Black Educational Choice

Assessing the Private and Public Alternatives to Traditional K–12 Public Schools

Diana T. Slaughter-Defoe, Howard C. Stevenson, Edith G. Arrington, and Deborah J. Johnson, Editors

Foreword by James A. Banks

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The Changing Landscape: Enhancing the Public School Option for Black Youth

Lara Perez-Felkner, E.C. Hedberg, and Barbara Schneider

INTRODUCTION

Although school choice options have expanded throughout the United States, it remains unclear whether they have significantly changed the educational opportunity structures of the students attending them (Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2001; Renzulli & Roscigno, 2005). New public high school institutions including charters have been instituted to enhance Black academic performance and access to postsecondary school. The current analysis historically compares and contrasts Black youths' postsecondary enrollment with other racial and ethnic groups', focusing on the types of high schools that the students attended. The intent is to characterize the types of public institutions that have been particularly successful in enhancing Black high school students' access to postsecondary institutions.

While Black postsecondary attainment rates rose in the 1990s, the academic racial gap among Blacks and Whites widened. In 1990, 13 percent of Black, non-Hispanic young adults (aged 25–29 years old) completed a Bachelor's degree or higher compared to 26 percent of White non-Hispanic adults, (Current Population Survey, 2009a). By 2000, 18 percent of Black, non-Hispanic 25–29 year olds had completed a Bachelor's degree or higher in comparison to 34 percent of White, non-Hispanics (a difference of 16 percentage points); by 2009, the gap had increased further to a difference of over 18 percentage points (Current Population Survey, 2009a). This escalating racial inequality prompts questions about the secondary school experiences of U.S. youth from the late 1980s through the 2000s.

One hallmark of educational reform has been an increased emphasis on market-based solutions that provide opportunities for students and their

families to choose the schools they will attend. While not an entirely new type of reform (public school choice options have been offered since the 1960s in the form of magnet schools, designed to address racial inequalities in education[1]), choice gained considerable momentum with the introduction of charter schools. Charter schools are granted autonomy through short-term contractual charters from school boards, state and local districts, or other public educational entities. This autonomy is designed to foster innovation aimed at improving students' outcomes (Bulkley & Fisler, 2003; Renzulli & Roscigno, 2005). Although not the case in all districts (Wells, Holme, Lopez, & Cooper, 2003), charter schools primarily enroll socioeconomically disadvantaged students who score low on their achievement tests, and experience similar or greater socioeconomic and academic disadvantages than their student peers (Hoxby, 2004; Rapp & Eckes, 2007). The admission process at charter schools usually occurs through a lottery system.

Charter schools are increasingly occupying a central role in school reform. By 2007–2008, 370,158 9th through 12th grade students were enrolled in charter schools. Over a quarter of these students (27%) were Black, non-Hispanic and 28 percent were Latino.[2] These numbers are likely to continue to increase as local and state-level investments in charter schools are expanding, due in part to incentives provided by initiatives such as the Race to the Top program and Promise Neighborhoods (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Recent studies report that charter schools improve the high school graduation and college matriculation rates of their students, compared to traditional public schools, particularly in certain states and cities (Booker, Sass, Gill, & Zimmer, 2008; Zimmer & Buddin, 2007). Overall however, evidence of charter schools' impact on student academic performance is mixed, especially for Black youth. In the past, more traditional privatization options such as Catholic schools and schools affiliated with the elite National Association for Independent Schools (NAIS), have shown similar results for Black students (Slaughter-Defoe & Johnson, 1988).[3] It is unclear whether these types of private schools will continue to show mixed results.

Racial Differences in College Enrollment

Preparing minority students for entry to four-year colleges has been a major emphasis of school choice programs. The question becomes whether newer types of public schools are more successful in increasing Black postsecondary enrollment than traditional public schools. In the 1990s and 2000s, the movement toward "college for all" gained accelerated momentum. The proportion of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in college rose from 36 percent in 2000 to 41 percent in 2009 (Current Population Survey, 2009b). In fall 2010, 19.1 million students were expected to attend two-year and four-year postsecondary institutions in the United States, up from 15.3 million in fall 2000 (NCES, 2009). Of these, 12.1 million students were expected to attend

public or private four-year institutions, 6.7 million were expected to attend public two-year colleges, and 0.3 million were expected to attend private two-year colleges (NCES, 2009). Much of this enrollment growth has been in the two-year college sector (see Rosenbaum, 2001). These institutions have been largely designed to provide a stepping stone to a four-year degree for students with limited resources (Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen, & Person, 2006), Research suggests however that youth with limited economic and social resources are less likely to benefit from the two-year system compared to students with more resources (Goldrick-Rab, 2006).

Some of the variation in postsecondary enrollments has been traced to differences in high school academic preparation. High schools have been shown to have different levels of academic emphasis, or press (Lee & Smith, 1999; Murphy, Weil, Hallinger, & Mitman, 1982). Schools high in academic press tend to place considerable emphasis on academic achievement and preparing students for college, encouraging rigorous coursework, school discipline, and College Board test-taking (Lee & Smith, 1999; Murphy et al., 1982). For example, advanced mathematics and science course taking has been found to be predictive of students' preparedness for college (Muller, Riegle-Crumb, Schiller, Wilkinson, & Frank, 2010; Schneider, Swanson, & Riegle-Crumb, 1998).

On the other hand, institutions high in academic press do not necessarily foster strong student attachment to their school (Phillips, 1997). Racial composition has been found to play a role in students' attachment to their schools such that schools with low proportions of underrepresented minority students have lower levels of attachment among members of those groups (Johnson, Crosnoe, & Elder, 2001). The social isolation associated with racial composition has been found to affect students long-term, for example, in the workplace years after high school (Stearns, 2010). Thus, schools' social contexts are important to consider when examining underrepresented minorities' pathways to college.

Student engagement in school is another factor that has been shown to affect students' postsecondary trajectories. Extensive research has associated student engagement in school (e.g., students' efforts on their math homework) with positive academic outcomes (Eccles, 2007; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). A related concept, students' *attachment* to their schools, has also been associated with students' postsecondary enrollment (Hallinan, 2008). Attachment can be measured in regards to both behavior (e.g., participation in extracurricular activities) and affect (e.g., feelings about one's school) (Johnson, Crosnoe, & Elder, 2001).

Certainly part of gains in two-year college attendance can be credited to their lower costs in comparison to tuition at four-year institutions. It is important to look beyond costs. There are likely to be other factors operating within high schools that are associated with the growth of enrollment at two-year colleges among recent high school graduates. For Black students, it may be the case that two-year institutions are a more viable strategy for beginning

a college education than seeking admission to a four-year college. This may be because of a lack of academic press, and social and emotional support in high school.

Measuring a Decade of Change

Changes in school organization can be tracked using longitudinal data collected by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics. Two of the most recent longitudinal secondary school studies, The National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS: 1988) and the Educational Longitudinal Study (ELS: 2002) were specifically designed to examine the process by which underrepresented youth move through the educational system toward, or away from, their postsecondary aspirations over time (Ingels et al., 2007). The 12 years separating NELS and ELS cohorts span an important decade of change in Black families' access to different types of high schools.[4] NELS and ELS data can be used to examine similar students over time and unpack the relationship between public school choice and postsecondary opportunities. By comparing cohorts, it is possible to explore whether the increased participation of Blacks in new public school contexts is improving their educational outcomes. These data can also be used to show how Black student postsecondary enrollments have changed.

Attempting to compare the association between postsecondary enrollment and high school preparation can be particularly difficult as there are quite a number of different types of public high schools. To be able to compare school types across the two longitudinal data sets, the following analysis divides these schools into five categories: (1) public schools of assignment, (2) assigned-choice hybrids, (3) public schools of choice, (4) Catholic or parochial schools, and (5) other private schools.[5]

We conducted a series of descriptive analyses that show increases in public high school enrollment.[6] This rise corresponds to the increasing availability of school choice in the public school sector. Residentially assigned (traditional) public schools enrolled 31 percent fewer sophomores in 2002 while alternative public school types made dramatic gains. These gains include increases in both existing choice types (e.g., magnets) and new choice types which did not exist in 1990 (e.g., charters). Public schools of choice more than doubled their enrollees, primarily reflecting increased enrollment in charter and magnet schools (16,188 and 94,140 in 2002, respectively). Assignment-choice combination schools (e.g., charter schools within traditional assigned public schools) increased their share of enrollees from 14 percent of the sample to 34 percent of the sample, rivaling the share of students enrolled in traditional public schools of assignment (46% of the sample). These changes were greater for Black sophomores who were enrolled in public schools over private schools in 2002 compared to 1990. Enrollments in public schools of choice also increased, with the largest increase seen in the Black population. This was also

the case for Hispanics and Whites, although the increase for Whites was considerably smaller.

The increased enrollment of Black students in public schools does not correspond to general declines in private school enrollment. Rather, the two percent increase corresponds to a three percent decline in Blacks' participation in Catholic schools. In 1990, six percent of Black sophomores were enrolled in Catholic schools; this figure decreased to only three percent by 2002. Nonparochial private schools increased their enrollment across all groups during this interval however, increasing their share of Black enrollment between 1990 and 2002 from 1.1 percent to 2.1 percent.

Differences by School Sector for Minority Youth

Given that more Blacks are attending public schools of choice, are their educational experiences different than they were a decade ago? Moreover, are they significantly different when compared to other racial and ethnic groups? In addressing this question, it is important to consider potential associations between different racial and ethnic groups' postsecondary transition outcomes and high school characteristics, family engagement, prior student academic experiences in high school, and student perceptions of school climate.

The pathway to college is complex and not always similar across racial and ethnic groups. Reporting information beyond enrollment patterns, Table 17.1 presents results for measures that examine Black adolescents' pro-academic behaviors, including the number of hours per week that students spend on extracurricular activities and mathematics homework, and the rigor of their mathematics and science coursework.

We also report students' perceptions of academic support from their teachers, based on student rankings of the degree to which they experience teacher-related high expectations, interest, praise, and support in the classroom. Student self-reports of peers' college expectations, interactions with other racial and ethnic groups, and safety concerns are also discussed.

Black youth in the ELS cohort completed higher levels of education than in the NELS cohort although they continued to lag behind their White and Asian peers. Slightly more Black youth did not complete high school. The proportion of Black youth enrolled in or completing two-year college degrees, two years after high school, remained stable between the 1990 and 2002 cohorts and statistically insignificant from that of their White and Asian peers.

Although White and Asian youth strongly increased their enrollment in four-year colleges during this period, the proportion of Black seniors on the path to a bachelors' degree rose only slightly. Overall, the postsecondary educational attainment pathways of Black youth improved, albeit modestly, in the 1990s and early 2000s. Schools of choice attended by Black students tend to be located in more urban and suburban districts, as compared to schools of

Table 17.1 Black Students' Background Characteristics by School Type and Year in which Respondents Were in 10th Grade

	Public School, Assigned		Public, Assigned-choice Combined			Public, School of Choice			Catholic			Other Private		
	1990	2002	1990		2002	1990		2002	1990		2002	1990		2002
	62,611	52,207	13,238		41,235	9,103		21,843	5,918		3,761	1,080		2,515
	$\bar{X}$ (SD)	$\bar{X}$ (SD)	$\bar{X}$ (SD)		$\bar{X}$ (SD)	$\bar{X}$ (SD)		$\bar{X}$ (SD)	$\bar{X}$ (SD)		$\bar{X}$ (SD)	$\bar{X}$ (SD)		$\bar{X}$ (SD)
Background Characteristics[a]														
Female	0.58	0.58	0.41		0.52	0.72		0.58	0.76		0.59	0.25*		0.63
	(0.49)	(0.50)	(0.50)		(0.50)	(0.45)		(0.50)	(0.43)		(0.50)	(0.44)		(0.49)
Male	0.42	0.42	0.59		0.48	0.28		0.42	0.24		0.41	0.75*		0.37
	(0.49)	(0.50)	(0.50)		(0.50)	(0.45)		(0.50)	(0.43)		(0.50)	(0.44)		(0.49)
Socioeconomic status	−0.44	−0.16	−0.38		−0.17	−0.61		0.02	−0.08*		0.30***	0.59***		−0.11
	(0.74)	(0.68)	(0.80)		(0.69)	(0.79)		(0.74)	(0.55)		(0.63)	(0.43)		(0.73)
Overall academic ability	−0.28	−0.44	−0.23		−0.55	−0.26		−0.23	−0.24		0.05***	0.50***		0.11**
	(0.97)	(0.75)	(0.91)		(0.77)	(0.81)		(0.82)	(0.55)		(0.89)	(0.55)		(0.68)
College educational expectations	4.83	5.28	4.88		5.49	4.77		5.56	5.56**		6.05***	5.49		5.68
	(1.49)	(1.29)	(1.29)		(1.13)	(1.46)		(1.18)	(1.22)		(0.89)	(0.95)		(0.98)

(Continued)

Table 17.1 (Continued)

	Public School, Assigned		Public, Assigned-choice Combined		Public, School of Choice		Catholic		Other Private	
	1990	2002	1990	2002	1990	2002	1990	2002	1990	2002
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	$\bar{X}$ (SD)	$\bar{X}$ (SD)	$\bar{X}$ (SD)	$\bar{X}$ (SD)	$\bar{X}$ (SD)	$\bar{X}$ (SD)	$\bar{X}$ (SD)	$\bar{X}$ (SD)	$\bar{X}$ (SD)	$\bar{X}$ (SD)
amily Engagement[b]										
Parent expectations (10th)	5.57	5.17	5.75	5.33	5.50	5.47	6.20*	5.68	6.26	5.75
	(1.35)	(1.45)	(1.24)	(1.37)	(1.49)	(1.36)	(0.92)	(1.16)	(0.48)	(0.98)
udent Academic Experiences in High School 9th through 12th										
Weekly hours spent on extracurricular activities	1.74	2.32	1.93	2.31	1.50	2.08	1.74	2.69	2.77***	2.52
	(0.99)	(1.23)	(1.16)	(1.25)	(0.84)	(1.17)	(1.22)	(1.26)	(0.67)	(1.17)
Weekly math homework hours	2.33	3.33	2.27	3.20	2.36	3.36	2.37	3.11	4.06***	3.06
	(1.46)	(2.69)	(1.31)	(2.73)	(1.69)	(2.49)	(1.65)	(2.02)	(2.34)	(1.55)
Math pipeline completion[c]	3.08	5.37	2.74	5.31	3.85***	5.61	3.31	5.99**	3.87*	5.98
	(1.00)	(1.35)	(1.17)	(1.23)	(1.51)	(1.35)	(1.07)	(1.28)	(0.39)	(1.38)

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Science pipeline completion[c]	4.52	4.98	4.07*	4.97	4.68	5.22	4.62	5.36	4.49	5.46
	(1.14)	(1.02)	(1.00)	(1.01)	(1.00)	(1.00)	(1.52)	(1.11)	(0.79)	(1.20)
udent Experience of School Climate 9th through 12th[d]										
Friends' plans to attend 4-year college	3.41	3.42	3.20	3.31	3.38	3.62	3.93*	3.92**	3.48	3.78
	(1.01)	(1.06)	(1.10)	(1.07)	(1.16)	(0.95)	(0.96)	(0.92)	(0.69)	(1.09)
Sense of community	2.85	2.85	2.91	2.79	2.96	2.79	3.03	3.19*	3.52**	2.86
	(0.80)	(0.77)	(0.83)	(0.82)	(0.67)	(0.70)	(0.76)	(0.69)	(0.79)	(0.72)
Students at school are friendly with other racial groups	3.19	3.25	3.22	3.30	3.27	3.24	3.07	3.31	1.96***	3.34
	(0.68)	(0.68)	(0.67)	(0.67)	(0.55)	(0.52)	(0.77)	(0.65)	(1.29)	(0.72)
Feel safe at school	3.30	3.17	3.29	3.11	3.42	3.32	3.39	3.65***	3.90	3.63*
	(0.73)	(0.80)	(0.90)	(0.77)	(0.72)	(0.62)	(0.78)	(0.48)	(0.37)	(0.65)

(*Continued*)

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	Public School, Assigned		Public, Assigned-choice Combined		Public, School of Choice		Catholic		Other Private	
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High School Characteristics[e]										
Urban	0.28	0.23	0.54***	0.49***	0.73***	0.67***	0.97***	0.64***	0.10	0.51*
	(0.45)	(0.42)	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.45)	(0.47)	(0.17)	(0.48)	(0.30)	(0.51)
Suburban	0.35	0.59	0.18*	0.43*	0.03***	0.27***	0.03***	0.36**	0.90***	0.15***
	(0.48)	(0.49)	(0.39)	(0.50)	(0.17)	(0.45)	(0.17)	(0.48)	(0.30)	(0.36)
Rural	0.37	0.18	0.28	0.09	0.24	0.05*	0.00***	0.00***	0.00**	0.35
	(0.48)	(0.39)	(0.45)	(0.28)	(0.43)	(0.23)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.48)
% Minority	46.44	55.36	62.01***	61.66	67.83***	68.61**	52.02	43.10*	25.22*	24.61***
	(29.47)	(28.90)	(33.84)	(26.12)	(28.18)	(24.90)	(39.04)	(35.05)	(18.31)	(19.13)
Plans to take SAT or ACT	2.18	2.46	2.26	2.45	2.23	2.53	2.63***	2.83***	2.63***	2.77***
	(0.35)	(0.24)	(0.39)	(0.23)	(0.48)	(0.32)	(0.37)	(0.19)	(0.18)	(0.21)
Student enrollment in 2-year college or university	2.88	3.51	3.17*	3.68	2.81	3.56	2.55	2.93***	1.44***	2.38***
	(0.74)	(0.77)	(0.97)	(0.72)	(0.98)	(0.81)	(0.66)	(1.07)	(0.96)	(0.98)

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Student enrollment in 4-year college or university	4.01	4.17	3.83	4.02	4.68***	4.65***	5.38***	5.54***	5.87***	5.38***
	(0.87)	(0.96)	(0.95)	(0.98)	(1.05)	(0.97)	(0.75)	(0.58)	(0.39)	(0.75)
Transition Outcomes[f]										
Does not complete high school	0.01	0.05	0.07**	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.09)	(0.21)	(0.26)	(0.15)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.24)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
High school graduate or GED	0.24	0.27	0.21	0.23	0.30	0.19	0.03*	0.11	0.00	0.25
	(0.43)	(0.45)	(0.41)	(0.42)	(0.46)	(0.39)	(0.18)	(0.32)	(0.00)	(0.44)
Attend 2-year college or university	0.29	0.31	0.38	0.30	0.26	0.22	0.14	0.08**	0.00	0.10
	(0.45)	(0.47)	(0.49)	(0.46)	(0.44)	(0.42)	(0.35)	(0.27)	(0.00)	(0.31)

(*Continued*)

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Attend 4-year college or university	0.47	0.44	0.34	0.53	0.44	0.61	0.77***	0.85***	1.00***	0.74*
	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.48)	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.49)	(0.42)	(0.36)	(0.00)	(0.45)

ote. Data are weighted to population means. Significant differences were calculated using t-tests using White-Asian as the comparison group for each. We also evaluated fferences in the following measures, found to be statistically insignificant: foreign-born status, family composition, number of siblings, parent volunteering, academic ipport from teachers, not feeling "put down" by classroom peers, and disruptions at school impede learning.

'amily composition was coded 1 for married or marriage-like relationships and 0 for all other nonmissing categories. SES and academic ability are constructed by NCES. ES is a standardized z-score ranging from -2.11 to 1.82 in 2002 and -2.97 to 2.56 in 1990. Academic ability is a standardized z-score ranging from -3.011 to 3.075 in 2002 id -1.589 to 3.425 in 1990. Students' educational expectations in the 10th grade are coded 1 (less than high school diploma) to 7 (doctorate).

'arent expectations and volunteering were obtained from the 10th grade parent survey. Parent educational expectations are coded 1 (less than high school diploma) to 7 (doctorate).

These measures were generated by NCES from the Transcript File. Math and science pipeline measures were also generated by NCES and range from 1 (no course in the ubject) to 8 (most advanced courses) and 1 (no course in the subject) to 7 (most advanced courses), respectively.

These measures pertain to students' 10th grade year, with the exception of friends' plans to attend a four-year college, which was assessed in the student 12th grade survey. SAT/ACT plans are derived by averaging 12th grade responses, aggregated to the school level and averaged within each school cluster, ranging continuously from 0 (not lanning to take) to 2 (have taken). Percentage enrolled corresponds to administrator-reported proportions of high school graduates' postsecondary enrollments, coded by NCES from 1 (0%) to 6 (75-100%). Percent minority refers to the percent of non-White students. These variables were obtained from the school administrator surveys.

The first four outcomes in this category are mutually exclusive. The variable "Does not complete high school" is a dummy: 0 (high school graduates) and 1 (those who did ot receive a H.S. diploma, including GED recipients).

$^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$.

ource. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS: 2002) and National Educational Longitudinal

assignment, with greater proportions of their students eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch, enrolled in dropout prevention programs, and significantly more being classified as non-White. Schools of choice have higher proportions of students who have taken or plan to take college entrance exams and significantly more graduates enrolling in four-year colleges or universities across all racial and ethnic groups.

Comparing public school types, for both cohorts, there are no significant differences in transition outcomes. Significant growth has occurred nationally in two-year college enrollment, with many of these schools targeted toward urban and lower-income populations. For Black youth enrolled in schools of assignment and assigned-choice combinations, there are no significant differences between sectors or study years, however. For schools of choice, the mean for attending a two-year college or university for those in the 2002 cohort (0.2) is not significantly lower than that for the assigned public school students (0.3).

With respect to four-year college enrollment or completion status two years after high school, there are no significant differences between sectors and study years for schools of assignment and assigned-choice combinations; differences are only significant in comparing assigned public schools to Catholic and other private schools. Schools of choice were less successful than the other public school sectors in the 1990 cohort. Twelve years later, schools of choice gained an advantage, gaining about 17 percentage points, suggesting a trend toward further improvement consistent with recent published findings on the positive effect of charter schools on college enrollment (e.g., Booker et al., 2008).

Looking at some of the likely predictors of postsecondary attendance, we find that Black sophomores' educational expectations rose between 1990 and 2002, along with their preparedness. On a scale from 1 to 7 in which 5 represents graduating from college, Black sophomores' expectations increased from 4.9 to 5.3 for the period between 1990 and 2002. Their parents' expectations for them decreased slightly during this period however, suggesting possible decreases in parents' ability to support their children's rising expectations.

Turning to their academic preparation for college, Black students' time spent on math homework rose in this twelve-year period, from 2.4 to 3.3 hours per week, reaching the weekly investment of White and Asian students. Further gains were made in advanced course taking in math and science, however the racial gap persisted. In 2002, despite completing an additional full math course and seven-tenths of a science course, Black sophomores remained over one-half of a course behind their White and Asian peers in math and one-third of a course behind them in science.

Regarding completion of advanced math and science coursework, in the ELS cohort, there is only slight variance between the three public categories: Blacks in choice settings complete an average of 5.6 math pipeline courses in comparison to 5.4 in schools of assignment and 6.0 in parochial and

non-parochial private schools. In the same cohort, White and Asian students in schools of choice complete 6.1 math pipeline courses, compared to the 6.0 completed by their peers in assigned public schools. With the exception of the Hispanic subsample, there are no significant differences between schools of choice and assigned public schools on math coursework completed.

Public school youth are, on average, from significantly lower socioeconomic backgrounds than those in Catholic and other private schools, with slightly fewer siblings and a lower tendency to have married parents, a characteristic most pronounced for Black sophomores enrolled in public schools of choice. Based on standardized ability test scores taken in cohorts' baseline years, the academic ability of Black sophomores varies little between the three types of public schools; Blacks in stand-alone schools of choice score slightly higher in 2002 and it was insignificantly different from the mean for assigned public schools.

Postsecondary Enrollment

While informative, the above descriptive findings do not take into account that students who attend public schools of choice may be quite different from students who do not, with a selection factor which accounts for their performance beyond the type of school they attended. To take such potential selection issues into account, we undertook another analysis. To adjust for factors that may be present but are not associated with any measures, a multinomial logistic regression analysis compares the postsecondary enrollment of youth who attended high schools of choice to that of their peers in other public school sectors.

To accomplish this, we fit a model to the data predicting the relative chances of a student attending a two-year college, compared to no college at all, and the chances of attending a four-year institution, compared to no college at all. We examined not only the direct effect of a student attending a school of choice, but also the propensity that a student attended a school of choice. An auxiliary logistic regression is employed to predict the chance that a student attended a high school of choice as a function of race, academic ability, gender, socioeconomic status, siblings, and family composition. We then calculated the predicted chances that a student would enter a school of choice. These estimated chances were entered into the model as covariates to estimate the true effect of being in a school of choice on college matriculation without having that effect confounded by other factors correlated with entering a school of choice, namely socioeconomic status and academic ability.

In our analyses of public school students reported in Table 17.2, we find no statistically significant benefit associated with attending a school of choice. While the strength of the observed association is stronger for the current cohort of students, the statistical uncertainty is too large for these patterns to be considered representative of the population. While these models

Table 17.2
Effect of High School Context in Sophomore Year on Public School Students' Postsecondary Enrollment Status, 1994 and 2006

	1994						2006					
	2-year college			4-year college			2-year college			4-year college		
Characteristics	**RRR sig**	**Slope**	**SE**	**RRR sig**	**Slope**	**SE**	**RRR sig**	**Slope**	**SE**	**RRR sig**	**Slope**	**SE**
School Sector (Sophomore Year)												
Propensity to be in a school of choice	1.403*	0.338	0.157	1.676**	0.517	0.171	0.900	−0.105	0.088	0.922	−0.081	0.101
Background Characteristics												
Race												
Black/African American	0.059*	−2.827	1.323	0.017**	−4.066	1.409	2.741	1.008	0.892	3.512	1.256	1.037
Hispanic/Latino	0.254*	−1.370	0.689	0.103**	−2.273	0.735	2.563	0.941	0.859	2.122	0.752	1.020
Number of siblings	0.940*	−0.062	0.028	0.948	−0.053	0.031	0.876***	−0.132	0.035	0.915*	−0.089	0.040
Socioeconomic status	2.233***	0.803	0.216	4.805***	1.570	0.227	1.506*	0.409	0.203	2.262***	0.816	0.227
Baseline academic ability	1.139	0.130	0.067	1.362***	0.309	0.067	1.210	0.191	0.121	1.861***	0.621	0.137
College educational expectations	1.176***	0.162	0.045	1.339***	0.292	0.048	1.224***	0.202	0.047	1.371***	0.315	0.053

(*Continued*)

Table 17.2 (Continued)

	1994						2006					
	2-year college			4-year college			2-year college			4-year college		
Characteristics	**RRR sig**	**Slope**	**SE**	**RRR sig**	**Slope**	**SE**	**RRR sig**	**Slope**	**SE**	**RRR sig**	**Slope**	**SE**
Family Engagement in College Preparation												
Parent expectations (10th)	1.069	0.067	0.036	1.131**	0.124	0.042	0.934	−0.068	0.041	0.995	−0.005	0.046
Parent volunteering in school (10th)	1.199	0.181	0.126	1.356*	0.304	0.124	0.903	−0.102	0.127	1.068	0.066	0.128
Student Academic Experiences in High School 9th through 12th												
Hours spent per week on extracurricular activities	1.063	0.062	0.043	1.129**	0.121	0.042	1.010	0.010	0.048	1.228***	0.205	0.047
Math pipeline completion	1.226***	0.204	0.052	1.584***	0.460	0.053	1.038	0.037	0.052	1.586***	0.461	0.053
Science pipeline completion	1.250***	0.224	0.051	1.541***	0.433	0.054	1.103	0.098	0.053	1.261***	0.232	0.055
Student Experience of School Climate 9th through 12th												
Friends' plans to attend 4-year college	1.217***	0.197	0.046	1.553***	0.440	0.047	1.044	0.043	0.057	1.579***	0.457	0.063
Sense of community	0.854*	−0.158	0.064	0.912	−0.092	0.065	0.890	−0.116	0.077	0.928	−0.074	0.081
High School Characteristics												
% Minority	1.005*	0.005	0.002	1.002	0.002	0.002	0.999	−0.001	0.003	1.000	0.000	0.003
Plans to take SAT or ACT	1.737***	0.552	0.153	1.620**	0.482	0.149	1.078	0.075	0.213	1.584*	0.460	0.222
% enroll in 2-year college or university	1.325***	0.282	0.054	0.931	−0.071	0.054	1.504***	0.408	0.070	0.992	−0.008	0.069
% enroll in 4-year college or university	0.951	−0.050	0.057	1.131*	0.123	0.056	0.979	−0.022	0.058	1.210***	0.191	0.059
Intercept	***	−3.288	0.659	***	−4.336	0.700		−1.758	0.897	***	−7.078	0.954
Pseudo R-square	0.252						0.215					
Log Likelihood	−860122						−856794					
N observations	7183						4038					

Note. Data are weighted to population means. Relative risk ratios, slopes, and standard errors are reported. Models also included the following, non-significant predictors: public school of choice, foreign-born status, family composition, weekly hours spent on math homework, academic support from teachers, not feeling "put down" by classroom peers, disruptions at school impede learning, school students are friendly with other racial groups, feel safe at school, and urbanicity.

*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS: 1988) and Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS: 2002).

include a predictor of the propensity to attend a school of choice as a function of race, socioeconomic status, and family composition, auxiliary models (not reported) that do not include this predictor still show no effect for schools of choice. The propensity predictor, however, was a significant predictor for the earlier NELS cohort.

Our most interesting finding concerns the decreasing effects of race, socioeconomic status, and parent behaviors on matriculation. Race had a significant negative impact on matriculation, holding all factors constant, in the NELS cohort. Yet, we found no effects of race, all else being equal, in the ELS cohort. Furthermore, the effect of socioeconomic status has decreased dramatically. In the earlier NELS cohort, each standard deviation increase on the socioeconomic scale produced a 123.3 percent increase in the odds of matriculation into a two-year institution and a 580.5 percent increase in the odds of matriculation into a four-year institution. Comparing these results to the later ELS cohort results, we see that the effect of socioeconomic status has been cut nearly in half for matriculation into a two-year or four-year institutions. A student's socioeconomic status still matters for matriculation, but now only half as much. Finally, we see a decrease in the effectiveness of parental behaviors. Parental expectations and volunteering behavior were predictive of matriculation into a four-year institution in the earlier NELS cohort, but not in the ELS cohort.

While parental indicators appear to have lost efficacy between the cohorts represented by NELS and ELS, indicators of student ability and behavior have remained. A student's number of hours spent on extracurricular activities was a predictor of four-year matriculation in both cohorts. The effect of math and science pipeline course taking was also stable in predicting four-year institution matriculation. Moreover, the effect of these indicators is quite strong. In both cohorts, math pipelines were associated with an over 50 percent increase in the chance of matriculation into four-year institutions. While the effect of science pipelines was reduced between cohorts, the effect was still very strong. Most importantly, however, was the increase in the effect of baseline academic ability. In the earlier NELS cohort, each standard deviation increase in baseline academic ability led to a 36 percent increase in the odds of matriculation into four-year institutions. This effect increased to an 86 percent improvement in the odds of matriculation by the later ELS cohort.

While there have been many changes to the pattern of effects between the cohorts in NELS and ELS, the effect of peer behaviors appears to have remained stable. The effect of friends' plans to attend a four-year institution remained almost the same between cohorts, with each increase in the scale associated with over a 50 percent increase in the odds of four-year matriculation. We see the same effect for the percent of students who plan to take the ACT or SAT tests. Finally, the effects of recent graduates attending a two-year institution on respondents' two-year institution matriculation, and

recent graduates attending a four-year institution on four-year institution matriculation, were also stable between cohorts.

Based on the results presented here, we find four major trends in college matriculation between the cohorts represented in NELS and ELS. First, the impact of race and socioeconomic status indicators has decreased over time. Second, there is also some evidence that the impact of both student characteristics and behavior have increased. However, in the third major trend we identified, the effects of peer groups and expectations have remained stable. Finally, our models have less of an ability to predict matriculation into two-year institutions as they did for past cohorts. In many instances, such as math and science pipeline predictors, or peer behaviors, items that had predictive power for two-year institution matriculation in the earlier NELS cohort were no longer significant in the later ELS cohort.

DISCUSSION

Black enrollment in schools of choice has more than doubled between 1990 and 2002. Although the student populations of choice schools (magnets, charters, and other schools of choice) attended by Black youth are proportionally more socioeconomically disadvantaged than other school types, more of their graduates enroll in two-year and four-year institutions. After accounting for the propensity to select into a school of choice, however, enrollment in a school of choice bears little effect on youths' postsecondary educational enrollment two years after high school. Aside from their academic ability, aspirations, and socioeconomic status, the only factors that significantly predict four-year college enrollment are peers and coursework, specifically, students friends' plans to go to a four-year college and students' completion of advanced science and math coursework. Although college-going peer networks and advanced course taking fit the purpose of schools of choice, the results presented in Table 17.1 show that they are not significantly more likely to be found in schools of choice than in traditional public schools.

Moreover, the results of our multivariate analysis show a democratization of college access. So many students are enrolling in two-year institutions that our models have little predictive power. In addition, we have seen the effects of typical status predictors—race, socioeconomic status, parental behaviors—decrease dramatically. Concurrent with these changes, we have also documented that the ability of students to influence their matriculation has remained through their academic ability, extracurricular activities, and class-taking behaviors. Each of these trends paints a clear picture that external influences on matriculation are losing strength while student-centered influences remain. In short, students are in more control of their destiny than before.

These findings are consistent with other national and local studies of the efficacy of schools of choice on educational attainment in the early 2000s.

More recent studies suggest that some charter schools are highly effective at improving the high school graduation and college enrollment of their graduates, for example, those in Chicago and Florida (Booker et al., 2008). Although school choice options for underrepresented minority youth have widely expanded, Black youth attending these schools do not report the attributes—such as, a college-going culture—most associated with academically successful schools. It may be the case that in particular districts, such as New York, choice schools may show more positive postsecondary matriculation rates. On average, students enrolled in schools of choice do not have significantly better chances of entering four-year colleges than their peers in more traditional public schools, based on this national longitudinal study.

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NOTES

1. First opening in the 1960s, magnet schools have been employed in school desegregation initiatives, to recruit White families to send their children to urban public schools and to provide "better" schools for inner-city youth (Metz, 2003). Supported by state and local educational entities, these schools were designated "magnets" because they drew students from across districts to individual schools. Magnet schools tend to employ selective enrollment procedures to generate their student populations, most of which are based on academic performance or some other criteria-based entry (e.g. audition, interview), creating a particularly talented student body.

2. Authors' calculations using the 2007–08 school year Common Core of Data database for elementary and secondary public schools.

3. Vouchers for private school access have been proposed as a viable option for equality of opportunity in education, first proposed in the 1960s (see Friedman, 1962). During the 1980s and 1990s, this discourse gave rise to increased options for new and existing forms of public school choice (Kahlenberg, 2003; Peterson & Campbell, 2001).

4. NELS: 1988 respondents were high school sophomores in 1990; ELS: 2002 respondents were high school sophomores in 2002.

5. Investigating the NCES coding of school types by school administrators of students at schools with the same school ID, we determined that sufficient "schools within schools" existed and were not reliably documented as such (e.g. schools for which 40% of cases were coded "magnet" and 60% were coded "assigned"). We recoded these schools as hybrid assigned-choice schools; such multiple codings of individual schools did not occur systematically for other school types in these datasets.

6. This information is available in a table, by request to the authors. Additional tables reporting supplementary analyses of Hispanic and White and Asian subsamples, referenced in the text, are also available by request.

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18

Where Should African American Parents Send Their Children to School? Disentangling Schools' Racial Composition from Students' Financial Resources

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INTRODUCTION

More than fifty five years after the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* ruling (1954), U.S. school children continue to face severe inequities in the quality of education they receive. Consequently, African American children lag behind their European American counterparts on most indicators of achievement. These trends force most African American parents to wrestle with unique and often very difficult choices regarding the education of their children. Unlike European American parents, African American parents cannot assume that a school is an appropriate place for their children simply because it boasts high overall test scores. This is often not an indicator of how well the African American students at the school perform. Furthermore, most African American parents do not want their children to be socially isolated or singled out, so they are also very concerned about the proportion of African Americans at the school and in the local community. However, children tend to perform better at schools with higher SES peers, presumably because those schools tend to have better facilities, more experienced teachers, more AP courses, and more academically oriented extracurricular activities. Given that most of the schools with higher SES students are also primarily European American and are located in primarily White neighborhoods, this creates a conundrum for those African American parents who want their children to have a great education, but who are also concerned with their children being exposed to other African American children.