RACIALIZED COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

by

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This dissertation is dedicated to Richard, Colin, and Katelyn Petts and all who supported me in the pursuit of my Ph.D. in sociology.

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ABSTRACT

Despite growing racial inequality in access to selective colleges, popular beliefs abound that college admissions practices are *advantaging* racial minorities over White students. Because racial minorities face numerous forms of inequality prior to applying college, there are two assumptions held about college admissions. First, people assume that colleges utilize affirmative action based admission practices to help students of color gain admittance and to increase racial diversity on-campus. Second, people assume that most people, particularly Whites, are opposed to all forms of affirmative action. In my dissertation, I challenge both assumptions. I consider how college admissions practice may disadvantage students of color and contribute to racial gaps in access to selective colleges. I ask how organizational and racial processes influence which racialized factors a college considers and how the factors a college considers influence enrollments for specific racial groups. In addition, I ask how the admission factors a college considers influence public sentiment. I find that an increase in racial minority enrollments results in colleges desisting in the consideration of factors known to increase racial minority enrollments. I argue that what a college considers when making admission decisions may be a mechanism for protecting the often-invisible White culture at selective colleges. In addition, I uncover how different racialized admission factors are associated with the representation of different racial groups—indicating that because the meaning of diversity is malleable, the criteria colleges use to admit students may be associated with divergent forms of diversity. Taken together my findings challenge the idea that college admission practices always advantage racial minorities and indicate that in some instances they can disadvantage students of color. Finally, I also discover that Americans, regardless of racial identity, tend to be opposed to admission practices that are perceived to be un-meritocratic like advantaging legacy students or explicitly considering race; but they do not oppose all attempts to increase racial minority representation—indicating that there are some forms of affirmative action that may have wider support in the general public than typically acknowledged.

INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, diversity has become one of the central most talking points at colleges in the US (Berrey 2011). Diversity and inclusivity are promoted among college leaders and touted as an important consideration when making admission decisions (Chun and Feagin 2019). As such, when people think about college admissions, they often believe that colleges are giving special consideration to racial minorities—and often in ways that disadvantage White students (Chun and Feagin 2019). Notwithstanding the pictures these assumptions paint, students of color remain starkly underrepresented among the student population at selective four-year colleges (Carnevale et al. 2018). And while many factors occurring prior to college admission decisions contribute to this inequality, the hidden ways in which race and racism are embedded in admission practices may contribute to the underrepresentation of racial minorities as well.

While much of the focus on race in college admission focuses on the explicit consideration of an applicant's race, colleges consider other factors that influence enrollment patterns for racial minorities as well. For example, the degree to which they weight standardized test scores or whether they consider first-generation or legacy status influences racial minority enrollments as well (Bastedo and Jaquette 2011; Bowman and Bastedo 2018; Posselt et al. 2012). Thus, even when colleges tout diversity, they may consider admission criteria in ways that disadvantage racial minorities. Scholars have long noted a divide between diversity policies and practices that promote it (Chun and Feagin 2019, Stevens 2007). In fact, at many selective colleges, admission officers actively discuss balancing a desire to *appear* diverse with sustaining a largely White campus culture, including ensuring that most students admitted can pay tuition in full and represent what admission officers call a "typical" student (Stevens 2007).

Because of a divide between policy and practice, I move beyond the assumption that colleges' espoused emphasis on seeking diversity always translates into admission practices that increase racial minority enrollments. I investigate the hidden ways that race and racism are embedded in college admission practices. In chapter 1 of my dissertation, I ask, how have the racialized admission factors that colleges consider varied across time and college? I look at five admission factors: the consideration of race explicitly, first-generation status, alumni (legacy) status, standardized test scores, and if they mention diversity in admission statements. Once I have described the trends college have taken relative to these admission factors, I also ask how organizational and racial processes explain what admission factors a college considers? In doing so, I test whether racial threat may be explanatory of organizational behavior. Some have argued that despite what colleges state on the frontstage (we are seeking diversity), their practices may in some instances function to protect White interests (Chun and Feagin 2019). Racial threat, often experienced when racial minority demographics increase, elucidates action to protect White privilege (Abascal 2015). Colleges therefore might desist in practices that help racial minorities gain admittance when the non-White presence on-campus increases. I test this theory in chapter 1.

In chapter 2, I ask how the trends in usage for each of these racialized admission factors, identified in chapter 1, influence racial group representation for all racial groups independently. Are certain admission practices aligned more with representing one racial group over another? And, are those differences likely to be the result of what happens when admission decisions are made or do the differences result from how what is considered affects who decides to apply? Finally, in chapter 3, I ask whether the general public are opposed to any admission factor that benefits racial minorities or only those that are explicit to group demographics like race.

To assess how the use of racialized admission criteria has varied across time and college, what factors explain those variations, and how those variations are consequential for the representation of specific racial groups, I use a unique dataset that I created. I hand-coded data contained in the Princeton Review's Best College Guidebooks from 1999-2019 relative to what admission factors they considered each year, how heavily they weighted them, and whether they mention diversity in their admission statements. I combined this data with information about each college and its surrounding community from the Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System and the American Community Survey. To address how the consideration of these factors influences the propensity with which students may apply to a given college or how they affect overall attitudes, I conducted a survey experiment using Prolific. More information about the data, as it pertains to each analysis, is provided in the appropriate chapter.

In summation, by moving beyond the assumption that diversity initiatives in college admissions translate into increased access for racial minorities to selective, top-rated colleges, I call attention to the ways that taken for granted practices embedded within social institutions can contribute to the reproduction of racial inequity. Expanding our knowledge of racialized college admission practices also illustrates how racial processes take root within social institutions and what the consequences of rooted, taken for granted racism within organizations can be. Moreover, by furthering understanding of college admissions, growing racial gaps in access to higher education can better be addressed and the meaning of diversity rhetoric can be uncovered.

CHAPTER 1: RACIAL THREAT AND ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICE

Per Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, colleges receiving federal funds cannot discriminate on race, color, or national origin when admitting students. However, what they should do to ensure equal opportunity has never been made clear (Harper and Reskin 2005; Holzer and Neumark 2006). After the Civil Rights Movement, many colleges explicitly considered the race of applicants to ensure equal opportunity (Leiter and Leiter 2011), but over time, this practice became less common, particularly as the Supreme Court held that doing so was only constitutional if narrowly tailored to the pursuit of diversity (Blume and Long 2014; Hirschman and Berrey 2017). Given no clear guidelines on how to ensure equal opportunity and ambiguity regarding how to constitutionally consider race to increase diversity (Moses and Chang 2006), there has likely been wide variation in how race has factored into admission practices across time and college (Espinosa, Gaertner, and Orfield 2015).

Some colleges have "deftly" defied bans and restrictions on explicitly considering race by considering first-generation status or reducing reliance on test scores to ensure more racially equitable admissions (Leiter and Leiter 2011; Reardon, Baker, and Klasik 2012); other colleges have continued to explicitly consider race, often in combination with other factors (Bowman and Bastedo 2018). Importantly, and as these strategies evidence, the explicit consideration of race is but one of several racialized admissions practices colleges have used either together or singularly to address racial inequality (Alon and Tienda 2007; Bastedo and Jaquette 2011; Bowman and Bastedo 2018; Posselt et al. 2012). I use the term racialized to mean factors affecting opportunity for admission by race. However, most of the focus in the literature is on individual trends in the consideration of a single racialized admission factor, not on how these trends may covary.

In this work, I focus on five racialized admission practices: (1) explicitly considering the race of applicants, (2) considering first-generation status, (3) considering alumni status, (4) considering standardized test scores, and (5) promoting diversity in admission statements. I use a unique dataset created by combining data from the Princeton Review Best Colleges Guidebook, the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the American Community Survey, and the NCAA college database for a broad subset of selective colleges (377) across twenty years (1999-2019) to address how colleges' use of these five racialized admission practices have varied across time and colleges. I also assess how these practices have covaried, and whether *one* racialized factor has prevailed over time (Boxenbaum and Jonsson 2017) or whether bundles of racialized admission practices may be used together (Earl and Reynolds-Stenson 2018; Meyer and Höllerer 2014). The Princeton Review is an ideal data source because it contains self-reported data from head admission officers at each college about what they consider when admitting students.

Beyond using these data to describe trends in the consideration of several racialized factors, I also ask how pressures external and internal to colleges explain these trends. Knowing what pressures shape the usage of different racialized college admission practices helps elucidate a quintessential, broader question about how race gets embedded in organizational practice more generally (Byron and Roscigno 2019; Ray 2019). While institutional pressures such as statewide bans on affirmative action (coercive isomorphism) or imitation of peers (mimetic isomorphism) may partially explain which racialized admission practices are used (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; DiMaggio and Powell 2004), individual agency within organizations likely matters too (Lounsbury 2001; Scott 2004). Because organizations have unique self-interests, structures, and needs and are inhabited by individuals, the practices they employ may be distinct relative to externally legitimated practices in the wider field (Hallett 2010; Lounsbury 2001; Scott 2004).

One form of self-interest for colleges may be in relation to the racial demographics of their student population. Colleges often consider racialized factors as a focused attempt to reduce racial disparity because they want to increase racial diversity on-campus (Hirschman, Berrey, and Rose-Greenland 2016; Warikoo 2016). Therefore, colleges should largely retain these practices when they are effective at increasing racial diversity. Alternatively, colleges may experience racial threat with increased racial diversity on-campus and desist in the use of these practices when they are effective. When individuals are threatened by a growth in minority population size, they experience racial threat and act in ways that protect White privilege (Abascal 2015). Because organizations are inhabited by individuals (Hallett 2010), which admission factors are considered may be influenced by racial threat too. Particularly for top-rated, historically White institutions, when more racial minorities enroll, it may heighten fear among administrators that the college's privileged reputation associated with whiteness will be altered (Lipsitz 2006). I use a fixed-effect model to assess how shifting racial demographics influence the use of racialized admission practices, and I conduct further tests for racial threat.

Affirmative Action in Higher Education

The legal background surrounding the use of racialized admission practices in higher education is complicated. While Title VI of the Civil Rights Act requires all federally funded colleges to ensure they are not discriminating in their allocation of those funds, it provides no concrete mechanism for how to guarantee this (Bonastia 2006; Leiter and Leiter 2011). States that historically operated dual-systems of higher education by race were once required to submit plans about how integration and equal opportunity would be evidenced, including numerical goals for minority representation (Epstein 1980). But, for colleges outside of those Southern states, there

have never been any requirements for evidencing compliance with Title VI (Harper and Reskin 2005; Holzer and Neumark 2006).

Many colleges in the late 1960s voluntarily completed desegregation plans as a sign of good faith towards meeting Title VI (Harper and Reskin 2005). Though affirmative action in college admissions was never a requirement, explicitly considering the race of applicants became standard for ensuring compliance with Title VI (Kahlenberg 1997; Leiter and Leiter 2011; Welch and Gruhl 1998). However, explicitly considering the race of applicants angered many White students who believed the practice resulted in reverse discrimination. In 1978, *Regents of the University of California v Bakke* was the first Supreme Court case to examine the constitutionality of explicitly considering race in college admissions (*Regents of the University of California v Bakke* 98 S. Ct. 2733 [1978]). No binding precedent was reached, but Justice Powell's opinion that considering the race of applicants is only constitutional when narrowly tailored to the pursuit of diversity has been upheld and reinforced in subsequent Supreme Court rulings (Berrey 2015; Moore and Bell 2011; Moses and Chang 2006).

Powell's argument represented a shift in the initial purpose of affirmative action in higher education from a measurable outcome – increased minority representation – to an ambiguous objective: diversity (Hirschman and Berrey 2017; Leiter and Leiter 2011; Moses and Chang 2006; Tran 2017). In doing so, the decision of the court represented a broader shift in public sentiment—racial inequality was not seen to be as pernicious as it was during the Civil Rights Movement, and addressing racial inequality was thought to no longer require explicit consideration of race (Brown et al. 2003; Forman 2004; Forman and Lewis 2015). Thus, colleges today must balance restrictions on the explicit consideration of race with a need to ensure equal opportunity. But, because of ambiguity in understanding how to meet either of these objectives, there is no clear picture of what

colleges have done to ensure equal opportunity when admitting students (Harper and Reskin 2005; Holzer and Neumark 2006).

Racialized Admission Practices

Organizations choose from among a variety of known practices when determining how best to respond to a given mandate or need within an organizational field (Earl and Reynolds-Stenson 2018; Fiss, Kennedy, and Davis 2012; Meyer and Höllerer 2014). While much research on trends in racialized admission practices have focused on the explicit consideration of race alone (Brown and Hirschman 2006; Hirschman and Berrey 2017; Howell 2010), there are other racialized admission factors colleges consider when admitting students such as the consideration of first-generation status or alumni status, the degree to which test scores are weighted, and the way diversity is mentioned in college admission statements (Bowen and Bok 1999; Posselt et al. 2012; Reardon et al. 2012). Placing less emphasis on standardized test scores can increase racial minority enrollments because standardized test scores are correlated with race (Alon and Tienda 2007; Alon 2009; Buchmann, Condron, and Roscigno 2010; Grodsky 2007; Posselt et al. 2012). Targeting first-generation students, and reducing reliance on alumni status – particularly at predominately White colleges– can also increase racial minority representations because racial minorities are more likely to be first-generation college goers (Espinosa et al. 2015; Gaertner and Hart 2013; Grodsky 2007; Hochschild and Weaver 2015; Kahlenberg 1995; Kahlenberg 1997). Finally, promoting diversity in admission statements may indicate to potential students that the racial climate of the campus is accepting and could increase racial diversity in the applicant pool (Thomas 2017).

Because there are numerous possible combinations of racialized admission factors that colleges can consider, it is likely that what they have considered has varied across time and college.

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For example, studies focused solely on the explicit consideration of race in college admissions indicate that most colleges have desisted from considering race in college admissions over time (Hirschman and Berrey 2017; Brown and Hirschman 2006). Yet, less is known about variations in trends across colleges, particularly whether there are distinct trends other than desistance. For example, some colleges never considered race to begin with (Brown et al. 2003). Moreover, even less is known about how trends in other racialized admission factors have covaried with each other (Espenshade and Radford 2009; Garces and Cogburn 2015).

Despite the potential for wide variation in the type and combination of racialized factors colleges have considered, what they have actually done largely remains a black box. It could be that a single winning practice has emerged as the agreed upon way to ensure equal opportunity within the organizational field. Early organizational theories posited that a single winning practice for responding to a particular imperative often emerges within an organizational field (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). A winning practice is not necessarily the most functional solution but is viewed to be the most legitimate (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). When it comes to how colleges have addressed assurance of equal opportunity in admissions, there is some support for a single winning practice. After the passage of the Civil Rights Act, most colleges came to explicitly consider the race of applicants as the way of ensuring equal opportunity (Berrey 2015; Harper and Reskin 2005; Hirschman and Berrey 2017; Holzer and Neumark 2006). With growing restrictions on the explicit consideration of race, first-generation status or reducing reliance on test scores or alumni status have increasingly become a new way to more *creatively* consider race in college admission (Reardon et al. 2012). Using non race explicit factors to more *creatively* consider race is evidence of what some have labeled "deft fiddling" in selective colleges, where race is still factors into admissions but is considered in ways that skirt restrictions on the explicit consideration of race

(Leiter and Leiter 2011). If there a singular winning strategy, a decreased use of race explicit admission practices should be associated with an increased reliance on *one* other racialized admission practice.

> *H1A*: *A decrease in the use of race explicit admission practices is associated with an increased use of considering first-generation status <u>or</u> a reduced reliance on test scores <u>or</u> alumni status.*

It is also possible that colleges consider numerous racialized admission factors together as a bundle. As organizational theories have developed, more attention has been given to the fact that bundles or repertoires of practices may become winning strategies for responding to a goal (Earl and Reynolds-Stenson 2018; Meyer and Höllerer 2014). When colleges engage in "deft fiddling," they use as many alternative practices to the explicit consideration of race as they can. Thus, alternative to hypothesis H1A, a decrease in the explicit consideration of race may be associated with an increase in the bundled usage of several other racialized factors.

> *H1B*: *A decrease in the use of race explicit admission practices is associated with an increased use of considering first-generation status <u>and</u> a reduced reliance on test scores <u>and</u> alumni status.*

Both hypotheses 1A and 1B assume that a decrease in the explicit consideration of race is associated with an uptick in alternative practices designed to more "deftly" increase minority representation (Reardon 2012; Bowen and Bok 1999). Alternatively, colleges may consider all factors relative to race that they can or consider none. Similar to hypothesis 1B, in this scenario, colleges would also consider racialized admission practices in bundles. But, unlike hypothsis 1B, the explicit consideration of race would be positively allied with the consideration of other racialized factors. There is some evidence to support this. When colleges use holistic review of applications, they try to consider the whole person (Bastedo, Howard, and Flaster 2016; Warikoo

2016), and often explicitly consider race but only in combination with all other factors available (Bowman and Bastedo 2018). Thus, alternatively to hypotheses 1A and 1B:

H2: *An increased use of race explicit admission practices is associated with an increased use of considering first-generation and alumni status and test-scores.*

The racial rhetoric that colleges use in admission statements, however, is unlikely to perfectly co-align with the consideration of race or other racialized factors as there is often a gap between the principles and policy surrounding racial diversity (Cooper-Stoll and Klein 2019; Havekes, Bader, and Krysan 2015). People can be eager to talk about racial equity in principle, but less willing to put practices in place that help ensure it. Institutional theory does not overtly specify a principle-policy gap, but has shown how the practices of organizations are often decoupled from their policies (Boxenbaum and Jonsson 2017; Meyer and Rowan 1977; Rasche and Gilbert 2015). If decoupling between principles and practices of racial equity are evident in college admissions, it might be expected that colleges would increasingly promote diversity in admission statements regardless of their practices.

H3: *The usage of diversity rhetoric is not associated with the use of any racialized admission factors.*

Classic Explanations for Organizational Practices

Understanding how racialized practices become institutionalized is key to uncovering the mechanisms that produce institutionalized forms of racism (Byron and Roscigno 2019; Ray 2019). Neoinstitutionalists argue that because how organizations operate is highly dependent on institutional pressures, organizations engage in practices perceived as legitimate (Christin 2018; Lim and Tsutsui 2012; Pfeffer and Salancik 2003; Zucker 1987). Nearly all organizations within a field come to engage in the legitimated practice, regardless of how effective that practice is for each individual organization—a process that produces isomorphism (Scott 2004).

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Neoinstitutionalists not only describe the outcome of the influence of institutional pressure (isomorphism), but an explanation for how seeking legitimacy shapes the practices of organizations (Boxenbaum and Jonsson 2017; DiMaggio and Powell 1983). There are three primary mechanisms which shape organizations' practices: normative, coercive, and mimetic isomorphism. Normative isomorphism refers to pressures towards conformity that arise from professionalization (Pillay, Reddy, and Morgan 2017). Certain organizational practices become so normalized they embed in the educational process of professionals in the field (Teodoro 2014). Because of the ambiguity surrounding consideration of race in college admissions (Holzer and Neumark 2006), it is unlikely that educational training has established a norm for admission factors. When there is ambiguity, coercive and mimetic forces are often influential in determining organizational behavior (Beckert 2010).

Coercive isomorphism is often exercised in state and federal laws and policies that govern organizations (Lipson 2011; Verbruggen, Christiaens, and Milis 2011). Because eight states (California, Washington, Arizona, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Michigan, Florida, and New Hampshire) have bans on affirmative action, including the use of any kind of race conscious decision-making in higher education, coercive isomorphism likely influences college admission practices, particularly whether they explicitly consider race. Moreover, for coercive isomorphism to be a strong force, organizations must be dependent on the coercive organization (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Verbruggen et al. 2011; Zucker 1987). Therefore, public schools likely also avoid race explicit admission practices because public schools are more dependent on federal funds (which restrict the use of race explicit practices) than private schools.

Notwithstanding the role of coercive isomorphism, ambiguity in the current legal precedent may lead to confusion regarding how students can legally be admitted. When there is ambiguity

relative to rules, organizations often model their practices based on what is already most commonly viewed as acceptable by organizations within the field – a practice known as mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Scott 2004). The degree to which organizational practices are mimicked is influenced by the amount of contact organizations have with one another (Granovetter 1977; Pfeffer and Salancik 2003; Uzzi 1997). Colleges are often connected through their athletic conference (e.g., Big 10) and are also connected regionally. Colleges in the same conference or region are likely to have similar racialized admission practices (Lipson 2007; Skrentny 2009).

Racial Demographics as Explanatory of Organizational Behavior

While there is ample support for neoinstitutional theories, and institutional pressures such as coercive and mimetic isomorphism expectedly shape racialized admission practices, the influence of these structures likely do not tell the whole story. Neoinstitutional theories have been critiqued precisely because of their overarching argument that structure is deterministic of organizational practices (Gray and Silbey 2014; Hallett 2010; Lounsbury 2001; Oliver 1991; Scott 2004). Because individual organizations have unique self-interests and technical needs, the practices that they engage in may be distinct relative to defined legitimate practices and prevent isomorphism. Relative to disparate impact law in the labor market (protected classes could use outcomes of inequality instead of proving intent), there were institutionalized incentives for companies to increase minority representation; yet, companies balanced those pressures with their individualized business needs (Stryker 2001). Applied to selective colleges, even when incentivized by pressures to conform to particular admission practices, such as desisting from explicitly considering race, they may only do so when it serves their interest.

Moreover, because organizations are comprised of individuals making choices (Hallett 2010), mechanisms that shape individual decision-making may be an important internal influence

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on how colleges determine which factors to consider. One mechanism that influences how individuals make decisions is racial threat (Abascal 2015; Abascal and Baldassarri 2015, Petts 2020; Wetts and Willer 2018). The concept of racial threat was developed in relation to theories of racial prejudice (Blalock 1956; Blumer 1958; Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Olzak 1992; Olzak 1983). Because White Americans have historically held positions of power and privilege, they may see their positions of advantage as normal and not resultant from an oppressive system (Anderson 2015; Feagin 2010). This position of superiority in and of itself does not create racism and prejudice, but these ideas and actions may emerge when there is a fear that the proprietary right to those privileges might be taken away (Blumer 1958). Racial threat then is defined as a feeling of peril regarding the perception of increased minority rights or population sizes that threaten the perceived normalized advantages and positions of power that White Americans have (Blalock 1956; Blumer 1958; Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Olzak 1992; Olzak 1983). The concept of racial threat assumes that competition between racial groups is a zero-sum game, where if minorities gain more, Whites perceive they will lose what they currently have (Brown et al. 2003; Olzak 1992). Generally speaking, when racial threat is heightened, Whites' behaviors change; they tend to support affirmative action less and police the boundary between White and anything else more (Abascal 2015; Abascal and Baldassarri 2015; Craig and Richeson 2017; Olzak 1983).

Extending racial threat to an organizational context, organizational practices may be used in ways that protect White privilege when racial threat is elevated. For college admissions, increases in racial diversity may lead to avoidance of practices associated with increasing minority representation– even if such practices are viewed as legitimate – as a strategy to respond to racial threat. Thus, there may be support for applying racial threat to an organizational context if colleges

desist in the consideration of factors associated with increased minority representation when minority representation increases.

> *H4*: *An increased percent of undergraduates who are racial minorities at selective colleges is associated with a decreased likelihood of explicitly considering race, considering first-generation status, or mentioning race in admission statements and is associated with an increased likelihood of considering alumni status and test scores.*

Notwithstanding, one could easily argue that colleges will desist in practices associated with increased minority enrollment when they have adequately represented disadvantaged racial groups. Thus, beyond sheer changes in racial demographics, to assess whether racial threat is operative on colleges' admission practices requires further evidence. If colleges desist in practices such as the explicit consideration of race when they have adequately represented all racial groups, the effect of a growing Black undergraduate demographic should not be contingent on the size of the Hispanic undergraduate population. That is, the percentage of the college-aged population that are Black (i.e., the number to be represented) should not change based on the percentage that are Hispanic. Alternatively, racial threat *is* multiplicative. Perceptions of threat associated with growth in the presence of one minority demographic are amplified if another minority group is also growing in size (Abascal 2015; Olzak 1992). There is more evidence of racial threat than representational arguments if an increased percentage of Black undergraduates on-campus leads to quicker desistance in the explicit consideration of race or first-generation status when there are more Hispanic undergraduates on-campus than when there are fewer.

Moreover, for racial threat to be operant on organizational practice, the broader context in which colleges are located should also heighten or reduce levels of perceived racial threat (Abascal 2015). In a state with more racial minorities, the threat experienced from a growing minority undergraduate demographic should be greater. Theories of racial threat are counter to assumptions that colleges may desist in explicit consideration of race or first-generation status when they have

become "diverse enough" relative to the demographic they serve. If it is racial threat, states with more racial minorities (i.e., more minorities to represent on-campus) should not be slower to desist in the use of practices associated with increased minority representation.

Finally, racial threat is often associated with fear of racially stereotypical narratives (Feagin 2010). Colleges' primary threat may be in relation to how they are perceived in the broader public if their concentration of White students decreases significantly (Lipsitz 2006; Moore and Bell 2011). Less selective colleges (those that admit a higher percentage of students) are more susceptible to the effects of this type of racial threat because racially stereotypical perceptions about students' abilities might be more damaging to their reputation as a selective college. In contrast, colleges that admit only a small share of students (think Harvard) are less likely to see their reputation marred, even if their racial minority population size is large. This leads to the following hypotheses further supporting the racial threat argument:

> *H4A: When there are more Hispanic students on-campus, a growth in the percent of Black students on campus will lead to a higher probability of desisting in considering first-generation status and race than when there are fewer Hispanic students on-campus.*

> *H4B: When there are less White residents in a state, a growth in the percent of URM on campus will lead to a higher probability of desisting in considering first-generation status and race than in states with more White residents.*

> *H4C: When the percent of students admitted is higher, a growth in the percent of URM on campus will lead to a higher probability of desisting in considering first-generation status and race than when the percent admitted is lower.*

It must also be noted that selective colleges have competing political interests impinging on usage of racialized admission practices. Selective colleges face pressures to increase racial diversity on-campus and to support the needs of a growing racial minority demographic (Hirschman et al. 2016; Thomas 2017; Warikoo 2016). Administrators may respond to the needs

of minority students and work to recruit more students of color when their population demographic grows and to further diversify. Thus, alternatively to hypothesis 4:

> *H5*:   *An increased percent of undergraduates who are racial minorities at selective colleges is associated with an increased likelihood of explicitly considering race, considering first-generation status, or mentioning race in admission statements and is associated with a decreased likelihood of considering alumni status and test scores.*

Finally, given the existence of a principle-policy gap, where political pressures to diversify are often realized in rhetoric instead of practice (Havekes et al. 2016; Smith and Mayorga-Gallo 2017), it is possible that how the percent of non-White undergraduates influences practices is different from how it influences rhetoric. This would mean there might be support for both H4 and H5 depending on which racialized factor is considered.

Methods

Data

To address my research questions, I created a unique dataset which combines hand-coded data from the Princeton Review's Best College Guidebooks (hereafter referred to as college guides), data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the NCAA database, and the American Community Survey (ACS). The College Guides contain self-reported data about what factors colleges consider when admitting students and how strongly they consider them.[1] The college guides also include admission statements designed to recruit students. IPEDS includes data about each college, such as the racial demographics of the student population. The NCAA database has the conference affiliation of each college. Finally, the American Community Survey provides state racial demographics for each college.

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[1] Personnel in the admissions office are responsible for reporting this data to the Princeton Review each year.

My dataset spans 20 years: 1999-2019. I used data from the following college guides: 1999, 2001, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2019.[2] Data from IPEDS and the ACS were collected for the year in which the college reported data to the Princeton Review for selection. College guides are published the August prior to the year listed. Thus, data for the 1999 guide came from the 1997-1998 academic year. The Princeton Review selects somewhere between 320 and 400 colleges each year that they define as "best".[3] To be included in my dataset, a college must be listed in at least three college guides to follow best practices for longitudinal data, be selective, be a four-year, degree-granting college, and must be a predominately White institution (PWI). The current sample of 377 schools that meets these requirements is wide-ranging. They represent 48 of the 50 states (Alaska and Nevada are not represented as no colleges in those states met the requirements) and the District of Columbia. They are both large and small, traditional and non-traditional, high and lower cost, and religiously affiliated and secular. They represent roughly 10% of all colleges in the United States in 2019 and enroll roughly 25% of all students attending college in 2019. While overall this is a limited sample of all colleges, it is more diverse than many studies which tend to focus on elite schools alone because my sample includes schools that are highly selective but are not necessarily considered elite. Thus, my combined data are the best available to address the questions answered as there is not another similar source.

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[2] Initial analyses showed that there were few changes to what a university considered in admission from one year to the next, thus I tried to collect books for every two years to account for this. When a book was impossible to locate, I went three years in between data points.

[3] When selecting colleges to include in the guide, the Princeton Review primarily considers academic reputation and includes those colleges viewed as above average. Decisions about which schools to include are aided by the National College Counselor Advisory Board. The board and the Princeton Review consider data on more than 2,000 schools each year, but very few new schools are added or removed across the years. Schools that are invited to be considered must complete a yearly survey and agree to allow their students to be surveyed.

Dependent Measures

The college guides contain information about whether and the degree to which each college listed considers *race/ethnicity*, *first-generation status*, *alumni status*, and *test scores* when admitting students.[4] My dependent variables are both the incidence of use (0=not considered 1=considered to any degree) and the degree of reliance (0=not considered, 1=considered, 2=considered important, 3=considered very important) for each of these factors.

I coded admission statements relative to whether they referenced diversity in any capacity (1=mentioned, 0=not mentioned). A colleague content coded a random sample of admission statements based on my coding guide (Appendix A). There was 92% agreement between coders and the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) was .83 ($p<.001$), both evidencing strong agreement among coders.

Measure of Racial Demographics

I include a measure from IPEDS for the percent non-White undergraduates at each college as my measure of racial demographics (Abascal 2015; Abascal and Baldassarri 2015; Wetts and Willer 2018). Percent non-White undergraduates includes all undergraduates enrolled who do not identify as White non-Hispanic. In further analyses, I analyze the specific racial composition of undergraduates at each college (%Black, %Hispanic, %Asian, and %international). These figures are as reported by the college to IPEDS. Percent international is inclusive of any race and percent Asian does not include international students who identify as Asian; the categories are mutually exclusive.

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[4] Personnel in the admissions office are responsible for reporting this data to the Princeton Review each year. The books also report whether colleges consider high-school record but nearly all colleges do—there is very little variation in this practice across time or college.

Neoinstitutional Variables

To measure coercive isomorphism, I include an indicator for whether there is a statewide ban on the explicit consideration of race for each year in the analysis and whether the college is public or private. To assess processes relative to mimetic isomorphism, I include a measure for the region of the college (West, South, Northeast, Midwest) and in a separate model include the conference affiliation of the college (derived from the NCAA database). These two variables are run in separate models because they have substantial overlap, producing collinearity and affecting estimates.

Other Control Variables

My analyses also include a control variable for the in-state tuition cost, percent of staff that are administrative, the percent of students admitted each year, the percent of students receiving aid, the size of the undergraduate population, the percent women undergraduates, and whether the college is a land-grant college. These variables are designed to account for degree of selectivity of the college and variations in college type all of which could be confounders in the relationships between racial demographics and use of certain admission practices[5] Finally, for each time point in the sample, I control for the percent White in the state. This measure indexes the racial composition and diversity of the larger context in which the college resides.

Analytic Strategy

First, to address how selective colleges, on average, have used racialized admission practices, I graph the trends in admissions criteria and in racial language across time. I use an

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[5] I considered analyses that included the Carnegie Classification of the college, but this variable was highly correlated with others already in the model.

unconditional growth model (i.e., model without any predictors) with a random intercept for time (treated as a continuous variable) to see the average trajectory that colleges have taken relative to racialized admission factors and diversity discourse in admission statements. I use ordered logistic regression to assess trends in the degree to which they weighted these factors in admissions and binary logistic regression for patterns in the use of these factors across time.

Using a random intercept alone may mask important variation among colleges. Because some colleges may have unique trajectories (Brown et al. 2003), to correctly test my hypotheses, I first determine whether inclusion of a random slope is necessary to accurately predict the use of each of the college admission factors. When using logistic regression, a random intercept model can produce different trajectories for colleges, including flat lines.[6] The inherent nonlinearity of logistic models can shift intercepts in ways that produce substantially different slopes even with the same regression coefficient (Long and Freese 2014, Mize 2019). However, if some colleges have a positive trajectory and others a negative one, this cannot be modeled with a random intercept model alone. I use BIC statistics to compare between random intercept and random slope models for each of the factors considered. I also use graphs of trajectories from each model to determine which model is most appropriate.

For explicit consideration of race, there is evidence of both positive and negative trajectories (figure A1 in appendix A) and BIC statistics (>10, very strong) support using a random slope model (Raftery 1995). Most studies assume that almost all colleges explicitly considered race in the past and are now desisting. These trajectories highlight that some have always had a low probability of explicitly considering race, some have maintained a high probability, and some

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[6] For example, a college having no likelihood or near 100% likelihood of considering a certain factor can be modeled with a random intercept model. The figure for first-generation and alumni trajectories provided in the supplementary materials evidences this.

have become more likely to explicitly consider race over time. For consideration of first-generation status and alumni status, there are both positive and negative trajectories as well, but negative trajectories are less than 5% of the cases for first-generation and positive trajectories are less than 3% of the cases for alumni status. BIC statistics evidence only strong support (not very strong) support for a random slope model over a random intercept for these factors (Raftery 1995), and random intercept models have difficulty converging to a stable set of estimates for either of these factors because of little variation. Because so few cases are not modeled appropriately with a random intercept model, I use this model for alumni-status and first-generation (figure A2 and A3 appendix A). A random slope model is suitable based on BIC statistics (>10, very strong) and graphed trajectories for the degree to which colleges consider test scores (figure A4 appendix A) and whether they mention diversity (figure A5 appendix A).

I use multilevel mixed models (some random intercept, some random slope as discussed above) to assess, on average, how racial demographics are associated with longitudinal patterns of racialized admission practices between 1999 and 2019. These data have three levels: time (level 1) is nested within colleges (level 2) which are nested within states (level 3). Multilevel mixed models correct for clustering and a lack of independence due to using repeated measurements across time (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002). The results I present are for whether a college considers race explicitly, first-generation status, alumni status, and mentions diversity, and the degree to which they consider test scores. I model the first four outcomes as binary indicators because there is little variation in the degree to which colleges consider these factors; nearly all of the variation over time is in whether or not they consider the factor (see figure 2). For example, at least 85% of colleges that consider these factors, just consider them but do not weight them as important or very

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important.[7] The opposite is true for consideration of test scores. There is very little variability in whether they consider them; nearly 99% have colleges have always considered them across time. There is far more variability in terms of the degree to which they weight it, so I model this outcome using linear regression.[8]

Random effects models do not account for all-time invariant aspects of colleges (Allison 2014). Therefore, a fixed effect model which uses only within-college variation is important to assess how changes in racial demographics for an individual college predict the consideration of these factors. This is a more stringent test of my hypotheses because it illustrates whether a shift in the percent non-White undergraduates at a single college changes their admission practices.

There is limited missing data; no variables in the model have more than 10% of the data missing[9] and most have less than 1% missing. Listwise deletion is handled well in panel data and particularly when there is limited missing data (Mustillo 2012; Nagin 2005). Some colleges are missing from some years of analysis because they were not included in the college guide for that year. Some variables were not included in all years of IPEDS data. All colleges and variables included in the sample have at least three years of data which is consistent with best practices for inclusion in longitudinal analyses (Nagin 2005).

Results in the main model are presented as marginal effects for a discrete change in the independent variable following best practices for logistic regression (Mize, Doan, and Long 2019). I use odds-ratios for the fixed effect model because average marginal effects can be dependent on the type of model used (Schunck and Perales 2017).

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[7] I also ran supplementary analyses for the degree to which they consider the factor and results were unsurprisingly robust given that what is primarily being modeled (i.e., where the variation lies) is whether they consider the factor.
[8] This is an ordered outcome, but there are very few colleges that never consider test scores and so it is hard to get full models in ordered logistic to run—in partial models, results are similar with linear as with ordered logistic. I also ran analyses using alternating least squares optimal scaling and results were consistent.
[9] One variable had more than 1% missing, this was the percent admission staff variable. I ran models with and without this control variable and results were the same.

In determining how best to model each dependent variable, I descriptively assess variations across colleges for how they considered each of these factors over time (e.g., never considering it, desisting, picking it up, always doing it). Understanding these variations enables appropriate specifications for how to model change in the consideration of these factors over time. Most analyses of trends in the explicit consideration of race assume that the average trajectory of desistance is descriptively accurate for most colleges. Thus, I use the descriptive knowledge of these variations to specify the best model and provide more accurate estimates of the relationships I am testing. Nonetheless, when I discuss my results, I summarize these patterns (modeled correctly) as average trends to understand the overarching relationship between racial demographics and admission practices.

Results

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for all variables in the model. These reflect averages across years and colleges. On average, 62% of colleges between 1999 and 2019 stated that they explicitly considered race when admitting students. When colleges consider race, 84% weight it as just "considered." Roughly 75% of colleges between 1999 and 2019 stated that they considered alumni status when admitting students, and similar to the explicit consideration of race for those colleges that consider race, 88% of them weight it as just "considered." Over the same time frame, about 45% of colleges claimed that they considered first-generation status in admissions. This average is lower because prior to 2008 no colleges claimed this; but similarly, when considered, roughly 84% of colleges just "consider" it. Test scores on the other hand were considered by nearly all colleges between 1999 and 2019. Less than 1% of colleges did not consider them and about 51% consider them to be "very important" to decisions (Table 1).

The Black student population averaged about 5.6% while the Hispanic student population averaged about 6.9%. Nearly 16% of colleges faced a statewide ban on considering race in college admissions during this time period. Roughly a quarter of the colleges in the sample are in the South, about 40% are in the Northeast, 19% are in the Midwest and 15% are in the West.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	St. Dev	Min	Max
Admission Practices				
Degree Considers Race Explicitly				
Not at all (0)	36.52			
Considered (1)	53.37			
Considered Important (2)	9.29			
Considered Very Important (3)	0.83			
Degree Considers First-Generation				
Not at all (0)	53.89			
Considered (1)	38.87			
Considered Important (2)	6.14			
Considered Very Important (3)	1.10			
Degree Considers Alumni Status				
Not at all (0)	23.26			
Considered (1)	68.10			
Considered Important (2)	8.01			
Considered Very Important (3)	0.62			
Degree Considers Test Scores				
Not at all (0)	0.89			
Considered (1)	10.65			
Considered Important (2)	37.09			
Considered Very Important (3)	51.36			
Whether Considers Race Explicitly	0.62		0.00	1.00
Whether Considers First-Generation	0.45		0.00	1.00
Whether Considers Alumni	0.75		0.00	1.00
Whether Consider Test Scores	0.99		0.40	1.00
Admission Statement				
Whether Mentions Diversity	0.19		0.00	1.00
Neoinstitutional Variables				
Percent Administrative Staff	6.70	3.22	0.01	22.00
Statewide Ban on Affirmative Action	0.16	0.33	0.00	1.00
Region				
West	15.38			
Northeast	39.52			
South	25.99			
Midwest	19.10			

Table 1 continued

Racial Demographics of College				
Percent Black Undergraduates	5.64	4.45	0.10	29.50
Percent Hispanic Undergraduates	6.86	5.59	0.60	37.30
Percent Asian Undergraduates	7.24	7.76	0.40	56.90
Percent White Undergraduates	68.26	15.17	14.50	95.00
Percent International Undergraduates	4.65	3.33	0.00	21.70
College Level Control Variables				
Private College	68.70			
Land grant	11.14			
Percent undergraduates receiving financial aid	80.10	14.87	41.44	100.00
Cost of in-state tuition (in 1000s)	34.23	12.36	9.82	51.69
Size of undergraduate population (in 1000s)	7.85	8.84	0.84	41.30
Percent women undergraduates	0.55	0.13	0.00	1.00
Percent of students admitted	56.98	20.22	7.50	100.00
Percent White in state located	75.25	10.96	25.25	95.75

Note: Descriptive statistics represent the average for all colleges (n=377) in the sample across all ten years of data.

Figure 1 shows how the probability that colleges consider race explicitly, first-generation status, alumni-status, and test scores have varied over time. Consistent with other studies, I show that the probability that colleges explicitly consider race has decreased over time (Hirschman and Berrey 2017). The predicted probability of explicitly considering race has declined from about a 70% probability in 1999 to about a 60% probability in 2019 ($p<.01$). There has been less change in consideration of alumni status, but still a decrease from an 80% probability in 1999 to a 75% probability in 2019 ($p<.05$). Unsurprisingly, there has been little change in whether colleges consider test scores; it is nearly universally considered (about 0.99; no change over time, p=ns). First-generation status was not mentioned in the guidebooks until 2008. From the point it was asked in 2008, it was already fairly common; and it has grown in popularity from about a 90% probability that colleges considered it in 2008 to an over 95% probability in 2019 ($p<.01$).

Trends in the degree of reliance on racialized admission practices reveal similar patterns. Figure 2 shows how the degree of reliance on racialized admission practices has changed over

time. For consideration of race explicitly, first-generation status, and alumni status most of the variation over time is between whether they just consider the factor or they do not consider it all. However, for consideration of test scores there has been a decrease in the probability that colleges consider this factor as very important and an increase in the likelihood they consider it as just important.
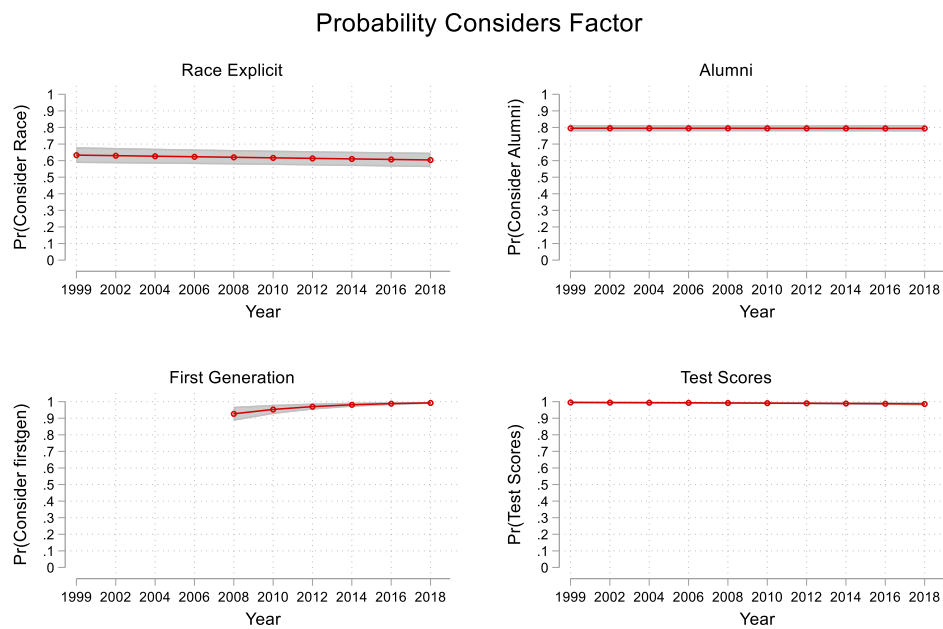
Figure 1: Whether Considers Factor Over Time
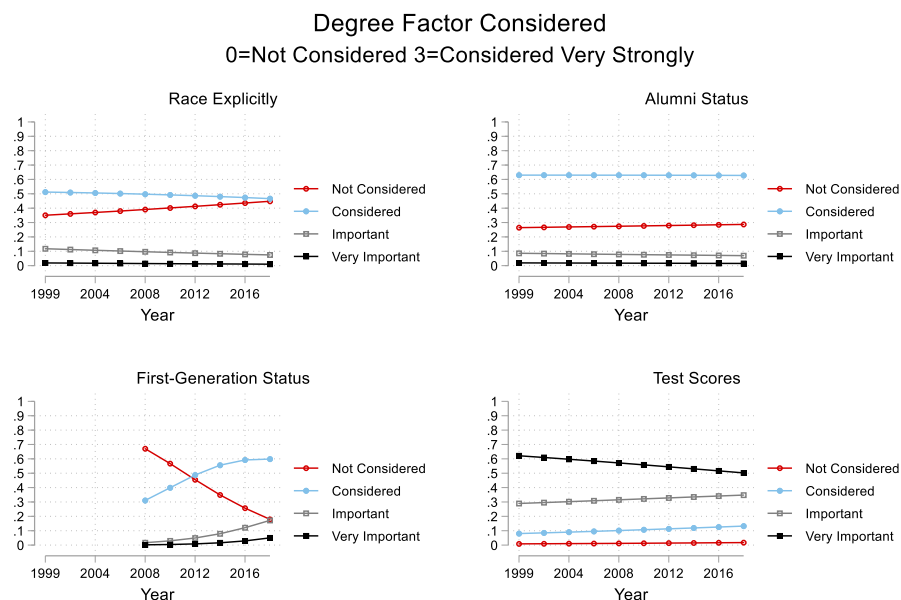
Figure 2: Degree Considered Factor Over Time

I also assess trends relative to mentioning diversity in admission statements. In contrast to trends showing a decreasing probability that colleges explicitly consider race, colleges are increasingly likely to mention diversity in their admission statements. These results are presented in Figure 3. There was roughly a 10% probability that colleges mentioned diversity in any capacity in 1999 and by 2019 there is about a 30% probability that they do (*p*<.001). While there has been significant growth, it is still far more common in 2019 for colleges to consider race explicitly in their admission decisions than to mention diversity in their admission statements.
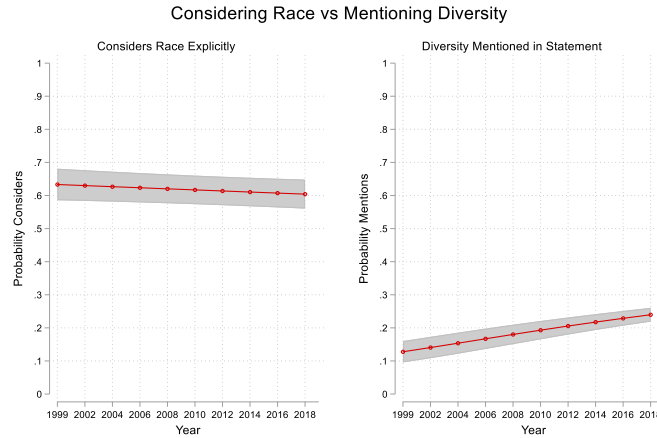
Figure 3: Whether Considers Race or Mentions Diversity

Racialized Admission Practices Are Bundled

In support of hypothesis 3 and contrary to hypotheses 1 and 2, my analyses support the idea that when colleges explicitly consider race, they do so in combination with other racialized factors. Racialized admission practices, when employed, are often bundled together (See Figure 4). Colleges, on average, throughout the years considered 2.8 of the 4 factors. Roughly 30% of colleges considered 3.5 factors and when they consider fewer than 3 they most frequently consider just one, test scores. Colleges, therefore, tend to either use more holistic admission practices (considering many racialized factors) or consider just those factors often assumed to represent merit (test scores). My results do not support the assumption that other racialized admission practices are used as a replacement for the explicit consideration of race.
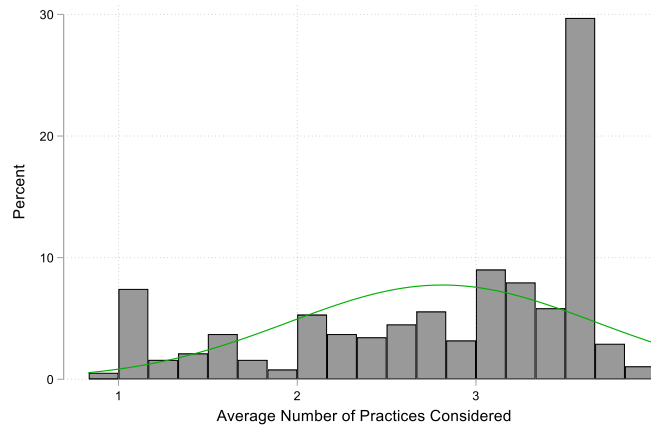
Figure 4: Bundling of Admission Practices

Multivariate analyses also highlight how racialized admission practices are bundled and positively associated with the explicit consideration of race. In model 1, consideration of alumni status positively covaries with explicit consideration of race (Table 2).[10] When alumni status is "very important" (3) for admissions, there is a near 90 percent probability that colleges will explicitly consider race (Figure 5). This may indicate that when predominately White colleges advantage White students by weighting alumni status highly they try to make-up for that White advantage by explicitly considering race. Given that few studies have considered how explicit consideration of race and alumni status correlate, this highlights a new way of thinking about the explicit consideration of race in college admissions. Instead of thinking of it as something that may benefit minority over White students, it may be used to counterbalance the privilege associated with historical admission practices that benefit White students (i.e., alumni status).

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[10] This finding was non-significant in models with a random slope and intercept for time and college id.

Table 2: Effect of Neoinstitutional and Racial Variables on Racialized Admission Practices

Variable	Consider Race	Consider First-Gen	Consider Alumni	Degree Considers Test Scores	Mentions Diversity
	AME	AME	AME	Beta Coefficient	AME
Year	-0.016***	0.028***	-0.006**	0.008	0.002
Admission Practices					
Degree Considers Race Explicitly	n/a	0.099***	0.077***	0.013	0.002
Degree Considers First-Gen	0.013	n/a	0.051***	0.006	0.002
Degree Considers Alumni	0.129***	0.118***	n/a	-0.007	-0.002
Degree Considers Test Scores	-0.010	-0.051**	0.007	n/a	0.001
Admission Statement					
Whether Mentions Diversity	0.000	0.014	-0.002	0.013	n/a
Neoinstitutional Variables					
Statewide Ban on AA	-0.177*	0.070	0.029	0.025	0.002
Private College	0.090*	-0.051	0.173**	0.203	0.009
Region (South ref)					
West	0.163*	0.022	-0.149***	0.097	-0.019
Northeast	0.138*	-0.079	0.024	-0.131	-0.016
Midwest	0.154*	0.010	0.019	-0.076	0.019
Racial Threat					
Percent non-White undergraduates	-0.004**	-0.002†	-0.001*	-0.000	0.001**
College Level Controls					
Land grant	0.108*	0.075	0.026	0.050	-0.015
Percent on financial aid	-0.007***	-0.001	-0.001	0.001	-0.000
In-State tuition cost	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	-0.000***	0.000
Percent Administrative Staff	-0.003	-0.010***	0.001	-0.001	0.000
Size of undergraduate pop.	0.000	0.000***	0.000	0.000	0.000
Percent women undergraduates	0.189	0.189	0.156*	-0.494*	0.035
Percent of students admitted	-0.001	-0.003***	-0.001	-0.002*	-0.000
State percent White	0.000	0.001	-0.000	-0.007*	0.000

Note: Average Marginal Effects (AME) represent discrete change from the baseline. Beta coefficient is provided for OLS regression model.
†<.10 * *p*<.05 **p*<.01 ***p*<.001

Consideration of first-generation status is also associated with the consideration of other racialized admission factors (Figure 5). The less test scores matter (*p*<.01) and the more alumni status is considered (*p*<.001), the more likely it is that first-generation status is considered (Table 2, Model 2). Consideration of alumni status is also associated with the consideration of other factors (Table 2, Model 3). The degree to which colleges explicitly consider race and first-generation status is strongly positively associated with their probability of considering alumni status (*p*<.001). The degree to which colleges consider test scores is not associated with the degree to which they consider any of the other factors (*p*=ns) (Table 2, Model 4).

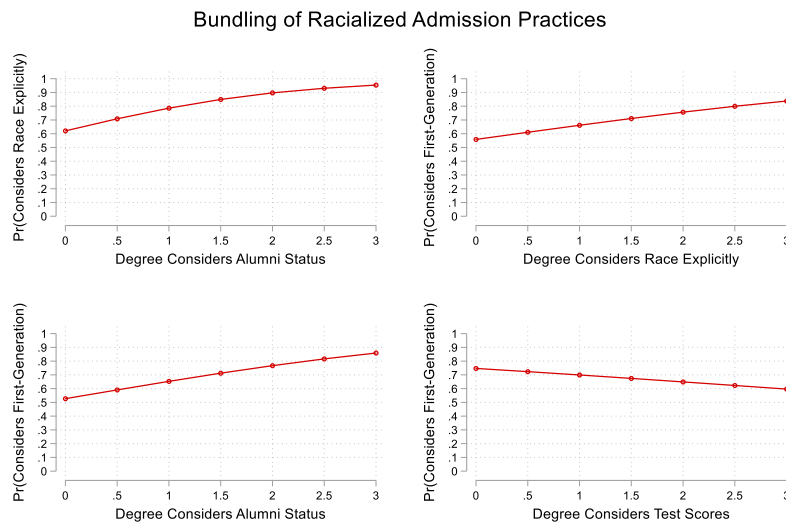Figure 5: Multivariate Evidence of Bundling

In support of institutional decoupling and a principle vs policy divide (hypothesis 3), there is support for the notion that admissions rhetoric is decoupled from admissions practices. None of the factors that a college reports considering in practice are associated with whether they mention diversity in their admission statements (Table 2, Model 5).

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*Infl*uence of Institutional Pressures (Neoinstitutional Variables)

Institutional pressures are predictive of the practices colleges employ to admit students. Mimetic and coercive isomorphism contribute to which factors are considered. Colleges in states with a ban on affirmative action are about 18 percentage points less likely to explicitly consider race than those in states without bans (Table 2, model 1). Notwithstanding, coercive isomorphism is not acting alone; the probability that colleges in states with affirmative action bans consider race explicitly is nowhere near zero. In 2019 colleges in states with bans on affirmative action still had a predicted probability of .60 of explicitly considering race (see Figure A8 in appendix A). Private colleges also explicitly consider race and alumni status more than public colleges do (Figure A8 in appendix A). Specifically, private colleges are 17 percent more likely to consider alumni status and about 10 percentage points more likely to explicitly consider race than public colleges are (Table 2, model 3). Both region and collegiate conference affiliation are predictive of admission practices. For example, colleges in the South evidence a significantly lower probability of explicitly considering race than do those in all other regions (Table 2, Model 1; Figure A8 in appendix A). Moreover, colleges in the Big Ten and Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) have significantly higher odds of explicitly considering race and considering alumni status than non-affiliated schools do (Table A1 in appendix A).

Effect of Racial Demographics

Above and beyond the influence of institutional pressures, I find support for the theory that racial threat is operative on organizational behavior (hypothesis 4, 4A, 4B, 4C). As the percent of non-White undergraduates at a college increases, the probability that they explicitly consider race

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($p<.01$) or consider first-generation status ($p=.07$) decreases[11]. Figure 6 illustrates the effect of percent non-White undergraduates on consideration of race explicitly and first-generation status. When racial minorities represent only ten percent of the undergraduate population, colleges have an 80% probability of explicitly considering race and this drops to less than 70% when racial minorities represent thirty percent of the undergraduate population ($p <.01$). Importantly, this finding holds true in a fixed-effects model. For any given college, a one percent increase in the non-White undergraduate population decreases the odds a college explicitly considers race by a factor of .95 ($p<.05$) (Table 3). And similarly, a one percent increase in the non-White undergraduate population decreases the odds that they consider first-generation status by a factor of .89 ($p<.01$) (Table 3).

Table 3: Fixed Effects Model

	Explicit Race	First-Generation	Alumni Status	Test Scores	Mentions Diversity
Variable	Odds Ratio	Odds Ratio	Odds Ratio	Coefficient	Odds Ratio
Year	0.932	1.426***	1.003	0.002	1.109
Nonwhite Undergraduates	0.953*	0.888***	1.025	-0.013	1.030
State percent White	1.114	0.574***	1.073	-0.013	0.907
Percent female undergraduates	233.592	0.042	2.960*	-1.157**	216.270
Percent of students admitted	1.010	0.930***	0.980	-0.004***	0.973*
Percent on financial aid	0.926***	0.974	1.003	-0.000	1.007
Size of college	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.000*	1.000
Price of tuition	1.000*	1.000***	1.000	-0.000***	1.000

*Note: Fixed effect model includes only variables that vary for each college over time.
* $p<.05$ **$p<.01$ ***$p<.001$

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[11] While the p-value for first-generation status does not meet the traditional threshold, I report it because in pure fixed-effects model this effect does reach that threshold.

While the effect of racial demographics supports the theory that racial threat operates as an individual-level predictor of whether colleges explicitly consider race or first-generation status—competing arguments could explain this. Thus, I provide further support for the effect of racial threat on organizational behavior. First, I afford slight evidence of a multiplicative effect for two large racial minority undergraduate demographics (hypothesis 4A). The negative effect of percent Black undergraduates on explicit consideration of race and consideration of first-generation status is stronger when the percent Hispanic on-campus is higher than when it is lower (Figure 7 and 8). This indicates that when two racial minority groups comprise a larger share of the undergraduate demographic, the threat experienced is greater than when only one racial minority group does. Moreover, the combination of two large racial minority groups leads to a quicker desistance in the use of racialized admission practices. This is consistent with racial threat, increasing in intensity with the presence of more racial minority groups (Abascal 2015).

Effect of Undergraduate Racial Demographics on Consideration of Racialized Factors
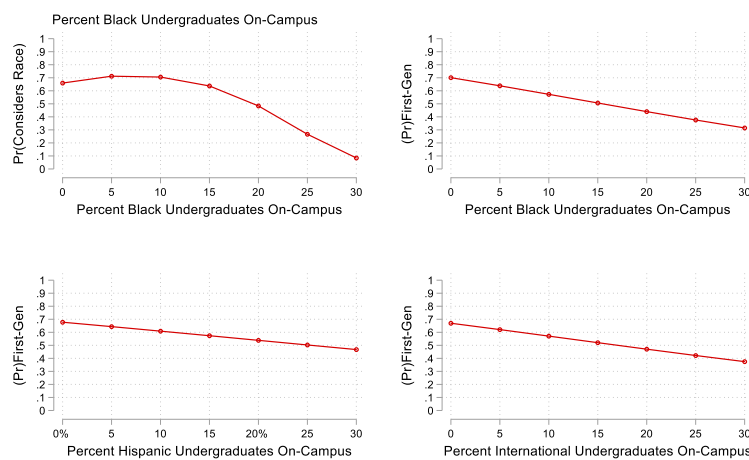
Figure 6: Racial Threat and Organizational Practice
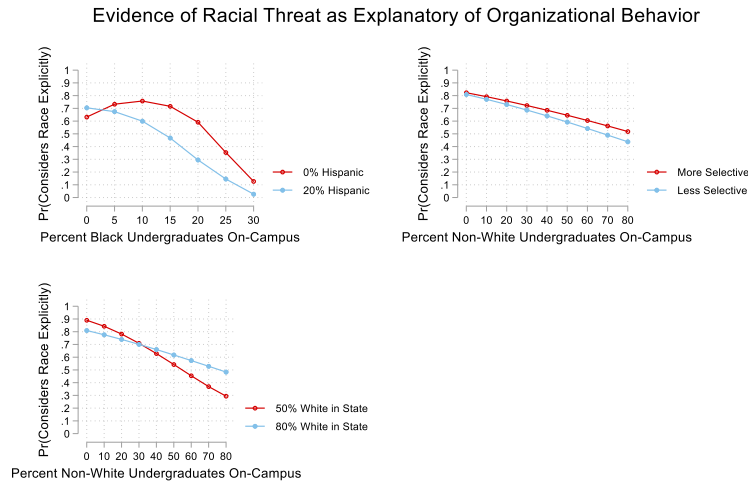
Figure 7: Racial Threat and Considering Race Explicitly

In addition, I do not find that the effect of percent non-White undergraduates is stronger in states with fewer minorities (hypothesis 4B). State racial demographics do not significantly moderate the effect of percent non-White on consideration of race and first-generation status (Figure 7 and Figure 8). Thus, if desisting in the use of practices designed to increase minority representation was simply representational (i.e., stop the practice when the group is represented equitably), then a state with a higher percentage of Whites should desist in these practices at a lower percent minority because there are fewer minorities to represent. While only significant at (*p*=.07), I find slight evidence of the opposite trend (hypothesis 4B); schools in states with more racial minorities to represent, desist from explicitly considering race at a lower percent minority than schools in states with fewer racial minorities.

To provide a case study example, Seattle University and Sonoma State College are both regional public colleges located in Western states with an active ban on explicit consideration of race prior to 1999. They are very similar in their degree of selectivity and student sizes. Both colleges have seen an increase in the percent of non-White undergraduates on-campus from about

40% in 1999 to 55% in 2019. A prominent difference between these two schools is that Seattle University is in a state with fewer racial minorities (<25% of the population), whereas Sonoma State College is in a state with more racial minorities (>35% of the population). For Seattle University, an increase in the percent non-White undergraduates on campus from 10 percent to 40 percent (all other factors held constant) is predicted to decrease the probability of explicitly considering race by 11 percentage points, but this difference is not-significant (*p*=ns). For Sonoma State College, the same increase in the percent non-White undergraduates on campus decreases the probability of considering race by 38 percentage points (*p*<.01*). This illustrates how colleges in states with more minorities are not desisting later in the explicit consideration of race than those with fewer. It provides moderate evidence consistent with theories of racial threat. Threat may be heightened when a state has more minorities and a college sees an increase in their racial minority population as well.
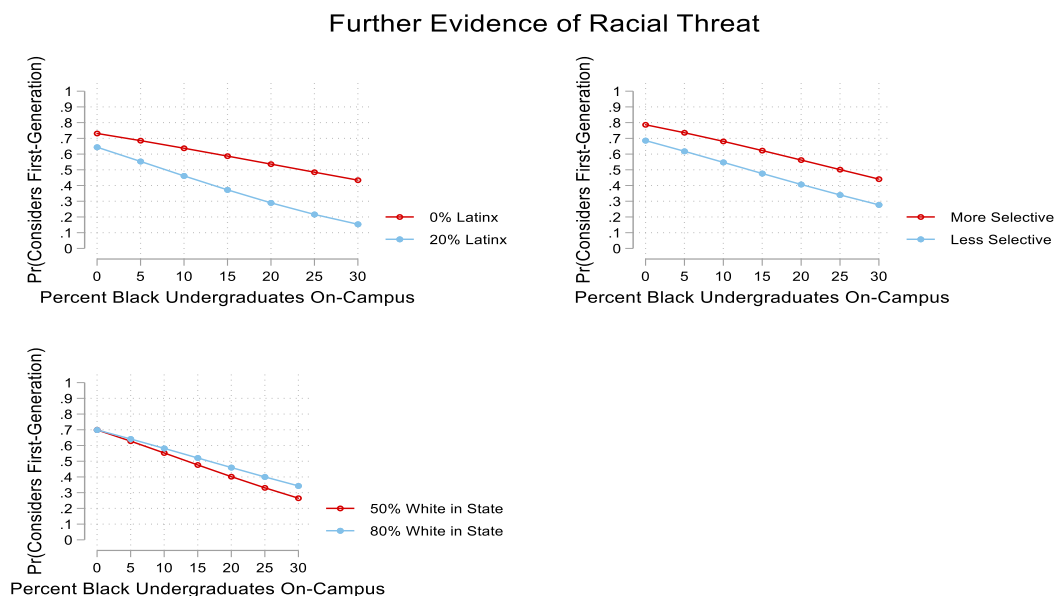
Figure 8: Racial Threat and Considering First Generation Status

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Finally, there is also slight evidence that the negative effect of percent non-White undergraduates on explicit consideration of race and consideration of first-generation status is stronger at schools that admit a higher percentage of students than at those that admit fewer (Figure 7 and 8). This is consistent with theories of racial threat as well (hypothesis 4C). Less selective colleges have more tenuous reputations, and thus face a greater risk from stereotypical racist assumptions about the academic ability of racial minorities. As such, they should be more susceptible to racial threat. In fact, at roughly zero percent non-White undergraduates, less selective colleges are more likely than selective ones to consider race, but as the percent non-White undergraduates grows this relationship changes as hypothesized. A case study illustrates this. Both Princeton and Seton Hall are doctoral, private colleges in New Jersey. One big difference between these two colleges is selectivity and reputation. Princeton admits on average less than 15% of students who apply, while Seton Hall admits slightly more than 70% of students who apply. An increase from 10% to 30% non-White undergraduates at Princeton does not significantly shift the probability that they explicitly consider race ($\Delta < 0.01$, p=ns). Yet at Seton Hall, the same increase is predicted to decrease the probability they explicitly consider race by 87 percentage points ($p<.001$).

There is some evidence in support of hypothesis 5, that as minority undergraduate population sizes increase, the use of practices associated with minority representation increase—contrary to the racial threat hypothesis. For example, the consideration of alumni status is negatively associated with the percent of non-White undergraduates ($p<.05$) and mentioning diversity in admission statements is positively associated with the percent of non-White undergraduates. However, Figure 6 illustrates that these positive effects are largely experienced when minority population sizes exceed 50%, which is uncommon at predominately White

institutions and these findings do not hold up in a fixed-effects model. Still, these findings do lend further support to hypothesis 3 that what is done in principle (the rhetoric colleges use) is divergent from the practices. Specifically, there is a different relationship between how an increase in the percent minority undergraduates affects the explicit consideration of race (reduces its probability) versus how it affects mentioning diversity in admission statements (increases its probability). This may indicate that as the strength of racial minority voices on-campus grows, their demands are heard in relation to what the college states in principle – but do not actually lead to practices that further enhance minority representation. This may evidence a principle versus policy divide as found in other social arenas (Havekes et al. 2015). It may also evidence decoupling where what is stated in rhetoric doesn't necessarily match what happens in action (Rasche and Gilbert 2015).

In auxiliary models, not presented here, I consider the direct effects for all racial demographic categories (with White as the reference) on each of the racialized admission factors. The percent of Black undergraduates is the strongest driving force for the negative effect of percent non-White undergraduates on the explicit consideration of race. All racial minority categories are negatively associated with the explicit consideration of race, but percent of Black undergraduates is the only significant demographic ($p<.01$). The percent of Black undergraduates has a nonlinear effect on the explicit consideration of race. This effect is strongest when the Black undergraduate population is over 10%, at which point there is a dramatic decrease in the probability that a college explicitly considers race (Figure A6 in appendix A). Percent Hispanic, percent Black, and percent international undergraduates are all negatively associated with the consideration of first-generation status (Figure A6 in appendix A). The percent Black, percent Hispanic, and percent international undergraduates are all positively associated with the probability of mentioning diversity in college admission statements (Figure A7 in appendix A).

Discussion

      I provide a comprehensive overview of how hundreds of selective colleges have admitted students relative to race between 1999 and 2019. While my findings corroborate other research documenting an overall decline in the explicit consideration of race among selective colleges (Hirschman and Berrey 2017), in my analyses decline is less severe. More importantly, this *average* trajectory does not exemplify the full range of patterns colleges have undertaken. Some selective colleges have never explicitly considered race, others always have, and some have picked up the practice more recently. Future research on changes in the explicit consideration of race in higher education must account for these different trajectories.

      Importantly, explicit consideration of race is not the only racialized factor that colleges consider, and the use of racialized admission practices co-occur. Consistent with contemporary organizational theories indicating that organizational practices tend to be used in bundles (Earl and Reynolds-Stenson 2018; Meyer and Höllerer 2014), when a college explicitly considers race, it is also highly likely that they consider alumni status and first-generation status. This finding challenges assumptions that colleges have come to consider factors like first-generation status as a substitute for explicitly considering race (Reardon et al. 2012). It lends support to the idea that colleges tend to either look at students more holistically (considering a wide range of factors) or focus almost solely on high school record and test scores (Bastedo et al. 2016). As an important aside, consideration of alumni status correlates strongly with explicit consideration of race and consideration of first-generation status. Explicitly considering race and considering first-generation may be practices colleges use to minimize the benefit White students acquire from the consideration of alumni status at PWIs. When affirmative action is discussed in college admissions, it is often seen as something that benefits racial minorities alone and less attention is given to the

fact that because there are other practices in admissions that benefit White students—it may instead be used as a balancing mechanism.

I also assessed how racial demographics explain which racialized admission factors colleges consider. I found that when minority undergraduate population sizes increased, selective colleges desist in the explicit consideration of race and in considering first-generation status. In support of theories of racial threat, this effect is not moderated by the broader racial demographics of the state. If the effect of racial demographics on consideration of racialized factors were purely representational, then colleges in states with more minorities to represent should not desist in these practices as quickly as those in states with fewer minorities do—and this is not the case. Moreover, the negative effect of specific racial demographics, like percent Black undergraduates, on explicit consideration of race and consideration of first-generation status is heightened when there is also a large share of other minorities (e.g., Hispanic students). And, colleges that admit more students also experience a stronger negative effective of percent non-White undergraduates on explicit consideration of race and consideration of first-generation status. Taken together these findings lend support to the notion that which racialized admission factors colleges consider might be influenced by racial threat.

There is also evidence of a principle-policy gap, similar to what exists in other social arenas (Havekes et al. 2015); diversity rhetoric in admission statements and what factors are considered when admitting students are decoupled from one-another. Over time, colleges increasingly mention diversity in admission statements while desisting in the utilization of practices known to be associated with maintaining racial diversity. Moreover, the percent of Black undergraduates on-campus is positively associated with mentioning race while negatively associated with explicitly

considering it. While a growth in racial diversity on-campus may lead to a recognition of minority voices—this may only be realized in rhetoric not in practice.

While I have shed light on the trajectories of racialized admission practices over time and the factors that predict choice of admission practices, I am focused on a somewhat limited number of colleges. It would be useful to find a data source with admission information for a wider array of colleges to explore more fully how an even broader subset of colleges make determinations about what to consider. It would also be helpful to see how these processes play out in action. While this dataset is innovative and gets at what colleges indicate to students about how admission decisions are made, this is only what colleges report they do and not a measure of what they actually did. It would be interesting to see how these practices are used at colleges claiming to explicitly consider race but residing in states with a ban on affirmative action.

Concluding Remarks

Since the Civil Rights Movement, the nature of racial inequality has shifted from more overt forms of racial discrimination to forms more covertly embedded in the day-to-day operations of social life (Bobo, Kluegel and Smith 1997, Bonilla-Silva 2015). Race gets embedded in organizational practices; and because organizational practices are often taken for granted, once race is embedded in them, it is not easily seen (Ray 2019). To more completely address racial inequality, therefore, we must expand knowledge of how race gets embedded in the patterns of practices within an organizational field. I answer this broad sociological question in the context of higher education admissions. My study advances organizational theory by providing evidence that theories of racial threat, typically used to explain individual behavior, may also be explanatory of organizational behavior. This may mean that when organizations experience an increase in

minority population size or rights, they alter their practices in ways that protect White interests,

regardless of other institutional pressures faced.

CHAPTER 2: RACIALIZATION OF NON-RACE-EXPLICIT ADMISSION FACTORS

Despite nearly 70 years having passed since Brown *v* Board of Education, racial disparities in enrollments at historically White, top-rated colleges persist (Arroyo and Gasman 2014, Carnevale et al. 2018, Iloh and Toldson 2013). Most explanations for why such stark racial disparities remain argue that inequalities racial minorities face before applying to college (e.g., during childhood and k-12 schooling) affect their chances of being admitted at selective colleges (Duncan and Magnuson 2011). These inequalities do matter. Yet, focusing too much on pre-college factors reifies stereotypical narratives of racial minorities being less academically prepared for post-secondary education and overlooks how admission practices may contribute to unequal access (Espenshade and Radford 2009).

Americans generally believe that if college admission practices contribute to racial inequality, it is because they *advantage* racial minorities (Forman and Lewis 2015). Many people assume this because colleges have, and some still do, explicitly considered the race of applicants to achieve more racially diverse student bodies. And, explicitly considering race in college admissions does increase minority enrollments (Bowen and Bok 1999, Espinosa, Gaertner and Orfield 2015, Reardon, Baker and Klasik 2012). Yet, race is not the only factor colleges consider when admitting students. And, while these other factors are not explicitly linked to race, they do have racialized outcomes. For example, the degree to which colleges weight test scores, whether they consider first-generation and alumni status, and whether they promote diversity affect minority enrollments at selective colleges (Posselt et al. 2012, Thomas 2017).

Therefore, how colleges admit students could advantage racial minorities, but it could also *disadvantage* them depending on what set of factors are considered. For example, if colleges

strongly weight alumni status in their decisions, it could disadvantage racial minorities who may be unlikely to have had a family member attend the school in the past. What begs to be answered then is how the *set* of racialized admission factors colleges consider (non-race-explicit and race explicit) combine to influence minority enrollments at selective colleges. Past research has tended to look at the individual influence of one of these factors on minority enrollment (Alon and Tienda 2007, Howell 2010), which is problematic given that colleges increasingly evaluate students holistically and with as many possible factors that they can (Bastedo, Howard and Flaster 2016). For example, focusing on one factor alone may mask how several racialized admission factors operate net of, and in combination with, each other to affect minority enrollments. Moreover, examining the influence of admission factors on overall minority enrollment, may mask how the effect of each factor differs by which racial group is being considered. For example, the use of the explicit consideration of race in college admissions originated after the Civil Rights Movement and was focused particularly on increasing Black enrollment at predominately White colleges (Leiter and Leiter 2011), whereas the term first-generation student is often linked to the enrollment of Hispanic students (Horwedel 2008).

Thus, I ask how both race explicit and non-race-explicit admission factors affect Asian, Black, Hispanic, International, and White enrollment both independently and in combination with other factors. To do so, I created a unique dataset by combining data from Princeton Review Best College Guidebooks, Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS), and the American Community Survey. These guidebooks are an ideal data source because they represent what colleges advertise to students about the factors they consider when admitting students. I use a fixed-effects (within college) model to answer my research question.

The results from these analyses; however, do not directly indicate that the admission process is driving the effect, because it is also possible that what colleges report considering affects the applicant pool. Racial minorities might be more inclined to apply to colleges that consider race explicitly or first-generation status because considering these factors may signal that colleges values racial diversity (Teranishi and Briscoe 2008). Thus, to better argue that the effect I measure is from how these factors are used in the admissions decision making process, I conducted a survey experiment to assess the degree to which the admission factors colleges advertise considering influence parental perceptions about the favorability of their child applying/attending that college. I use this information to assess whether potential changes to the applicant pool can explain the relationships I find between admission factors considered and racial minority enrollments or whether this relationship is likely driven by the admission process.

Representation of Racial Minorities at Top Colleges

While there are more racial minorities enrolled in college in the 21st century than at any point in previous history, racial minorities are still disadvantaged relative to *where* they attend (Carnevale et al. 2018). Racial minorities are severely underrepresented at four-year and top-rated colleges (Iloh and Toldson 2013), but are overrepresented at community colleges (Baum et al. 2013, Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen and Person 2007). Over time, White students have become more likely to enroll in top-rated colleges than was the case in the past, whereas the odds of Black and Hispanic students attending top-rated colleges has declined (Carnevale and Strohl 2013, Carnevale et al. 2018, Iloh and Toldson 2013, Posselt et al. 2012).

The stark underrepresentation of racial minorities in top-rated colleges is frequently explained by challenges racial minorities face prior to college (i.e., during k-12 education) that leave them less competitive on standard admission criteria such as standardized test scores and

high school records (Alon and Tienda 2007, Grodsky 2007, Posselt et al. 2012), and less prepared and supported for the process (how to apply, what type of high school classes to take, etc.) required to gain entry at top-colleges (Niu 2015). For example, racial minorities are more likely than Whites to have parents who think that college will cost too much money and not be worth that investment and risk (Grodsky and Jones 2007, Warnock 2016).

Disadvantages racial minorities face prior to applying to college clearly contribute to their underrepresentation at top-rate colleges. However, explanations focused on family, schooling, and cultural differences do not fully explain racial differences in where racial minorities attend college. Even when controlling for academic preparation and family characteristics, most racial minorities attend a less rigorous college than they could have enrolled in based on their academic credentials (Bowen, Chingos and McPherson 2009, Callahan and Humphries 2016). We must look beyond these commonly cited factors to fully understand why racial disparities in college access persist, particularly by exploring the role of structural factors such as admission factors. I ask how the use of several racialized admission factors (considering race explicitly, considering first-generation status, considering alumni-status, the degree to which test scores are weighted, and whether colleges promote diversity in admission statements) affect the representation of specific racial groups at selective colleges.

Racialized College Admission Factors and College Enrollment

Even if a level-playing field could be created prior to college admissions, it is still likely that racial inequality in college access would persist due to how colleges admit students. Since the late 1960s, colleges have been required to ensure that they were neither discriminatory nor racially segregated; yet there were no clear imperatives for how colleges that were historically predominately White institutions (PWI) should achieve these goals (Epstein 1980, Leiter and

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Leiter 2011). It is generally understood that in the late 1960s and early 1970s, many predominately and historically White colleges explicitly accounted for the race of applicants in admission decisions to improve racial integration (Harper and Reskin 2005, Kahlenberg 1997, Leiter and Leiter 2011). However, there is evidence that some colleges never took these measures (Brown et al. 2003). Moreover, subsequent Supreme Court hearings narrowed the use of this practice over time by only allowing colleges to consider race if narrowly tailored to the pursuit of diversity (Berrey 2015, Berrey 2011, Espinosa, Gaertner and Orfield 2015, Garces and Cogburn 2015, Moses and Chang 2006, Warikoo and de Novais 2015). Thus, there has likely been much variation across time and college relative to whether race has been explicitly considered when admitting students.

Variations in whether or not race is explicitly considered when admitting students is generally thought to be highly linked to the representation of racial minorities at top-rate colleges (Denson and Chang 2009, Hillman, Tandberg and Gross 2014, Moses and Chang 2006, Reardon, Baker and Klasik 2012). For example, statewide bans on the explicit consideration of race have led to reductions in the number of minorities applying to, and being accepted into, more elite and selective universities – resulting in colleges becoming increasingly White (Bastedo, Howard and Flaster 2016, Blume and Long 2014, Bowen and Bok 1999, Brown and Hirschman 2006, Garces and Cogburn 2015, Howell 2010). Thus, I hypothesize:

H1: Explicitly considering the race of applicants increases minority enrollments.

Explicit consideration of race, however, is not the only admission criteria colleges use that has racialized outcomes. Other factors, such as the consideration of first-generation status or alumni status, the degree to which test scores are weighted, and the way diversity is mentioned in college admission statements also affect minority enrollments– even though they are not factors

explicitly tied to race (Bowen and Bok 1999, Posselt et al. 2012, Reardon, Baker and Klasik 2012). The colorblind nature of these factors is consequential. Systemic racial inequality is often masked through colorblindness because colorblindness works to justify racial inequality and maintain White people's ignorance of racial injustice (Bonilla-Silva 2017, Mueller 2017, Petts 2020). In this way, individual and cultural attributes of racial minorities can be used as explanations for why racial minorities may not be admitted to top-rated colleges instead of faulting the system itself. For example, racial minorities (excluding Asian Americans) tend to score lower than White students on standardized tests (Alon and Tienda 2007, Bowen, Chingos and McPherson 2009, Buchmann, Condron and Roscigno 2010, Espinosa, Gaertner and Orfield 2015, Gaertner and Hart 2013), but instead of questioning the merit of these exams, people often assume that lower scores indicate lower ability—faulting the individual. Moreover, considering alumni status at predominately and historically White colleges advantages White students. Yet, no Supreme Court cases have been argued for the removal of this practice because one can justify and maintain ignorance of the problem by stating that if a racial minority did have a legacy claim they would be equally able to use that admission criteria.

While the consideration of non-race-explicit factors in decisions, such as alumni status, may be frequently overlooked contributors to racial inequality in access to college, colleges may also alter their consideration of these factors in ways that promote racial integration. Given that explicitly considering race is banned in some states[12] and generally discouraged by the public and courts (Berrey 2015), non-race-explicit factors such as considering first-generation status or reducing reliance on alumni-status and standardized test scores, could increasingly become tools

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[12] The practice is constitutionally banned in 6 states (California, Nebraska, Michigan, Arizona, Oklahoma, and Washington)[12]. In Florida, there is also a ban that was issued through an Executive Order and in New Hampshire, there is a ban issued through the state legislature.

for addressing the underrepresentation of racial minorities at top-colleges (Leiter and Leiter 2011). In fact, reducing reliance on test scores or focusing on increasing socioeconomic diversity through promoting applications from first generation students can increase minority representation (Alon and Tienda 2007, Gaertner and Hart 2013, Grodsky 2007, Grodsky and Jones 2007, Hochschild and Weaver 2015, Kahlenberg 1995, Kahlenberg 1997). Yet, despite some evidence of using non-race-explicit admission factors in ways that promote minority enrollment, the current consensus is that explicitly considering race in college admissions is necessary to ensure adequate representation of racial minorities at top-colleges and that non-race-explicit factors are less efficient at doing so (Bastedo, Howard and Flaster 2016, Brown and Hirschman 2006, Hirschman and Berrey 2017, Howell 2010, Kurlaender, Friedmann and Chang 2015, Long 2015, Moore and Bell 2011, Tran 2017). Thus, I also hypothesize:

> *H2: Considering first-generation, reducing reliance on SAT scores and alumni status, and promoting diversity in admission statements increases minority representation, but the effect is less than explicit consideration of race.*

The first two hypotheses are rooted in past research on the consequences of racialized admission practices on minority enrollment. Yet, much of the research has been based on simulations instead of observed data (Bowen and Bok 1999, Reardon, Baker and Klasik 2012), and have used data from the 1980s and early 1990s. In the twenty-first century, there is much less cultural acceptance for the consideration of race in any capacity (Forman 2004). Ironically, because explicitly considering race in admissions increased representation of racial minorities on many college campuses, it is largely perceived to no longer be necessary (Berrey 2015, Berrey 2011, Espenshade and Radford 2009, Warikoo and de Novais 2015). Because people orient their practices in ways that will resonate positively with the broader public (McDonnell, Bail and Tavory 2017), what it means for colleges to consider race explicitly might be different in the 21st

century, where it is increasingly less accepted, than it was in the late 20th century. As such, considering race explicitly could have become less effective in increasing minority representation and non-race-explicit factors may be more effective than previously documented.

Past research also tends to focus on how a single factor influences representation (Alon and Tienda 2007, Howell 2010); as a result, there is little evidence of how racialized admission factors operate in combination and net of one another. In the real world, colleges consider multiple factors together with each other, not one factor individually, especially because many colleges have moved to holistic admissions (Bastedo, Howard and Flaster 2016). The fact that admission factors are considered together in practice, raises questions about whether the known role of a single admission factor, such as the explicit consideration of race, on minority representation could be spurious to other admission factors that are considered with it. That is, if considering race explicitly often happens at colleges that have reduced their reliance on test-scores, is it really the effect of explicit consideration of race that matters or the reduced reliance on test scores. The only way to know this is to control for all racialized factors considered in models to identify their independent effect. When doing so, it may highlight different trends that what has been concluded before. For example, alternative to hypothesis 1 and 2, non-race explicit factors may be more important in determining minority representation than previously thought. And, how many and what combinations of factors colleges consider may matter too. For example, promoting diversity in admission statements but not explicitly considering race or first-generation status may indicate that a college supports racial diversity in policy more than practice (Smith and Mayorga-Gallo 2017).

> *H3: The effect of non-race-explicit admission factors will be stronger determinants of racial minority enrollment than explicitly considering race.*

Moreover, looking at minority representation broadly may mask variations in how racialized admission factors both individually and in combination with each other influence representation for specific racial groups. Colleges started explicitly considering the race of applicants as a reaction to the Civil Rights Movement and to promote racial justice for Black students (Berrey 2015, Leiter and Leiter 2011). When colleges explicitly consider the race of applicants it may increase Black enrollment more than it does for other racial groups. There is also evidence that targeting first-generation students, is often likened to representing Hispanic students, as they are often viewed to be the children of immigrants and seen as not only new to college but newer to the United States (Horwedel 2008). Therefore, I hypothesize:

H4: The effect of non-race-explicit practices on enrollment will affect enrollment differently for different racial groups.

How Racialized Admission Factors May Influence College Racial Demographics

There are two primary mechanisms through which what a college reports considering when making admission decisions may influence minority representation. The first is the admission decision process and how each specified factor influences who is admitted. The second is relative to how what is advertised to families influences the propensity that a student applies and ultimately enrolls (Drewes and Michael 2006, Flores 2010). When considering where to apply, parent and student characteristics intersect with information colleges make public, and this meaning-making process contributes to perceptions about colleges and the likelihood of applying and enrolling (Simões and Soares 2010). For example, historically when colleges reported considering race explicitly, it indicated to prospective students that the campus climate was more friendly for minorities and increased their desire to attend (Teranishi and Briscoe 2008). When colleges offer more financial aid, it also increases the likelihood that racial minorities apply and enroll (Flores 2010, Perna 2000). For racial minorities, the consideration of race (or factors associated with race)

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may signal that the climate is accepting of racial diversity—increasing perceptions that racial minorities will be admitted and succeed, and thereby increasing the likelihood they would apply. This could then explain relationships between how the consideration of racialized admission factors influences minority representation—because it affects the applicant pool.

Alternatively, given that nearly all Americans believe that college admissions should be meritorcratic and increasingly espouse negative attitudes towards the explicit consideration of race (Newport 2016), it could be that there are no differences among racial groups in regard to perceptions of colleges that consider these factors. Instead individuals of all racial groups may view colleges more favorably when they emphasize a meritocratic process (i.e., use of test scores) in admission decisions. If this turns out to be the case and attitudes about a college do not vary by admission practices, then any relationship between the consideration of racialized admission factors and minority enrollement is likely due to how the use of these factors contributes to admission decisions.

Methods

Data

To address how the use of racialized admission practices affect racial group representations at top-colleges, I constructed a novel dataset combining hand-coded data from the Princeton Review's Best College Guidebooks (hereafter referred to as college guides), data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), and data from the American Community Survey (ACS). The college guides include information about the factors colleges report considering when admitting students and how strongly they weight those factors.[13] The

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[13] Personnel in the admissions office are responsible for reporting this data to the Princeton Review each year.

factors I focus on in this analysis are whether colleges consider race/ethnicity, test scores, alumni status, and first-generation status as well as whether they promote diversity in their admission statements. I also include data from IPEDS about the percent of students who are admitted, the cost of tuition, and the racial demographics of the student population for each college in the analysis. I utilized the Census's American Community Survey to gather the racial demographics of the state in which each college resides.

My dataset represents 20 years – 1999-2019 –and includes information from the following guidebooks: 1999, 2001, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2019.[14] College guides come out in the August prior to the admission cycle advertised (e.g. August 1998 publication for the 1999 admissions cycle book). Data from IPEDS and the ACS were collected for the year when the college reported data for that year of the college guide. ACS and IPEDS data for the 1999 book came from the 1997-1998 academic year. The Princeton Review selects colleges they define as "best" colleges. This is typically somewhere between 320 and 400 colleges each year.

To be included in my final sample, a college must be a selective, four-year, degree-granting college and it must be historically a predominantly White institution. Also, to follow best practices for longitudinal analyses, colleges had to be in at least three guidebooks to be included in my sample. There are 377 colleges in the final sample. These colleges are in 48 states and the District of Columbia. They are diverse in nature: both large and small, traditional and non-traditional, high and lower cost, private and public, religious and secular. They represent some of the top colleges in the United States and combined enroll roughly 25% of all students attending college in 2019.

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[14] Initial analyses showed that there were few changes to what a college considered in admission from one year to the next, thus I tried to collect books for every two years to account for this. However, when a book was impossible to locate, I went three years in between data points.

To address how what colleges advertise considering influences attitudes about the favorability of that college, I conducted a survey experiment using Prolific (www.prolific.co), an opt-in survey panel. My sample was limited to US residents over the age of 18 who are parents. There are 403 participants in my sample; this includes 108 White participants, 92 Asian participants, 95 Black participants, and 98 Hispanic participants. There were ten participants who claimed other as their racial identity. I manipulated whether or not colleges considered first-generation status, alumni status, race explicitly, and SAT scores and then asked participants to rate the degree to which they would want their child to apply to the college. Each participant rated two schools. The exact cover story and examples of manipulations are included in appendix B[15]. While online panels are opt-in and not randomly sampled, the effects of experimental manipulations are consistent with what is found in a nationally representative sample (Mullinix et al. 2015; Weinberg, Freese, and McElhattan 2014). Moreover, I focus on parents, as parents are instrumental in helping shape the choices their children make about where to attend college (Alvarez 2010, Myers and Myers 2012, Warnock 2016).

Dependent Variable

The key dependent variable for my first set of analyses is the percent of each racial group enrolled among undergraduates at each college in the sample for each time point. I gathered this data from what each college reported to IPEDS. I consider the representation of Asian, Black, Hispanic, international, and White undergraduates. Each group is mutually exclusive; for example, percent international could include Black, Hispanic, and Asian international students, whereas percent Asian would only include domestic students who identify as Asian. Importantly, IPEDS

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[15] All participants were debriefed about the true nature of the study after completing it. Participants were paid $1.50 and the survey on average took them roughly 10 minutes to complete.

does have data for other racial minority groups, such as Native Americans but the sample sizes and variability across years are too small to adequately model.

For the survey experiment, my dependent variable is a scale indicating the favorability of the college. This measure assesses the degree to which parents view a college as a favorable option for their child. Because each parent reviewed two schools, there are two scales. Both scales consist of responses to four questions asking to what degree: 1) would you encourage your child to apply to this college, 2) do you think your child would be accepted at this college, 3) do you believe that your child would feel comfortable at this college, and 4) know that your child would succeed at this college. For each question, responses ranged from 1(not at all) to 10 (completely). Each scale ranges from 4-40. Cronbach's alpha was greater than .85 for both scales. I also squared each scale to reduce skewedness and kurtosis necessary to model these variables appropriately.

Independent Variables

My independent variables for the first part of my analysis come from the college guides and are the admission factors colleges report considering as well as whether they promote diversity in their admission statements. College guides indicate both whether each college considers race/ethnicity, first-generation status, alumni status, and test scores when admitting students and the degree to which they consider them (described in the books as: not considered, considered, considered important, considered very important). I coded admission statements regarding whether diversity was promoted (1=mentioned, 0=not mentioned). A colleague also content coded a random sample of admission statements based on the coding guide (see appendix). The intraclass coefficient between coders was .83 ($p<.001$), with 92% agreement.

There are two ways that admission factors could be analyzed: the degree they are considered (ordinal indicator) or whether they are considered at all (binary indicator). I create

binary indicators for considering race explicitly, first-generation status, and alumni status (0=not considered, 1=considered). I do so because there is little variation in the degree to which colleges consider these factors; most all variation between colleges and over time is in whether they consider it or not. For example, over 85% of colleges that consider these factors just consider them and do not weight them as important or very important. The opposite is true for consideration of test scores; nearly 99% have colleges have always considered them across time, but there is far more variability in terms of the degree to which they weight it. So, I use a continuous indicator (from 0=not considered to 3=considered very important) for test scores[16].

For my second analysis, the independent variables are the manipulation of whether the college the parent assessed indicated that they considered first-generation status, race, SAT scores, and alumni status (1 = yes).

Control Variables

For the first set of analyses, I include a measure for whether there is a statewide ban on the explicit consideration of race for each year in the analysis as this may affect both admission practices and minority enrollments. I also include college-specific time-varying variables such as the in-state tuition cost, percent of students admitted each year, percent of student receiving aid, size of undergraduate population, and percent women undergraduates. Lastly, I include a measure for the percent White in the state for each time point in the sample. This measure is designed to index the racial composition of the larger context in which the college resides.

For the second part of my analysis, no control variables are needed as participants were randomly assigned to different combinations of factors considered by each college (Mutz 2011).

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[16] I treat this as a continuous variable in my analyses and comparing between fit-statistics between models where this was categorical or continuous evidenced greater fit when treated as continuous.

While balance tests are not definitive, as the goal of randomization does not necessarily mean that all variables will be balanced (Mutz 2011), the results of t-tests and the global F-test indicate that there is balance between groups exposed to the consideration of a factor and those not exposed. The one exception is that parents who are never married were slightly more likely ($p<.05$) than those who are married to view colleges that considered SAT scores, but results are the same in auxiliary models that controlled for participant demographics.

Analytic Strategy

First, to address how the consideration of various racialized admission factors influences racial group representation for each racial group, I fit a fixed-effect, within college model with a 2-year time lag for each admission factor. I use a 2-year time lag because the data in the college guides are produced roughly 2 years prior to when a student would enroll at a college. This model should more closely match the causal process at hand by lagging the effect of the consideration of these factors on racial group enrollments. And, by using a fixed-effects model, I am also controlling for all effects of time-invariant variables with time-invariant effects (Allison, Williams and Moral-Benito 2017). There is recent evidence that fixed-effects models with time-lags can produce inefficient and biased estimates because the causal process they are examining does not unfold in the timeframe specified by the time lags (Leszczensky and Wolbring 2018, Vaisey and Miles 2017). I verify my results using the method developed by Allison, Williams and Moral-Benito (2017) which accounts for these biases. I then use coefficient plots to illustrate how racialized admission practices effect minority enrollments for each racial group. I also use OLS regression with demeaned independent and dependent variables (which produces a fixed-effects model) coupled with the SUEST command in STATA to formally test for significant differences in how each racialized admission practices influences enrollment by race. In supplementary

analyses, I also use fixed-effect models to consider how racialized admission practices combine and intersect to predict minority representation by including interactions among all admission practices and by looking at how the number of practices (a count of how many are considered) influences minority enrollment.

Finally, for the second part of my analysis, each participant viewed and rated two colleges based on what they reported considering for admissions. I use a random-intercept, linear model which combines within- and between-subject variation to show how colleges' reported usage of first-generation status, alumni status, race, and SAT scores for admission decisions influences parental favorability of that college for their child. I run separate analyses by participant race and use the SUEST command in STATA to formally test for significant differences in how the reported consideration of each factor influences attitudes by race.

Results

Table 4 provides descriptive statistics for all variables in the model, reflective of averages across colleges and across years. On average, roughly 61% of colleges across 1999-2019 considered race explicitly when admitting students and more than 3 out of 4 colleges considered alumni status during this time. Only about 46% considered first-generation status, but this lower percentage is largely due to the Princeton Review not asking whether colleges considered this factor until 2008. Nearly all colleges in my sample considered test scores during this time period (99%), and when they did about half (51%) considered them "very important" to admission decisions while 11% only "considered" them.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics Chapter 2

Variable	Mean	St. Dev	Min	Max
Admission Factors				
Whether Considers Race Explicitly	0.62		0.00	1.00
Whether Considers First-Generation	0.45		0.00	1.00
Whether Considers Alumni	0.75		0.00	1.00
Whether Consider Test Scores	0.99		0.40	1.00
Degree Considers Test Scores				
Not at all (0)	0.89			
Considered (1)	10.65			
Considered Important (2)	37.09			
Considered Very Important (3)	51.36			
Admission Statement				
Whether Mentions Diversity	0.19		0.00	1.00
Racial Demographics of College				
Percent Black Undergraduates	5.64	4.26	0.10	29.50
Percent Hispanic Undergraduates	6.86	5.62	0.60	37.30
Percent Asian Undergraduates	7.24	7.83	0.40	56.90
Percent White Undergraduates	68.27	15.12	14.50	93.20
Percent International Undergraduates	4.65	3.36	0.00	21.70
Control Variables				
Private College	68.70			
Land grant	11.14			
Percent undergraduates receiving financial aid	80.10	14.81	41.44	100.00
Cost of in-state tuition (in 1000s)	34.23	12.22	10.80	51.69
Size of undergraduate population (in 1000s)	7.86	8.89	0.84	41.32
Percent women undergraduates	54.59	12.93	0.00	100.00
Percent of undergraduates admitted	56.98	20.17	7.50	95.88
Percent of undergraduates from in-state	49.99	27.05	1.00	99.00
Statewide Ban on Affirmative Action	0.16			1.00
Region				
West	15.38			
Northeast	39.52			
South	25.99			
Midwest	19.10			
Percent white in state where located	75.25	11.01	25.25	95.75

Note: These descriptive statistics represent the average for all colleges (n=377) in the sample across all ten years of data.

On average across all years, Black students represented roughly 6% of the undergraduate population at these top-rate colleges, Hispanic and Asian students represented roughly 7% each, and White students represented about 68% of the undergraduate population. More than 2 out of 3 colleges in my sample are private (69%), and roughly 16% of these colleges are located in a state that had a ban on explicit consideration of race between 1999-2019. There is considerable regional variation in where these colleges are located across the United States.

How do racialized admission practices influence racial group representation?

Table 5 provides results from a fixed-effect (within college) model with a two-year time lag for the effect of admissions factors on representation for each racial group. In contrast to hypothesis 1, the explicit consideration of race is associated only with Hispanic enrollment, and actually reduces their enrollment. Results also fail to support hypothesis 2, as non-race-explicit admission practices are more consequential than the explicit consideration of race for how groups are represented. For example, consideration of first-generation status increases Hispanic and international student enrollment. However, the consideration of first-generation status decreases Blacks, Asians, and White enrollment. And, an increased reliance on test-scores and mentioning diversity in admission statement decreases the enrollment of Black undergraduates. Overall, these findings support hypothesis 3, illustrating that the effect of racialized admission practices varies across different racial groups and non-race-explicit factors are highly influential in the degree to which groups are represented.

Table 5: Effect of College Admission Practices on Racial Minority Representation

Variable	Black Undergrads	Hispanic Undergrads	Asian Undergrads	International Undergrads	White Undergrads
	Beta Coefficients				
Admission Practices					
Considers Race	-0.04	-0.32*	0.09	0.14	0.22
Considers First-Generation	-0.18*	0.99***	-0.40***	0.86***	-1.28***
Considers Alumni Status	-0.16	-0.20	0.27	0.17	0.57
Degree Considers Test Scores	-0.19**	-0.10	0.12	0.01	0.08
Mentions Diversity	-0.28**	0.10	0.23	0.21	-0.39
College Level Controls					
Percent on financial aid	0.00	0.04***	-0.02**	-0.02**	-0.03
In-State tuition cost	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	-0.00***
Size of undergraduate pop.	-0.00*	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	-0.00****
Percent women	-3.20*	-2.08	-0.76	-1.79	15.58**
Percent of students admitted	0.01**	0.02**	-0.00	-0.04***	0.02
Statewide Ban	-0.26	0.58	0.37	0.35	-1.01
State percent white	-0.08**	0.17***	-0.12***	-0.11**	0.03

Note: Only controlling for variables that vary within colleges as this is a fixed effect within college model. The effect of admission practices on the dependent variable is lagged by 2 years to account for when the student would have read the guidebook (summer of their junior year (e.g., 1998) and when they would have been accounted for in statistics reported to IPEDS (e.g., 2020). Significant findings for admission practices when possible were verified using a fixed-effect linear dynamic panel-data estimation with maximum likelihood and SEM.
N=377. * $p<.05$ **$p<.01$ ***$p<.001$

Figure 9 highlights these findings further. There are no significant differences across groups relative to how the explicitly consideration of race affects their enrollment, and in contemporary time, by and large, claiming to consider race is not very influential in determining enrollment by race. This could very well be because explicit consideration of race is no longer a viable cultural schema and that colleges have turned to more culturally acceptable tools for addressing race in admissions (McDonnell, Bail and Tavory 2017). Promoting diversity in admission statements decreases Black enrollment; this effect is significantly different from the effect for all other groups, excluding Whites ($p<.05$). Given how divergent definitions for diversity can be (Bell and Hartmann 2007), it may be that promoting diversity in admission statements does not translate into colleges utilizing practices associated with increasing Black representation (Smith and Mayorga-Gallo 2017). Instead, colleges may be seeking a different type of diversity. Additionally, more strongly weighting SAT scores in admission decisions decreases Black enrollment and increases Asian enrollment, a significant difference ($p<.05$). Finally, there is a great deal of racial variation in how the consideration of first-generation status relates to enrollment. It decreases Black and Asian enrollment while increasing Hispanic and international enrollment and its' effect is significantly different across groups ($p<.001$).
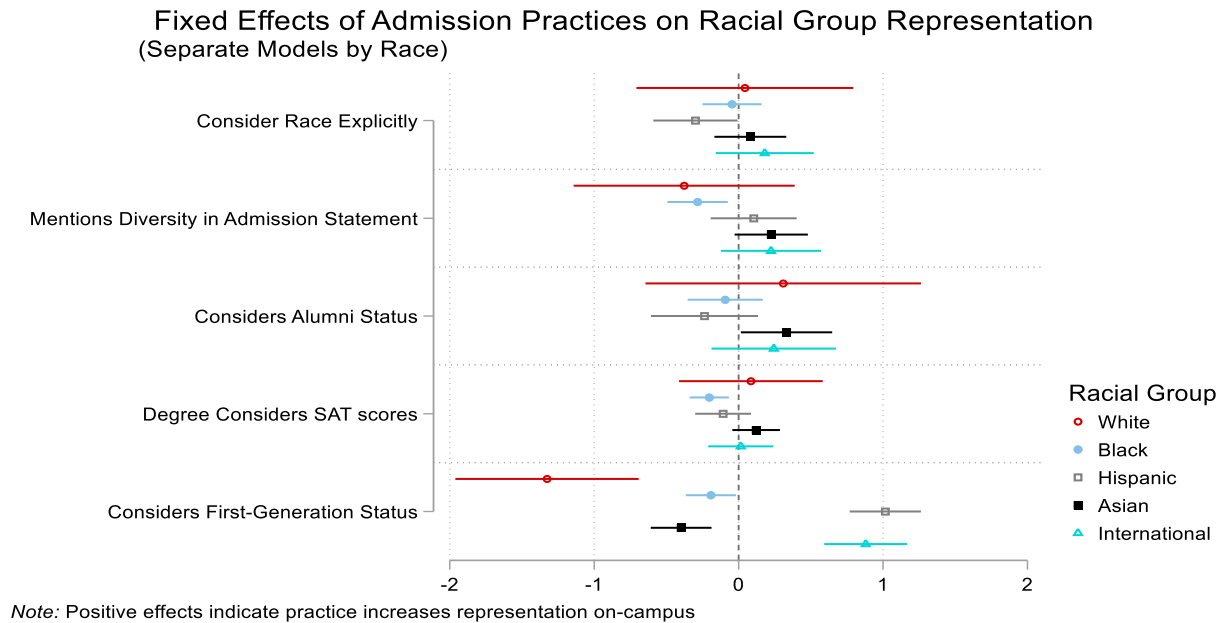
Figure 9: Effect of Admission Practices on Racial Group Representation

It is also important to note that these practices do not just occur in a vacuum separate from one another. I know provide results for how each admission factors moderates the influence of the other. Importantly, there are interactions amongst these practices that influence their importance relative to minority enrollments. Figure 2 illustrates how the number of racialized admission practices considered influences racial group representation. Interestingly, when colleges consider more racialized admission factors (think holistic admissions), it decreases Black enrollment. However, this effect size is small. Alternatively, considering more racialized admission factors increases Hispanic and international enrollments. Research has evidenced that Black Americans face the most racial discrimination in the U.S. (Bonilla-Silva 2004, Gaddis 2014, Petts 2019), and it may be that racial biases against Black students lead to them being less likely to be chosen for admission when the whole student is considered. In supplementary analyses, I also consider models with interactions for all admission practices, and using marginal effects assess the

combination of factors associated with the highest and lowest representation for each racial group. I find that representation of Black undergraduates is highest (6.5%) when no racialized admission factors are considered, and test scores are considered but not weighted as important or very important. Black undergraduate representation is lowest (4.8%, Δ 1.7, $p<.001$) when test scores are weighted as very important and first-generation status and race are both considered. Hispanic undergraduate representation is highest (12.2%) when the admission statement promotes diversity, first-generation status is considered, and test scores are just considered. Alternatively, when just race is considered and test scores are highly valued in admission decisions, Hispanic representation is lowest (6.7%, Δ 5.5, $p<.001$). Asian representation is highest (10.1%) when colleges consider race and promote diversity in admission statement; it is lowest when they promote diversity and consider first-generation status (4.3%, Δ 5.8, $p<.001$). These findings taken together seem to suggest that when colleges promote diversity what that means can differ (Bell and Hartmann 2007). It may be that the consideration of different factors is aligned with representing some groups as opposed to others—indicating unsurprisingly that the use of non-race-explicit factors is likely not at all colorblind in practice.

Effect of Number of Admission Practices Considered on Undergraduate Representation For Racial Minorities
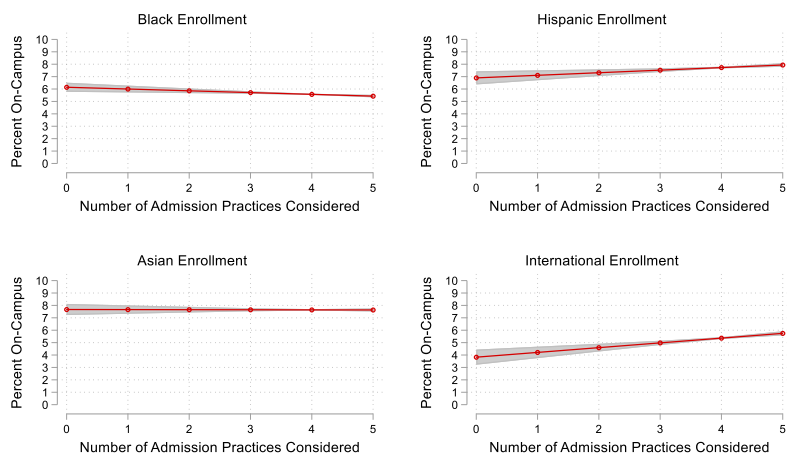
Figure 10: Effect of Number of Admission Factors Considered on Representation

The Influence of Racialized Admission Practices on Attitudes about Colleges

I use data from a survey experiment to assess the degree to which what colleges report and advertise influence where parents are likely to encourage their child to apply/attend, and thus whether shifts in the demographic pool are likely to explain results from the first analyses. Table 6 highlights the effect of the consideration of race, first-generation status, alumni status, and SAT scores on college favorability. I find little evidence that relationships between admission factors considered and minority enrollments derive from how what is considered affects the applicant pool. For example, while the consideration of first-generation increased Hispanic enrollments and decreased White and Black enrollments, it is not significantly related to the perceived favorability of colleges. Moreover, race and alumni status, two factors least influential in determining minority enrollments, are related to attitudes about colleges and consistently so across racial groups. The consideration of race and alumni status lead to less favorable attitudes about colleges; whereas the consideration of SAT scores leads to more favorable attitudes.

Table 6: Effect of Admission Factors on Favorability of College

	All	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White
Considers First-Generation	6.11	4.04	6.86	6.14	6.81
Considers Race	-9.29**	-8.00	-10.56	-1.67	-11.31*
Considers Alumni Status	-8.96**	-8.77	-12.99*	-8.35	-3.34
Considers SAT Scores	10.47***	14.68***	8.35	4.61	11.39*
N	806	184	190	196	216

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Conclusion

There has been an ongoing debate in the political, legal, and social arenas since the 20th century regarding whether and how colleges should explicitly consider students' race for admission decisions. This debate recently resurfaced in the news, as Harvard and Yale have been accused of penalizing Asian applicants on a personality score used for admission as a way of reducing the representation of Asians among their student population (Hartocollis 2018, Lee 2018). Harvard claims that this is not exactly the case, but college officials do not deny that race is a part of how they holistically evaluate candidates for admission (Hartocollis 2018, Lee 2018). The Yale case is the most recent of many cases that consider how the explicit consideration of race in college admissions should be borne out in practice. What this debate has given less attention to is how non-race-explicit admission factors also matter for how racial minorities are represented at selective colleges. In some cases, colleges may use non-race-explicit factors in ways that disadvantage racial minorities (e.g., considering alumni status), while in other cases, colleges may use these factors to their advantage, especially with restrictions and growing resistance to explicitly considering race (e.g., lowering the importance of SAT scores) (Leiter and Leiter 2011, Reardon, Baker and Klasik 2012).

I find that the relative importance of non-race-explicit admission factors for determining minority enrollments may have increased as society has become more resistant to the explicit

consideration of race. This may suggest that because considering race explicitly has come to be seen negatively by a vast number of Americans (Newport 2016), it is no longer a culturally acceptable tool for addressing race in college admissions (McDonnell, Bail and Tavory 2017). Instead, as some have argued, focusing on test-scores and economic factors, such as first-generation status, may be good tools for addressing racial disparity in college access (Grodsky and Jones 2007, Kahlenberg 1997). For example, considering first-generation significantly increases Hispanic and international enrollments, and reducing reliance on test scores significantly increases Black enrollments.

However, it is important to note that the consideration of non-race-explicit factors is not necessarily a panacea for increasing minority enrollments; the effects depend on which racial group is considered, and the use of these factors can actually *decrease* minority enrollments. For example, considering first-generation status has a negative effect on Black enrollments. In addition, promoting diversity in admission statements negatively impacts Black enrollment as well. This could be evidence of a principle-policy gap where colleges may talk about diversity in general ways, but their practices may not align with what they state (Smith and Mayorga-Gallo 2017). There is also some evidence that diversity might mean different things. For example, whereas promoting diversity decreases Black student enrollment, it significantly increases Hispanic and Asian student enrollment. Taken together these results indicate that different admission practices are associated with the representation of different groups.

Why might admission practices that are not explicit to race be associated with representation of one racial group differentially than another? One explanation for the differential effects associated with first-generation status is that this factor is often discussed relative to immigration and Hispanic students, which may explain why it increases representation of Hispanic

and international students but does not do so for other groups (Horwedel 2008). More broadly, colleges likely have different definitions for how they perceive initiatives to increase diversity (Moses and Chang 2006). For example, while diversity could be interpreted by college officials to refer to a particular race (Chen and Hamilton 2015, Edgell and Tranby 2010, Plaut et al. 2011, Unzueta and Binning 2010), it can also be defined more broadly to talk about difference of any kind, like differences in socioeconomic status, political views, gender, or sexuality. Thus, which admission practices a college comes to use might be an indication of which type of diversity they are seeking and as a result have different effects for different racial groups. It is also important to note that many non-race-explicit factors decrease Black enrollment; this is particularly troubling given that new evidence indicates that Black students are less likely to be attending selective schools in 2020 than they were in 2000 (Patel 2020).

Results from my survey experiment indicate that racial differences in how admission factors considered influence minority enrollments are likely not due to how potential applicants perceive the use of these practices. Parents across all racial groups view colleges less favorably when they consider race and alumni status and more favorably when they consider SAT scores. Attitudes are not dependent on the consideration of first-generation status. How admission factors like first-generation differentially influence racial group representation for Hispanic and Black students is likely the result of how these factors are used when admitting students.

However, one limitation of my study is that I only have a report of what is considered and cannot investigate the actual admission process. What colleges say they do might be different from what actually happens when colleges make admission decisions. Future research should expose what colleges do when they state that they consider race explicitly or first-generation status and why, as considering first-generation status has different outcomes for Hispanic and Black students.

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Moreover, while racial minorities remain most underrepresented at top-rated colleges, it is important to extend this type of analysis to a broader array of schools to fully extend each of these practices on minority enrollments. For example, research from Washington State found that statewide bans decreased racial minority enrollment at flagship colleges (Brown and Hirschman 2006), but not all flagship colleges are top-rated. Thus, it could be that the importance of the explicit consideration of race persists at selective but less highly rated schools.

So much attention by scholars and the media has been given to the explicit consideration of race in college admissions that less attention has been given to how non-race-explicit factors are used to help racial minorities gain more equitable access to college or to further exacerbate racial disparities in college enrollments. My findings indicate that if colleges were to put more focus on the consideration of first-generation status, Hispanic students might be better represented and by putting less reliance on test scores Black students might be better represented. Yet, these non-race-explicit factors affect different racial groups in different ways, showcasing how the consideration of non-race-explicit factors are inherently and unsurprisingly race-based. While so much of our focus on colleges admissions has centered around the overt consideration of race, we need to pay increased attention to how non-race-explicit admission practices are linked to racial representation in ways that reduce and contribute to racial disparities.

CHAPTER 3: ATTITUDES ABOUT AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION ADMISSIONS

What is affirmative action and why do Americans tend to oppose it so much? When most people think about affirmative action, they picture human resource or college admission officers explicitly using an applicant's specified racial identity on an application to weigh racial minorities more favorably. Generally, many Americans disagree with the idea of explicitly considering an applicant's race to make determinations about a candidate because they view it as oppositional to the principles of meritocracy (Forman and Lewis 2015; Newport 2016). If meritocracy holds, individuals should be rewarded for their effort and skills and not for their ascribed demographic characteristics. Many White Americans believe that the US is a post-racial society with lower levels of racial inequality than in the past (Bonilla-Silva 2017). As such, using the specified race of an applicant to sort and stack applications is perceived to create racial injustice and undermine what should be a meritocratic process.

Affirmative action is complex, however. It can be exercised through the explicit consideration of an applicant's specified racial identity, as described above, or it can also be implemented through alternative non-race-explicit practices. Okechukwu (2019) defines affirmative action as "policies and programs that provide special consideration to historically excluded groups, such as racial and ethnic minorities, and women in the spheres of education and employment" (pg 4). By this definition, affirmative action practices need not *explicitly* consider an applicant's race but can be any program or policy that *gives special consideration* to underrepresented and historically excluded groups. For example, within higher education admissions, when colleges faced restrictions on explicitly considering an applicants' race, they used other non-race explicit factors, such as considering first-generation status and weighing

standardized test scores less, to give special consideration to underrepresented groups (Leiter and Leiter 2011). Thus, while Americans, and White Americans in particular, unquestionably oppose considering an applicant's race when making decisions, they may be tolerant of other implementations of affirmative action.

Resistance to affirmative action, therefore, may largely be resistance to considering ascribed group demographics explicitly. The core principle of meritocracy is that decisions should be based on merit not ascribed status. On the other hand, race scholars have long noted that conceptions of what constitutes a meritocratic process are steeped in racial bias and that appeals to meritocracy are themselves colorblind forms of racism designed to protect White privilege (Bobo 1998; Forman and Lewis 2015). In fact, Warikoo (2016) argues that what people perceive to be meritocratic is what best supports their own and their racial group's ability to be successful in the applicant pool.

In this work, I investigate Americans' tolerance for affirmative action implementation across race explicit and non-race-explicit practices. I use a survey experiment to explore how the factors colleges consider when admitting students affect attitudes and behaviors towards that college. Higher education admissions are an ideal context to study attitudes towards different types of affirmative action, as colleges use both race explicit and non-race explicit admission factors for the purpose of increasing racial diversity. Thus, I ask how the consideration of race explicitly, legacy/alumni status, standardized test scores, and first-generation status influence parents' perceptions of colleges and what college they would pick for their child and how these relationships vary by the racial identity of the participant. My sample is purposefully racially diverse because most research on attitudes about affirmative action focuses on White attitudes

alone. Thus, I address attitudes toward the complexities of affirmative action among a largely equal share of White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian participants.

Attitudes toward practices designed to increase minority rights tend to be challenged by White people when perceptions of racial threat are heightened. Racial threat is a feeling of peril when minority population sizes or rights increase and the normalized privileges associated with Whiteness, like access to selective higher education institutions, is challenged. Given that the US is in the midst of a third demographic transition whereby there will be fewer White students among the college-aged population (Lee and Bean 2004, Lichter 2013), fear of changing demographics at colleges may be driving attitudes about a broad range of affirmative action practices (Chun and Feagin 2019). Therefore, I also investigate whether minimizing racial threat can increase the desirability of affirmative action based admission factors.

Affirmative Action in Higher Education

The story behind affirmative action in higher education is complicated and has been primarily linked to the explicit consideration of race in college admission decisions (Blume and Long 2014, Hirschman and Berrey 2017, Holzer and Neumark 2006, Howell 2010, Long 2015). The official Affirmative Action mandate, Executive Order 11246, signed by President Johnson, did not apply to how colleges admitted students because it was only for employers (Harper and Reskin 2005). However, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act did mandate that colleges ensure equal opportunity in college admissions by race. As a result of no clear guidance on how to meet this mandate, many colleges by the mid-1970s came to voluntarily consider the race of applicants in order to increase racial diversity on-campus (Kahlenberg 1997, Leiter and Leiter 2011, Welch and Gruhl 1998).

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In the aftermath the Civil Rights Movement, resistance to the explicit consideration of race in college admissions grew amongst the populace (Berrey 2015) and White students mobilized legally against the practice (Epp 1998, Okechukwu 2019). In 1978, *Regents of the University of California v Bakke* was the first case examining the constitutionality of explicitly considering race in higher education admissions (*Regents of the University of California v Bakke* 98 S. Ct. 2733 [1978]). The Supreme Court made no binding decision about the constitutionality of considering race in admission practices. Four justices were willing to rule that the consideration of race was necessary to sufficiently address past racial inequality and assure non-discrimination, and four justices were willing to rule that race could not be considered in admission decisions (Berrey 2015). Justice Powell's opinion served as a non-binding precedent[17] offering a compromise of sorts between the two perspectives (Leiter and Leiter 2011). He reasoned that colleges could consider the race of applicants but only if narrowly tailored to the pursuit of diversity (Berrey 2015, Moore and Bell 2011, Moses and Chang 2006). This compromise shifted the goal of considering race from a measurable outcome – increased racial minority enrollments – to an ambiguous objective: diversity. Supreme court rulings following *Bakke* upheld Powell's opinion limiting the explicit consideration of race in admission decisions to times when narrowly tailored to the pursuit of diversity (*Grutter v. Bollinger* 123 S. Ct .2325 (2003), *Fischer v. University of Texas Austin* 136 S.Ct. 2198 [2016]). In the twenty-first century, all colleges in the US are limited in their ability to use race explicitly as a factor in admission decisions, and in nine states[18] the practice is banned (Holzer and Neumark 2006).

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[17] Subsequent cases, like *Grutter* reference *Bakke* as likely precedent because so many universities took notice and shifted their practices to align.

[18] California (1996), Washington (1998), Florida (1999), Michigan (2006), Nebraska (2008), Arizona (2010), New Hampshire (2012), Oklahoma (2012), Idaho (2020).

Statewide bans on the explicit consideration of race and restrictions in its usage in colleges admissions have led to an overall pattern of desistance in the practice (Hirschman and Berrey 2017, Okechukwu 2019). These patterns of desistance are consequential as researchers have evidenced that they are associated with reduced racial minority enrollments at selective colleges (Bastedo, Howard and Flaster 2016, Blume and Long 2014, Bowen and Bok 1999, Brown and Hirschman 2006, Garces and Cogburn 2015, Howell 2010). For example, in states where explicitly considering the race of applicants has been banned, selective colleges have become increasingly White and the number of racial minorities both applying to and being accepted at these colleges has declined (Kurlaender, Friedmann and Chang 2015, Long 2015).

But while much of the focus on affirmative action in college admission has focused on the explicit consideration of race, non-race-explicit factors, by definition, can operate as a form of affirmative action too. Non-race-explicit policies and practices can be used to give special consideration to increasing racial minority enrollments. This is particularly true within higher education admissions. In fact, when colleges faced restrictions and bans on considering the race of applicants, many colleges used other non-race-explicit admission factors to increase racial minority representation (Harper and Reskin 2005, Leiter and Leiter 2011, Okechukwu 2019). For example, because standardized test scores are biased and correlated with race (Alon and Tienda 2007), weighing standardized test scores less, or even no longer considering them can be an admissions policy for increasing racial minority enrollments (Alon and Tienda 2007, Alon 2009, Bowen, Chingos and McPherson 2009, Buchmann, Condron and Roscigno 2010, Posselt et al. 2012). Another non-race-explicit admission policy which can be used for affirmative action is considering whether applicants are first-generation college students because racial minorities are disproportionately likely to be first-generation students (Gaertner and Hart 2013, Grodsky and

Jones 2007, Kahlenberg 1995, Kahlenberg 1997). Considering alumni status (or whether an applicant is a legacy at the college) disadvantages racial minorities at predominately and historically White colleges (Massey and Mooney 2007, Warikoo 2016), and as such, removing this practice could be a purposeful policy for increasing racial minority enrollments (Chun and Feagin 2019). Thus, affirmative action in higher education admissions consists of the explicit consideration of race *and* the consideration of non-race-explicit factors.

Attitudes about Admission Factors Considered

Understanding American attitudes about affirmative action policies that are race explicit *and* non-race-explicit disentangles perceptions of practices that give special consideration to disadvantaged groups from perceptions of practices that explicitly consider a specific ascribed group demographic. While the word "affirmative action" has a negative connotation in society, such negativity may result more from likening affirmative action to the explicit consideration of group demographics than from leveraging policies and practices to address racial inequity. Because affirmative action has been likened to the explicit consideration of race alone, studies that conclude that Americans oppose affirmative action may be conflating attitudes about affirmative action more broadly defined with attitudes about the explicit consideration of ascribed group identities (Bobo and Kluegel 1993, Bobo 1998, Forman and Lewis 2015, Newport 2016). If perceptions towards non-race-explicit practices which can be used to increase racial equity are more favorable among the general public, it opens up the door for policy makers to use more creative affirmative action based strategies to address racial inequity.

Resistance to affirmative action in higher education may largely result from opposition to considering characteristics of applicants for which they have little control. If true, any ascribed status that colleges consider whether it advantages or disadvantages any particular

racial group should be viewed unfavorably. Americans believe strongly in meritocracy and because someone cannot easily change their racial identity, or whether their family members are alumni at a particular college, Americans may oppose considering these factors that explicitly seem to advantage one group over another with no consideration to "merit" (Newport 2016). And, while individuals can also not change whether they are first-generation college students, many Americans associate first-generation college goers with meritocracy because first-generation college students are emblematic of individuals bootstrapping their path to college through hard work. Thus, if what Americans oppose about affirmative action is the explicit consideration of ascribed demographics that are unreflective of skills and work ethic, they should oppose the explicit consideration of an applicants race *and* the consideration of alumni/legacy status.

> *H1A: Parents will view colleges that consider alumni status **and** an applicant's explicit racial identity less favorably than colleges that don't consider these factors.*

Additionally, if opposition to affirmative action hinges primarily on opposition to the consideration of ascribed statuses individuals cannot change, there should be little racial variation in attitudes about the use of various admission factors in higher education. The main tenants of meritocracy that individuals should be awarded based on hard work and not ascribed status are widely held among the American population, regardless of racial identity. Zucker (1987) provides an explanation for why racial minorities might oppose practices, like explicitly considering an applicant's race, originally designed to mitigate racial disparities. The more widely accepted and institutionalized a belief is in society, the more individuals believe it too, regardless of how it might affect them personally.

Alternatively, negative attitudes about affirmative action, particularly among White Americans, may have less to do with institutionalized beliefs about meritocracy (e.g., not basing

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decisions on ascribed status) and more to do with how the very meaning of meritocracy is racialized (Brown et al. 2003, Chun and Feagin 2019, Forman and Lewis 2015, Okechukwu 2019). Warikoo (2016) argues that definitions of what constitutes meritocratic practices are shaped by individual and group interests. In this case, it would be expected that opposition to affirmative action is opposition to practices, both race-explicit and *non*-race-explicit, that disadvantage one's position in the racial hierarchy. It is not what type of factor they are considering—it is the fact that they are considering factors that may reduce White privilege in access to selective higher education institutions (Warikoo 2016). If true and when it comes to higher education admissions, I would expect that colleges using either race explicit *or* non-race- explicit admission factors known to be associated with increasing racial minority enrollments and that could disadvantage White students would be viewed negatively by White Americans.

> *H2A: White parents will view colleges that consider test scores and alumni status more favorably and those that consider first-generation status and racial identity less favorably than colleges that don't consider those factors.*

If views of affirmative action are reflective of protecting or changing positions within the racial hierarchy, I would also expect substantial variability across racial groups in terms of how people view different admission factors colleges consider. While it would be expected that White Americans would oppose the consideration of factors associated with increasing racial minority enrollments and would do so more than other racial groups, there should also be variation across other racial groups. Because colleges started explicitly considering the race of applicants as a reaction to the Civil Rights Movement and to promote racial justice for Black students (Berrey 2015, Leiter and Leiter 2011), explicitly considering race might be viewed more favorably by Black participants. Similarly, because targeting first-generation students is

often likened to representing Hispanic students (Horwedel 2008), considering this factor might be viewed more favorably by Hispanic participants.

Assessing attitudes about colleges alone, however, may be problematic because of social desirability in survey responses. Social psychologists have long documented a split personality among many Americans where they espouse attitudes that promote racial equality but more privately harbor implicit racial biases that influence their behavior (Craemer 2007). Race scholars have referred to this as a principle-policy gap where measured racial attitudes do not correspond with how people behave (Smith and Mayorga-Gallo 2017; Petts 2020). For the purpose of this research, attitudes expressed about admission factors could reflect what participants deem to be socially desirable responses (Cramer 2007). To account for this, I constrain participants to pick what they believe would be the best college for their child, and I use the same theories derived above to make my hypotheses.

> *H1B: Parents will be less likely to pick colleges that consider alumni status **and** an applicant's explicit racial identity than colleges that don't consider these factors.*

> *H2B: White parents will be more likely to pick colleges that consider test scores and alumni status and less likely to pick colleges that consider first-generation status and racial identity than colleges that don't consider these factors.*

Racial Threat and Attitudes about Admission Factors

Racial threat may at least be partially explanatory for negative attitudes toward all forms of affirmative action (Baker 2019). Racial threat is defined as a feeling of peril regarding the perception of increased minority rights or population sizes that threaten the perceived normalized advantages and positions of power that White Americans have (Blalock 1956, Blumer 1958, Bobo and Kluegel 1993, Olzak 1992, Olzak 1983). The concept of racial threat assumes that competition between racial groups is a zero-sum game, where if minorities gain more White people perceive that they will lose what they currently have (Brown et al. 2003,

Olzak 1992). Generally speaking, when racial threat is heightened, White Americans tend to support race conscious practices less (Abascal 2015, Abascal and Baldassarri 2015, Craig and Richeson 2017, Olzak 1983). For example, when White participants were told that the racial minority demographic in the US was growing, they were more likely to report that they expected to face discrimination than were those who weren't told about racial demographics (Craig and Richeson 2017).

When it comes to institutions of higher education, fears about how colleges may change as a result of increasing racial diversity among the college-aged population have also led to racial turmoil on colleges campuses (Chun and Feagin 2019). Fears are based on assumptions that increased racial diversity on college campuses is profoundly altering the culture of higher education institutions (Chun and Feagin 2019). Yet, Stevens (2007) argues that despite efforts to diversify college campuses, such efforts have led to little cultural change on-campuses. While a lack of change in campus culture underscores inequality that racial minorities face on college campuses (Stevens 2007), it also indicates that fears relative to changing racial demographics at colleges are perceptions of what might be not actualizations of what is. Ironically then, if the perceptions of threat are minimized, particularly because they may be overstated as it is (Stevens 2007), it may lead to less resistance to affirmative action based practices. In terms of college admission factors, focusing less on changes to racial demographics may increase the favorability of using both race explicit and non-race-explicit admission factors to give special attention to increasing racial minority enrollments.

> *H3A: Minimizing racial threat increases the favorability of colleges that use race explicit and non race explicit affirmative action based factors.*

> *H3B: Minimizing racial threat increased the likelihood that colleges that use race explicit and non race explicit affirmative action based policies are picked by participants.*

Methods

Sample & Experimental Design

I conducted a survey experiment to address how the admission factors colleges consider influence parental attitudes and behaviors toward colleges, and to examine how minimizing racial threat moderates the effect of admission factors on parental attitudes and behavior. Parents are an advantageous group for evaluating attitudes about colleges because they are often thinking about where their children should attend, weigh in on their child's choice, and vote on issues related to restrictions on college admission practices. I used Prolific (www.prolific.com) to complete my survey experiment. Prolific is an opt-in survey panel; participants who are part of the Prolific database can opt to take the survey. Samples recruited through Prolific are not nationally representative, but research consistently reveals that the effects of manipulations in survey experiments operate the same way in opt-in panels as they do in nationally representative data (Coppock 2019, Mullinix et al. 2015, Weinberg, Freese and McElhattan 2014). An additional benefit of Prolific is the ability to select participants based on demographic characteristics. For this study, I was able to limit eligibility to parents (my target population), to people over the age of 18, and to US residents. I sampled racial groups separately to obtain a relatively equal representation of Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White participants. Equal representation was needed to test for racial differences in how admission factors influence attitudes about colleges. In total, I obtained 403 eligible participants through Prolific On average, the survey took about 10 minutes to complete, and participants were paid $1.50 for taking the survey. Participants were informed that they would receive full payment if they stopped taking the survey, but all participants completed the survey.

Participants were told that they were to review two college profiles from the Princeton Review Best Colleges guides. They were told that they were to think about the factors those

colleges consider when admitting students and how they feel about the college based on what they consider when admitting students.[19] Participants completed (and passed) a comprehension check question illustrating that they understood how they were to evaluate the colleges. Prior to seeing the college profiles, participants were randomly shown a vignette designed to minimize or maximize the perception of racial threat or they were presented with no information about racial demographics at colleges (the baseline group). I followed the design used by Wetts and Willer (2018) where to maximize racial threat, you describe dramatic decreases to the percent White in college (racial threat maximized) and to minimize racial threat, you describe more stability in the percent White in college (racial threat minimized).[20]

When evaluating colleges, participants reviewed a profile designed to look like a Princeton Review Best College Guidebook entry for a college.[21] The character of applicants and high school record were always presented as being considered, as nearly all colleges listed in the Princeton Review consider these factors. I manipulated whether (or not) the colleges participants evaluated considered first-generation status, standardized test scores, racial identity, and alumni (or legacy) status.[22] There were 16 possible random combinations for whether or not these factors were considered that participants could be presented with. After reviewing the guidebook entry, participants were asked a series of questions about their perceived favorability of each of the two schools they evaluated. After evaluating both schools individually, participants were provided with a summary of the information and asked to pick which college they would want their child to attend and then answered an open-ended question about why they picked that college. Participants

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[19] Detailed information about the cover story is presented in Appendix B.
[20] The exact graphics and stories about racial demographics designed to minimize and maximize racial threat are presented in Appendix B.
[21] An example of how this page looked is included in Appendix B.
[22] Participants could access a definition for what each of these terms meant in terms of what colleges considered. For example, if they didn't understand what alumni status meant there was a guide that said the college considered whether a parent or grandparent had attended.

were debriefed at the end of the survey about the purpose of the study and were provided the current racial demographics at four-year colleges in the United States. They were given contact information for the research team for follow-up questions and concerns.

Dependent Variables

There are two dependent variables: parents' attitudes about the favorability of the two colleges and the college that the parent picked. <u>Favorability of College</u> is a scale that indexes parents' attitudes about the college. There are two scales, one for the first college evaluated and one for the second. Both scales consist of responses to four questions asking to what degree: 1) would you encourage your child to apply to this college, 2) do you think your child would be accepted at this college, 3) do you believe that your child would feel comfortable at this college, and 4) know that your child would succeed at this college. For each question, responses ranged from 1(not at all) to 10 (completely). Each scale ranges from 4-40. Cronbach's alpha was greater than .85 for both scales which is considered good to excellent (Gliem and Gliem 2003). For appropriate modeling purposes, each scale was squared to reduce skewedness and kurtosis.[23] <u>College Picked</u> measures whether they picked the first or second college that they evaluated as the best choice for their child. This variable is designed to get more at behavior.

Independent Variables

The primary independent variables reflect what factors colleges considered. Specifically, whether *or not* the college considered first-generation status, alumni status, standardized test scores, and racial identity are the four key independent variables.

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[23] See graphics to demonstrate the appropriateness of this strategy in Appendix B (Figure B1 and B2).

Moderating Variables

The first set of moderating variables is the racial identity of participants. Part of what distinguishes hypothesis 1 and 2 is that hypothesis 2 is race specific and hypothesis 1 is not. If there is substantial racial variation among groups, it supports hypothesis 2 and not hypothesis 1. Thus, I assess whether the effect of admission factors considered influences attitudes about the college differently by race. I surveyed an equivalent number of Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White participants. Of the 403 participants in the sample: 92 are Asian, 95 are Black, 98 are Hispanic, and 108 are White. While I specifically recruited Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White participants, 10 participants self-identified in the survey as something other than these categories and are grouped separately.

The second moderating variable is the racial threat manipulation, specifically whether participants were exposed to a scenario where racial threat relative to changing demographics of the college population was minimized.

Control Variables

It is not necessary to control for the demographics of participants because random assignment in experimental designs balances the individual characteristics of participants across conditions (Mutz 2011). Nonetheless, controlling for participants demographics more efficiently isolates the effect of the manipulated variables by eliminating other sources of heterogeneity (Mutz 2011). This means that the coefficients will not change when controlling for additional independent variables (if random assignment is effective), but if independent variables are correlated with the dependent variable it can reduce the size of the standard errors, providing more precise estimates. However, control variables are needed for looking at heterogenous effects (e.g., how these factors operate differently by race (Levay et al. 2016). Thus, following best practices

and because needed for interactions effects, I control for participants' gender, age, race, marital status, political status, number of children, and highest education achieved.[24]

In addition, I also control for the admission statement participants saw with the profile of factors considered. Because I designed what participants saw on actual Princeton Review Best College Guidebooks entries, I also needed to include admissions statements. Thus, the profile included an admission statement, designed after example admission statements in the Princeton Review Best College Guidebooks, and a list of factors that the college considered when admitting students. Based on how colleges define diversity in admission statements, participants were randomly presented with one of four different admission statements: one that did not reference diversity in any way (baseline), one that mentioned diversity in relation to where students came from such as different states or countries (location diversity), one that mentioned diversity in relation to it being an educational benefit (diversity for ed benefit), and one that specifically mentioned diversity in relation to racial/ethnic groups (racial/ethnic diversity).[25]

Analytic Strategy

I first provide descriptive statistics for the participants in my survey. Second, I use a random intercept linear model to assess how the admission factors and statements colleges advertise influence the perceived favorability of the college. This model measures both within (difference ratings for college 1 and college 2 for each participant) and between (different ratings across different participants) variation in the favorability of colleges. Then, I evaluate separate models for each racial group independently and use demeaned variables to account for the hierarchical nature of the data (ratings of schools nested under participants) and use the SUEST

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[24] I also ran supplementary analyses without controls, not included here, and results were the same.
[25] Examples of these four statements are included in Appendix B.

command in STATA to test for significant differences in the effect of key independent variables across racial groups. I provide graphical illustrations of racial differences across effects. Next, I repeat this analysis by interacting whether racial threat was minimized or maximized with each of the admission factors considered. I then run separate models by racial group only for participants where racial threat was minimized and I follow the same procedure described above to test for significant racial differences. This allows me to test hypothesis 3 and see how these factors influence attitudes when racial threat is minimized. I present these results graphically as well. I go through all the same steps and analyses described above for the second dependent variable, college picked. The only difference is that these models use logistic regression because college picked is a binary outcome. Finally, I use the open-ended question on why participants picked the college they did to give more insight into my findings.

Results

Table 7 provides descriptive statistics for the sample of participants who participated in the survey experiment. As is common with opt-in survey panels, my sample is slightly more educated and more liberal than the general population (Mullinix et al. 2015). On average the parents in my sample had 1.38 children and the majority (68%) reported that they were married. The goal of randomization is to balance participants randomly across manipulations to control for individual demographic attributes. While balance tests are not definitive, as the goal of randomization does not necessarily mean that all variables will be balanced (Mutz 2011), the results of t-tests and the global F-test indicate that there is balance between groups exposed to each manipulated factor. For example, those who were more liberal were not more likely than those who were more conservative to evaluate a school that considered racial identity. Furthermore, I also tested whether the effects I find are contingent (interact) on any specific demographic. In general, I found that the effects in

the models operate similarly across all groups. The only three differences I found suggest that the

effects I describe below would be *stronger* in a more representative, national sample.[26]

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[26] Participants with more kids had more negative attitudes about colleges that considered alumni status; separated participants viewed schools that considered race more favorably; and those who are liberal view test scores less favorably.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics Chapter 3

	Mean/Prop.	SD
Race		
White	.27	
Asian	.23	
Black	.24	
Hispanic	.24	
Other	.02	
Women	.56	
Number of Kids	1.38	.87
Age	38.37	9.99
Highest Education		
No Degree	.01	
High School	.09	
Some College	.18	
Two-Year Degree	.12	
Four-Year Degree	.38	
Masters Degree	.14	
Professional Degree	.08	
Marital Status		
Married	.68	
Never Married	.20	
Separated	.03	
Divorced	.07	
Widowed	.01	
Politics		
Conservative	.09	
Somewhat Conservative	.12	
Moderate	.32	
Somewhat Liberal	.28	
Liberal	.19	
First College Reviewed		
Favorability College Scale	29.33	7.41
Favorability College Scale Squared	915.29	398.83
Second College Reviewed		
Favorability College Scale	29.66	7.58
Favorability College Scale Squared	937.10	405.93

Favorability of Colleges

Table 8, model 1, provides the coefficients for regressing factors considered on favorability of colleges. Participants viewed colleges that consider race significantly less favorably than schools that did not consider race. On a scale of 1-40, considering race reduced favorability by about 9 points[27]. Participants also viewed colleges that considered alumni status significant less favorable. Considering alumni status reduced favorability by about 8 points. Considering test scores, however, increases the favorability of the college among participants. In this case, it increases the favorability by about 10 points on a 40-point scale. The consideration of first-generation status does not significantly alter attitudes about colleges. These findings support hypothesis 1A; admission factors that consider ascribed statuses (i.e., racial identity and alumni status) lead to more negative attitudes about colleges while those unattached to a specific group (test scores) are viewed more favorably. I don't find support for the notion that all *non-* race-explicit forms of affirmative action are perceived negatively (hypothesis 2A) because attitudes are mixed about the consideration of first-generation status and there is support for the removal of alumni status.

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[27] The coefficients reported here are for a change on the scale of 1-40.

Table 8: Factors Influencing Perceived Favorability of College

	Favorability of College		College Picked	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Factors Considered				
Considers First-Generation	6.00	7.82	1.07	1.39
Considers Race	-9.36**	-13.15***	0.65**	0.52*
Considers Alumni Status	-8.61**	-12.69***	0.56***	0.53*
Considers Test Scores	10.12***	11.73**	1.71***	1.60***
Statement				
Diversity Not Mentioned Reference				
Location Diversity	7.99	2.91	1.54*	1.57*
Diversity for Ed Benefit	-2.33	-2.23	1.10	1.12
Racial/Ethnic Identity	8.10	9.06*	1.10	1.10
Racial Threat				
No Mention of Race Baseline				
Minimized		-4.74		0.89
Maximized		6.30		1.04
Considers First-Generation*RT Min		-8.21		0.61
Considers Race*RT Min		10.91*		1.38
Considers Alumni Status*RT Min		12.81*		1.36
Considers Test Scores*RT Min		-4.47		1.25
Considers First-Generation*RT Max		4.53		0.78
Considers Race*RT Max		11.11		1.24
Considers Alumni Status*RT Max		7.85		0.85
Considers Test Scores*RT Max		-9.82		0.99
N	806	806	806	806

Note: These models control for the race, political orientation, marital status, highest education level, gender, number of kids, and age of the participants. Beta coefficients are presented for favorability of college and odds ratios are presented for college picked* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Beyond looking at these broad effects for the entire sample, I also considered how these effects vary by racial group. In fact, hypothesis 2A states that it is White participants who should oppose all factors associated with increased racial minority enrollments, not the entire sample. Thus, if there is further support for hypothesis 1A, there should be limited racial variation in the effect of factors considered on attitudes but much variation if hypothesis 2A is supported. Figure 11 shows the effect of each admission factor on perceived favorability of the college for each racial

group.[28] Keep in mind that when confidence intervals do not overlap it evidences a significant difference, but when they do overlap, tests for significance are necessary.[29] By and large, there are few racial differences in how what colleges consider influences attitudes. And, White participants opposed both the explicit consideration of race *and* the consideration of alumni/legacy status. There are, however, a couple of significant group differences that should be pointed out.

First, Asian participants viewed colleges that considered test scores significantly more favorably than Black, Hispanic or White participants did ($p<.05$, at least). Second, Hispanic participants viewed schools that considered race significantly more favorably than Black or White participants did ($p<.05$, at least). The fact that participants, regardless of race, generally had similar attitudinal changes to the different admission factors considered provides further evidence in support of hypothesis 1A. Opposition to affirmative action is likely mostly resultant from the consideration of ascribed statuses and less from the use of any factor designed to increase racial minority enrollments.

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[28] The tables and coefficients associated with all figures are presented in Appendix B (Table B1-B4). Keep in mind that you cannot compare coefficients' direction or statistical significance directly and this is why I completed additional tests for racial difference using the SUEST command and report those as found in the text.

[29] I complete these necessary tests using the SUEST command in STATA as described in the analytic section.
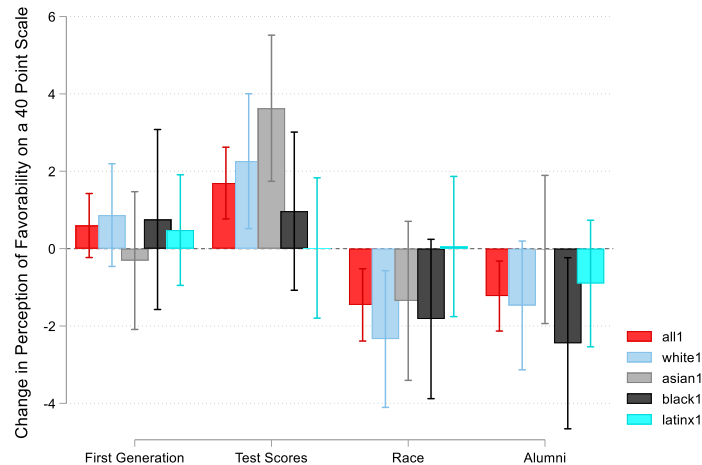
Figure 11: Effect of Admission Factors Considered on Favorability by Race

Yet, there is also interest in understanding whether attitudes towards all affirmative action based factors, including those that are race explicit can be made more favorable if racial threat is minimized. Thus, I also considered whether minimizing racial threat associated with changing racial demographics at US colleges moderates the effect of admission factors on attitudes. Table 8, model 2, provides the coefficients for interacting degree of racial threat with each factor considered. I find some evidence to support hypothesis 3A, as minimizing threat increases the perceived favorability of colleges that consider racial identity. However, minimizing threat also increases the perceived favorability of colleges that consider alumni status. This may indicate that when racial threat is minimized, people are less concerned with the degree to which they perceive processes to be meritocratic—as clinging to meritocracy is a colorblind tool for justifying practices that are used to maintain White privilege in times of racial threat (Warikoo 2016). Figure 12 shows the effect of each admission factor on perceived favorability of the college for each racial group when racial threat is minimized. The only difference from Figure 11 is that Hispanic participants no longer view considering racial identity significantly more favorably than White participants.
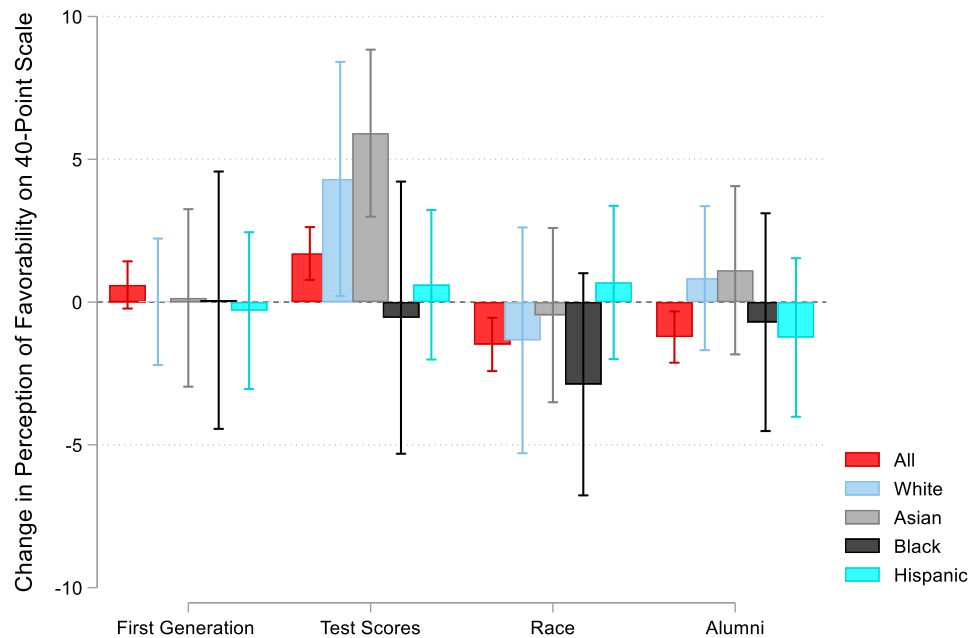
Figure 12: Effect of Admission Factors on Favorability When Racial Threat Minimized

College Picked

Because there is a substantial gap between people's attitudes relative to racialized factors and how they behave in practice (Smith and Mayorga-Gallo 2017), I constrained participants to pick (i.e., a behavior instead of an attitude) one of the two colleges as the best for their child. Table 8, model 3, provides the coefficients for regressing factors considered on which college a participant picked. Findings are largely consistent with how these factors influenced attitudes and support hypothesis 1B. Considering racial identity and considering alumni status decreased the odds that participants picked that college for their child by a factor of .65 and .56, respectively. Whereas, considering test scores increased the odds that participants picked that college for their child by a factor of 1.71. Which college a participant picked also supports the hypothesis that resistance to affirmative action is driven by resistance to the consideration of ascribed statuses (hypothesis 1B). I do find somewhat more racial variation in terms of what college is picked—that

may lend some support to hypothesis 2B. Figure 13 illustrates how the effect of admission factors considered on college picked differs by race. Most notably, Asian and White parents are significantly less likely to pick a college that considers racial identity than Black and Hispanic parents are (*p<.01*). And, Asian parents are more likely than Black, Hispanic, and White parents to pick a college that considers test scores (*p<.01*). While these are important differences, overall, there are so few that it is hard to argue that conceptions of merit are strongly correlated with what was in the best interest of each individual racial group.
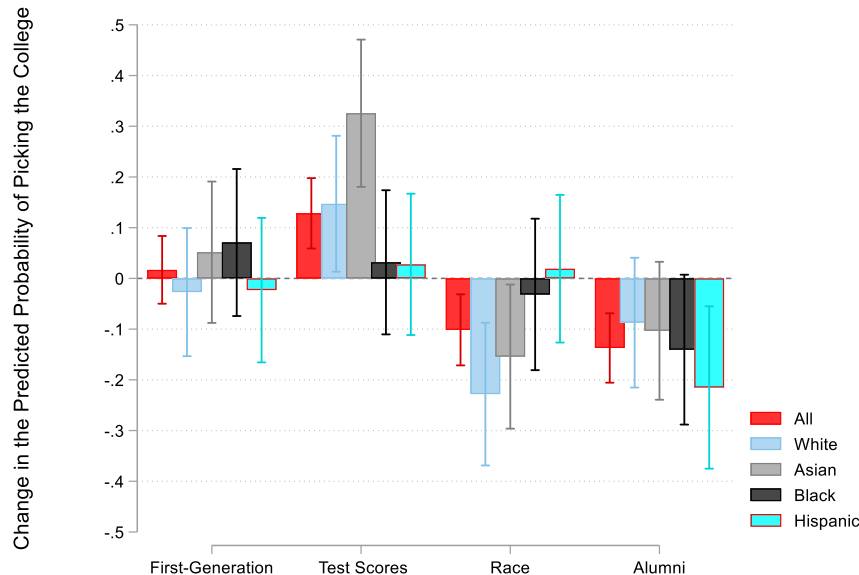
Figure 13: Effect of Admission Factor Considered on College Picked

The next question is whether minimizing racial threat alters practices like it did with principles. While Table 8, model 4, shows that minimizing racial threat does not significantly alter how parents select the best school for their child, marginal effects evidence that it does significantly reduce the gap between White and Black/Hispanic participants. Figure 14 illustrates this by showing how the effect of admission factors considered influences choice of college by

race when racial threat is minimized. The gaps between White and Black/Hispanic participants for picking a college that considers racial identity is smaller when racial threat is minimized. Thus, minimizing racial threat reduces the gap between Whites and Black/Hispanic participants' probability of picking a college that considers racial identity.
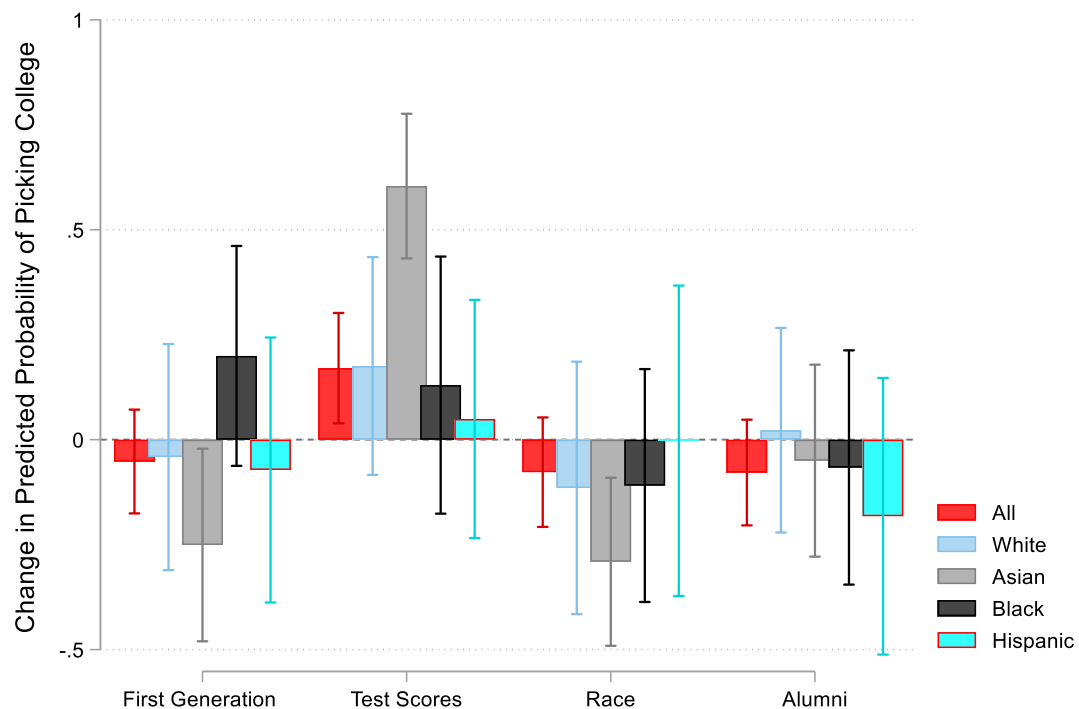
Figure 14: Effect of Admission Factors on College Picked When Racial Threat Minimized

Qualitative answers to the open-ended question about why parents picked the college that they did help provide more nuance and details to the quantitative findings reported above. Nearly 2 out of 10 participants stated that they chose the college that did not consider racial identity. About 15% of participants stated that they chose the college that didn't consider alumni status and the same percentage picked their college because it considered SAT scores and they felt that this was a necessary factor for colleges to consider to ensure meritocracy. For example, one participant said,

"College Y doesn't look at race, alumni status, or first-generation student. Those aren't factors a student has any control over, so it's more fair to not look at those factors." Another stated, "Because admissions should be based upon academics and not alumni or racial basis." Still another argued, "I picked the college that doesn't appear to make judgments off race or legacy ties to the school. I feel that this college gives a more fair and equal application process, and learning environment." And most directly, one stated, "If you're awesome you should get in, regardless of what color you are or who your daddy is." These responses bolster the conclusion that participants viewed colleges less favorably and were less likely to pick colleges that considered ascribed characteristics of applicants.

Some may argue that first-generation status is also a characteristic that students cannot alter and as such is unmeritocratic. Yet, at the same time, the idea of first-generation college students working hard to achieve what their parents did not is also emblematic of meritocracy. Unsurprisingly then, the consideration of first-generation status does not significantly alter attitudes about college. The null effect is likely due to heterogeneity in perspectives about first-generation status and the qualitative responses evidence this. When participants mentioned first-generation status positively, they indicated that considering first-generation status had the potential to increase equity in society. One participated stated, "The best colleges take into consideration first-generation which I think is an important factor to be evaluated to determine acceptance. Those students who applies and are first generation deserves a high chance to receive admission because they are representing the importance of education not just for themselves but to make their family proud since they are the first generation to attend college so it is a big deal." Another said, "If someone has done excellent in high school and really wants to go to college and will be the first in his/her family to do so, then they should be given slight priority because they could and probably

would in turn encourage others from the family to go. It would be setting a standard for others to follow. It would help not only that student, but others to whom that student is a model for." Yet, others stated that considering first-generation status was biased and provided and disadvantaged those whose parents had gone to college before.

In summation, I unpacked attitudes towards two distinct affirmative action based practices, considering ascribed group demographics and considering any factor, including non- race-explicit ones, that can increase racial minority enrollments. I find that negative attitudes towards affirmative action are likely most resultant from the consideration of ascribed statuses not to any factor that could be used to give special attention to increasing racial minority enrollments. For example, White participants were opposed to the consideration of alumni status despite the potential advantages considering legacies may provide their children. Colleges, therefore, may be able to use less race explicit admission factors to give special attention to racial minority enrollments with less pushback from the broader public. Additionally, I evidence that minimizing racial threat associated with changing racial demographics on college campuses may also help increase the perceived favorability of affirmative action based practices.

Discussion

Affirmative action is far more complex than the explicit consideration of an applicant's race alone. It encompasses any program or policy that can be used to give special attention to the inclusion of previously underrepresented groups, including non-race-explicit ones. In general, most Americans, particularly White Americans oppose affirmative action. Yet, it is unclear whether opposition to affirmative action results from how explicitly considering an applicant's race breaks institutionalized norms (i.e., utilizing an ascribed status to determine merit) or from resistance to any practice or policy that is designed to increase equity for underrepresented groups.

Determining where most of the resistance to affirmative action lies is particularly salient in higher education admissions.

Black and Hispanic students remain severely underrepresented at top selective colleges in the US (Carnevale et al. 2018). As a result, many colleges emphasize that they are working to increase racial diversity on-campus by giving special consideration to racial minority applicants. In most states, colleges can explicitly consider the race of applicants if narrowly tailored to the pursuit of diversity. But, because of restrictions on explicitly considering race, and outright bans in some states, fewer colleges report considering an applicant's race when making admission decisions in the twenty first century. Restrictions on the explicit consideration of race arose as a result of legal mobilization against considering an applicant's race. Because many Americans, particularly White Americans, believe that considering an applicant's race to make admission decisions is unmeritocratic and disadvantages White applicants, they legally mobilized, and restrictions on the practice were implemented (Berrey 2015, Okechukwu 2019).

Understanding attitudes about non-race-explicit admissions factors colleges consider to give special consideration to racial minorities could underscore the potential for legal restrictions on non-race-explicit practices in college admissions as well. If there are more legal restrictions on the tools colleges can use to work to redress racial inequity in college access, it could lead to greater disparity in access to top-rated selective colleges. For example, the California State Courts have held that considering standardized test scores, especially during the pandemic, is unconstitutional because these tests are biased factors. The ruling is soon to be appealed which could lead to increased regulation of how standardized test scores are used in the future.

To understand whether Americans are opposed to any practice designed to give special consideration to racial minorities are just to those that utilize ascribed statuses of individuals, I

used a survey experiment with a diverse pool of participants to assess how the consideration of both race explicit and non-race-explicit admission factors influence the perceived favorability of colleges and the college parents pick for their child.

I find that much of the resistance to affirmative action stems from opposition to considering ascribed statuses of individuals when making admission decisions. For example, participants viewed colleges that explicitly considering an applicant's racial identity *and* legacy/alumni status far less favorably than colleges that did not consider these factors. And, participants were far less likely to pick colleges that considered an applicant's race or legacy/alumni status as the best college for their child. Moreover, there was very little racial variation in attitudes about factors.

My results provide little support for the idea that what factors someone views more favorably are those that might advantage their own position in the racial hierarchy. For example, White Americans do not support the use of alumni status as an admission factor and there was not much variability among racial groups in terms of how favorable any of these admission practices were. I did find some evidence that White participants differed more from Black and Hispanics participants when it came to picking a college that explicitly considered race as opposed to the degree to which they favored that school. While this finding is consistent with the theory of a principle-practice divide (Smith and Mayorga-Gallo 2017), it is the only finding is this data that corroborates that theory. The fact that so few racial differences existed likely highlights the degree to which not considering ascribed status is an institutionalized norm in American society (Newport 2016). It is so engrained in society that adhering to its values is more central to people's principles and practices than supporting and doing what might be most advantageous for them (McDonnell, Bail and Tavory 2017, Zucker 1977). In fact, while Asian participants valued more favorably and picked colleges that considered standardized test scores more than Black, Hispanic, and White

participants, there were no significant differences between Black and Hispanic participants and White participants. Moreover, there were no racial differences in the favorability of colleges that considered race explicitly between Black and Hispanic and White participants.

I also find slight evidence that minimizing racial threat may reduce the negativity associated with race explicit forms of affirmative action. Because the term affirmative action is likened so strongly to the explicit consideration of race alone, one way to reduce threat associated with other non-race-explicit policies colleges use may be to frame them, even when intended to increase racial minority enrollments, in ways that are more race neutral. For example, if colleges can frame the California state court's ruling in ways that minimize the potential of racial threat, like calling attention to broad inequity in access to standardized testing sites resulting from COVID-19, it may reduce resistance to the court's ruling.

While my findings highlight attitudes about numerous admission factors that colleges may use as affirmative action policies, there are some limitations to this study. For example, in future work, it is also necessary to look at the degree to which standardized test scores are weighted, not just whether they are considered. While there may be little support and a lot of resistance to removing this admission factor completely, there could be more support for reducing the weight that it has in decisions. Finally, while I argue that it is important to recognize that non-race-explicit admission practices can be used as affirmative action policies—this is not necessarily always the case. To be defined as affirmation action the intention must be to give special consideration to racial minorities. Future work should investigate how admission officers conceptualize the use of non-race-explicit admission factors when making admission decisions.

Notwithstanding, I find that much resistance to affirmative action stems from the consideration of ascribed characteristics of individuals and less from the use of non-race-explicit

factors that might also be used to increase racial equity. Affirmative action policies that are less race explicit but that still work to give special consideration to racial minorities may not be as firmly opposed in society and could be used by policy makers to redress racial inequity in the labor market and at selective colleges.

CONCLUSION

The labor market in the US relies on a steady stream of well-educated college graduates to fuel innovation and progress (Lichter 2013). The demographic of college-aged individuals to fill this need has become increasingly racially diverse (Chun and Feagin 2020; Lichter 2013). Yet, selective top-rated colleges continue to underrepresent the growing numbers of Hispanic and Black students who make up the college aged demographic (Carnevale et al. 2017). Why racial minorities remain underrepresented at top-colleges is a complex question and can only fully be answered by looking at both individual and structural factors. Clearly, at an individual level, racial minorities face inequalities that inhibit their ability to gain admittance to top-rated selective colleges (Duncan and Magnuson 2011). But, the social structure of top-rated selective colleges, particularly how they admit students, also functions as a gatekeeper and contributes to how well racial minorities are represented on-campus (Stevens 2007).

In my dissertation, I focus on addressing how race and racism are embedded in the process through which colleges admit students. If we understand how the practices colleges use to admit students are racialized, we can better address how structural forms of inequality at colleges contribute to the underrepresentation of racial minorities. Importantly, colleges consider many factors that affect racial minority enrollments. For example. they can explicitly consider the race of applicants. And, they can also consider non-race-explicit factors that affect racial minority enrollments too. This includes factors like first-generation status, standardized test scores, alumni/legacy status, and whether and how diversity is mentioned in admission statements. I ask how the consideration of these factors has varied across time and college, how organizational and racial process explain those variations, how those variations influence racial minority enrollments for specific racial groups, and how Americans feel about the consideration of those factors.

There has been a great deal of variation across time and college relative to the racialized admission factors colleges have considered. Organizational theories are explanatory of some of this variation. For example, statewide bans on affirmative action have led to a decrease in the explicit consideration of race, and there is substantial regional and conference level similarity in when and how various factors were considered. Yet, these organizational theories are not fully explanatory of trends in the consideration of racialized admission factors. I find that racial process matters as well. Specifically, I provide substantial evidence that racial threat is a mechanism that influences what factors colleges consider. When the percent non-White increases at colleges, they are significantly less likely to consider factors known to be associated with increased racial minority enrollments, like first-generation status and an applicant's explicit racial identity. Moreover, colleges in states with more racial minorities, desist in considering these factors at a lower percent non-White further evidencing the mechanism of racial threat. It is as though there is a tipping point at which colleges become racially diverse enough. But, in the context of growing racial diversity among the college-aged demographic, the fact that colleges may feel diverse enough while not adequately representing the racial demographic that they serve will likely only heighten inequity in access to selective top-rate colleges.

Moreover, I also find that because conceptions of diversity can differ, how colleges use different racialized admission factors may be related to the type of diversity they choose to seek. For example, I find that considering first-generation status increases Hispanic student enrollments but not Black student enrollments. And, considering legacy/alumni status negatively affects Black and Hispanic student enrollments but not Asian student enrollments. In addition, I find that a lot of traction in increasing racial minority enrollments may be achieved through less race explicit mechanisms like reducing reliance on standardized test scores and no longer considering alumni

status. Thus, while so much focus is often on the explicit consideration of race in college admissions, more attention should be given to alternative mechanisms to redress racial inequity in college access.

Relatedly, results from my survey experiment, evidence that Americans dislike for affirmative action is largely the result of negative attitudes toward the explicit consideration of ascribed statuses. Participants in my survey, across racial groups, were opposed to the explicit consideration of an applicant's race *and* to the consideration of legacy/alumni status. They had mixed feelings about considering first-generation status with some viewing first-generation students as emblematic of meritocracy, having worked hard to achieve what their parents had not, while others viewed this factor as yet another ascribed, and therefore unfair, factor for making admission decisions. Importantly, this work evidences that there is support for reconfiguring college admissions in ways that might reduce bias against racial minorities—particularly by reducing the use of alumni/legacy status. In chapter 2, I find that not considering this factor increases racially minority representation for Black and Hispanic students more than explicitly considering race does.

I believe that one of the first steps to increasing racial equity in college admissions, based on my findings, is to better regulate what colleges can and cannot consider when making admission decisions. If there were more regulation and more standardization, colleges wouldn't be able to switch which factors they consider so easily and as the result of changing racial demographics. One important first step in this regulatory process could be to remove legacy considerations from college admissions. There is so much focus on the explicit consideration of race that students often feel as though students of color didn't "earn" their spot at selective colleges. Yet, in a situation where a college considered neither the race nor legacy status of applicants, racial minorities would

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be better represented than in a situation where they considered both. Thus, by simply removing legacy admissions racial minorities gain better access to selective colleges and without the stigma of having not "earned" their spot.

Notwithstanding the policy implications, my findings highlight how the admissions process remains consequential for racial minority representation at selective colleges. The subset of factors that colleges consider when admitting students are used in ways that both advantage and *disadvantage* racial minorities. Moreover, how colleges conceptualize diversity and experience racial demographic transitions on their campuses influences how they admit students and in return how well represented racial minorities are. Even if a level playing field were created relative to racial inequalities students face prior to admission decisions being made, the structure of admissions is likely to perpetuate racial inequity in access.

Finally, my dissertation highlights how race and racism get embedded in social institutions as one potential mechanism may be as a reaction to racial threat and as a way of protecting White interests. Moreover, even when institutions espouse to be seeking diversity how this translates into the practices they use is not always aligned with that narrative. This likely has broad implications across numerous social institutions that while on the surface appear to be involved in diversity projects but at best are ignoring taken-for-granted practices (such as considering legacy status in college admissions) that advantage White people. And, I also highlight that when race and racism are rooted in social institutions in hidden ways the reproduction of social inequality is maintained.

APPENDIX A: ADDITIONAL MATERIALS CHAPTER 1

Coding Guide

Table A1: Coding Guide

	Code it as 1
Mentions Diversity	In some way mentions different groups (racial, sexual, ethnic, international) or an appreciation of difference of any kind on campus
Ways Diversity Can Be Mentioned	
Educational Benefit	Differences that are discussed are presented in a way that highlights that they are a benefit to students at the school educationally Examples: "Students are challenged by other students who are friendly, diverse, and actively involved in their own educations." "At [ ] diversity is a way of learning with education enriched by a lively mix of students" "The diversity of people and ideas at [ ] make it an extraordinary educational environment"
Diversity broader than race	When diversity is mentioned, and it is something other than race. Examples: "The college's colorful kaleidoscope of tongues, talents, and cultures, sixty-six different native languages are spoken here, provides an extraordinary educational environment." "We seek students with a broad diversity of talents, interests, and backgrounds." "The university is a community of persons of diverse professional, academic, and personal interests." "Our students value and respect differences of background, style, and belief."
Racial Diversity is for racial justice.	Racial diversity is mentioned in a way that it is important to work towards equality and that is the purpose of diversity. Examples: "Students of color are an important part of the [ ] community." "Founded by abolitionists in 1855, [ ] graduates have always included men and women from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds." "[ ] was the first coeducational college in the United States, as well as a historic leader in educating black students" "Founded in 1855 by ardent abolitionists, [ ] was the first racially integrated coeducational college in the South."
Diversity Equals International Students	Racial diversity is about the inclusion of international students. Examples: "[ ] welcomes a diverse student body from every state and 90 countries." "[ ]'s urban experience is unique with an internationally diverse student body" "[ ] is private, yet open to all regardless of financial need; American, yet decidedly global in outlook and diversity, drawing students from around the world

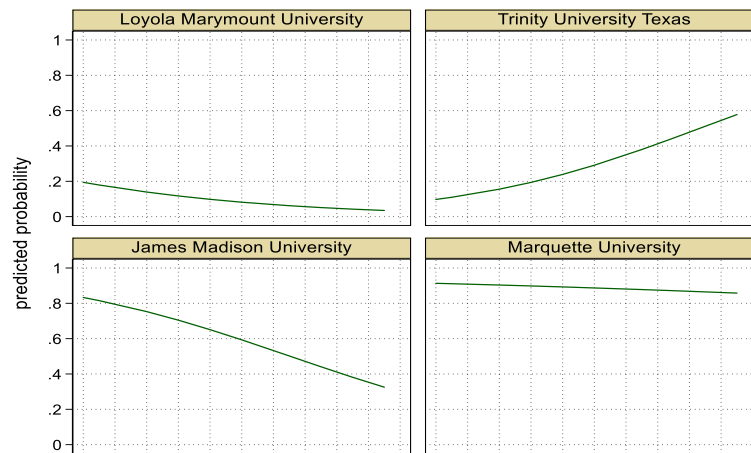**Trajectories for Considering Factors**

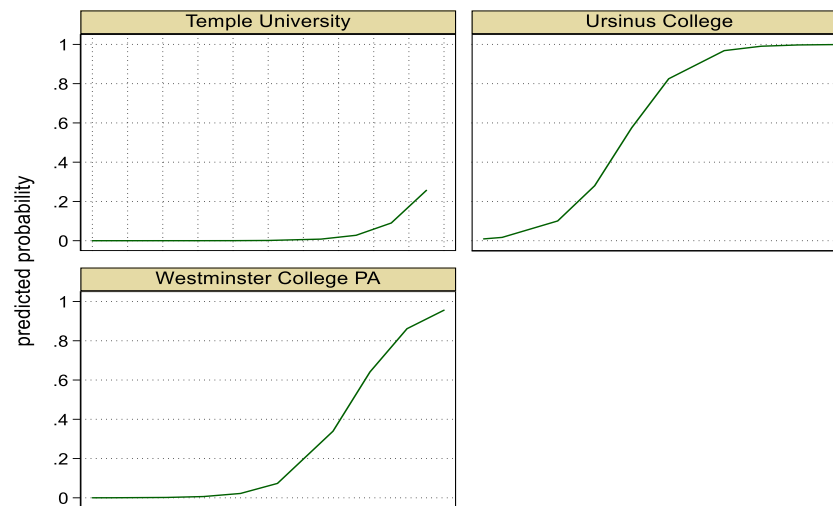Figure A1: Trajectories of Explicit Consideration of Race

Figure A2: Trajectories of Consideration of First-Generation Status
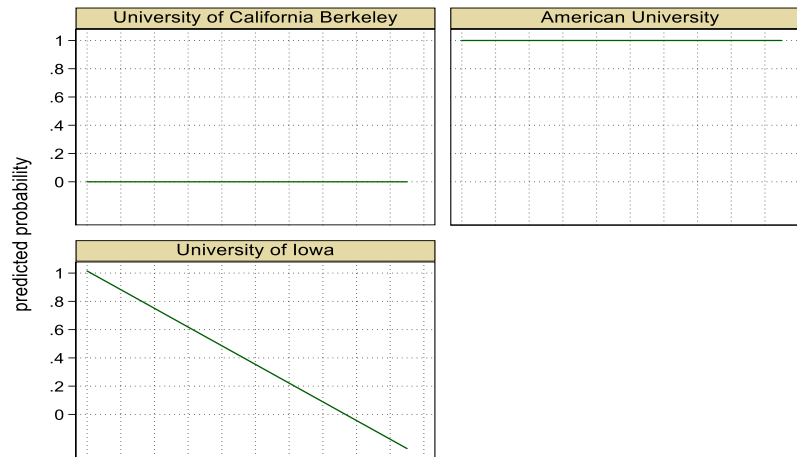
Figure A3: Trajectories of Consideration of Alumni Status
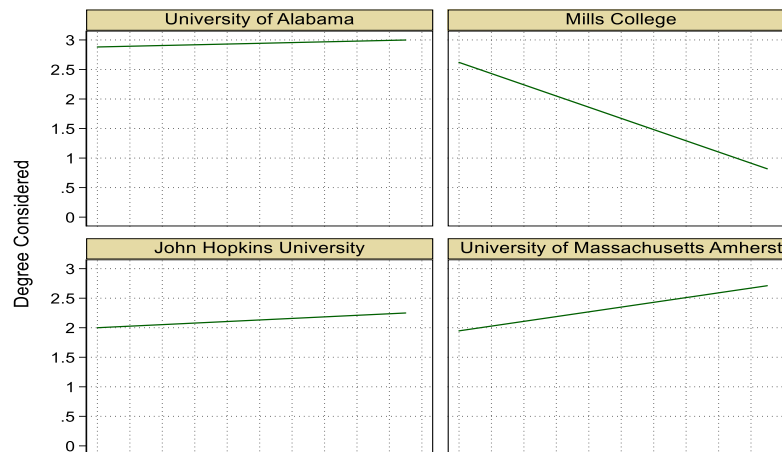
Figure A4: Trajectories of Degree to which Test Scores are Considered
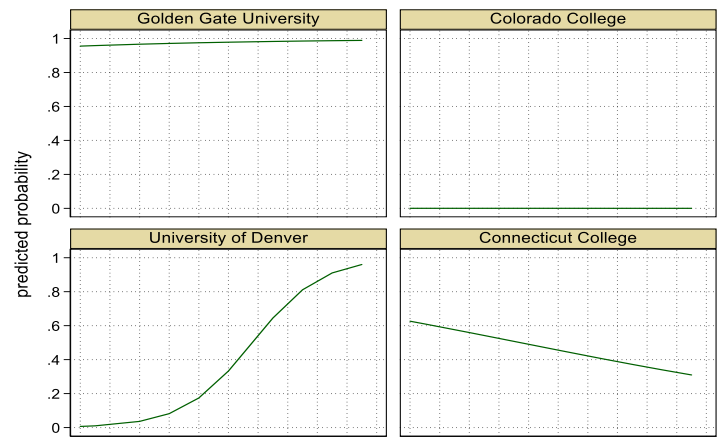
Figure A5: Trajectories of Mentioning Race in Admission Statements

Supplementary Analyses

Effect of Undergraduate Racial Demographics on Consideration of Racialized Factors

Figure A6: Effect of Specific Racial Demographics

Effect of Racial Demographics on Mentioning Diversity in Admission Statement

Figure A7: Specific Racial Demographics Influence on Mentioning Diversity

Effect of Neoinstitutional Factors On Consideration of Race

Figure A8: Neoinstitutional Explanations for Admission Practices

Table A2: Results with Conference Affiliation Instead of Region

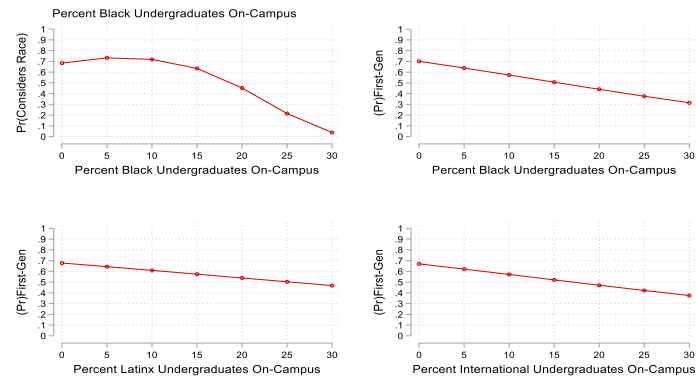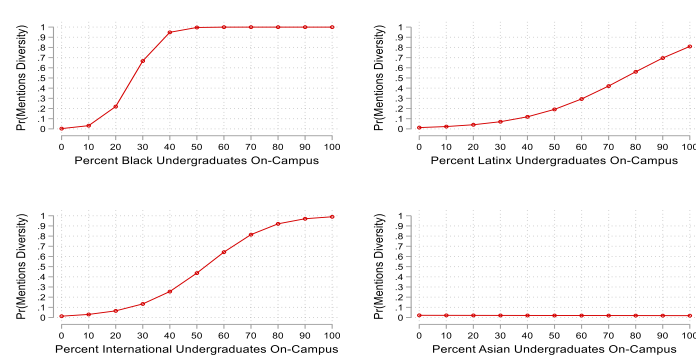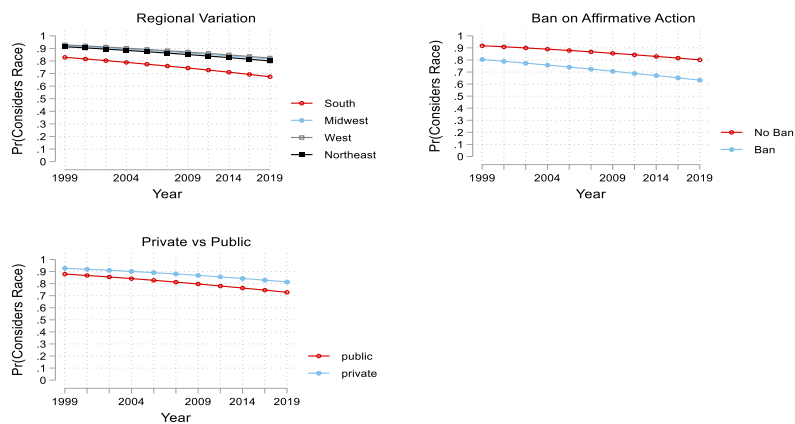| Variable	Consider Race Exp.	Consider First-Gen	Consider Alumni	Degree Considers Test Scores	Mentions Diversity
Year	0.796***	1.343***	0.843**	0.007	1.001
Admission Practices					
Degree Considers Race	n/a	2.674***	7.881***	0.022	1.196
Degree Considers First-Gen	1.555*	n/a	4.284***	0.006	1.257
Degree Considers Alumni	3.827***	2.998***	n/a	-0.013	0.778
Degree Considers Test Scores	0.750	0.669*	1.321	n/a	1.161
Admission Statement					
Whether Mentions Diversity	1.044	1.260	0.938	0.036	n/a
Neoinstitutional Variables					
Statewide Ban on AA	0.035***	2.817*	1.564	0.076	2.627
Private College	6.769	1.139	21.511*	0.328	1.053
Conference					
North Coast Athletic	3.203	3.063		-0.154	73.887
Patriot League	54.912	0.663	2.620	-0.118	0.365
New England Small College	0.594	0.860	0.792	-0.504*	5.638
PAC 10	6.868	0.845	0.062	-0.224	0.229
Northeast 10	47.494	0.639		-0.422	0.014
South Eastern	0.587	1.364	15.099	-0.100	14.394
Southern Collegiate	0.010	7.067	1.527	-0.106	0.088
New England's Women's and Men's	16.370	4.803	3.569	0.135	0.032
Liberty League	13.819	2.490		-1.092***	9.001
Big Twelve	0.023*	0.056*	0.224	0.323	1.871
Great Lakes Valley	1.589	4.534	59.293	0.442	
Midwest	2.270	2.417	20.737	-0.710**	18.772
Atlantic Coast	445.215***	0.394	481.262**	0.091	5.047
Eastern College	1.068	0.950	1.001	0.192	9.101
West Coast	424.531***	1.616	3.226	-0.042	0.347

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Centennial	7.236	1.069	3.329	-0.463*	0.777
Southern California Intercollegiate	39561.27	0.975	11.777	-0.293	0.005
Big West		4.093		0.992	0.002
Minnesota Intercollegiate	22.521	1.701		-0.223	4.841
Landmark	5.222	2.172		-0.055	0.298
CUNY			0.054	0.019	239.932
Metro Atlantic	6.282	0.281		0.040	0.588
Colonial	88.216**	1.824	25.481	0.113	0.766
Mountain West	0.064	1.539	0.242	-0.111	8.060
Atlantic 10	0.888	3.269	197.903*	-0.511*	15.877
Big East	0.956	2.893	4.057	-0.326	21.801
Southern	0.552	0.295	0.776	-0.019	0.527
Old Dominion	1.318	2.561	1.950	-0.079	10.890
Big Ten	37.729*	0.551	52.304*	0.108	435.313*
American Athletic	0.092	0.564	12.489	-0.117	2.162
American East	6.880	2.933	114.41***	0.053	
Racial Demographics of College					
Percent non-White	0.095**	0.980†	1.043	-0.000	1.075**
College Level Controls					
Land grant	2.186	0.075	0.907	0.079	0.063
Percent on financial aid	0.899***	-0.001	0.983	0.001	0.995
In-State tuition cost	1.000***	0.000***	1.000***	-0.000***	1.000
Percent Administrative Staff	0.986	-0.010***	1.043	-0.001	1.015
Size of undergraduate pop.	1.000	0.000***	1.000	0.000	1.000
Percent women	5.308	0.189	385.889*	-0.659**	19.728
Percent of students admitted	0.996	-0.003***	0.976*	-0.002*	0.983
State percent White	1.004	0.001	1.012	-0.010**	1.040

Note: Odds-Ratio used for all variables except test scores which are beta coefficients. Results presented for conferences are in comparison to colleges in the sample not in a conference with another school. Conferences with no coefficients represent instances of perfect prediction where all colleges in that conference considered the practice.
†<.10 * p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

APPENDIX B. ADDITIONAL MATERIALS CHAPTER 2 AND 3

Experimental Study Design

About the Research Project

This project is designed to better understand what admission factors best relate to how families determine where their children apply to college. You will be presented with two randomly selected colleges listed in the Princeton Review Best Colleges guide. These guides provide information about how the best colleges make admission decisions. You will see information about what these colleges consider when admitting students. You will then be asked a series of questions about each of these colleges. The college's name will be anonymized to put the focus of evaluating colleges solely on admission practices.

About the Schools

Keep in mind that these colleges have all been selected from among those that are ranked in the top 328 of all colleges in the United States. The two colleges you see will be from among this group of top colleges.

Your Assignment

Your task is to evaluate 2 colleges' descriptions of their college in their admission statement and their admission practices. You will be asked a series of questions about your opinion regarding these admission practices.

Please keep these definitions in mind as you evaluate colleges.

- First generation status refers to students who are the first-generation in their family to attend college.
- Alumni status refers to students who have family members who have attended the college to which they apply.

Racial Threat Vignettes

Minimizing Threat:

Before reviewing each college, it is important to note that the population of students enrolled in US colleges is changing; however, it is not changing as drastically as it is often portrayed in the media. By 2030, the college population is projected to have dropped from 79% White in 1980 to 68% in 2030.
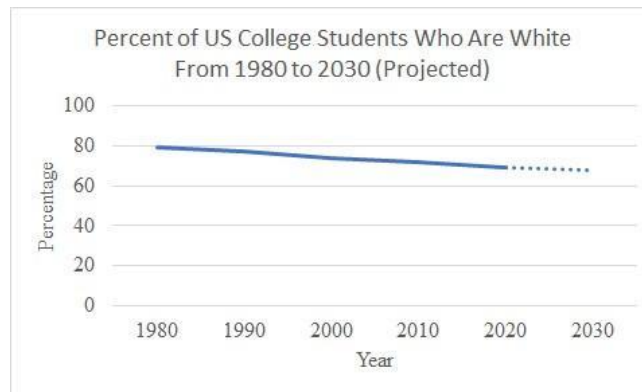
*Note: These figures come for the US Department of education and dashed lines represent projections

Maximizing Threat:
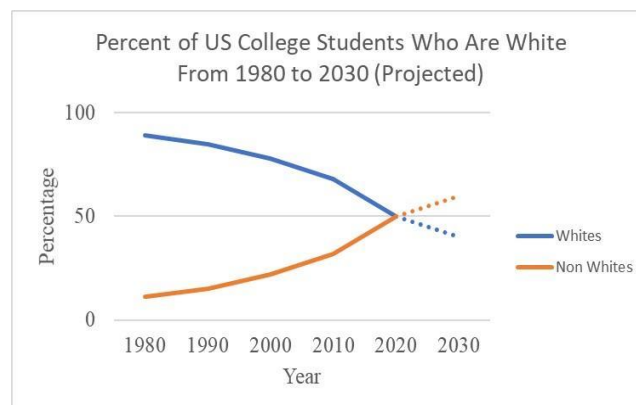
 Before reviewing each college, it is important to note that the population of students enrolled in US colleges and universities is changing dramatically. By 2030, the college population is projected to have dropped from nearly 90% White in 1980, to less than 50% White in 2030.

*Note: These figures come for the US Department of education and dashed lines represent projections

Admission Statement Experimental Manipulations

Baseline: Consistent with its dedication to excellence, X provides both an educational and extracurricular environment that enables its undergraduate students to become accomplished individuals and informed and responsible citizens. X offers the ideal learning environment and professional education to help students gain the depth of knowledge needed to empower them to become leaders in their professions and communities. Furthermore, X fosters in its students a broad understanding of the world in which we live as well as excellent in competencies that transcend any particular field of study.

Location Diversity: Consistent with its dedication to excellence, X provides both an educational and extracurricular environment that enables its undergraduate students to become accomplished individuals and informed and responsible citizens. X offers the ideal learning environment and professional education to help students gain the depth of knowledge needed to empower them to become leaders in their professions and communities. Furthermore, X has a ***diverse student body. X's student population comes from over 40 different countries and every state in the US***. X fosters in its students a broad understanding of the world in which we live as well as excellent in competencies that transcend any particular field of study.

Diversity for Ed. Benefit: Consistent with its dedication to excellence, X provides both an educational and extracurricular environment that enables its undergraduate students to become accomplished individuals and informed and responsible citizens. X offers the ideal learning environment and professional education to help students gain the depth of knowledge needed to empower them to become leaders in their professions and communities***. Furthermore, X fosters diversity in its study body which provides our students with a broader understanding of the world in which we live and enhances competencies that transcend any particular field of study.***

Racial/Ethnic Diversity: Consistent with its dedication to excellence, X provides both an educational and extracurricular environment that enables its undergraduate students to become accomplished individuals and informed and responsible citizens. X offers the ideal learning environment and professional education to help students gain the depth of knowledge needed to empower them to become leaders in their professions and communities. ***Furthermore, X fosters diversity in its student body. X has been a leading institution in ensuring better representation of racial minorities and prides itself on working to make all students feel welcome and***

experience equitable outcomes. In doing so, we provide our students with a broader understanding of the world in which we live and enhances competencies that transcend any particular field of study.

X provides an educational and extracurricular environment consistent with its dedication to excellence. X enables its undergraduate students to become accomplished individuals and informed and responsible citizens. X offers the ideal learning environment and professional education to help students gain the depth of knowledge needed to empower them to become leaders in their professions and communities. Furthermore, X fosters diversity in its student body. X has been a leading institution in ensuring better representation of racial minorities and prides itself on working to make all students feel welcome and experience equitable outcomes. In doing so, we provide our students with a broader understanding of the world in which we live and enhances competencies that transcend any particular field of study.

ADMISSIONS FACTORS

High School Record	Considered
Alumni Status	Considered
SAT Scores	NOT Considered
Racial Identity	NOT Considered
Character	Considered
First-Generation Status	NOT Considered

Supplementary Analyses Chapter 3

Table B1: Results for Asian Participants Only

	Favorability of College		College Picked	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Factors Considered				
Considers First-Generation	-18.03	-65.05	1.28	1.67
Considers Race	-79.05	-276.18**	0.50*	0.51
Considers Alumni Status	-1.27	-201.25*	0.62	0.52
Considers Test Scores	213.58***	210.23*	4.19***	7.37**
Statement				
Diversity Not Mentioned Reference				
Location Diversity	92.28	62.95	1.28	1.40
Diversity for Ed Benefit	79.74	46.81	1.60	1.24
Racial/Ethnic Identity	114.15	97.97	1.39	1.24
Racial Threat				
No Mention of Race Baseline				
Minimized		-270.53		1.58
Maximized		-151.88		2.34
Considers First-Generation*RT Min		37.70		0.15
Considers Race*RT Min		285.87*		0.80
Considers Alumni Status*RT Min		275.62*		1.55
Considers Test Scores*RT Min		-156.48		2.04
Considers First-Generation*RT Max		81.48		2.67
Considers Race*RT Max		245.85		0.65
Considers Alumni Status*RT Max		222.23		0.42
Considers Test Scores*RT Max		-156.48		0.15
N (403 sample * 2 colleges evaluated)	184	184	184	184

Note: These models control for the race, political orientation, marital status, highest education level, gender, number of kids, and age of the participants. Beta coefficients are presented for favorability of college and odds ratios are presented for college picked. * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

Table B2: Results for Black Participants Only

	Favorability of College		College Picked	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Factors Considered				
Considers First-Generation	45.73	122.75	1.35	2.52
Considers Race	-110.74	-144.35	0.87	1.15
Considers Alumni Status	-149.32*	-242.01*	0.56*	0.33*
Considers Test Scores	58.74	138.59	1.14	1.11
Statement				
Diversity Not Mentioned				
Reference				
Location Diversity	33.93	75.86	1.46	1.59
Diversity for Ed Benefit	-21.86	7.08	0.67	0.62
Racial/Ethnic Identity	167.63*	180.43*	1.71	1.67
Racial Threat				
No Mention of Race Baseline				
Minimized		320.89		1.23
Maximized		62.29		1.79
Considers First-Generation*RT Min		-197.02		0.63
Considers Race*RT Min		-57.99		0.58
Considers Alumni Status*RT Min		191.90		2.22
Considers Test Scores*RT Min		-234.81		1.38
Considers First-Generation*RT Max		60.95		0.28
Considers Race*RT Max		120.19		0.82
Considers Alumni Status*RT Max		21.72		2.20
Considers Test Scores*RT Max		-12.30		0.88
N (403 sample * 2 colleges evaluated)	188	188	188	188

Note: These models control for the race, political orientation, marital status, highest education level, gender, number of kids, and age of the participants. Beta coefficients are presented for favorability of college and odds ratios are presented for college picked. * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table B3: Results for Hispanic Participants Only

	Favorability of College		College Picked	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Factors Considered				
Considers First-Generation	30.00	115.91	0.90	1.19
Considers Race	3.44	-73.43	1.08	0.42
Considers Alumni Status	-56.49	-176.99	0.41*	0.30
Considers Test Scores	1.07	-14.81	1.12	0.27*
Statement				
Diversity Not Mentioned				
Reference				
Location Diversity	58.58	70.60	1.63	1.76
Diversity for Ed Benefit	-101.02	-93.26	1.10	1.04
Racial/Ethnic Identity	-28.23	-31.68	1.13	1.08
Racial Threat				
No Mention of Race Baseline				
Minimized		54.45		0.32
Maximized		-14.31		0.11
Considers First-Generation*RT Min		-168.02		0.70
Considers Race*RT Min		98.99		2.50
Considers Alumni Status*RT Min		155.18		1.48
Considers Test Scores*RT Min		24.09		4.62
Considers First-Generation*RT Max		113.59		0.65
Considers Race*RT Max		72.20		5.11
Considers Alumni Status*RT Max		178.82		1.90
Considers Test Scores*RT Max		37.05		12.20*
N (403 sample * 2 colleges evaluated)	194	194	194	194

Note: These models control for the race, political orientation, marital status, highest education level, gender, number of kids, and age of the participants. Beta coefficients are presented for favorability of college and odds ratios are presented for college picked. * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

Table B4: Results for White Participants Only

	Favorability of College		College Picked	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Factors Considered				
Considers First-Generation	51.04	20.24	0.89	1.02
Considers Race	-137.87**	-201.89*	0.37*	0.23*
Considers Alumni Status	-86.50	-65.52	0.68	0.91
Considers Test Scores	133.44*	138.63	1.91*	2.61
Statement				
Diversity Not Mentioned				
Reference				
Location Diversity	64.48	74.75	1.73	1.89
Diversity for Ed Benefit	65.56	58.79	1.24	1.27
Racial/Ethnic Identity	25.93	53.80	0.70	0.73
Racial Threat				
No Mention of Race Baseline				
Minimized		-145.10		0.82
Maximized		182.92		1.88
Considers First-Generation*RT Min		-0.85		0.93
Considers Race*RT Min		122.28*		2.67
Considers Alumni Status*RT Min		78.17		1.16
Considers Test Scores*RT Min		110.90		0.72
Considers First-Generation*RT Max		60.64		0.72
Considers Race*RT Max		44.26		1.42
Considers Alumni Status*RT Max		-73.60		0.39
Considers Test Scores*RT Max		-172.20		0.59
N (403 sample * 2 colleges evaluated)	216	216	216	216

Note: These models control for the race, political orientation, marital status, highest education level, gender, number of kids, and age of the participants. Beta coefficients are presented for favorability of college and odds ratios are presented for college picked. * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

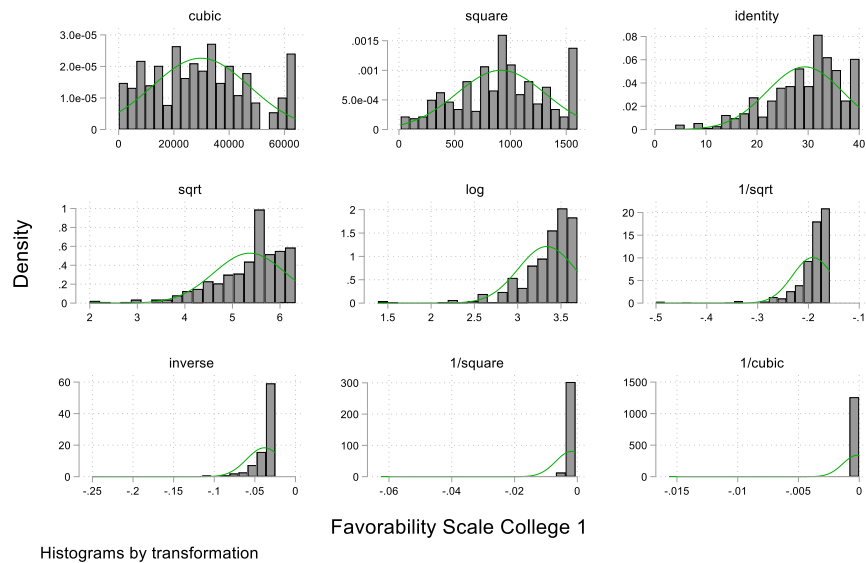## Figures for transformation of dependent variable
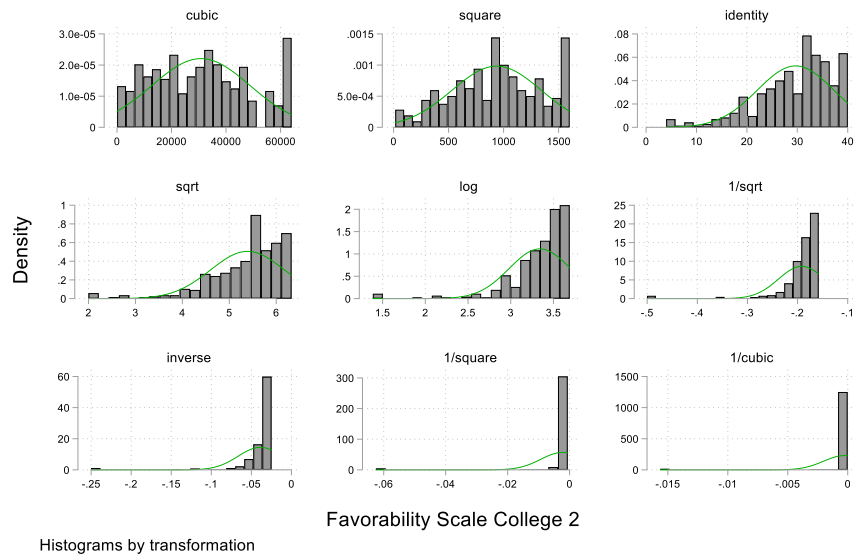

Figure B1: Transformation of Scale 1

Figure B2: Transformation of Scale 2

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