
Am I Smart Enough? Will I Make Friends? And Can I Even Afford It? Exploring the College-Going Dilemmas of Black and Latino Adolescent Boys

RODERICK L. CAREY

University of Delaware

Black and Latino adolescent boys and young men from low-income communities face numerous perceived and actual barriers to achieving their postsecondary educational goals. To advocate for more precise interventions, this study investigated how black and Latino eleventh grade boys' college ambitions were shaped by their school's college-going culture, racial stereotyping, and their families' economic marginalization. Drawing from social cognitive theory, the author examined the boys' college-going dilemmas as internal (e.g., participants' self-assessments of their academic [un]preparedness and [un]ease about making new friends) and external (e.g., concerns about affording college, given limited financial resources and familial responsibilities).

Few educational policy and practice agendas are more vital than those focused on the most optimal ways prekindergarten (PK) through grade 12 schools prepare all of their graduates for postsecondary educational pathways. Individuals with postsecondary educations are more likely to report better health outcomes and to engage in higher levels of volunteerism and civic participation, and in addition to earning more money, they report an overall greater degree of life satisfaction in comparison to those who do not attend college (Baum et al. 2013; Dee 2004; Savitz-Romer and Bouffard 2012). However, youth from racially and economically marginalized groups continually find their postsecondary educational pathways blocked for economic, societal, and institutional reasons (Aronson 2008; Goldrick-Rab 2006; Perez-Felkner 2015). In addition to racial and economic oppressions contributing to the obstacles students of color face in

Electronically published March 20, 2019

American Journal of Education 125 (May 2019)

© 2019 by The University of Chicago. All rights reserved.

0195-6744/2019/12503-00XX\$10.00

MAY 2019 000

PK–12 schools (Milner 2015), researchers continue to uncover the ways that a multitude of other educational barriers disrupt particularly boys and young men of color, as they aspire to graduate high school, access higher education, succeed in college, and even imagine postgraduate studies (Burt et al. 2018; Carey 2018; Dancy 2012; Davis 2006; Davis and Jordan 1994; Gasman et al. 2017; Harper and CSREE 2014; Harper and Wood 2016; Howard 2014; Johnson 2013; McGowan et al. 2016; Noguera et al. 2013; Sáenz and Ponjuán 2009). In addition to encountering actual educational barriers, black and Latino adolescent boys make meaning of these barriers in light of their likelihood to overcome them, and thus maintain numerous feelings and other socio-affective concerns that weigh heavily on them as they seek access to postsecondary education (Anderson and Larson 2009; Carey 2018; Martinez and Huerta 2018).

Studies of successful black and Latino men who overcame barriers, reflecting back on their high school experiences, indicate the importance of familial supports, caring and supportive teachers, early college exposure, and creative interventions by educational providers for not just telling boys and young men about their college potential but also supporting them to ensure successful matriculation (Brooms 2017; Johnson and McGowan 2017; McGowan et al. 2016; Rodríguez et al. 2013; Squire and Mobley 2015; Strayhorn 2015; Warren and Bonilla 2018). Although these studies offer considerable value to our understandings of the precollege lives of black and Latino boys and young men, they rely on the retrospective accounts of adults who, years removed from their high school experiences, may miss exposing the crucial nuances that played into their thinking during their college-going process, given the influence of their unique school contexts. Capturing and analyzing this thinking—these in-the-moment and in-context challenges or even hopes that boys maintain in spite of barriers—offers educators evidence of the policies and practices that presently work or fail in supporting boys' of color perceived understandings of themselves as students and future collegians (Carey 2018; Flowers et al. 2003; Howard 2003).

In this article, I investigate perspectives on college going and college access, as described by five black and Latino adolescent boys during their eleventh grade year at one US public charter secondary school in an urban community. Par-

RODERICK L. CAREY is an assistant professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Sciences in the University of Delaware's College of Education and Human Development. His current interdisciplinary research focuses on family and school influences on the ways that black and Latino boys and young men conceptualize and enact elements of their postsecondary educational and other life ambitions.

ticular focus is on my participants' accounts of their "college preparation process" (Griffin and Allen 2006, 479), which refers to students' experiences developing various academic skills and other forms of knowledge that shape their college choice and readiness (Griffin and Allen 2006). I investigated their processes, mindful of ways that black and Latino adolescent boys from urban school communities encounter barriers to postsecondary access related in part to economic marginalization and structural racism. I also report on findings rooted in social cognitive theory, which considers the ways individuals acquire knowledge about a phenomenon or understand the steps to achieve a goal by observing the behaviors of individuals around them (Bandura 1986). Social cognitive theory also posits that as individuals extrapolate meaning from situations, they form self-appraisals based on their cognitive abilities and in turn form self-efficacy beliefs about their likelihood of goal attainment (Bandura 1986). Expanding on this general definition, person-centered variables (i.e., internal variables) relate to or interact with aspects of the person's environment (i.e., external variables) to shape the course of development (Bandura 1986; Lent et al. 2000; Swanson and Woitke 1997). I utilize social cognitive theory, embedded within what I call "college-going internal and external dilemmas," to make sense of the ways black and Latino boys formed self-appraisals by evaluating their own cognitive and noncognitive factors that both supported and would likely obstruct them from accessing and eventually achieving postsecondary education success (Carey 2018).

More specifically, internal dilemmas were triggered by participants' beliefs about their cognitive, academic, or personality-based attributes. External dilemmas were due, at least in part, to individuals, situations, or other socially based circumstances external to them. I use the concept of internal and external college-going dilemmas to frame findings that reveal the ways participants approached their schoolwork, their interest in college, and the perceived likelihood of eventual college enrollment and success.

In addition to employing social cognitive theory to unearth the challenges black and Latino boys face in seeking out college, another salient goal of this study is to add to the discourse of college preparatory charter schools, often viewed as salient in stimulating and sustaining the college aspirations of marginalized youth in urban communities (Carey 2016, 2018; Marsh and Noguera 2018; Martinez et al. 2018; Rhoden 2017). I consider the college-going challenges and anxieties harbored by a group of adolescent boys in the same grade and school and offer findings that point to the ways that schools, which center college going so prominently in their mission, can sometimes miss the mark in the school lives of the very students they seek to serve.

Schools that are serious about implementing effective college-going supports for students—especially those marginalized and denied power owing to various intersections of their race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status—must

simultaneously enact equitable and antioppressive school cultures (Carey et al. 2018). Moreover, schools implementing college-going cultures in the absence of culturally responsive approaches for racially, ethnically, and economically oppressed students will never meet their goals of truly preparing students equitably for their college ambitions (Knight and Marciano 2013). As will be revealed in this study, racial and ethnic stereotyping, infused in grading and other school practices, detracted from participants' ability to see themselves as worthy enough, let alone likely to attend college. In this regard, the findings speak back to both the broader structures working against the future aspirations of black and Latino boys and young men, generally, and to the research base on the importance of college-going cultures (Harper 2015; Harper and CSREE 2014; Holland and Farmer-Hinton 2009; Knight and Marciano 2013; Welton and Martinez 2014), particularly within charter schools with an explicit college-going focus.

Last, student voices are critical but often unheard in the policy decision making and practices of most schools (Carey et al. 2018; Liou and Rotheram-Fuller 2016; Mitra and Gross 2009; Pazy and DeMatthews 2016; Scott et al. 2013). With so many educational stakeholders talking about boys and young men of color and poised to support their academic and social ambitions, surprisingly few studies employ high school student voices in the research that shapes the practices of their schools. Another contribution of this article is the depth of reflection shown in the perspectives of adolescent boys grappling with their present educational conditions and future college aspirations. Findings suggest that educational stakeholders devoted to securing college access for marginalized groups like boys of color must advance policies that help students navigate the competing interests, conflicting pressures, and inherent dilemmas that college going invokes.

Research in Context

Black and Latino adolescent boys face multiple structural and cognitive challenges as they consider and prepare for college (Griffin et al. 2010; Harper and CSREE 2014; Irizarry 2012; Johnson and McGowan 2017; Swail et al. 2005). Lower teacher expectations (Marsh and Noguera 2018; Oakes 2005), disproportional disciplinary practices (Bristol and Mentor 2018; Brown and Rodriguez 2009; Bryan 2017; DeMatthews et al. 2017; Gregory et al. 2010), and inadequate school funding (Neckerman 2007) all underscore actual barriers that prevent the school success and college matriculation of boys of color, particularly those in urban contexts. In addition to these more widely acknowledged phenomena, research reveals other college-related barriers that black and Latino boys perceive and encounter. This includes scholarship that highlights how in-

ternalized racial stereotypes and socioaffective barriers are experienced during high school, as well as how college students retrospectively discuss factors that contributed to their own college-related challenges and success. This review delineates between internal factors (e.g., internalized feelings regarding ability, motivation, academic/social preparation) and external factors inherent in the college processes of youth (e.g., financial concerns facing families).

Internalized Racism and Self-Doubting Framing Internal Dilemmas

As stated, internal dilemmas are based in participants' beliefs about their own cognitive, academic, or personality-based attributes. Because schools are instrumental developmental contexts for students, it is important to consider these environments as key contributors to individuals' internal dilemmas. School factors like the curriculum, grading policies, and teachers' belief systems contribute to much of the social alienation and academic challenges many boys of color face in schools (Davis and Jordan 1994). Other factors like the amount of hope and optimism infused within the school culture—not just the control mechanisms and disciplinary procedures—also contribute to why some boys and young men of color believe they will find success in college and others believe they will not (Harper 2015; Harper and CSREE 2014).

Underlying the PK–12 school factors that contribute to their challenges are historical stereotypes about their abilities, which often compel high school students from racially marginalized communities to feel intimidated by the prospect of college-level academic coursework (Freeman 1997; Steele 2003). Researchers cannot attribute all black and Latino boys' anxieties about college to internalized racism, yet it is important to consider how school-based messages that indicate their academic and social potential inform their sense of college readiness and anticipations for college success. For example, studies have linked stereotype threat (Steele 2003) to reduced working memory capacity or one's inability to focus on a singular task while keeping other task-irrelevant thoughts at bay (Engle 2001; Schmader and Johns 2003). "Focus," defined by Wood and Palmer (2014) as "the degree of attention directed toward academic matters" (142), plays into how well students can attend to academic requirements. However, academic focus is often difficult to achieve for black and Latino boys navigating layers of racial stereotypes.

Beyond racial stereotypes, intersections among race, ethnicity, and gender-role expectations inform the problematic assumptions guiding much of the discourse of what education can and should mean in relation to black and Latino boyhood, masculinity, and manhood (Carey et al. 2018; Dancy 2011, 2012; Dumas and Nelson 2016). With black boys being more readily perceived through societal imagery as athletes than as scholars (Carey 2015; Howard 2014), and

Latino boys seen more as docile, yet chauvinistic, potential manual laborers (Noguera et al. 2013), boys of color must do so much cognitive work to undo narrow, harmful images of themselves to imagine college for their life. Moreover, encompassed in the challenges boys and young men of color face preparing for college are not just the negative portrayals others perceive of them but also the negative beliefs boys and young men of color internalize of themselves as “college material” (Harper and CSREE 2014).

A core ethnoracial stereotype for both Latinx and black youth is their lack of academic capabilities or intelligence (Steele 2003). It comes as no surprise then that in a mixed-gender quantitative study of Mexican American and white juniors and seniors from one Midwest and one Southwest high school, McWhirter et al. (2007) found that Mexican American students were more likely to perceive internal, cognitive barriers to their college success. Specifically, Mexican American students anticipated being academically underprepared and lacking the motivation, ability, and confidence to succeed and fit in at higher levels than white peers (McWhirter et al. 2007). In a prior study of Mexican American and white high school juniors and seniors ($n = 1,139$), McWhirter (1997) similarly found significant ethnic differences when investigating students’ perceived barriers to attending college and perceived dilemmas anticipated in college. For instance, in response to survey items related to “If I don’t go to college, it will probably be because of . . .” (McWhirter 1997, 136), Mexican American students were more likely than their white counterparts to respond with notions like “not being smart enough.” In addition, Mexican American respondents were more likely than their white counterparts to believe that if they did go to college, they would struggle academically (McWhirter 1997). These findings hold across other racially marginalized students.

In a mixed-gender qualitative study of 13 first-generation black collegians from one urban high school, Reid and Moore (2008) found that 10 of the 13 students in their sample felt unprepared for many of the academic aspects of college. Even those students in the sample with higher high school grade point averages (GPAs), including students with 4.0s, believed themselves to lack time management skills and be ill-prepared for the rigors of college-level work. Although academic deficiencies can contribute to college students feeling academically unprepared, a diminished sense of academic confidence prior to college also is a key factor that detracts from college success, particularly in the domains of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Strayhorn (2015) found that academic confidence was a major factor in the precollege attributes that contributed to black men finding eventual success in college (e.g., earning good grades, persisting in college), especially in STEM majors. Studies such as these indicate that black and Latinx youth internalize stereotypes and harbor internal beliefs regarding their academic preparation for college demands. Pre-

college beliefs have strong implications for students' academic self-confidence because precollege academic experiences are among the most important contributors to the academic success of college students of color (Griffin et al. 2010).

Sustaining Community Kinship Framing Internal Dilemmas

Research has shown the importance of peer networks and interactions in the ways black and Latinx youth form and sustain college-going aspirations and plans (Marciano 2017). In addition, a desire to maintain connection to social networks established prior to college might cause anxiety for black and Latinx future first-generation college graduates (Freeman 2005; Sáenz et al. 2016). Creating new networks can be a significant challenge for racially marginalized students away from their home communities for the first time and unfamiliar with the norms and values adopted on college campuses. Factors including integrating into the campus community and extracurricular scene (Johnson 2013; Kuh et al. 2011; Palmer and Young 2009), making new friends (Paul and Brier 2001), and developing institutional connectedness (Campbell and Mislevy 2013) are skills that, if not adequately mastered, could evolve into significant barriers to early collegians' success. Paul and Brier (2001) offer the concept of "friendsickness," which details the "preoccupation with and concern for the loss of or change in precollege friendships" (77). Many youth experience friendsickness when they move away from a network of friends, and it poses a significant relational challenge as students enter college (Paul and Brier 2001). Friendsickness can be particularly difficult for black and Latino boys and young men from low-income communities, who may be the first in their home or community to attend college, and who developed deep kinship relations with friends who stayed home and did not attend college.

Financial Challenge and Family Obligation as Influencing External Dilemmas

As noted, external dilemmas are those caused in part by individuals, situations, or other socially based circumstances external to the individual student. They extend beyond the individual learner into the macrolevel influences and the local community and family networks that influence students' development (Carey 2018). Insufficient familial financial aid knowledge and support reflect two of the most important, and overlapping, dilemmas facing racially and economically marginalized college goers.

For example, in an ethnographic study of 14 mostly Latinx and black high school seniors at a public, college-oriented Bronx, New York, school, Green-

field (2015) found that participants' families supported their college ambitions but offered little support when it came to the college financial aid process. Findings from Greenfield's study align with those of other researchers who have found that although black and Latinx families from low-income communities support the college ambitions of their children (Carey 2016; Freeman 2005; Jayakumar et al. 2013; Kimura-Walsh et al. 2009; Martinez 2013), they misunderstand both the actual cost of a college education and the process to secure the best financial aid options (Carey 2018; Greenfield 2015; Martinez et al. 2018; Page and Scott-Clayton 2016; Perna 2005). Indeed, students' decisions about whether or not to attend college or which college to pursue are influenced by their understandings of their family's ability to afford college, which may not be based in accurate assessments of either their family's finances or an understanding of financial aid options (Carey 2018; Poynton et al. 2015).

Families, some adhering to cultural norms, play other roles in contributing to youths' anticipatory obstacles (Lor 2017) or college-going dilemmas (Carey 2018). Seen in families of color broadly, but particularly salient in the Latinx community, is a commitment to family termed *familismo* that happens when the needs of the family supersede the desires of the individual. It guides the decision making of many Latinx youth weighing college aspirations with familial responsibilities (Martinez 2013). In addition, young men of color often connect their educational aspirations to their constructs of manhood. Many weigh their responsibility to attend and complete college with their role as son, brother, and protector of their families (Anderson and Larson 2009; Carey 2016, 2018; Dancy 2011).

Other commitments to family have been shown to be salient factors in the ways students of color perceive college going (Lor 2017; McWhirter 1997). For instance, in McWhirter's (1997) study of high school juniors and seniors, Mexican American participants were more likely than white participants to view family concerns about their college goals as potential preventative factors shaping their college-going mind-sets. Mexican American respondents were also more likely than their white counterparts to believe that if they did go to college, their families would maintain negative attitudes about them being away from home (McWhirter 1997). These findings do not indicate that families were unsupportive of their children's educational goals (McWhirter 1997). Instead, they point to ways that Latinx parents may encourage their children to live at or stay close to home during college to keep them within the family network (i.e., to help raise their siblings, to provide moral support to the student, etc.) (Carey 2018; Turley 2006). The material need of some families in urban contexts for labor in childcare, earnings, or general familial support should not be minimized. Undoubtedly, boys' sense of obligation to their families in relation to perceived home and college duties can be seen as both an internal and external dilemma, as some economically marginalized youth of color feel especially connected to

and responsible for the success of their family unit (Anderson and Larson 2009; Carey 2018; Lor 2017; Martinez and Huerta 2018).

Academic and Institutional Contexts of College-Going Dilemmas

Given this article's focus on understanding the college-going dilemmas of students at one college-oriented secondary school, it is important to consider literature that situates the importance of school contexts in shaping and influencing youths' college preparation process. Black and Latinx students rely heavily on their high schools to successfully navigate the college preparation and access process (Farmer-Hinton 2011; Griffin and Allen 2006; Holland and Farmer-Hinton 2009; Kimura-Walsh et al. 2009; Scott et al. 2013). Because PK–12 educational choices and school quality are often beyond the control of the individual student, the extent to which academic institutions underprepare students for college contributes to youths' college-going dilemmas.

Schools that best serve students' college-going needs help students navigate many perceived obstacles in preparing for college admissions and equip them with skills to eventually find success (Irizarry 2012). For example, in his 3-year ethnographic study of two groups of Latinx students from two different schools during their final years of high school, Irizarry (2012) found that students who attended the school that best met their academic and personal needs eventually excelled within their respective colleges. Given findings like these, the importance of high schools, especially those that provide high levels of cognitive, social, and institutional supports for black and Latinx students' college aspirations and preparation, cannot be overstated (Duncheon 2018; Griffin and Allen 2006; Kimura-Walsh et al. 2009; Knight and Marciano 2013; Swail et al. 2005; Welton and Martinez 2014).

Gaps in the Literature

A growing body of literature is focusing on the nuances of the college preparation and college-going process from the perspectives of high school students of color (Anderson and Larson 2009; Carey 2016, 2018; Duncheon 2018; Gibbs Grey 2018; Lor 2017; Marciano 2017; Martinez et al. 2018). However, to better inform school policies, the literature needs even more studies that advance discourses centering on the voiced experiences of adolescents from urban communities as they grapple with the internal and external dilemmas that college going incites. Because of studies conducted with recent high school graduates and men reflecting on their high school experiences, we know some of the cognitive and noncognitive challenges black and Latino collegians overcame to

eventually access college (e.g., Davis 1994; Sáenz et al. 2016; Scott et al. 2013; Strayhorn 2015; Warren and Bonilla 2018), but more studies are needed with adolescents navigating precollege factors, in real time. In this regard, there is much more to know about the experiences of students of color who bridge that gap between high school experiences and postsecondary educational expectations (Anderson and Larson 2009; Kirst and Venezia 2004).

Furthermore, studies that take up related constructs, like students' perceived barriers (a closely related construct) or dilemmas for their postsecondary plans, typically do so using quantitative rather than qualitative tools. Although these quantitative studies are valuable in gaining broad, macrolevel understandings of students' mind-sets about themselves and their futures (e.g., McWhirter 1997; Poynton et al. 2015), studies are needed that harness the nuances and crucial complexities, as voiced through youths' own perspectives while navigating multiple sites of influence. This study adds to the literature by focusing on students' own college-going dilemmas in the present-day context of their college-oriented secondary school. Given the significance of race and economic marginalization in shaping black and Latino boys' educational experiences and through the lens of the college-going dilemmas they held during eleventh grade, I pose solutions aimed at improving research, policy, and school practice to bolster students' accurate beliefs about themselves as "college material."

Methodology

Research Design and Setting

Ethnographic case study data were gathered at Metropolitan Collegiate Public Charter School (a pseudonym)—referenced also as "Metro Collegiate" or "Metro"—an economically, linguistically, racially, and ethnically diverse urban charter school in the mid-Atlantic United States that served 1,000 students in PK (enrolling 3-year-olds) through grade 12. I selected the well-regarded Metro Collegiate because of its student racial demographics—particularly for its high Latinx and black student population—and its explicit college-going culture. Through successful fund-raising and capital campaigns, the school had resources to offer students a beautifully renovated building, competitive athletic opportunities, and a relatively desirable student-teacher ratio (10 to 1). The 320-student population of the high school division was approximately 54% Latinx, 41% black, 2% white, 1.5% Asian, and 1.5% other. Nearly 16% of students were English-language learners, and 79% qualified for free and reduced-price meals. In a school with a 95% black and Latinx population, faculty diversity (59% white) did not mirror the diversity of the student population, with only one black male teacher of a core academic subject and one Latino man who was one of the two college counselors.

As indicated, Metro Collegiate served a high percentage of students from low-income families and communities, and beyond providing free and reduced-price meal resources, it struggled to support the specific needs of students at the intersection of racial and economic marginalization. Academic supports were provided mostly for students with special needs designations; disciplinary practices were swift, particularly against black boys; and because the school was so sought after by families, Metro school leaders had no difficulty replacing expelled students with others off of their lengthy waitlist. Students needed to be self-sufficient and motivated, and this expectation pervaded the college-going culture. Although students' teachers taught with college in mind, only two staff members were charged with securing college admission for 100% of the senior class, a daunting task given how few students' parents or other family members attended.

Metro Collegiate maintained a robust college-going culture and rigorous curriculum that provided students with no support for noncollege postsecondary options. Students were ushered onto yearly college tours and were immersed in college-going messaging via their college counselors, who made weekly announcements in class meetings. College-going messages were visual too: throughout the high school division, college signage, posters, pennants, and certain seniors' acceptance notifications were prominently featured. Students received supplemental assistance to secure local and national scholarships and were expected to apply to at least three colleges or universities during their senior year. Data were gathered within the time frame of nearly an entire academic school year, specifically between November 2013 and June 2014, in the 320-student high school division. Given this time frame and the parameters of a qualitative case study as "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (Merriam 2009, 43), this study was bounded by both space and time. Employing a qualitative case study methodology that drew from ethnographic approaches for interviewing and observation was ideal to capture the depth of student reflections and the often-invisible norms of Metro's college-going culture. Further support for utilizing a case study approach (see Yin 2003) related to the nature of my questions (e.g., typically "how" and "why" questions), my inability to manipulate or alter the setting studied (e.g., Metro Collegiate was a bounded system), and my interest in the relationship between my participants and their immediate context (e.g., how participants understood their ambitions in relation to school influences).

Participants and Recruitment Rationale

I focus on what Griffin and Allen (2006) refer to as the "college preparation process," or students' experiences with gaining not only academic skills but also

College-Going Dilemmas of Adolescent Boys of Color

the other information needed to facilitate college choice and readiness. Whereas students in ninth and tenth grade consider college going, by eleventh grade US students are steeped in the process for preparing to apply (e.g., taking the PSAT, SAT, and ACT tests; reviewing college solicitation materials) and are developing concrete plans for both attending and funding their college educations (Hossler et al. 1999). Given my interest in the underlying tensions triggered during the process leading up to college going, eleventh-graders were an ideal population to study.

In addition, this study centered on the experiences of eleventh-grade black and Latino boys who were born in United States. Reflected here are the educational experiences of boys from the two largest ethnic/racial groups (i.e., black and Latinx youth) attending the city's public schools—nonimmigrant blacks and Salvadorans. Participants were recruited in various ways. I presented the study during an eleventh-grade class meeting; distributed permission forms to interested students; and only two participants, Lucas and Malik (pseudonyms), returned forms. As I began to immerse myself into the Metro Collegiate culture, I was able to solicit participation from King, Perdido, and Samuel (pseudonyms), with whom I interacted informally on class field trips and met while observing Lucas and Malik in classes.

Participant Descriptions

As detailed in table 1, all five participants were born and raised in a large mid-Atlantic US city. Malik, Samuel, and King self-described as black or African American, and both Perdido and Lucas as Latino, of Salvadoran heritage. To afford participants greater ownership of their narratives, they chose their own pseudonyms, which they picked for various reasons. For example, Lucas, heavily active in his church, was captivated by the biblical name Luke. Perdido (translated from Spanish as “lost”) believed his pseudonym reflected the candid belief of his uncertain life path.

With the exception of King, who was 16 years old, all other participants were 17 years old during the majority of the study. Two participants came from self-described low-income families (Samuel and Perdido), whereas the other three described themselves as working or middle class (Malik, King, and Lucas). All participants lived in mostly racially—and economically—isolated communities. Besides Malik, whose mother completed college with a bachelor's degree, and King, whose stepmother graduated, participants would be the first in their immediate families to complete college with a degree. Participants had a range of academic records. Whereas Samuel, Lucas, and King were mostly midrange to high achievers (GPAs at 2.5 or higher), Perdido and Malik were lower to mid-range (GPAs at 2.0–2.5).

TABLE 1

Descriptive Data for Participants

	King	Lucas	Malik	Perdido	Samuel
Race/ethnicity	Black or African American	Latino (Salvadoran)	Black or African American	Latino (Salvadoran)	Black or African American
Age	16	17	17	17	17
Born in the US?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Parents born in the US?	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Self-identified social class	Working/middle	Working/middle	Working/middle	Low-income	Low-income
Parent education level	Bachelor's degree	Middle school	Bachelor's degree	Middle school	Some college
Junior-year GPA	2.66	3.63	2.28	2.44	2.89
Took AP classes?	Yes (1)	Yes (2)	No	No	Yes (1)
Anticipated an athletic or academic scholarship?	Yes, either	Yes, academic	No	No	Unsure
Type of "dream school"	Division I football college	Highly competitive college but affordable	Historically Black College or University	An affordable college close to home	A college in a safe community

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Sources

Data sources primarily included individual interviews with youth participants. However, observational data and artifact and document analysis (e.g., school mission statement, student GPAs, school website) influenced my findings regarding the school culture. I observed participants in their academic classes and in their informal learning environments (e.g., gym, cafeteria, field trips) to inform and refine interview protocols regarding their school experiences. I captured these observations in field notes and coded them along with interviews and other data sources such as photographs of posters and college pennants. As noted in the literature, these artifacts provided key insights into school culture (Anderson-Levitt 2006), which at Metro Collegiate was college preparatory.

In this study, I more prominently feature data gathered utilizing in-depth, semistructured interviews (Seidman 2013) with student participants. I interviewed all but one participant for 45–60 minutes in either classrooms or meeting rooms after school, four times over the course of the school year. Four of the five participants were interviewed four times. One (Lucas) was interviewed twice, because of continual scheduling conflicts. However, his second interview was extended to cover all interview questions and lasted approximately 90 minutes.

Aligning with the in-depth interview method advanced by Seidman (2013), the first interview centered on participants' home and academic backgrounds and personal descriptions. Although descriptive data were elicited with questions regarding age, parental education levels, and grades, the most generative question from the first interview for this study was "How would you describe yourself as a person?" The second interview centered primarily on participants' perceptions of college and of the ways the school supported them in achieving their college ambitions. Inquiries like "Do you want to go to college? If so, why? If not, why not?" and "What's the best thing about going to this school?" and prompts like "Tell me about the classes you're currently taking" compelled participants to share deep reflections about the relationship between their present academic experiences and their perceived future outcomes. The third and fourth interviews focused on participants' deeper perceptions on their futures with prompts like, "Do you feel academically prepared for college?" "Do you feel socially prepared for college?" and "How do you plan to pay for college?" Responses and follow-up probes to these three questions, in relation to responses to previous questions about their academic outcomes and future plans, were the most generative regarding participants' internal and external dilemmas. I uti-

lized these prefashioned interview questions for all participants; however, our discussions evolved organically and reflected the specific voiced experiences of each student given themes uncovered from observations, their unique interests, and my own hunches. Interviews were digitally recorded, uploaded to a secure server, and transcribed by a professional company. Given the recursive and dynamic process of data collection and analysis in qualitative case study methodology (Merriam 2009), I collected and analyzed some data simultaneously to triangulate, inform interview questions, and note what to look for during observations. This approach allowed for the constant refining and adjusting of observation tools, interview protocols, and other research tools that were authentic to how the study unfolded.

Analysis

I read and edited each transcribed interview prior to follow-up interviews with participants. To provide member checking or respondent validation (Merriam 2009), I encouraged participants to review and correct their interview transcriptions and discuss initial themes in the data. I used Atlas.ti (a qualitative data analysis software) to code field note write-ups and interviews. Deductive and inductive coding occurred after all data were collected during a multilayered process. As I deductively coded each participant interview, for instance, more codes became apparent. For example, “school culture” and “college preparation” were initially deductive codes, but numerous inductive codes became present, like “academic” and “social preparation for college.” I realized that when participants discussed their academic and social preparation and their excitement for college, they also revealed some anxieties and dilemmas that I grouped into the broader themes—internal dilemmas and external dilemmas. I spent more time working to understand these themes by analyzing them in relation to social cognitive theory and grouped into the findings presented in this article.

Positionality

For all scholars, but especially researchers with an interpretivist epistemological commitment, it is important to acknowledge how their identities position them in relation to their study (Lincoln 1995; Milner 2007). I approached my study as a former high school English teacher who worked tirelessly for 4 years to secure college access for black and Latinx youth in urban, college-oriented schools similar to Metro Collegiate. Also, as a black man who mentors many

young adults of color who struggled academically or socially in postsecondary educational contexts, I am sensitive to solving the dilemmas college going poses for first-generation collegians and their families.

In addition, intersections of my race, gender, age, education, class, and lived experiences as a black cis-gendered man informed some of my understandings of my participants' lived experiences as teenagers of color living amid the negative social imagery that envelops black and brown bodies. However, I did not take for granted any possible mutually shared assumptions. Instead I worked to learn as much as I could about my participants' lived experiences to ensure that I was not misinterpreting their words in our discussions and in later analyses. I worked to foreground their own meaning making and understand the phenomena under study through their unique and insightful lenses. I built trust with participants between classes, during field trips, and prior to interviews with casual conversations about their lives and dreams, and in turn, I was open about my own personal journey. The challenges and anxieties revealed in this article were participants' truest accounts, given their own self-appraisals in relation to multiple influences. Although I maintain feverishly and unabashedly high hopes for greater levels of school achievement and eventual successful life outcomes for black and Latino boys like Malik, Perdido, Lucas, King, and Samuel, I worked to separate my own wishes for their futures from influencing the outcomes of our discussions and my interpretations of these data.

Findings

As noted, Metro Collegiate's college-going culture shaped participants' college ambitions. However, participants' college mind-sets were shaped by other influences as well. Thus, I present representative excerpts from data to reflect participants' college-going dilemmas formed through exposure to college knowledge at Metro Collegiate, their families, and their interactions with peers.

Internal Dilemmas: Am I Smart Enough? Will I Make Friends?

College-going internal dilemmas included participants' present-day beliefs and anxieties of their own academic abilities, personality-based attributes, and personal challenges. Overall, internal dilemmas fell within two related themes—their perceived academic underpreparation, related particularly to difficulty focusing on academic tasks, and their unease about feeling socially equipped to build a support network at college (i.e., make friends). Participants' internal dilemmas also reflected their evaluations of Metro teachers' subjective and

harmful grading practices, which participants believed were informed by racial stereotypes.

Am I smart enough? Academic preparation, subjective grades, and difficulties focusing.—Self-appraisals based on their own academic grades triggered participants' internal dilemmas. For example, whereas Perdido and Malik doubted their academic preparation, given their low GPAs (approximately 2.3 of 4.0), Lucas, Samuel, and King, who earned above-average GPAs (2.6–3.7), believed they were academically ready for college courses. Mid- to high-achieving black and Latino boys like Samuel, King, and Lucas were uncommon at Metro Collegiate. Generally, girls and the few Asian (1.5% of the student population) and white (2% of the student population) students earned the highest grades and more frequently garnered awards and behavioral recognitions at assemblies. Educators struggled to create the structures needed to secure continual and equitable high academic achievement for all black and Latino boys, a phenomenon participants linked to biased grading. Thus, to analyze the difficulty black and Latino boys had achieving school success and their accompanying internal dilemmas about whether or not they were “smart enough” for college, it is important to consider the subjective nature of the grading system. Specifically, racial stereotypes and cultural misunderstandings contributed to the ways teachers disproportionately disciplined and assigned lower grades especially to black boys.

Students' grades at Metro Collegiate were calculated utilizing three separate components. In addition to an academic grade (based solely on quizzes, tests, homework, and projects), students also received a grade for “Practices of Work” (POW) and “Practices of Mind” (POM). The POW grade reflected a teacher's assessment of, for example, a student's organization skills, personal accountability for staying on task in class, and contribution to group projects. These grades reflected not only the academic skills that students possessed but also the effort with which they approached their work. The POM grade judged a student's ability to reflect on and debrief lessons and set goals for future learning. It also assessed a student's ability and willingness to produce multiple drafts of work and to demonstrate new skills in formats such as graphic organizers, laboratory reports, and journal entries.

Perdido believed this grading policy to be unfair, as it offered opportunities for teachers to be unnecessarily harsh with students they disliked. Similarly, King expressed frustration at what he believed to be the subjective nature of this grading policy. Explaining how the POW and POM grades are determined, King noted the following: “That's basically a teacher's opinion grade based on how teachers feel that you are doing in a certain learning topic. . . . Like every teacher has some type of control over your grade so they can choose to put your grade up a little bit or put it down a little bit, but it has to be somewhere where

your work is at, so I just feel like the Practices of Work and Practices of Mind is the teacher's opinion of you." By emphasizing how opinion based this subjective grading policy was, King reinforced the control teachers had over a student's academic record. He believed that teachers, using the hazy metrics of POW and POM, rewarded their favorite students by rounding their grades up and punished the nuisances by rounding their grades down.

Perdido mentioned that his grades were so low primarily because of missed homework. Because completing homework on time reflected a behavioral expectation, it counted for POW. Missed homework also counted for an academic grade. This meant that Perdido and other students who struggled to complete homework suffered by having their GPA reflect this double penalty. The magnitude of teachers' often subjectively based grading must be considered, given the ways that grades signaled to others which students were most serious about their future college ambitions and most deserving of college-related supports. College counselors used academic records as a rationale for directing high-achieving students, like Lucas, to apply to certain colleges and based their recommendations for certain merit scholarships on students' grades. Moreover, these grade appraisals contributed to participants' internal dilemmas about being smart enough for college and whether or not students like Perdido saw themselves as even being "college material."

Other participants were critical of Metro's grading policy. They felt unsure about the mostly white teachers' expectations for them and often felt demeaned for engaging in playful feats. According to participant responses and my multiple hours spent observing classrooms, hallways, and the cafeteria, black students were more frequently disciplined for verbally or physically play fighting or what participants referred to simply as "being loud." Participants reported that teachers stereotyped black and Latino boys as troublemakers and often misread this behavior as violent. Teachers and administrators then enforced harsher disciplinary control mechanisms on them, as shown by the disproportionate number of black boys, particularly, seen in the hallway or in the dean's office. Because white and Asian students were never seen in trouble, Malik commented on how teachers and administrators often particularly punished black students more than Latinx students. He noted, "If you walk around the hallway—if you take one lap around the hallway, you'd probably see more black kids in the dean's office or the principal's office than you will see Hispanics there. You'll see some Hispanics, but you won't see as many as much as you would black." Students who were written up for behavioral infractions and sent to the dean's office for detention or suspension not only found their behavioral records marred but also were subjected to POW or POM grade deductions for teachers' views of their behavior.

Adding to the racial stereotypes that informed their disproportional disciplining, peers and teachers were more likely to inaccurately perceive black

boys as prone to athletic, as opposed to academic, excellence. Participants challenged these dichotomies, as Lucas and Samuel performed well academically but not athletically, and King successfully straddled both the academic and athletic domains. King, a three-sport athlete, anticipated earning an athletic scholarship but believed himself intellectually capable enough for an academic scholarship. He inferred that when others see a black teen boy like him, they are more inclined to believe his athletic, rather than his academic, aptitude. When I asked if he believed that he was academically ready for college, he confidently said, “Of course!” But racial stereotypes framed his understandings of his student-athlete identity. King recounted that peers and teachers touted his athletic traits and doubted his scholarly abilities. To metaphorically explain how he self-appraised, King described himself with both the attributes of a well-known black US National Football League running back and a white cartoon boy genius. King said, “I’m like—this might be funny when I say it—but I’m serious. I might be like Adrian Peterson on the outside, but I’m like Jimmy Neutron up here [pointing to his head].” King believed that although others viewed him as an athletic, sometimes silly and even aggressive, black young man (e.g., Adrian Peterson), he was just as intellectually astute as this fictional white boy genius (e.g., Jimmy Neutron). Through the lens of the racially gendered stereotypes he navigates, this metaphorical example highlights King’s internal dilemma. King’s example also underscores the extensive sociocognitive labor he enacts to envision both an athletic and scholarly identity within his black teenaged body.

Other participants shared specific academically related dilemmas. Both Malik and Perdido had low grades, felt unprepared for college, and were particularly concerned about their ability to handle the amount of expected reading and writing. Both struggled to complete homework, and Malik, in particular, shared his challenges writing multiparagraph essays. Malik noted, “I feel that I’m not academically prepared for college. In some—I wouldn’t say that for all my classes but some classes—I know I’m not prepared for college. Like English—I know that’s something that for the rest of this year and next year—I really have to work on that because that’s something I really struggle with.” Malik performed better academically in math and science courses. Although he anticipated employing his scientific gifts to major in engineering, he knew his reading and writing difficulties would thwart his college success.

As I probed participants to discuss specific cognitive and noncognitive factors that contributed to their feelings of college unpreparedness, participants, especially Perdido and Malik, repeated “focus” as a key concern. Perdido said, “Going to college kind of gives me the idea of only sophisticated classes. And, I have a problem staying focused. So like I’m always wandering around, if not physically, then mentally, I’m like somewhere else. Always. And college is—most teachers, like, emphasize that the professor will not repeat. Like, you have to take notes quickly; you have to keep up with everything. And I have a hard

time focusing, so it's—it's—I wouldn't say like, a terrible problem focusing, but it's pretty bad." Perdido held a vivid depiction of college as uptight, sophisticated, and rigorous, with classes taught by professors who would not repeat key points, for instance. Underlying Perdido's perception of college was an assumed belief that, unlike him, his peers would be focused and cognitively equipped to excel. Perdido believed he did not embody traits required for collegiate success because he struggled to focus on academic tasks and earn good grades in high school. Because of both his perceived academic and personality traits and flaws, Perdido realized how much support he might need in college, based partially on the college messaging he received from those at Metro Collegiate.

Perdido's quote highlights similar sentiments shared by Malik, who also doubted his ability to be academically successful in college. Perdido's concerns reflected the clearest articulation of the ways that participants' cognitive self-appraisals shaped their internal dilemmas regarding their own academic weaknesses in relation to expected college outcomes. The ways all participants self-appraised using grades or other observed evidence were key factors influencing whether or not they harbored internal dilemmas based in academic preparedness.

Will I make friends? Grappling with social preparation.—In addition to academically based dilemmas, participants grappled with internal dilemmas informed by their responsibility to, familiarity with, and need for their home kinship community (e.g., friends, peers, networks). Participants' internal dilemmas concerning social preparation were informed by their felt needs for friends and peer supports, as opposed to being encouraged via peer pressure to not attend college away from this peer network. Lucas, who aspired to attend highly competitive colleges, noted the anticipated difficulty of developing a new network of friends. In describing his anticipated social challenges, Lucas said, "Um, making new friends. That will be hard too. 'Cause, like, the friends who I'm with right now, we're not all going to go to the same college. We're all interested in different majors and stuff, right? So we might all go to different colleges, so you have to make new friends. How you started, like in high school." Drawing from his experience making new friends in high school, Lucas realized the inevitable challenge of making new college friends. This trepidation was amplified by the fact that Lucas, with a GPA approaching 4.0, wanted to apply to highly selective colleges. He knew he would not take many high school friends with him to college, as the colleges on his list would be out of reach for most within his peer group to earn admission.

During his explanation of feeling socially ill-equipped for college, Samuel also revealed evidence of internal dilemmas about what college-going would mean, given the way he constructs and maintains his network of friends: "I don't feel I'm socially prepared. . . . I mean, I'm a diverse person when it comes to socializing with people, but I'm really shy and I'd rather not make new friends. I kind of—if I don't know you, I'd rather keep to myself. I usually gain friends

from friends. . . . I'm getting better with that, but I don't think I'm at the point where I can say that I'm ready for college for that." Samuel's internal dilemma reflected a keen awareness of his own personal strengths and weaknesses. However, he intended to develop skills aimed at making friends. He was eclectic, or "diverse" in his interests, and maintained a motley crew of close friends. But these friendships were not easy for Samuel to make. Given his shyness, leaving his friends and developing a new network in college reflected a significant internal dilemma.

Participants were influenced in numerous ways regarding their dilemmas. For instance, interviews with Samuel suggest that his internal dilemmas with making friends were related to not only his racial identity and economic status but also to the direct victimization he experienced in schools and in his neighborhood by bullies and robbers. Other participants reported either being victims or bystanders during neighborhood or school-based violence. However, Samuel, who was unassuming, thin, and sometimes aloof, was bullied and targeted for robbery more than other participants. These experiences contributed to some of Samuel's social anxieties and reinforced his belief that to survive within his predominantly racially isolated, low-income community, one had to constantly—as he put it—"look over your shoulder." These violent encounters reinforced Samuel's desire to attend a college in a safe community and establish a close network of trusted college friends that would insulate him from the threats of vulnerability. In sum, some participants grappled with various college-going dilemmas that were based on internalized racism, as demonstrated in their grade records, and others grappled with internal struggles and anxieties based on their perceived challenge in creating a stable and safe, familial network of peers.

External Dilemmas: Can I Even Afford It? Funding Their College Education

External dilemmas extended beyond participants' own self-perceptions, cognitive abilities, and personal strengths to those individuals, situations, or systems around them that they perceived may unintentionally contribute to their inability to attend, find success within, or complete college. Among other dilemmas, the most salient shared across participants was their family's ability and willingness to pay for their college education.

As participants discerned possible college locations and majors, anticipating college costs and the accompanying difficulties these costs posed for their families proved a major external dilemma. By nuancing the economic realities and financial challenges that college-going incited for participants and their families, this section explores one of the most significant external dilemmas racially and economically marginalized youth experience.

Participants stood in various relations to the college-funding external dilemma. For example, Lucas and King planned to secure financial aid with academic and athletic scholarships, respectively. More specifically, although Lucas had certain “dream schools” in mind, he expected to attend a school that offered him a generous academic scholarship. When I asked him about college options, Lucas weighed both his interests in specific dream schools and the expected financial burden attending these schools would pose for his family. He noted, “So like, I’ve been thinking about it. Let’s say, university—OK, wherever I get scholarships basically. ‘Cause I want to make, I don’t want my parents to work hard a lot to pay for my college.” Lucas’s reflection was rooted in familismo, or the commitment to family over any other individual pursuit (Martinez 2013). Couched in his personal ambitions were his familial responsibilities. He wanted to attend a highly selective college or university but knew securing a scholarship to such schools would be difficult. So, he resigned himself to attend any college—even a less selective one—if it offered him a generous scholarship and lessened his family’s expected financial burden. If Lucas earned a scholarship, then his mother and father, who worked hourly paying jobs as an office cleaner and a painter, respectively, would not have to use their hard-earned money for his tuition.

Similar to Lucas, King believed his GPA approaching 3.0 might merit him an academic scholarship to a less selective school. However, King actively sought out a “D1,” as he called it, or Division I football scholarship. Because of the risk, these expectations for funding were external dilemmas for Lucas and King, because neither knew for sure if they would earn a scholarship. Also, neither Lucas nor King wanted his family to use precious financial resources for college when scholarship options were a possibility at certain, perhaps less selective colleges.

Samuel, Malik, and Perdido were uncertain about their plans to pay for college but knew, because of messages from Metro Collegiate’s college counselors, that the process was demanding and daunting for families—all of which triggered participants’ significant external dilemmas. I asked Samuel if he had plans to finance his education. Samuel replied, “No. I have no idea. That kinda scares me, ‘cause I think about that sometimes. I’m just like, yeah, maybe I should start getting financially ready.” Aligning with social cognitive theory, Samuel’s observances of others contributed to shaping his efficacy in tackling this significant goal. When Samuel’s older sister eventually dropped out of college, he saw firsthand her difficulties staying enrolled, given the costs and the confusing loan procurement process. Thus, in addition to Samuel’s familial experiences and messages from Metro Collegiate, college costs triggered tremendous trepidation.

Similar to Samuel, Malik garnered some financial aid knowledge from family members, including his college-educated mom and from witnessing his older sister unenroll from college after 1 year. Despite Metro’s influence and that of

his mother and sister, Malik was still unclear about the differences between loans, grants, and scholarships. Malik noted, "You can get grants and loans, or you can get one or the other, or you can get like a scholarship. . . . And for the grants you get money from like, I don't know. It's like people who give you money for college or you apply for grants or something like that. I don't really know how to do it. I don't really know what it is." Malik was vaguely familiar with the terminology of financial aid but was uncertain about the differences in the various forms of aid and the process for obtaining them.

Perdido was even less familiar with the financial aid process and was the most pessimistic of all participants about his family's ability to finance a degree program, even though they encouraged and supported his going to college. Unlike Samuel, Perdido made no mention of financially preparing himself for a college education. He misunderstood the average price tag for college, knew little about securing grants and loans, and generally viewed financing a college degree as an insurmountable obstacle. When I inquired about his plans to pay for college, Perdido noted, "No man, that's bull man. I can barely pay for my own rent already." In conceptualizing college affordability, Perdido drew from his observances of his family's economic struggles to maintain their life in a small two-bedroom apartment in a low-income neighborhood. Perdido was encouraged to attend college by his family members but struggled to urge his family to take on the economic burden associated with the education that they desired for him. Dismayed at his perceptions of high college costs, and combined with his developing manhood and familial responsibilities rooted in familismo, he could not allow his parents to shift familial resources from contributing to essentials like rent, to his college tuition. Combined, participants revealed various solutions aimed at overcoming this external dilemma. In sum, Lucas and King hedged their bets on their ability to secure academic and athletic scholarships, respectively. Samuel and Malik minimally understood the funding process and had vague plans to secure aid, whereas Perdido was pessimistic about the likelihood of college affordability, given his family's struggles.

Discussion

Findings reveal that participants' perceptions of their present skills, perceived academic and social needs, and expected familial responsibilities contributed to their college-going dilemmas. Internal and external dilemmas were based on participants' fears and apprehensions about their ability to access, succeed in, and graduate from a 4-year college or university. Internal and external dilemmas also reflected not only participants' knowledge of their own personal areas of growth and the types of challenges posed by individuals around them but

also their expectations of the academic, financial, and social demands of college life.

Similar to findings from previous research, participants held mostly realistic understandings of college life (Duncheon 2018), as Metro Collegiate's college-going culture and lessons from family (Carey 2016, 2018) influenced their mind-sets. However, with a social cognitive lens on college-going dilemmas, I found that participants' experiences and observances induced deep inner conflicts. Participants faced these dilemmas in the developmental contexts of both home-life and school-based supports that sent confusing and at times conflicting messages in relation to college-going. In addition, participants' internal and external dilemmas were not the same as actual barriers to college access (Aronson 2008; Perez-Felkner 2015). Participants in this study were only in their junior year and had another year to improve their academic skills and concretize financial plans that would perhaps alleviate certain barriers.

Beyond gaining more knowledge for securing college access, some of the dilemmas presented were rooted in broader societal barriers like racism. Similar to previous research, racial stereotyping was evident in school-based practices like disciplining and grading that affected participants' perceptions of themselves (Davis and Jordan 1994; Marsh and Noguera 2018; Oakes 2005). However, findings from this study extend the impact of this stereotyping into the mind-sets students adopt to secure postsecondary education. At Metro Collegiate, grades were also capital for securing entrance into honors or advanced placement-level courses and used as baseline measures for participation in high-profile activities, like student government, that "look good" on college applications. Moreover, teachers' subjective and negative appraisals of student behavior contributed to keeping black boys away from certain college-going supports, because grades were used by college counselors to orient certain students to particular types of postsecondary contexts and certain high-profile scholarships. Grade reports also signaled back to participants what they were capable of academically and whether or not they viewed themselves as college material, a finding that mirrors the impact of racial stereotyping on collegians of color (Freeman 1997; Fries-Britt and Griffin 2007; Steele 2003).

Participants believed that college would require them to navigate a daunting social scene, which would necessitate their ability to socialize easily with professors and peers. Previous research has shown that determining tactics to overcome perceived challenges in interacting with college professors is salient for men of color (Goings 2017); however, participants did not reveal specific strategies to overcome such barriers. College will also require them to get involved with campus organizations and manage social arrangements like dormitory living. However, beyond King's athletic ambitions, most participants reported minimally understanding what extracurricular involvement in college looks like (e.g., clubs, fraternity membership). This finding is salient, given how vital ex-

tracurricular participation is to students' postsecondary success (Garcia et al. 2017; Johnson 2013; Kuh et al. 2011; Palmer and Young 2009). Although meeting new people and building a solid group of friends is important for college social success, participants were unclear about how to foster new friendships and fictive familial relations.

All participants couched their postsecondary ambitions within the needs of and responsibilities to their families, particularly along the lines of college affordability. Aligning with other previous research, participants were particularly unaware of the financial aid options available to them and were gravely concerned about their ability not only to attend but also to stay enrolled in college, given financial difficulties (Carey 2018; Greenfield 2015; Martinez et al. 2018). Precollege internal and external dilemmas contextualize what might evolve into later college, economic, and family-related outcomes. Moreover, college-going dilemmas, especially those held by low-income students, might contribute to students falling victim to "summer melt," when college-going students have their postsecondary education plans dissolve—partly due to some of the dilemmas revealed in this study—during the summer after high school graduation (Castleman and Page 2014).

Participants' reflections shine further light on the various conflicting commitments that racially and economically marginalized youths straddle when considering utilizing limited family resources for their postsecondary educations (Allen et al. 2018; Anderson and Larson 2009; Carey 2018; Freeman 2005; Greenfield 2015; Harper and CSREE 2014; Lor 2017; Page and Scott-Clayton 2016; Perna 2005; Sáenz et al. 2016). The responsibility for the success and failure of the familial unit, particular seen in Perdido's example, underscores the ways that participants' college ambitions conflicted with their understandings of masculinity, rooted in their desires to be good sons, brothers, providers, and even financial protectors of their families (Carey 2018; Dancy 2011). Although parents and family members encouraged their boys to secure college degrees for upward social and economic mobility, participants reflected on the conflicting and contradictory nature of assuming tremendous financial burdens in the present with the hopes of acquiring greater fiscal security later.

Implications and Conclusion

Research, Policy, and Practice Implications

By advancing college-going dilemmas as a concept for research, policy, and practice, I acknowledge other studies that delineate between internal and external factors that contribute to perceived barriers for students' postsecondary

aspirations. Specifically, like other scholars have noted (see Lent et al. 1994, 2000), external or social factors are particularly difficult to classify because the locus of the barrier, actual or perceived, may reside in the individual or in his or her environment (Swanson and Woitke 1997). This article pivots from these studies in scope and focal area in that, not only does this study consider social factors like school contexts, it centers racial stereotyping, racial isolation, and economic marginalization as significant barriers to students in the analysis of factors contributing to the source and effect of these dilemmas.

Moreover, the field has gained critical insights into precollege factors influencing the eventual academic and social success of men of color, but often we learn of these in retrospective accounts from men who have graduated high school and thus are removed from the school and community contexts that contributed to or detracted from their eventual college enrollment. To accompany this growing body of research addressing precollege access factors from the vantage of adult men, scholars must also advance research agendas that utilize students' perspectives in PK–12 school contexts. Assuredly, greater attention to the challenges revealed by students' voices in real time, as opposed to retrospective accounts, could aid educational stakeholders in refining the school policies and practices meant to serve these students (Cushman 2003). Similarly, the college access literature would be aided by far closer attention to the college-going processes boys and young men of color navigate before college enrollment, to gain a more nuanced understanding of what works in supporting their aspirations and attainment.

Furthermore, when researchers investigate the college-going processes of boys of color, they must pay closer attention not only to the cognitive factors (e.g., grade reports, SAT scores) that may predict success but also to the noncognitive factors (e.g., socioaffective concerns, college-going dilemmas) that students weigh in relation to college going. These noncognitive factors provide critical insights into the familial, academic, community, and peer-network elements influencing the likelihood of students' eventual enrollment and success. As noted, to best understand these noncognitive factors, student voice must be more prominently featured in research on college going. The voiced perspectives of boys and young men, developing within the context of the college and career readiness policy discourses that shape their school lives, offer such crucial glimpses into the ways youth make sense of the multiple factors that play into their college-going decisions.

School policies must be oriented around supporting equitable outcomes for students, particularly given what grading and students' behavioral records mean to their understanding themselves as "college material." To support this effort, teachers must create policies that minimize the possibility of their own subjective, racial bias playing into the grading and GPAs of already academically and socially marginalized students. In addition, given the wide gaps be-

tween the curricular and social demands experienced in high school and those expected in college, educators must build critical bridges across the PK–16 schooling spectrum (Howard et al. 2016; Kirst and Venezia 2004). To help bridge these gaps, strong college-going cultures have tremendous potential to mitigate barriers facing underrepresented groups in securing both postsecondary educational access and eventual success (Corwin and Tierney 2007; Farmer-Hinton 2011; Griffin and Allen 2006; Kimura-Walsh et al. 2009; Knight and Marciano 2013). However, in addition to displaying college imagery and providing a rigorous college-oriented curriculum, for example, educators must engage students in deeper discussions of the racialized realities implied in college-going and help students craft plans that make sense for their own well-being, given the cultural and contextualized needs of their family (Anderson and Larson 2009; Carey 2018; Knight and Marciano 2013; Welton and Martinez 2014).

Furthermore, especially by junior year, families and students need to be immersed in the reality of college financial aid options and be walked through the financial aid process, not merely informed about it (Scott-Clayton 2015). To support students in developing an accurate understanding of themselves as future collegians, policy makers must support principals in implementing creative mechanisms that provide college financial aid information as early as possible. Mock financial aid packages can be drawn up with the support of college counselors so that families, prior to twelfth grade, gain an accurate sense of the cost of college and their likelihood of securing financial aid. To accomplish this, policy makers must advance district-wide mechanisms to support the hiring of more college counselors, particularly in college-oriented schools within urban contexts, to become more deeply integral in the school lives of prospective collegians at an earlier age.

Mitigating internal dilemmas: further implications for educators.—It is important that high school teachers paint realistic portrayals of traditional college classrooms. However, they must share these messages mindful of the fear and trepidation these messages trigger, especially for students who struggle to see themselves as “college material.” To assuage students’ fears—and, because colleges typically offer a wealth of help centers and tutors—high school students should be rewarded, not penalized, for seeking help early in the semester. Mastering help-seeking behaviors can serve as a crucial tool for college success. Educators should work creatively to help students understand their learning styles so that they will not repeat high school mistakes and instead develop the skills to utilize campus help resources when academic troubles arise.

In addition to preparing students for college by exposing them to various academic programs, majors, and minors, high school teachers can urge students out of their comfort zones by breaking down barriers between student peer groups and cliques through purposeful group assignments. Moreover, given par-

ticipants' experiences with racial stereotyping in their social and school lives, educators can urge students of color to consider attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities, which have been traditionally situated as key sites of sanctuary for racially oppressed people (Mobley 2017). Furthermore, Samuel's experience with bullying and street violence informed his approach to securing a tight network of friends. Thus, educators must be aware not only of students' academic and social ambitions but also of their academic and social histories, which inform their interest or disinterest in attending particular colleges. For instance, students who felt unsafe in their neighborhood communities and who were frequently exposed to traumatic occurrences at home would need to be assured of campus safety resources.

Mitigating external dilemmas: further implications for educators.—Schools must bring families into the college-going process as early as possible so that families can begin to foster the most accurate understandings of college affordability and the ways that their children's college ambitions will have an impact on their immediate familial unit (Carey 2016, 2018). Beyond having a firm grasp of the loan and grant options for financing a degree program through need-based aid, students should have a realistic awareness of their high school transcripts and potential for securing athletic scholarships at Division I, II, and III programs. By junior year, they should know about the availability of academic scholarships for GPA benchmarks and other scholarship or merit awards for underrepresented groups or those with special attributes.

Finally, in schools with intensive college-going cultures, banners and pennants are publicly displayed, reminders for entrance exams are emphasized in group settings, and trips are planned to boost all students' interest and excitement for postsecondary options. However, counseling happens in one-on-one meetings, behind closed doors. Rarely are students given the opportunities to gather with peers, who are key sources of college information and motivation (Marciano 2017), to collectively theorize around common college-going dilemmas. Scholars are advocating for educators to meet and collaborate to decipher solutions that stem from ethical dilemmas of practice (see Levinson and Fay 2016). Similarly, educators should create structures so that high schoolers can gather and share common college-going dilemmas. High school students can support each other in determining the locus of control framing their dilemmas. Then they can collectively develop solutions for navigating the academic, social, and financial challenges associated with postsecondary educational access and success.

Conclusion

For many high school students, college going incites excitement and hope for a future with a fulfilling career and economic stability. However, findings from

this study reveal that accompanying students' excitement during the college preparation process are fears, doubts, anxieties, or simply dilemmas that are influenced in part by internal and external factors that play out through their familial, neighborhood, and institutional contexts.

The socioaffective concerns revealed in the internal and external dilemmas of boys of color offer educational stakeholders from the ranks of policy, higher education, PK–12 practice, and research a significant glimpse into the often hidden yet remarkably influential concerns that weigh on adolescents as they consider what postsecondary attainment means for them and their families. Beyond simply motivating vulnerable youth to attend college, findings from this study reveal the urgency of radical changes to the assumptions guiding college-going school cultures, the need for more precise sociodevelopmental interventions in college counseling, and the inability of well-meaning schools to use college-going rhetoric to fully undo the deep racial and economic realities framing youths' approaches to seeing college as a viable option. If marginalized youths wonder too long if they are smart enough, or if they will build networks and make friends, or if they can even successfully finance a postsecondary education, college going and eventual degree attainment will remain an impossibility for far too many students.

To remedy and mediate college-going dilemmas, scholars must harness the voices and lived experiences of students as they maneuver through the sometimes perilous terrain of seeking upward mobility and satisfaction through college degree attainment. Policy makers must provide supports for districts working with multiple first-generation prospective collegians to offer ample and earlier supports to the families of students considering higher education. Schools must be oriented to better serve the needs of black and Latino boys, especially given the racial, economic, and school-based challenges they encounter and the dilemmas they harbor about college attendance. With greater attention to the internal and external dilemmas students grapple with during the college preparation process, educational stakeholders across the PK–20 spectrum (i.e., from PK through graduate school) will be even more effective stewards to youths' futures.

Note

In addition to the reviewers and editors of the *American Journal of Education*, I wish to thank Richard Donato, Kimberly Griffin Haynes, Henry May, H. Richard Milner IV, Lindsay C. Page, Mandy Savitz-Romer, and Ashley Woodson for feedback on earlier iterations of what would become this article.

References

- Allen, Taryn Ozuna, Melissa Laird Thompson, and Shalun Collins. 2018. "The Influence of Dual Credit on Latinx Students' College Aspirations and Choices." *Journal of Latinos and Education*. doi:10.1080/15348431.2018.1510780.
- Anderson, Noel S., and Colleen L. Larson. 2009. "'Sinking, like Quicksand': Expanding Educational Opportunity for Young Men of Color." *Educational Administration Quarterly* 45 (1): 71–114.
- Anderson-Levitt, Kathryn. 2006. "Ethnography." In *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Educational Research*, ed. Judith Green, Gregory Camilli, and Patricia Elmoore. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Aronson, Pamela. 2008. "Breaking Barriers or Locked Out? Class-Based Perceptions and Experiences of Postsecondary Education." *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* 2008 (119): 41–54.
- Bandura, Albert. 1986. *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Baum, Sandy, Jennifer Ma, and Kathleen Payea. 2013. *Education Pays 2013: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society*. New York: College Board.
- Bristol, Travis J., and Marcelle Mentor. 2018. "Policing and Teaching: The Positioning of Black Male Teachers as Agents in the Universal Carceral Apparatus." *Urban Review* 50 (2): 218–34.
- Brooms, Derrick R. 2017. *Being Black, Being Male on Campus: Understanding and Confronting Black Male Collegiate Experiences*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Brown, Tara, and Louie Rodríguez. 2009. "School and the Co-construction of Drop-out." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 22 (2): 221–42.
- Bryan, Nathaniel. 2017. "White Teachers' Role in Sustaining the School-to-Prison Pipeline: Recommendations for Teacher Education." *Urban Review* 49 (2): 326–45.
- Burt, Brian A., Krystal L. Williams, and William A. Smith. 2018. "Into the Storm: Ecological and Sociological Impediments to Black Males' Persistence in Engineering Graduate Programs." *American Educational Research Journal* 55 (5): 965–1006.
- Campbell, Corbin M., and Jessica L. Mislevy. 2013. "Student Perceptions Matter: Early Signs of Undergraduate Student Retention/Attrition." *Journal of College Student Retention* 14 (4): 467–93.
- Carey, Roderick L. 2015. "Desensationalizing Black Males: Navigating and Deconstructing Extreme Imageries of Black Males and Masculinities." In *The Assault on Communities of Color: Reactions and Responses from the Academy*, ed. Kenneth J. Fasching-Varner and Nicholas D. Hartlep. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Carey, Roderick L. 2016. "'Keep That in Mind . . . You're Gonna Go to College': Family Influence on the College Going Processes of Black and Latino High School Boys." *Urban Review* 48 (5): 718–42.
- Carey, Roderick L. 2018. "'What Am I Gonna Be Losing?' School Culture and the Family-Based College-Going Dilemmas of Black and Latino Adolescent Boys." *Education and Urban Society* 50 (3): 246–73.
- Carey, Roderick L., Laura S. Yee, and David E. DeMatthews. 2018. "Power, Penalty, and Critical Praxis: Employing Intersectionality in Educator Practices to Achieve School Equity." *Educational Forum* 82 (1): 111–30.
- Castleman, Benjamin, and Lindsay C. Page. 2014. "A Trickle or a Torrent? Understanding the Extent of Summer 'Melt' among College-Intending High School Graduates." *Social Science Quarterly* 95 (1): 202–20.

- Corwin, Zoë, and William Tierney. 2007. *Getting There—and Beyond: Building a Culture of College-Going in High Schools*. Los Angeles: Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis.
- Cushman, Kathleen. 2003. *Fires in the Bathroom: Advice for Teachers from High School Students*. New York: New.
- Dancy, T. Elon. 2011. “Colleges in the Making of Manhood and Masculinity: Gendered Perspectives on African American Males.” *Gender and Education* 23 (4): 477–95.
- Dancy, T. Elon. 2012. *The Brother Code: Manhood and Masculinity among African American Males in College*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Davis, James E. 1994. “College in Black and White: Campus Environment and Academic Achievement of African American Males.” *Journal of Negro Education* 63 (4): 620–33.
- Davis, James E. 2006. “Research at the Margin: Mapping Masculinity and Mobility of African American High School Dropouts.” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 19 (3): 289–304.
- Davis, James E., and Will J. Jordan. 1994. “The Effects of School Context, Structure, and Experiences on African American Males in Middle and High School.” *Journal of Negro Education* 63 (4): 570–87.
- Dee, Thomas. 2004. “Are There Civic Returns to Education?” *Journal of Public Economics* 88 (9): 1697–720.
- DeMatthews, David E., Roderick L. Carey, Arturo Olivarez, and Kevin Moussavi Saeedi. 2017. “Guilty as Charged? Principals’ Perspectives on Disciplinary Practices and the Racial Discipline Gap.” *Educational Administration Quarterly* 53 (4): 519–55.
- Dumas, Michael, and Joseph Nelson. 2016. “(Re)imagining Black Boyhood: Toward a Critical Framework for Educational Research.” *Harvard Educational Review* 86 (1): 27–47.
- Duncheon, Julia C. 2018. “Making Sense of College Readiness in a Low-Performing Urban High School: Perspectives of High-Achieving First Generation Youth.” *Urban Education*. doi:10.1177/0042085918756712.
- Engle, Randall. 2001. “What Is Working Memory Capacity?” In *The Nature of Remembering: Essays in Honor of Robert G. Crowder*, ed. James Nairne and Henry Roediger III. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Farmer-Hinton, Raquel. 2011. “On Being College Prep: Examining the Implementation of a ‘College for All’ Mission in an Urban Charter School.” *Urban Review* 43 (5): 567–96.
- Flowers, Lamont A., H. Richard Milner IV, and James L. Moore. 2003. “Effects of Locus of Control on African American High School Seniors’ Educational Aspirations: Implications for Preservice and Inservice High School Teachers and Counselors.” *High School Journal* 87 (1): 39–50.
- Freeman, Kassie. 1997. “Increasing African Americans’ Participation in Higher Education: African American High-School Students’ Perspectives.” *Journal of Higher Education* 68 (5): 523–50.
- Freeman, Kassie. 2005. *African Americans and College Choice: The Influence of Family and School*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Fries-Britt, Sharon, and Kimberly Griffin. 2007. “The Black Box: How High-Achieving Blacks Resist Stereotypes about Black Americans.” *Journal of College Student Development* 48 (5): 509–24.
- Garcia, Gina A., Adrian H. Huerta, Jenesi J. Ramirez, and Oscar E. Patrón. 2017. “Contexts That Matter to the Leadership Development of Latino Male College Students: A Mixed Methods Perspective.” *Journal of College Student Development* 58 (1): 1–18.

College-Going Dilemmas of Adolescent Boys of Color

- Gasman, Marybeth, Thai-Huy Nguyen, and Felecia Commodore. 2017. "Advancing Black Male Success: Understanding the Contributions of Urban Black Colleges and Universities." *Urban Education* 52 (9): 1129–39.
- Gibbs Grey, Theda Marie. 2018. "Reppin' and Risin' Above: Exploring Communities of Possibility That Affirm the College-Going Aspirations of Black Youth." *Urban Education*. doi:10.1177/0042085918804020.
- Goings, Ramon B. 2017. "Traditional and Nontraditional High-Achieving Black Males' Strategies for Interacting with Faculty at a Historically Black College and University." *Journal of Men's Studies* 25 (3): 316–35.
- Goldrick-Rab, Sara. 2006. "Following Their Every Move: An Investigation of Social-Class Differences in College Pathways." *Sociology of Education* 79 (1): 67–79.
- Greenfield, Jeremy S. 2015. "Challenges and Opportunities in the Pursuit of College Finance Literacy." *High School Journal* 98 (4): 316–36.
- Gregory, Anne, Russell J. Skiba, and Pedro A. Noguera. 2010. "The Achievement Gap and the Discipline Gap: Two Sides of the Same Coin?" *Educational Researcher* 39 (1): 59–68.
- Griffin, Kimberly, and Walter R. Allen. 2006. "Mo' Money, Mo' Problems? High-Achieving Black High School Students' Experiences with Resources, Racial Climate, and Resilience." *Journal of Negro Education* 75 (3): 478–94.
- Griffin, Kimberly, Uma Jayakumar, Malana Jones, and Walter R. Allen. 2010. "Ebony in the Ivory Tower: Examining Trends in the Socioeconomic Status, Achievement, and Self-Concept of Black, Male Freshmen." *Equity and Excellence in Education* 43 (2): 232–48.
- Harper, Shaun R. 2015. "Success in These Schools? Visual Counternarratives of Young Men of Color and Urban High Schools They Attend." *Urban Education* 50 (2): 139–69.
- Harper, Shaun R., and CSREE (Researchers from the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education). 2014. *Succeeding in the City: A Report from the New York City Black and Latino Male High School Achievement Study*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education.
- Harper, Shaun R., and J. Luke Wood, eds. 2016. *Advancing Black Male Student Success from Preschool through PhD*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Holland, Nicole, and Raquel Farmer-Hinton. 2009. "Leave No Schools Behind: The Importance of a College Culture in Urban Public High Schools." *High School Journal* 92 (3): 24–43.
- Hossler, Don, Jack Schmit, and Nick Vesper. 1999. *Going to College: How Social, Economic, and Educational Factors Influence the Decisions Students Make*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Howard, Tyrone. 2003. "'A Tug of War for Our Minds': African American High School Students' Perceptions of Their Academic Identities and College Aspirations." *High School Journal* 87 (1): 4–17.
- Howard, Tyrone. 2014. *Black Male(d): Peril and Promise in the Education of African American Males*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Howard, Tyrone, Jonli Tunstall, and Terry K. Flenbaugh, eds. 2016. *Expanding College Access for Urban Youth: What Schools and Colleges Can Do*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Irizarry, Jason. 2012. "Los Caminos: Latino/a Youth Forging Pathways in Pursuit of Higher Education." *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education* 11 (3): 291–309.
- Jayakumar, Uma, Rican Vue, and Walter R. Allen. 2013. "Pathways to College for Young Black Scholars: A Community Cultural Wealth Perspective." *Harvard Educational Review* 83 (4): 551–79.

- Johnson, Jennifer M., and Brian L. McGowan. 2017. "Untold Stories: The Gendered Experiences of High Achieving African American Male Alumni of Historically Black Colleges and Universities." *Journal of African American Males in Education* 8 (1): 23–44.
- Johnson, Royel M. 2013. "Black and Male on Campus: An Autoethnographic Account." *Journal of African American Males in Education* 4 (2): 103–23.
- Kimura-Walsh, Erin, Erica Yamamura, Kimberly Griffin, and Walter R. Allen. 2009. "Achieving the College Dream? Examining Disparities in Access to College Information among High Achieving and Non-High Achieving Latina Students." *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education* 8 (3): 298–315.
- Kirst, Michael, and Andrea Venezia, eds. 2004. *From High School to College: Improving Opportunities for Success in Postsecondary Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Knight, Michelle, and Joanne Marciano. 2013. *College-Ready: Preparing Black and Latina/o Youth for Higher Education—A Culturally Relevant Approach*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Kuh, George, Jillian Kinzie, John Schuh, and Elizabeth Whitt. 2011. *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions That Matter*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Lent, Robert, Steven Brown, and Gail Hackett. 1994. "Toward a Unifying Social Cognitive Theory of Career and Academic Interest, Choice, and Performance." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 45 (1): 79–122.
- Lent, Robert, Steven Brown, and Gail Hackett. 2000. "Contextual Supports and Barriers to Career Choice: A Social Cognitive Analysis." *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 47 (1): 36–49.
- Levinson, Meira, and Jacob Fay. 2016. *Dilemmas of Educational Ethics: Cases and Commentaries*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Lincoln, Yvonna. 1995. "Emerging Criteria for Quality in Qualitative and Interpretive Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 1 (3): 275–89.
- Liou, Daniel D., and Erin Rotheram-Fuller. 2016. "Where Is the Real Reform? African American Students and Their School's Expectations for Academic Performance." *Urban Education*. doi:10.1177/0042085915623340.
- Lor, Yang. 2017. "Ties That Bind: Family Obligations as Immediate and Anticipatory Obstacles." *Race Ethnicity and Education*. doi:10.1080/13613324.2017.1395327.
- Marciano, Joanne E. 2017. "'We're Friends, We Have to Be in This Together': Examining the Role of Culturally Relevant Peer Interactions in Urban Youth's College Readiness and Access." *Urban Review* 49 (1): 169–87.
- Marsh, L. Trenton S., and Pedro A. Noguera. 2018. "Beyond Stigma and Stereotypes: An Ethnographic Study on the Effects of School-Imposed Labeling on Black Males in an Urban Charter School." *Urban Review* 50 (3): 447–77.
- Martinez, Eligio, Jr., and Adrian H. Huerta. 2018. "Deferred Enrollment: Chicano/Latino Males, Social Mobility and Military Enlistment." *Education and Urban Society*. doi:10.1177/0013124518785021.
- Martinez, Melissa A. 2013. "(Re)considering the Role Familismo Plays in Latina/o High School Students' College Choices." *High School Journal* 97 (1): 21–40.
- Martinez, Melissa A., Desireé Vega, and Jocabed Marquez. 2018. "Latinx Students' Experiences with College Access and Preparation at College Preparatory Charter Schools." *Journal of Latinos and Education*. doi:10.1080/15348431.2017.1418353.
- McGowan, Brian, Robert Palmer, J. Luke Wood, and David Hibbler Jr., eds. 2016. *Black Men in the Academy: Narratives of Resiliency, Achievement, and Success*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- McWhirter, Ellen. 1997. "Perceived Barriers to Education and Career: Ethnic and Gender Differences." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 50 (1): 124–40.

College-Going Dilemmas of Adolescent Boys of Color

- McWhirter, Ellen, Danielle Torres, Susana Salgado, and Marina Valdez. 2007. "Perceived Barriers and Postsecondary Plans in Mexican American and White Adolescents." *Journal of Career Assessment* 15 (1): 119–38.
- Merriam, Sharan. 2009. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Milner, H. Richard, IV. 2007. "Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality: Working through Dangers Seen, Unseen, and Unforeseen." *Educational Researcher* 36 (7): 388–400.
- Milner, H. Richard, IV. 2015. *Rac(e)ing to Class: Confronting Poverty and Race in Schools and Classrooms*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Mitra, Dana L., and Steven Jay Gross. 2009. "Increasing Student Voice in High School Reform: Building Partnerships, Improving Outcomes." *Educational Management Administration and Leadership* 37 (4): 522–43.
- Mobley, Steve D., Jr. 2017. "Seeking Sanctuary: (Re)claiming the Power of Historically Black Colleges and Universities as Places of Black Refuge." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 30 (10): 1036–41.
- Neckerman, Kathryn M. 2007. *Schools Betrayed: Roots of Failure in Inner-City Education*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Noguera, Pedro, Aida Hurtado, and Edward Fergus, eds. 2013. *Invisible No More: Understanding the Disenfranchisement of Latino Men and Boys*. New York: Routledge.
- Oakes, Jeannie. 2005. *Keeping Track*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Page, Lindsay C., and Judith Scott-Clayton. 2016. "Improving College Access in the United States: Barriers and Policy Responses." *Economics of Education Review*, 51:4–22.
- Palmer, Robert, and Estelle Young. 2009. "Determined to Succeed: Salient Factors That Foster Academic Success for Academically Unprepared Black Males at a Black College." *Journal of College Student Retention* 10 (4): 465–82.
- Paul, Elizabeth, and Sigal Brier. 2001. "Friendsickness in the Transition to College: Precollege Predictors and College Adjustment Correlates." *Journal of Counseling and Development* 79 (1): 77–89.
- Pazey, Barbara L., and David E. DeMatthews. 2016. "Student Voice from a Turnaround Urban High School: An Account of Students With and Without Dis/Abilities Leading Resistance against Accountability Reform." *Urban Education*. doi:10.1177/0042085916666930.
- Perez-Felkner, Lara. 2015. "Perceptions and Resilience in Underrepresented Students' Pathways to College." *Teachers College Record* 117:1–60.
- Perna, Laura. 2005. "A Gap in the Literature: The Influence of the Design, Operations, and Marketing of Student Financial Aid Programs on the Formation of Family College-Going Plans and Resulting College-Going Behaviors of Potential Students." *Journal of Student Financial Aid* 35 (3): 7–15.
- Poynton, Timothy, Richard Lapan, and Amanda Marcotte. 2015. "Financial Planning Strategies of High School Seniors: Removing Barriers to Career Success." *Career Development Quarterly* 63 (1): 57–73.
- Reid, M. Jeanne, and James L. Moore III. 2008. "College Readiness and Academic Preparation for Postsecondary Education: Oral Histories of First-Generation Urban College Students." *Urban Education* 43 (2): 240–61.
- Rhoden, Stuart. 2017. "'Trust Me, You Are Going to College': How Trust Influences Academic Achievement in Black Males." *Journal of Negro Education* 86 (1): 52–64.
- Rodríguez, Louie F., Eduardo Mosqueda, Pedro E. Nava, and Gilberto Conchas. 2013. "Reflecting on the Institutional Processes for College Success: The Expe-

- riences of Four Chicanos in the Context of Inequality.” *Latino Studies* 11 (3): 411–27.
- Sáenz, Víctor, and Luis Ponjuán. 2009. “The Vanishing Latino Male in Higher Education.” *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education* 8 (1): 54–89.
- Sáenz, Víctor, Luis Ponjuán, and Julie Figueroa, eds. 2016. *Ensuring the Success of Latino Males in Higher Education: A National Imperative*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Savitz-Romer, Mandy, and Suzanne Bouffard. 2012. *Ready, Willing, and Able: A Developmental Approach to College Access and Success*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Schmader, Toni, and Michael Johns. 2003. “Converging Evidence That Stereotype Threat Reduces Working Memory Capacity.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 85 (3): 440–52.
- Scott, Jameel, Kenneth Taylor, and Robert Palmer. 2013. “Challenges to Success in Higher Education: An Examination of Educational Challenges from the Voices of College-Bound Black Males.” *Journal of Negro Education* 82 (3): 288–99.
- Scott-Clayton, Judith. 2015. “The Role of Financial Aid in Promoting College Access and Success: Research Evidence and Proposals for Reform.” *Journal of Student Financial Aid* 45 (3): 7–22.
- Seidman, Irving. 2013. *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Squire, Dian D., and Steve D. Mobley Jr. 2015. “Negotiating Race and Sexual Orientation in the College Choice Process of Black Gay Males.” *Urban Review* 47 (3): 466–91.
- Steele, Claude. 2003. “Stereotype Threat and African-American Student Achievement.” In *Young, Gifted, and Black: Promoting High Achievement among African-American Students*, ed. Theresa Perry, Claude Steele, and Asa Hilliard. Boston: Beacon.
- Strayhorn, Terrell. 2015. “Factors Influencing Black Males’ Preparation for College and Success in STEM Majors: A Mixed Methods Study.” *Western Journal of Black Studies* 39 (1): 45–63.
- Swail, Watson, Alberto Cabrera, Chul Lee, and Adriane Williams. 2005. *Latino Students and the Educational Pipeline: A Three-Part Series. Part III: Pathways to the Bachelor’s Degree for Latino Students*. Stafford, VA: Educational Policy Institute.
- Swanson, Jane, and Mary Woitke. 1997. “Theory into Practice in Career Assessment for Women: Assessment and Interventions Regarding Perceived Career Barriers.” *Journal of Career Assessment* 5 (4): 443–62.
- Turley, Ruth. 2006. “When Parents Want Children to Stay Home for College.” *Research in Higher Education* 47 (7): 823–46.
- Warren, Chezare A., and Christian Bonilla. 2018. “Care and the Influence of Student-Adult Stakeholder Interactions on Young Black Men’s College Aspirations.” *Multicultural Perspectives* 20 (1): 13–24.
- Welton, Anjalé, and Melissa Martinez. 2014. “Coloring the College Pathway: A More Culturally Responsive Approach to College Readiness and Access for Students of Color in Secondary Schools.” *Urban Review* 46 (2): 197–223.
- Wood, J. Luke, and Robert Palmer. 2014. “Academic Achievement and the Community College: Perspectives of Black Male Students on the Importance of ‘Focus.’” *College Student Affairs Journal* 32 (1): 141–53.
- Yin, Robert K. 2003. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.