

NAVIGATING UNCHARTED TERRITORY:
A LOOK AT THE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR LOW-INCOME,
MINORITIZED FEMALE STUDENTS

by

Darian Redfearn-Washington

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in
Sociology

Charlotte

2023

Approved by:

Dr. Elizabeth Stearns

Dr. Lisa Slattery Walker

Dr. Roslyn Mickelson

ABSTRACT

DARIAN REDFEARN-WASHINGTON. Navigating Uncharted Territory: A Look at the College Application Process for Low-Income, Minoritized Female Students. (Under the direction of DR. ELIZABETH STEARNS).

Objectives

As the United States economy moves from a manufacturing to technology economy, the number of those jobs that require postsecondary education has increased. In an effort to ensure that the United States can compete in a global market it is imperative to ensure that minority youth are able to attend college. According to Bourdieu's theoretical work, minority and lower class students do not have the social networks, cultural capital, and/or financial capital as their counterparts. These differences create hurdles when navigating the college application process. As a result, many students experience college undermatch. College undermatch occurs when a student has the credentials to attend a selective college, but does not (Smith et al, 2013). Instead, he or she may choose a community college or remain close to home at a less selective four-year university. However, Lareau (2015) highlights cultural guides or individuals who help upwardly mobile adults navigate institutions. Cultural guides can be teachers, coaches, ministers, or family friends. The goal of a cultural guide is to help prospective college students that are unaware of how to optimize the college application and financial aid process and increase exposure to colleges.

Methods

To explore this phenomenon, interviews were conducted with low income, first generation, native born, minority female students at a large public university located in the Southeast region of the United States. Students were asked about their college application experience and who helped them throughout the process.

Findings

Respondents reveal the importance of having a cultural guide assist them with the college application and financial aid process. Respondents attest to the fact that their college application process and journey would have been different without the assistance of their cultural guide.

Implications

If education is to be a means for upward mobility, marginalized and minority students should be given the proper assistance and information in regards to the process of college selection, financial aid application, and navigating higher education.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my family for giving me encouragement and being my biggest supporters throughout my educational journey. As a first-generation college student, education is a means of social mobility and I am blessed to be able to continue to pursue my dreams and aspirations. Next stop, PhD!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, thank you to my committee chair, Dr. Elizabeth Stearns, for her willingness to assist me throughout the thesis writing process. Your constant feedback, suggestions, and countless number of hours invested are appreciated. To the other committee members, Dr. Roslyn Mickelson and Dr. Lisa Slattery Walker—thank you for your literary and methodological contributions. I could not have accomplished this educational feat without all of you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
THEORETICAL FRAME.....	3
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	4
DATA AND METHODS.....	14
RESULTS.....	16
DISCUSSION.....	28
CONCLUSION.....	34
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	36
REFERENCES.....	38

INTRODUCTION

Within the United States, higher education is seen as having the potential to facilitate occupational attainment, create increased income and wealth, provide greater knowledge of civics and participation in the political process, and encourage healthy practices that contribute to living smarter and longer (Ma et al., 2019). However, not everyone who desires to obtain higher education is able to. Circumstances and life chances create unique situations for individuals. For example, individuals vary in parental involvement in schools and decision making, attending charter or public school, and being designated as gifted and encouraged to prepare for college versus a trade school route.

Academic preparation can explain a fraction of the college enrollment and college completion rate. However, even for students that have had similar levels of achievement in high school, students from lower socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds both enroll and graduate at lower rates compared to those from higher SES backgrounds (Ma et al., 2019). White individuals have the highest enrollment rates for post-secondary education. Regardless of SES, minority students have higher educational expectations, such as wanting to obtain a bachelor's degree than their white peers (Villalobos, 2021). However, minority students enroll in college at lower rates than their white peers (Villalobos, 2021). Additionally, first-generation students are less likely to attend college compared to their peers and the majority choose to enroll in a two-year college due to individual circumstances (Engle, 2007).

Similar to the work of Ma et al. (2019), much of the literature on higher education focuses on enrollment, such as investigating reasons for the differences in racial, socioeconomic, and gender enrollment rates, rather than the college application process. One phenomenon

regarding college enrollment is academic undermatch, which takes place when a student chooses to attend a college or university that is less selective than their qualifications (Smith et. al, 2013). Academic undermatch has been found to be more common for students from low SES status families and those who have parents with no college degree (Smith et. al, 2013). The literature on college undermatch focuses on the extent rather than the underlying mechanisms or possible mediators, such as teachers or advisors who might help students through the college application process (Deutschlander, 2017).

In this thesis, I will first outline the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu's work. Then, I will review the literature on the preceding processes and experiences leading up to the college application process. Next, I will build on Calarco's work of how students operate within the classroom and extend it to students in secondary schools (2015) and Calarco's work on the reproduction of educational inequalities. The mechanisms through which the socioeconomic status of families and class based differences outside and within the classroom create hurdles in applying for and obtaining higher education (Calarco, 2014). I will highlight the differences in the college application process for minority and low-income students to pinpoint who acts as cultural guides for low-income, first-generation, minority, female students. The goal is to identify specific individuals, which Lareau (2015) termed "cultural guides," who can help students at pivotal moments such as the college application process in a student's educational journey. In addition, I sought to discover in what specific ways cultural guides provide assistance to students during the college application process and uncover the social forces which constrain students from underprivileged backgrounds. Finally, I sought to understand the impact of the assistance provided by cultural guides during the college application process and if their assistance made a difference throughout the process.

The implications of this research are to recognize key individuals who have helped disadvantaged students through the college application process and to strategize ways to implement more possible guides and knowledge in regards to applying and navigating college into the lives of high school students. In the end, I will acknowledge the limitations of my study and suggest reforms.

THEORETICAL FRAME

Bourdieu's theory of practice accounts for the individual and institutional forces that shape stratification in educational outcomes. The theory of practice will be used in this paper as the theoretical framework to support the research in this study. Bourdieu (1977) defines a field as the actors and organizations involved in an arena of social or cultural production. Humans work to accumulate and monopolize different forms of capital. Capital can be anything from attributes, possessions, or qualities for a person or position. Habitus is "a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks" (DiMaggio, 1979 p.1464). Habitus is a product of experiences in early childhood and unconscious family socialization. Habitus constantly changes as individuals interact with the world around them. Bourdieu was a pioneering sociologist who identified the stratification present in the higher educational system. "Schools, he argues, reproduce and legitimize the class structure by transforming social distinctions into educational distinctions, seen as distinctions of merit" (DiMaggio, 1979 p.1463).

Drawing from Bourdieu's theoretical work, I will review the sociological literature in order to explain how invisible and prevalent social forces shape an individual's educational

journeys and prospect of gaining a higher education prior to the college application process.

Bourdieu's theory of practice applies to my research because I aim to examine how different forms of capital and habitus on account of social background, child rearing, and school experiences create differences during the college application process. There are also institutional practices and outcomes such as tracking and ability grouping and turnover which affect the college application experience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand the differences in an individual's educational journey and the silent and invisible forces that constrict education for some while opening pathways for others, I utilize Bourdieu's theory of practice. The purpose of this literature review is to synthesize the sociological literature on the social forces, most of which remain underneath the surface of educational journeys. Factors include parental involvement in schooling (*as opposed to selecting clothes or a new car*) and designation of giftedness by school actors, and related tracking impact on preparation for secondary education. In addition, social forces such as socioeconomic status (SES) and being a first-generation college student have implications as well.

a. Social forces

High SES parents possess forms of capital which they can pass on from one generation to the next. In fact, "One of the best predictors of whether a child will one day graduate from college is whether or not his or her parents are college graduates" (Lareau, 2011 p.8) and "2/3 rds of the members of society reproduce their parent's level of educational attainment while about 1/3 rd take a different path" (Lareau, 2011 p.8). Thus, most children's educational journey depends on what their parents can offer in terms of cultural capital. If parents have gone through the college

application process and/or attend college themselves, he or she would have knowledge about the process and necessary procedures. However, income is often tied to education and lower-class parents who only obtain a high school diploma are not versed in the college application process or college life, so there are nuggets of information they do not possess themselves. Ultimately, as a society, we do not want students who are ambitious and willing to work hard to miss out on opportunities to further their education and in turn secure their financial futures. Thus, this study is important to find ways to add to the human capital and cultural knowledge to assist vulnerable populations in the college application process.

i. SES/Habitus

Habitus is formed during early childhood and as a result of family socialization, strongly influences how students from different social backgrounds interact with teachers in the classroom. Lareau (2015) found that young adults with middle class backgrounds were more knowledgeable about the “rules of the game” for institutions compared to their working-class and poor counterparts. Additionally, middle class students possessed a sense of entitlement and were not hesitant to ask for help. Middle class children had the luxury of having parents who shaped them early in life about how to navigate institutions. Adults give them advice, which comes with an expectation that when help is needed, it will be given. However, working class students tend to have a sense of individualism and attempt to do things themselves. They were unlikely to ask for help or to receive it.

Within the classroom, the way in which and how children seek help from teachers is different depending on social-class background. An ethnographic study conducted by Calarco (2012) found that there were no specific rules for asking for help within the observed classrooms.

However, middle-class children would ask for help more often and had different strategies than working-class children. Middle-class children would call out or approach teachers even going as far as interrupting to get their needs met instead of raising their hands. In fact, teachers expected students to be “proactive learners” and to reach out for help when needed, but this expectation was implied, never directly told to students. Working-class students did not often admit that they were in need of assistance. Working-class students would raise and wait for the teacher to acknowledge him or her which might require some waiting time for the teacher to notice and respond to their request. Additionally, when working-class students approached their teachers they were often soft spoken and failed to make eye contact (Calarco, 2012). In short, students who ask for help and go out of their way to make sure they are both seen and heard are more likely to get their requests handled compared to students that are okay with waiting or being indiscrete about wanting assistance. This habit can be negative in seeking assistance from adults and other individuals within school settings. Students who identify as first-generation and low-income may not have someone at home who has navigated the college application process. So, teachers, if the student is willing to approach him or her and seek assistance, could be helpful during the application process. However, students who do not ask for help in class may be less likely to ask for help during the college application process.

ii. First-Generation

First-generation students are defined as “students whose parents have not attended college and/or have not earned a college degree” (Engle, 2007 p.25). First-generation students are more likely to be older, female, identify as Black or Hispanic, have dependent children, and come from low-income families. First-generation students have an increased probability of delaying entry into college, which can reduce the chances of ever enrolling in college and

persisting in college until graduation (Engle, 2007). Parental support encompasses parents getting involved in the college-going process such as attending workshops on financial aid, creating a savings account for their children, and going on college tours. However, first-generation college students receive less parental support than their counterparts (Engle, 2007).

First-generation students who do not have parents that attended college are less likely to involve their parents in their college planning process (Robinson and Roksa, 2016). In fact, college knowledge tends to be the lowest for parents with lower income and levels of education. First-generation college students and low-income students are more likely to have both limited and inadequate information (Deutschlander, 2017; Roderick et al., 2011). As an added disadvantage, individuals who have lower levels of information in regard to knowledge about college are also less likely to utilize other sources of social capital such as counselors, teachers, and college representatives for college information (Robinson and Roksa, 2016). If first generation students do not rely on their parents' experience within college and during the college application process, students must seek help from other individuals.

iii. Parental Involvement Before and During College Application

Middle-class parents often have the time and ability to volunteer at schools and have connections with school personnel and are familiar with the school expectations. Due to their own educational experiences, they also are able to help their children with homework in many subjects and in making educational decisions. Information between middle-class parents is often exchanged and as a result, middle-class parents typically know the timing of state assessments, the school's weekly schedule, and how to successfully request accommodations. In stark

contrast, working-class parents often believed that the school and its personnel should decide and execute what was in their children's best interest. Thus, even if a working-class parent was frustrated by a decision made by a teacher, he or she would not intervene (Calarco, 2014). Working-class parents often viewed classroom issues through a "logic of constraint." Because of their own educational and occupational attainment, they viewed themselves as less knowledgeable than the educators and therefore did not question the teacher's judgment. Working-class parents did not regularly volunteer at the school and were not familiar with the expectations, personnel, and procedures at the school. As a result, working-class parents often defaulted to their own experiences in school to guide their interactions and instructions they provided to their own children (Calarco, 2014).

Calarco (2014) found that "parents contributed to social reproduction by actively equipping children with class-based strategies that generated unequal outcomes when activated at school" (Calarco, 2014 p. 1016). For example, working-class parents encouraged their children to respect the authority of the teacher by not asking for help compared to middle-class parents who supported their children's efforts to negotiate with teachers for assistance. For this reason, children receive different responses from their teachers and there are differing advantages in school (Calarco, 2014). Those who asked for help were more likely to be academically successful than those who declined to ask for assistance.

Roksa and Deutschlander (2018) acknowledge that a focus on parents for understanding the educational outcomes of students in K-12 schools. They are interested in the role families also play in higher education application and attainment due to the resources they can and cannot provide to their children. Families influence the college decision making process by shaping the attitudes of what is important to take into consideration, such as cost and living at home, as well

as college-going behaviors for students including the sources students use to evaluate their choices and the number of applications he or she submits. In fact, a student's perception of expenses and living at home are associated with whether a student undermatched their academic potential with their college of choice (Roksa and Deutschlander, 2018). Lastly, Roksa and Deutschlander (2018) found that "students embedded in families with more social and cultural capital are less likely to undermatch" (p.15). In contrast, "the lack of information or inaccurate information is a potential barrier for socioeconomically disadvantaged students" (Robinson and Roksa, 2016 p. 846).

While most parents want to support their children in school " many parents do not know how to assist their children in ways to improve school performance" (Hill and Craft, 2003 p.74). Parental involvement in children's education has been linked with positive outcomes such as improvements in school behavior and school performance. Parental involvement in education activities both at school and home can improve children's performance in school because it helps with academic skills and feeling comfortable during social interactions. Parents can be involved by volunteering at school, participating in home-learning activities, and emphasizing the importance of education for their children.

There are ethnic differences in parental school involvement. For example, African American parents might monitor their child's performance in school but have feelings of limitation about intervening and/or having the knowledge to intervene at school. In addition, Euro-American parents tend to have informal networks within schools which provide them with information about the climate of the school and the school activities (Hill and Craft, 2003). Parents who are involved in schools can activate the connections they make with institutional

agents in efforts to help their students, using their social and cultural capital to navigate the college application process (Robinson and Roksa, 2016).

Parental involvement in the college application process is significant because it is the most important factor in affecting students' aspirations and college planning regardless of parent's level of education (Engle, 2007). During the college application process, middle- and upper-class parents are involved by "providing information, seeking out resources, and visiting schools" (Robinson and Roska, 2016 p.847). However, students that have lower-class backgrounds and parents who have not attended college, are not afforded the lived experiences and knowledge gained by their parents during their college journey.

iv. Tracking and Giftedness

Tracking and ability grouping, another organizational feature of schools that affects learning and access to equality of educational opportunity is ability grouping in elementary schools and tracking in secondary schools. As early as elementary school, students go through the process of being screened for identification as gifted, regular, or special education. Once placed into a track, the instruction that the student receives is different from the curricula instruction given to students in other distinctive tracks which "leads to different educational careers" (Mickelson, 2003 p.1530). In secondary school, students are separated by academic tracks into different classrooms. "Tracks are designed to match students' abilities with differentiated curriculum and instruction" (Mickelson, 2003 p. 1530-1531). Research has suggested that in a track there are a wide array of student abilities. Also, tracking assigns minority students disproportionately to lower tracks and prevents them from entering into accelerated tracks. Students in higher-level classes tend to cover more subject matter, have

instructors that are better qualified, and get more challenging instruction than those who are in lower-level classes. Tracks are often homogenous in terms of race, ethnicity, and social class. Thus, students have lower amounts of exposure to individuals who are not in their own track and who have different characteristics (Mickelson, 2003). During the college application process, students are evaluated on the rigor and number of their selected courses. However, students that are directed into trade school or community college tracks do not take the rigorous courses admission counselors expect to see on a transcript.

b. Cultural Guides and Important People

Cultural guides are important for most students' college application process. Lareau argues that cultural guides are a form of cultural capital that has been heretofore neglected in the literature. Lareau defines cultural guides as “teachers, coaches, relatives, or friends who helped decode institutional rules of the game, gave advice, and intervened at crucial moments” (2015 p.3). The role of a cultural guide is to help prospective college students that are unaware of how to optimize the college application and financial aid process and increase exposure to colleges.

Lareau found that middle-class children had the luxury of having parents who shaped them early in life about how to navigate institutions. Working-class students tend to have a sense of individualism and attempt to do things themselves. Thus, they were unlikely to ask for help or to receive it (Lareau, 2015).

Once disadvantaged youth reach the college application point, there are different avenues he or she may need to take to reach their desired outcome. If their parent or guardian is unfamiliar with the college process, the student may have to look to other people for assistance: a cultural guide from the school, the community, or the extended family. For example, a family

friend or sports coach may provide assistance with completing both the college and financial aid application. Most importantly, a cultural guide may be needed if the student is prepared in terms of academic qualifications to attend an institution of higher education, but they lack information and knowledge of college requirements and the application process. This is another aspect of cultural capital which can be provided through the assistance of a cultural guide. Many youth that struggle to connect with a cultural guide are afraid to ask for assistance and may end up undermatching. Undermatching could be attending a community college or less prestigious university. However, according to the Standard Center on Poverty and Inequality, only 18% of students who enroll in community colleges have an associate's degree after eight years.

i.Counselors

Counselors are “key institutional agents that have the capacity to transmit valuable information, institutional resources, and opportunities regarding college to students” (Robinson and Roksa, 2016 p.848). Counselors may have the ability to help reduce the inequality in college destinations. Robinson and Roksa (2016) found that “seeing a counselor plays a significant role in predicting application to college” (p.845). There is a positive relationship between the number of high school counselors and four-year college enrollment rates, but at low-income high schools, there may not be enough counselors to provide the needed assistance (Perna, 2015). However, counselors may not be the only people students can consult for college information. Students can turn to parents, friends, relatives and even sources online which can be beneficial if counselors are unavailable (Robinson and Roksa, 2016).

c. College Application Process

The importance of cultural guides—be they parents, friends, siblings, teachers, counselors, trusted neighbors—is that they help the candidate submit the best possible application to a college. The college application process is the next step after high school. The college application is meant to present the grades, extracurricular, standardized tests, and more information that will give college admissions counselors an overall idea of who the student is and how he or she performs within and outside of school (Engle, 2007). On the basis of the information in the application, sometimes an interview, and the college's own criteria, the college application results in a candidate being accepted or rejected by a college

Socioeconomically disadvantaged students are less likely to enter or complete higher education. They are also less likely to attend selective schools that match their level of academic rigor (Robinson and Roksa 2016). According to Robinson and Roksa (2016), disadvantaged students either lack information or have inaccurate information in regards to applying and attending college. Thus, students from lower status SES groups are more likely to undermatch such as applying to and attending two-year colleges (Robinson and Roksa, 2016; Deutschlander, 2017). Unfortunately, enrolling in colleges which are less selective four-year universities or two-year institutions can have negative consequences for obtaining a degree due to the lower rates of graduation (Engle, 2007).

i. College Undermatch

Deutschlander (2017) examined the role of cultural capital in the outcome of college undermatch. The two types of capital identified were college-specific and general cultural capital. In addition, instead of treating college undermatch as a yes or no phenomenon, Deutschlander considered the different types of undermatch students can experience which are selecting a two-year university or four-year university although a student possesses credentials

for a more selective institution. This paper will focus on four-year undermatch because the study sample includes students who currently attend a four-year university. An additional limitation in the literature surrounding college undermatch is a lack of consideration for the broader social contexts in which children are raised (Deutschlander, 2017)—a key component of this paper.

Lowry (2016) looked at the process of American students choosing to attend two-year community colleges although they are academically qualified to attend more prestigious institutions. In comparison, this study examines students currently enrolled in a four-year institution. Community college seems to be an appealing choice for minority, female, first generation and rural students (Lowry, 2016). Students who opt to attend a community college or less prestigious university than one which they have the qualifications for have undermatched.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the literature reviewed in the previous pages, this study was guided by several questions:

- 1: From whom do low-income, minoritized female students seek assistance during the college application process?
2. With what specifically do individuals who provide assistance during the application process help?
- 3: What social forces impact the college decision making for low-income, minoritized female students? How do these social forces constrain or augment the process?

DATA AND METHODS

To address the research questions, the researcher used qualitative data from interviews with seven students who identify as low income, first-generation minoritized female students who attended a North Carolina public high school, and were in their first or second year of college.

Qualitative Data

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with seven students at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC), a large, minority-serving, public university in the southeast of the United States. To recruit participants, a research study announcement was sent to the entire student population. Additionally, a recruitment email was sent to professors of introductory-level classes. Potential interviewees responded to the recruitment strategies via email and interviews were scheduled via email. Interviews were conducted via Zoom. Interviews lasted between 15 to 30 minutes and were recorded to use for transcription. Students were paid a \$10 Amazon gift card for participating in the interview. All interviews were set to record the interview's visual and audio. Upon completion of the interview, the video recording was deleted and the audio transcripts were edited and corrected to create accurate transcriptions. In an effort to recruit more participants, a snowball strategy was used. Individuals who had already participated were asked to refer friends or acquaintances that may also be interested in participating. From this method, no new participants were gained. A second coder was sent an interview to ensure intercoder reliability.

The Interview Protocol (Appendix A) was designed with the assistance of the thesis chair and approved by the University of North Carolina at Charlotte Institutional Review Board. For the interview, pre-selected questions were asked and participants were given the opportunity to

elaborate with their responses. The interview protocol for all students included general questions about their educational background (“Describe how your parents or guardians were involved in your educational journey?”), questions about who helped them through the college application process (“Who helped you through the college application process?” and “Did your school have a college and career counselor?”), and how prepared and what deciding factors students used when applying to college (“What made this university attractive to you?”). The interviews were coded for key themes that emerged from answers to the interview protocol.

The analytic approach that the researcher used was a combination of deductive and inductive coding. Once interviews had been transcribed, the researcher went through each transcript and annotated looking for relevant words and phrases such as “mentor,” “help,” and “assistance.” She used memoing to capture the narrative for each participant. Then, the researcher created categories based on the emerging themes. After analyzing the results, if a code appeared in more than one interview, it was deemed noteworthy.

For example, the first research question was in regard to who served as the cultural guide for the college student, if anyone, and if that help was sufficient enough to be beneficial in the overall college application process and decision-making stage. Then, the researcher looked into what factors were evaluated during the choice process. Specifically, how did students decide which schools to apply to and which offer to accept. Then, the data was put into thematic categories and a codebook was constructed. A fellow coder was consulted to refine codes and coding definitions.

RESULTS

Table of Respondents

Respondent Pseudonym	Race	Ethnicity	Year	Age
Kaitlin	Black		Transfer, 1st year at UNCC	18
Daisy		Hispanic	2nd year	19
Alexandra		Hispanic	1st year	19
Sally		Hispanic– Mexican/Honduran	1st year	18
Michelle	Black		2nd year	19
Elizabeth	Asian		2nd year	20
Farrah	Asian			

Each research question produced both high and low level results. These results will be discussed in depth and in order within the results section. Research question one focused on the involvement of a cultural guide or lack thereof for participants and what type of assistance these guides provided during the college application process. The results show that a wide array and combination of individuals serve as cultural guides such as teachers, counselors, and siblings. Because the participants in this study are first generation as well as low-income, having key individuals who have been through the college application process and are familiar with deadlines as well as procedures did in fact impact the journey as well as the outcome of the college application process for participants.

This study utilized semi-structured interviews to gain an account of the lived experiences during the college application process of low-income, minoritized female students who attended public high schools. Participants spoke about some of the social forces such as money, cost of attendance, and distance from home as factors that influenced their college decision. In addition, participants recounted who they utilized as cultural guides throughout the college application process. Analyzing the interviews presented codes and major themes of who provided assistance and what factors lead students to select the college in which they did. Some themes which emerged are social networks and social forces such as cost, the COVID-19 pandemic, and experience. Throughout the interview process, participants spoke about how their application process was “non-traditional” on account of changes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

a. Themes

i. Common Experiences and Similarities

While the participants in this study were recruited from the entire undergraduate student population at one university and had to meet the requirements of identifying as low-income, first-generation, from a minority group, and graduated from a public high school, additional similarities emerged throughout the interviews. A majority of the participants reported taking advanced courses in high school and benefited from the process of tracking and gifted designation in elementary school. Taking AP, IB, or dual enrollment classes in high school prepared college students for the rigor of college courses and allows some of the credits to transfer to their college and counted towards general education and pre-requisite courses. College admission officers consider AP classes and challenging course level as a factor in college admissions.

Additionally, a majority of the participants applied early action, which signifies their level of commitment for the college of their choice. Early action is non-binding, but does allow for students to get an early response from the college. The deadline for early action is November 1st. Lastly, at least five out of the total seven participants reported attending a small high school.

Participants recalled the individual whom they thought helped the most throughout the college application process. While unable to rely on the experience and expertise of their parents, these first-generation students often sought out individuals with whom they had a pre-existing relationship to assist them with their college application. These individuals became their cultural guides. Additionally, the results capture the specific ways in which these guides helped during the application process. These ways included essay writing, deciding which colleges best matched the participants' career aspirations, and ensuring that participants met the college and financial aid application deadlines.

ii. Social Networks

When asked “Who helped you through the college application process?,” most participants stated an individual other than their parents. This emphasized the idea of cultural capital within Bourdieu's theory of practice. If their parents are unable to provide assistance during the college application process because they themselves lack the skills and knowledge, then their children will have to seek assistance from someone else. Participants in this study reported being within the first generation in their families to attend a four-year university. For example, responses ranged from teachers, counselors, siblings, and even a sibling's girlfriend. Cultural guides were a variety of individuals in which the participants knew. In addition, the amount of assistance received from their cultural guide varied. Several of the respondents

reported already having an established relationship with their cultural guide prior to the college application process.

Most respondents noted that their parents helped them throughout the process, but this help was limited to emotional support only. In addition, their parents were often the first individuals to mention college to them as an option and for some, an expectation. When asked about when she first thought about going to college, Farrah responded: “Probably really, like it was kind of like a given it wasn’t really like a decision for me. It was like a default.”

While most parents were unfamiliar with the college application process—in uncharted territory—but they had a spoken and understood agreement with their child that no matter the obstacles or their own lack of expertise, their child would attend college. For example, one respondent had parents who were immigrants and both uninformed and inexperienced with the college application process here in America. Unfortunately, this participant noted that she did not receive much help throughout the entire process. As Farrah said, “My parents are immigrants, so they like didn’t know how it works.”

Other than parents, respondents revealed that they were assisted by their teachers, friends, counselors, and even siblings or a combination of those individuals. Prior to the start of the college application process, relationships were already established. Thus, participants more than likely felt comfortable approaching these individuals for assistance. However, for students who attended schools with turnover, this was not the case. Turnover is a coined phrase used to describe the on-going number of teachers who choose to leave the teaching profession. According to Carver-Thomas and Darling Hammond (2017), about one-third of teachers retire, but the other two-thirds leave for other reasons such as job dissatisfaction. One participant who attended a

small high school, Sally, [a participant] had a pre-established relationship with her English teacher because he had in fact been her teacher early in her high school career.

In today's society, school personnel are often spread thin between doing their job duties and those of others who have left the profession. Thus, many respondents completed the college application process mostly on their own. Help was only given when it was sought after and when they had specific questions to ask. This is important because the institutions did not provide what the kids needed and only those who requested assistance got help from cultural guides.

Participants typically met with their counselors once or twice throughout the entire college application process. However, having someone to hold them accountable to deadlines was a common experience for participants. Only one participant missed the FAFSA deadline and she stated that she was unaware of the deadline.

Alexandra utilized a friend who already attended the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. "My biggest source of help was actually a friend from high school who came to Charlotte. So they were really like helping me with the application, because they already went through it and know what mistakes they made. And they really did help me a lot."

This illustrates Bourdieu's concept of social capital. Social capital captures the relationships and social networks within one's life. Participants benefit from having cultural guides who have pre-existing relationships.

The second research question was crafted to explore the ways in which cultural guides provided specific assistance during the college application process. Cultural guides helped participants with different aspects of the college application process. For example, students received help with identifying which colleges they would apply to. One respondent spoke about

how her cultural guide [school counselor] helped her throughout the application process. When asked “what specifically the cultural guide provided assistance with,” the response was,

the essay that you need to do for them to read, identifying colleges. See what major you want to be in and pick and she[school counselor] had a social media page which was really helpful during that time, so she would remind us of deadlines.

Cultural guides provided assistance with essay writing, recommendation writing, assistance with applying for FAFSA and scholarships, creating a list of colleges to apply to and ensuring that students had a timeline of the important dates such as FAFSA and application deadlines.

This is in line with Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital. Cultural guides tended to have more cultural capital than the immediate family members of the participants. Cultural capital includes any social assets that can be used for social mobility such as education, knowledge, and skills. Presumably, the cultural guides were more knowledgeable and had experienced the college application process themselves.

Research question three examined the impact of social forces such as financial issues (costs of college, family resources, grants and loans), distance from home, and COVID-19 on a participant's college decision making. Participants removed out-of-state colleges from their realm of possibilities because they wished to remain within a reasonable distance from home, but also because they were aware of the difference in cost between out of state and in state schools. Finances also played a major role in participants deciding the number of colleges they would apply to. College applications cost on average \$45. Participants reported that they often limited the number of schools they applied to because they did not have the funds to pay for numerous applications.

iii. Social Forces

The second research question investigated the role of various social factors in the college application process and the ultimate college selection. Participants evaluated the cost of college attendance as well as individual college applications. Additionally, their familial ties kept them within a certain distance of home. The global COVID-19 pandemic made the college application process unique for this cohort of students because of the changes which prevented in person access to their high schools and potential colleges. Finally, participants recalled the experiences of visiting their ultimate destination and some spoke about the importance of feeling a sense of belonging as someone identifies as a minority.

1. Cost of Higher Education

Participants often felt limited in the type and number of colleges they could apply to on account of cost of attendance as well as the cost of each individual application. More than half of the respondents spoke about the financial cost of the college application and the cost for overall college attendance. Concerns about the cost of college were evident in both specific and general ways. Specifically, students felt unable to apply to out-of-state and certain in-state schools. More generally, the number of applications were restricted because of cost. Strikingly, Sally noted that out-of-state colleges and universities, in line with the responses of all participants, were automatically eliminated from her mind as possible choices. This limitation caused the participants to choose from in-state schools. This decision early on in the college application process restricts the realm of possible schools participants were willing to apply to. One participant noted that, “I knew that some people are lucky enough to go to like out of state schools and to different universities and colleges. But I knew that I couldn’t afford that, and I know that in-state would be best for me.”

Additionally, Elizabeth vocalized that: “Because I knew how expensive it was to apply to these schools. I was worried about how much I’d be spending because I paid everything out of pocket. So I think that’s why I tried to keep it limited, and know for sure what I wanted, so that’s why I only applied to three instead of more.” Farrah also noted that because of working at Walmart at the time, cost was a determining factor in the number of colleges she applied to:

Because there’s like an application fee for all of them, and I don’t have that much money. I come from a lower income family. Nobody in my family has that much money. Also, at the time, I was working at Walmart which doesn’t pay amazing, so I didn’t have the money to apply for as many colleges as I wanted to.

All but one of the participants reported applying to less than five schools. Sally, on the other hand had a specific course, Senior Seminar, which set apart time and a teacher to help students with preparing their college essays as well as determining which schools they would like to apply to. Sally attended a small public charter high school in Wake County, North Carolina. Sally had an established relationship with the teacher prior to the start of the college application process because he was her English teacher during her freshman year in high school. “Yes, because of my senior class, and it was my English teacher. He made us apply to at least 9 to 10 colleges. It was a whole separate class that they offered.”

2. Distance

Participants also felt constrained to in-state schools because of their desire to be in close proximity to their families. As highlighted in the following quotes, participants wished to stay close to home, but also to have the full college experience of living on campus, taking classes, and being away from home. Elizabeth describes her choice to attend the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, “I chose UNCC because it was farther from home. So I still had an experience to grow up on my own independently, without it being too far. So I still have my parents and family there for support as well.” Elizabeth is approximately an hour and fifteen

minutes away from home. Sally is from the Cary, North Carolina area and she stated that “they (her parents) wanted her to go to the school around there because it’d be close to home.”

However, Sally was not accepted into any of the colleges she applied to within the Research Triangle. All of the participants are currently attending a college that is within a three-hour car drive from their hometown.

Michelle, a Greensboro native, spoke about her decision making process of deciding between attending the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Michelle: In state, UNCG was too expensive.

Darian Redfearn: And so how does UNCG’s tuition differ from UNCC’s tuition?

Michelle: It was higher, but it only would have been cheaper if, like I stayed home. But I didn't want to do that, I wanted to feel the college vibe.

In sum, distance was both a constraint and desire for participants. Participants had mental tension between wanting to remain in-state to be close to family, but move outside of their hometowns to experience college life on their own. Attending a school close to home might mean that participants would reside at home and commute to school daily versus living on a college campus away from their family.

3. COVID-19

Additional codes emerged during interviews which will now be discussed. Issues in broader society at the time in which the participants were going through the college application process made their experience unique to those who had done this process before them. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic caused many secondary schools and higher education to close their building doors and require students to learn virtually. Because of this, students were not

able to access their teachers in person nor were they able to attend many, if any, college visits in person. In fact, one participant, Kaitlin, reported not making any college visits. Kaitlin stated that, “It was just like during that point it was heavy into COVID times. And so, with me being immunocompromised, I didn’t want to risk catching anything at all during that time.”

In contrast, participants who were able to attend college visits were often struck by the beauty of the campus and other features that are only able to be captured in person. Some participants reported that they had both gone on campus tours and colleges visited their high schools to give brief information sessions during times such as their lunch period. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual and self-guided tours were the only option for many prospective students. Farrah described completing a self-guided tour and ending up more confused than when she started.

I did like those self-guided tour things, and it was not helpful. It left me more confused than I was originally, and since it was self-guided neither me nor my parents knew what was going on.

Farrah’s experience contrasts with Alexandra’s, who was given a personal tour by a friend who was a current student. The experience of being on campus solidified many of the participants’ desire to attend the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. In fact, Kaitlin detailed that “when I toured the campus it was just like this good feeling I had, like I belonged here compared to the other campuses that I toured.”

4. Turnover

Recently, there has been a great deal of news coverage and discussion about the current state of affairs in North Carolina for school personnel, especially teachers. Many are overworked, unpaid, and undervalued. The mass exodus of experienced, high-quality teachers and other school personnel had an impact on many of the participants in the study. In the pivotal

moments, such as the college application process when someone who is well-versed in the process was needed, some of the participants could not get in touch with school personnel or chose not to reach out to them because they were new to the school or the district and unaware of policies and practices. Thus, these participants either had to find someone else to assist or thought it would be best to rely on their own expertise. When Kaitlin was asked whether she had a college or high school counselor and if she chose to meet with him or her during the college application process, her response was “yes,” but

she was new to the school and kind of new to like guiding students along. So at some points it was really confusing. So I decided not to meet with her as often as I did with my teachers and my sibling and other people.

Similarly, one respondent revealed that “at certain times we couldn’t get a hold of her though email, or she wouldn’t be at school. We [students going through the application process] wouldn’t be able to get in contact with her.” When asked why she thought this was, the respondent replied that “there was a lot going on with her coming into our school system and trying to figure out how the previous counselor had everything set up and to continue with what the other counselor started.” The lack of availability and communication between potential cultural guides and participants could have caused participants to go through the college application alone and uninformed.

iv. Experience

Diversity

A theme of diversity and inclusion arose in many of the interviews, with participants emphasizing they desired diversity and inclusion at the specific college they chose to attend. As minoritized individuals, participants actively sought after universities which had diverse populations. Approximately half the participants identify as Hispanic and a few spoke about the

Latinx community presence at UNCC. A quote from Alexandra captured this sentiment: “When I was looking for universities, of course, like the first to come up in North Carolina was NC State, Chapel Hill, Charlotte, Appalachian. But, Charlotte, specifically, I was really interested because I saw that on their website, they had the number one LatinX movement and being in a community surrounded by my own people is really something I was looking forward to.” Similarly, Daisy reiterated the sentiment of having diversity at the university of her choice. “What really is different for Charlotte from the other schools is because it is more diverse. I love the diversity here.”

DISCUSSION

For this study, the researcher created two research questions which aimed to discover who helped participants throughout the college application process– cultural guides and in what ways they provided assistance. Also, the third research question examined what social factors placed constraints on the universe of available college options for participants.

Previous research studies (Calarco 2014 and Lareau 2015) discuss the habitus of low-income individuals within the classroom and field of education. For example, how students go about seeking out assistance from their teachers and other school personnel within the school setting.

From the data collected, there is evidence which supports prior literature on the topic of education and socioeconomic status. On the contrary, there are some findings which have real world implications which arose out of the sample, but do not align with previous literature.

In alignment with the work of Calarco (2014), participants reported that their parents who are low-income often did not participate in their educational journeys and trusting that school personnel had more information to assist during the college application process. In respect to

cultural guides, Lareau's definition is broad and allows for many individuals to potentially act as guides. This research intended to identify the specific people who assisted during the college application process for low-income, first-generation minoritized female students. The takeaways from the research are that the specific demographic group of interest used a variety of individuals in their lives to help them throughout the college application process including but not limited to teachers, counselors, and siblings. Additionally, invisible social forces are constantly working to impact college decision-making for socially and monetarily disadvantaged students. Roksa and Deutschlander (2018) emphasized the role of perceived expenses of college attendance as a factor in whether or not a student undermatched. These broad social forces affected the young women in this research study as well as those who share common identities. Lastly, individuals who acted as cultural guides often had pre-established relationships with participants and if they were school personnel, they did not have much time and assistance to offer. Participants had to reach out with specific questions and through certain protocols such as requesting a meeting through email or use of a Google calendar.

In contrast to the findings of Lareau and Calarco, who observed younger kids in elementary school, participants were not hesitant to reach out to their schoolteachers and counselors for assistance when needed. In fact, this was seen as a form of independence and a "go get it" attitude shared by most of the participants. This finding may be on account of self-selection for the respondents in the interviews.

In addition, much of the prior research on academic undermatch has taken a quantitative approach. Previous literature on academic undermatch also does not take into consideration the broader social context or social forces in which students are raised (Deutschlander, 2017). However, this research evaluated the social forces which caused participants to feel limited in the

number of schools they could apply to on account of the cost of individual school applications and the overall cost of attendance for schools. Most of the participants spoke about how important it was for them to be within a couple hours of their hometown. This deliberate choice caused the participants to automatically remove out-of-state schools from their realm of possible options. In addition, being low-income students, perceived cost of attendance is a factor that weighed heavily on their college decision making.

Secondary findings also developed during interviews. Participants spoke about their experiences having colleges come to their high schools and taking college tours on college campuses. Most participants had a visit to the University of North Carolina at Charlotte before they committed to the school. The experience of visiting the college which they were interested in attending often solidified their decision to attend.

In relation to previous research, this study revealed both alignment and contradiction. Robinson and Roksa (2016) found that “seeing a counselor plays a significant role in predicting application to college” (p.845). This proved to be true for at least a few of the participants. However, participants reported that they were at times unable to reach their counselor or that the help he or she did provide was uninformed on account of their newness to the school or the district.

Rather than a yes or no dichotomous outcome for academic undermatching, this study explored the social context in which students exist and the invisible social forces they considered when deciding first which schools to apply to, then the number of schools they should apply to and finally, which school to attend. Academic undermatch was examined as a possible result of the social constraints participants faced during the college application process.

Lastly, the majority of participants reported being tracked into AP and IB courses designed for college preparation. While Mickelson (2003) found that tracking typically assigned minority students disproportionately to lower tracks and prevented them from entering into accelerated tracks, participants in this study benefited academically from the rigorous courses and expectation that they would in fact be applying to college rather than a job or trade school.

Although this research identified several important findings, there are several limitations that should be mentioned. One, the abilities and achievements are self-reported by students and have not been verified with official transcripts or school reports. Thus, the data may not accurately determine if in fact a student has undermatched in their college application process. Two, the sample size of seven is not large enough to establish external validity. On account of the small sample size, these findings may not be able to be generalized to a larger context. Yet, they can serve as a guide for use in future research. Three, the socioeconomic minority serving university is not representative of higher education institutions that do not fit into this category, etc. The most important limitation is that the sample is self-selected, and this introduces selection bias into any findings. While this is exploratory research, it will need to be replicated with a larger sample size.

This study extends our knowledge of how first-generation, low-income, minority native-born female students navigate the college application process and select four-year universities, if they are unable to utilize their parents as knowledgeable resources. Within education, a field according to Bourdieu's theory of practice, students may not be equipped with social, cultural, and financial capital and hence need to turn to key individuals in their journey of education. However, the developed habitus of low- and working-class children may discourage them from reaching out for help when needed. Findings from this study suggest that efforts

should be made to ensure students from disadvantaged backgrounds are linked with individuals that have availability in their schedules and knowledge to attend to their questions and needs during the college application process.

In addition, allowing students to participate in on campus tours of colleges they are interested in attending can make a difference in their final college decision. Most colleges offer in-person guided tours, but they have to be scheduled ahead of time and are only available Monday through Friday. For example, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has a video tour, self-guided tour, and student-led tours available. However, if a potential student wishes to schedule a visit through the undergraduate admissions department, their operating hours are Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., so the tours are only available during those hours. This setup poses potential problems for low-income students because their parents (as reported by many participants during their interviews) work many hours in an effort to provide for them and maintain their household. In addition, the money in the family is tightly managed, so the cost of travel and missing work would not be optimal for these families and potential students.

A potential solution would be to utilize programs which help with college application assistance as well as take students on college tours. An example program would be ICP-T.E.A.M.S. ICP-T.E.A.M.S is a company contracted with Charlotte Mecklenburg schools which tutors students in all subjects, offers assistance with FAFSA, searching and applying for scholarships, and college essay writing. Students can begin college preparation as early as middle school.

In relation to costs, all participants in the study identified as low-income and did not use any vouchers to assist with paying for applications. Presumably, some of the participants would

have been eligible for vouchers to assist with paying college application fees if they had known or found out on their own. This also emphasized the importance of cultural capital and access to information because although the participants were unaware, having someone to assist them through the process who did know might have changed their perspective of being limited in the number of schools they could apply to on account of the college application fee.

Another possible solution for the broader pool of college applicants as well as the specific demographic within this study would be to offer financial literacy courses geared towards demystifying some of the pre held notions of college attendance and affordability. Rather than removing out of state and private institutions from their realm of possible college choices, the aim would be to get students to understand that if they are accepted into a private or out of state university, they will receive financial aid such as scholarships and grants. It is highly unlikely that a high-achieving, low-income student will pay the full dollar amount to attend a public or private university.

This point arose in the research study because many of the participants might have qualified for big scholarships or discounts in tuition for out-of-state public or private schools, yet the published tuition cost deterred them from even considering those schools. If they had had better guidance, they may have made other decisions about where to apply and ultimately attend. Participants should have been informed that most people only pay approximately 20% of the listed price for their college education.

Finally, schools should provide guides for students who would not get the help they need throughout the college application process from parents or close family members and friends. Instead of placing the burden to find and connect with a potential cultural guide to provide assistance, schools could survey students about whether or not they are interested in attending

college and then match them with an educator who would help them to select colleges which they may be interested in attending and then work with them consistently throughout the process to ensure that all questions are answered and that they meet the required deadlines. Because this does not apply to all high school students, specifically, the college application process should begin towards the end of one's junior year of high school, a recommendation would be to implement a senior seminar course which would carve out time during the school day for students to conference with their guide and complete portions of the application process.

CONCLUSION

The overall contribution to science this paper provides is that students in high school from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as low-income and first-generation, will inevitably need assistance with the college application process. However, as a society we should be aware and help to mitigate the effects of not having parents who are well versed in regards to the steps and procedures for the college and financial aid processes. If students attend schools where there are issues of staffing or a large number of students enrolled, they may not be able to get the one-on-one assistance they need during the college application process.

This study contributes to society because it reveals that low-income, minoritized first-generation female students need assistance with the college application process and typically that assistance does not come from within their families. Many of the participants in the study noted because they attended a small high school they may have been able to develop relationships with school personnel, such as their teachers and guidance counselors. For this reason, I am not able to generalize their experiences and these findings to individuals who attend large public high schools.

In an overall effort to push for higher education for more young adults, we must be mindful of the barriers and challenges faced by disadvantaged groups within the United States of America. In order to get more students who identify as belonging to a minority group, low-income, first-generation and attend a public high school, a conscious effort must be made to mitigate some of the disadvantages which are stacked against them. This study was unique because it allowed participants to tell their stories having grown up in households in which money was a struggle, parents did not attend college and were unfamiliar with the college application process, and other factors. Furthermore, this research is relevant and can provide suggestions of how to mitigate the constraints of social factors and to ensure the presence of cultural guides for marginalized students in high schools.

Appendix A

Interview Protocol for UNCC students

Warm-Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. • I am Darian Redfearn, I currently work as a graduate teaching assistant for the department of sociology here at UNCC. I am a second year Master's student hoping to graduate in May. I am conducting these interviews as part of my thesis. • Confirm the respondent's name. Tell them you won't use the name again in order to assure anonymity and give them a chance to ask questions about the process. • Press record. • Get verbal consent: "You have read the information in this consent form. You have had the chance to ask questions about this study, and those questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You are at least 18 years of age, and you agree to participate in this research project. You understand that your verbal acknowledgement indicates your informed consent." • Mention the respondent's number (check Google spreadsheet).
General Questions about the College Application Process/ Undermatch	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What made attending UNCC attractive to you? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How far is UNCC from your home? b. How affordable was UNCC for you? 2. Were you offered any scholarships or grants? 3. When did you first think about going to college? Who mentioned it to you as a possibility ? Parents, siblings, teachers, etc. 4. When you were trying to decide to go to college did you participate in any on-campus college visits? If yes, describe them. Community colleges or four year universities? 5. How far is UNCC from your home? 6. Did any colleges make visits to your high school? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If yes, tell me about them. b. When and where did you attend them? 7. Were you aware of the deadlines for the college and financial aid applications? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Did you apply early decision or early action? 8. Describe your college application process. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How confident were you? b. Did you apply to more than one school? If so, what schools did you apply to?

	<p>c. What schools were you accepted at?</p> <p>d. Why did you pick UNCC?</p> <p>9. Did you feel limited in the number of schools you could apply to?</p> <p>a. If so, why?</p> <p>b. What factors influenced your college choice?</p>
Questions about academic preparation	<p>1. Were you placed into the gifted program in elementary school?</p> <p>a. Did your high school offer AP or IB classes? Which ones?</p> <p>b. Did you take AP or IB classes? If so, which ones?</p> <p>2. Did you take dual enrollment classes? If so, which ones?</p> <p>3. What was your high school GPA?</p> <p>4. What was your class rank (or an approximation)?</p>
Questions about Cultural Guides	<p>1. Who helped you through the college application process?</p> <p>a. Counselor, coaches, teachers, family members, friends, etc.</p> <p>2. What institution or organization were they from?</p> <p>a. School, your faith community, family, friends, etc?</p> <p>b. How did they assist you? Discussions about college, financial support for tutoring or college entrance exams, role model or mentor?</p> <p>c. What did they help you with during the college application process? Writing essays, comparing colleges, visiting colleges, etc.</p> <p>3. How often did they help you throughout the college application process?</p> <p>4. Did your high school have a college and career counselor?</p> <p>If so, did you meet with him or her? How often?</p> <p>5. How accessible was the school counselor during the college application process?</p>
Questions about Parental Involvement	<p>1. Describe how your parents or guardians were involved in your education.</p> <p>a. How often did they attend school functions?</p> <p>b. How often did they attend parent/teacher conferences?</p> <p>c. Were they involved with your college application process?</p> <p>2. What did they help with? Did they go on college visits? Help with the application and/ or financial aid process?</p>
Wrap up	<p>I am interested in learning about the process first generation, low income, minoritized women used to obtain entrance into four year universities. Is there anything else along these lines that I have not asked about that I should have?</p> <p>Is there anything else about the college application process that you'd like to add?</p>

References

- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology) (R. Nice, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
doi:10.1017/CBO9780511812507
- Calarco, Jessica McCrory, "Negotiating opportunities: Social class and children's help-seeking in elementary school" (2012). *Dissertations available from ProQuest*. AAI3508978.
<https://repository.upenn.edu/dissertations/AAI3508978>
- Calarco, J. M. C. (2014). Coached for the classroom. *American Sociological Review*, 79(5), 1015–1037. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122414546931>
- Carver-Thomas, D. & Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). Teacher turnover: Why it matters and what we can do about it. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. <https://doi.org/10.54300/454.278>.
- Deutschlander, D. (2017), Academic Undermatch: How General and Specific Cultural Capital Structure Inequality. *Social Forum*, 32: 162-185. <https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12322>
- DiMaggio, P. (1979). On Pierre Bourdieu Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture. Pierre Bourdieu , Jean-Claude Passeron , Richard Nice Outline of a Theory of Practice. Pierre Bourdieu , Richard Nice. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 84(6), 1460–1474.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/226948>
- Engle, J. (2007). Postsecondary access and success for first-generation college students. *American academic*, 3(1), 25-48.
- Harding, D. (2016, November 10). Is there a pay-off to for-profit colleges? YouTube. Retrieved January 31, 2023, from
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIf8sSw4h78&list=PLZapTuSHtu-CeejCJGLVBLqNT-ipS0Idh&index=29>
- Hill, N. E., & Craft, S. A. (2003). Parent-School Involvement and School Performance: Mediated Pathways Among Socioeconomically Comparable African American and Euro-American Families. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95(1), 74–83.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.95.1.74>
- Karlson, K. B., & Birkelund, J. F. (2019). Education as a Mediator of the Association between Origins and Destinations: The Role of Early Skills. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 64, 100436. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rssm.2019.10043>
- Lareau, A. (2011). *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life* (2nd ed.). University of California Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1ppgi4>
- Lareau, A. (2015). Cultural Knowledge and Social Inequality. *American Sociological Review*, 80(1), 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122414565814>

Lowry, K. M. (2016). Community college choice and the role of undermatching in the lives of African Americans. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 41(1), 18–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2015.1125315>

Ma, J., Pender, M., & Welch, M. (n.d.). *Education Pays 2019: The benefits of higher education for individuals and society*. Education Pays – College Board Research. Retrieved February 9, 2023, from <https://research.collegeboard.org/trends/education-pays>

Mickelson, R. (2003). The academic consequences of desegregation and segregation: evidence from the charlotte-mecklenburg Schools North Carolina Law Review, 81(4), 1513-1562.

Perna, L. W. (2015). Improving College Access and Completion for Low-Income and First-Generation Students: The Role of College Access and Success Programs. Retrieved from https://repository.upenn.edu/gse_pubs/301

Robinson, K.J. and Roksa, J. (2016) Counselors, Information, and High School College-Going Culture: Inequalities in the College Application Process. *Research in Higher Education*, 57, 845-868. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-016-9406-2>

Roderick, Melissa, Vanessa Coca, and Jenny Nagaoka 2011. “Potholes on the Road to College: High School Effects in Shaping Urban Students’ Participation in College Application, Four-Year College Enrollment, and College Match.” *Sociology of Education* 84: 3: 178–211. doi: 10.1177/0038040711411280.

Roksa, J., & Deutschlander, D. (2018). Applying to College: The Role of Family Resources in Academic Undermatch. *Teachers College Record*, 120(6), 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811812000601>

Smith, J., Pender, M., & Howell, J. (2013). The full extent of student-college academic undermatch. *Economics of Education Review*, 32, 247–261. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2012.11.001>

Villalobos, A. D. (2021). College-Going in the Era of High Expectations: Racial/Ethnic Disparities in College Enrollment, 2006 to 2015. *Socius*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23780231211009994>