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“Getting Educated”: Working Class and First-Generation Students
and the Extra-Curriculum

by

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Abstract

Previous research shows that participation in the extra-curriculum supports college students' integration, but participation varies based on students' background: working class students and first-generation college students tend to participate less. I contribute to this literature by analyzing interview data. I find students differ in *how* they participate in activities and integrate into college based on their likelihood of attending an elite institution. Working-class and first-generation students participate in activities as an extension of academics, while other students participate for social reasons, resulting in different experiences of campus life. This difference can restrict students' gains in social and cultural capital, potentially limiting any decrease in inequality that results from elite college access.

Introduction

Higher education may offer the opportunity for some students to become socially mobile and increase their status in society; however, institutions of higher education can also work to maintain the social advantages of the elite. For those who enter higher education with limited amounts of the cultural knowledge, academic experiences, and social connections vital for successful participation in and integration into, for example, certain professional occupations or post-college academic institutions, the college experience could be a means of compensating by providing ways for these students to gain social and cultural resources, or capital.

However, the college experience may not always compensate for preexisting gaps in cultural and social capital, or at the very least in the translation of these into economic gains or prestigious social status (Buerkle and Guseva 2002; Zweigenhaft 1993). Further, the cultural and social capital with which a student enters college may discourage their participation in the extra-curriculum (Stuber 2009), a space outside of the academic sphere of college that can offer possibilities for social and cultural capital gains. While high school students with limited amounts of these forms of capital may share activities or attitudes with other college bound students, such as valuing participation in the high school extra-curriculum, and consequently gain distinction as part of a high status culture, the extent to which this translates into high status in college or participation in the college extra-curriculum remains questionable.

This study compares the college experiences of students who were less likely to attend an elite college—working class and first-generation college students—with those of

students who were very likely to attend an elite college—middle and upper class students from highly educated families—by focusing on their experiences of the extra-curriculum. This paper provides insight into the relationship between students' backgrounds and their participation in college-sponsored extracurricular activities at “Henson College,” a highly selective liberal arts school, and the implications that this participation may have for working class and first-generation college students' ability to access elite cultural and social capital through integration into the campus social life. Primarily, I compare the levels and types of participation in collegiate extracurricular activities of students who were likely to attend an elite college to the levels of participation of students who were not likely to attend: the likelihood of their having attended an elite college being measured by such things as self-identified social class, parents' levels of education, extracurricular participation in high school and college choice, working class and first-generation students being those identified as less likely to attend. This approach provides insight into students' motivations for and obstacles to participation in extracurricular activities in the cultural context of a specific elite college.

I explore how students' likelihood of attending an elite college relates to participation in the college extra-curriculum, and what this implies for those less-likely-to-attend students' integration into social college community. Initially, I hypothesized that students of working-class backgrounds and first-generation college students who were less-likely than middle and upper class students to attend an elite college would participate less in the extra-curriculum, as found by Stuber (2009), and that this would result in significant differences in the role of the extra-curriculum in integration into the campus social life. Less likely to attend students would not benefit from the high levels of social integration likely to attend students would

gain through extra-curricular participation because they simply did not participate as much as the likely to attend students. I found that this tended to be true—the working-class and first generation participants in this study *did* participate less frequently in the extra-curriculum than their middle and upper class counterparts. However, I also found that when these students *did* participate their participation tended to differ from likely-to-attend students along two clear axes: the importance attributed to participation and the type of activities they participated in. Both importance of participation and type of activities related to their valuation of the academic over the social aspects of higher education at an elite institution.

More specifically, I find that those students in this study who were not likely to attend an elite college tended to participate less in extracurricular activities once in college and that this related to their greater valuation of academic responsibilities over social commitments. Further, among those less-likely students who did participate in the extra-curriculum, I find that the types of activities and groups with which they became most involved facilitated their integration into a narrow sector of the non-academic community. Even though many of the groups these students may have supported their transition to college and college experience in academic terms, they did not tend to lead to broad social integration. This has implications for the potential of these students to augment their cultural capital—cultural knowledge which confers power and status—and social capital—social network connections (Bourdieu 1984)—through participation in extracurricular activities and involvement with a wide and diverse social network. While extracurricular participation in high school and parental background may indicate the presence of a specific college bound status culture among Henson students at large, differences in parental education levels among less likely to attend and likely to attend students correspond to differences in the college experiences among

these students. Thus, I find that access to elite education for students less likely to attend a selective college does not on its own mitigate inequalities among these student populations.

In the following sections, I provide an analysis of previous literature relevant to this topic on student integration, including the implications of social inequalities and status hierarchies for integration, and literature on social reproduction theory, theories of student culture, and education and social transformation. I then describe the research design of this study specifically, followed by an in depth analysis of my findings. Finally, I address the significance of these findings, indicating areas for future inquiry suggested by this study.

Literature Review

Literature on the process by which college students' become integrated into student life stems largely from Vincent Tinto's theories of integration. I begin by addressing Tinto's analysis, moving to an examination of the contemporary theories that extend Tinto's conclusions about the relationship between integration and student persistence to include analysis of the inequalities related to integration. I also consider the literature on extracurricular participation at the collegiate level. Finally, I consider research on education and social transformation, theories of collegiate student culture and, ultimately, social reproduction theories. Throughout I situate this particular study in terms of this body of literature and address how this study is guided by the literature in general and by bringing together theories of social integration and social reproduction theory more specifically.

Student Integration: Persistence and Inequality

Tinto (1975) considers student dropout to result from a lack of social integration (91), and distinguishes “between the academic and social domains of the college,” suggesting that “a person may be able to achieve integration into one area without doing so in the other” (92). Applied to this research, Tinto’s model indicates that a student who is not integrated in both academic and social domains may not experience all the benefits of college education, such that non-integration in the social domain may result in decreased gains in social and/or cultural capital through college. In addition, the idea that increases in social integration limits student dropout provides a method to theorize social integration effects on a scale, rather than only in terms of whether or not students drop out of college. The situation of a student who does not dropout but lacks social integration leads one to consider other possible effects of low levels of social integration, such as an inability to acquire new forms of social and cultural capital or alienation.

Sociological and education literature consider student integration and “persistence”—not dropping out—often using student participation in campus activities as a measure of that integration (Stuber 2009; Chapman and Pascarella 1983; Terenzini et al 1994). While many of these studies underemphasize social inequalities as they relate to integration, their theorizing of student participation as a measure of integration is useful for this study. Not all of the literature ignores inequalities: much of the literature on student integration can lead into considerations of the inequalities in this integration. For example, some studies in this vein have turned their attention to the question of “external influences” that prevent student integration; that is, cases in which failures in student integration are not equally experienced

by all students, and thus cannot be blamed upon a uniform failure by the institution for all students (Christie and Dinham 1991:413). More recent research considers the barriers that nontraditional or disadvantaged students face in becoming integrated into their college community (Stuber 2009; Pascarella et al. 2004; Terenzini et al. 1994, Chapmin and Pascarella 1983:317), a topic furthered by this study.

Stuber (2009) directly considers the role of social class in students' participation in extracurricular activities, finding that working class students are less likely to participate in the extra-curriculum because of limited cultural and social resources, as opposed to solely economic resources, that would encourage participation and provide an understanding of a reason to participate. However, Stuber's research does not directly consider the role of extracurricular participation in social integration in terms the types of activities participated in or the intensity of participation for those students who *do* participate—something which my study at an institution with high levels of extra-curricular participation is able to consider. Furthermore, although Stuber considers the role of programs targeted at working class or first-generation students, she does so only briefly. Her research also fails to address the size and intensity of the social network students build through extracurricular activities in comparison to their general social network. Taking this into account would illuminate the extent to which extracurricular activities have the potential to expand social networks, possibly providing access to new cultural capital.

Education and Social Transformation

A great deal of qualitative research considers students' immediate experience of their transition from high school to college in terms of identity and social identity formation (Kaufman 2003; Kaufman and Feldman 2004). Emblematic of this approach, Kaufman (2003) argues that social transformation through education depends on specific types of identity-work activities. According to Kaufman, these activities are anchored in interpersonal interactions and role enactments and are key to securing a student's membership in particular social groups (481). Similarly, Tinto asserts that becoming integrated into the college community requires "actually adopting the norms and behavioral patterns" of the community (Christie and Dinham 1991:413). Combining these two perspectives is relevant for my research questions, as together they imply that gaining membership in a particular social group requires gaining knowledge of the cultural capital necessary to be accepted, a process that could be accomplished through participation in extracurricular activities and resultant integration in the social domain of a college.

However, research on social transformation is limited because of the lack of economic and educational diversity used to describe the process of social transformation. For example, Kaufman explores social transformation in terms of the "process through which individuals *alter* the ascribed social-class position of their parents into a different achieved social-class position for themselves," (2003:482), and considers specifically students whose ascribed social class position is "working-class" and who seek to achieve a "middle-class" identity. As a result, Kaufman uses family income, parents' occupations and education levels, and "self-avowals of class location" to ascribe a class position to his participants (486), a

definition which is limited in that it relies in part on both student identification with a particular class and students' recognition that they are engaged in activities with the purpose of social mobility. Similarly, Stuber also chooses working class students to consider the question of integration into the middle class college environment (2009). Other research has considered first-generation college students as a sample population for those involved in processes of social transformation (Christie and Dinham 1991; Pascarella et al. 2004). However, defining all first-generation students as being engaged in social transformation ignores possible economic and educational diversity in this group.

Neither a student's status as a first-generation college student nor coming from a working class background necessarily indicate that the student understands their experience to be in some way transformational or that a student differs from his or her peers. For instance, a student who was academically successful in high school could understand the mere act of attending college to be a part of a natural transition to a new social class position, and therefore may not consider his or herself to be actively involved in achieving a new social position. Additionally, the self-reporting of middle class as opposed to working class status is likely to be incongruent with the actual reality of working class students, whether or not they see themselves as such, and could have the result that working class students who have self-identified as middle-class do not understand their experience in terms of social mobility or change. Further, first-generation status cannot necessarily be equated with working-class status and contrasted with the "middle-class" environment of an elite college. To address these issues, my methodology involves a more direct way of determining processes of social transformation. My research relies on defining students not only in terms of self avowals of class status, and parental education and occupation, but also in terms of

high school background and the extent to which students see themselves as similar or different from other students at an institution—Henson College—with an elite status culture.

An additional problem with this literature on social transformation is the lack of research on students currently attending college. Existing literature often considers students either in the process of transitioning from high school to college (Terenzini et al 1994) or considers the experiences of students after graduation (Zweigenhaft 1993). My research, however, primarily considers students who are in their junior year of college, at a point when they have already spent at least two years constructing their college-identity but are also beginning to consider their post-college identity. By capturing the experiences of students who have completed the transition to college and are nearing entry to the work force, I am able to access both the immediate experience of integration into college life and expectations for the future. As a result, my analysis bridges the gap found in existing literature that either explores the immediate experiences of the transition to college or post-college experience, and fails to consider the experience of integration during the college years.

Student Culture

The question of the extra-curriculum and its relationship with student social integration raises questions about student culture, and the effect that student culture can have on the possibilities for integration offered by involvement in the social life of a campus. Horowitz's influential historical analysis of student culture in *Campus Life* (1987) proposes the existence of three primary types of college students in the higher education system in the United States. One of these groups, the "outsiders," is composed of primarily poorer (male)

students who intend to become ministers or join become a professional. As a result of their pre-college socio-economic status, “the outsiders” focus on the academic aspects of college above all else, eschew the social life of campus, and see their education as a step toward social mobility. “The outsiders” resemble contemporary students from lower socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds. However, lower SES students differ from the ideal type “outsiders” in that contemporary students have the opportunity to use non-academic high school pursuits, such as participation in the extra-curriculum, to become high achieving academically and attractive to college admissions committees. Students for whom the process of gaining admission to college requires a significant cultural knowledge of what elite colleges require for admission, as opposed to only poorer but academically gifted students, do not fit this type.

My research considers that working class and first-generation students who are able to gain admission to an elite college may have cultural capital that is in a sense more “elite” than that of their high school community, but which nevertheless may not mirror that of their more elite college peers. Further, my research also addresses the possibility that there may not be enough “outsiders,” or students of lower status backgrounds, at an institution of higher education to form a significant group of students. In this way, my research offers a corrective to Horowitz’s assumption that a significant group of outsiders exist in any given school setting. In addition, my research addresses the implications of the larger culture of an elite institution or academia in general, which may require the adoption of middle class or upper class norms for integration, thus restricting integration to those of lower class backgrounds who do not gain elite cultural capital through some means.

Additionally, inherent in Horowitz's model is the assumption that the professions are the intended destination of all less-advantaged (less-likely to attend) students, not taking into account the notion that differences in career prospects may, in the mode of social reproduction theory, work against social mobility (Willis 1981). Finally, my study is able to expand the notion of student groups by exploring the idea that integration into only certain sectors of the non-academic campus community may not provide the opportunity for less-likely students to build their social capital (and following this their cultural capital) by connecting with a diverse group of students—including those with elite cultural capital. As Granovetter contends, the "strength of weak ties" lies in an ability to create a social network between different groups (1973). The social capital which students could gain as a result of their participation in the extra-curriculum, if their involvement is not restricted to groups in which they interact only with individuals similar to themselves, could lead to an increase in social capital and as a result the more fluid transmission of cultural resources among students of different class backgrounds.

Education and Social Reproduction

Finally, the literature on social reproduction theory is extremely relevant to my investigation of the integration of working-class and first-generation students into campus social life at an elite college. Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron's consideration of education as an institution which reproduces power structures through culture (1990) is relevant as a backdrop to my analysis of higher education and directs my research questions to the cultural and social gains which college is purported to provide, as opposed to the

academic aspects of college attendance. Similarly, Paul Willis' study of the cultural reproduction of class through education (1981) emphasizes that the students' subcultures—for him, the antiauthoritarian “lads”—rather than only academics, influences students' possibilities for social mobility. These theories contend that institutions of higher education maintain and reproduce the privileges of high-status societal elites by restricting access to social resources, such as elite cultural knowledge and access to high status social networks. As a result, so-called non-elite low status groups, such as working class or first-generation students for the purposes of this study, have less access to those resources (Santana and Schneider 2007). My study considers that working class and first-generation students may have restricted access to the cultural and social capital typically associated with a degree from an elite institution of higher education. In other words, although working class and first-generation students may gain cultural capital from their achievement in the academic sector of campus life, they may not gain the same access to other forms of cultural capital or social capital because their involvement in the campus social life differs from those students with more elite backgrounds. Like Willis' lads, working class and first-generation students at an elite college who do not have social ties to a diversity of other students groups may be hindered by their own subculture, one defined by less elite cultural capital.

In summary, my analyses of working class and first-generation students at Henson college bridges the gap between the primary areas of integration and social reproduction theory by considering low-status groups that have already accessed an elite college and are integrated into the academic sphere of college but also preparing to move to the working world. Bringing together these two foci of integration and social reproduction theory allows me to consider integration into campus life through participation in the extra-curriculum as

one way by which low status groups can gain access to elite resources. However, I also consider how academic integration and social integration into campus life may differ in the cultural and social capital attained and the access to elite social networks. In other words, I analyze how working class and first-generation students approach academic and social integration as different, but interrelated, sectors of campus life. This study is designed to address social integration through in depth interviews which address extracurricular participation and integration at the level of students' experience. In the following section, I explain this research design and the population involved in this study.

Data and Methods.

This study seeks to answer three primary research questions: (1) How does participation in extra-curricular activities differ for students who were less likely to attend Henson—working class and first-generation students—and students who were very likely to attend Henson—middle and upper class students with highly educated parents? (2) What is the importance of extracurricular involvement relative to academic achievement for these two groups of students? And, (3) How might differences in participation relate to these students' integration into campus life? This study addresses these questions through in depth interviews with Henson students. As a result, this analysis provides insight into the status culture of Henson, allowing for a comparison between working class and first-generation students who were likely to attend an elite school because of their performance in high school and middle and upper class students who were likely to attend an elite school because of their class status and parent's level of education in addition to their academic performance.

I identified interview participants through a survey I conducted as part of a larger project to understand the socio-economic make-up and general class background of students at Henson college. Out of the 113 participants in the social survey, only 2 participants reported that neither of their parents had ever pursued any type of higher education, and about 75% of respondents reported that they had at least one parent who had completed a master's degree. In fact, the population of those students whom I defined as "unlikely" to attend Henson College was so small that I turned to a program at Henson College specifically designed for first-generation students to contact interview participants. The small population of students first-generation or students with working class backgrounds at Henson College has implications for their ease of integration into college social life. Unlike Horowitz's "outsiders," these students form a very small minority at Henson College. As a result, unless these students successfully integrate into wider campus life, their social networks are narrow and fail to provide large social and cultural capital both during and after college. However, by recording and analyzing the experiences of first-generation and working class students at Henson college, my research provides unique insight not found in previous literature on student participation in extra-curricular activities (Stuber 2009) and on student integration (Christie and Dinham 1991, Pascarella et al. 2004; Terenzini et al. 1994, Chapmin and Pascarella 1983).

Interviews

This research uses ethnographic interviewing to understand participants' subjective experiences, data that cannot be gained through a social survey. My research questions and

analytical discussions rely on determining the background to participants' decision to attend an elite private liberal arts college and the extent to which they see attendance at this particular school as meaningful or socially expected. Additionally, the detailed coding of specific participants as either likely or less likely to attend a school like Henson would not be possible through other methods, such as a social survey only, as (a) self reported class status, SES, or first- generation status are not in themselves enough to determine if a student comes from a culture in which he or she was likely to attend an elite college, and (b) self-reported class status abstracted from the context of other information on such things as family background is not reliable. Further, interviews provide a format in which I am able to investigate the micro level processes of integration and motivations for extra-curricular participation. In addition, semi-structured interviews allow for the inclusion of valuable contributions from participants that were not addressed by my interview schedule. For instance, some participants suggested ways to improve the campus culture, and the first participant I spoke with brought up his conception of the academic-social divide, a notion which proved integral to my understanding of participants' college experiences and extra-curricular participation in later interviews.

As mentioned previously, I planned to contact interview participants solely from the population of a survey I conducted about high school experiences in conjunction with a larger project. However, since only three students responded to this request, I changed my sampling technique in order to contact more students. Four participants were contacted through interview requests sent to a group of first-generation college students and alumni through the director of a program for these students, and I used personal contacts on campus and social network sampling to contact the final three participants.

The interview sample included three likely to attend students—two men, one woman—and seven less likely to attend students—six women, one man. Six of the students were white, two identified as Asian, and two identifies as Latino. Three students—one junior and the two first-years—were involved in the first-generation program, and these students and the one alumnus had been involved with a similar program while in high school. The interviews provided for a complex scheme for coding participants as likely or less likely to attend an elite college. Likely to attend students had highly educated parents and may have attended a private high school. The parents, teachers and school counselors of likely to attend students were involved directly in guiding their college application process, and these students were expected to apply to and attend a wide variety of elite schools. Less likely to attend students went to public school and had parents without high post-secondary degrees. The less likely to attend students' college search was primarily self-motivated. These students also included the children of first-generation immigrants and participants in programs for academically talented low-income or first-generation college students both during and after high school.

Although this method does not create generalizable results—the sample skews toward female students, and the experiences of ten students attending a single liberal arts college are clearly not representative of all college students, all liberal arts college students, or even of all students at Henson—it offers a critical starting point for analyzing issues of integration into campus life and extra-curricular participation at an elite college, while at the same time providing insight into the difficulties of identifying less likely to attend students in a way that does not solely rely on self-identified class status, socioeconomic status, or status as a first-generation student. Further, my findings offer insight into an interesting case, which is

especially important in light of the lack of scholarly attention to elite schools in which most students *do* participate in the extra-curriculum.

In the following sections, I discuss my findings in detail, focusing on what student background indicates about Henson culture, the relationship between students' likelihood to attend Henson and their social orientation, extra-curricular participation, and integration, and the implications of these results for understanding college student culture and social reproduction theory.

Findings

Findings: Overview

The participants in this study who were very likely to attend an elite college and those who were less likely to attend an elite college participated for different reasons, in different ways, and in different types of extra-curricular activities. Those students who were more likely to attend Henson valued the social aspects of their college experience and extra-curricular participation more than the academic aspects, while students who were less likely to attend Henson valued the academic experience of Henson most highly. Secondly, this view of the differences between the academic versus the social was related to the frequency of extra-curricular participation, the types of activities participated in, and how participants viewed their participation. The less likely to attend working class and first-generation students tended to see their extra-curricular participation as an extension of their academic life. Exceptions were students who participated in extra-curricular groups that related to their

own ethnic or racial identity, or, additionally, some of the first-generation students who participated in programs for first-generation students which helped them transition to college and provided a social support network of students with similar backgrounds. Further, as a result of their extra-curricular participation, participants' likelihood of attending an elite college related to how they were integrated into the Henson social community. That is, middle and upper class students identified coming into contact with a wide range of students through participation, whereas working class and first-generation students participated in activities that tended to build social connections with others who were similar to them—other first-generation or working class students.

Social versus Academic Perspective on the College Experience

Participants who were likely to attend Henson viewed their college experience at Henson in non-academic terms, while less likely to attend participants emphasized the academic and differentiated between what they saw as the academic focus at Henson and their high school environment.

Students who were less likely to attend Henson differentiated between the academic environment at Henson and their high school. For example, Max, a working class and first-generation student, explained that at his high school “a lot of students just don't really care about their education. A whole big chunk of the school just doesn't really care.” Similarly, Carly, a working class junior, explained that “definitely the smart kids at my high school would not be the smart kids here [Henson]”. In another instance Shannon, a lower-middle class student from a rural town, made clear that she wanted to go to a school “where everyone *loved learning*” and shared her passion for academics.

In addition to noting the difference between the academic environment of Henson and their high schools, less likely to attend students valued the highly academic focus of Henson College. For example, Maggie, a low-income first-generation student, echoed Shannon's sentiment regarding the academic experience at Henson:

I am really constantly grateful for the academic resources at Henson. I'm a really big nerd, and, I really—we have a *library*, and to have professors, and to have things like all the different forums that go on and the speakers that come is—I mean, it's incredible, and it's something that I never had, and we certainly don't get in [my hometown].

Rose, an alumnus, said that she thinks academics are “the *one* reason why I like Henson, because of all the great professors and challenging classes that I took there, and the social life was just, you know, something that came with it. I was definitely more focused on school [than on the social life of campus].” Less likely to attend students in this study viewed themselves as belonging on the Henson campus because of their passion for academics and learning. They noted that their dedication and excitement for school were the reasons that they had chosen to attend Henson.

However, likely to attend middle and upper class students emphasized the social aspect of their college experience, and none of these three participants identified a significant difference between the academic environment of their high school and Henson. Mark, a junior who attended an elite high school he described as “kind of like a mini-college,” saw the social experiences at Henson as more important than academic experiences:

Well, I think I'm here more for the social aspect. [...] Usually my classes end up being sort of, cool, or interesting, you know, but I don't really think: “you know, oh—oh this is really going to help me, get into grad school” or something. I don't really end up thinking about that too much. I think this is more of an adventure, sort of, rather than a well of knowledge.

Paul, a junior who also attended an elite private high school and describes his family as “pretty wealthy”, expressed a similar sentiment:

Your academics is your job. You know, it's something that's important and it's something that you need to do, but it's not something that you're looking forward to, and it's not something that you want to do, you know, your *social life*—that's what's important. [...] I can get a decent education like

Henson at any one of 150 different colleges in this country. I am only gonna find the people at Henson here. And I'm only gonna find this setup, both in terms of the campus life and in terms of the social life here. And so, when you ask me how satisfied I am at Henson, that's what I go to— Henson is a great school, but there are 150 great schools. The Henson student body is unique.

Paul's focus on "the people at Henson," whom he finds to be unique, instead of the education, which he finds to be common—"I can get a decent education like Henson at any one of 150 different colleges in the country," underscores how "likely" he was to attend an elite college like Henson. By not differentiating between the academic rigor or quality of Henson or other schools, Paul takes for granted the focus on academics at Henson. Unlike Shannon or Max, Paul did not emphasize the fact that his fellow students are serious students. Instead, Paul, like the other two participants more likely students to attend Henson, valued the social environment of Henson over the academic environment.

Similarly, the experience of Alice, another student likely to attend Henson, underscores the importance of the social aspect of Henson for likely to attend students. Alice attended a public school, but was pressured by her parents to attend a good college. She chose to attend Henson because she didn't feel like she fit in very well in high school, but thought that the students at Henson seemed "quirky" and that she would fit in socially. She regretted having to go to an elite college, when what she really wanted to do was "become a hair stylist, or something not academic," and considered the relationships she's made and the social world at Henson to be the part of college that she most values. Her experience highlighted her attendance at Henson as something that was expected of her—not necessarily an academic leap after high school. Because Alice, much like the other middle and upper class students in this sample, was expected to attend an academically elite college, she focused on the social aspects of Henson as allowing her integration into the college. Whereas students the working class and first-generation students in this study who were less-likely to

attend Henson framed their place at Henson College by relating their passion to academics to the intelligence of the student body as a whole, those participants who were more likely to attend defined their place at Henson by focusing on their appreciation of Henson's social life.

Academic Achievement and Participation in the Extra-curriculum

Students who were likely to attend Henson and students who were less likely to attend Henson differed in how they viewed the importance of academics relative to extra-curricular activities. The seven less likely to attend participants explained that they would always choose academics over extra-curricular obligations, while the three participants in the likely to attend group would sometimes let their academics suffer by choosing to participate in extra-curricular activities or other aspects of campus life.

Students who were likely to attend Henson participated in EC activities that added to rather than extended their academic interests, and if their academic responsibilities and EC interests conflicted, they would chose participation in the extra-curriculum over their academic commitments. For example, Alice participated in theater groups, although she was not a theater major, because she liked to perform and had met a lot of her friends through theater. Mark, a social science major, was involved in a performance group which took up a lot of his time as well as several music groups that meet once or twice a week. While he planned on going to graduate school or a master's program in the social sciences after he graduates, he saw his involvement in his performance group as the most memorable part of his time at Henson: "It wouldn't be an overstatement to say" that when I think of my college experience "it's probably gonna revolve around this group." Mark talked about students who

chose to study rather than attending social events on campus, remarking that he found it strange that anyone would choose to do something academic over something social:

A lot of people will end up not going to events because they have a paper due or something, which to me is really weird, because I would definitely pick the event over any paper. [...]—like, “There’s a play, and I really wanted to see it and I couldn’t because I had to read this book,” it just seems really silly, because ultimately, what’s more important? I think clearly the play.

Paul echoed Mark’s dedication to prioritizing extracurricular activities over academics. For instance, Paul explained that he was part of an extra-curricular performance group: an “all consuming” activity, which could often impair his academic achievement:

Last week—I didn’t do any of my homework [...] ‘cause we had our first tournament last weekend. [...] I slept in yesterday and missed a quiz, and was so exhausted—and I decided to miss a Wednesday course yesterday it turned out there was a pop quiz in, so... I’m like *so* behind...I was doing really well this semester, GPA-wise, and it just all went to shit last week, but I do it anyway. And that’s a little bit crazy. I think about how it’s an entirely pointless activity, and how I really shouldn’t do it, because like a lot of aspects of my life suffer quite a bit as a result, but I stick with it for the social benefits.

Although students who were likely to attend Henson often chose the social over the academic, students who were less likely to attend Henson would choose their academic obligations over extra-curricular responsibilities if the two conflicted. Although two of these seven students reported that they tried to maintain a balance between the academic and the social, academics were clearly the priority for working class and first-generation participants. Further, while students likely to attend Henson participated in extra-curricular activities that were separate from their academic interests, less likely to attend often participated in extra-curricular activities which related to or extended their academic interests, or which were related to their social identities as a part of an ethnic group or as a first-generation student. For example, Shannon, a religious studies major, participated in religious groups at Henson, which she said expanded her academic understanding of religion. Her experience of this activity was similar to her general academic experience of Henson

College, and she connected her participation in extra-curricular multi-faith groups with what she saw as a general “broadening” of her academic “understanding and world view”. Whereas Max and Paul valued their extra-curricular groups for the social aspects, Shannon found the value of participation in the multi-faith extra-curricular groups to be primarily academic. Although she enjoyed the social relationships she gained through involvement in the group, she characterized these relationships primarily in terms of the value of “learning from the perspectives and world views” of a diverse group of people.

Other working class and first-generation college students were involved in extra-curricular groups related to their ethnic identities: one Latina student was involved in an extra-curricular group centered on Latino culture, and two students of Asian backgrounds participated in groups centering on Asian cultures. Of these students, Cara, the Latina student, became involved with the Latina culture group as a result of a contact she had made when she visited the school on a program for minority students. Despite the social connections she gained from this extra-curricular group, Cara still felt closest to other students involved in the group for first-generation students. Carly, a working class but non-first-generation student, participated in a group for Asian women, but had little time to be heavily involved in the group, as she was working upwards of fifteen hours per week for her work study job, at which she tutored other students in her major. Finally, Rose, the first-generation working class alumnus, was involved in a group for Asian students during her time at Henson, like other less likely to attend students, but she reported that she didn’t let her participation in the extra-curricular group dominate her time.

In summary, those middle and upper class participants who were likely to attend Henson College emphasized the importance of the social community to their college

experience. Conversely, working class and first-generation participants who were less likely to attend prioritized their academic commitments over participation in extra-curricular groups. Those students who were less likely to attend Henson who *did* participate in extra-curricular groups chose groups that related to their academic interests or their racial or ethnic identity, whereas more likely to attend students at Henson participated in groups that were not related to or an extension of their academic experience or racial or ethnic identity. While more likely to attend students participated in extra-curricular activities even if their involvement conflicted with their academics, less likely to attend students monitored their participation in extra-curricular groups so that they would not conflict with their academic life. The difference between the intensity of participation in extra-curricular groups and the types of extra-curricular groups participated in reflected the differing priorities of participants who were likely to attend Henson and participants who were unlikely to attend Henson.

Challenges to Social Integration for Less Likely to Attend Students

In general, students in this study who were less likely to attend a college like Henson were also less likely to feel integrated into the Henson social community as a whole or form relationships with a large group of friends. While the likely to attend students talked about the many friendships they'd made with diverse groups of people, the less likely to attend students indicated that most of the friends and connections they'd made were people who were also not very likely to attend Henson. In some instances, working class students noted that some of the only students they felt close to stemmed from similar working class backgrounds.

For instance, Rose, a Henson alum, explained that most of her close friends at Henson had either been involved in the Latino group on campus or, mostly, in a program for first-generation students. Similarly, the two first-generation first-year students I spoke with, Max and Cara, explained that the program for first-generation students at Henson had led them to form close bonds primarily with other first-generation students in the program. They said that they felt closer to these students than any others on campus. While first-generation students involved in groups related to their ethnic identifies had made friends outside of the first-generation group, these students felt the most connected with the other students in the first generation group.

The First Generation Program. Three students from this study were involved in a program for first-generation students on campus. Students apply to the program before their first year at Henson. The program aims to provide both academic and social support for first-generation students in their transition to the elite college environment of Henson. Although the group allowed at least half of its members to be non-first-generation students, the program was focused on the needs of first-generation students. The program, according to these three students, aided their transition to Henson by providing a way for them to get to know other students with similar backgrounds. All three students said that they had found their closest friends at Henson among other group members. Membership in this group supported their feelings of belonging at Henson, but ultimately these students did not consider themselves to be completely integrated into campus life or deeply connected with most of the likely to attend-type students at Henson.

For example, Maggie, a member of the program, felt that she had connected more to first-generation students than others because she felt different from most other students on campus. Maggie explained that her focus on academics and her social background made it difficult for her to become integrated in the social component of campus life at Henson College:

Well, part of [the reason I prioritize academics over social life] it is because I have a hard time connecting with some of the people who are at Henson, so it's harder for me to have really fulfilling social connections like I would if I was from, like, suburban Maryland, or whatever, but also because that's why I came to college—my motivation in getting educated is different from some people, where it's part of their family that they're expected to go to college, and that they're – you know, it's part of their culture that they go there, and they've got all these friends at other liberal arts schools, and they've got siblings from here, there, wherever, and so it's more of like a social experience for them. For me, I'm motivated to get a degree, and to learn, and to, you know, make money with my degree, and have all these opportunities, so in that way the academics are more important for me.

Although the program for first-generation students had created a supportive community where Maggie found many of her close friends, she also noted that she was not exactly *close* to everyone even in the first-generation program:

I thought that [the program] would be a good place [to talk about my family income or circumstances], because it's supposed to be for first-generation college students, so I thought that we would have more agreement or discussion about issues with class and race and—things like that. But actually there are a lot of First-Gen people who are pretty well off, and they were the most—they were, I'm not quite sure why, because half of the group has to be first-generation, and then the other half doesn't, and it just—worked out, that the 3 or 4 most outspoken people in our group are also the most affluent, and their parents are the most educated. So sometimes it was even hard to, really have a dialogue about income, or like different class experiences, with First-Gen.

Maggie's comments illustrate that first-generation students may feel uncomfortable discussing issues that are specific to their transition to college when students with different backgrounds are present. Maggie's comments also indicate that many first-generation students may likely be acutely aware of the differences, particularly financial differences, between themselves and students more likely to attend Henson College.

Further, the presence of this program for first-generation students at Henson College, and the role played by this group as an extra-curricular activity in students' social integration,

was interesting, as it suggested that even groups which seek to support first-generation students, and indeed which do so in many ways, may have the unintentional result of cementing students' relationships in low status social networks.

Summary

My findings indicate that the students' experiences of the extra-curriculum and college life in general differ depending on their likelihood of attending Henson College, and that this has implications for their integration into the social sphere at college. Working class and first-generation students who were less likely to attend an elite liberal arts college were in the minority, as most students come from highly educated, professional backgrounds, and although they shared extra-curricular participation as a value prior to coming to college, differences in this participation surfaced after they came to Henson. I find that differences among students prior to coming to college did not dissipate after attendance, and that the social world of Henson is one area in which differences among low and higher status groups are actually illuminated. These findings support and expand upon the premise of social reproduction theory: class is reproduced through education, as even those working class students who did not follow high school with working class jobs may be limited by their non-elite cultural capital in the context of a dominant culture that is defined by middle or upper class elite cultural capital.

Less likely to attend participants valued the academic over the social experience of college, tended to be involved less than others in extra-curricular activities, and participated in activities that facilitated their integration into only a narrow section of the student body,

including activities which mirrored or extended their academic interests, a fellowship program for first-generation students, and student clubs which aimed to support the interests of specific ethnic or regional identities. While these activities seemed to offer the less-likely-to-attend students in this study a support network and sometimes aided these students' integration into the academic sphere of Henson, they did not seem to aid integration into general campus life. Some of these less likely students reported a sense of alienation from the general campus community, dissatisfaction with their experience of campus life, or frustration at the lack of support for working-class students on campus. This sense of difference in addition to a more academic orientation toward college life suggest a lack of integration in terms of Tinto's basic notion of "adopting the norms and behavioral patterns" of the community (Christie and Dinham 1991:413), as the likely to attend students—representing the dominant culture—did not share this feeling. In the final section of my paper, I explain further the significance of these findings, discuss the limitations of the study, and explain future areas of study suggested by my research.

Conclusion

Recent literature on integration and student participation in the extra-curriculum indicates that students who are less likely to attend college face barriers to integration due to cultural, social, and economic resources which differ or do not facilitate participation. This research lends support to Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) thesis that higher education serves to reproduce social class through culture. However, previous literature does not fully consider the ways in which students who are less likely to attend elite colleges differ from

students who are likely to attend elite colleges in their involvement in campus life and motivations for involvement. Furthermore, the literature on integration and student participation in extracurricular activity does not consider the case of non-academic campus life at elite institutions where the majority of students participate in extra curriculum both during and before college. In order to address this gap in the literature, I conducted 10 interviews with students likely and unlikely to attend Henson College- a highly selective liberal arts college.

I found critical differences between the value that participants likely to attend and not likely to attend Henson placed on academics and social life. The less likely to attend students valued the academic over the social experience of college, understanding college as primarily an academic endeavor. Conversely, the likely to attend students emphasized that it was the social environment of Henson that set it apart from their other college choices and saw college as more of an “adventure” than a space for academic growth. As a result of these differing priorities, participation and motivations for participating in the extra-curriculum differed between participants likely to attend Henson College and participants unlikely to attend Henson College. The academic focus of the less likely to attend students in this study corresponded to their participation in groups that extended their academic interests, were related to their racial/ethnic identities, or a specific program which aimed at supporting first-generation students. However, less likely to attend students in this study monitored their involvement in extra-curricular groups so that extra-curricular commitments would not interfere with their academic performance. On the other hand, likely to attend students participated in extra-curricular groups that were unrelated to their academic interests and prioritized extra-curricular activities over academic obligations.

These differing orientations toward campus life and the extra-curriculum translated into differences in social integration, with the less likely to attend participants becoming integrated into only a narrow section of the student body unlikely to offer the same cultural and social capital provided by the activities and social networks of the likely to attend students. While all ten participants in this study shared at least one characteristic of a college-bound class culture— extra-curricular participation while in high school— cultural differences in even this area became more pronounced after college matriculation. After coming to college, the orientation toward extra-curricular participation becomes more indicative of differences among student groups than similarities. As a result, the seven less-likely-to-attend students participated in extra-curricular activities in a way that does not provide them with access to a wide range of social and cultural capital. My research therefore supports social reproduction theory and Bourdieu and Passeron's larger view that college reproduces social class rather than providing a means for social mobility.

These findings address important gaps in the literature on social integration of lower SES into college social life by documenting the experiences of students who are in the middle of their college careers. However, further research must be done on these findings because of the limitations of this study. First, ten interviews with mostly female college students are generalizable neither to the Henson population as a whole nor to elite liberal arts colleges in general. Second, due to the scope of this study I was unable to take into account how participants experiences and identities as working class, first-generation, or middle and upper class students are related to their racial, ethnic, or gender identities. Third, the inclusion of mostly college juniors in this study primarily provides insight into only one specific stage of the college experience, and it is not possible to draw conclusions about

students' ultimate integration into college life or their entire processes of integration, suggesting the need for a longitudinal study of students—both working class and first-generation and those more likely to attend students—to better understand their processes of integration. This suggests also the need for future study in this vein at other, similar elite colleges, especially those with high levels of extra-curricular participation in order see if these patterns of extra-curricular participation hold for other institutions.

Another strength of my study is that by including both working class and first-generation students in my analysis of integration into college social life, I illustrate that although these two groups of students are viewed as separate in existing literature, they share many experiences and characteristics. This strength is also a weakness, as the inclusion of both working class and first-generation students in this study complicates the analysis by not providing a means to analyze how these two groups may differ in their college experience and extra-curricular participation. However, by not focusing on either working class or first-generation students solely, but rather grouping the study population in terms of their likelihood to attend an elite college, this research is successful in pointing out the similarities between working class and first-generation students, categories that are not mutually exclusive. As a result, further research should consider students' integration into college life in terms of their "likelihood" of attending college, as opposed to using only a single indicator—SES, class status, or first-generation status—of that likelihood.

Another finding of this study that deserves further attention is the role of groups targeted towards first-generation students. The presence of such a group for first-generation students at Henson College, and the role played by this group as an extra-curricular activity in students' social integration, was interesting, as it suggested that even groups which seek to

support first-generation students may have the unintentional result of cementing students' relationships in low status social networks. However, since only three students in the interview population were involved in this activity, a consideration of the role of groups of this nature is not necessarily conclusive. Further research into the roles played by groups for first-generation students, or perhaps groups for working class students in particular, would be helpful for understanding the ability of these groups to aid student integration into more diverse, or perhaps wider, segments of the student body.

The experiences of these ten students at Henson College illustrate that, even for working class and first-generation students who gain access to elite schools, there are still significant barriers to integration into campus life and their ability to benefit from elite social and cultural capital in general. However, removing obstacles to the integration of less likely to attend students into college social life should not translate into an attempt to force these students to remodel themselves to fit in with this campus community. In other words, integration need not imply assimilation. Although Tinto's model of integration saw "learning the values and expectations of that community" into which one seeks to become integrated and "actually adopting the norms and behavioral patterns of the new community" as a necessity (Christie and Dinham 1991: 413), perhaps it would be helpful to keep in mind the value of the perspectives of working class and first-generation to the elite academic and social world of the elite college.

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