

Evaluating the Perceived Capacity of High School Seniors to Value, Pursue and Complete a Four-Year Degree: The College Capital Index

Scott Andrew Schulz, Ph.D.

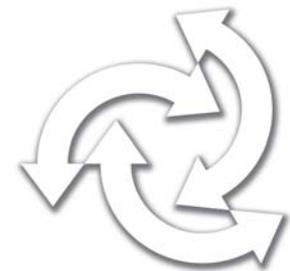
Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice

University of Southern California

WACAC Regional Forum

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Orange, California



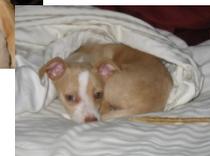
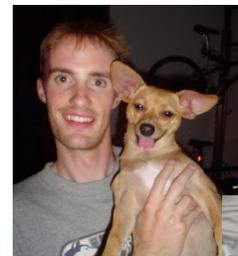


Purpose of this Session

- Provide an overview of the Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice at the University of Southern California
- Explain the original purpose of the College Capital Index
 - Target audience
 - Research team
 - Collaborators
- Describe the theoretical framework
- Provide an overview of the initial nationwide pilot study
 - Methodology
 - Data Analysis
 - Findings
- Address how the index project may be evolving
- Describe the project's next steps
- Seek your reactions and feedback

Introducing Scott Andrew Schulz

- Originally from The Last Frontier
- Former lead singer of Kincaid (www.soundclick.com/kincaidak)
- Chihuahua owner (x2)
- Father of a new daughter
- Graduate of the doctoral program at the U of AZ
 - Dissertation focused on applying existing organizational theories to new theoretical contexts
- Program Director – Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice at the University of Southern California





UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice

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- Founded in 2007 at the University of Southern California
 - Center Goals
 - Provide forums such as organized events, on-line communities, and written publications that allow scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to share their perspectives and further generate ideas that enhance our understanding of enrollment issues
 - Conduct and sponsor research that is intellectually worthy, useful for practitioners, and has a direct and lasting impact on students, institutions, and society
 - Enhance the level of professionalism within the enrollment management field by opening new educational avenues for practitioners to develop and hone their professional skills
 - Serve as the nation's central hub for information relating to enrollment issues to advance a collective agenda focused on improving access to higher education and maximizing student success



College Capital Index – Purpose

- The idea was to create a tool that could evaluate the extent to which high school seniors perceive:
 - A college degree to be of importance
 - They have the knowledge necessary to apply to and enroll in college
 - A personal capacity to academically and financially earn a degree
 - Access to informed and supportive family members, teachers, and counselors
 - The outcomes of the admission process to be favorable
 - A personal commitment to enroll in college
 - An expectation for college success

College Capital Index - Reporting

- An overall national index that annually shows whether the general student population perceives to have more or less college capital each year
- A college capital index of actual college-bound seniors
- Local college capital indices (by school, district, or state)
 - Could survey students as sophomores and again as seniors to inform efforts to infuse capital where needed
 - Locals could benchmark to attitudes of actual college-bound seniors
- All indices would include:
 - An overall index measure, also reported by various student demographic profiles
 - Percentages by survey item that show the extent to which students perceive to have various components of college capital, also reported by various student demographic profiles



College Capital Index – Target Audience

- Federal, state, and local K-12 administrators, counselors, teachers, and policymakers
- Postsecondary enrollment practitioners
- Scholars focused on student access and success issues
- Members of the general public

College Capital Index – Research Team

- Designed by:
 - Jerry Lucido, Ph.D. - Executive Director
 - Scott Andrew Schulz, Ph.D. - Program Director
 - Ray Gonzales, Ph.D. – Senior Director of Research and Reporting in the Enrollment Services Division at USC

- Support provided by:
 - Wayne Camara, Ph.D. – Vice President of Research and Analysis, The College Board
 - Steve Conroy, Ph.D. – Associate Professor of Economics, University of San Diego
 - John Parker, Chief Technology Officer for the College of Letters, Arts, & Sciences at USC
 - Charles Ramos – Director of Outreach Services, ACT, Inc.
 - James Sconing, Ph.D. – Director of Statistical Research, ACT, Inc.

College Capital Index – Collaborators

- The College Board



- The College Board is a not-for-profit membership organization whose mission is to connect students to college success and opportunity and is a collaborator in the production of this report

- ACT, Inc.



- ACT, Inc. is a not-for-profit corporation whose mission is to help people achieve education and workplace success and is a collaborator in the production of this report

College Capital Index – Theoretical Framework

- What is capital?
 - Capital represents power over the field, powers that define the chances of profit (Oakes, Townley, & Cooper, 1998)
- What is college capital?
 - We have defined college capital as the capital required to value, pursue, and complete a college degree, a credential institutionalized by society as capital with economic value
 - College capital is the latent variable we hope to measure with the index



College Capital Index – Theoretical Framework

- The Value of Measuring Perception
 - The Thomas Theorem
 - People's behaviors are influenced by their own perceptions of the viability of their behavior (Thomas & Thomas, 1928)
 - Other Research

College Capital Index – Theoretical Framework

□ Constructs

■ Economic Capital

- Access to and power over necessary resources (Bourdieu, 1986)

■ Cultural Capital

- Knowledge, skills, education, and advantages that provide status in society – may be intergenerational (Bourdieu, 1986)

■ Social Capital

- Resources gained through relationships, network associations, and group memberships (Bourdieu, 1986)

■ Human Capital

- Skills and knowledge that serve as a mean's of production, affecting one's ability to contribute to economic development (Becker, 1990)

College Capital Index Pilot Study - Methodology

□ Data Source

- National stratified random sample
- 12th grade high school students entering the fall of their senior year during the 2008-09 school year
- Must have registered for or completed the SAT® (offered by the College Board) and/or the ACT® standardized tests as of the month of June prior to their senior year
- Must have provided either the College Board or ACT, Inc. with:
 - An e-mail address
 - Demographic data

College Capital Index Pilot Study - Methodology

□ Data Sample

- Based on a 95% confidence level and plus/minus 3 point confidence interval
- Sample numbers were outlined by race/ethnicity within designated geographic regions using a simple sample calculator and sent to the College Board and ACT, Inc.

College Capital Index Pilot Study - Methodology

- The College Board and ACT, Inc. randomly drew names within each designated geographic region of students who had reported, gender, race/ethnicity, zip code, and an e-mail address
- Total numbers were then reported to the PIs, who created unique IDs and corresponding URLs for each name
- This information was then sent back to The College Board and ACT, Inc. accordingly
- The College Board and ACT, Inc. each e-mailed their own versions of a participation request letter in November 2008 to the students on their particular lists using the URLs provided

College Board Index Pilot Study - Methodology

- Data Instrument
 - Online survey
 - Consisted of 21 survey items + 3 questions inserted to test for item validity
 - Each survey item was a statement with response options based on a 5-point Likert Scale
 - Strongly agree – Strongly disagree
 - A high level of agreement reflects the existence of college capital
 - Each survey item was informed by research relating to one or more types of capital

College Capital Index Pilot Study - Methodology

- Data Collection continued
 - Survey data was received at the center
 - The unique IDs associated with survey respondents were then compiled and returned to the College Board and ACT, Inc.
 - The College Board and ACT, Inc. then merged demographic data as available with the response IDs
 - This ensured the anonymity of respondents
 - Known only to the College Board and ACT, Inc.
 - This allows the study's researchers to view response data by:
 - Gender
 - Race/Ethnicity
 - Student Geographic Region
 - Parental Education
 - Family Income
 - Student HS GPA

College Capital Index Pilot Study – Data Analysis

- Approximately 40 different analyses conducted
 - Substituted skewed variables for transformed variables
 - Removed theoretically overlapping items
 - Removed heavily correlated items that were redundant (also makes future versions of the survey more concise)
 - Rotated the solution using varimax, quartimax, and equamax analysis options

College Capital Index Pilot Study – Findings

- Response patterns were similar among SAT and ACT participants
- Missing data was evident later in the survey
- The instrument was generally reliable
- The factor analysis revealed factors that were not consistent with capital literature:
 - Self-confidence
 - Knowledgeable and supportive counselors
 - Partial parental support
- Evidence the sample population skewed our capacity to measure general student attitudes

An Evolving Project

- There was concern following the pilot study that relying on attitudes alone is too one-dimensional and problematic
 - Does the index help schools identify ways that *schools* can actually improve college-going and success?
 - To what extent can schools influence attitudes?
 - To what extent can schools influence cultural capital?
 - Is the index of value to schools if attitudes improve locally but college attendance does not – problems with an attitudes only/perception based survey



An Evolving Project

- College-going culture has been defined as the environment, attitudes, and behaviors in schools and communities that support and encourage students and their families to obtain the information, tools, and perspectives to ensure access to and success in postsecondary education – *UC Berkeley School/University Partnership Program*

An Evolving Project – Proposed College-going Culture Assessment Tool

- Developing a Three-Pronged Tool to Help Schools Comprehensively Assess their College-going Culture
 - Environment
 - Survey high school principals to assess what schools are doing/offering to foster a college-going culture consistent with best practices literature
 - Attitudes/Perceptions
 - Utilize the College Capital Index to assess student attitudes regarding their perceived capacity to value, pursue, and complete a college degree
 - Behaviors
 - Apply tested components of the High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE) to measure the extent to which student behaviors reflect college-going and college-ready indicators



An Evolving Project – Proposed College-going Culture Assessment Tool

- Outcomes – A customized report that would allow secondary schools to individually:
 - Examine the extent to which their educational environment is conducive to a college-going culture
 - Reveal the extent to which students believe they have a capacity to value, pursue, and complete a college degree
 - Highlight how students are making use of their time and opportunities both inside and outside of the classroom
- Benefits
 - Provides each school with a snapshot of the extent to which they have a college-going culture to inform efforts to more effectively target limited resources in ways that will create and foster a college-going (and college ready) culture within America's high schools



Next Steps

- Holding advisory meetings with noted scholars to inform the creation and refinement of each component within the comprehensive assessment tool
- Facilitating additional pilot studies
- Engaging in exploratory conversations with the College Board and Green Dot Public Schools about opportunities to bring the tool to practice for fall 2010



2009 Presentations and Discussion Forums

- College Board Western Regional Forum in February
 - Denver, CO
- WACAC Conference in June
 - Orange, CA
- ACT, Inc. Enrollment Planners Conference in July
 - Chicago, IL
- NACAC Conference in September
 - Baltimore, MD

Questions and Feedback



Presentation will be available at: <http://www.usc.edu/cerpp>

Click on: CERPP Presentations

