

## Rationale for the Study

As the number of students attending college in the United States continues to grow, the persistent lack of enrolling underrepresented minorities<sup>1</sup> in college, particularly at 4-year institutions, continues to be a critical issue in access to higher education. In California, home to one of the largest minority populations in the United States, university outreach programs have emerged as one way of addressing minority access to higher education by preparing students for the academic and social aspects of college (Gandara and Moreno, 2002; Swail and Perna, 2002). The University of California Early Academic Outreach Program estimates that in 2004 nearly one-third of the historically underrepresented students enrolled at the University of California (UC) participated in an Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP) program during high school (UC EAOP, 2004). While UC outreach programs collect data on whether or not their students attend college and, if they go to college, which undergraduate institution they attend, little research exists on how outreach students' fair in college and if they graduate (Hayward, Brandes, Kirst, and Mazzeo, 1997). Given that large numbers of African American and Latino/a students currently enrolled at UC participated in EAOP programs, there is a need to understand the longer-term impact of outreach that extends into students' college experiences.

The focus of outreach is to prepare students to meet increasingly selective admissions requirements. In this respect, college access is viewed conservatively in that the goal of outreach is only to get students to attend college. This myopic view of college access and outreach programs, however, fails to acknowledge that college access is not *only* about getting one's foot in the door by way of a college acceptance letter. College access as a form of educational equity is about being admitted to college and success is ultimately measured by obtaining a college degree.

By looking at college access as an issue of educational equity, there is a need to capture the long-term implications of outreach on college access for underrepresented students. In order to fully understand the long-term effectiveness of outreach programs on minority college access, post-high school studies addressing the transition to, persistence in, and, ultimately, retention in higher education of outreach students is necessary.

This dissertation aims to uncover the long-term effectiveness of a university outreach program by connecting its outcomes from acceptance to college alone to adjustment and persistence in the college years. Specifically, this dissertation will explore students' social networks developed by participating in a university outreach program, with an emphasis on the role of peer social capital, the connections to peer groups that encourage academic engagement and success (Stanton-Salazar, 2004). This dissertation will then examine the lasting influence of peer social capital on students' academic and social development during their transition to college and first year experience. In-depth interviews with eighteen participants in the University of California, Los Angeles Early Academic Outreach Program (UCLA EAOP) will be conducted over the course of two years, including a pre-college interview, an interview after their first quarter/semester in college, and one interview after the end of their first college year. Interviews with outreach staff and document analysis of the outreach program will be conducted as well. This research identifies a measurable, long-term outcome of participating in a university outreach program and will contribute to furthering research on outreach programs from college access (acceptance to college) to educational equity (graduation from college).

### *The California Context*

Disparities in access to higher education among racial groups continue to persist in California. Consonant with these disparities is the stratification of African American and Latino/a students at community colleges while Caucasian and Asian American students are overwhelmingly represented at the UC. Further exacerbating these inequities is the passage of state initiative Proposition 209, which eliminated affirmative action in higher education admissions in 1997. The UC, in response to Proposition 209 intensified its outreach efforts and allocated an unprecedented \$177.4 million to UC outreach programs, tripling their budget and increasing the size and scope of their programs (Timar, Ogawa, and

---

<sup>1</sup> Underrepresented minorities refers to African American, Latino/a and Native Americans who, as racial groupings, continue to be underrepresented in higher education relative to their representation in the general population.

Orillion, 2004). Outreach has been the main student-centered intervention addressing college access post-Proposition 209.

With many states, including California, facing fiscal crises, outreach programs have come into jeopardy. In 2003, the outreach at the University of California took a fifty percent budget cut. Soon thereafter, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger proposed the termination of all outreach funding statewide. Since then, the governor has recanted his call for the total elimination of outreach, but has left outreach facing an unknown financial fate. Without affirmative action, with outreach having already been downsized once, and with outreach continuing to be threatened with another round of devastating cuts, the need to understand the long-term effectiveness of outreach programs on students' transition to and persistence college becomes even more pressing for financial and practical reasons. Financially, if links between outreach participation and increased access and equity can be made, funding for outreach may become less precarious as policymakers would be able to see the lasting effects of participating in outreach that extend into the college years. On a practical level, without affirmative action and outreach, low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students' opportunities to attend and be successful in college may not be realized.

### ***Outreach as Facilitating College Access***

Post-Proposition 209, the UC embarked on a four-pronged outreach strategy: student-centered programs, school-centered programs, informational programs, and evaluation. The majority of the funds, however, would support student-centered programs, such as providing workshops to students and parents on various aspects of college admission and financing, college counseling, and weekend and summer intervention programs. Most recently, the University of California the Early Academic Outreach Program estimated that in 2004 nearly one-third of the historically underrepresented students enrolled at UC participated in EAOP during high school (UC EAOP, 2004). These results suggest that outreach is being effective in facilitating college access. Yet little is known about how and in what ways outreach is effective beyond enrolling at a UC.

With limited funding, outreach programs center their monies on staffing and resources needed to successfully run a program. Historically, outreach research has been a secondary priority to providing direct services for most programs. In addition, budgetary limitations and uncertainties contribute to the lack of research on outreach programs. With increased accountability to funding sources and the need to serve more students with less money, much of the research on outreach programs has been limited to program evaluations. Significant portions of these program evaluations are quantitative studies that focus on the short-term outcomes of participating in outreach programs (Gandara and Moreno, 2002; Hayward, et al, 1997). While these program evaluations are helpful for program management and efficacy, they are not grounded in research-based studies. In addition, scholars note that these evaluations often lack rigor and are not comprehensive (Cunningham, Redmond, and Merisotis, 2003; Tierney and Hagedorn, 2002).

### ***Outreach as a Form of Educational Equity***

While college access itself is a significant outcome of outreach, it does not determine or indicate educational equity. Educational equity is important because it is what policymakers and universities expect by funding outreach and it is where real systematic change occurs. By funding outreach, policymakers and universities expect these programs to prepare underrepresented students to apply to and be accepted to college, thereby increasing the diversity of college campuses. Yet if these students do not transition to and persist in college, the level of diversity that is expected does not translate into results. Not only does this situation leave college campuses with less diverse student bodies, but, more importantly, the educational potential of underrepresented students is not realized.

The formation of and use of peer social capital for outreach students may shift outreach programs from college access alone to educational equity as well. Research on peer social capital is just beginning to emerge (Gandara, 2002; Stanton-Salazar, 2004). Peer social capital itself is a relatively new concept that is drawn from social capital theories. Social capital refers to the relationships and networks that people have and utilize in their lives, which is often linked to social class (Coleman, 1988). Peer social capital, extends social capital by hypothesizing that peers, other outreach students in this case, can be beneficial and provide support and networking in many of the same ways that traditional social capital

itself provides. In education, using peer social capital could be receiving information on scholarships, deadlines for colleges, or ways to get academic help, taking courses together at the community college, etc. In particular, Stanton-Salazar (2004) notes that for working class and minority youth who have difficulty in providing the class-based socialization for academic success, peer social capital may play an important mediating role (p.28).

An assumption made in this study is that because the UCLA EAOP works with high achieving students who are self-motivated to attend college, fellow outreach students may serve as a potent source of peer social capital. While outreach students are low-income, potential first-generation college students, and from minority groups who may have less knowledge and experience in higher education in the United States, the networks and relationships formed in these programs have the potential to assist them in transitioning to and excelling in their first year of college.

For example, students' in UCLA EAOP come from over 20 high schools, many with similar low-income and majority-minority demographics and, if they attend a UC, are likely to attend majority middle-income and predominantly Caucasian and Asian American universities. If outreach students are connected with their outreach friends in college, coming from similar backgrounds and already having shared pre-college academic and social experiences together, they may be likely to look to each other for help and support in their new college environment. Results from the pilot study suggest that students not only keep in touch with outreach students throughout high school, but are also attending universities together, at times even becoming roommates. Chronicling the influence of peer social capital from the college preparation to the college years can then longitudinally link K-12 and higher education research on outreach as well.

The influence of outreach in the critical stages in the college years, such as transition and persistence, can thus be of utmost importance. If outreach programs can identify their most significant sources of influence on students' ability to have a smooth college transition and persist in college, then they can improve their programs, better serve their students, and thereby move beyond college access and directly influence educational equity.

This study aims to contribute to research on moving outreach from college access toward educational equity. The research questions that guide the study include:

- 1) Is peer social capital a measurable and significant longitudinal outreach outcome?
- 2) How does peer social capital provide a source of support for outreach students academic and social transition to and persistence in college?
- 3) Does peer social capital link outreach from college access to educational equity

## **Dissertation Outline**

### Chapter 1: Introduction

- Background, Problem Statement, Research Questions
- Theoretical Frameworks
  - Social Capital and Peer Social Capital
  - Critical Race Theory and Cultural Wealth

### Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

- Outreach Programs
- College Access
- Transition to College
- 1<sup>st</sup> Year Experience

### Chapter 3: Design and Methodology

- Design and Rationale (Pilot Study Results)
- Site Selection, Sample
- Data Collection and Analyses

### Chapter 4: Results

- The Formation of Peer Social Capital in an Outreach Program
- Transition to College: The Role of Peer Social Capital
- Peer Social Capital in the First College Year

### Chapter 5: Discussion of Results

- Implications for Policy (Outreach Programs, Transition to College, and Retention)
- Implications for Practice (Outreach Programs, Transition to College, and Retention)

### Chapter 6: Conclusion

**References**

- Coleman, J.S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology* 94: 95-120.
- Cunningham, A., Redmond, C., Merisotis, J. Investing early: Intervention programs in selected U.S. States, Institute for Higher Education Policy, The Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2003.
- Gandara, P. (2002). A study of high school Puente: What we have learned about preparing Latino youth for post-secondary education. *Educational Policy* 16(4): 474-495.
- Gandara, P and Moreno, J.F. (2002). The Puente project: Issues and perspectives on preparing Latino youth for higher education. *Educational Policy* 16(4): 463-473.
- Hayward, G.C, Brandes, B.G., Kirst, M.W., and Mazzeo, C. Higher Education Outreach Programs: A Synthesis of Evaluations, Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE), Outreach Taskforce, Board of Regents, University of California, 1997.
- Stanton-Salazar, R.D. (2004). Social capital among working class minority students, In Gibson, M.A, Gandara, P, and Koyama, J.P (eds.) *School connection: U.S and Mexican youth, peers and school achievement*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Swail, W.S. and Perna, L.W. (2002). Pre-college outreach programs: A national perspective In Tierney, W.G and Hagedorn, L. S. (Eds.), *Increasing access to college: Extending possibilities for all students*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Tierney, W.G and Hagedorn, L. S. (Eds.). (2002). *Increasing access to college: Extending possibilities for all students*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Timar, T.B., Ogawa, R., and Orillion, M. (2004). Expanding the University of California's outreach mission. *Review of Higher Education*, 27(2): 188-209
- University of California, Early Academic Outreach Program (UC EAOP), History. Webversion (<http://www.ucop.edu/sas/eaop/about/index.htm>). Retrieved 4/20/2004.

## **Research Methods**

The objective of this study is to critically examine the transition and first year experiences of outreach students, particularly the role of peer social capital formed by participating in outreach. Building on a pilot study that identified peer social capital as a salient resource in students' college application processes, this study will continue to examine the influence of outreach peers on students' academic success and persistence in the college years. Informed by theories of social capital (Coleman, 1988; Stanton-Salazar, 2004; Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch, 1995) and critical race theory (Bell, 1995; Solorzano, 1998) interviews with outreach students and staff, and document analyses of the outreach program will be conducted.

### **Site Selection**

Having been involved in the UCLA Early Academic Outreach Program (UCLA EAOP) for the last 6 years, as an undergraduate student, counselor, summer program supervisor and now as a researcher, this dissertation is the first step in my larger research agenda to address issues of college access and equity for urban, underrepresented students. Students who participated in the UCLA EAOP program will serve as the focus of this study. The mission of UCLA EAOP program is to increase the number of underrepresented students from urban schools on UC campuses by providing workshops, (such as admission requirements, financial aid, etc.) summer programs, and college counseling. The UCLA EAOP program partners with 20 high schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District and works with one cohort of students in each school. Student demographics at these schools include a high concentration of low-income, potential first generation college students, and African American and Latino/a students. UCLA EAOP, in particular, works with high achieving students, as indicated by enrollment in Advanced Placement and Honors courses and having a 3.0+ grade point average.

### **Sample**

Students who participated in the UCLA EAOP residential Advanced Placement Readiness Summer Academic Camp (AP SAC) were invited to participate in this study. The AP SAC is a 2-week residential camp for incoming 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders who will be taking Advanced Placement (AP) coursework the semester following the camp. Graduating high school seniors who participated in APSAC were selected as the focus of this study as the program is the longest, most-rigorous and most-selective component of the UCLA EAOP outreach program. APSAC lasts for 2 consecutive weeks, providing a continuous and extended period of interaction between students and outreach staff. The APSAC is also one of the most academically rigorous programs in EAOP with 6 hours of formal academic instruction from credentialed teachers each day and a 2-hour tutorial each night with outreach student staff.

Nine African American women, seven Latinas and two Latinos have agreed to participate in the study. Participants attended 13 different high schools and currently attend a range of undergraduate institutions, including highly selective private, flagship public 4-year, and religious institutions. All but three students attend college in California.

### **Continuation of a Pilot Study**

This dissertation is a continuation of a pilot study that sought to understand the role of outreach on the college choice processes of outreach students. Findings from the pilot study suggest that the peer social capital, the peer social networks and relationships, that was developed by participating in outreach served as a significant source of students' academic and social support throughout their college choice process.

Recognizing the importance of this peer social capital in students' pre-college preparation, my dissertation aims to build upon the results of this study by examining the role of outreach students' peer social capital on their transition to and first year experience in college. The first year of college is the focus, as research suggests that the first year of college is often the most definitive in determining whether or not students will persist and ultimately graduate (Upcraft and Gardner, 1990; Tinto, 1993).

### **Data Collection**

A grounded theory approach will be utilized in this data-driven study. Because social networks and relationships are specific to the individual and carry different meanings for each student, a qualitative research methodology was chosen to best capture students' experiences as they transition to and persist in

college. Semi-structured interviews will be utilized in this study, as they allow for flexibility in order to adapt to the responses and needs of individual interviewees (Bogden and Biklen, 2003). In order to understand these longer term influences of outreach, students will be interviewed at three timepoints: before college, after the first quarter/semester, and after students' first college year.

Interviews with eighteen outreach students were conducted before they entered college. The intent of the interview was to identify their social networks in outreach and the role that they played in their preparation for college. In their pre-college interview, students were asked questions on their college choice process and whether and to what extent friends from outreach were a source of support or influence before they applied to college, while they applied to college, and/or in making their final decision to attend college. In addition, students were asked questions about their academic and social expectations of college. (See Appendix A for the Pre-College Interview Questions)

Students will then be interviewed after their first quarter/semester. In the follow up interview after their first quarter/semester in college, students will be asked questions on their adjustment to college academically and socially, including their relationship to and influence of outreach students on their course selection, study habits, involvement in extracurricular activities, their sense of belonging and their ethnic/racial identity. In addition, college expectations as described in their pre-college interview will be followed up. The goal of this interview is to get a pulse on how difficult or smooth their transition to college is and if and how their peer networks from outreach play a role. (See Appendix B for Transition to College Interview Questions)

A final interview will be conducted after their first college year to get a full view of their entire first year and to gain insight into their future years in college. Issues of academic and social adjustment as well as college expectations will be revisited. Questions on their most challenging and exciting academic and social experiences and if and whether their outreach peer network supported or assisted them will be explored to gain a better understanding of the obstacles and highlights of their college student experiences. Furthermore, students will be asked about their plans and goals in their subsequent years in college. (See Appendix C for First Year Experience Interview Questions).

Interviews with outreach staff will also be conducted after the student interviews. The purpose of interviews with the outreach staff is to understand the unstated goals of the outreach program on peer relations and observations that they made on peer group formation and subsequent development. Interviews will be conducted after student interviews in order to triangulate findings.

Document analyses of program materials, curriculum, and evaluations on the outreach program will be conducted as well. The goal with the document analyses is further probe peer relations and development in the outreach program.

### ***Data Analysis***

All three phases of student interviews will yield narratives about transition to college and first year experiences and the role of social networks on students' academic and social success. All interviews will be transcribed verbatim. For student interviews, based on these narratives, themes will be developed at each stage, with one set of interviews informing the other. In addition, throughout the entire process, themes, and processes will continue to be examined and re-examined utilizing a constant comparative method (Glazer and Strauss, 1967). By documenting these student experiences, how and in what ways educational equity is facilitated by their outreach networks will be illuminated. And outreach programs will shift one step closer to moving from college access to educational equity.

Interviews with outreach staff will provide narratives on the outreach program and their observations of students and peer relations. After the interviews are transcribed verbatim, themes will be developed among the staff interviews. Then, student interview data will be triangulated with staff interview data. By triangulating student data with outreach staff data, a deeper understanding of peer social capital and development of outreach students will be uncovered.

Lastly, document analyses of outreach program materials will be used to understand the organizational perspective of the outreach program. In particular, the vast collection of evaluation materials will be reviewed and analyzed in order to understand peer group relations in high school and if and how these relationships and outcomes can be understood in the college years.

### **References**

- Bell, D. (1995). *Brown v. Board of Education* and the interest convergence dilemma. In K. Crenshaw, N. Gotanda, G. Peler, and K. Thomas *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. New York: The New Press.
- Bogden, R.C. and Biklen, S.K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods (4<sup>th</sup> edition)*. Boston: Pearson Education Group
- Coleman, J.S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology* 94: 95-120.
- Glaser, B. and Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine
- Solorzano, D. (1998). Critical race theory, racial and gender microaggressions, and the experiences of Chicana and Chicano Scholars. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 11(1).
- Stanton-Salazar, R.D. (2004). Social capital among working class minority students, In Gibson, M.A, Gandara, P, and Koyama, J.P (eds.) *School connection: U.S and Mexican youth, peers and school achievement*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Stanton-Salazar, R.D. and Dornbusch, S.M. (1995). Social capital and the reproduction of inequality: Information networks among Mexican-origin high school students. *Sociology of Education*, 68 (April), 116-135.
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London.
- Upcraft, M. L. & Gardner, J. N. (1990). *The freshmen year experience*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

### Appendix A: Pre-College Interview Questions

- 1) When was the first time that you talked about college? With whom?
- 2) When did you decide that you wanted to go to college?
- 3) How did you go about preparing for college?
  - Academically
  - Extracurricular Activities
  - Peers
  - Parents help
  - Siblings help
- 4) What was your college application experience like?
  - Applications
  - Essays
  - Peers
  - Parents
- 5) What was it like preparing for college as an African American or Latino/a student?
  - Academically
  - Extracurricular Activities
  - Peers
  - Parents help
  - Siblings help
- 6) Let's go back in time when you were at the Summer Academic Boot Camp. What was the experience like for you?
- 7) What was the experience like for you?
- 8) What type of relationship did you have with:
  - Your counselor?
  - Other staff?
  - Other students?
- 9) What type of information did you learn about college at the program?
  - counselors
  - peers
- 10) How is this information similar or different from information you had previously received/learned from school, parents, peers, etc?
- 11) Was there any information/experience that changed your mentality about:
  - Going to college?
  - Applying to colleges?
- 12) Was there any information/experience that changed your views on:
  - Applying highly selective colleges?
  - Applying to UC's?
  - Applying to UCLA?
  - Which colleges were within your reach?
  - Which colleges you could succeed at?
- 13) How did the Boot Camp experience influence you academically?
  - AP Coursework the following year?
  - Classes overall? SAT's/ACT's?
  - Study skills?
  - Motivation to study?
  - Motivation to learn?
- 14) What are your expectations of college?
  - Academically
  - Socially
  - Making Friends/Maintaining high school friendships

**Appendix B for Transition to College Interview Questions**

- 1) Tell me a little bit about your first quarter/semester experience:
  - Academically
  - Socially
  - Friendships
  - Relationship with your family
  - Did it meet your expectations?
  - Did it exceed your expectations?
- 2) Tell me a little bit about your friends in college? How have your friendships evolved since you've come to college?
  - Friends from high school
  - Friends from outreach program
  - New friends from college
- 3) What was your first quarter/semester experience like as an African American or Latino/a Student?
  - Similarities to high school
  - Differences from high school
- 4) What types of activities were you in involved in? Why?
  - Extracurricular
  - Work
  - Friendships
- 5) What was the most challenging part of your first quarter/semester experience? What was the highlight of your first quarter/semester experience?
- 6) What will you do differently next quarter/semester based on your first quarter/semester experience?
  - Study skills
  - Social skills
  - Involvement
  - Friendships
- 7) What did outreach do to prepare you for your first quarter/semester experience
  - Boot camp
  - Academic preparation
  - Social preparation
  - Friendships
- 8) What could have outreach done to better prepare you for your first quarter/semester experience?
  - Boot camp
  - Academic preparation
  - Social preparation
  - Friendships

\*\*\*Include individual follow-up questions from Interview A as well

**Appendix C for First Year Experience Interview Questions**

- 1) Looking back on your first year, how would you describe the entire experience?
  - Academically
  - Socially
  - Friendships
- 2) Tell me a little bit about your second and third quarter/second semester experience:
  - Academically
  - Socially
  - Friends from hs/new friends from college
  - Relationship with your family
  - Did it meet your expectations?
  - Did it exceed your expectations?
- 3) Tell me a little bit about your friends in college? How have your friendships evolved since you've come to college?
  - Friends from high school
  - Friends from outreach program
  - Few friends from college
- 4) What was your second and third quarter/second semester experience like as an African American or Latino/a student?
- 5) What types of activities were you involved in? Why?
  - Extracurricular
  - Work
  - Friendships
- 6) What was the most challenging part of your second and third quarter/second semester experience? What was the highlight of your second and third quarter/second semester experience?
- 7) What will you do differently next year?
  - Study skills
  - Social skills
  - Involvement
  - Friendships
- 8) How did outreach prepare you for your second and third quarter/second semester?
  - Boot camp
  - Academic preparation
  - Social preparation
  - Friendships
- 9) What could have outreach done to better prepare you for your second and third quarter/second semester?
  - Boot camp
  - Academic preparation
  - Social preparation
  - Friendships
- 10) If you could create an ideal outreach program to prepare students for their first college year, what would the program look like? Why did you pick those components?

\*\*\*Include individual follow-up questions from Interview B as well