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Gender Differences and Similarities in Attitudes Toward College Access

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## Introduction

The needs and demands of the public have always played an important role in defining the mission, curriculum, and admissions policies of colleges and universities (Rudolph, 1962/1990; Wechsler, 1977). The process of shaping institutional priorities occurs not only through colleges and universities' direct assessment of their current (and potential) students' interests, but also in response to federal and state policies that place incentives or limits upon certain practices. This adjustment to public desire becomes particularly crucial when state residents have the opportunity to directly and significantly affect higher education (e.g., via California's Proposition 209, and the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative). In this political climate, it becomes increasingly necessary to understand people's current conceptions, as well as the potential to change these views. Given the difficult road that women have had in accessing higher education (Solomon, 1985), this study examines gender differences and similarities in the public's opinions about and conceptualizations of access to college.

## Literature Review

### *Research on Public Attitudes toward Access to Higher Education*

Most inquiry into public perceptions of college has taken the form of telephone-based public opinion polls. These surveys have shown that the public consistently endorses the importance of attending college, particularly as a means for attaining occupational success (e.g., Ikenberry & Hartle, 1998; Immerwahr & Farkas, 1993). These studies also show that people strongly believe that opportunities to attend college

should be accessible to all (Callan, 1996; Immerwahr, 1998, 2004; for a brief summary of this research, see Doyle, 2005).

However, these high levels of agreement can be misleading. This apparent consensus probably stems (at least in part) from the survey items' focus on general values as opposed to specific policies. That is, people will broadly support vague ideals such as "access" or "equity," but attitudes diverge much more strongly when focusing on what these mean or how they should be accomplished (Moses, in press). For example, when participants are asked what should be done to pay for increased financial aid (Immerwahr, 1998) or whether colleges should consider race in their admissions policies (Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Krysan, 1997), the public is either unsure or sharply divided. In fact, various members of the public tend to frame the same policy solution (e.g., affirmative action) in remarkably different ways (e.g., Haley & Sidanius, 2006).

### *Gender and Higher Education*

Women in the U.S. have made tremendous gains in educational attainment in the last 30 years and are now more likely than men to be awarded an associate, bachelor's, or master's degree (Adelman, 2004; Nettles & Perna, 1997). Despite this recent progress, men ages 18 and over are still more likely than women to hold a bachelor's degree (U.S. Census, 2005), more likely to be awarded degrees in science and engineering (Huang, Taddese, & Walter, 2000), and more likely to have a higher-paying job after college (Horn & Zahn, 2001). In addition, women still face numerous gender-related challenges while pursuing their college degrees (e.g., American Association of University Women [AAUW], 2006; Gmelch, 1998; Holland & Eisenhart, 1992).

Clearly, though, women's current status in the educational system is not the only relevant factor in shaping their beliefs. It is likely that women's conceptions of college access will reflect their longstanding marginalization from higher education (Solomon, 1985), especially since attitudes and perceptions on any issue are influenced by a variety of historical, social, and cultural factors (e.g., Frank, 2004; Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Sears, Sidanius, & Bobo, 2000). Despite the considerable attention paid to attitude differences toward higher education across racial/ethnic groups (Immerwahr, 2000; Schuman et al., 1997), virtually no studies have examined gender differences. In addition, public opinion polling tends to place a heavy emphasis on people's responses to individual questions. While this can be somewhat informative, little is known about the underlying structure of people's attitudes toward higher education (i.e., the relationships among various opinions and beliefs). Understanding these attitude structures can provide substantial insight into why people believe what they do and how their opinions can be changed (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998).

Generally speaking, public opinion polls also do not allow people to convey what is most important—or even relevant—in their own words. Providing an opportunity for people to engage one another in meaningful conversation can yield insights that would be overlooked by administering a set of prescribed closed-ended questions (Creswell, 2002). Therefore, this study addresses three primary questions. First, what are the similarities and differences between women and men in attitudes toward access to higher education? Second, how are women and men's attitudes toward this issue structured? Third, how do women and men discuss and frame issues relevant to college access?

## Method

### *Participants and Sampling*

Participants were 670 community members (60% female, 27% people of color) in 10 counties and two states who took part in dialogues on the issue of “Who is College For?” The dialogues, which were organized to promote awareness and understanding of issues surrounding college access, occurred from September 2004 to July 2005.

Dialogues were hosted in a variety of locations, including colleges and universities, libraries, community organizations, high schools, adult learning centers, bookstores, hotels, offices, and homes. Many participants belonged to organizations that were hosting these events, but some participants heard about the dialogues (either through formal publicity or word-of-mouth) and decided to attend. Participants received no monetary compensation for their involvement.

Dialogue groups were determined through purposive sampling (Krathwohl, 2004). This action research project was not designed to achieve a random sample; instead, we wanted to conduct dialogues in a variety of communities in the state of Michigan (where the vast majority of dialogues took place) and with various groups that are relevant to improving college access. These groups included people who were affiliated with K-12 institutions (teachers, administrators, adult GED students, and parents), higher education (faculty, students, staff, administrators, and alumni), and community groups (parishioners, businesspeople, farmers, and civic leaders). The dialogues were organized by local community leaders, often with the direct participation and support of the action research team.

Before each dialogue, participants gathered in a room and were seated at chairs or tables, which were arranged in a circle. After the moderator explained what would happen in the dialogue, participants completed a pre-dialogue (i.e., “pre-test”) questionnaire. These dialogues were sometimes moderated by a trained community member and other times by a member of the action research team, who was introduced by the community member that was hosting the dialogue. Using an impartial discussion guide, participants discussed the strengths and weaknesses of three approaches to college access, which suggested, in turn, that college should be for (1) those who are willing to work hard for it, (2) the most academically qualified, and (3) everyone who wants to attend. The total time for the dialogue and questionnaires was approximately 90 minutes.

#### *Quantitative Measures*

The pre-discussion questionnaire asked participants to rate their agreement with seven statements (e.g., “Scholarships should generally be given to students with the highest grades and test scores”) on a five-point Likert scale (1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”). The questionnaire also contained demographic information (gender, age, educational attainment, and race/ethnicity). Age was indicated by checking one of six categories, and educational attainment was indicated with nine categories. Race/ethnicity was indicated by participants’ choosing from among six existing categories. Participants were instructed to check all categories that apply; those who checked more than one box were coded as multiracial/multiethnic (for more detailed information and descriptive statistics for these variables, see Table 1).

### *Quantitative Analyses*

First, general descriptive statistics were computed on the seven primary items to provide a broad overview of participants' opinions. Second, to determine gender differences in opinion, t-tests were performed on each of the items. On items for which there were statistically significant differences, ordinary least squares (OLS) multiple regression analyses were performed, using the questionnaire item as the dependent variable, and gender, age, educational attainment, and race/ethnicity as independent variables. Race/ethnicity was measured with dummy codes (e.g., Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino/Chicano, etc.), using White/Caucasian as the referent group (note that using a single dummy-code contrasting people of color and Whites/Caucasians yields similar results). These additional analyses were designed to ensure that the gender differences were not confounded with other demographics. Third, to determine attitude structures, factor analyses with principal axis factoring and Varimax rotation were conducted separately for women and for men on the seven pre-discussion items. Factors with Eigenvalues greater than one were extracted, yielding two factors for men and three for women (examining scree plots to determine the number of factors yields identical results). Items with factor loadings of .35 or greater were considered adequate. These factors were compared to determine structural similarities and differences in attitudes for men and women.

### *Qualitative Analyses*

Thirty-one dialogues were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim, yielding more than 300 pages of data. This data was coded inductively in a number of stages. Initially, the individual utterances according to normative statements expressing individual values

were coded. All statements, including 'should' or 'ought' statements, related to higher education access and attainment were included. Subsequently, a thematic analysis was conducted, which created groups of the major topics that emerged during discussion. Quotes from male and female participants were then separated, and the final analysis focused on the differences and similarities among themes, as framed by men and women.

## Results and Discussion

### *Questionnaire Results*

#### *Overall Perceptions of Access to College*

Consistent with previous research, there was broad endorsement of the importance of college and the presence of financial barriers. Specifically, a vast majority of women and men agreed or strongly agreed that "it is important for people to go to college" (94% and 90%, respectively). Furthermore, a strong majority of women and men disagreed or strongly disagreed that "only the best and brightest high school students should go to college (87% and 84%, respectively). Finally, women and men agreed or strongly agreed that "high tuition prevents many people from going to college" (88% and 79%, respectively).

However, as expected, there was far less agreement about specific policies pertaining to admissions and scholarship criteria. Participants were sharply divided over whether "race, ethnicity, and gender should be considered in college admissions"; 37% of women and 41% of men agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while 42% of women and 40% of men disagreed or strongly disagreed. In addition, approximately half

of women and men disagreed or strongly disagreed that “scholarships should generally be given to students with the highest grades and test scores” (58% and 44%, respectively).

### *Gender Differences in Attitudes*

Despite some general agreement between men and women, there were also significant differences on four of the seven items. Three of these items dealt explicitly or implicitly with the existence of barriers toward college access and persistence.

Specifically, women ( $M = 4.20$ ) are more likely than men ( $M = 4.01$ ) to agree that “high tuition prevents many people from going to college,”  $t(665) = -2.641, p < .01$ . In addition, women ( $M = 2.55$ ) are less likely than men ( $M = 2.84$ ) to agree that “scholarships should generally be given to students with the highest grades and test scores,”  $t(659) = 3.605, p < .001$ . Taken together, these differences imply that women are less likely than men to view “merit-based” criteria as being essential to the financial aid process, especially when tuition prices represent a significant barrier toward college attendance. Furthermore, women ( $M = 3.90$ ) are less likely than men ( $M = 4.15$ ) to agree that “those who work hard enough can graduate from college,”  $t(663) = -3.388, p = .001$ . The only item not related to barriers that showed a gender difference was that women ( $M = 4.48$ ) were more likely than men ( $M = 4.34$ ) to agree that “it is important to go to college,”  $t(658) = -2.487, p < .02$ . Importantly, the gender differences on these items remain significant, even when performing OLS multiple regression analyses to control for age, educational attainment, and race/ethnicity (all  $p$ 's  $< .01$ ).

However, there was one key item that reflects a cognizance of barriers for which there was no gender difference. Women ( $M = 2.85$ ) were as likely as men ( $M = 2.88$ ) to agree that “race, ethnicity, and gender should be considered in college admissions,”

$t(661) = .281, ns$ . This pattern is unexpected, given that (a) affirmative action helped pave the way for women's widespread participation in higher education, and (b) simple self-interest would suggest that women would be more likely to favor gender-based affirmative action than would men.

### *Gender Differences in Attitude Structure*

There were some important similarities and differences in factor structures between women and men. For women, the principal axis factor analysis yielded three factors. The first factor represents the *Value of College*; the two items in this factor are "it is important for people to go to college," and "colleges and universities play an important role in shaping responsible citizens." Thus, the general importance placed on college-going is paired with the positive democratic outcomes associated with college attendance. The second factor is a *Meritocracy* factor (Lemann, 2000; Young, 1958). Specifically, these items are "only the best and brightest high school students should go to college" and "scholarships should generally be given to students with the highest grades and test scores." In other words, college should be for those with the greatest ability, and financial aid decisions should be primarily based upon standard academic criteria. The third factor, called *Sufficiency of Hard Work*, is comprised of a single item: "Those who work hard enough can graduate from college." It is interesting that an item about affirmative action does not load onto any of these factors, which suggests that women see this issue as distinct from other potentially related issues, including Meritocracy perspectives on college access.

In contrast, there were only two factors for men. The first factor represents the *Value of College*, which is identical to the factor for women. The second factor, which

includes four items, is somewhat more complex. The two items that positively load on this factor represent a *Meritocracy* view of college. In addition, two items negatively loaded on this factor, and these represent an acknowledgement of barriers to college attendance: “high tuition prevents many people from going to college” and “race, ethnicity, and gender should be considered in college admissions.” As a whole, this four-item *Meritocracy and Barriers* factor implies a certain conditional logic: If there are few barriers to college access, then a meritocratic higher education system (i.e., one that places a heavy emphasis on grades and test scores) is appropriate. Unfortunately, this negative relationship between perception of barriers and endorsement of widespread access can be problematic, because policies that promote access and equity would likely be viewed as threatening to the “best and the brightest.”

### *Transcript Results*

#### *Overall Framing by Men and Women*

Within the dialogues, two major themes emerged for both men and women: the role of higher education in society and educational access. This analysis will focus only on educational access, as it more often pertains to barriers. Related to educational access, both men and women articulate a number of barriers to higher education attainment within the state of Michigan. There was a tremendous amount of overlap in emergent themes between men and women. Primarily, it is the relative emphasis on the emergent themes that differs across gender. The overall similarity could be due to actual similarity in perspectives or the dialogue format itself, among other issues.

Both men and women emphasized hard work and merit in very similar ways. Men and women also similarly emphasized financial concerns, encouragement and

support for students, and differentiation of institutions to suit students' needs (although in these areas, they attended to issues in slightly different ways). In some cases, the way in which these issues are talked about mirror one another. This is true for the way that participants frame hard work as essential for college success:

Well, I don't think that going to college should just be handed to you on a silver platter. I think that you need to work for it, going against approach three where everyone should just go to college and get that opportunity. I think that—if you are going to take it seriously—I think that gratification and feeling like you earned that placement in college. (Woman, high school)

I think that it should be available to everyone, but only if they are going to work for it. And if they want to, you could end up with some undesirable student that would be a distraction. (Man, community organization)

These similarities were also evident in the way that men and women framed merit. Men and women both suggest that the most qualified students are predicted to succeed and, in some cases, should be awarded scholarships; however, at times, both groups also express reservations about standardized testing as a measure for qualifications, and emphasize broader definitions of merit.

Just because you are willing to work for it, does that mean that you are capable of doing it? If you say that you want to be an engineer there are some people who probably should not be engineers, because they will be working on bridges at some point. [Laughs] So there are some—I am all for part of this thing if you are willing to work for this thing—but there has to be some skill involved as well. (Man, high school)

I understand that we need to support academics and we need to support that there is access for kids and people in our society that are just off the charts academically. (Woman, community organization)

Here, both a man and a woman express that students will differ in capabilities and they need to find a career match, and perhaps financial support, if necessary. However, several other emergent themes are expressed differently for men and women.

*Framing Differences for Men and Women*

Some themes around higher education access and attainment were completely different for men and women; in some others, men and women emphasized different aspects of the same theme. Emphasis, in this case, is defined by the length of response and the number of instances a subject was broached by men and women.

*Women.* In the dialogues, women expressed values about the importance of (a) financing an education, (b) support and encouragement to enter and succeed in college, (c) differentiation of institution types, and (d) student choice. These themes, although sometimes similar to those expressed by men, are framed as unique subthemes.

When expressing financial concerns about college access, women emphasize the role of the government at the state and federal level. They address issues of debt and affordability as well as governmental priorities:

I think that education should always be first. I have always believed it and I believe that social security should be our second because we—our elderly raised us you always got—we need—we've got to give back. You know, they have put enough in our system, but if we would educate ourselves more or get more for education then we would have more to give back, do you know what I mean? (Woman, community organization)

Here, support is identified beyond finances. And in the dialogues, women expressed encouragement toward educational attainment coming from many sources including parents, the educational system, the community, and (rarely) individuals. The following quotes express general community perspectives on this issue:

That's the parents' job too, to start telling their kids early—we did you have to do this, because you are going to college, and it was expected of them. So and I think that is where young children should be told, that when they get big, that they are going to go to college; that is just the way it is going to be. (Woman, community organization)

I think that is the counselor's job to help those children find ways to get grants, and you know just deal with their tuition and all that. I do believe that is a school counselor's job, that is one of their main jobs; that is what they should be doing. (Woman, community organization)

In fact issues of preparation came up when talking about educational support. This was rarely the case from men.

I really think that they should have a more demanding curriculum to an extent though. I don't—that is actually the only thing that I would even think, but I think that it should be more based on and trying to get kids to go to college more. I think people should really think more and implement that more in the schools, like I said for the first one, I think that it should be part of an English credit, like career-type thing. (Woman, community organization)

Both women and men express concerns about higher education and institutional choice as important. According to both men and women, there should be different institutions for different intellectual capabilities or career interests of students. However, when women talked about this subject, it was expressed as students' choice of which institution to attend as well as the institution's ability to fit students' capabilities and interests:

I think that it gets back to the definition of college: Is it the trade school? If that is the definition of college, not the traditional four-year degree, then I agree that everyone should have that opportunity for whatever postsecondary suits what their individual strengths or skills and needs are, that there need to be choices for people based on what their individual needs are. And I would say postsecondary ed, I don't mean college, I mean you know there is like x-ray programs...(Woman, community organization)

I also think, as a democracy, we need to be able to offer educational routes to all kinds of people. And that doesn't mean that being a carpenter, farmer or other options or skill trades aren't great and that you shouldn't have those options for people...(Woman, community organization)

Women much more often than men expressed a student's right not to attend college, regardless of how one defines "college"; in contrast, this perspective appeared only once from a man in the dialogues.

As shown in the above analysis, women have diverse and clearly formed opinions about higher educational attainment within the state of Michigan. Within these dialogues, they shared values about finances, support, choice of institution type, and whether to attend at all.

*Men.* In the dialogues, male participants emphasized finances, encouragement, broad admissions considerations, merit, and differentiation. When talking about finances, men emphasized making college affordable in two ways. They talked about (a) taking the individual responsibility associated with paying for college, and (b) diverse external sources that could help defray costs, including community organizations, businesses, the public (framed as both taxpayers and government), and/or society.

I think that in terms of costs of it, you are saying that it is a societal good, then this—then the cost should be, it should go on some local employers, some of the local, which I guess is the taxpayers, but or the corporate side, but increasing the partnership. That if this is the way you are going to go, say this is for everybody and it is worth it to you, to have this happen, we need to say to companies, you know, what we will increase the partnerships with you, so basically help us train your workforce. But we would have to give up some of the academic control. (Man, parent group)

Maybe they come from a family where they don't have the money, and they don't know how to do it, and we should be actively seeking to support those as a society, that those children should be supported by us. But if you ask me should only those people should be supported by the state in attempting to increase their educational outcomes, and do better and get great jobs and pay social security so we can retire, my answer is no. (Man, high school)

There were several occurrences of men mentioning individual responsibility for paying for college. Language around this framework usually involved the value of a personal investment in one's own education, and without that investment, it was a devalued experience:

It's a completely different model though, and if you look at it going through school, I worked a heck of a lot harder because I knew that I was paying for it. I was going to be paying for it for the next twenty or thirty years, and I wanted to get as much out of it as I could. If I knew that the government was going to be paying for everything would I go in there with the same, ok I want to work hard, and I want to get as much out of it. And if the answer is no, then maybe you should be selective. (Man, community member)

One theme that was prevalent for men (but not for women) was broad admissions considerations. Men often expressed the importance of taking admission on a "case-by-case" basis. They often take a stand against standardized testing, which is not unique to men, but additionally this includes a strong emphasis on special circumstances:

I think that it should be taken as a case by case situation, I don't think that you should judge people on their anything, if you know that person only has one parent, or you know that person has two parents, a doctor and a lawyer, it should be based on a case by case individuality. (Man, community organization)

Men articulate a barrier of a lack of support and encouragement, though this is not expressed as strongly from men as it is for women. Interestingly, men do not express specific sources for encouragement and support; instead, men use broad frames, such as 'we' or 'society':

I don't think that you can enforce it, you can't make it a law to go to college, or you are going to die or anything like that. For me, I think that everyone who wants to go should have the opportunity. And I think that in order to make more people want to go, they should have more preparation, so it's not as intimidating, and more encouragement. (Man, community organization)

Another emergent difference between men and women within the dialogues was the framing of choice and differentiation of colleges. Men emphasized differentiation of institutions to cater to diverse student needs and interests:

Well I agree that people should go to college, I also think that there should be increases in like college alternatives, for example, the career center. If

somebody says that I don't need college, I want to go into, maybe go into computer aid and design, or want to go into cosmetology. I think that those should be treated as valuable alternatives. I think that it is becoming more and more that is just not "oh, you're dumb, you are going to the career center," and it is viewed as an alternative to going to college. If they think—if they can be taught the skills that are needed on the job, or at the career center, I think that they should be able to, to be encouraged to do that. (Man, community organization)

As shown in the above analysis, men articulate diverse opinions about higher educational attainment. Men attend to issues related to individual financial responsibility, admission standards, support and encouragement (by broad, unnamed actors), and educational choice. Although in many ways, men and women express overall attention to similar issues related to higher educational attainment, there are specific points within these dialogues illustrating a divergence.

#### *General Discussion and Integration*

At first glance, the quantitative analysis suggests that women are more cognizant of barriers to college access than are men. Only one item asks directly about the existence of barriers, but other items—which address the allocation of scholarships and the sufficiency of hard work for college graduation—provide indirect evidence for this view. Such an interpretation would be consistent with past and present-day challenges that women face in undergraduate education (AAUW, 2006; Gmelch, 1998; Holland & Eisenhart, 1992; Solomon, 1985).

However, the qualitative findings may suggest a more nuanced perspective. Within the discussions, women and men are equally likely to value effort as a necessary component for college success, to mention finances as a potential challenge, and to argue that merit should be viewed more broadly than standardized test scores. However, the way in which these challenges should (or could) be addressed seemed to vary

systematically across gender. In general, men were more likely to emphasize the individual's role in owning financial obstacles and support for college, along with values associated with individual hard work and the costs for obtaining an education. Specifically, they felt individuals need to take personal responsibility for paying for college, since this effort and investment would encourage them to appreciate their college experience. Furthermore, people who have faced significant life challenges should receive individualized consideration of these circumstances during the admissions process (i.e., treating each applicant on a case-by-base basis). Therefore, although men recognize numerous barriers toward college access and persistence, they seem to assign individuals a great deal of agency in their ability to overcoming these barriers.

In contrast, women were more likely to discuss the role of specific, external sources that should provide financial and personal support (e.g., family members, the federal government, etc.). Whereas men occasionally mentioned the need for support or encouragement, most often it was unclear from their comments who should provide this support. As such, women's emphasis on collective efforts (as embodied through the actions of specific people and/or organizations) for improving college access implies that hard work or individual initiative is not sufficient to overcome barriers (or, perhaps, that it is unfair to ask individuals to rely solely on themselves given these barriers). They feel that these barriers can be overcome, but increasing access may (or should) require a more systematic approach.

## Conclusion

Despite overall agreement about the value of college, women and men differ considerably in the content and structure of their opinions. Women are more likely than men to perceive barriers to college access and persistence as being substantial, and—with the notable exception of affirmative action—women are more likely to favor policies that confront these barriers. In addition, men tend to conceptualize barriers to college as connected with issues of who should go to college (i.e., a *Meritocracy* perspective). Whereas this linkage could be seen problematic, it also presents an opportunity to effect attitude change. Specifically, if men become more aware of the barriers that underrepresented groups face (and the inability of mere personal initiative for dealing with these obstacles), they are likely to become more egalitarian in their perspectives on admissions and financial aid. This sort of opinion change could be realized either through an in-depth dialogue format, such as our own, or through a national public awareness campaign, such as the American Council on Education’s “Solutions for the Future” initiative (2006). Public support is crucial for improving educational access and opportunity in our country, and further research into the perspectives of various constituencies can help develop the means for garnering this support.

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Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics for All Variables*

Variable	Coding	Mean	SD
Gender	1 = Male, 2 = Female	1.60	.490
Age	1 = 17 or younger, to 6 = 65 or older	3.57	1.26
Educational attainment	1 = Less than 6 <sup>th</sup> grade, to 9 = Graduate degree	7.34	2.01
Black/African American	1 = African American, 0 = Other	.169	.375
Asian American/Pacific Islander	1 = Asian American, 0 = Other	.015	.121
Hispanic/Latino/Chicano	1 = Latino, 0 = Other	.031	.174
Native American/American Indian	1 = Native American, 0 = Other	.006	.077
“Other”	1 = Other race/ethnicity, 0 = Other	.012	.109
Multiracial/multiethnic	1 = Multiracial, 0 = Other	.036	.186
It is important for people to go to college.	1 = Strongly disagree, to 5 = Strongly agree	4.42	.687
Those who work hard enough can graduate from college.	1 = Strongly disagree, to 5 = Strongly agree	4.00	.965
Only the best and the brightest high school students should go to college.	1 = Strongly disagree, to 5 = Strongly agree	1.86	.817
Colleges and universities play an important role in shaping responsible citizens.	1 = Strongly disagree, to 5 = Strongly agree	4.02	.852
Race, ethnicity, and gender should be considered in college admissions.	1 = Strongly disagree, to 5 = Strongly agree	2.86	1.36
Scholarships should generally be given to students with the highest grades and test scores.	1 = Strongly disagree, to 5 = Strongly agree	2.66	1.03
High tuition prevents many people from going to college.	1 = Strongly disagree, to 5 = Strongly agree	4.13	.908

Table 2

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Group Differences by Gender*

Variable	Mean (SD)	
	Women	Men
It is important for people to go to college.	4.48 (.658) *	4.34 (.721)
Those who work hard enough can graduate from college.	3.90 (.997) **	4.15 (.894)
Only the best and the brightest high school students should go to college.	1.83 (.800)	1.89 (.840)
Colleges and universities play an important role in shaping responsible citizens.	3.99 (.852)	4.06 (.853)
Race, ethnicity, and gender should be considered in college admissions.	2.85 (1.35)	2.88 (1.37)
Scholarships should generally be given to students with the highest grades and test scores.	2.55 (1.00) ***	2.84 (1.05)
High tuition prevents many people from going to college.	4.20 (.858) **	4.01 (.970)

\*  $p < .05$     \*\*  $p < .01$     \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 3

*Principal Axis Factor Analyses with Varimax Rotation of Women's Pretest Responses*

Variable	Factor		
	Value of College	Meritocracy	Hard Work
It is important for people to go to college.	<b>.63</b>	-.07	.32
Those who work hard enough can graduate from college.	.08	-.03	<b>.55</b>
Only the best and the brightest high school students should go to college.	-.11	<b>.62</b>	-.06
Colleges and universities play an important role in shaping responsible citizens.	<b>.46</b>	.14	-.14
Race, ethnicity, and gender should be considered in college admissions.	.10	-.04	-.29
Scholarships should generally be given to students with the highest grades and test scores.	.06	<b>.39</b>	.05
High tuition prevents many people from going to college.	.20	-.12	-.10

Note: Factor loadings with an absolute value of .35 and above are in bold.

Table 4

*Principal Axis Factor Analyses with Varimax Rotation of Men's Pretest Responses*

Variable	Factor	
	Value of College	Meritocracy and Barriers
It is important for people to go to college.	<b>.62</b>	-.00
Those who work hard enough can graduate from college.	.28	.09
Only the best and the brightest high school students should go to college.	.05	<b>.60</b>
Colleges and universities play an important role in shaping responsible citizens.	<b>.57</b>	-.12
Race, ethnicity, and gender should be considered in college admissions.	.11	<b>-.35</b>
Scholarships should generally be given to students with the highest grades and test scores.	.07	<b>.35</b>
High tuition prevents many people from going to college.	-.02	<b>-.38</b>

Note: Factor loadings with an absolute value of .35 and above are in bold.