



Research in the Sociology of Education

Narratives of Interdependence and Independence: The Role of Social Class and Family Relationships in Where High-Achieving Students Apply to College

Yang Lor,

Article information:

To cite this document: Yang Lor, "Narratives of Interdependence and Independence: The Role of Social Class and Family Relationships in Where High-Achieving Students Apply to College" *In* Research in the Sociology of Education. Published online: 09 Oct 2018; 107-128.

Permanent link to this document:

<https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-353920180000020005>

Downloaded on: 12 November 2018, At: 11:20 (PT)

References: this document contains references to 0 other documents.

To copy this document: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

Access to this document was granted through an Emerald subscription provided by

For Authors

If you would like to write for this, or any other Emerald publication, then please use our Emerald for Authors service information about how to choose which publication to write for and submission guidelines are available for all. Please visit www.emeraldinsight.com/authors for more information.

About Emerald www.emeraldinsight.com

Emerald is a global publisher linking research and practice to the benefit of society. The company manages a portfolio of more than 290 journals and over 2,350 books and book series volumes, as well as providing an extensive range of online products and additional customer resources and services.

Emerald is both COUNTER 4 and TRANSFER compliant. The organization is a partner of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and also works with Portico and the LOCKSS initiative for digital archive preservation.

*Related content and download information correct at time of download.

NARRATIVES OF INTERDEPENDENCE AND INDEPENDENCE: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CLASS AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN WHERE HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENTS APPLY TO COLLEGE

Yang Lor

ABSTRACT

Research demonstrates that social class affects where high-achieving students apply to college, but the processes through which such effects come about are not well understood. This chapter draws on 46 in-depth interviews with high-achieving students in the Bay Area to examine how social class impacts college application decisions. I argue that the upbringing and experiences associated with students' social class shape their narratives regarding how much autonomy or constraints they perceive in making college decisions. Higher-SES students present a narrative of independence about what they have done to prepare themselves for college and where to apply. In contrast, lower-SES students speak of experiences and considerations that reflect a narrative of interdependence between themselves and their parents that is grounded in the mutual concern they have for one another as the prospect of college looms. As a result, higher-SES students frame college as an opportunity to leave their families and immerse themselves in an environment far from home while lower-SES students understand college as a continuation of

Research in the Sociology of Education, Volume 20, 107–128

Copyright © 2018 by Emerald Publishing Limited

All rights of reproduction in any form reserved

ISSN: 1479-3539/doi:10.1108/S1479-353920180000020005

family interdependence. Consequently, higher-SES students are more likely to apply to selective private universities in other parts of the country, while lower-SES students tend to limit their choices to primarily selective and non-selective public colleges closer to home. This research enhances our understanding of the mechanisms by which social class differences in family experiences contribute to the perpetuation of social inequality.

Keywords: Higher education; culture; decision-making; social stratification; parenting

Research on higher education consistently point to the significance of social class in shaping where highly qualified high school students attend college: high-achieving students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to end up at less selective institutions compared to their socioeconomically advantaged peers with similar academic qualifications (Hill & Winston, 2006; Hoxby & Avery, 2012; Karabel & Astin, 1975; Lopez-Turley, Santos, & Ceja, 2007; McPherson & Schapiro, 2006). Hill and Winston (2006) find that while high-achieving, low-income students represent about 13% of the high-achieving student population, they represent only about 10% of the student body at the nation's leading private colleges and universities. The problem that Hill and Winston (2006) identified is known as academic undermatch – when a student's academic credentials permit them access to a college or university that is more selective than the postsecondary alternative they choose (Hoxby & Avery, 2012; Smith, Pender, & Howell, 2013). Academic undermatch is more common among students from low socioeconomic status families, those who live in rural areas and whose parents have no college degree (Smith et al., 2013).

Where students go to college has implications for educational and economic outcomes and social stratification. Students who attend selective colleges are more likely to graduate on time, to receive a graduate or professional degree, and to have higher earnings compared to those who attend nonselective colleges (Bowen & Bok, 2000; Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009; Carnevale & Rose, 2004). Moreover, graduates of selective colleges disproportionately occupy political and economic leadership roles in society (McPherson & Schapiro, 2006). This is especially the case for students who attend top private selective colleges, also known as highly selective or most selective institutions, such as Ivy League universities and top liberal arts colleges that are concentrated outside of California. For instance, McPherson and Schapiro (2006) note how the educational backgrounds of Presidents of the United States for the past 20 years and of current Supreme Court Justices can be tracked back to highly selective private institutions. Bowen et al. (2009) find that high-achieving students have an 89% graduation rate when they attend colleges ranked “most selective” and just 59% when they attend colleges ranked “least selective.” Similarly, Bowen and Bok (2000) distinguish between three tiers of selective colleges and they show that graduation rate increase as the selectivity of the college rises. Bowen and Bok (2000) find that the most selective group of colleges, which are private institutions, tend to be residential, to have relatively small enrollments, and to have

financial resources to afford smaller classes and more support services. Indeed, research has shown that top private colleges spend more per student and subsidize student costs at a much higher rate than other selective colleges (Carnevale & Rose, 2004; Hill & Winston, 2006). In contrast, public selective colleges have lower graduation rates, which Bowen and Bok (2000) attribute to larger enrollments and less assistance in the form of need-based financial aid. Among all selective colleges, less selective institutions typically have smaller budgets and spending per student (Hoxby, 2009). This translates into less academic support and less spending on nonacademics students enjoy, which has been shown to reduce graduation rates (Webber & Ehrenberg, 2010).

The value of attending a selective college, especially a highly selective private college, cannot be understated. Thus, it is important to understand how students end up in these colleges. A major reason for social class differences in access to selective colleges is that few highly able, socioeconomically disadvantaged students actually apply to such institutions in the first place (Hoxby & Avery, 2012; Radford, 2013). Lopez-Turley et al. (2007) find that while the influence of parents' education and income on the likelihood of applying to any college has remained about the same across cohorts, its influence on applying to a selective college has increased across cohorts. In the most comprehensive study to date of the college choices of high-achieving students, Hoxby and Avery (2012) find that the majority of high-achieving, low-income students do not apply to any selective colleges despite being well qualified for admission. Similarly, Radford (2013) reveals that social class strongly shapes how students go about identifying colleges to attend such that students from less affluent schools are less likely than their affluent peers to apply to selective institutions. Radford (2013) concludes that to explain why low-income, high-achieving students are less likely to enroll at selective institutions, we need to recognize that the "the divergence by socioeconomic status is set in motion in the application stage" (p. 151). While it is clear that social class shapes where students apply to college, the process through which this occurs is not well understood.

To examine how social class shapes where high-achieving students apply to college, I compared the processes used by high-achieving students from different social class backgrounds in the Bay Area, California when deciding where to submit college applications. Drawing on in-depth interviews with 46 high-achieving students, I find that students from lower-SES backgrounds tend to limit their choices of colleges to institutions within California while students from higher-SES backgrounds applied to top colleges across the United States. By only applying to colleges close to home and in California, lower-SES students applied primarily to large public selective universities (University of California [UC] universities) and nonselective public colleges (California State University [CSU] colleges). In contrast, higher-SES students are more likely to apply to selective private colleges across the country like Ivy League universities and top liberal arts colleges.

I show that part of the explanation for social class differences in application to out-of-state colleges can be found in how much autonomy students perceive they have over their decision-making. When discussing their decision-making

processes, higher-SES students present a narrative of independence regarding what they have done to prepare for college and where to apply. They emphasize aspects of their upbringing and experiences that demonstrate how they exercise initiative in making decisions about what activities they should participate in. They downplay the influence of their parents in making these decisions, and they see themselves as individuals who are autonomous in choosing their directions and college options. In contrast, lower-SES students speak of experiences and considerations that reflect a narrative of interdependence between themselves and their parents that is grounded in the mutual concern that they have for one another as the prospect of college looms. Lower-SES students recognize the struggles their parents have had to overcome and they develop a sense of responsibility for their parents. Some students have assumed family responsibilities throughout high school. Others have parents who press them to consider attending only those colleges near home. These factors reinforce a narrative of interdependence that the fate of students and parents are intertwined. As a result, higher-SES students frame college as an opportunity to leave their families and immerse themselves in an environment far from home while lower-SES students understand college as a continuation of family interdependence. Consequently, higher-SES students are more likely to apply to selective private universities in other parts of the country, while lower-SES students tend to limit their choices to selective and nonselective colleges closer to home.

This research demonstrates how social class differences in family experiences perpetuate social inequality when such experiences lead to the development of divergent understandings among lower-SES and higher-SES students about the role of family in one's transition into adulthood. By focusing on the decision-making process among students, I show how students' decisions about which colleges to apply to are not merely a straightforward consideration of the costs and benefits of various college options. Instead, these decisions are intimately linked to students' social class backgrounds. In other words, students' decisions are informed not only by their knowledge of different types of college institutions but also by their understanding of the type of social experiences they have accumulated and the type that they want to pursue while in college. Choosing where to go to college is as much about the institutional qualities of colleges as it is about the particular type of lifestyle that students want to pursue, a reflection of their social class experiences and upbringings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rational choice has been the prevailing framework used to explain social class differences in where high-achieving students submit college applications. This framework represents high school students as individuals choosing among different educational options on the basis of an evaluation of these options' costs and benefits (Beattie, 2002; Brand & Xie, 2010; Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997). Rational choice explanations about why socioeconomically disadvantaged, high-achieving students are less likely to apply to elite institutions primarily center on the lack of two types of information: information about the different

quality of colleges and information about the financial costs and financial aid of these postsecondary institutions (Grodsky & Jones, 2007; McCabe & Jackson, 2016; Plank & Jordan, 2001; Radford, 2013; Smith et al., 2013).

While the rational choice perspective has advanced our understanding of the crucial role that access to information plays in relegating socioeconomically disadvantaged, high-achieving students to less selective colleges, it has not adequately addressed how social class affects students' decision-making when choosing colleges. Identifying differences in access to information among students based on social class and emphasizing this difference as the crucial factor ignores how such information actually figures into the decision-making of these students. For instance, how do students come to their understandings or interpretations of college based on the information they have? How do their experiences shape these understandings? What are the consequences of these understandings on where they decide to apply to college?

By conceptualizing decision-making as primarily an individual endeavor, rational choice explanations overlook how students are embedded in social or cultural contexts that make some choices more likely and others less likely (Beattie, 2002; Brand & Xie, 2010). Brand and Xie (2010) argue that the college decision is not a straightforward balancing of costs and returns; instead, it is heavily influenced by cultural and social circumstances. Indeed, some individuals make decisions or engage in particular actions without the need to consciously resort to some underlying rational logic (Ball, Davies, David, & Reay, 2010; McDonough, 1997). This understanding of decision-making as unconscious is influenced by Bourdieu's concept of habitus, which is a set of dispositions acquired through a gradual process that predisposes individuals to conform their actions and decisions to the objective conditions of their class positions (Bourdieu, 1999). McDonough (1997) develops the concept of organizational habitus, defined as the impact of a social class culture through an intermediate organization, for example, high school, to describe the process by which schools structure students' college choices (p. 156). Organizational habitus makes possible individual decision by setting boundaries around the search parameters: different schools offered different views of the college opportunity structure. Ball et al. (2010) show that the institutional habitus of schools, which consists of embedded perceptions and expectations, make certain choices obvious and others unthinkable. According to Ball et al. (2010), "habitus [is] evident here in its inexplicitness" (p. 58). Weiss, Cipollone, and Jenkins (2014) demonstrate how the cultivation of an identity among high-achieving students as selective college goers makes attending a selective college a norm such that students do not consider other types of college.

Beyond the nature of decision-making, the emphasis on information neglects how social class impacts individual decision-making beyond that of access to information. A key mechanism by which social class influence individual action is through family upbringing and experiences. Research reveal that the upbringing and experiences of socioeconomically disadvantaged students tend to result in an emerging sense of constraint while those of middle and upper-middle class youth lead to a greater sense of choice and autonomy

(Calarco, 2014; Kohn, 1959, 1963; Kohn & Schooler, 1983; Lareau, 2002). For instance, Lareau (2002) concludes that interactions in working class families in which children are expected to conform to parents' directives lead to the development of a sense of powerlessness and frustration among children in dealing with professionals and institutions. In contrast, middle class children are encouraged to speak up and share their thoughts and feelings, leading to a sense of entitlement that makes middle class children feel they can manipulate situations to suit their preferences. Calarco (2014) demonstrates how social class upbringing influences students' decision-making when it comes to seeking assistance in the classroom. She finds that middle class children are more likely than working class children to assert themselves in classroom and that they receive more assistance as a result.

The development of a sense of choice and autonomy among middle class children is also evident in how parents draw upon the interests of students in the selection of activities. Chin and Philips (2004) find that children of middle class parents lead highly structured lives centered on activities that are customized according to the needs and interests of the children. Lareau and Weininger (2010) show that middle class parents tend to stress the importance of self-direction by placing children in situations in which they must make and justify their decisions. Stuber (2009) argue that this type of upbringing fosters a set of cultural dispositions that encourages students to seek out extracurricular activities and new experiences as a way to test their independence.

Whereas middle class children grow up in families in which they are given opportunities and experiences to develop their sense of control and autonomy, socioeconomically disadvantaged students grow up in families in which they develop a sense of constraint in their decision-making. Socioeconomically disadvantaged students often have to take into account their family's well-being and even shoulder family responsibilities. Several studies have found that a strong obligation to assist the family can involve responsibilities and activities that compromise the ability of young adults to pursue postsecondary schooling (Desmond & Turley, 2009; Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002). Fuligni, Tseng, and Lam (1999) and Fuligni and Pedersen (2002) find that young adults who believed in the importance of assisting their parents and siblings were more likely to live with their parents and contribute financially to their families. Louie (2004) finds that while both working class and middle class students exhibited a strong sense of obligation toward their family, only working class students were forced to contribute financially to their family while in school.

Research specifically on college choices among socioeconomically disadvantaged students demonstrates the relevance of such constraints. Desmond and Turley (2009) find that a cultural preference privileging family goals over individual goals, which they term familism, may discourage some Latino/a youth from applying to and attending college, especially selective ones, particularly if they must leave home. Ovink and Kalogrides (2015) find that familism is not only a Latino phenomenon but also one that is shared by students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Mullen (2011) explains that students from poor and working class backgrounds rarely considered out-of-state colleges

because of cost and the importance of maintaining family ties. Lee and Kramer (2013) argue that low-SES children have to contend with how leaving for college will impact their relationship with their peers, family, and community. Stuber (2009) shows how the value placed by first-generation college students upon the importance of family solidarity and staying close to home can make it difficult for students to take advantage of opportunities located far from home.

In summary, the rational choice framework offers a very individualistic understanding of decision-making, emphasizing the importance of information and assuming that individuals from different social and economic backgrounds interpret information the same way (Beattie, 2002; Brand & Xie, 2010; Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997). In doing so, rational choice explanations overlook how social classes influences via family relationships and experiences also shape students decision-making over and beyond that of access to information (Calarco, 2014; Lareau, 2002; Ovink & Kalogrides, 2015; Stuber, 2009). In contrast, the habitus framework shows how decisions can be made through unconscious processes that bring social destinations into conformity with social origins (Bourdieu, 1999). Studies that draw upon a habitus perspective do a nuanced job at describing the social and cultural environments of individuals and the resulting actions taken by such individuals (Ball et al., 2010; Calarco, 2014; Lareau, 2002; Lareau & Weininger, 2010; McDonough, 1997; Weiss et al., 2014). However, these studies dwell on the constraints of the social environment or on the behaviors of individuals without sufficiently addressing the decision-making process that link the environment with the behaviors. What is needed is a framework that explicitly accounts for the constraints of the social and cultural environment within the individual decision-making process.

CULTURE AND COGNITION FRAMEWORK: NARRATIVES

In this study, I draw upon a culture and cognition framework to address this gap in the literature. A culture and cognition framework depicts decision-making as less a matter of deliberate (rational) versus unconscious (habitus) processes and more about how people perceive the world and act upon these perceptions (Lamont, Beljean, & Clair, 2014). This framework shifts the focus to the shared categories and classification systems individuals utilize to perceive and make sense of their environment (Lamont et al., 2014). A culture and cognition framework focuses on the cultural process not only at the level of individual cognition, but also inter-subjectively, through shared scripts and cultural structures such as “frames,” “narratives,” and “cultural repertoires” (Lamont et al., 2014). By focusing on the subjective understandings of individuals, a culture and cognition framework enables an analysis of how social class-based experiences and family relationships inform students’ understandings of higher education and how students employ those understandings in making college application decisions. In doing so, this framework achieves the goal of describing the process

by which constraints in the social environment (e.g., social-class-based experiences and family relationships) impact the individual decision-making of students (e.g., the meanings students attach to higher education in light of their social class experiences and how these understandings shape the decisions they make).

I specifically draw upon the concept of narratives to examine one aspect of how social class shapes where high-achieving students apply to college. As shared cultural scripts that shape how people interpret their social world, narratives are stories with a “causally linked sequence of events” (Small, Harding, & Lamont, 2010). Narratives are stories people tell that express how they make sense of their lives. Narratives consist of three elements (Ewick & Silbey, 2003). First, a narrative relies on some form of selective appropriation of past events and characters. Second, within a narrative the events must be temporally ordered. This quality of narrative requires that the selected events be presented with a beginning, middle, and an end. Third, the events and characters must be related to one another and to some overarching structure, often to an opposition or struggle. The temporal and structural ordering ensure both “narrative closure” and “narrative causality,” which is an account about how and why the events occurred as they did.

Narratives provide an account of how individuals view themselves in relation to others (Abelmann, 1997; Small et al., 2010). They affect one’s action because individuals choose actions that are consistent with their personal narratives. People act, or do not act, in part according to how they understand their place in any number of given narratives – however fragmented, contradictory, or partial (Somers, 1994). Lamont and Small (2008) write that the narrative perspective shows “that action is not an automatic response to incentive: it is made possible within the context of narratives around which people make sense of their lives” (p. 84). A narrative approach assumes that social action can only be intelligible if we recognize that people are guided to act by the structural and cultural relationships in which they are embedded and by the stories through which they constitute their identities (Somers, 1994). Analysis of narratives can contribute to a better understanding of college-choice decision-making by highlighting how students’ decisions reflect the narratives they have about themselves and the social world.

METHOD

This project is based on 46 in-depth interviews with high-achieving students from the Bay Area in their senior year in high school. To be considered high-achieving, students needed to have SAT scores above 1260 or ACT scores above 28 and an unweighted GPA of at least 3.7. Higher-SES students were recruited primarily from two schools through the use of snowball sampling. At each of the two high schools, I reached out to students in school clubs and via flyers that were posted on school campus, resulting in 20 interviews. The remaining three higher-SES students from this study were recruited via flyers that I posted around Berkeley and Oakland. Lower-SES students were recruited primarily

from their participation in several college preparation programs for low-income and first-generation college students. The other four lower-SES students were recruited through their schools by way of teachers forwarding my research to their students.

Most students were interviewed twice, with the first interview being the primary one that inquired about how students applied to college and the second one being the follow-up about where students will attend college. The first interview consisted of questions about students' individual and family background, their approach to higher education, their preparation for college, their exploration of colleges, and lastly, where they applied to colleges. These interviews were conducted at libraries and cafes. They lasted anywhere from 45 minutes to 2.5 hours, but most averaged 1.5 hours. The second interview was over the phone and lasted anywhere between 15 and 30 minutes.

To determine the socioeconomic background of students, students were asked to discuss the educational backgrounds and occupations of their parents and to choose among ordered income categories in increments of 25K for their family income (e.g., less than 25K, 50–75K [...] more than 250K). Of the research participants, 23 were categorized as lower-SES and 23 were categorized as higher-SES. Lower-SES students were defined as students whose parents have not completed a bachelor's degree and were not working in a professional occupation. Among lower-SES students, all but three students had parental incomes under US\$50,000. These three students had family incomes between US\$50,000 and US\$75,000. These students were still categorized as lower-SES based on the lack of a higher education and the absence of a professional occupation among the parents. Moreover, these students participated in programs for socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Consequently, lower-SES students in this research refers to poor, low-income, working class, and first-generation college students.

Higher-SES students were defined as those students for whom at least one parent has a bachelor's degree or higher and was working in a professional occupation. Among higher-SES students, all students had family income above US\$75,000 except for two. One student reported his family income as between US\$25,000 and US\$50,000 and the other stated his family income was between US\$50,000 and US\$75,000. These two students were still categorized as higher-SES students based on the backgrounds and current circumstances of their parents. One student was living in an affluent community; both of his parents are college graduates from China but only his father was currently working. The other student also attended school in an affluent area; his parents are both college graduates, but his father was forced into retirement making his mother the only working adult. As a result, higher-SES students are from families that are considered middle- and upper-middle class.

Among the lower-SES sample, there were 3 African Americans, 15 Asian Americans, and 5 Hispanics. For the higher-SES sample, there was 1 was Hispanic, 12 Asian Americans, 8 whites, and 2 multiracial students. There were more females than males in each SES group. Except for the three African American students and seven (out of eight) white students, all other students in

the study had at least one parent who is an immigrant. Some of these students were themselves immigrants.

To analyze my data, I first transcribed the interviews. Then I selected six interview transcripts, representing students from both SES groups, for a detailed analysis. I then coded these six transcripts and identified main themes. Next, I applied the codes and themes from these selected interviews to the other interview transcripts. I made sure to avoid trying to fit all interview responses into the themes identified in the initial six interviews. After new codes and themes emerged in later transcripts, I went back and applied them to the earlier transcripts. Based on this process, I identified themes around how schools, families, and programs shaped students' understanding of what colleges are appropriate to them. All names used in the chapter are pseudonyms.

FINDINGS

My analysis of interview data reveals that social class experiences shape how much autonomy students perceive in making their decisions about where they can apply to college. Adopting narratives of interdependence or independence, students chose to present stories to answer questions about who they are and where they are heading. Lower-SES students spoke about dealing with family struggles and structural constraints, whereas higher-SES students told stories of how their parents set them up to make decisions about what they want to do growing up. Students were not just speaking about a single point in time. They referenced their experiences and upbringing during childhood, throughout middle and high school, and up to the point when they decided where to apply to college. While the overarching theme of the narrative among higher-SES students was that of autonomy, it was that of constraints grounded in child/parent interdependence for lower-SES students. This focus on interdependence limited lower-SES students to applying to colleges in California only. In contrast, higher-SES students highlighted the initiative and autonomy they had in their lives, which enabled them to consider applying to colleges across the country.

Narratives of Interdependence among Lower-SES Students

Lower-SES students recounted stories that reflected what I call a narrative of interdependence. These stories included a combination of students' awareness of the sacrifices and struggles of their parents to support the family, students' family responsibilities while in high school, students' anticipation of their role in the health and success of their family in the future, and parental pressures (direct and indirect) for students to stay close to home for college. Due to these experiences, lower-SES students believed not only that their families needed them, but that they also needed their families. Consequently, lower-SES students viewed making decisions about college as an undertaking that

required taking into account the real and perceived needs and wishes of the family.

Interdependence Grounded in Immediate and Anticipatory Family Obligations

Some lower-SES students were forced to contend with family responsibilities while in high school and they drew upon such responsibilities to make sense of the college-choice decision-making process. These students anticipated family responsibilities to persist beyond high school and to potentially interfere with their college plans. As such, they have had to modify their plans accordingly to address these potential responsibilities when they are in college. Jack, the son of a Chinese immigrant mother who works an in-home care assistant, is among those students whose upbringing and family experience reflect a narrative grounded in immediate and anticipatory family obligations. Jack speaks about having to take on many family responsibilities throughout high school. While he views these responsibilities as an inconvenience, he understands that is something he must do for his mother who raised him:

I really don't like it. I know it's partially my responsibility to help her because, as her son, she's helped me as a mother [...] I help my mom to relieve this guilt of having to take care of me. She works so much and for so long and I respect her for that. I understand it's all for me. I don't like to but I do my best to help her.

Jack recognizes the sacrifices his mother has made for him to live a comfortable life. As a consequence, he feels obligated to support his mother as much as he can. Knowing this however troubles him when he contemplates what will happen when he is away at college. He worries who will read mail or help his mother navigate English-only institutions. The prioritization of his mother's needs in his decision-making is evident in his discussion on how family responsibilities affect his college choices:

That's the reason why I didn't apply to colleges out of state. I only applied to colleges in California. Only Stanford, the rest are California public schools. I know it'll be closer and in a sense easier to help my mom than out of state.

As a result of a narrative of interdependence, Jack feels constrained in his decision-making about where he can attend college. For Jack, college means a continuance of family relationships and the possibility that he may be called upon to assist his mother while in college. Consequently, he has to confine his college choices to places where he can reach home within driving distance, which he defines as in California. He states, "Out of state is not an option and plane ticket is not an option." In the end, Jack applied to five UCs, four CSUs, and Stanford, all colleges in California.

Meiying, the daughter of Chinese immigrants, is also another student who has had to support her family while in high school. Meiying's mother experienced an injury at her factory job, forcing her to stop working and to see doctors frequently. Meiying has to accompany her mother to many of these office visits. She is also tasked with many family responsibilities: she drives her brother to school, shops for the family, and does household chores. These responsibilities

have caused her to occasionally question the prospect of attending college far away from home:

I don't know how I feel about going away from home. I do hope that my mom gets better after she comes back. I have been taking care of her and my brother this year so if I go away next year, I guess my mom would have to take care of my brother or he'll have to take care of himself [...] I don't know how my brother will take care of himself. Even though he's one year younger, I do most of the housework.

Unlike Jack, Meiyong also has to contend with the fact that her parents insist she stay close to home for college, a common theme especially among lower-SES female students. Her parents believe there are plenty of good colleges nearby. More importantly, her parents want her to stay close so they can support one another:

Since they are very protective of me, they always make sure that I am safe. I think they want to continue looking after me in college. If I go far away in college and something happens, they can't get to me because they don't speak English and they don't know how to communicate with people around them. I think it's better for me to be around them and help them when they need help.

Meiyong's narrative of interdependence results from her responsibilities while in high school, her parents' insistence that she attend college near home, and her own understanding that she needs to be available while in college to support her parents. As a result, she views college as a continuance of the family-child dependence that has guided her throughout high school. This narrative imposes limitations on her choices of colleges, forcing her to only consider colleges in California. She ended up applying to four UCs, four CSUs, and two private colleges.

Interdependence Grounded in Anticipatory Family Concerns

Most lower-SES students do not have to actively support or intervene on their parents' behalf while they are in high school. Even with little to no current family obligations, these students still feel tied to their parents' well-being and they worry about their family as they ponder their own future. One such student is Carlos, the son of Mexican immigrants. He does not have family responsibilities, but he depends on his father for moral and social support. Moreover, recognizing how hard his father has to work as a construction worker, he is concerned about his father's health while he is away at college. This narrative of interdependence has factored into Carlos' thought process about where he should attend college:

I feel if I go far away, I'm going to miss my dad. I'm going to miss what he does. My dad cooks. I'm going to miss my dad's food. I'm going to miss the presence of my dad. Me and my dad, we always laugh so I feel like those jokes and laughter I'm going to miss a lot. And then with his job, I don't know [if] at the end of the day, when I go back home from school I'm never certain if he's alive or something bad happened. When I go to college, I won't know until I call him when he comes home. I'm kind of scared because I never know if my dad's okay.

Like other lower-SES students, Carlos' discussion of his upbringing and college choice decision-making is filled with concern and saturated with constraints about where he can go to college after taking into account the needs of his

family. The emotional support of his father and his concern about his father's well-being play a significant role in how Carlos thinks about where he can attend college. Given this narrative, Carlos reasons that he should stay relatively close to home while in college so that he can check up on his father and come home if needed to relieve stress. Carlos ended up applying to four UCs and four CSUs.

Marcus, the son of an African American couple, is another student who is worried about his family when he thinks about the prospect of college. His family has relocated multiple times across the country as his parents search for stable employment. At one time, they were homeless for eight months. As a result of their situation, Marcus and his family have had to develop a close-knit relationship to help them make it through the tough times. The importance of maintaining relationships with family members is also reinforced explicitly by his parents, who attribute their precarious financial situation to the lack of strong bonds with extended family:

I think the biggest thing that they have tried to enforce is that when we get our own family is to make sure that we become close to our relatives because they are saying that having access to relatives and getting to know them would have helped us on multiple occasions. We wouldn't have had to move so much if we had relatives help us out in certain situations.

This experience with poverty, dislocations, and reliance on one's family has deeply affected how Marcus thinks about college. As someone who is interested in studying engineering, he is well aware of the importance of going to a school that specialize in that field. However, his family upbringing and experiences have cast doubts about where he can attend college. His family recently moved to the Bay Area to be closer to other family members. But even here, he still continues to be troubled by family issues. In the following text, he reflects on his decision against applying to out-of-state colleges, specifically to his dream school of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), an elite private research university:

Marcus: At the moment, I'm more keen on going to a UC because of all the deaths or things in my family. I still want to go to MIT, it's still my number one choice but I have to put that aside for when I go for my graduate degree. At the moment, I'm going to try to stay in state.

Interviewer: You say you want to stay close to home? Tell me more about that?

Marcus: As I stated earlier, there's been a whole bunch of deaths in my family. My grandpa died about two months prior and my grandma died yesterday. My uncle has stage four cancer and he's going to die soon. And so then, I want to be there to support them.

Despite the countless obstacles and issues that he and his family has endured, Marcus remains steadfast in his commitment to attend college. However, his experiences have forced him to push off more ambitious goals like attending MIT. His narrative of interdependence, expressed in his awareness of the importance of a close-knit family for overcoming crises, grounded his decision to only apply to colleges in California. He anticipates family issues to linger and he recognizes the importance of being near home while in college so that he can provide support. He applied to four UCs and four CSUs.

Some students not only anticipated family difficulties while in college but they also faced opposition from their parents against pursuing higher education far away from home. Jay is the son of Chinese immigrants. His mother is unemployed but his father works at a company warehouse. Unlike other lower-SES students, Jay has many extended family members who have attended and graduated from college. Yet, he still anticipated obstacles in where he could attend college. This anticipation is grounded in his observation of the geographic constraints imposed upon where his older cousins could attend college and his own struggle with his mother over the same issue. The failure of the parents in Jay's extended family to distinguish between various types of colleges played a role in their resistance against letting their children attend college across the country. Yet, the larger issue is that parents still want to be able to take care of their children:

It's more convenient for the both of us. Say if I get homesick, being in [UC] Santa Cruz, it's only an hour and a half from Oakland if they want to see me or I want to see them or if there's a family emergency, it's a lot more convenient than if I went out of state or to SoCal [Southern California].

Students like Jay come to eventually internalize these worries as well and it shapes how far from home they think they can attend college. This is the case with Jay, who applied to four UCs, four CSUs, and an in-state private university. This narrative of interdependence, expressed in the anticipation of ongoing dependence between child and parents beyond high school, shaped his college choice decision-making.

It was more likely the case that students who faced family resistance toward pursuing higher education far from home were female students. Maria is the child of Mexican immigrants. Her family relies on government assistance, in the form of food stamps and subsidized housing, to supplement her mother's meager wages. Recognizing the difficulties her family has faced, Maria is set on making her mom proud by being the first one in the family to attend college. Yet Maria is aware that family issues can be a potential obstacle:

So what if my mom gets sick. She has hypertension so I worry about that all the time. My brother, he's 14. What if there's peer pressure and he becomes involved with something. What if my little siblings get injured? I always think about different situations. What if a family member passes away? I recently had that and that was really hard because I was finalizing my senior project and obviously I had to take time to go to the funeral and all that stuff.

Given what has transpired in her life with her family's economic and health issues, Maria already anticipates that similar issues may arise in the future. These experiences and the concerns it brings have already impacted where she thinks she can go to college. In addition to anticipating family issues, Maria has also received pushback from her family when she told them about the possibility of attending UCLA. They did not understand why she was seriously considering UCLA when UC Berkeley is a good school that is close by. As a result, distance from home is an important consideration in where she applies to college: "Being close to home is just, I guess if I ever needed help or just even emotional help, my mom will be there. Just being close to my mom is really valuable for me."

As a result, Maria applied to only in-state universities: four UCs, four CSUs, and a couple of private colleges.

Heterogeneity among Lower-SES Students

The majority of lower-SES students (18 of 23) talked about their experiences and upbringings that reflected a narrative of interdependence. In a couple of cases, students are still able to apply to out-of-state colleges even when they project a narrative of interdependence. These students usually have multiple experiences being in environments, particularly beyond California, which helps them to view out-of-state colleges as desirable options that will introduce them to a new experience. Those students who did not possess a narrative of interdependence did not anticipate their family to be a cause of concern or a source of obligation in the future. The absence of a narrative of interdependence does not automatically mean that students will apply to out-of-state colleges. Lower-SES students without a narrative of interdependence remained tentative about applying to such colleges if they are unfamiliar with those environments because they perceive such areas as less diverse culturally.

Narratives of Independence among Higher-SES Students

In comparison to lower-SES students, higher-SES students expressed a narrative of independence, which consist of a combination of three elements. One element is initiative, in which students stresses their ability to identify academic and extracurricular activities for themselves, rather than having it forced upon them by their parents. Another is curiosity, which can be initiated by the parents or students, but involves the student gaining exposure to a new set of experiences. This often happens through family vacations, camps, or other organized activities that result in students developing an interest about places and things beyond their local environment. The third element is autonomy, in which students emphasize that when it comes to choosing what activity to participate or what college to apply to, it is they who make the decisions, not their parents. These three aspects of a narrative of independence – initiative, curiosity, and autonomy – shape how students understand their past and how they think about their future, specifically about where to apply to college and what criteria to use in their college search. As a result of this narrative, higher-SES students perceived a great deal of autonomy in their lives and with regards to their college choices. Consequently, higher-SES students framed college as an opportunity to explore a new environment in a different part of the country.

Scott's case exemplifies the centrality of initiative and autonomy in higher-SES students' narratives of independence. His mother graduated from college and his father owns a small business. Scott fondly remembers his father working with him in elementary school to help him overcome his speech impediment. While Scott recognizes his parents' involvement in his life, Scott is quick to

emphasize aspects that reflect his initiative and autonomy. This is readily seen in his discussion about the role of his parents in his life:

I think they're hands-off because they trust me. They set me up initially [...] This is the thing. For instance, I used to fly out to San Diego to visit my grandparents. From an early age I packed my bag. They just tell me what to do. It's like, "What do you want to do for the summer." I'm like, "I want to do this and this over the summer." "So circle them on the booklet and tell me what weeks you want to do what." It's like I knew, I chose what I did by myself and I organized it. They just provided help, finding me a ride or something.

Scott projects a narrative of independence that relies on identifying moments within interactions that demonstrated his initiative and autonomy. Scott still depends on his parents in that they pay for his activities, but he is more focused on how he is able to identify and choose his activities. He minimizes the involvement of his parents and stresses the centrality of his own efforts in organizing his experiences. This narrative shapes how he understands higher education. For instance, Scott relishes the opportunity to attend college outside of California. Being far away from home was a key criterion in his college search because he wants to extend his independence from his parents. He is unconcerned about returning home for the holidays or during school breaks, a comment that reflects his social class upbringing in which his parents have provided financial support for his activities and experiences. Scott ended up applying to one CSU, multiple UCs, an in-state private university, and multiple out-of-state public and private universities on the West Coast and the East Coast.

Unlike Scott, Lan's parents were more active in shaping his direction in life. His parents decided to move the family to the United States from China so that he could take advantage of the educational system from high school through college. Yet, despite the greater involvement on the part of his parents, the consequence was not a sense of constraint but rather a developed sense of curiosity accompanied by a sense of autonomy in his decision-making. For instance, Lan occasionally follows his father, an editor for a Chinese-English environmental website, across the country and even abroad when his father gives lectures at university campuses:

I think they've [my parents] always tried to expose me to different things, especially my dad. He takes me on his trips to see different parts, see different things. I get to see his environmental work in Tibet. So you know he's showing me that I can do whatever that I like to do. That's also good for college. I think generally they are pretty open. They didn't force me to do anything that I didn't really want to.

Lan makes it clear that he does not feel coerced by his parents to go on these trips, keeping intact his sense of autonomy. Instead, he views these trips as opportunities to explore and to be exposed to new things and places. This developed sense of curiosity motivated him to become involved with an organization at his high school that takes students around the world to build schools in developing countries. With this organization, Lan has traveled to Nepal and Haiti.

These experiences have shaped his desire to move out of his local environment for college:

I think just expanding my horizon. Maturing as a person. Learning practical skills. I feel like I am pretty mature, I think for myself but I don't have any practical skills that I can apply in a job situation. Getting some of that, expanding, getting to know the world better. I just think it brings a lot of different opportunities. If I don't go, I would be stuck [in the Bay]. Not much going on in here.

Lan frames college as an opportunity to move beyond this comfort zone and to experience as much of the world as possible. This framing is made possible by his trips across the country and around the world and his upbringing, which has instilled a sense of curiosity of faraway places and a sense of autonomy about choosing his path. Lan specifically targeted many colleges outside of California that would enable him to satisfy these expectations: five UCs, six Ivy Leagues, three out-of-state and one in-state liberal arts college, and another private out-of-state university.

Anna comes from a household in which both of her parents, who are European immigrants, have completed their doctorates. Her parents foster her curiosity and sense of independence by encouraging her to explore her interests. They give her the freedom to figure out what she wants to do with her life:

I don't think they ever forced me to do anything. I'm lucky. I got to figure that out for myself. I think they got this from Europe or something. They are like, "You will get to what you want to do when you get to college. You can do anything and it's completely fine. You don't have to figure it out until you are 21." [...] Because of that I have the freedom to figure out for myself what is it that I want to do.

In the aforementioned excerpt, the themes of curiosity and autonomy are present. Anna's parents encourage her to explore different interests and leave it up to her to decide what to explore. She brings up an example of her initiative to show that she is in control of what she does and that her parents are primarily supporters, and not decision-makers. While her parents encourage her to explore her different interests, Anna is adamant that it is not them but she who initiates these activities, a common theme in the narrative of independence among higher-SES students.

Anna's narrative of independence is bolstered by her experience traveling alone. Through her parents' social connections, Anna was able to explore Europe by herself. These trips helped cultivate her curiosity about experiences and places different from where she grew up, which shapes her interest in colleges outside of California:

I didn't think about it as I'm going away from home. It's like I'm just going someplace different [...] I have absolutely no problem going to school there [far away]. I want to go on adventures. I want to experience the world. That means I have to leave California. I love traveling to new places so I'll be fine.

Instead of viewing her attendance at a college out of state or out of the country as being away from her family, Anna frames it as an opportunity to be exposed to a new set of experiences. This framing is made possible by her

narrative of independence, which has been shaped by her upbringing and her experiences traveling in Europe. Anna applied to over 20-plus colleges, including in-state colleges like the UCs and private colleges, out-of-state colleges such as Ivy Leagues and liberal arts colleges, and colleges in England.

While most higher-SES students portray their parents as hands-off or only moderately involved, several students describe their parents as being heavily involved in their lives, especially in the college application process. Emily, the daughter of two immigrant professionals from China, is one such student. She and her parents have clashed over her grades, her involvement in extracurricular activities, and her potential college majors. Moreover, her parents hired her a private college counselor. Yet, she sought to portray herself as autonomous by downplaying the role of her parents:

They didn't really prepare me. It was me getting myself through to college. Everything else, once again, I can't explain. I just thought it was known that to get into a good college, I need to succeed in high school.

By minimizing the influence of her parents, she projects a narrative of independence. This narrative of independence is bolstered by her middle class background, which has provided her with multiple opportunities to travel beyond California and outside of the country with a chorus group based out of San Francisco. This experience cultivated a desire to be away from her family for college. Emily applied to in-state and as well as out-of-state colleges that include the UCs, Ivy League universities, several liberal arts colleges in the Midwest, and other private research universities across the country.

DISCUSSION

By comparing the application decisions of high-achieving students from lower- and higher-SES backgrounds, I find that lower-SES students tend to limit their application choices of colleges to primarily in-state public selective and nonselective colleges whereas higher-SES students are more likely to apply to out-of-state colleges in the form of highly selective private institutions such as Ivy League universities and liberal arts colleges. To explain this difference in applications to out-of-state colleges by social class, I show how students' decisions about where to apply to college are intimately linked to the experiences of their social class background. I show that the way students perceive their relationship with and responsibility to their family in the present moment and once they are in college affects whether or not students deem an out-of-state college to be a viable option. Students' narratives about their lives are shaped by the involvement of their parents in their lives, the absence or presence of family struggles, and the absence or presence of parental restrictions on where students can attend (or apply) to college. These three sets of experiences, a product largely of the family's social class, mold what role students think they will play in the family during and beyond college. This in turn influences their understanding of which colleges are appropriate for them to apply to.

In the narratives offered by students from each social class, both highlighted certain aspects of their upbringing or experience. These narratives reflect students' understandings of their social and economic circumstances; they are how students interpret their upbringing and experiences. While lower-SES students project a narrative of interdependence, it could be argued that lower-SES students, given what they have had to overcome to become high-achieving students, are just as prepared to be independent as higher-SES students. However, the immediate and anticipated family responsibilities that lower-SES students face, while preparing them for adulthood, also puts an immense weight on their shoulder when they are making decisions about their future. In the stories they told, lower-SES students rarely focused on their resilience or independence and instead spoke more about interdependence and family obstacles. For instance, rather than view the lack of involvement of their parents in the college application process as a sign of their independence or autonomy, many lower-SES students interpreted it as a drawback when they compared themselves to middle class children who are more likely to receive parental support.

Conversely, even though higher-SES students chose to highlight themes of independence and initiative, their lives could also be construed as dependent upon their parents. Indeed, studies of middle and upper-middle class families consistently show that parents are heavily involved in the lives of their children; as a result, their children dependent upon their parents' social, cultural, and economic capital to help them procure advantages in educational settings (Calarco, 2014; Hamilton, 2016; Lareau, 2002; Lareau & Weininger, 2010). While dependence can be a valid argument, it is a claim based on the behaviors of students, and not how students interpret their experiences. How students understand their experiences can be different from how others perceive it (Weiss et al., 2014). In this study, higher-SES students interpret their upbringing and experiences as one that demonstrates their autonomy and they project this understanding to their college choice decision-making. While they mentioned their parents' financial and academic support throughout their lives, this was overshadowed by their emphasis on their own initiative and independence in making their decisions.

This study contributes to a better understanding of the mechanisms of social reproduction, specifically within the family. The concept of narratives captures how this process unfolds over time through a multitude of experiences. Through narratives, we understand that the importance of family considerations in where students apply to college cannot be reduced merely to a value devoid of any concrete experiences. Rather, the decision about whether or not to apply to colleges across the country is based upon experiences and observations that students have accumulated over the years. The concept of narratives captures how parenting among most higher-SES families combined with students' repeated exposure to new experiences and environments over time help to strengthen their children's confidence about their ability to thrive far from home. These multiple experiences lead to the development of a sense of autonomy and curiosity that emboldens higher-SES students to seek out colleges far from home. Among lower-SES students, exposure to a life of economic deprivation, family responsibilities, and family health concerns influence how far from home students think

they can attend college. Once these narratives are established, lower-SES and higher-SES students interpret their past through these lenses, highlighting and emphasizing experiences and observations that fit in with this understanding.

Given the importance of college destinations in addressing social stratification, this study points to things that can be done to encourage socioeconomically disadvantaged students to apply to selective and highly selective colleges that may be located out of state or far away from home. As Hoxby and Avery (2012) demonstrates in their study, many low-income, high-achieving students do not live in close proximity to such colleges. Thus, these students often need to consider colleges located further away from home if they are interested in attending more selective colleges. Selective and highly selective colleges interested in recruiting lower-SES, high-achieving students should do more than provide information about their institutions to students. Funding programs that provide subsidized travel and residential programs for lower-SES students at their institutions would be a step toward addressing the constraints these students face. The lived experience of being at these institutions will also help students develop greater knowledge and comfort about being in these comparatively “foreign” social settings, allowing them to transcend some of the limits of their prior environments and experiences. These interventions will not necessarily address the deeper constraints that some students and family face, but they can help to change how lower-SES students understand college and their ability to thrive in an environment far from home.

The sample of students interviewed in this study may result in some limitations. First, students from lower-SES backgrounds consisted of mostly individuals from Latino and Asian backgrounds, with the overwhelming majority of students (20 of 23) being children of immigrants. Future research on this topic should investigate the extent to which narratives of interdependence are prevalent among nonimmigrant, lower-SES families. It may be the case that narratives of interdependence still exist among such populations, but other aspects of interdependence are emphasized rather than those found in this study. Also noteworthy, there were a handful of higher-SES students who were children of immigrants, but they did not project a narrative of interdependence, which means that such barriers are most likely not due to just to immigrant status alone but also social class. Second, students from this study are from the Bay Area, a region that is home to two selective private and public colleges. Moreover, California is home to several more selective colleges, albeit different from the elite institutions that occupy the East Coast. Further research should look at how students from regions in which in-state colleges are not among the highly ranked institutions make decisions about which colleges to apply to.

REFERENCES

- Abelmann, N. (1997). Narrating selfhood and personality in South Korea: Women and social mobility. *American Ethnologist*, 24(4), 786–812.
- Ball, S. J., Davies, J., David, M., & Reay, D. (2010). ‘Classification’ and ‘judgment’: Social class and the ‘cognitive structures’ of choice of higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 23(1), 51–72.

- Beattie, I. R. (2002). Are all 'adolescent econometricians' created equal? Racial, class, and gender differences in college enrollment. *Sociology of Education*, 75(1), 19–43.
- Bourdieu, P. (1999). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bowen, W. G., & Bok, D. (2000). *The shape of the river: Long-term consequences of considering race in college and university admissions*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Bowen, W. G., Chingos, M. M., & McPherson, M. S. (2009). *Crossing the finish Line: Completing college at America's public universities*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Brand, J. E., & Xie, Y. (2010). Who benefits most from college? Evidence for negative selection in heterogeneous economic returns to higher education. *American Sociological Review*, 75(2), 273–302.
- Breen, R., & Goldthorpe, J. H. (1997). Explaining educational differentials: Towards a formal rational action theory. *Rationality and Society*, 9(3), 275–305.
- Calarco, J. M. (2014). Coached for the classroom: Parents' cultural transmission and children's reproduction of educational inequalities. *American Sociological Review*, 79(5), 1015–1037.
- Carnevale, A. P., & Rose, S. J. (2004). Socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and selective college admissions. In R. D. Kahlenberg (Ed.), *America's untapped resource: Low-income students in higher education* (pp. 101–156). New York, NY: The Century Foundation.
- Chin, T., & Philips, M. (2004). Social reproduction and child-rearing practices: Social class, children's agency, and the summer activity gap. *Sociology of Education*, 77(3), 185–210.
- Desmond, M., & Turley, R. N. L. (2009). The role of familism in explaining the Hispanic-white college application gap. *Social Problems*, 56(2), 311–334.
- Ewick, P., & Silbey, S. (2003). Narrating social structure: Stories of resistance to legal authority. *American Journal of Sociology*, 108(6), 1328–1372.
- Fuligni, A. J., & Pedersen, S. (2002). Family obligation and the transition to young adulthood. *Developmental Psychology*, 38(5), 856–868.
- Fuligni, A. J., Tseng, V., & Lam, M. (1999). Attitudes toward family obligations among American adolescents with Asian, Latin American, and European backgrounds. *Child Development*, 70(4), 1030–1044.
- Grodsky, E., & Jones, M. (2007). Real and imagined barriers to college entry: Perceptions of cost. *Social Science Research*, 36(2), 745–766.
- Hamilton, L. T. (2016). *Parenting to a degree: How family matters for college women's success*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Hill, C. B., & Winston, G. C. (2006). How scarce are high ability, low-income students? In M. McPherson & M. Schapiro (Eds.), *College access: Opportunity or privilege?* (pp. 75–102). New York, NY: College Board.
- Hoxby, C. M. (2009). The changing selectivity of American colleges. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 23(4), 95–118.
- Hoxby, C. M., & Avery, C. (2012). The missing "One-offs": The hidden supply of high-achieving, low-income students. *National Bureau of Economic Research*. Retrieved from <http://www.nber.org/papers/w18586>
- Karabel, J., & Astin, A. W. (1975). Social class, academic ability, and college 'quality'. *Social Forces*, 53, 381–398.
- Kohn, M. L. (1959). Social class and parental values. *American Journal of Sociology*, 64, 337–351.
- Kohn, M. L. (1963). Social class and parental-child relationships: An interpretation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 68, 471–480.
- Kohn, M. L., & Schooler, C. (1983). *Work and personality: An inquiry into the impact of social stratification*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Lamont, M., Beljean, S., & Clair, M. (2014). What is missing? Cultural processes and causal pathways to inequality. *Socio-Economic Review*, 1, 1–36.
- Lamont, M., & Small, M. L. (2008). How culture matters: Enriching our understandings of poverty. In D. Harris & A. Lin (Eds.), *The colors of poverty: Why racial and ethnic disparities persist* (pp. 76–102). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Lareau, A. (2002). Invisible inequality: Social class and childrearing in black families and white families. *American Sociological Review*, 67, 747–776.

- Lareau, A., & Weininger, E. B. (2010). Class and the transition to adulthood. In A. Lareau & D. Conley (Eds.), *Social class: How does it work* (pp. 118–151). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Lee, E. M., & Kramer, R. (2013). Out with the old, in with the new? Habitus and social mobility at selective colleges. *Sociology of Education*, 86(1), 18–35.
- Lopez-Turley, R. N., Santos, M., & Ceja, C. (2007). Social origin and college opportunity expectations across cohorts. *Social Science Research*, 36, 1200–1218.
- Louie, V. (2004). *Compelled to excel: Immigration, education, and opportunity among Chinese Americans*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- McCabe, J., & Jackson, B. A. (2016). Pathway to financing college: Race and class in students' narratives of paying for school. *Social Currents*, 3(4), 367–385.
- McDonough, P. M. (1997). *Choosing colleges: How social class and schools structure opportunity*. New York, NY: State University of New York Press.
- McPherson, M. S., & Schapiro, M. O. (2006). Introduction. In M. S. McPherson & M. O. Schapiro (Eds.), *College access: Opportunity or privilege?* (pp. 3–15). New York, NY: College Board.
- Mullen, A. L. (2011). *Degrees of inequality*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Ovink, S. M., & Kalogrides, D. (2015). No place like home? Familism and Latino/a-white differences in college pathways. *Social Science Research*, 52, 219–235.
- Plank, S. B., & Jordan, W. J. (2001). Effects of information, guidance, and actions on postsecondary destinations: A study of talent loss. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(4), 947–979.
- Radford, A. W. (2013). *Top student, top school?: How social class shapes where valedictorians go to college*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Small, M. L., Harding, D. J., & Lamont, M. (2010). Reconsidering culture and poverty. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 629(1), 6–27.
- Smith, J., Pender, M., & Howell, J. (2013). The full extent of student-college academic undermatch. *Economics of Education Review*, 32, 247–261.
- Somers, M. R. (1994). The narrative constitution of identity: A relational and network approach. *Theory and Society*, 23, 605–649.
- Stuber, J. (2009). Class, culture, and participation in the collegiate extra-curriculum. *Sociological Forum*, 24(4), 877–900.
- Webber, D., & Ehrenberg, R. (2010). Do expenditures other than instructional expenditures affect the graduation and persistence rates in American higher education? *Economic of Education Review*, 29(6), 947–958.
- Weiss, L., Cipollone, K., & Jenkins, H. (2014). *Class warfare: Class, race, and college admissions in top-tier secondary schools*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.