College Experiences,
Decisions, and Inequalities in Bachelor’s Degree Attainment

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Sample

- 3,299 members of the entering cohort of 1999 at three public, flagship universities.
  - 1,642 women and 1,657 men
  - 809 people of Hispanic origin
  - Among non-Hispanics, 820 African Americans, 829 Asians and Asian Americans, 841 Caucasians
  - 990 people who graduated from the university from which they were sampled in 4 years or less
  - 1,119 people who graduated from the university from which they were sampled in more than 4 years
  - 1,190 people who did not graduate from the university from which they were sampled
## Number of Completed Surveys by School and Graduation Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>University A</th>
<th>University B</th>
<th>University C</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Weighted Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>1,334</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Graduate</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>719</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>859</td>
<td>2,053</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted Response Rate</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey

- Section A: Applying to College
  - Application process, social support, factors that influenced decision to attend the target school, family attitudes, advising

- Section B: Experiences at the Target College
  - Choice of major, change of major, enrollment pattern, living situation, difficulties/challenges encountered

- Section C: Degrees and Satisfaction with College
  - Satisfaction with academic advising, housing, financial aid, overall, reasons for not graduating, highest degree received

- Section D: Background/Demographics
  - Age, family’s educational background, living situation while growing up, current work status and salary, demographics
College Outcomes

Total Sample
N=2053

Graduated from
Original School
n = 1334
  - Graduated in 4 Years
    n = 566
  - Graduated in 4.5 - 9 Years
    n = 768

Did Not Graduate from Original School
n = 719
  - Graduated from Another School
    n = 343
  - Have Not Received a Bachelor's Degree
    n = 376
    - Are No Longer in School
      n = 266
    - Are Still Pursuing a Bachelor's Degree
      n = 110
      - At the Original School
        n = 59
      - At Another School
        n = 51

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Did Not Graduate
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n = 768

Graduated from
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n = 343

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n = 51

Total Sample
N=2053
Predictors: Demographics

- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Mother’s educational attainment (graduated from college or not)
- Father’s presence more than 50% of the time while respondent was growing up
Predictors: Difficult or challenging situations faced while at the target school

- Academic performance
- School finances
- Personal health/well-being
- Family health/well-being
- Personal/social life

For each:
0 = No difficulty in that domain
1 = Difficulty reported
2 = Given as a reason for taking time off from the target university
3 = Given as a reason for not graduating from the target university
Underrepresented minorities cite more difficulties during enrollment at the target school.
Academic difficulties and their consequences vary as a function of race/ethnicity and gender.
Financial difficulties and their consequences vary as a function of race/ethnicity....

[Bar chart showing the percentage of each racial/ethnic group experiencing financial difficulties, with categories for no financial difficulties, difficulties reported, time off, and left university because of finances.]
Financial difficulties and their consequences vary as a function of race/ethnicity and SES.

- Mom non-grad/Dad absent
- Mom non-grad/Dad present
- Mom graduate/Dad absent
- Mom graduate/Dad present

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of Each SES Group</th>
<th>No financial difficulties</th>
<th>Difficulties reported</th>
<th>Time off</th>
<th>Left university because of finances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Family health difficulties also vary as a function of race/ethnicity....
Family health difficulties also vary as a function of race/ethnicity and SES.
Personal health difficulties are more prevalent for women.

Percent of Each Race x Gender Group
- No personal health difficulties
- Difficulties reported
- Time off
- Left university because of personal health

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Difficulties with personal/social life are more prevalent for Asian and Hispanic respondents.
Predictors of Attainment from a Transfer School
Step One
(Pseudo $R^2 = .043$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian (vs. White)</td>
<td>0.779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (vs. White)</td>
<td>0.515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic (vs. White)</td>
<td>0.585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s non-attainment</td>
<td>0.698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s absence</td>
<td>0.626</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Predictors of Attainment from a Transfer School

**Step Two**

(Pseudo $R^2 = .228$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic difficulties</td>
<td>0.778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial difficulties</td>
<td>0.729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal/social difficulties</td>
<td>1.911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal/social difficulties * Mother’s non-attainment</td>
<td>0.576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence at target school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- for &gt; 1 year but &lt; 2 years</td>
<td>0.722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- for &gt; 2 years</td>
<td>0.200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s absence</td>
<td>0.486</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

- Racial/Ethnic group predicted academic, financial, and personal/social difficulties at the target school
- The difficulty variables, rather than group membership, predicted subsequent differences in transfer attainment
Further Research

- Institution effects
- Academic majors: Are some more conducive to graduation than others?
- Data from other data sources (released by 41% of respondents)
- Open-ended responses
Next Stage for the Research Team: Interviews

- Approximately 60% of respondents agreed to be contacted for a follow-up interview.
- Interviewed 213 respondents.
- Goals:
  - Learn more about the difficulties they encountered while enrolled and how they addressed them.
  - Learn more about how gender, race, and family background influence beliefs about persistence in college and when it is time to give up.
  - Probe respondents’ experiences with the institutions they attended.