Culture Shock Revisited: The Social and Cultural Contingencies to Class Marginality[1]

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Existing explanations of class marginality predict similar social experiences for all lower-income undergraduates. This article extends this literature by presenting data highlighting the cultural and social contingencies that account for differences in experiences of class marginality. The degree of cultural and social dissimilarity between one's life before and during college helps explain variation in experiences. I contrast the experiences of two groups of lower-income, black undergraduates—the Doubly Disadvantaged and Privileged Poor. Although from comparable disadvantaged households and neighborhoods, they travel along divergent paths to college. Unlike the Doubly Disadvantaged, whose precollege experiences are localized, the Privileged Poor cross social boundaries for school. In college, the Doubly Disadvantaged report negative interactions with peers and professors and adopt isolationist strategies, while the Privileged Poor generally report positive interactions and adopt integrationist strategies. In addition to extending present conceptualizations of class marginality, this study advances our understanding of how and when class and culture matter in stratification processes in college.

KEY WORDS: cultural capital; education; marginality; race; sense of belonging; social class.

INTRODUCTION

Discussing how well she fits in at her elite college, Sarah extols her sense of belonging: *"I am infected by privilege. . . . I fit in based on my qualifications."*[3] In contrast, Nicole paints a portrait of deep isolation: *"Can't relate. No identification with these people."*

Elite undergraduate institutions have recently implemented measures to become more economically diverse by recruiting students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Rimer 2007), making socioeconomic diversity a priority for admissions (Karabel 2005; Marx 2004; Stevens 2007; Summers 2004). Existing research shows, however, that disadvantaged undergraduates' low stocks of capital—economic and cultural—hamper their ability to integrate into, and successfully navigate, their universities (Aries and Seider 2005; Benediktsson 2012; Stuber 2011; Torres 2009). Yet, Sarah and Nicole *both* come from disadvantaged backgrounds. They *both*

identify as black. They *both* are first-generation college students. They *both* hail from segregated neighborhoods marked by crime, joblessness, and poverty. And importantly, they *both* are representative of a larger population of economically disadvantaged undergraduates at their college.

Why do individuals from equally disadvantaged backgrounds experience the same college so differently? Employing a case study of black undergraduates at an elite college and data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen (NLSF), I show that even for undergraduates from similar class backgrounds, the effects of class marginality, taken as feeling like an outsider because of one's class background, are not uniform. Rather, class marginality has cultural and social contingencies. It is those lower-income undergraduates whose lives before college are culturally and socially dissimilar to their lives in college who experience the effects of class marginality most acutely.

This study furthers sociological understanding of how differential precollege exposure to social inequalities has implications for disadvantaged undergraduates' social experiences in college (Massey et al. 2003). We know little about disadvantaged undergraduates' college experiences compared to their high school experiences. This lack of knowledge is especially salient in the context of more expansive, class-based affirmative action measures (Rimer 2007). Education scholars' prioritization of quantifiable outcomes (e.g., GPA) undervalues the cultural underpinnings of education processes and inequality (Stevens 2008), forgoing the examination of the "experiential core of college life" (Stevens, Armstrong, and Arum 2008). How undergraduates, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, navigate college warrants investigation as it sheds light on how the process of moving through college contributes to the acquisition of cultural and social capital that have consequences for later life outcomes.

CLASS MARGINALITY AND THE COLLEGE CONTEXT

Class marginality on the college campus manifests itself in different yet related ways. "Culture shock," a consequence of class marginality, captures "the strangeness and discomfort [marginalized students] feel when they matriculate" (Torres 2009:885). Scholars also explore undergraduates' sense of belonging (Hurtado and Carter 1997; Ostrove and Long 2007), sense of isolation or difference (Aries and Seider 2005; Reay, Crozier, and Clayton 2009; Stephens et al. 2012), and sense of fit (Bergerson 2007; Lehmann 2007; Walpole 2003) to assess how class marginality negatively affects undergraduates' acclimation and integration. Aries and Seider (2005) examine how the college context makes capital deficiencies for lower-income undergraduates salient. They show that compared to working-class undergraduates at a state school, working-class undergraduates on the elite college campus feel intimidated by and inferior to their wealthy peers. From social psychology, Stephens et al. (2012) find that first-generation college students experience excess stress when transitioning from being socialized in working-class contexts to middle-class college contexts. In all, studies find that lower-income undergraduates feel the effects of class marginality due to colleges catering to affluent, advantaged populations, whose social

norms exacerbate and magnify class differences (Armstrong and Hamilton 2013). And due to this class marginality, disadvantaged undergraduates are expected not only to be less primed to take advantage of college resources (Lareau 2003; Stuber 2011), but also to participate less in college life, limiting their acquisition of social and cultural capital which has implications for lifelong consequences regarding family formation, job acquisition, and network development (DiMaggio and Mohr 1985).

Previous literature on the black undergraduate experience focuses on racial marginalization (Allen, Epps, and Haniff 1991; Feagin, Vera, and Imani 1996; Torres and Charles 2004; Willie 2003). Newer research, however, adopts class-based or intersectional approaches. Torres (2009:888) advocates for such a class-based approach, arguing that "social class differences push black students further to the margins of campus life, particularly at schools that have traditionally catered to affluent students." I agree that social class is vital to understanding the black undergraduate social experience. I argue, however, that class marginality and culture shock are contingent on the social and cultural dissimilarity between an individual's life before college and her life therein.

PATHS THEY TAKE

Lower-income black students, due to racial and socioeconomic segregation, traditionally live in distressed, segregated communities and have less access to cultural resources valued by mainstream institutions (Massey and Denton 1993; Sampson and Wilson 1995). Their neighborhoods and schools are less racially and socioeconomically diverse and their infrastructures suffer from weaker economic bases, negatively affecting academic and social life (Kozol 1991; Logan, Minca, and Adar 2012; Massey et al. 2003; Neckerman 2007; Orfield et al. 1994; Ryan 2010).[4] Academically gifted students develop strategies to navigate these distressed arenas but remain socially and physically tied to them (Carter 2005). I label undergraduates who make the transition from these secondary institutions to elite colleges the Doubly Disadvantaged. They are so named because *in college*, they are economically disadvantaged, have lower stocks of dominant cultural capital, and have less exposure to the cultural and social norms of elite colleges to draw upon in their transition and acclimation to college life.

There is a growing literature, however, on high school students who cross cultural and social boundaries for secondary school due to policy or government programs, independent agencies, or diversity initiatives at private schools (Anderson 2012; Carter 2012; Cookson and Persell 1985; DeLuca and Dayton 2009; Gaztambide-Fernández 2009; Holland 2012; Horvat and Antonio 2008; Ispa-Landa 2013; Khan 2011; Kramer 2008).[5] Zweigenhaft and Domhoff's (1991) retrospective

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[4] Lower-income pupils do attend magnet/charter schools. These alternatives, however, do not guarantee greater exposure to resources or racial/socioeconomic diversity. Exceptions exist (e.g., Knowledge Is Power Program [KIPP]), but differences in resources, culture and climate between alternatives and preparatory schools is greater than alternatives and public schools.

[5] This article focuses specifically on extraction programs and/or initiatives that recruit academically gifted, lower-income youth to boarding, day, and preparatory schools. Pipeline initiative is the collective term used in this article.

analysis of economically disadvantaged participants of A Better Chance, a nation-wide pipeline initiative that places participants in boarding, day, and preparatory schools, shows that participants developed cultural endowments similar to their affluent peers and even begin to adopt their traits and behaviors (Kuriloff and Reichert 2003). Participants are immersed in privileged environments during adolescence and consequently acquire dominant forms of cultural capital as they are exposed to privilege, status, and power at these resource-rich, predominantly white and wealthy secondary schools. I label graduates of these secondary schools the Privileged Poor. They are so named because *in college*, they too are economically disadvantaged, but unlike the Doubly Disadvantaged, they have higher stocks of dominant cultural capital and greater precollege experiences in socially, culturally, and structurally similar educational contexts to draw upon in their transition and acclimation to college life.

These newer studies investigate the high school experiences of economically disadvantaged students in predominately wealthy, white high schools. They cannot, however, account for how these secondary school experiences influence students' lives in college. This article extends this literature by documenting their college experiences. In doing so, I show how class marginality and culture shock in college is contingent on the social and cultural dissimilarity between one's life *before* college and one's life *in* college.

Doubly Disadvantaged and Privileged Poor are theoretical concepts used to capture the overlooked diversity within the lower-income population that results from academically gifted youth shared beginnings but divergent paths to college. The Privileged Poor and Doubly Disadvantaged are, in effect, Weberian ideal types (Anderson 1999, 2002; Weber 1978). As I demonstrate throughout the article, differences in their trajectories to college manifest themselves in respondents' experiences with class marginality and culture shock in college. Unlike the Doubly Disadvantaged, the Privileged Poor experience the shock of entering elite academic and cultural environments years prior to college. Furthermore, the Privileged Poor enter these new environments during adolescence when they are developmentally more malleable. There is greater variation in college experiences between the two groups than within them. In all, these theoretical concepts shine light on the overlooked diversity that this article explores in some detail—a diversity within a presumed homogenous population (Young 2004).

DATA AND METHODS

Employing a case study of black undergraduates at an elite, private college, I investigate how respondents' precollege experiences affect their college behavior and experiences.[6] I chose Midtown College for its progressive admissions and financial aid policies which control for economic factors associated with disengagement from undergraduate life like seeking full-time employment off campus by meeting undergraduates' demonstrated financial need. Midtown is residential, placing

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[6] I exclude first-generation immigrants. Roughly a third of the Doubly Disadvantaged and Privileged Poor are second-generation immigrants. I found no notable differences between native-born and second-generation immigrant respondents' accounts of class marginality.

campus life and respondents' adjustment to it center stage. Regarding demographics, blacks constitute roughly 10% of the Midtown student body, making them the largest minority group on campus.

The qualitative data include 35 semistructured, in-depth interviews with current undergraduates. I recruited participants by e-mail and targeted snowball sampling. The e-mail listservs of student affinity groups contain much of the larger black community's information—members and nonmembers—and served as point of initial contact. Thirteen respondents are male and 22 are female.[7] Eleven respondents are from middle-class families, defined as having college-educated parents with professional careers. Twenty-four are from lower-income families, defined as either having non-degree-holding parents with nonprofessional careers or receiving significant financial aid (~$40,000). This article focuses on respondents from lower-income families to highlight (1) the variation in lower-income undergraduates' paths to college and (2) how this overlooked diversity plays out in their college experiences.

I designed the project to qualitatively examine cross-class comparisons of college experiences, as campuses are theorized to magnify class differences. The first component of the interview follows a targeted life history approach to investigate respondents' depictions of and experiences in their homes, neighborhoods, and schools (Young 1999). The second component investigates how students identified with their relative positions in college and their interactions with peers, professors, and the larger college community. Questions explore respondents' transition to college, sense of belonging, and day-to-day experiences.

The first round of analysis consisted of taking summary notes while listening to interviews, focusing specifically on respondents' precollege experiences. The project shifted after noticing bimodal responses from respondents from lower-income backgrounds. Two groups emerged inductively: the Privileged Poor and the Doubly Disadvantaged.[8] Ten Doubly Disadvantaged and 14 Privileged Poor constitute the lower-income sample. I traced this variation to pipeline initiative participation that resulted in private school attendance. The second round of analysis focused on identifying general patterns in college experiences using Atlas.ti.[9]

It is important to understand undergraduates' lives inside and outside of school before they enter college as differential exposure to inequality influences social experiences in college (Carter 2012; Massey et al. 2003). To supplement the qualitative descriptions of their neighborhood and school and the interactions therein, I asked Midtown respondents to complete short, biographical surveys. From the surveys, I used respondents' home addresses to pull Census 2000 data regarding neighborhood characteristics including race, poverty rate, and labor force participation. I also used the Common Core of Data (CCD) and Private School Survey (PSS) from the National Center for Education Statistics to obtain structural data for

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[7] There are almost two black women for every black man at elite colleges (Massey et al. 2003). The lower-income, black population at Midtown is less imbalanced but still favors black women: 59:41.

[8] Respondent characteristics and discussion of selection bias is shown in online supplement appendices (http://scholar.harvard.edu/anthonyjack).

[9] I performed intercoder reliability tests with a research assistant: rereading transcripts to assess representativeness of accounts. There was overwhelming consensus, and where differences arose, we adjusted coding.

respondents' high schools including racial and socioeconomic composition and student–teacher ratio. These data provide a contextual understanding of Midtown respondents' neighborhoods and schools to supplement accounts of respondents' experiences within these institutions.

After completing the qualitative analysis, I employ complete population data for Midtown from 2003–2009 (a range that includes the enactment of more expansive admissions policies) to document the prevalence of the Privileged Poor at Midtown over time. I then leveraged NLSF data to compare Midtown respondents' qualitative accounts of precollege exposure to neighborhood and school processes (e.g., disorder, violence, resources, whites) to those of a nationally representative sample. The NLSF follows a cohort of almost 4,000 first-time freshmen at 28 highly selective colleges and universities (see Massey et al. 2003 for detailed methodology and construction of indices).[10] Midtown is not an NLSF institution; however, it fits many of the selection criteria. To further comparability, I restrict NLSF data to private research and liberal arts colleges as they are most similar to Midtown.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In this section, I (1) provide a national and case-specific demographic snapshot of the overlooked diversity within the black, lower-income undergraduate population; (2) outline the Doubly Disadvantaged and Privileged Poor's shared beginnings but divergent paths to college with respect to family, neighborhood, and high school experiences; and (3) show how continuity of life experiences mediates the effects of class marginality and culture shock in college for the Privileged Poor while discontinuity exacerbates it for the Doubly Disadvantaged.

Lower-Income, Black Undergraduates at NLSF Institutions and Midtown College

Previous research on nontraditional undergraduates overlooks the Privileged Poor, thereby downplaying the diversity within the lower-income, black population. Roughly 25% of NLSF native-born blacks are lower income, defined as coming from a family with a reported household income of $35,000 or less.[11] And, the Privileged Poor, those lower-income undergraduates who graduated from private secondary schools, constitute 35% of this group.

To investigate Midtown's native-born, black population, I created a composite economic disadvantage scale using first-generation status, Pell grant receipt, institutional classification of familial disadvantage (≤$40,000 household income), and financial aid award (≥$40,395) ($\alpha$ = .81). As Fig. 1 shows, on average, 65% of Midtown's black population from 2003–2009 is lower income (51%–77% range). The Privileged Poor, on average, constitute 32% of the total black population

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[10] NLSF data are standardized at the group mean (black students).

[11] Using the NLSF, I classify lower-income status using students' reported household income of <$35,000 as the next income range included $50,000, a metric used for lower-middle-class status (Pattillo-McCoy 1999). Still, these numbers are conservative estimates given that for the population of students who attend elite private universities and liberal arts colleges, a household income of $50,000 still places them in the bottom of the income distribution.
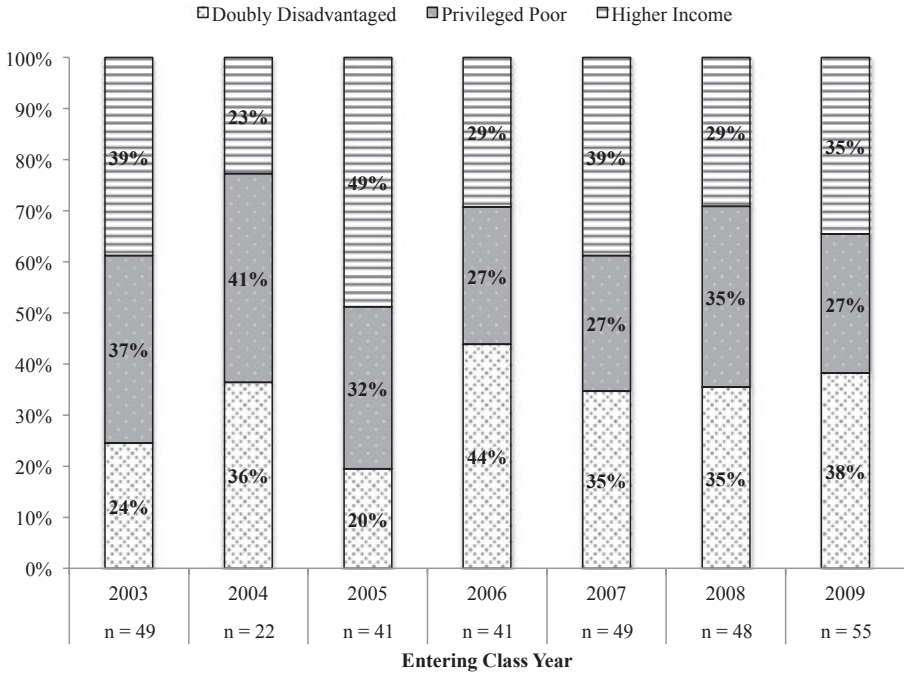
Fig. 1. Native-born, black undergraduates at Midtown College by entering year.
n = 305. Errors due to rounding.
Source: Author's compilation.

(27%–41% range). The numbers are even more striking when decomposing the lower-income population separately: on average, 50% (38%–62% range) are Privileged Poor.

Similar Origins, Divergent Paths

Family—Support without Specifics. I observed little variation in family structure and economic and social resources between the Doubly Disadvantaged (DD) and Privileged Poor (PP). Roughly 60% of Midtown Doubly Disadvantaged and Privileged Poor report living with one biological parent, and that family dissolution occurred early, often before adolescence. With the exception of one Privileged Poor respondent, mothers bore the burdens of single-parenthood.[12] Compared to traditional college students, respondents' familial well of information about getting in, and consequently, navigating college was dry (Lareau and Weininger 2008; McDonough 1997). Nevertheless, respondents report their custodial parents supporting their education endeavors and pushing academics as the key to success. Encouragement and support, however, came without specifics. Susan (DD) put it bluntly: "My parents didn't really know anything." David (PP) recalls his parents' hands-off stance when he applied: "They, in terms of support, wanted me to be independent

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[12] NLSF Privileged Poor (76%) and Doubly Disadvantaged (81%) live with single parents.

and that was, my guess, practice for college." Finally, Nicole (DD) recalls, "The thing I hated was that I had to explain so much because there was so much they didn't understand."

Neighborhood—Differences between Residing and Living. Although currently residing in safe, college environments, data from respondents' qualitative accounts, Census 2000, and NLSF survey results all indicate that both the Doubly Disadvantaged and Privileged Poor come from distressed, disordered (e.g., prostitution), segregated, and violent (e.g., gangs) neighborhoods (Table I). They differ, however, in time spent in and connections to their neighborhoods. The Privileged Poor report spending significant time outside of their neighborhoods, at school, and in the homes of their affluent school peers.

   Not particularly close to his neighbors, Lindon (DD) reports spending about an hour outdoors in his minority, working-class neighborhood daily. Though a fixed amount of time, Lindon (DD) describes traversing dangerous streets above and beyond simply living in such distressed environments, further increasing his exposure to social dislocations present in his community. Asked if there was crime in his neighborhood, he replies:

> Yeah. People robbing stores, video stores. Sometimes people would get robbed on the street. Sometimes there would be a guy dying on the street... gotten shot. And there are gangs around.... Drug dealing, definitely common there. (How close to your house?) On the same block. House next door was a crack den for a while. (Everybody knew what was going on?) Mmmhmm. Not everyone but my grandma's all up in people's business.

   Laughing mirthlessly, Anthony (DD), a senior, recounts how the local McDonald's stopped being open 24 hours because of night robberies. With that as background, he also speaks of his neighborhood in terms of close ties. Reflecting on the current states of his friends, he calls them a mixed bag, highlighting a few strong starts that morphed into dreams deferred and defeated:

> Wouldn't consider them friends, I would consider them family. We were all so close. We went to the same elementary school, same middle school, same high school, and was in the same area. We all ended up in the top of our class and were recognized for our academic abilities. (So how often did you hang out with them?) Every. Single. Day. (What are they doing now?) Right now, the one who was in class with me from kindergarten until 12th grade, he is about to graduate. A couple are incarcerated. One recently died. One's working. The other is enrolling in college.

   Alternatively, the Privileged Poor are upfront about limited presence in and connections to their neighborhoods.[13] Additionally, these disconnections started well before college. Sahara (PP), too, lived close to a dense pocket of concentrated disadvantage: "The projects were right down the street." On neighborhood ties, however, she reports:

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[13] Roughly 40% of Midtown Privileged Poor respondents attended schools in different states from their home communities.

Table I. Neighborhood contexts and interactions of the Doubly Disadvantaged and Privileged Poor at Midtown College and NLSF institutions.

	Doubly Disadvantaged	Privileged Poor
Midtown		
Precollege Exposure to Whites (% White)	41.3	35.2
% Labor Force Participation	62.9	58.2
% Below Poverty Line	Families: 17.8 Individuals: 20.6	Families: 16.1 Individuals: 18.4
% BA or Higher	19.2	20.3
Median Household Income (1999 dollars)	$38,018	$42,629
Inside Home Community	Primary Site of Socialization	Limited Time/Connections
Outside Home Community	Limited interactions outside of home networks	Extended time at school and in homes of school peers
NLSF		
Neighborhood Disorder Index	.46	.54
Neighborhood Violence Index	.42	.52
Exposure to Whites	−.64	−.29* [14]

$^{T}p < .1$, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.
$n_{disorder} = 141$, $n_{violence} = 141$, $n_{white} = 140$.
Each incident of disorder and violence is weighted using Sellin-Wolfgang weights developed for the National Survey of Crime Severity Index (see Massey et al. 2003). Neighborhood disorder weighted index ($\alpha = .78$) captures students' exposure to homelessness, prostitution, drug paraphernalia, use of illegal drugs, public drunkenness, and graffiti at ages 6, 13, and 18.
Neighborhood violence weighted index ($\alpha = .78$) captures students' exposure to gangs, selling of illicit drugs, physical violence, gunshots, stabbings, and muggings at ages 6, 13, and 18.
Exposure to whites captures percent white in the neighborhood.
Source: National Longitudinal Study of Freshmen.
Note: Neighborhood characteristics averaged at group mean using Census 2000.

> I don't count back home because I went to boarding school and a lot of my friends are from high school. Home is just home.... [Boarding school,] that's when the ties started breaking. When we were little, there were friends in our courtyard. We grew up together, but once I started [boarding school]... I guess I became more into education.... It just didn't click anymore. I guess I was on a different path. I don't mean other path as in above, just different trajectories.

In addition to severed ties to his home neighborhood, which in addition to being troubled is also home to a major prison, Idet (PP) became an adopted son of his white school friends' parents. Though not a boarder, he recalls, enthusiastically, living at his friend's home and developing close relationships with the parents. They became his primary sources for information, more so than his dedicated mother, absent father, or older brother who "made completely different [life] choices." I asked, "Ever chill at their house?" He replies:

> Yes! The kid I'm living with this summer, [John,] my best friend. I would live at his house. During the school year I would sleep over for weeks on end just, "Mom, not coming home tonight." (Talk to them about school?) I talk to his parents about everything. His dad is a father figure.

[14] Neither group resides in locales with significant white populations. No less than 55% of lower-income, black NLSF respondents come from segregated neighborhoods. Translating z scores in percentages, the Privileged Poor's neighborhoods are, on average, 35.8% white and the Doubly Disadvantaged's neighborhoods are 20.8% white.

The difference between the Doubly Disadvantaged and Privileged Poor is *not* neighborhood characteristics, but rather the difference between "living" and "residing." While the Doubly Disadvantaged speak of neighborhood friends and some semblance of a life in their communities, the Privileged Poor speak of emotional detachment and tie formation with preparatory school peers. The Privileged Poor lived away from home and in drastically different ecological niches, permitting greater exposure to whites, wealth, and explicit and implicit markers of class and power. Moreover, the emotional toll of leaving one's home community for college was lessened significantly for the Privileged Poor as this process began before college.

School—Worlds Apart. As these students entered high school, their worlds diverged. Comparing the Privileged Poor and Doubly Disadvantaged's precollege education experiences juxtaposes Kozol's (1991) discussion of the inequalities plaguing segregated schools and Cookson and Persell's (1985) analysis of privilege at elite schools.

As Table II shows, data from the PSS and CCD report that, compared to Midtown Privileged Poor, Midtown Doubly Disadvantaged have less precollege exposure to whites by 33%. Additionally, while the Privileged Poor attended schools where families pay lofty tuitions that rival most colleges, the Doubly Disadvantaged attended high schools where, on average, 50% of the population is free/reduced lunch eligible. Additionally, the Doubly Disadvantaged's classrooms were 2.5 times more crowded.

The NLSF report similar findings (Fig. 2). The Privileged Poor attend schools where academics were less frequently interrupted by disorderly conduct or violence across the life course. NLSF Privileged Poor also report greater exposure to whites in school, quality teaching, and access to high school resources.

Interview data reinforce the fact that the Doubly Disadvantaged and Privileged Poor had divergent high school experiences. Adding to our structural understanding of their high school experiences, my qualitative data permit more nuanced understanding of how respondents experience these differences and relate them to their college lives.

Generally, lower-income black students attend local high schools. High teacher turnover; younger, inexperienced teacher corps; weak institutional support; and scarce funding often plague these schools (Neckerman 2007; Ryan 2010). Anthony (DD) offers a somber description that speaks to both structural inequities and cultural dissimilarities between home and Midtown:

> Size isn't much bigger, but the environment is. My high school was structured [and] seemed like a power struggle between students and administration. Nothing was stable; all hectic. We went through two or three assistant principals. The people [at Midtown] are more engaging. I say more engaging on a conversation level, interacting, that nature. Academics are way more rigorous. . . such a disconnect between what I've learned in high school and what I was expecting to learn here. The learning curve was so steep. It made the adjustment difficult. There was information that I needed to know but I didn't know I needed to know because it wasn't on the agenda from my high school.

Table II. Precollege contact with whites and high school structure between Doubly Disadvantaged and Privileged Poor at Midtown College.

	Doubly Disadvantaged	Privileged Poor
Midtown		
% White in High School	31%	64%[a]
% Free/Reduced Lunch	52%	—
Average Yearly Tuition Cost	—	$35,809
Student–Teacher Ratio	20:1	8:1
Geodisic Distance between Home and School (miles)	4.97	Nonboarders Only: 9.28 All Privileged Poor: 69.58
Precollege Networks	Localized. Racially and socioeconomically homogenous: minority, low income	Extended. Racially and socioeconomically homogenous: white, wealthy (with some diversity from school)
Precollege Contact with Whites	Low: minority neighborhood and high school, predominantly black precollege friend group	High: limited time in minority neighborhood, predominantly white high school, mixed/white precollege friend group

[a]This percentage is biased slightly downward due to the number of international and Asian students.

After describing her school as black, Latino, and all lower income, Robyn (DD) spoke of differences between high school and Midtown that go beyond race and class to speak to her fellow students' orientation toward work and education:

> Very different. Academically. Demographically. Culturally. Most people didn't want to be in class or work. It was weird for me to transition from a school like that to Midtown where everyone works hard. The library in high school, no one wanted to be there. The books were rotting on the shelves. But here, the library is infested with people.... Different work ethic. Different priorities.

Doubly Disadvantaged respondents outline drastic dissimilarities—both cultural and structural—between their high schools and Midtown. Despite the odds against them, the Doubly Disadvantaged earned admission into Midtown. Their words attest to their resilience and the obstacles they overcame to graduate from high school let alone gain entry into one of the most selective colleges in the country. Reay et al. (2009) also find that lower-income undergraduates show high levels of resilience, having developed strategies to deal with their economic disadvantage and feelings of difference between themselves and their precollege peers. Having precollege exposure to being newcomers may attenuate the negative effects of transitioning to college and acclimating to college life. They gain less cultural and social preparation for Midtown, however. By contrast, the Privileged Poor attended some of the most elite preparatory schools, which historically act as feeders to top colleges (Cookson and Persell 1985). These students have experiences typically out of reach of disadvantaged populations, accumulating different stocks of capital en route. For example, a quarter of Midtown Privileged Poor respondents studied abroad *before* college.
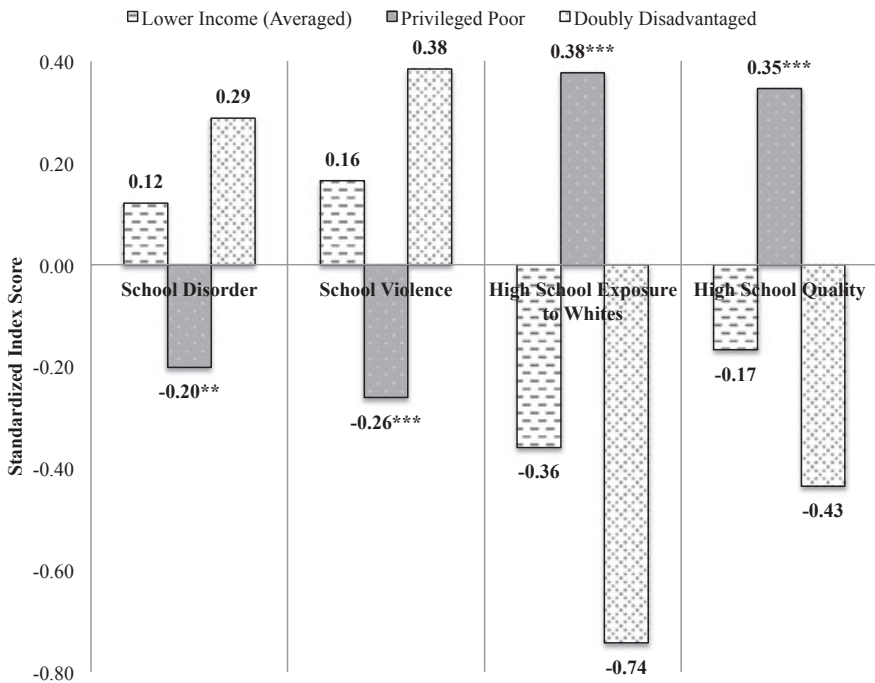
Fig. 2. High school characteristics of native-born, black NLSF respondents.
^{T} p < .1, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001
$n_{disorder} = 141$, $n_{violence} = 141$, $n_{white} = 140$, $n_{resources} = 140$.
School disorder weighted index ($\alpha = .82$) captures students' exposure to truancy, verbal abuse of teachers by peers, vandalism, theft, and use of alcohol and illegal drugs at ages 6, 13, and 18.
School violence weighted index ($\alpha = .81$) captures students' exposure to fighting, violence directed toward teachers, peers carrying concealed weapons (knives, guns), gang activity, and robbery as well as presence of security guards and medal detectors at ages 6, 13, and 18.
Exposure to whites measures percent white in the high school.
High school resources index ($\alpha = .83$) captures students' assessment of resources including library, classrooms, computer and lab equipment, teacher preparedness and attentiveness, fairness of discipline, school spirit, and an overall assessment of the high school.
Source: National Longitudinal Study of Freshmen.

Veronica (PP) remembers her transition, framing it more as continuity of context, composition, and culture than that of a major shift:

> Midtown's definitely more diverse. My old school has probably 15 [black] kids. Even though Midtown is small, this feels bigger. In [high school,] I definitely knew everyone and definitely knew most of the faculty. [Midtown] holds the same values true, small class sizes, being able to have a relationship with the faculty.

Idet (PP) had a complicated transition to Midtown due to a bad high school breakup where infidelity on both sides led to infighting at his day school. And due to the feeder pattern between his day school and Midtown, he entered Midtown dealing with that stigma, ultimately seeking counseling for the emotional toll. After describing this rocky start, he states:

> Midtown is a bigger version of [my day school]. I don't think it's that much different but I feel that's why I'm able to sort of excel. I knew or figured out how to excel there and been able to do that here. It's different in that it's more people. But going to the thick of things, I don't think it's that much different. [Do you think that helped with such a rough start?] Definitely. It definitely helped. I was able to know and to realize that, OK, while I was at [my day school] I did these sorts of things that helped me achieve, I can do those same things here [at Midtown]. And it's funny because I would compare [Midtown] to [my day school] whether it was on the football field, academically, or whatever.

Sometimes respondents lamented continuity even if it offered easy transitions: Jaylen (PP) notes, "I wish I would've tried something different. I'm doing high school over again plus alcohol."

The Doubly Disadvantaged and Privileged Poor's precollege educational experiences are worlds apart. From the demographic composition to the culture and climate of their schools, the Doubly Disadvantaged and Privileged Poor generally report divergent high school experiences and differential exposure to educational institutions like that of Midtown. Consequently, treating lower-income undergraduates as a monolithic group biases our understanding of their precollege experiences. The Doubly Disadvantaged speak of limited interactions with students similar to Midtown peers, resource-deprived high schools, and how Midtown was (and continues to be) a new world. Midtown, being roughly 50% white *and* affluent, is compositionally and culturally different from what they previously experienced. Alternatively, the Privileged Poor highlight similarities between their high schools and Midtown and the resulting familiarity. They were *not* shocked. As Monica (PP) explains, "the shock I would have experienced, I experienced from eighth grade to high school... from public to private school."

Making One's Way Through

Having mapped respondents' paths to college, I now show how their different pathways to college influence their sense of belonging at Midtown and their engagement strategies.

Sense of Self. Ideational dissimilarities, specifically understanding one's "rights" as a student, emerge in striking ways. The Doubly Disadvantaged and Privileged Poor see themselves at Midtown differently. Without preamble toward the end of the interview, Marilyn (DD) took control of the conversation to outline her disadvantage. However, her sense of difference spawns not only from differences she saw between herself and middle-class peers, but also between herself and the Privileged Poor. She exclaims:

> Midtown is an extension of high school for them. You don't realize how much privilege that is. [They] have that sense of entitlement instilled in [them]. I didn't know that I could complain and get something done... didn't know the school had a duty to me. I *still* feel bad about seeking help.

Even when battling an unjustified driving offense en route home from Midtown, she remained hesitant, even as a senior, to ask for help. Eventually dismissing her mother's advice of keeping her head down and letting God handle things, which caused tension, she worked with deans to clear her name. Almost polar opposites,

however, the Privileged Poor generally see themselves more as community members. Sarah (PP), a sophomore, explains:

> In terms of my qualifications, if no one knew I was low income, I fit in.... In terms of being a boarding school kid, getting some of the finest education. Why not fit in? You get in places and you start to feel privileged. Especially with me coming from boarding school, I've already been infected. I came into this place infected. You get spoiled. You don't even think of it. Sometimes I don't even think of myself as a low-income student.

The Privileged Poor's sense of entitlement, a valuable form of cultural capital (Armstrong and Hamilton 2013; Stuber 2011), differs starkly from the Doubly Disadvantaged. Like Sarah (PP), they connect this orientation to years of preparation they received in high school.

Seminar-style discussions; small, intimate classes; and frequent, close contact with professors are staple elements of a liberal arts education. In addition to interactions on campus during one's tenure as a student, school officials are key resources for post-baccalaureate endeavors. Thus, the nature of these interactions warrants investigation.

The Privileged Poor (10 out of 14) report positive connections to school officials, oftentimes relating them directly to high school experiences. Veronica (PP) notes, "You got to know everyone really well. And going to ask for help, that's something I carried on here." Calling his college transition "easy," Greg (PP) explains:

> I learned how to interact [with professors] because of my boarding school professors. Going to office hours, talking to them, going deeper than academic issues, talking about more personal things. My freshman year, I was very closed off. I started opening up to [my adviser] each year. My senior year [was] the best because I was comfortable. I got back from Spain and that was a life-changing experience. I was very open with her. We grew very close. I brought that experience here, just being open from the beginning: talking, introducing myself, being friendly, helping them when I could.

Attention from professors, however, was not always welcomed, and many Doubly Disadvantaged (8 out of 10) report negative interactions. Although an experienced dancer with an ease of performing in public, Marilyn (DD) felt picked on when her freshman dance professor chose her as his "go-to" person. She says, "I thought, 'What the fuck?'":

> Midtown was the first time I ever been to school with whites. My English class, I was the only black. My dance class, freshman year, I was the only black. The professor kept calling on me. I didn't feel comfortable. He kept calling on me to do demonstrations. I hated being put on the spot. I was like, "I wish this man would just not pay attention to me." (Why you think he called on you?) He was showing me attention and that was great, but it was attention I didn't want.

Her initial response was defensive compared to middle-class peers who enter college with an ease of engaging adults and being comfortable while on display, forms of cultural capital according to cultural theorists (Calarco 2011; Lareau 2003; Stuber 2011). In addition to focusing on new experiences with Midtown's diversity compared to her all-black, lower-income high school, Marilyn (DD) was also not accustomed to the style of interaction with faculty members. Instead of taking his encouragement as praise—attention one would expect for a trained performer in an introductory class—she saw him as singling her out.

Amy (DD), a junior, reports feeling "misunderstood by people who work here." Sharing an example involving studying abroad, she feels school officials

forced the idea on her because she is lower income, assuming she will be unable to go abroad otherwise. Resenting such presumptions, she rejects their advances and continues to have confrontational interactions. In fact, I met up with Amy (DD), still visibly upset, leaving one of these meetings during spring break when she stayed on campus to make money. Using more colorful language, Rose (DD) echoes such sentiments regarding Midtown's handling of socioeconomic diversity, exclaiming, "The administration is full of shit! That's the best way to describe it."

The Privileged Poor see interacting with school officials as something to be continued and cultivated. They enter Midtown primed for engagement. Greg (PP) admits being initially resistant to seeking help at his private school. However, this tension waned, and disappeared by the time he entered Midtown. It becomes second nature. The Doubly Disadvantaged experience greater adjustments when they transition from high school to Midtown. Many still find this style of interpersonal interactions intrusive. Unlike their peers, the Doubly Disadvantaged's immersion into this style of academic community comes the first day of college.

Action Plans

Engagement strategies further distinguished the Privileged Poor from the Doubly Disadvantaged (Table III). The Privileged Poor (11 out of 14) practice *integrative strategies* aimed at engaging the community. Alternatively, the Doubly Disadvantaged (7 out of 10) adopt *isolationist strategies*, behaviors that often removed them from the community.

Integrative Strategies. The Privileged Poor's behavior is more engaging. Michael (PP), a freshman, reports meeting with the college president about diversity. He recalls events leading up to the meeting:

> [A bunch of people] went drinking by the dorms, chillin', just upper-classmen opening [things] up. I couldn't go because I had a meeting with [the President] about community engagement and moving the [cultural center] from the basement. My other friends were like "Yo, are you going [drinking]?" I'm like, "Nah, I got this [meeting]."

When asked why he takes it personally, he answers, "I feel like I have to.... I'm trying to make progress on campus and, on top of that, trying to maintain a good GPA." He attributes this self-imposed mandate to his community-oriented boarding school and the fact that his "eight brothers and sisters didn't have this opportunity," highlighting both his privilege and humble beginnings.

Monica (PP) also recounts being involved with the formal side of campus, integrating herself through many committee roles:

> My first two years I was an active member and leader in the Africana Society. My sophomore and senior year I have been a dorm adviser. I worked on a number of committees for different things. I worked on the Malcolm X committee. I helped plan that honoring. I'm currently on the senior commencement committee. I worked a lot my sophomore year with the organization and institution of a cultural center. I don't play a sport unlike 75% of Midtown, but I do find that I am in activities that have afforded me an opportunity to meet different groups of people. I have participated in the Vagina Monologues, which is combination theater piece [and] women's support and nurturing group. I've done a couple different things; I'm sure there are others here or there.

Table III. College experiences between Doubly Disadvantaged and Privileged Poor at Midtown College.

	Doubly Disadvantaged	Privileged Poor
Transition to Midtown	New World	Nothing New
Interactions with School Officials at Midtown	Negative, Tense, Isolating: Seen as abrupt change from high school	Positive, Developing Relationships: Seen as continuation of high school
Interactions with Peers at Midtown	Tense Encounters, Misunderstandings	Positive Interactions, Critiques of need for more community
Strategy for Combating Racism	Fight, Be physical	Teach, Confront
Consequences	Lower stocks of dominant forms of Cultural Capital to draw upon to navigate Midtown: *Isolationist Strategies*	Higher stocks of dominant forms of Cultural Capital to draw upon to navigate Midtown: *Integrationist Strategies*

I asked Sarah (PP) what strategies she takes to make Midtown her own. Looking straight into my eyes, she says she takes issue with the question because it "sounds escapist," too individualistic. Instead she reports doing "things like working for the cultural center and, more generally, pushing Midtown forward." Echoing Sarah (PP), Doctor (PP) fashions himself as "the wrench in the system. I like to change things."

Isolationist Strategies. The Doubly Disadvantaged's level of engagement on campus is lower. They frame Midtown as "not their scene" and the people as "weird." Nicole (DD), a junior, characterizing Midtown as a make-believe place of inauthentic people and fake interactions, retreats to the nearby university, an institution with more lower-income and minority students:

> My freshman year was a blur; [it] was not [here]. My freshman year was not at Midtown. My freshman year was at Crosstown University. I basically slept here, ate here, went to class here. Everything else I did at Crosstown. I didn't have class on Friday, so Thursday I would pack a bag [and] go stay over my friend's house at Crosstown. I would come back on Sunday, and then head to class [on Monday]. It was the same every week.... I just felt like I couldn't, I wasn't finding my kind of people [at Midtown]. Like people that I could hang out with on a regular; it's like there was some but like you know then weekend would come and they would want to go out at Midtown and I'd be like this is not my type of party. So I'm not trying to do that.

Although she admits recently making attempts to find her niche at Midtown, this behavior persists into her junior year, even when hosting prospective students as she leaves them in her room after making introductions.

Anthony (DD), a senior, is a self-described loner, but not because he is shy. His lone-wolf approach, which worked before college, negatively affected him academically and socially:

> I closed myself off... sometimes [to] my professors. I was doing everything on my own because that's what I was used to. I was miserable; it made me miserable. Separating yourself from the environment while you're immersed in it, it causes internal conflict.

Robin (DD), a junior, reflects on her class background and inability to afford to participate in unofficial social gatherings like ordering food with friends and going to restaurants. Speaking more generally on the social scene at Midtown, Robin (DD) offered these words:

> On weekends, when everyone else goes out, I hardly go out. I don't like the social scene: drinking beer; playing beer pong; being loud, drunk, and belligerent. I just don't fit in with that. I like to have a good time, just not in that environment. It's made me a recluse. It's opened my eyes, made me realize that, yes, I am a minority, because I did not realize that when I was growing up. It's made me not want to go out and interact with people. After freshman year I gave up on people here because they were just so different. People say people at Midtown are awkward. It's true; it really is. The awkwardness is really annoying, so in order to avoid becoming awkward myself, I limit the amount of time I spend outside, interacting with these people, so I can stay true to myself.

Alternatively, after attending predominantly white, wealthy schools, the Privileged Poor enter Midtown with experiences of being "double minorities," lower-income and black. Monica (PP), for example, reports growing accustomed to not being able to partake in surprise trips to Paris with high school peers. Though common for both the Doubly Disadvantaged, the inability to pay for social activities was not new and did not present the Privileged Poor with the same negative social and psychological consequences.

Naturally, not all the Doubly Disadvantaged felt out of place. Discussing how well she fits in, Natalie (DD) responds, "I feel great at Midtown. I love it. It's perfect. . . . I never feel excluded from any groups." Prior to Midtown, Natalie (DD) lived in concentrated affluence and interacted with people and institutions similar to who and what she found at Midtown. Different from the more programmatic and institutionalized alternative pathways taken by the Privileged Poor, Natalie's (DD) residence in a wealthy, white enclave and attendance at a public school that catered to that population was connected to chance and her mother's job as a domestic worker. In middle school she moved from a distressed, troubled neighborhood to "an upper-middle-class, very cookie-cutter" neighborhood where the people were "98% white. . . and all well-off" when her single mother took a job as the enclave's house cleaner. She became immersed in community life: "My friends were really smart; we were all in IB. We were really close, obviously. [I] would hang out and spend the night at people's houses." Talking with Natalie (DD) about how she felt about her position in the neighborhood and school given her mother's job, she explained, "It's not like I felt out of place or that I was lesser than them. I don't ever notice disparities between myself and other people really even though there always is one way of the other." This case provides evidence that precollege exposure to whites, affluence, and similarly structured and populated educational environments mediate the effects of social class and class marginality on college experiences for lower-income undergraduates.

Throwing Down versus Talking It Out. As the old saying goes, "All that glitters ain't gold." Black undergraduates, irrespective of path taken to college, still face racism and discrimination once they arrive on campus. The Doubly Disadvantaged and Privileged Poor handle these incidents differently. Both groups draw from their pasts; however, drawing from their toolkit left the Doubly

Disadvantaged with conflicting rules of engagement. Many Doubly Disadvantaged report naturally having an aggressive demeanor, a dominant form of capital back home (Anderson 1999). They state, however, that such self-presentation does not translate well into life at Midtown. Rose (DD) says, "Aggressiveness is accepted at home but not here." With her voice cracking from fighting back tears, she explains feeling devoid of power:

> [White] kid came out yelling "Nigger!" I couldn't do anything because this is a kid of privilege. I don't want to sound like a savage, but my instinct was to throw down. Make him shut up. But *here* you can't do that. You're paralyzed. At home, what little power I have physically means nothing *here*. . . . I'm not from money. I'm not from anything.

Although she is an equal member of the Midtown community, Rose (DD) believes she only has physical power, a power not equal to her classmates' privilege, to resolve this unfortunate incident. Her sense of difference and paralysis spawns from tensions between norms at home and Midtown. When probed about alternatives to address this issue, she admits, reluctantly, "Technically there are avenues." Her answer and tone betray her feelings that she neither feels comfortable traveling those routes nor think that they will be effective for someone like her.

The Privileged Poor report approaching such racialized altercations, although upset, as manageable moments, explaining that the days for allowing oneself to get visibly angry ended in high school when they encountered immature, white peers who had little to no experience with diversity (Anderson 2012; Cary 1991; Cookson and Persell 1991). Sahara (PP) recalls:

> [This white guy] talked about how he's always wanted to try a black girl. I asked, "What do you mean?" He says, "I've never been with a black girl." I said, "OK, maybe you should try. I know there's a lot of black women who are proponents of interracial dating." He says, "Of course they are, they don't have anything to lose in terms of the hierarchy." [Then he] kissed me. . . . He noticed I clearly wasn't into it. He says, "Oh, I'm sorry. By the way. . . let's keep this on the DL [down low]." I left. Confronted him afterwards because he needs to know why this is wrong.

DISCUSSION: CULTURE SHOCK REVISITED

While previous studies connect lower-income undergraduates' experiences with class marginality to their class background, this article highlights the social and cultural contingencies of class marginalization. Not all lower-income, black undergraduates experience the strangeness, unfamiliarity, and isolation that entering elite colleges brings. Borrowing from Sampson and Wilson (1995), only those who traversed and interacted in contexts that were "ecologically dissimilar" to the elite college context felt the full effects of class marginality. Adding to the examination of ecological dissimilarity, I explore how undergraduates' precollege experiences in different ecological niches connect to their sense of belonging in and acclimation to college.

The social and cultural contingencies of marginalization and culture shock are applicable to other instances where nontraditional groups enter social

contexts favoring particular cultural experiences, habits, orientations, or interactional styles over others (Turco 2010). Similarly, this research adds to sociological understandings of integration and incorporation processes, as mapping the variation in cultural resources presumed homogenous groups bring with them when moving between contexts provides insights into how those resources differentially attenuate adverse effects of that move (Gans 2007; Nee and Sanders 2001). Within higher education, before accurately tracing undergraduates' capital accumulation processes that occur in college, we must first understand how undergraduates' paths to college affect the cultural resources they bring with them. This particular case hinges on the Privileged Poor's alternative trajectory to college that placed them in private secondary schools and nonacademic social contexts that offered them access to valued resources, people, and experiences typically out of reach of lower-income, minorities that, in turn, eased their acclimation into college and lessened the effects of class marginality. Alternatively, the Doubly Disadvantaged's precollege experiences regarding neighborhood and school processes align more with theoretical expectations of lower-income minorities in the college context. The Doubly Disadvantaged do adjust, but their lag period is more pronounced (Swidler 1986). Consequently, though they have shared beginnings, the Privileged Poor and Doubly Disadvantaged lived evermore divergent lives before college and those differences directly influence their sense of belonging and engagement strategies.

Both the Doubly Disadvantaged and Privileged Poor explain their transition to predominately white, wealthy elite education institutions as shocking. The difference between the two groups is that Privileged Poor respondents experience this shock 3–6 years before entering Midtown. Recall Monica (PP) noting, "the shock I would have experienced, I experienced from eighth grade to high school... from public to private school." Discussing potential reasons why the same adjustment and acclimation processes that worked for the Privileged Poor in high school are slowed or not working for the Doubly Disadvantaged in college is important. I suggest two reasons for the slowed process. First, high schools—both public and private—with their regimented structure, are more like total institutions than colleges where students are expected to be both intellectually and socially independent (Goffman 1961). High schools force students to interact and participate, while college permits greater freedom for self-definition. Second, the Privileged Poor's transition occurs during adolescence, a time when one is developmentally more malleable (Erikson 1980). At 17 and 18, traditional ages for entering college, students are more set in their ways. Additionally, the ecological influences on their development differed (Bronfenbrenner 1993).

Blanket programming aimed at helping lower-income undergraduates adjust to college is partially preaching to the converted. Some enter college with less preparation for the social environment while others enter with direct experiences that ease their integration. Differentiated programming is needed. School officials must work to overcome the Doubly Disadvantaged's defensive orientation. Preterm immersion programs can aid students' introduction to college life, prompting localized familiarity with the campus and those populating it (Stuber 2011). Such programs can combat feelings of difference that promote detachment and

isolationist behaviors and make explicit the unwritten rules that cause uncertainty.

While this study highlights the mediating effects of pipeline initiative participation on undergraduate experiences with class marginality, it places the entrenched problems plaguing America's disadvantaged neighborhoods and public schools in sharper relief. Grouping lower-income undergraduates together biases estimates of the effect of class background on college outcomes given that the social inequalities manifesting themselves in everyday experiences in neighborhoods and schools do not fall evenly on all lower-income students. Policy solutions aimed at proliferating pipeline initiatives do not address underlying problems and may not be tenable given the ever-precarious reliance on private donations. Pipeline initiatives provide resources to individuals—not collectives. Rather, policies aimed at investing in neighborhoods and schools, in tandem, like the Harlem Children's Zone, are potential alternatives.

Diversity statistics tell only part of the story. To hedge their bets, elite colleges admit significant numbers of lower-income students from private high schools to ensure lower-income applicants' familiarity with the social and cultural norms that operate on their respective campuses, which, in turn, help minimize class marginalization and culture shock. For this study shows that, even after a decade of diversity initiatives, the elite college campus still privileges privilege. Further investigation into both the short- and long-term consequences of these decisions is needed.

Limitations exist as I interview only native-born, black undergraduates at one college. This article investigates the lives of those who matriculated. There are students who entered lower-tier institutions or no college at all, whose dynamics cannot be accounted for in this article. Theoretically, however, for those entering college, the accompanying acclimation processes attached to switching from familiar context to familiar context should be less marginalizing than switching from familiar to unfamiliar. Further investigation of lower-income undergraduates at elite colleges is needed given major shifts to recommit to or introduce class-based affirmative action measures in addition to or in place of race-based measures.

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