Countering Cultural Matching? Class and the Cultural Styles Applicants Present to Gatekeepers

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Cultural matching theory holds that class reproduction occurs when individuals from different class origins present different cultural styles to gatekeepers, who in turn select advantaged individuals based upon their styles. This theory also suggests that class reproduction will be disrupted if individuals from different origins present gatekeepers with the same styles. We investigate whether this is possible by examining a case in which similarities are particularly likely to occur: a situation in which public instructions give applicants from each class common information about what styles gatekeepers reward, gatekeepers select among applicants from each class who share access to similar styles, and applicants are likely to use the same styles as they are given time to strategize and need only present each style superficially. Drawing upon a content analysis of over 1,000 randomly selected applications that were written under these conditions, we find that individuals from different class origins present several similar styles but that differences remain. We conclude that the simultaneous presence of these conditions is unlikely to block class reproduction by erasing cultural differences.

1. Introduction

Cultural matching theory is among sociologists' dominant theories of class reproduction (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). This theory rests upon the premise that individuals from different class origins present different cultural styles to gatekeepers. Gatekeepers, in turn, do not purposefully discriminate against individuals from lower class origins but see more advantaged individuals' cultural styles as more meritorious. In doing so, they turn neutral cultural differences into "cultural capital" and reproduce inequality (Bettie 2003; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Calarco 2018; Kusserow 2004; Lareau 1989, 2011; MacLeod 2008; Rivera 2015).

Of course, while cultural matching theory explains class reproduction, it also suggests how it can be alleviated. If individuals from different origins present the same cultural styles to gatekeepers, then gatekeepers will not be able to use them to select individuals from one class

origin over another. Class reproduction, then, will be mitigated. But is it possible for those from different origins to present gatekeepers with similar cultural styles?

We investigate this question by examining a case in which individuals from different class origins are particularly likely to present gatekeepers with similar cultural styles. Cultural differences typically arise because actors from different classes believe gatekeepers reward different styles, have different access to the styles they reward, and differentially make use of the styles they can access (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bourdieu 1980, 1984, 1989). But each of these factors can be countered: detailed instructions can homogenize individuals' beliefs about the styles particular gatekeepers reward, gatekeepers can select among applicants who have been exposed to similar styles, and short applications that are available in advance gives individuals the cover and time to try styles they otherwise might not. We test whether, under these conditions, the premise of cultural matching theory is undermined – whether applicants from different origins present gatekeepers with similar styles. Analyzing over 1,000 randomly selected applications that college students used to apply for Teach for America, we find that when each of these conditions are present, applicants from different origins use several similar styles but that differences remain. As these conditions do not result in identical cultural displays among applicants of different origins, they do not prevent class reproduction from occurring.

2. Cultural Matching Theory

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) developed cultural matching theory to explain class reproduction. According to this theory, individuals develop a habitus based upon their location within the class structure – what Bourdieu calls the field of power (Swartz 1997) – such that people with different origins develop different habitus. The habitus, a deeply internalized “feel for the game,”

helps individuals navigate their class origin, in part, by shaping what cultural styles they acquire and display. Because the habitus is developed in and reflects their early class position, and because it is durable, transposable, and works without conscious awareness, individuals unknowingly present cultural styles that reflect their class origin and do so across the life course and situations. They also present these different styles to gatekeepers, who reproduce class inequality by rewarding the styles of advantaged groups more than disadvantaged ones (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bourdieu 1980, 1984).

There are three reasons that individuals with different class origins present gatekeepers with different styles. First, individuals from different origins come to believe that gatekeepers reward different styles – different goals, dispositions, activities, and language (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bourgois 1995; Kusserow 2004). This occurs because parents located in different parts of the class structure typically interact with different gatekeepers, who in turn reward different styles. Parents in different classes teach their children the styles that appease the gatekeepers with whom they interact, and thus children from different classes come to assume that gatekeepers reward different styles (Calarco 2018; Kohn 1977; Kusserow 2004). Given the durable and transposable nature of the habitus, individuals from different origins maintain different beliefs about what styles gatekeepers reward even when they strive to enter the same class destination and encounter the same gatekeepers (Rivera 2015; Thiele 2016; Yee 2016).

Second, even if individuals from different origins came to share the same ideas about the styles gatekeepers reward, they would not have the same ability to produce them. Individuals internalize the styles that help them navigate their early class position; people raised in different classes then learn to display different styles (Bourdieu 1980, 1984). These differences tend to be organized around binary oppositions, such as enjoying what is affordable or costly, making a

virtue of necessity or distancing oneself from it, being a cultural univore (enjoying one type of activity) or a cultural omnivore (enjoying many types of activities), and being other-oriented or self-oriented (Bourdieu 1984; Bryson 1996; Jensen 1997; Peterson and Kern 1996; Skeggs 2011; Stephens, Markus, and Phillips 2014). Typically, the disadvantaged grow up in settings in which the first style in these binary pairs is accessible and the second is not, while the advantaged typically have access to and use the second (Bourdieu 1984; Peterson and Kern 1996; Stephens, Markus, and Phillips 2014). Class origin then relates to access to presentation styles, enabling some groups greater opportunities to meet particular gatekeepers' standards (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bourdieu 1989; Bourgois 1995; Khan 2012; Kusserow 2004; Rivera 2015).

Third, even if individuals raised in different origins came to interpret gatekeepers' preferences in the same way and to acquire the same cultural styles, they would not select them in the same moments. This is because individuals first gain access to styles associated with their origins and only later gain access to styles unassociated with their origins, and the timing of when individuals learn styles relates to if and how they use them. The styles internalized into the habitus early in life come to feel natural, and the styles learned later feel less intuitive to produce (Bourdieu 1984, 2000). When individuals respond quickly to gatekeepers, they draw upon the styles that come naturally to them – ones that reflect their origins (Lizardo 2017; Noble and Watkins 2003; Rivera 2015; Vaisey 2009). Moreover, the styles learned at later ages are filtered through the habitus, which includes styles that have been previously internalized (Bourdieu 1984). Internalizing new styles through old ones alters them in the process, such that the use of newly-learned styles often comes across as inauthentic, stilted, or off (Bourdieu 1984; Granfield 1991). Attempts to match others' origins then reveal their own (Bourdieu 1984, 2000). Actors

can sense this (Lubrano 2005) and may choose to present styles they are more comfortable with instead – ones that, again, reflect their origins.

Thus, the premise of cultural matching theory usually holds as individuals from different origins assume gatekeepers reward different styles, have different access to the styles gatekeepers reward, and differentially select from the styles they can access. Yet, each of these factors has the potential to be blocked by what we call “countering conditions,” or conditions that counteract the mechanisms that lead individuals from different origins to produce different styles. Research suggests that countering a single of the above factors reduces the number of class differences in presentation styles but does not eliminate them (Calarco 2014; Kozlowski 2020; Streib 2015). We examine whether individuals from different origins present the same styles when four countering conditions are present at once. If this occurs, the premise of cultural matching theory would be undermined, and with it, a mechanism of class reproduction.

The first countering condition is instructions about what styles gatekeepers reward. Without instructions, individuals from different origins assume gatekeepers want different things; with instructions, they gain common ideas about what gatekeepers want (Swartz 1997). Indeed, researchers have found that explicit instructions increase the degree to which children from different origins hold common and accurate understanding about gatekeepers’ preferences, though they do not lead to the production of completely similar styles (Calarco 2014; Kozlowski 2020).

The second countering condition is to select among applicants from each origin who have been exposed to similar cultural styles. This occurs when the applicant pool is restricted to those whom previous gatekeepers have already selected based upon their ability to present particular styles or who gain exposure to similar styles by living in similar environments. Previous

gatekeepers have the ability to select applicants from different origins who share similar styles as there is cultural variation not only across classes but within them (Streib 2020). Exposure to similar styles is possible because cultural differences by class origin emerge, in part, from living in different environments. Individuals from different classes who come to live in the same environment will be exposed to some similar styles, leading to more similar cultural presentations than would otherwise occur (Curl, Lareau, and Wu 2018; Horvart and Davis 2011; Jack 2019).

The third countering condition is short presentations. Applications that require brevity necessarily limit the number of styles applicants can present, allowing little space for differences to emerge. Short presentations also encourage superficial presentations, ones that do not demand detailed knowledge of particular styles and that hide subtle differences in the use of them. Freed from worries that they will use newly-learned styles incorrectly, short applications may give applicants cover to experiment with styles they are less familiar with – ones unassociated with their origins.

The final countering condition is the ability to slowly consider what styles to present. When individuals respond to situations quickly, they tend to respond automatically and draw upon styles that reflect their origins. However, when they respond slowly, as occurs when applications are available in advance, they can more consciously deliberate about what styles to present (Noble and Watkins 2003; Vaisey 2009). When time to slowly respond is combined with instructions and access to the styles gatekeepers reward, applicants can purposefully select these styles, including styles that do not reflect their origins.

These four conditions have the potential to overcome class differences in interpreting, accessing, and selecting the styles gatekeepers reward, and thus to allow individuals from

different origins to present the same styles to gatekeepers. We use a case approach to determine whether they do. In taking this approach, our aim is not to test whether these conditions produce more similarities than their absence, but to determine whether their simultaneous presence allows individuals from different origins to present themselves to gatekeepers in the same way. If they do, this suggests that the premise of cultural matching theory can be undermined and gatekeepers cannot use cultural differences to select applicants from one class over another.

3. The Case

3.1. Case Rationale

We take a case approach to understand whether countering conditions allow individuals from different origins to present similar styles. Specifically, we analyze the cultural displays college seniors from low and high class origins use in their written job applications to Teach for America (TFA). Teach for America is a service organization that places recent college graduates in low-income school districts to teach for two years. With tens of thousands of applicants, it is also one of the most common jobs taken by recent college graduates, even as it remains highly selective (Winerip 2010). It also advertises its class diversity: half of its teachers are from low-income families and one-third are first-generation college graduates (Teach for America 2020). And, importantly, TFA's application includes the four countering conditions we identified above.

3.1.1. Instructions

Teach for America offers students detailed instructions about what cultural styles to present. Specifically, Teach for America provides a three-page job ad that lists the goals, dispositions,

and experiences they prefer. We provide the full ad in the appendix, but consider these to be key portions:

- Goals for the organization: “to address educational inequity”
- Goals for the applicant: “a rigorous pre-service summer training program that is designed to further develop your leadership mindset and provide you real-world experience,” “full salary and benefits,” “coaching and ongoing professional development,” “take on an intense personal challenge,” “develop leadership, communication, management, and problem solving skills,” “develop lasting relationships and build a network of colleagues and friends”
- Teaching goals: “Set an ambitious vision of your students’ academic success and invest them and their families in working hard toward that vision,” “go above and beyond traditional expectations,” “plan purposefully, execute effectively, and work relentlessly to ensure that students growing up in low-income communities are given the educational opportunity they deserve”
- Dispositions: “a deep belief in the potential for all kids,” “demonstrated leadership ability and superior interpersonal skills,” “strong achievement,” “perseverance in the face of challenges,” “critical thinking skills,” “organizational ability,” “respect for individuals’ diverse experiences”
- Experiences: “Our corps members possess skills and experiences from their work, leadership, and academic backgrounds that are invaluable in affecting change in their classrooms.”

The job ad also presents this information in a particular style – one that conveys how they expect applicants to present themselves. In this case, TFA’s ad uses formal language, employing standard grammar and a secular tone.

In addition to the job ad, the application itself provides instructions. In their cover letters, students are asked to respond to three specific prompts rather than to determine what to write about on their own. In the résumé section of the application, students are again given specific instructions: to mention two or more extracurricular activities, to classify each activity into one of ten categories, and to select one of three roles they played in each activity.

Of course, even a three-page job ad and application instructions do not remove all ambiguity about what styles to present. Unresolved ambiguity arises from TFA’s position in the educational field: TFA is selective and selective institutions often prefer cultural displays that show one’s distance from necessity (Bourdieu 1989; Rivera 2015), yet TFA places students in jobs that entail working with disadvantaged people, and employers in these types of jobs tend to see elite cultural displays as a liability (Erickson 1996; Thomas 2018). Unresolved ambiguity also occurs as applicants cannot know if their application will be read by screeners from high or low origins or screeners who believe that low-income students are best served by people like them or people who provide a different perspective. Still, TFA’s job ad removes more ambiguity than is typical. Researchers find that information included in job ads tends to be so vague that it leaves job-seekers unsure what the position even entails (Cappelli 2012; Feldman and Klaas 2002; Selingo 2016).

3.1.2. Restricting the Applicant Pool to Those Exposed to Similar Styles

Applicants who apply to TFA have already been selected upon and exposed to similar cultural styles. Applicants have attended college, and we limit our sample to those who attended selective public universities. Students who graduate from these universities have been selected upon their cultural styles; these universities deny admissions to many students without the cultural styles rewarded in the education field (Bastedo et al. 2018; Kilgore 2009) and students without these styles who are admitted tend to drop out (Lareau 2011). Students who remain in these types of universities go on to be exposed to shared cultural styles: professors teach linguistic forms, staff promote a set of personal characteristics, peers encourage each other to develop particular dispositions, and extracurricular clubs provide opportunities to try new activities (Grisby 2014; Lehmann 2013; Pascarella et al. 2004; Stephens et al. 2012). While universities' selection and exposure processes do not erase cultural differences between students from different classes (Armstrong and Hamilton 2013; Friedman and Laurison 2019; Stuber 2009, 2011), they do create more cultural similarity than would occur without them (Lehmann 2013; Kaufman 2003).

The process of applying to TFA further limits the applicant pool to students exposed to similar styles. That students decide to apply to TFA suggests that it attracts students from each origin who have overlapping interests – ones possibly developed because they have similar goals, dispositions, and extracurricular experiences. Students also tend to apply to positions they think they can receive (Bourdieu 1984, 1989); by putting detailed hiring criteria online, TFA is particularly likely to receive applications from students from each origin who can present the listed styles. And, finally, TFA's job ad lists styles that are inexpensive to produce – thereby increasing the odds that applicants from each origin have been exposed to the styles it rewards. Between highly-ranked universities' selection and exposure processes and selection into

applying to TFA, the applicant pool for this job is likely to include students from different origins who present similar styles.

3.1.3. Short Presentations

TFA's application requires short presentations: applicants have just 500 words to reply to three prompts and are asked to describe their activities, roles, and responsibilities in small text boxes. The brevity of the application also allows only superficial presentations – ones that paper over subtle stylistic differences and may provide a cover for applicants to experiment with newly-learned styles. In the TFA application, for example, there is space to present oneself as a hard worker who believes all children can succeed but not to provide detailed explanations about what hard work means and why they believe in all children.

3.1.4. Time to Deliberate

TFA posts its application instructions months before its deadline, allowing individuals to bypass tendencies to present familiar styles and to instead present the styles emphasized in the ad. They also hire each year, allowing students to anticipate that they will hire in the future and plan how to apply. In sum, the process of applying to Teach for America includes four conditions that have the potential to block the production of cultural differences by class.

4. Data and Methods

4.1. Sample

We examine if students from different origins present similar styles in TFA's application. Specifically, we draw upon 1,124 written applications that college students submitted to Teach

for America in 2012 and 2013. To compare applicants exposed to similar cultural styles, we restricted our sample to applications from students at highly ranked public universities (about the top 25 public universities as ranked by US News and World Report). We also restricted our sample to students with at least a 3.0 GPA. These are students we assume are most likely to read the application carefully and understand it, and who had some success presenting cultural styles that college professors – also gatekeepers – reward. Among applicants meeting these criteria, we asked TFA to stratify applications by their class origin, race, and gender, then to randomly select 100 applicants from each strata. This approach allowed us to examine class origin differences and to control for demographic traits correlated with exposure to particular styles (Lee and Benson 2020). Among groups that had fewer than 100 applicants, we included all candidates in the strata. Table 1 lists the groups and number of applicants within them.

[Table 1 Here]

4. 2. Measures of Class Origin

TFA asked applicants about their demographic characteristics, including their parents' education. Parents' education is the element of class origin most related to youth's cultural exposure (Weininger, Lareau, and Conley 2015), and we used it to define applicants' origins.

Teach for America asked respondents about their parents' education in two ways. First, they asked applicants if they were a first-generation college student, which they defined as the first in their family to attend college. We used this measure, defining individuals with low origins as those without a parent who attended college and those with high origins as those with a parent who attended college. Second, in just one of our application years, 2012, TFA also asked applicants to identify the amount of education their most educated parent received. As

students may have interpreted being the first in their family to attend college in varied ways and as sociologists use varied measures of first-generation status, we used these data to test the robustness of our findings. Specifically, we used three additional measures of first-generation, or low origins: (1) we overrode an applicant's self-identity of first-generation (or not) to count low origins as those who reported not having a parent who attended college, (2) we overrode an applicant's self-identity to count low origins as not having a parent who completed college, and (3) we dropped applicants whose applications contained a discrepancy between their self-identification as a first-generation college student and their parents' highest level of education. Results from these robustness tests produce largely similar findings. Therefore, we report our results using just one measure of low class origins: self-reports of whether they were a first-generation college student.

4.3. Analysis

We conducted a systematic content analysis of the written applications and then analyzed whether applicants from each origin presented the same cultural displays. For our content analysis, we took an inductive approach to determine how applicants presented themselves. To stay close to the data, we created over 300 fine-grained codes; we later combined the codes into themes using sensitizing concepts from the literature on class origin and cultural displays. Codes were not mutually exclusive; each passage could be included under multiple codes. Except in cases in which applicants revealed their demographic characteristics in their cover letter or résumé, each coder was blind to applicants' class origin, gender, race, and university.

We took several steps to code reliably. We began by having four authors read 100 applications. We then ran interrater reliability scores, discussed our disagreements, clarified the

definition of each code, and began coding anew. We next assigned two coders each to 35 percent of our applications, surpassing the standard procedure of testing interrater reliability on 10 percent of the data (Hodson 1999). We then ran two interrater reliability scores again: percent agreement and Gwet's agreement coefficient (AC1) – an interrater reliability test statistic that is appropriate for binary coding on skewed distributions (Cicchetti and Feinstein 1990; Gwet 2008). The AC1 scores can be interpreted similarly to kappa scores (scores of 0.81 – 1.0 are very good, 0.61 – 0.79 are good, and 0.41 to 0.60 are moderate) and Gwet (2014) advises evaluating them in light of their 95% confidence interval. In most cases our coding revealed very good or good agreement. At that point, we assigned one coder per application. Table 2 includes each code's definition, verbatim examples of data that corresponds to each code, percent agreement among coders, and Gwet's agreement coefficient and its 95% confidence interval.

We then deductively analyzed whether applicants of each class origin were equally likely to use each presentation style. We estimated three models. First, a bivariate regression model shows the relative odds that low origin applicants compared to high origin applicants used each theme. Second, because applicants from different demographic groups and with different abilities and inclinations may have received different cultural exposure, we controlled for applicants' gender, race, and GPA. Third, because cultural exposure differs across universities, we included university fixed effects in our final model. In effect, this model compares applicants from low and high class origins who attended the same university. Together, these analyses reveal whether this pool of applicants from different class origins presented themselves in similar ways.

[Table 2 Here]

5. Findings

In TFA's application, in which four countering conditions were present, applicants from different origins presented several similar cultural styles. Nevertheless, differences remained too, suggesting that the conditions we studied do not remove the potential for class reproduction to occur through different cultural displays. We present the similarities, followed by the differences.

5.1. Similarities

Applicants from different origins presented gatekeepers with similar styles in three broad areas: their goals for potential students, dispositions unrelated to economic resources, and extracurricular activities.

5.1.1. Goals for Students

Bourdieu's (1984) research establishes that those from low class origins tend to set goals that make a virtue of necessity, aiming for what is needed to get by. Those from high class origins tend to set goals that distance themselves from necessity, aiming not just to get by, but also for psychological well-being, status, or the appearance of ease. We grouped applicants' goals for their potential students in this way. We considered applicants who made a virtue of necessity those who focused on the markers needed to get by in school: learning, showing evidence of learning through high grades and test scores, and earning credentials. We considered applicants who focused on helping students show psychological well-being in regard to these outcomes as displaying distance from necessity. These goals included helping students develop a positive attitude about learning, themselves, or their future.

As Table 3 shows, applicants from different origins presented mostly similar goals for their potential students. The three goals that made a virtue out of necessity – *gaining credentials*, *improving learning*, and *improving test scores or grades* – were used equally by applicants from each background. Most goals that highlight distance from necessity, including *gaining a positive attitude about themselves* and *gaining a positive attitude about their future*, were used equally across applicants from each origin. In all, just one difference was present. Students from low class origins had about three-quarters the odds of naming a specific goal that showed distance from necessity: helping students *develop a positive attitude about learning*. Thus, despite that making a virtue of necessity or distancing oneself from it is one of the main axes of cultural differences for members of different classes, when four countering conditions were present, students from each class origin generally presented the same styles.

[Table 3 Here]

5.1.2. Dispositions Unrelated to Economic Resources

Bourdieu (1984) maintains that dispositions related to economic resources are unevenly accessible to individuals from different class origins. However, it does not take economic resources or experiences with poverty to claim the dispositions cued in the job ad or how teachers are often presented: as *passionate*, *leaders*, *hard-working*, *caring*, *understanding of the challenges of the job*, *knowledgeable of subject matter*, and *intellectual*. We found broad similarity in how such styles were invoked. As Table 4 shows, we find that applicants from different origins presented six of these seven characteristics to the same extent, and that applicants from different origins from the same university were equally likely to present all seven styles.

[Table 4 Here]

5.1.3. Extracurricular Activities

The activities individuals engage in often reflect their class origin – with differences existing in the type of activity as well as the roles and responsibilities within an activity (Bourdieu 1984; Peterson and Kern 1996; Stuber 2009). TFA required applicants to describe their activities, naming at least two roles within at least one extracurricular activity or job. In 2013, TFA also asked applicants to categorize their activities into one of ten types: academics, athletics, campus organizations, faith, Greek life, leadership, professional, service, student government, and work. In this sample, we observed remarkable similarity in extracurricular participation. As Table 5 shows, applicants from each origin were equally likely to state that they were involved in each *type of activity*, with the exception that applicants from high origins were significantly more likely to report being involved in an athletic organization. This category included university, club, and intramural sports, many of which were not prestigious. These similarities may reflect the low numbers of students choosing these categories or that applicants from each origin were able to present similar styles when the four countering conditions were present.

We also considered applicants' roles and responsibilities within their activities. The application asked applicants to categorize their role as a *leader*, *supplemental leader*, or *general member*, and asked applicants to describe their primary responsibilities within each role. Using this data, we inductively identified five types of responsibilities: *managers* (those in charge of others), *accountants* (those who raised, tracked, or distributed money), *secretaries* (those who focused on communicating and organizing), *helpers* (those who assisted others), and those who

showed up (those who simply attended events). As illustrated in Table 5, applicants from each origin were equally likely to report each role and responsibility.

In addition, we wondered whether one group was more likely than the other to claim a leadership role but to provide no proof of it. To test this, we examined if either group more often claimed to be a *leader of an organized activity but provided no evidence of managing others*. As displayed in Table 5, we did not find evidence that this occurred.

Finally, we analyzed whether applicants from each origin were equally likely to present themselves as *univores* (those involved in only one type of activity, such as only athletics or only service organizations) and *omnivores* (those involved in a variety of activities, such as athletics *and* service *and* student government). As displayed in Table 5, we found that applicants from each class origin were equally likely to present themselves as involved in just one activity (univores) or two activities. However, applicants from high class origins were significantly more likely to be broad omnivores, engaged in three or four different types of activities. This difference was significant and held across models with controls. This finding could reflect a class origin difference in applicants' access and desire to participate in a broad range of activities or a difference in whether they interpreted the application's stated two-activity requirement as a minimum or a preference.

[Table 5 Here]

In summary, within three broad domains, we found differences only in a single goal, a single activity, and in applicants' breadth of activities. Otherwise, applicants from different origins presented many similar goals for potential students, dispositions unrelated to economic resources, and extracurricular activities.

5.2. Differences

Though applicants from different class origins presented several similar styles, differences predominated in other areas. In particular, applicants from different origins presented different goals for participating in TFA, dispositions that take economic resources to invoke, and linguistic styles.

5.2.1. Goals For Participating in TFA

Previous research shows that individuals from different origins tend to emphasize different goals: while those from low origins tend to focus on helping others, those from high origins more often focus on helping themselves (Jensen 1997; Skeggs 2011; Stephens, Markus, and Phillips 2014). Each type of goal appeared in the job ad: goals related to helping the organization meet its mission of reducing inequality and goals related to helping advance the applicants' personal and career development. Accordingly, we grouped applicants' goals into two themes: helping TFA and helping oneself.

As Table 6 reports, our findings show that applicants from each origin displayed different goals. Though each group wrote that they wanted to help TFA meet its organizational goals more often than they wrote that they wanted to meet their own goals, the two groups emphasized each goal to different extents. Applicants from low origins had nearly twice the odds of writing that they wanted to help TFA compared to students from high origins. By contrast, applicants from low origins had only about three quarters the odds of applicants from high origins of writing that they wanted to help themselves. The size and significance of these differences was largely consistent across models with controls. That is, students from different origins with the same

race, gender, and GPA, who attended the same university, and, of course, who could follow the same instructions, did not present the same goals for joining TFA to the same extent.

[Table 6 Here]

5.2.2. Dispositions Related to Economic Resources

Bourdieu (1984) argues that dispositions that take economic resources to invoke will be displayed at different rates by people from different origins. We observed two dispositions related to possessing economic resources: being *experienced* and being a skilled *cross-cultural communicator*. Applicants tended to invoke the first in regard to volunteer tutoring experiences – an activity that takes time away from paid work. Applicants tended to invoke the second in regards to travel. They claimed to learn to interact with different people by traveling to different parts of the world (see Table 2 for examples). As Table 7 shows, each of these dispositions was presented more often by applicants from high origins. Compared to applicants from high origins, applicants from low origins had about thirty percent lower odds of describing themselves as experienced and about fifty-five percent lower odds of describing themselves as cross-cultural communicators. These differences were significant and robust even among applicants of the same race and gender who attended the same university – among those whose access to cultural resources was likely to be particularly similar.

Applicants also identified dispositions that they associated with lacking economic resources. Some did so by referring to themselves as a *role model*. Though this disposition does not inherently relate to lacking economic resources, many applicants suggested that their own experiences growing up poor or working-class made them a positive example for those who also grew up economically disadvantaged. Compared to applicants from high origins, applicants from

low origins had about fifty percent higher odds of describing themselves as a role model – a difference that was significant across models with additional controls.

[Table 7 Here]

5.2.3. Linguistic Styles

Linguistic styles are cultural displays that stem from the habitus (Bourdieu 1993), but that have the possibility of being changed via following instructional cues, word processing systems' prompts, exposure to new styles, and time to respond and revise. We focus on the use of standard spelling and grammar, and find that applicants from each origin struggled to use standardized styles. As Table 8 shows, a non-trivial minority (11%) of applications included two or more spelling errors and the majority (58%) included two or more grammar errors. Applicants from each origin were equally likely to include two or more spelling errors. However, a difference was evident as well: applicants from low origins had 50% higher odds than applicants from high origins of including two or more grammar errors.

Teach for America's ad also included another type of standard professional writing: secular language. Though the use of secular language in the job ad could be read as an implicit instruction that applicants do the same, some applicants used religious language as well. Four percent of applicants from low origins and eight percent of applicants from high origins used religious language (see Table 2 for examples). This difference was significant; applicants from low origins had roughly half the odds of using religious language than applicants from high origins. This difference may reflect a common distinction between low and high origin individuals: that lower origins individuals are more likely to be aware of and strive to meet

others' expectations, while higher origin individuals are more likely to present their individuality (Stephens, Markus, and Phillips 2014).

[Table 8 Here]

6. Discussion

6.1. *Summary*

Cultural matching theory (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977) is among sociologists' dominant explanations of class reproduction. It holds that individuals from different class origins present different cultural styles to gatekeepers, who act upon them to reproduce existing inequalities. However, countering conditions may allow those from different origins to present gatekeepers with similar styles, thereby disrupting the reproduction of inequality. We provide the first analysis of an instance in which four of these conditions were present simultaneously: instructions, similar cultural exposure, short presentations, and time to deliberate about what styles to use.

We found that when these conditions occurred simultaneously, applicants from different origins presented several similar styles. Applicants from different origins presented largely similar goals for their potential students, dispositions unrelated to economic resources, and extracurricular activities, roles, and responsibilities. At the same time, we found that these conditions were not enough to eliminate all differences. Applicants from different origins presented different goals for applying, dispositions associated with economic resources, and linguistic styles. Some of these differences were even quite large – with one group having nearly twice the odds of the other in presenting a particular style. Thus, we conclude that instructions, similar cultural exposure, short presentations, and time to slowly-produce them are associated

with the display of some shared styles across individuals with different origins but not with the erasure of cultural differences.

6.2. Implications for Cultural Matching Theory

Our findings indicate that the premise of cultural matching theory is robust. Even when each of the reasons why individuals from different class origins present different styles were countered by processes with the potential to minimize them, we still observed several differences between the classes. This suggests that cultural styles deeply reflect class origins, even when these associations seem unlikely.

Still, our findings suggest that while the premise of cultural matching theory is robust, it is not unshakeable. Making a virtue of necessity or distancing oneself from it is at the core of Bourdieu's (1984) work, yet we see little difference in how applicants from different class origins signal these styles to gatekeepers. Other research finds that students from different origins participate in different extracurricular activities (Stuber 2009), but we observe little difference in the extracurricular activities applicants present. The disappearance of these differences under the countering conditions may matter. If gatekeepers are more likely to use cultural styles to enact class reproduction when the number of stylistic differences is large, then the countering conditions may be able to reduce class reproduction, even if they do not eliminate it.

In addition, our approach advances how we think about the sources of cultural matching. Traditionally, researchers cast individuals from different origins as likely to present different styles because they grew up in different locations within social fields (Bourdieu 1984, 1989; Lareau 2011). However, this approach assumes that the styles individuals present do not vary by

the applicant pool and application context. Our work asks researchers to not only consider how fields matter, but how countering conditions may shape the process of cultural display.

6.3. Implication for Other Theories of Cultural Presentation

Often contrasted with the idea of the habitus—which suggests that culture is deeply internalized, related to class origins, and presented consistently across domains—are the arguments of toolkit theory. Toolkit theory (Swidler 2003) holds that individuals lightly internalize culture and that cultural use follows from publicly available cues. Because of this, individuals who are exposed to the same public cues should use the same culture; their class is less relevant because culture is not deeply internalized or based upon origins. Our findings counter toolkit theory’s position that culture is lightly internalized and not based on class; at least some cultural styles seem deeply internalized, related to class, and consistently used, even when individuals are exposed to the same public culture. Yet our findings also counter a strong version of the habitus. Under the right conditions, some cultural styles are used equally by individuals from different classes. This suggests that rather than debating which cultural theory is correct, it may be more useful to understand which cultural styles are more accurately characterized by which theory.

Lahire (2003) also raises doubts about Bourdieu’s idea of dispositions. He suggests that dispositions stem from many socialization experiences, not just class, do not follow an organizing principle, and are not known to be transposable across domains. Our findings again suggest that it is less fruitful to ask who is right, Bourdieu or Lahire, than to ask for which dispositions each theory is most apt. Even under circumstances likely to produce similar displays of dispositions across classes, we saw, as Bourdieu would predict, that dispositions related to economic resources were related to class, followed this organizing principle, and abided by a

logic found in different domains (Streib 2015, 2020). At the same time, dispositions unrelated to economic resources were unrelated to class, did not follow an obvious organizing principle, and may or may not be transposable across domains – factors offering support for Lahire’s contention that various socialization experiences can shape dispositions.

6.4. Generalizability

Our findings present a plausible upper-bound of shared styles that individuals are likely to present to gatekeepers. The styles individuals present are shaped by the field they are in and are trying to enter. College students share a particularly high degree of shared cultural exposure and Teach for America asks for a particularly low number of origin-specific styles. Moreover, Teach for America’s three-page job ad, regular presence on college campuses, and website offer more information about the styles they reward than many other gatekeepers (Cappelli 2012; Feldman and Klaas 2002; Selingo 2016), and the advance lead-time of the job posting gives students a particularly long time to prepare. TFA’s mission also makes it likely that applicants assume that TFA’s staff rewards styles that are accessible to students of all classes, thereby deterring advantaged students from presenting styles that disadvantaged students are less likely to acquire. In addition, TFA is widely seen as being as selective as elite universities, and elite organizations often have the symbolic power to convince others that their standards are legitimate – enticing those from all classes to try to meet them (Bourdieu 1989; Johnson 2011; Krueger 2013; Winerip 2010). We expect that, in other situations and fields and among less selective organizations, these countering conditions will generate some similar styles among applicants from different origins, but will be accompanied by more differences. In other words, in other fields, the premise of cultural matching theory is likely to remain robust.

6.5. Future Research

Our study suggests several avenues for future research. First, would more stringent implementations of countering conditions lead to the erasure of cultural differences? Researchers could investigate if clearer instructions, more shared cultural exposure, and even shorter applications would lead to the production of only shared styles. Likewise, researchers could examine if incentivizing students to read the application instructions more carefully and respond more slowly would produce more cultural similarities. Second, researchers should investigate if the same cultural similarities exist under similar conditions when measuring origins in other ways. Would focusing on origins as measured by parental occupation, income, or wealth reveal more or fewer similarities? Third, researchers should discern why applicants from different origins are able to present some similar styles but not others, and if similarities and differences appear in subtle ways we missed, such as coming across in the same tone. Fourth, researchers should do more to examine gatekeepers' perceptions. What differences do they notice and what differences do they overlook? Of the differences they notice, whose styles do they favor, if they have a preference? And how do they weigh multiple differences at once? And, finally, we need to know more about which of the countering conditions do the most to create similarities and to what degree each matters for producing each type of similarity – answers that could be resolved by more comparative studies. Advancing these lines of work would tell us more about each side of cultural matching theory and how class reproduction is perpetuated and alleviated.

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Table 1: Sample Demographics

		Low Origins	High Origins
<i>Women</i>	White	100	100
	Black	100	100
	Hispanic	100	100
<i>Men</i>	White	100	100
	Black	76	70
	Hispanic	100	78
<i>Total</i>		576	548

Table 2. Cultural Styles in Applications: Codes, Percent Agreement, and Interrater Reliability Scores

Definition & Examples		Percent Agreement Among Coders	Gwet's AC [95% Confidence Interval]
<i>Goals for Participating in TFA</i>			
Help TFA	<p><i>Definition:</i> Wants to help meet TFA's mission by alleviating inequality or helping others</p> <p><i>Example:</i> "While many other students growing up in inner cities or slums experience a negative racial-political climate with violence and extreme cases of racism and prejudice, my experience was subtle; yet had a great impact to push me to do what I am doing today for my community... Because of this I am driven to seek change. I want to join Teach For America to help make a difference for all students and solve the issues that are preventing students from receiving the proper education needed for them to develop into leaders of the future."</p>	0.753	0.635 [0.558, 0.712]
Help Oneself	<p><i>Definition:</i> Wants to help themselves build a career, develop skills, or achieve self-growth</p> <p><i>Example:</i> "I am seeking to join TFA in order to grow as a person."</p>	0.845	0.702 [0.632, 0.772]
<i>Goals for Students</i>			
Gain Credentials	<p><i>Definition:</i> Applicant wants to help students graduate from high school or attend and/or graduate from college</p> <p><i>Example:</i> "As a corps member my goal is to help as many of my students attend college as is reasonably possible."</p>	0.900	0.853 [0.806, 0.900]
Improve Learning	<p><i>Definition:</i> Applicant wants to help students raise their attendance or learn more</p> <p><i>Example:</i> "Success would be hearing a student reading aloud a little more smoothly than last week. It would be watching a student solve an equation a little faster than before."</p>	0.731	0.531 [0.445, 0.617]
Improve Test Scores and Grades	<p><i>Definition:</i> Applicant wants to help students raise their test scores and/or grades</p> <p><i>Example:</i> "If they show improvement on assessments throughout my time being there, then I know I have at least made a small mark on their tracks toward a better future and that is what matters."</p>	0.885	0.849 [0.803, 0.895]

Gain a Positive Attitude About Learning	<p><i>Definition:</i> Applicant wants to help students enjoy learning, such as believing that learning is fun, increasing motivation to learn, or simply gaining a more positive attitude about learning or school</p> <p><i>Example:</i> “As a Teach for America corps member I hope to instill a positive outlook on education in each of my students. They should not only meet and exceed academic markers but also gain a positive attitude towards learning and school in general.”</p>	0.803	0.606 [0.528, 0.684]
Gain a Positive Attitude about Themselves	<p><i>Definition:</i> Applicant wants students to gain a positive attitude about themselves – to feel confident, happy, prideful, and/or empowered</p> <p><i>Example:</i> “Of course, children spend the majority of their time in the classroom. That is where so much of their self worth and expectations for themselves are formed. That is where a difference can be made. As a corps member, my goal would be to increase that self worth.”</p>	0.880	0.776 [0.714, 0.837]
Gain a Positive Attitude about Their Future	<p><i>Definition:</i> Applicant wants students to gain a positive attitude about their future, such as having hope or believing that hard work will pay off</p> <p><i>Example:</i> “It is often said that the sky is the limit, but I want to be the one to make bright yet disadvantaged students actually believe it.”</p>	0.848	0.783 [0.726, 0.840]
Dispositions Experienced	<p><i>Definition:</i> Frames themselves as experienced in teaching-related activities, such as tutoring, student-teaching, or working with children</p> <p><i>Example:</i> “I have spent hundreds of hours of my free time volunteering in several art-education related organizations. In an organization called [Organization], I helped give art lessons to underprivileged children. These children, without the means to provide a creative outlet were so appreciative and excited to learn and create art. Through an internship at the [Organization], in Washington DC I learned about STEAM which validated my entire perspective on education. Through STEAM, (science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics) curriculum focuses on blending subject fields together for a well-rounded education. At the [Organization], I created several lessons teaching music through different subjects such as science and math through STEAM. If chosen to work for Teach for America, I would use this experience to give my students the most well-rounded education.”</p>	0.878	0.773 [0.711, 0.835]
Cross-Cultural Communicator	<p><i>Definition:</i> Claims to be able to effectively talk to people unlike themselves, often indicated through anecdotes involving travel</p>	0.903	0.887

	<p><i>Example:</i> “During my period of study abroad in Cape Town, South Africa I faced that challenge of connecting with students who participated in an after school education program where I volunteered. I taught 10-13 year olds in Khayelitsha, South Africa's largest and poorest township. The task of connecting with my students, children whose lives had been ravaged by the legacy of Apartheid, seemed like an insurmountable task. I'd never experienced anything close to their living standards or day-to-day struggles. It took a few weeks and several games of after school soccer, but eventually the students saw my genuine interest in their lives and in their learning. Once they accepted and connected with me, they were much more receptive to my lessons.”</p>		[0.850, 0.924]
Role Model	<p><i>Definition:</i> Writes that they can serve as a role model to students</p> <p><i>Example:</i> “Growing up in a poor, drug-ridden neighborhood, I’ve had the opportunity to see how important education is and the daily challenges faced by kids at school and at home. I believe I would serve as an excellent role model to high school students.”</p>	0.848	0.772 [0.713, 0.831]
Passionate	<p><i>Definition:</i> States that one is a passionate person or passionate about activities related to working for TFA; may instead write of self as dedicated or enthusiastic</p> <p><i>Example:</i> “One can not develop a passion for something, it has to come from within. Service is one of my dear passions and it is an intrinsic quality that I have exuded throughout my whole life.”</p>	0.751	0.537 [0.452, 0.622]
Leader	<p><i>Definition:</i> States that they are a leader; leadership can refer to an innate trait or a role</p> <p><i>Example:</i> “I am a leader with a mighty voice.”</p>	0.865	0.818 [0.767, 0.869]
Hard Working & Disciplined	<p><i>Definition:</i> Considers themselves hard working, disciplined, someone who perseveres, manages time well, or is organized</p> <p><i>Example:</i> “I have developed a work ethic and determination, where nothing can stand in the way of accomplishing my ambitions.”</p>	0.810	0.725 [0.661, 0.790]
Understands Challenges of the Job	<p><i>Definition:</i> Writes that they understand that working for TFA will be difficult. They claim to have realistic expectations or are prepared for the challenge.</p>	0.875	0.830 [0.781, 0.879]

	<i>Example:</i> “I have no illusions that being a TFA member is an easy endeavor. On the contrary, I am more interested because teaching is extremely challenging and takes unwavering commitment.”		
Subject Matter Expert	<i>Definition:</i> Considers themselves prepared to teach because of their knowledge of a particular intellectual discipline <i>Example:</i> “Personally, I would love to be a math teacher and I am confident I can truly accomplish great things with my students. Because math is a subject that excites me and is very interesting, I will bring that enthusiasm to the classroom to inspire my students in a subject that is so daunting to many students (I have always been fortunate to excel in math).”	0.913	0.894 [0.857, 0.930]
Caring	<i>Definition:</i> Writes of oneself as caring, kind, empathetic, considerate, helpful, or patient <i>Example:</i> “I believe I would be an effective TFA member because I am a selfless person. I will put the needs of my students before my own and understand the greater purpose of the situation is getting them to become indulged in their education.”	0.868	0.833 [0.786, 0.880]
Intellectual	<i>Definition:</i> States that they are smart, receive high grades, or are at the top of their class <i>Example:</i> “I’ve always strived to be a good student, not because my parents told me to but because I genuinely wanted to. I can’t say I always liked school, because I found it mundane at times. I’m the type of person who likes to be challenged intellectually with topics that provoke deeper thought, and my normal classes were not always able to do this for me. These attributes make me a prime candidate for your program.”	0.885	0.855 [0.811, 0.899]
Positive	<i>Definition:</i> Presents self as having a positive attitude, cheerful, or seeing the best in others <i>Example:</i> “A teacher can provide hope for a better future. I plan to achieve this by demonstrating and maintaining a positive attitude, a skill that I have developed and strengthened my entire life.”	0.845	0.802 [0.750, 0.854]
Responsibilities			
Manager	<i>Definition:</i> Oversaw others	0.885	0.830

	<i>Example:</i> “Oversee over 400 members and 14 subgroups/ subcommittees to fulfill [Group’s] principles.”		[0.697, 0.963]
Secretary	<i>Definition:</i> Organized events or documents, recorded meetings, communicated with members <i>Example:</i> “Has responsibility of keeping meeting minutes, organizing and scheduling events, and keeping records for the organization to continue to prosper and grow.”	0.934	0.910 [0.817, 1.000]
Helper	<i>Definition:</i> Assisted others, took charge of creating an emotional tone for a group or other person, or mentored <i>Example:</i> “Assist in after school activities and help with homework.”	0.902	0.817 [0.671, 0.964]
Accountant	<i>Definition:</i> Raised, tracked, or distributed money <i>Example:</i> “To keep accurate accounts of money.”	0.967	0.937 [0.849, 1.000]
Showing Up	<i>Definition:</i> Attended events without having other responsibilities <i>Example:</i> “As a member I am required to attend meetings once a month.”	0.984	0.982 [0.946, 1.000]
<i>Writing Styles</i>			
Two or More Grammar Errors	<i>Definition:</i> Makes two or more grammatical errors, including incomplete sentences, improper punctuation and capitalization, and ending a sentence with a preposition <i>Example:</i> “Grandma [Name] and Grandpa [Name] are saints by any standard; they had 5 girls of their own and chose to adopt 5 more girls; saving these young women from life on the streets and opening their lives to new potentials.”	0.708	0.477 [0.387, 0.567]
Two or More Spelling Errors	<i>Definition:</i> Includes two or more words that are misspelled <i>Example:</i> “However, as cliché as it may sound I am not looking for any personal success, my success lies in the success of the students I have the privilege of encountering. I just hope I can give to them the same wisdom and encouragement my elementary and secondary school teachers gave me.”	0.820	0.752 [0.692, 0.813]
Religious Language	<i>Definition:</i> Uses religious language or references, often by using the words blessed, God, Jesus, or prayer <i>Example:</i> “Yesterday, I had the opportunity to attend a TFA luncheon, sponsored by my university’s Career Services office. I would like to think that I had a ‘come to	0.963	0.959 [0.937, 0.980]

Jesus' moment during that luncheon, because I realized all my past experiences and future goals instantly fit into this one program."

Table 3. Proportions and Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression of Class Origin Differences in Goals for Students

	Proportions			Diff.	Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression Models		
	Total	High Origins (N = 548)	Low Origins (N = 576)		(1) Bivariate Logistic Regression	(2) Controlling for Applicant Characteristics	(3) Controlling for Appl. Char. & University FE
<i>Makes a Virtue of Necessity</i>							
Gain Credentials	0.214	0.206	0.222	-0.016	1.100	1.072	1.069
Improve Learning	0.341	0.330	0.351	-0.020	1.095	1.123	1.119
Improve Test Scores or Grades	0.124	0.133	0.115	0.019	0.842	0.787	0.782
<i>Distant from Necessity</i>							
Gain a Positive Attitude About Learning	0.534	0.568	0.502	-0.066*	0.767*	0.779*	0.780*
Gain a Positive Attitude About Themselves	0.362	0.356	0.368	-0.012	1.054	1.061	0.971
Gain a Positive Attitude about Their Future	0.221	0.214	0.227	-0.014	1.084	1.113	1.195

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Estimates present low origins applicants' odds relative to high origin applicants. Model 2 includes controls for applicant gender, race, and cumulative college GPA; Model 3 maintains these controls and adds university fixed effects.

Table 4. Proportions and Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression of Class Origin Differences in Dispositions Unrelated to Economic Resources

	Proportions			Diff.	Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression Models		
	Total	High Origins (N = 548)	Low Origins (N = 576)		(1) Bivariate Logistic Regression	(2) Controlling for Applicant Characteristics	(3) Controlling for Appl. Char. & University FE
Passionate	0.327	0.338	0.318	0.020	0.914	0.950	0.953
Leader	0.165	0.182	0.149	0.033	0.786	0.776	0.765
Hard Working	0.157	0.142	0.170	-0.028	1.235	1.270	1.340
Understanding Challenges	0.118	0.128	0.108	0.020	0.810	0.819	0.850
Subject Knowledge	0.101	0.120	0.083	0.037*	0.664*	0.669*	0.702
Caring	0.089	0.102	0.076	0.026	0.727	0.734	0.716
Intellectual	0.093	0.080	0.100	-0.019	1.245	1.265	1.263

Note: Estimates present low origins applicants' odds relative to high origin applicants. Model 2 includes controls for applicant gender, race, and cumulative college GPA; Model 3 maintains these controls and adds university fixed effects.

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

Table 5. Proportions and Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression of Class Origin Differences in Extracurricular Activities

	Proportions			Diff.	Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression Models		
	Total	High Origins (N = 548)	Low Origins (N = 576)		(1) Bivariate Logistic Regression	(2) Controlling for Applicant Characteristics	(3) Controlling for Appl. Char. & University FE
<i>Type of Organization</i>							
Academic	0.137	0.125	0.147	0.022	1.209	1.356	1.559
Athletic	0.107	0.137	0.082	0.055*	0.564*	0.414**	0.384**
Campus	0.467	0.504	0.435	0.069	0.757	0.776	0.843
Faith-Based	0.070	0.069	0.072	-0.003	1.053	1.102	1.192
Greek	0.169	0.185	0.154	0.031	0.800	0.782	0.770
Leadership	0.133	0.137	0.130	0.007	0.942	0.983	0.984
Professional	0.604	0.573	0.630	-0.058	1.272	1.346	1.262
Service	0.394	0.419	0.373	0.046	0.825	0.830	0.779
Student Government	0.074	0.077	0.072	0.005	0.934	0.814	0.825
Paid Work	0.645	0.646	0.644	0.002	0.992	1.018	0.973
<i>Role</i>							
Leader	0.662	0.668	0.656	0.012	0.949	0.961	0.984
Supplemental Leader	0.718	0.739	0.698	0.041	0.816	0.801	0.789
General Member	0.605	0.624	0.587	0.037	0.855	0.852	0.875
<i>Responsibility</i>							
Manager	0.544	0.540	0.554	-0.014	1.080	1.090	1.096
Accountant	0.279	0.294	0.264	0.030	0.862	0.865	0.922
Secretary	0.846	0.856	0.833	0.023	0.817	0.881	0.863
Helper	0.749	0.741	0.755	-0.014	1.069	1.078	1.067
Showing Up	0.086	0.080	0.092	-0.012	1.161	1.173	1.207
<i>Role and Responsibility</i>							
Leader and Manager	0.376	0.367	0.385	-0.019	1.083	1.081	1.077

Leader and Not Manager	0.425	0.436	0.415	0.021	0.917	0.930	0.938
Supplemental Leader and Manager	0.314	0.327	0.302	0.025	0.892	0.885	0.900
Supplemental Leader and Not Manager	0.547	0.566	0.530	0.036	0.864	0.857	0.860
General Member and Manager	0.118	0.126	0.111	0.015	0.868	0.863	0.877
General Member and Not Manager	0.543	0.555	0.531	0.024	0.910	0.914	0.954
<i>Univore/Omnivore</i>							
Univore	0.154	0.133	0.171	-0.038	1.346	1.323	1.301
Omnivore – 2 Types of Orgs	0.580	0.548	0.606	-0.058	1.268	1.258	1.292
Omnivore – 3+ Types of Orgs	0.267	0.319	0.223	0.096*	0.613*	0.624*	0.620*

Note: Estimates present low origins applicants' odds relative to high origin applicants. Model 2 includes controls for applicant gender, race, and cumulative college GPA; Model 3 maintains these controls and adds university fixed effects. N's listed in column headings reflect all categories except for types of organization and univore/omnivore. TFA only asked for organization type in 2013; the N for these categories is 540.

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

Table 6. Proportions and Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression of Class Origin Differences in Goals for Participating in TFA

	Proportions			Diff.	Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression Models		
	Total	High Origins (N = 548)	Low Origins (N = 576)		(1) Bivariate Logistic Regression	(2) Controlling for Applicant Characteristics	(3) Controlling for Appl. Char. & University FE
Help TFA	0.864	0.825	0.901	-0.076***	1.934***	1.868***	1.982***
Help Oneself	0.414	0.449	0.380	0.069*	0.753*	0.767*	0.785

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Estimates present low origins applicants' odds relative to high origin applicants. Model 2 includes controls for applicant gender, race, and cumulative college GPA; Model 3 maintains these controls and adds university fixed effects.

Table 7. Proportions and Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression of Class Origin Differences in Dispositions Related to Economic Resources

	Proportions			Diff.	Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression Models		
	Total	High Origins (N = 548)	Low Origins (N = 576)		(1) Bivariate Logistic Regression	(2) Controlling for Applicant Characteristics	(3) Controlling for Appl. Char. & University FE
<i>Connected to Economic Resources</i>							
Experienced	0.388	0.429	0.349	0.080**	0.714**	0.719**	0.707**
Cross-Cultural	0.080	0.109	0.052	0.057***	0.447***	0.440***	0.416***
<i>Connected to Lack of Resources</i>							
Role Model	0.229	0.190	0.266	-0.076**	1.544**	1.505**	1.421*

Note: Estimates present low origins applicants' odds relative to high origin applicants. Model 2 includes controls for applicant gender, race, and cumulative college GPA; Model 3 maintains these controls and adds university fixed effects.

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

Table 8. Proportions and Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression of Class Origin Differences in Writing Styles

	Proportions			Diff.	Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression Models		
	Total	High Origins (N = 548)	Low Origins (N = 576)		(1) Bivariate Logistic Regression	(2) Controlling for Applicant Characteristics	(3) Controlling for Appl. Char. & University FE
Two or More Spelling Errors	0.113	0.102	0.123	-0.021	1.235	1.133	1.049
Two or More Grammar Errors	0.577	0.516	0.635	-0.119***	1.632***	1.558***	1.493**
Religious Language	0.060	0.078	0.042	0.037**	0.511*	0.517*	0.587*

Note: Estimates present low origins applicants' odds relative to high origin applicants. Model 2 includes controls for applicant gender, race, and cumulative college GPA; Model 3 maintains these controls and adds university fixed effects.

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

Appendix A: 2013 Teach For America Corps Member Job Description

About Teach For America

Teach For America is the national corps of outstanding recent college graduates, graduate students, and professionals – of all academic majors and career backgrounds – who commit two years to teach in urban and rural public schools. Our corps members become lifelong leaders in the effort to make a great education, and the opportunities that come with it, a reality for all students. Teach For America's network in the 2013-14 school year includes 11,100 corps members teaching in 48 regions across the country and nearly 32,000 alumni working in education and many other sectors to create the systemic changes that will help end educational inequity.

Teach For America provides a rigorous pre-service summer training program that is designed to further develop your leadership mindset and provide you real-world experience before entering the classroom. We place you as a full-time teacher with full salary and benefits in an urban or rural public school, and support you with coaching and ongoing professional development throughout your two years to help you achieve success in your classroom and beyond.

The Problem of Educational Inequity

In America today, 9-year-olds in low-income communities are already three grade levels behind their peers in high-income communities. Half of them won't graduate from high school. Those who do graduate will read and do math, on average, at the level of eighth graders in high-income communities. This educational inequity is one of our nation's most pressing problems, and Teach For America enlists our most promising future leaders in the movement to solve it. Through the combined efforts of our corps members and alumni, working alongside other members of the communities we serve, we will achieve our vision: One day, all children in this nation will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education.

Minimum Pre-requisites for Applying:

- Bachelor's degree by June 2014
- Minimum 2.5 cumulative undergraduate GPA
- Citizen, national, or lawful permanent resident of the United States or have received deferred action for childhood arrivals
- Candidates of all backgrounds, academic majors, and career interests encouraged to apply
- No educational coursework or certification required to apply

Qualifications

Each year, we select a diverse corps of individuals who have the skills and commitment to improve the quality of education for students growing up today in low-income communities. Our corps members possess skills and experiences from their work, leadership, and academic backgrounds that are invaluable in affecting change in their classrooms.

We Look For Individuals Who Possess the Following Characteristics:

- A deep belief in the potential of all kids and a commitment to do whatever it takes to expand opportunities for students

- Demonstrated leadership ability and superior interpersonal skills to motivate others
- Strong achievement in academic, professional, extracurricular, and/or volunteer settings
- Perseverance in the face of challenges, ability to adapt to changing environments, and a strong desire to do whatever it takes to improve and develop
- Excellent critical thinking skills, including the ability to accurately link cause and effect and to generate relevant solutions to problems
- Superior organizational ability, including planning well and managing responsibilities effectively
- Respect for individuals' diverse experiences and the ability to work effectively with people from a variety of backgrounds

Education coursework or certification is not required to apply to Teach For America.

Apply Now by visiting our website: www.teachforamerica.org.

Positions/ Locations

- Our corps members teach grades Pre-K through 12 and more than 10 different subjects. Subjects include mathematics, social studies/history, English/language arts, science, special education, early childhood education, bi-lingual, and English as a second language.
- We currently place corps members in 48 urban and rural regions across the country.

If you are invited to a final interview, you'll be able to tell us your regional, subject, and grade-level preferences. We make every effort to meet your preferences while also balancing regional needs and placement availability and adhering to district and state requirements.

Compensation and Benefits

Corps members are full-time teachers employed by school districts. They receive full salaries and the same comprehensive health benefits as other beginning teachers. We recognize that personal finances vary widely from person to person, so additional benefits, such as funding for relocation, testing, start-up costs, and student loans may also be available.

Snapshot of Corps Member Compensation

- Salary
- Health insurance
- Retirement benefits
- AmeriCorps benefits including federal loan forbearance, interest accrual payments, and education awards may be available*
- Money for relocation and transition
- Educator discounts
- Exclusive scholarships and benefits from graduate schools and employers

*Teach For America is currently a member of AmeriCorps. Given the nature of the AmeriCorps competitive grant process and the dependence on Congressional funding cycles, we cannot guarantee these benefits for all TFA corps members. Additionally, corps members must meet citizenship and service term requirements to be eligible for AmeriCorps membership and

subsequent access to AmeriCorps benefits. Per regulations, the AmeriCorps education award and interest accrual payments are considered to be taxable income for the year they are used.

Additional Benefits

As a Teach For America corps member, you will:

- Take on an intense personal challenge to address educational inequity in your classroom.
- Develop leadership, communication, management, and problem solving skills, among others.
- Set an ambitious vision of your students' academic success and invest them and their families in working hard toward that vision.
- Go above and beyond traditional expectations in order to help your students excel academically.
- Plan purposefully, execute effectively, and work relentlessly to ensure that students growing up in low-income communities are given the educational opportunity they deserve.
- Develop lasting relationships and build a network of colleagues and friends that will provide you with support both during your corps experience and for many years to come.
- Join the Teach For America network of over 43,000 corps members and alumni working to close the achievement gap in every sector, from education to policy to medicine.

Apply Now

- To learn more and to apply, visit our website at www.teachforamerica.org.
- To apply, upload onto our website a resume, letter of intent meeting our guidelines, and complete supplemental application questions.