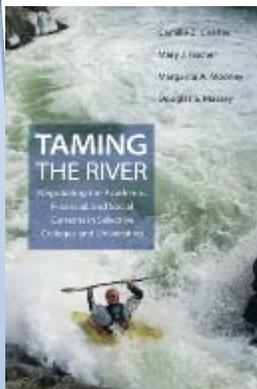


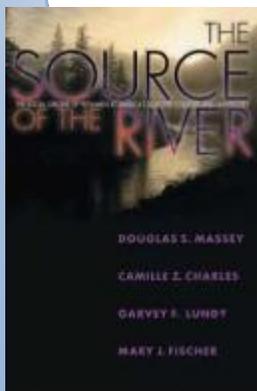


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Published Books



Charles, Camille Z., et al.  
*Taming the River: Negotiating the Academic, Financial, and Social Currents in Selective Colleges and Universities.*  
 Princeton: Princeton University Press (2009).



Massey, Douglas S., et al.  
*The Source of the River: The Social Origins of Freshmen at America's Selective Colleges and Universities.*  
 Princeton: Princeton University Press (2003)

If you publish...

Please let us know at [nlsf@princeton.edu](mailto:nlsf@princeton.edu).  
 Thanks for your interest on the NLSF.



# National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen

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## What is the NLSF?

NLSF provides comprehensive data to test different theoretical explanations for minority underperformance in college. The NLSF follows a cohort of first-time freshmen at selective colleges and universities through their college careers. It sampled equal numbers of Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians at each of the 28 participating schools.

## NLSF Survey

We designed a survey that included equal-sized samples of white, black, Asian, and Latino freshmen entering selective colleges and universities. The baseline survey consists of face-to-face interviews that compiled detailed information about the neighborhood, family, and educational environments students experience before entering college.

The survey also assesses their attitudes, aspirations, and motivations at the time of entry. The follow-up surveys take place via telephone interview in the Spring of each academic year to gather information from the same students about their social, psychological, and academic experiences on campus.

By combining retrospective data captured in the baseline survey with prospective information compiled in years 1 through 4, we sought to create a longitudinal database stretching from childhood through college graduation. This design provides a basis for linking pre-college experiences to behaviors and psychological states emerging in the course of higher education, and for sorting out the direction of causality between determinants and outcomes. Those dropping out of college or transferring to another institution are followed, interviewed, and retained in the survey to avoid building selection biases into the sample.

## Sample

4,573 students were approached in Wave 1, of whom 3,924 completed the survey for a response rate of 86%. By Wave 5, we were able to survey 3,098 students for a response rate of 79%.

Baseline Survey	Total	White	Asian	Latino	Black
Number Selected	4,573	1,202	1,118	1,071	1,182
Completed Interviews	3,924 86%	998 83%	959 86%	916 86%	1,051 89%

Follow-Up Surveys	Total	White	Asian	Latino	Black
Number in Baseline	3,924	998	959	916	1,051
Freshman (Wave 2)	3,728 95%	935 94%	920 96%	864 94%	1,009 96%
Sophomore (Wave 3)	3,475 89%	877 88%	856 89%	810 88%	932 89%
Junior (Wave 4)	3,280 84%	842 84%	821 86%	765 84%	852 81%
Senior (Wave 5)	3,098 79%	814 82%	765 80%	721 79%	798 76%

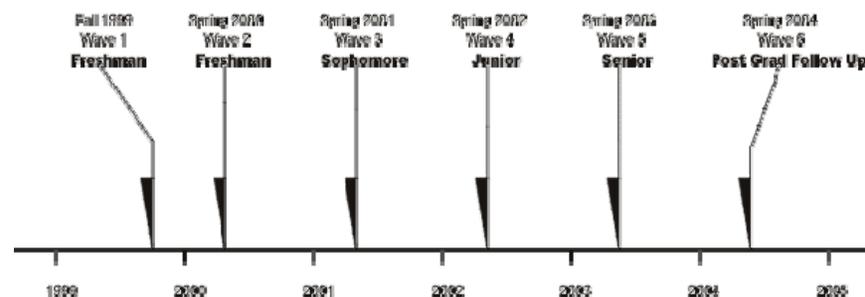
## Participating Schools

28 school participated: 9 Liberal Arts Colleges, 14 private research universities, 4 public research universities, and 1 historically black college.



## Data Collection and Public Data

Data were collected in five waves; and, as of Summer 2008, all five waves of the NLSF are available for public use and all waves can be merged to the baseline data (Wave 1) using the respondents' unique case ID.



**Wave 1**, the baseline survey, includes detailed information on student's background such as family structure, neighborhood, and school characteristics, at age 6, 12, and one year prior to entering college. It also includes information about student's preparation for college, peer networks, and racial/ethnic attitudes. Wave 1 data include summary variables about the respondent's household; a separate file (household roster) contains information about each household member.

**Wave 2** contains detailed information about courses taken, grades earned, social networks, time use, living arrangements, financial matters, relationships, and students' perception of prejudice on campus.

**Wave 3** contains much of the same information, plus the factors in the students' decision to attend college, information on high school SAT scores, majors chosen, career plans, and employment while in school.

**Wave 4** includes information about expected degree, mentoring received, extracurricular group involvement, personal health and emotional problems.

**Wave 5** includes information about terms studied abroad, college debts, plans for employment, career, and higher education and respondents' perception of their own/other racial and ethnic groups in terms of identity, incidences of discrimination and prejudice, as well as certain opinions and behavior.

**Graduation Data** has been drawn from offices of the registrar at the 28 participating schools in the NLSF, and the National Student Clearinghouse. Data include information on whether respondents graduated within 4 or 6 years and a summary measure of the paths taken by the NLSF students in pursuit of a bachelor's degree.