

(No) Harm in Asking

Anthony Abraham Jack

Junior Fellow, Harvard Society of Fellows

Assistant Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education

Shutzer Assistant Professor, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study

College:

Unwritten Rules and Unsaid Expectations

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Lesson from two resident counselors

Unequal Rewarding

- College officials nominate who they know, who they like, and who they find impressive. I put it in that order because thoughts go straight to the students you know best. When you think about someone to nominate, you're not going to nominate someone you don't like. It is people you like. Justifying it, you reverse the order because you only know if someone is impressive if you know them.... You win these prizes by what is not on your resume.... You are not going to know anything unless you really know that student. Students who college officials don't know are just not in the mix. Students who don't get nominated are either not known or not liked. If you draw a Venn diagram, the larger circle will be those who are not known. –Maggie (Resident Counselor)

Who Knows You

- “The (nomination) process is relationship-dependent, unfortunately. It enables students who develop relationships a leg up in the process.... Oftentimes the best candidates are not put forward [and] some students get nominated for more prizes more often. It is hard to tease out what is meritocracy and what is nepotism, favoritism, cronyism or whatever you want to call it.” –Susan (Resident Counselor)

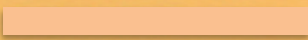
Speaking Up In Class

Fall 2012



Three sessions:
Wednesdays, October 3, 10, 17
1:00-2:30 p.m

This group provides strategies for students who wish to have more of a voice in classes. Through discussion and in a supportive group context, the focus will be on increasing self-confidence and managing anxiety in academic settings.

Pre-group consultation is required.
Please call  to schedule an appointment.



Tip of the Iceberg

- In College
 - Extensions
 - The benefit of the doubt (when in trouble)
 - Social support when things go wrong
 - Access to coveted events (e.g., private movie screenings, dinner with presidents)
- Transitioning Out
 - Letters of Recommendation
 - Research Assistantships, Internships
 - Introduction to recruiters and head hunters
 - Help with firsts: negotiating, apartments, credit cards

Who Benefits? Who Loses Out?

Middle Class Advantage

Paying for the Party

HOW COLLEGE MAINTAINS INEQUALITY



ELIZABETH A. ARMSTRONG • LAURA T. HAMILTON

- Privileges stem from
 - More formally educated families who can teach their children how to engage teachers effectively and develop a sense of entitlement to adults' time and energies (Calarco 2011, Lareau 2003, Streib 2011)
- **Advantages endure in college**
 - Meeting expectations of faculty (Collier and Morgan 2008)
 - Feeling at ease with dominant culture (Aries 2008, Mullen 2010)

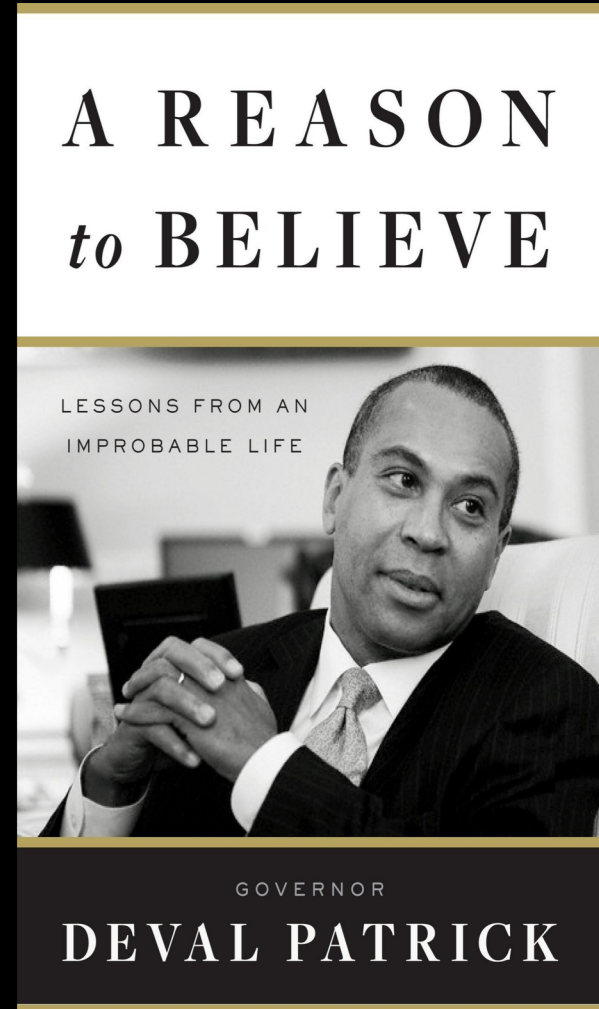
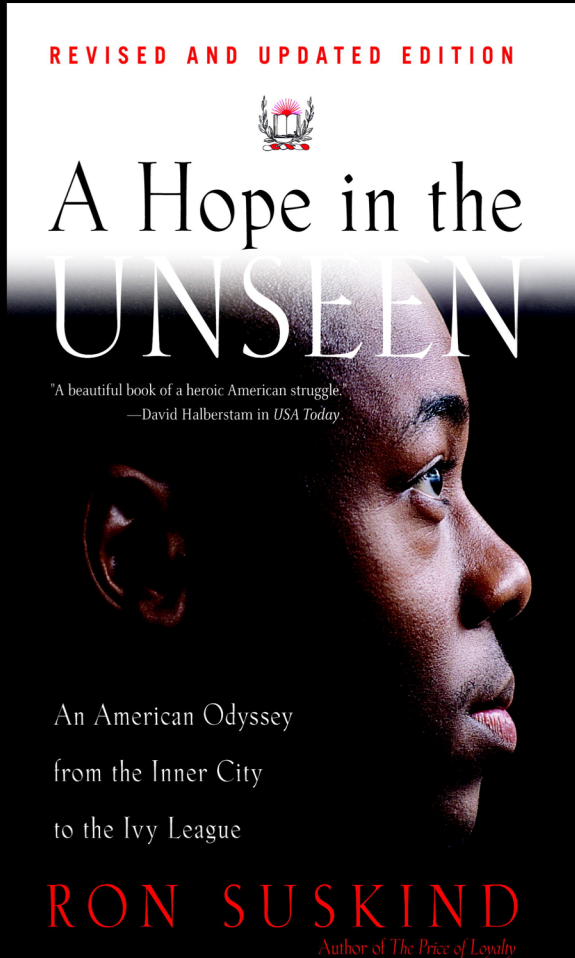
A New Approach

I outline how precollege experiences influence how undergraduates navigate college that looks beyond the family, especially for those from lower-income backgrounds.

A Tale of Two Inner-City, Ivy Leaguers

Doubly Disadvantaged

Privileged Poor

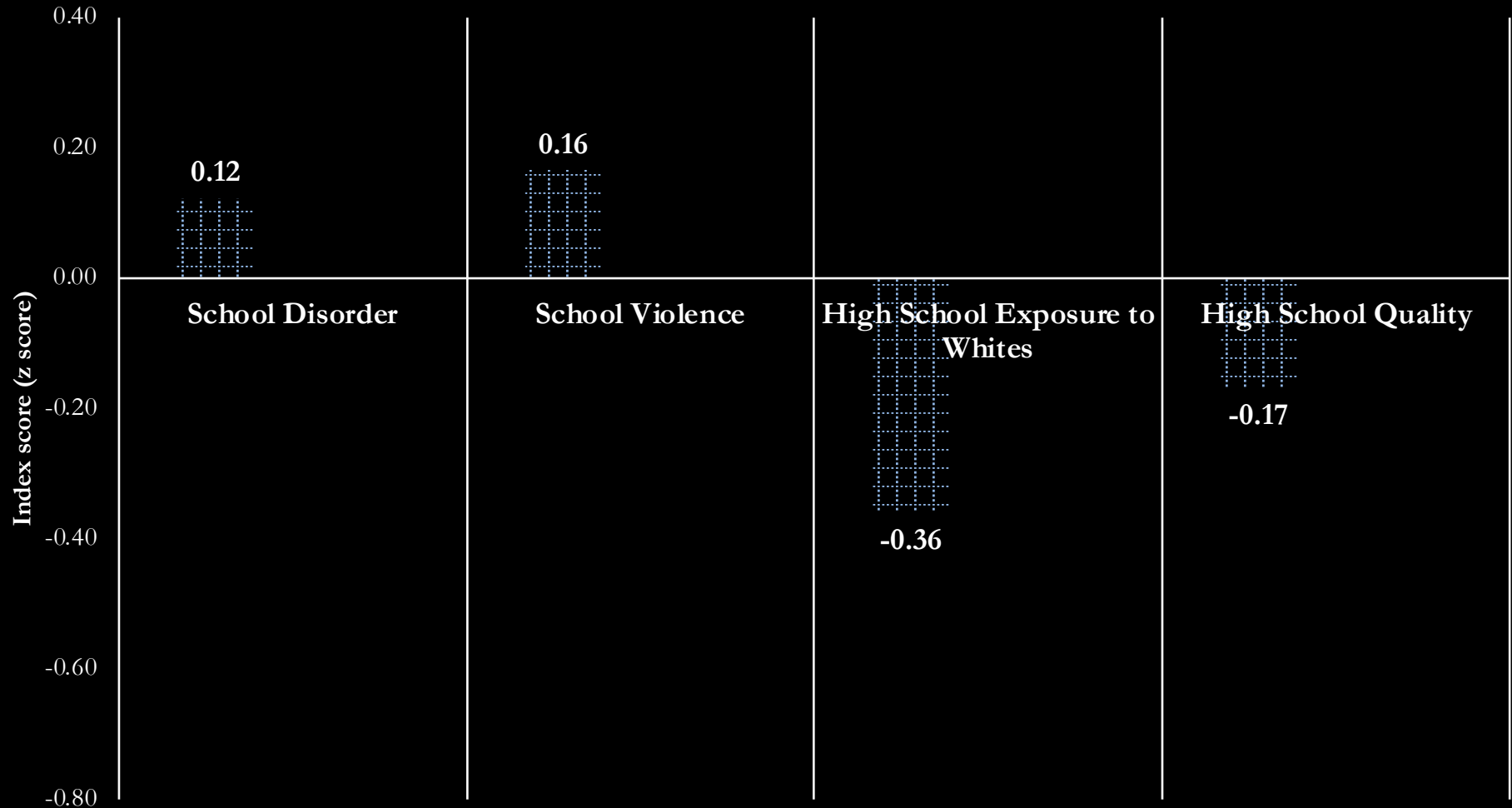


Moments of Divergence

A National Snapshot

High School Characteristics for Black NLSF Undergraduates

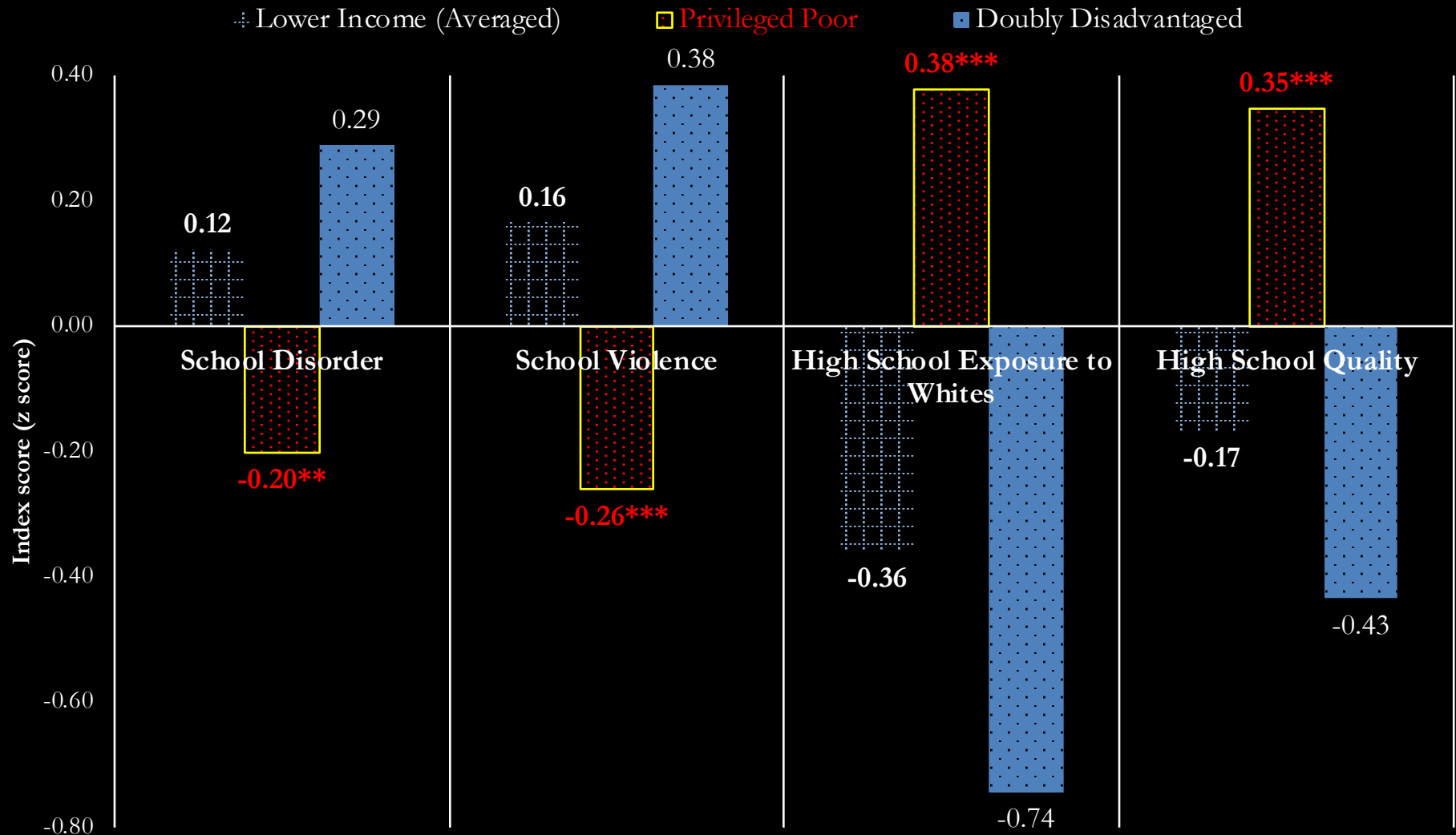
‡ Lower Income (Averaged)



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen (n = 141)

Disorder and Violence indices capture respondents exposure at ages 6, 13, 18.

High School Characteristics for Black NLSF Undergraduates

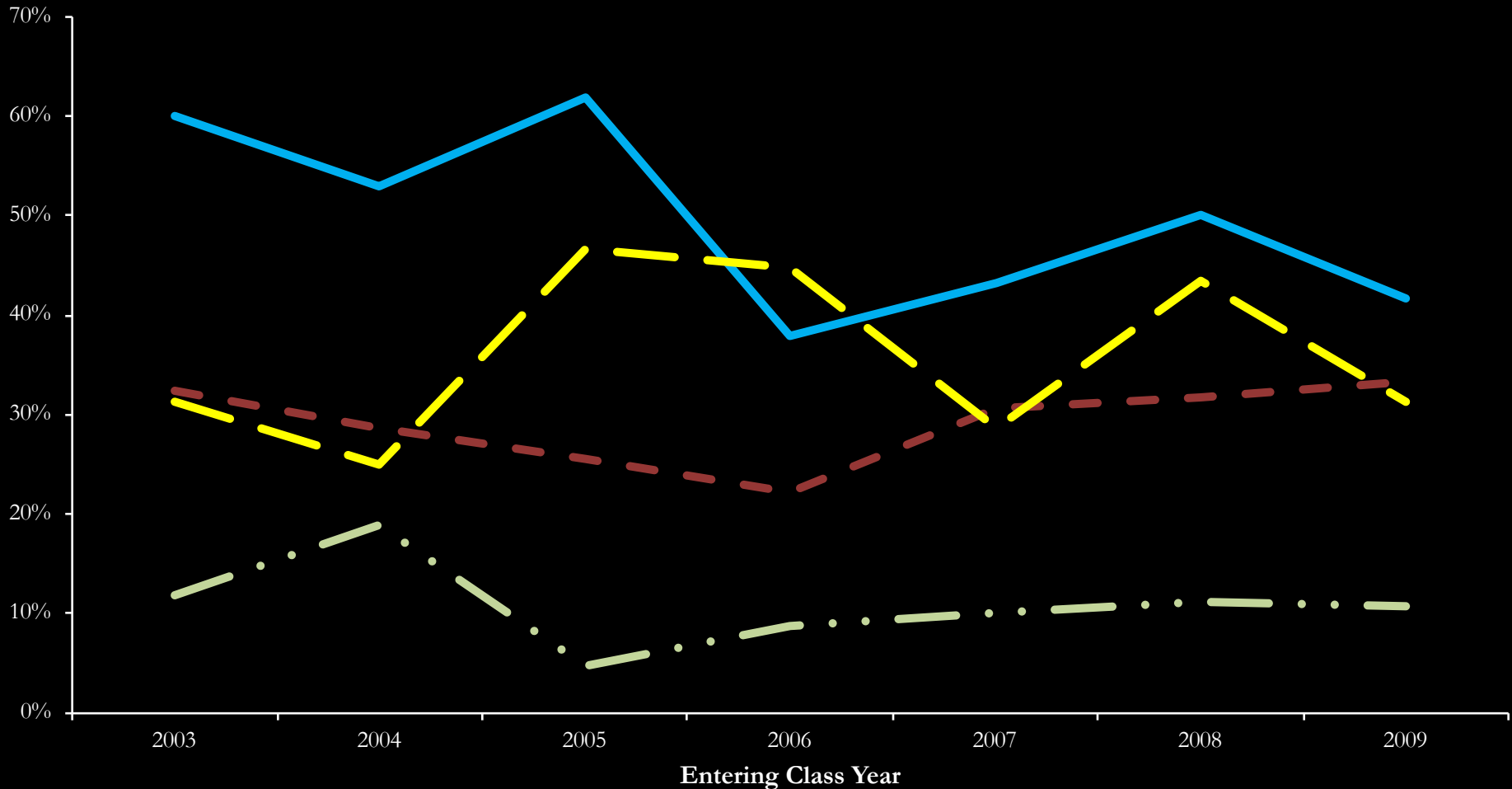


Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen n = 141

Disorder and Violence indices capture respondents exposure at ages 6, 13, 18.

Privileged Poor by Race

Black White Latino Asian



Source: Author's Compilation. Errors due to rounding.

Composite Variable ($\alpha = .81$): Pell Grant Receipt, >\$40,000 in aid, FGCS status, and institutional classification of low-income household



THE PRIVILEGED POOR

**How Elite Colleges Are Failing
Disadvantaged Students**

ANTHONY ABRAHAM JACK

Data and Methods

- The Place
 - Renowned University (pseudonym)
 - Elite colleges are supposed to exacerbate class differences
 - Progressive financial aid and admissions policies
- The People
 - In-depth interviews with 103 native-born, black, Latino, and white undergraduates
 - **Privileged Poor**: lower-income and attended private school
 - **Doubly Disadvantaged**: lower-income and attended public school
 - Two years of ethnographic observations of campus life
 - 15 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with informants

Approaching College Officials

Teaching Fellows, Professors, Resident
Counselors, Deans, Directors, and members of
Staff

Mine for the Taking

Making Renowned His Own

- Renowned is what I expected: a place of profound excess and profound wealth. Definitely try and get a slice of it. What I do really well for myself this past year, not only this past year, is reaching out to professors, reaching out to business people, reaching out to physicians. I'm interested in medicine. Reach out to public health scholars; I'm interested in public health also. This place is becoming what it should be for me which is a place where I have this opportunity, the privilege to understand how the world works [and] how I can effect change. –Justin (MC,B)

Challenging Authority

- I expect a lot of teachers: be compassionate, happy to help, make sure you understand, give advice. But, man, I had the weirdest encounter with a TA; it set me off. I hadn't done as well on the exam as I wanted to, so I went to her about a regrade. And she was like, "That probably won't work." I was like, "I explained my point." She was like, "Yeah, but you have to say this." She didn't seem like she cared and that kind of pissed me off. I talked to my TA about it when I went to class later. –Joe (MC,B)

Dignity of Work

Daddy Lessons

- My being uncomfortable going to office hours: that's the [social] class thing. I don't like talking to professors one-on-one. That's negative because Renowned really wants you to be proactive. *And* raise your hand. *And* talk. Freshman year, I didn't say a word. People who I had small classes with, if I see them on the street, I recognize them. They won't recognize me because I didn't speak. My dad would always teach me, "You don't want to get where you are based on kissing ass, right? You want it based on hard work. It'll take longer, but there's more value to it. You'll feel more proud." That's bad in *this* context because Renowned totally wants you to kiss them. —Valeria (DD,L)

Feeling Guilty

- “I’m very much about doing as much as I can myself and *only then* asking for help because I feel bad asking for help. It’s hard to put into words but I feel *guilty*.” –Robbie (DD,W)
- “I feel very *self-conscious*. I still don’t feel comfortable speaking to school officials ‘cause I’m constantly wondering what’s going through their mind, how they’re perceiving me which I probably shouldn’t do but it’s an instinct.” –Arianna (DD,L)

Accepting What is Given

- **Shaniqua:** When you're poor *and* you're homeless, you get used to what is given. You don't complain. Someone gives you a shirt, even if it's ugly, you wear it. Of course you'll be grateful. It's made it harder for me to advocate for myself. Part of me is like I've been given enough. It wouldn't really be good to rock the boat when you're homeless and depend on others. I make myself likable. I've gotten better but it's hard for me to advocate for myself. It's taken time to not feel guilty asking for extensions.
- **Tony:** How long did it take you to feel comfortable?
- **Shaniqua:** I don't know how much of it is pressure or me feeling comfortable. Junior year was really good. I know I'm not comfortable now because I almost failed a class. I didn't reach out to the professor until he sent an email. Even though he said if you don't turn in this paper you'll fail, it wasn't until I got that email that I realized I need to email this professor. For weeks, I just sat and didn't do anything. –Shaniqua (DD,B)

Go Out And Get Yours

Starbucks, Anyone?

- I say “Let’s get coffee.” I have no qualms asking for help. If I need something, I’m more than willing to go; I email often. It is valuable for your grades to know professors. I make it a point to know my professors. Since my high school had mandatory tutorial hours for teachers, I was like, “If I need help here I’ll just go to office hours.” Wasn’t a big thing. –Nicole (PP,B)

Going After Hers

- I draw on skills I learned at my day school. [One] thing I learned was connecting with teachers. They made it ok to say, “Hey, can you meet Tuesday at this time?” I had the small classroom experience where it was ok to ask your teacher can we meet about this paper. I did that a lot my first semester here too. There was a TA, we had a final paper and he was in New York. I asked can we talk. He was like “sure, give me a call.” I was perfectly comfortable with that. My friends are like, “You’re crazy; on the phone with your TA?” Listen, I gotta go out for mine. When I talk about my 5th year, I learned to go out and get mine because I didn’t have a network anywhere else. The school was providing my network. I use the same mentality of “go out and get yours.” –Ogun (PP,L)

Preaching and a Parable

- I know what I ought to do. My friend struggles: “I don’t get this, I don’t know what to do.” I told her what to do: “contact them; they give their email.” That was very intuitive to me. Reaching out to your teacher and having one-on-one time was definitely something that was at [my boarding school]. I didn’t think that was a big deal but the fact that she was like “I don’t know, are you sure I can just email them?” Not that she felt the professor wasn’t welcoming, but ‘cause she wasn’t used to that. I arguably have an advantage. I would have been meeting with my professor for a whole semester at this point and she would have been struggling. Let’s say there’s two students both struggling. One of them gets a tutor, which I figure is normal at public schools. I would very intuitively email the professor and say, “I’m not doing well please meet with me, this is my schedule.” –Stephanie (PP,B)

In All

- College Officials **disproportionately reward** proactive engagement strategies.
- Middle-class respondents see college officials as **partners** in their academic journey.
- The Doubly Disadvantaged see college officials as **authority figures**.
- The Privileged Poor see college officials as **facilitators** helping to get them what they need.

Quick Poll

- Have you ever had a professor or administrator define office hours to you?

An Exercise

- On the sheet of paper provided, **define “office hours” or those practices that bridge the gap**
 - What will you highlight besides when they are?
 - What buckets will you give students to cast their questions in?
 - What boundaries will you try to maintain?
 - For those in:
 - Classrooms and Lecture Halls: How discipline-inspired or personal will you make your definition?
 - Offices and Support Services: How will you balance outlining what your offices do and who you are?

Welcome Back

Language Matters

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HU91P55U9qw&feature=youtu.be>

Helping (Not Just) Colleges Help Students

Helping Colleges Help Students, Pt. 1

- We must account for varied *cultural* and *social* resources undergraduates bring to college.
- *Social* hurdles easily turn a 3.93 into a 3.39.
- Taking culture seriously is *not* admitting academic deficits or lowered standards but rather recognizing that poverty and inequality restrict the opportunity structure for lower-income youth.
- Colleges must look at their own operating procedures to see how they may be inadvertently leading to the reproduction of inequality in college.

Helping Colleges Help Students, Pt. 2

- Define office hours
 - Sounds simple but some students believe that office hours are a time when they *cannot* bother professors, deans, and directors
- Impress upon students: it is more than normal to ask for help
 - It is *smart*. It is *expected*. It is *rewarded*.
- Inspire them to build intergenerational support networks
 - It is not about sucking up or cheating but rather playing by rules that govern their new home
 - Invite student to go early and go often; establish new routines
 - Educate families on the new rules
 - Orientation programs as key

Thank You

Anthony_Jack@gse.harvard.edu

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From the Former First Lady

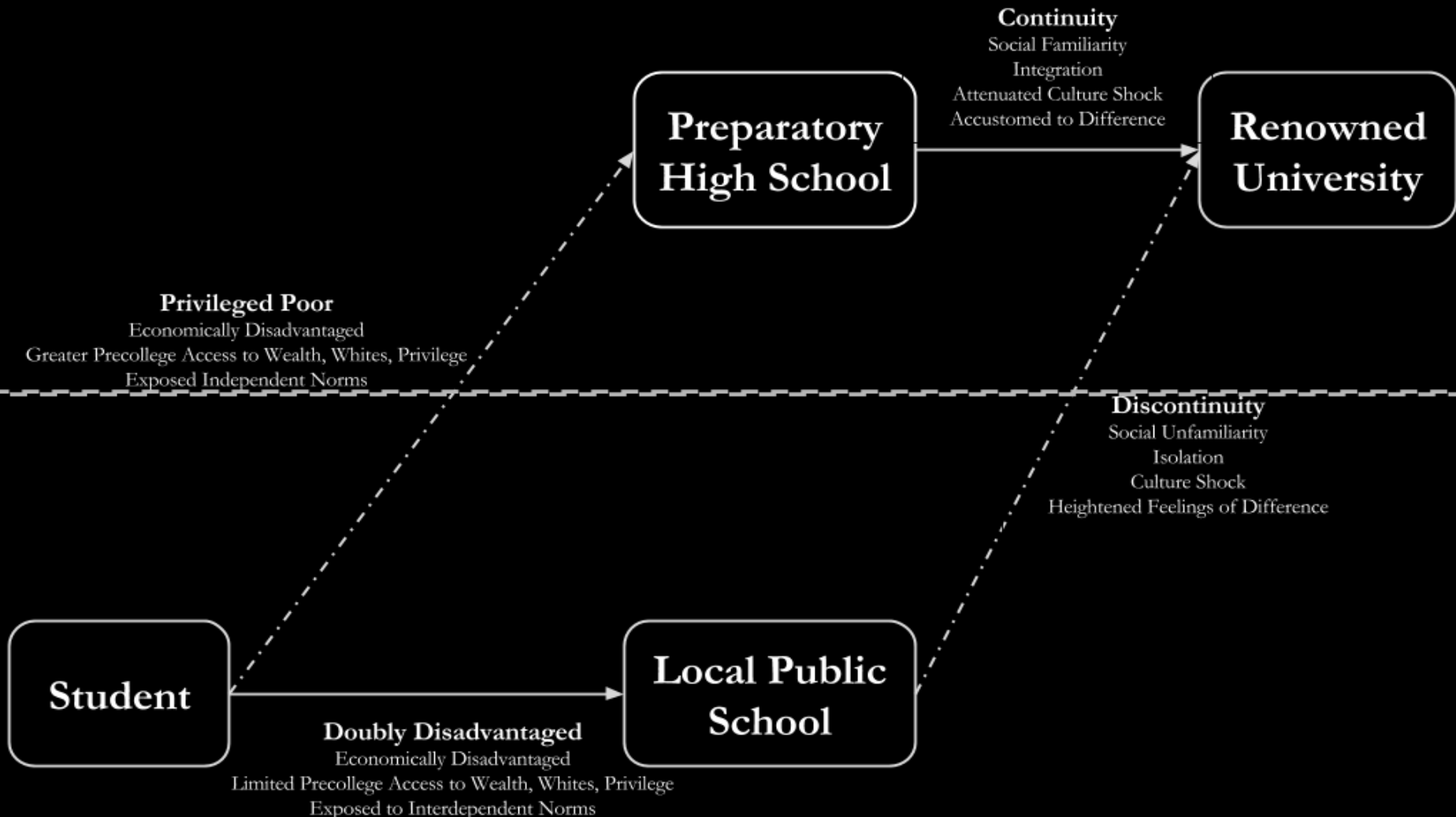
- “Now, the first lesson is very simple, and that is, don’t ever be afraid to ask for help. And I cannot stress that enough.... At first, I didn’t tell a soul how anxious and lonely and insecure I was feeling. But as I got to know my classmates, I realized something important: they were all struggling with something, but instead of hiding their struggles and trying to deal with them all alone, they reached out. They asked for help. If they didn’t understand something in class, they would raise their hand and ask a question, then they’d go to professor’s office hours and ask even more questions. And they were never embarrassed about it, not one bit. Because they knew that that’s how you succeed in life.... So I decided to follow their lead. I found an advisor who helped me choose my classes.”

Bringing the Two Together

Early Childhood/Adolescence

Late Adolescence

Early Adulthood

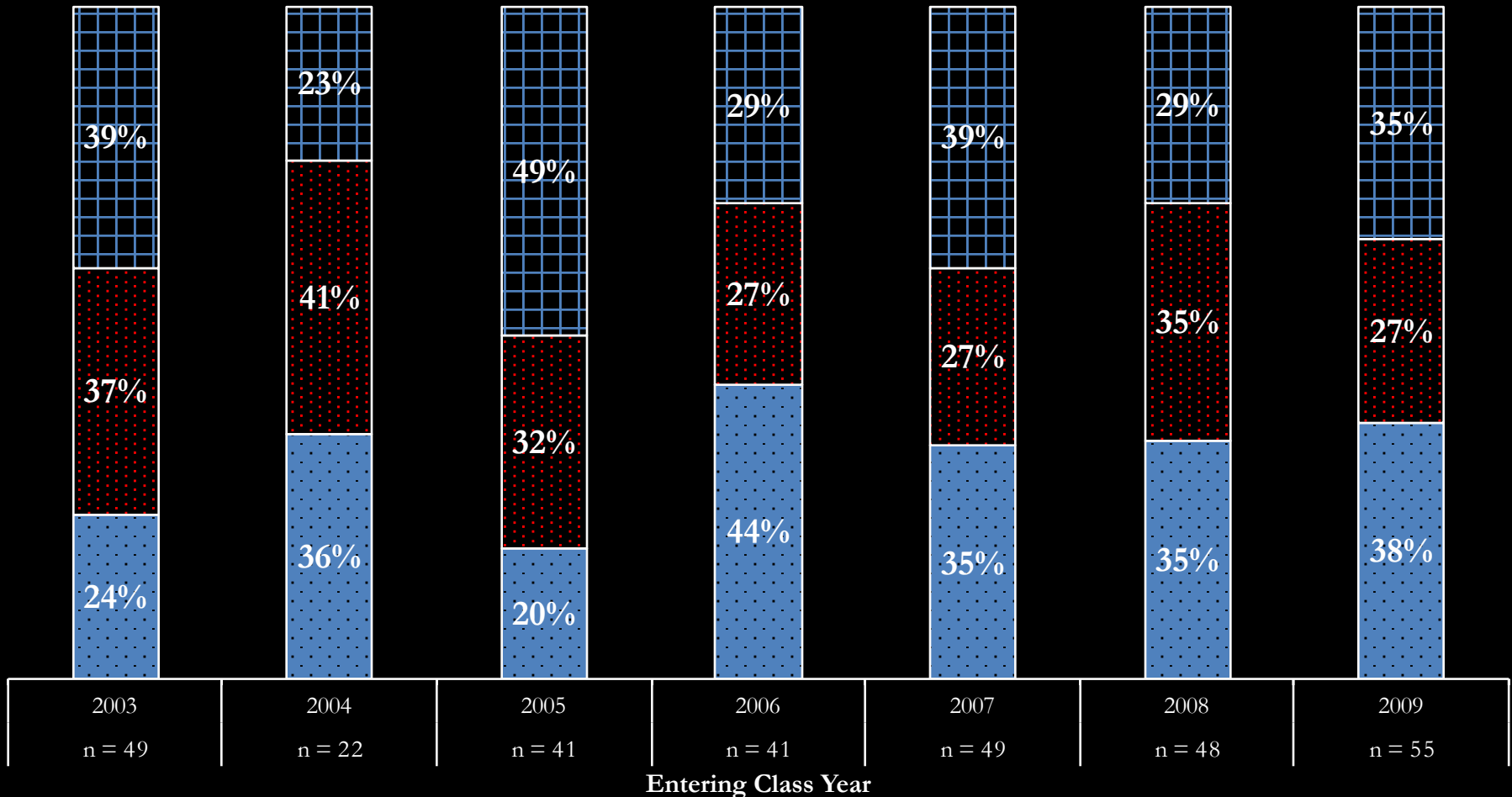


Concluding Thoughts

- Push for taking the long view of the acquisition of cultural capital (see Young 1999)
- Call for examining the social processes that lead to the reproduction of inequality in college (see Stevens et. al. 2008)
- Bridging Culture, Education, Organizations: in line with studies in the sociology of organizations that investigate cultural matching (Rivera 2012) and how value systems and norms operate in local environments (see Turco 2010)

Black Undergraduates at Midtown College

■ Doubly Disadvantaged
 ■ Privileged Poor
 ■ Higher Income



Source: Author's Compilation. Errors due to rounding.

Composite Variable ($\alpha = .81$): Pell Grant Receipt, >\$40,000 in aid, FGCS status, and institutional classification of low-income household