes
Number of colleges applied to	7 point scale, none to six or more
Anticipated Capital Reinvestment and Conversion	
Living on campus	0-no, 1-yes
Attending college more than 500 miles from home	0-no, 1-yes
Attending a religiously affiliated college	0-no, 1-yes
Amount of aid receiving from:	4 point scale, none to over \$1500
-parents or family	
-working on campus	
-college grant	
-GSL/Stafford loan	
Expectations for college:	4 point scale, no chance to very good chance
-need extra time to graduate	
-will transfer to another college	
-be satisfied with college	
Future goals:	4 point scale, not important to essential
-be very well off financially	
-keep up with political affairs	
Highest degree aspirations	6 point scale, none to Ph D, MD, or JD
Career choices requiring graduate school	1-doctor, lawyer, college teacher, or research scientist, 0-other choices

Table One. Population descriptives of weighted data (percentages)

variable	White (n=769,057)	Black (n=100,755)	Asian (n=51,617)	Chicano/a (n=17,317)
Capital Endowment				
Women	54.0	60.1	47.0	55.4
One or both parents are immigrants	6.5	5.7	93.4	60.5
Mother is not a high school graduate	3.0	8.9	16.9	40.0
Father is not a high school graduate	4.5	13.2	12.4	43.4
Mother is a college graduate	44.2	33.8	51.8	15.6
Father is a college graduate	53.6	29.5	62.1	19.4
Parental income is \$20,000 or below	8.1	32.8	19.8	28.4
Parental income is \$60,000 or above	45.7	21.0	40.3	18.5
Past Capital Accumulation				
High School GPA was A or A-	38.2	16.8	48.8	33.6
600-800 SAT math score	18.9	5.1	25.2	7.8
600-800 SAT verbal score	39.1	10.1	58.9	22.0
3+ years of study in a foreign language	54.5	32.5	66.9	50.1
High school activities (marked "occasionally" or "frequently")				
-was a guest in a teacher's home	30.2	26.3	23.5	25.3
-asked a teacher for advice after class	20.5	27.4	22.5	23.8
-visited an art gallery or museum	62.8	55.7	68.6	61.9
-performed volunteer work	74.4	68.9	79.6	75.4
College Choices				
Reasons to go to college (marked "very important")				
-to be able to get a better job	75.3	81.1	71.7	78.6
-to make more money	68.8	83.9	67.9	72.3
-to prepare for graduate school	53.9	73.4	75.7	70.8
Reasons to choose freshman college (marked "very important")				
-graduates go to top graduate schools	28.5	35.5	39.9	35.4
-good academic reputation	57.9	71.1	60.4	60.8
-was offered financial aid	29.4	44.3	29.0	46.3
-was recruited athletic department	6.6	8.2	1.9	4.7
-religious affiliation	6.7	6.1	4.4	8.7
Freshman college is 1st choice college	76.7	59.2	56.3	74.0
Applied to four or more colleges	25.4	31.6	46.7	27.5
Anticipated Capital Reinvestment and Conversion				
Living on campus	80.9	77.3	71.2	61.4
Attending college more than 500 miles from home	11.8	19.7	19.3	13.8
Attending a religiously affiliated college	20.4	14.3	14.4	25.6
Receiving greater than \$1500 in aid from				
-parents or family	67.8	40.2	67.6	40.5
-working on campus	2.5	2.0	4.5	7.5
-other college grant	18.8	17.0	18.9	24.6
-GSL/Stafford loan	29.1	35.4	24.5	36.1
Expectations for college (marked "some chance" or "very good chance")				
-need extra time to graduate	46.2	50.7	50.3	56.5
-will transfer to another college	32.9	37.9	37.3	32.8
-be satisfied with college	95.7	90.2	92.2	93.7
Future goals (marked "very important" or "essential")				
-be very well off financially	69.3	88.2	78.5	78.6
-keep up with political affairs	35.6	25.2	34.4	39.9
Highest degree aspiration Doctorate	16.0	22.4	21.3	21.2
Career choices requiring graduate school	13.7	16.8	25.5	18.3

Table Two. Final standardized regression coefficients for predicting selective college attendance

variables	White (n=3789)	Black (n=3776)	Asian (n=3804)	Chicano/a (n=1792)
capital endowment				
gender, female	-.02	-.04**	.01	-.02
mother's education	.06***	.00	-.02	.01
father's education	.05***	.02	.03	.01
family income	.04**	.00	.00	-.02
parent's immigrant status	.06***	.05***	.07***	.05*
(adjusted R ²)	(0.13)	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.02)
past capital accumulation				
guest in a teacher's home	.00	.01	.05***	.03*
did volunteer work	-.01	.02	-.02	.04*
visited an art gallery/museum	.03*	.02	.04***	.01
sought advice from a teacher	.01	.03*	.01	.01
Foreign language courses	.09***	.06***	.04**	.04*
high school grades	.10***	.11***	.09***	.14***
SAT math	.22***	.19***	.23***	.16***
SAT verbal	.20***	.18***	.19***	.13***
(adjusted R ²)	(0.36)	(0.33)	(0.37)	(0.30)
college choices				
reasons to go to college:				
to be able to get a better job	-.03*	-.02	-.01	.02
to be able to make more money	-.01	.01	-.04**	-.01
to prepare for grad/prof school	-.05***	-.03*	-.02	-.03
reasons to choose freshman college:				
graduates get into top grad/prof schools	.11***	.09***	.06***	.07*
good academic reputation of school	.13***	.08***	.11***	.09***
was offered financial aid by school	-.07***	.03	-.04*	.00
was recruited by athletic dept of school	.05***	.00	.04**	-.04*
religious affiliation of school	-.02	-.03*	-.03*	-.10***
attending first choice college	.03*	.07***	.05***	.08***
# of colleges applied to	.10***	.14***	.11***	.12***
(adjusted R ²)	(0.43)	(0.39)	(0.43)	(0.39)
investment of capital & future conversion				
living on campus	.06***	.06***	.14***	.19***
college is more than 500 miles from home	.08***	.09***	.14***	.21***
attending religiously affiliated college	-.11***	-.11***	-.11***	-.20***
amount of financial aid receiving from				
parents or family	.03*	.03	.05**	.02
part-time wk on campus	.04**	.07***	.03	.04
other college grant	-.04*	.04**	-.01	.03
Stafford or GSL	.06***	.04**	.09***	.04*
expectations for college:				
need extra time to graduate	-.02	.01	-.06***	-.05**
expect to transfer	-.05***	-.06***	-.02	-.04
be satisfied with college	-.04**	.01	-.02	-.01
high concern to pay for college goals	-.01	.01	.01	-.04*
be very well off financially	-.01	-.02	-.05***	-.04*
keep up with political affairs	.03*	.00	.03*	-.01
highest degree aspirations	.03*	.05***	.02	.03
career choices requiring graduate school	.00	.03*	.02	.04*
(adjusted R ²)	(0.46)	(0.43)	(0.49)	(0.52)

*p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001