

Spring 2013

# Academic Pathways: an Account and Analysis of Post Secondary Destinations

Joy E. Alfano

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Alfano, Joy E., "Academic Pathways: an Account and Analysis of Post Secondary Destinations" (2013). *Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses (ETDs)*. 1842.  
<https://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations/1842>

**ACADEMIC PATHWAYS: AN ACCOUNT AND ANALYSIS OF POST  
SECONDARY DESTINATIONS**

**Joy Alfano Udert**

**Dissertation Committee**

**Christopher H. Tienken, Ed.D.  
Carolyn E. Sattin-Bajaj, Ph.D.  
Roberta Devlin-Scherer, Ed.D.  
Eunyoung Kim, Ph.D.**

**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**Seton Hall University**

**2013**

© Copyright by Joy Elaine Alfano Udert., 2013

All Rights Reserved

## ABSTRACT

Although researchers have shown that their data indicate a higher percentage of African-American students aspired to obtain college degrees than their white peers in students surveyed (Hauser & Anderson, 1991; Ogbu, 1974; Ogbu & Simons, 1998), the number of African-American students who enrolled in and graduated from college was much lower than their white peers. This disparity of students who desire college degrees and attain them results in students unable to reap the economic and social benefits associated with obtaining a college degree. This study examined the role of influences such as parents, peers, school guidance counselors, and high school staff that exist within students' homes, school, and community and how these influences affected low-income African-American students as they charted and implemented their academic trajectories. I followed African-American students who attended a low-income urban high school as they charted their academic trajectory from junior year of high school until one-year post graduation. Insight gained by identifying and understanding how factors, persons, and events in their environment hindered or assisted students in reaching their goals will assist students, parents, and school staff in mitigating identified obstacles.

Utilizing qualitative methodology, I gave student participants a voice to relate their feelings and thoughts about how they prepared for college and made college-going decisions. All student participants (n=37) were interviewed in their junior year (2008), and several (n=8) students participated in two more rounds of interviews in their senior year (2009) and (n=9) in their first year post-graduation (2010). The 9 students who participated over multiple years of the study were then able to reflect on prior experiences



during high school along with detail on how they enacted their academic plans and how those plans changed over the subsequent one or two years.

Findings revealed that (a) the majority of students had career goals, aspired to enroll in college the fall after graduation, and understood the importance of higher education as a social mobility tool and means to reach their career goals; (b) the students, in the spring of their junior year, were unable to describe the necessary steps in the college search and college application process, and lacked knowledge of the education requirements of their career choice; (c) the students perceived favoritism by the guidance counselors in how they assisted in college searches and application processes, which influenced how students approached the college search and application process; (d) students had limited exposure to a robust college-going culture in their schools and homes although many students' parents or guardians held expectations for them to attend college or were supportive of students' college goals; and (e) students' college destination was a function of both the student's ability to navigate through obstacles such as filling out financial aid paperwork and the assistance the student received from guidance counselors or admissions officers.

Analysis of data and findings suggest that the three-phase model of college choice (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; McDonough, 1997) is invalid for low-income African-American students. In this study, the three-phase model does not give insight to the obstacles these students face during each of the phases of the college choice model.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With gratitude, I acknowledge the many people who assisted me throughout the dissertation process and who were part of my cultural environment and witness to my academic journey.

To my husband, who carted Becky and me around during the hottest summer, so that I would not get lost or go hungry. Roland, you are the bestest!!!

Very rarely do you find people who you instantly admire, are charismatic, and have a common belief system. I have been so lucky at Seton Hall University to find such wonderful and caring mentors to encourage me along my academic journey.

Foremost, I thank Dr. Rebecca Cox, who found a way to keep it real but never discouraged me from leaping. Becky, I owe you so much because you did more than you were required or needed to do. I will never forget how you believed in me, even when at times I did not believe in myself.

I thank Dr. Christopher Tienken for being enthusiastic throughout my coursework and throughout this long process. I thank you for the endless hours of reading and notes and for responding calmly to desperate e-mails. You have taught me so much about the responsibility of being a teacher, and I hope that that is reflected not only in this piece of scholarship but also in all I have to give in the years to come.

I thank Dr. Roberta Devlin-Scherer for taking a chance on me and for all of her input during the course of this last year. It has been a privilege and an honor to be your student.

Special thanks to Dr. Kim and Dr. Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj for all of their help; I am very grateful.

I would like to thank the entire Seton Hall Department of Education faculty and staff who helped me along the way: Dr. Collins, Dr. Finkelstein, Dr. Stetar, and Dr. Walker.

To my first mentor, Dr. Matthew Petersheim, who would not let me give up. I hope that somewhere in heaven, you have seen the person I have become and know that your goodness and your strength is part of all of the good things I am. You were the first person at Seton Hall who believed in me and who took me under your wing, and I will never forget all of the pizzas and lunches that became pep talks.

To Dr. Carolyn Bentivenga, who is an amazing presence; I think Sean said it best: you taught us what it means to research and the responsibility that comes with being a good researcher. You set the bar so high for all of us and then did everything in your power to help us exceed it. You were a great mentor, and I am so happy to call you my friend.

To Sister Pat Tavis, who was my cheering section throughout this whole process, and who read countless drafts throughout the last two years.

To my parents, my husband, and my son—the words do not exist.

To the Caronia-Alfano family, mia familia, thank you for all of your support.

To the Matis Family, I thank you for opening your home to me whenever I needed a quiet place to work.

To James Engles, Jr., the best partner a girl could ever have. Losing you so suddenly broke me for a very long time. We both weren't into that sappy stuff, so I never told you how much you meant to me and how I relied on your friendship and encouragement when times were rough. Riding was never the same without you.

To the Richmond Statkus Klan, led by my fun, fearless sister-in-law, Ruth Richmond. My nephews David, Jimmy, Tommy, and Joey. My great nephew Sean, my great nieces Shea Lauren, AnnMarie Elizabeth, and Carly Mae, and in loving memory of my beautiful great nephew, Michael James.

## DEDICATION

To my John Roland. Over the course of my life, I have accumulated many wounds, and you, my son, heal me with your mere presence, smile, and laugh.

My Mom, Dad, and Roland (in no specific order).

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iv
DEDICATION .....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	viii
LIST OF TABLES .....	xi
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION .....	1
Post-Secondary Destinations .....	2
Statement of the Problem .....	4
Statement of Purpose .....	5
Research Questions .....	6
Theoretical Basis .....	7
Background of the Study .....	10
Methods .....	11
Delimitations of the Study .....	12
Limitations of the Study .....	12
Significance of the Study and Organization of Dissertation .....	13
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELEVANT RESEARCH THEORY AND	
LITERATURE .....	17
Methodology .....	18
Organization of Synthesis .....	19
The Effects of Socioeconomic Status on Higher Education .....	20
The College Choice Model .....	35
Applications of College Choice Models .....	41
CHAPTER III: METHODS .....	51
The Qualitative Approach .....	52
Site .....	54
Participants .....	55
Data Organization and Analysis .....	59
Validity .....	65
The Researcher's Role .....	68
Limitations .....	69

CHAPTER IV: PREPARING FOR COLLEGE.....	71
Academic Plans .....	74
Home Environments .....	78
Rosa Parks High School .....	86
Rosa Parks Faculty and Staff.....	92
CHAPTER V: GOING TO COLLEGE.....	99
Self-Imposed Limitations of Choice.....	100
External Limitations of College Costs.....	102
Chapter VI: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	115
Developing a Supportive College-Going Structure.....	118
The Role of Guidance Counselors.....	125
Future Research, Policy, and Practice.....	129
REFERENCES .....	133
APPENDIX A.....	156
Student Focus Group Questions .....	156
APPENDIX B .....	159
Codebook.....	159
APPENDIX C .....	161
Focused Interview Questions: Students 1-2 months prior to graduation.....	161
APPENDIX D.....	164
College Demographics.....	164
APPENDIX E .....	167
Narratives	
Andrea.....	168
Cameron.....	170
Charlene .....	173
Christina.....	175
Eva .....	177
Lara .....	180
Linda .....	182
Mary.....	186
Necie .....	188
APPENDIX F .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Focus Group Guiding Questions .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

APPENDIX G.....	193
Contact Information Sheet.....	193
APPENDIX H.....	196
Focused Interviews: Students Post Graduate Interviews.....	196
APPENDIX I .....	203
Subject Students: Detailed Description .....	203
APPENDIX J:.....	208
Definition of Terms .....	208
APPENDIX K: Getting to College at Rosa Parks .....	234



## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Focus Groups A-D.....	56
Table 2. Focus Groups E-H.....	56
Table 3. Student Interviewed during 12th Grade.....	57
Table 4. Students Interviewed Post-Graduation.....	57
Table 5. Student Contact.....	70

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Although the rate of African-American students enrolling in college has increased over the last ten years, African-American students enroll in and complete four-year college degrees at a lower rate when compared to other racial groups. In 2009, United States Census data showed that African-Americans over 25 were least likely to have completed a college degree in comparison to all other racial groups, yet the most likely of all racial groups to enroll in college (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Although the enrollment gap between African-American and White students decreased from 9.3% in 2003 to 4.9% in 2010, graduation rates for African-Americans have remained static. According to the United States Census, 18% of African-American males and 21% of African-American females over 25 (percentage of civilian non-institutional population) obtained a bachelor's degree, graduate degree, or professional degree, while nationally 32% of males and 31% of females obtained the same degree level (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

People unable to complete a college degree do not reap the economic benefits associated with obtaining a college education. The United States Department of Labor quantified the economic benefit of those earning a baccalaureate degree. The average annual percentage increase in hourly earnings between the years of 1978-2008 from persons 18 to 22 who obtained only high school degrees was 3.2% less than those who had obtained a bachelor's degree. In addition, the average annual percentage increase in hourly earnings by persons 23 to 27 who had obtained only high school diplomas was

5.2% less than those who had obtained a bachelor's degree. In 2005, a person possessing a high school diploma made a gross income of \$31,000 compared to college graduates, who earned an annual gross income of \$51,000 (BLS Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). This translated into an expected lifetime earnings of \$800,000 dollars more for persons who earned a four-year degree than those who completed high school alone (Baum & Ma, 2007). An increase in African-American attainment of college degrees would translate into greater economic advancement, as obtaining a college education on average equates to a higher salary and benefits. Increased education raises not only earnings but also productivity, as knowledge, skills, and problem-solving skills add to efficiency (Becker, 1993, p. 19).

The positive effects of college attainment extend beyond personal economic advances and contribute to the overall economic health of the country (Becker, 1993, p. 19); therefore, it is imperative to understand the phenomena of increased enrollment and static attainment. Equally, the identification of influence on student college choice will expand the knowledge base, resulting in added data that can be integrated into best practice strategies to assist students who desire to obtain college educations and gain the knowledge and skills needed to guide them beyond the enrollment process.

### **Post-Secondary Destinations**

Numerous social, economic, and cultural variables influence African-American education attainment. Several researchers examined social political variables of education attainment such as the effects of certain pieces of legislation (Coleman, 1968; Kerckoff, 1976; Hearn, 1984; Morgan, 1996) and social economic status (Furrer & Skinner, 2003), while others have focused on school related influences such as school

and teacher quality (Mercy & Steelman, 1982). Other researchers examined cultural influences such as parental and peer influences (Freeman, 2005), student attitudes (Mickelson, 1990), school and community influence (McDonough, 1997), and large-scale cultural influences such as the presence of oppositional culture or dominant/subordinate culture (Ogbu, 2008). More recently, researchers such as Perna and Thomas (2006) used a 4-layer model that uses multiple contextual examinations to assess what influences and to what degree internal, family, school, and policy influences affect student success.

Understanding how these multiple interconnected and interworking webs of factors influence students and isolating how specific influences affect college destination and degree completion is complex. Since statistics show an increase in African-American enrollment in college with a static rate of completion, I focused my research on the major influences on years where students decide if and where to enroll in college, or student *college choice*. College choice refers to the way students form ideas about possible college attendance, search for potential schools to attend, and narrow down their choices of the colleges for which to complete the application process (Chapman, 1981). Although these multiple components of policy and practice interface to influence student outcomes, previous scholarship has shown the predominant role of home and school influences. These influences include students' discussions and interactions with peers, parents, and school staff about their future college plans and the steps taken as students search for and make their college choice (Bloom, 2007; McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002; Mickelson, 1990); therefore, I focused on home and school influences on student college choice in this study.

The *three-phase college choice model* consists of the predisposition phase, search phase, and choice phase (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). During the *predisposition phase*, students plan for their education beyond high school and ultimately their career. In the *search phase*, students discover and evaluate possible colleges in which to enroll (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999). In the *choice phase*, students choose a school from among those they have considered during the search phase of the model.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Although the percentage of African-Americans (percentage of civilian non-institutional African-American population male and female over 25) who obtained a bachelor's degree has increased from 16.6% in 2000 to 19.9% in 2011 compared to an increase of 26.1% and 31% in White student college attainment; statistically, inequality in education still exists (U.S. Census 2000, 2006, 2011). Consequences of the gap in attainment include the following: (a) African-Americans are less likely to earn a living that places them in the middle class, causing social and economic differences and intensifying racial tensions (Chubb & Loveless, 2002, p. 1); (b) African-American students of parents who did not enroll or graduate from college are least likely of all students to themselves enroll in college. An increase in education attainment would result in future generations of parents with earned college degrees, therefore increasing the next generation's college attainment rates, as statistically children of parents with college degrees have greater likelihood of children going to college (Olneck, 2005; Perna & Thomas, 2009); and (c) Earning potential increases proportionally with education attainment in addition to education attainment raising productivity, knowledge, and problem-solving skills that add to efficiency (Becker, 1993, p. 19).

## Statement of Purpose

I analyzed data collected from students in a United States high school located in an urban center on the East Coast. Students stated their goals included attending college. Rosa Parks High School<sup>1</sup>, a comprehensive high school housing Grades 10-12 with a student population of 1487, is composed of a majority of African-American students<sup>2</sup> from low-income families<sup>3</sup>. Administrators, faculty, and staff at Rosa Parks, along with the administrators overseeing the city's other public high schools, have tried to increase the percentage of graduates who attend college through counseling programs, various inter- and intra-school college readiness programs, and programs sponsored by local colleges and universities. Despite these initiatives, and 95% of Rosa Park's junior students surveyed in 2008 reporting aspirations of attending college (Temple, 2009) at the end of their senior year, students self-reported post-high school plans included 28.1% reported plans to attend a four-year institution and 34% reported plans to attend a two-year college (New Jersey Department of Education, 2010). Further, as of 2010, only 9% of the city's population indicated their completion of a bachelor's degree (U.S. Census, 2010). Understanding how students planned their academic pathways and the factors, events, and persons that either assisted them in maintaining these pathways or created barriers preventing their continuing process on their paths will contribute to the larger goal of equal representation of African-American students in higher education.

---

<sup>1</sup> Rosa Parks High School is a pseudonym for the high school where this research took place.

<sup>2</sup> The student population described in terms of race and gender at Rosa Parks High School was defined as 48% Black males, 49% Black females, 1% Hispanic males, 1% Hispanic females, 0% Native American males, 0% Native American females, .13% Asian males, .07% Asian females, 0%, White males, and 0% White females, (New Jersey Department of Education, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> The percentage of students who received free or reduced lunches, as determined by eligibility for "Free or Reduced" meals under the National Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act, was 58% (New Jersey Department of Education, 2008).

The purpose for this qualitative study was to develop insights into the reasons why, despite interventions by the state and city departments of education to increase education attainment, students who aspire to college degrees do not achieve their goals. I used students' reflections on their academic and career goals during the three-year period from the students' junior year of high school to their first year post-graduation, the phases of the college choice model. This study aimed to understand why some students who while in high school aspired to attend college maintained their academic paths, while other students from the same urban high school deviated from their goals. I found that these students' college choice process diverged from the phases of the college choice models. In examining why this phenomenon occurred, I examined how students interacted with their parents, friends, and school staff in dealing with career and college choices during the last two years of high school into the first year of high school graduation.

### **Research Questions**

1. How did academic and career goals change over the three-year period beginning in the students' junior year and extending to one year post-graduation?
2. By whom and how were students influenced during the phases of the college choice process--college search, admissions, enrollment, and attendance of their post-secondary institution(s)?
3. How were students' academic pathways similar to or different from the phases of the college choice model?

## Theoretical Basis

The conceptual model for this study draws on the college choice model developed by Chapman (1981) and revised by Hossler and Gallagher (1987) and Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper (1997). Additionally, the conceptual model for this study draws on McDonough's (1997) college choice model, which shows significant influence from Bourdieu's (1977) *cultural reproductive model* and Freeman's (2005) model of predetermination.

Chapman (1981) designed this model for colleges to explore how students made their college choice decisions to illustrate how college administrators could more effectively recruit college students. The Chapman model proposes that student enrollment decisions are most influenced by three types of variables: student characteristics, such as aspirations and high school performance; significant people, such as parents, counselors, and teachers; and college characteristics such as cost, financial aid, and availability of desired program. The Chapman model assumes that by changing admission policies and procedures to accommodate the student characteristics as listed above, college admissions officers could increase enrollment. For example, by creating college communications that concentrate on the college characteristics that most influence student choice, administrators could increase student enrollment.

While Chapman's (1981) model concentrated on student college choice from an institutional viewpoint, Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model used a psychological and sociological lens and examined student choice from a student's perspective. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) used previous scholarship to propose a three-phase model of student



college choice where students formed ideas about college, searched for possible college choices, and then made ultimate college choices. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) found that (a) different factors influence students during each of the different phases of college choice and (b) during the phases of choice, students receive and process college-going information in context with the students' characteristics. Based on a synthesis of prior research, Hossler and Gallagher (1987) illustrated that best practices would target interventions during the specific time period of the college choice process. For example, they found that parents, siblings, and peers were the primary influences during the predisposition phase in which students plan their post-secondary education; therefore, interventions aimed to expose students to possible post-secondary programs should include not only targeting students but also providing information to parents and students' family members to encourage their students.

Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper (1997) utilized the Hossler and Gallagher (1987) three-phase college choice model, building on the three-phases of the model and focusing on the phases from a student's perspective. For example, Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper (1997) provided student perspectives on financial aid college costs; students' perceptions of education costs and availability of financial aid caused students to eliminate possible colleges because students perceived they would be unable to afford college costs.

McDonough (1997) designed her college choice model after an extensive review of scholarship and theory, foremost using Bourdieu's (1977) *cultural reproductive model*. The cultural reproductive model provided a base to explain the connection between society, education, and individuals. Students' home and school environments influence students' perception; having parents who were college graduates or attendance at a school

that fosters a robust college-going environment shape the perceptions of the student. Therefore, students' college choices are a function of their experiences within their environment (McDonough, 1997). Bourdieu (1977) described the relationship of society and the individual as their *habitus*, a term referring to influence of the whole on the individual. McDonough (1997) illustrated that a student's choice of college is a function of the student's *habitus*, where students self-limit their college choices based on their contextual experiences. McDonough (1994) defined this *habitus* as follows:

an internalized, permanent system of outlooks and beliefs about the world that an individual learns from his or her immediate environment ... a common set of subjective perceptions held by all members of the same group or class that shapes the individual's expectations, attitudes, and aspirations (p. 430).

Both Bourdieu and McDonough use the terminology *habitus* to describe the contextual basis in which students make college-choice decisions. This research builds on the principle, supported by research, that their environment influences students. Freeman's (2005) college choice model was built on the Hossler and Gallagher (1987) college model focusing on African-American college choice and designed to explain the African-American college choice process. Freeman (2005) divided students into three categories based on their college aspirations: knowers, seekers, and dreamers. Knowers are students who have always known they will attend college, seekers come to believe they can obtain a college degree, and dreamers do not believe they can attend college but dream of the possibility of attending. For example, Freedman (2005) concluded that knowers have advantages in college preparations over seekers and dreamers because they gather more information to make decisions, make better school-related choices such as

which classes and activities to participate in, and have more time to focus on college selection. Based on her research, Freeman retooled the Hossler and Gallagher model (1987) by focusing each of the stages of college choice through a lens of knowers, seekers, and dreamers.

### **Background of the Study**

Rosa Parks High School is located in the urban city of Milton, New Jersey. Selection of this site considered race, class, and socioeconomic status. The city of Milton's estimated 2006 population was 281,402. Demographics relate that 7.8% of the total population in Milton is under the age of five as compared to the New Jersey State percentage of 6.7% and 27.9% of Milton's population is under the age of eighteen as compared to the New Jersey State percentage of 24.8% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

Race demographics for the city of Milton are as follows (the New Jersey State average race demographics in percentages appear in parentheses after the city data): White persons, 26.5% (72.6%); Black persons, 53.5% (13.6%); Asian persons, 1.2% (5.7%); Hispanic or Latino persons, 29.5% (13.3%). Other social demographics included the following: language other than English spoken at home, 42.6% (25.5%); persons over the age of 25 that report they have graduated from high school, 57.9% (82.1%); persons over the age of 25 who report they have achieved a bachelor's degree or higher, 9% (29.8%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

The city of Milton has a lower median value of housing units (\$119,000 compared to the state median of \$170,800). Home ownership rates were well below the state average with 23.8% of the residents owning their homes compared with the state rate of 65.6%. The median household income in 1999 for the city of Milton was half that of the

median of household income for the whole state, and the percentage of persons below the poverty line in the city of Milton was over three times the state percentage (U. S. Census Bureau, 2008).

### **Methods**

During this three-year qualitative study, in which I collaborated with several other graduate student researchers under the direction of a former Seton Hall faculty member, the research team set out to create situations in which students could freely express their feelings, perspectives, and experiences about the process of planning and following their academic pathways. Utilization of qualitative research methodology allowed me to capture the perceptions, thoughts, and experiences from the students themselves over a three-year period. The primary research tools used in this study were focus group discussions and focused interviews. I utilized this design and methodology because students' environments present a complex web of interconnected variables of which individuals may or may not be directly aware. Individuals, regardless of their awareness of these constantly changing variables, may not be able to denote their perceptions and experiences accurately on a quantitative tool such as a survey.

I utilized focus group discussions composed of 44 junior student participants led by Seton Hall graduate student facilitators who used a question guide (Appendix A). Of the 44 students who participated in the focus group discussion, eight students participated in interviews the following year at the end of their senior year. The year after graduation, I interviewed nine of these student volunteers.

## **Delimitations of the Study**

Due to financial, logistical, and time constraints, only one school, Rosa Parks High School, was utilized to conduct the study. Participants were required to be in their junior year at the time of the study. Students volunteered at a recruitment booth stationed at the college fair and therefore the participant selection was not random. Students who volunteered to participate in the study were required to have their parent or guardian sign an informed consent form to participate in the study. Of the 310 eleventh-grade students eligible to attend the college fair, 112 students completed forms indicating their possible interest in participating in focus group conversations regarding their college and career plans. Of the 44 students who returned the necessary parent permission forms, 37 students actually participated in the 8 focus groups over a two-day period.

## **Limitations of the Study**

Student recruitment for this project occurred on one day, on which approximately 200 students were not present in school and an unknown number of students were not available to attend the college fair because of time and personal constraints. An unknown number of 11th grade students were unable to participate and therefore unable to be recruited<sup>4</sup>.

The focus groups were uneven and consisted of 2 to 11 students, as students showed up at the designated area late or early or in groups, which resulted in an unequal amount of information collected for each of the student participants. The unequal

---

<sup>4</sup> Students were to attend the college fair during their English classes; it was reported by several students that some English teachers did not allow their classes to participate in the fair. It was also noted that students from other classes (such as math and science classes) were brought down to the college fair so that students could have visited the college fair twice. The attendance office also only reported the number of students absent without a breakdown of the exact number of students from each class who were absent that date. Also, mixed classes, with a mixture sophomores, juniors, and seniors attended the fair, so I could not obtain a correct count of the number of junior participants.

grouping also resulted in difficulty when the moderators transcribed the tapes of the focus group discussions. Moderators of groups that had more students had great difficulty in distinguishing which students made which statements.

There was an inability of the researchers to contact the students once they graduated from Rosa Parks High School<sup>5</sup>; therefore there was a small sample size. There were several students who could not be part of the research study due to insufficient contact information (n=4), their phone numbers were disconnected (n=11), they did not respond to contact (n=12), or were no-shows for interviews (n=3). By the spring of 2010, 50% of the students had moved to another location and changed or disconnected their phone numbers. Therefore, the sample size was reduced from 37 to 9.

### **Significance of the Study and Organization of Dissertation**

Prior research has illustrated a disconnect between aspiration to attend college, acceptance and enrollment in college, and graduation from college. The most frequently used tool to assess college choice has been the college choice model. The basis of college-choice modeling is statistical analysis of large data sets (Chapman, 1981; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999; Litten, 1982), which limits analysis to variables in the researchers' constructs, most commonly demographical information. While this methodology captured large quantity data, it lacked a contextual component in how and why different demographics of students made different college choice decisions. While these college choice models are a useful tool in the analysis of understanding the process of decision making, such as that parental influences are greatest during the predisposition of college choice, the Chapman, Hossler, and

---

<sup>5</sup> A full detail of how I contacted students is in Chapter 3. Students did not furnish the research staff with updated contact information after graduation, so I was unable to make contact with many students.

Gallagher, and the Hossler et al. models do not assist in the understanding of why parental influences during the predisposition phase is so strong.

McDonough (1997) and Freeman (2005) explored the finer nuances of the college choice process using smaller qualitative data to explore the influences themselves. Using the parental influence example above, McDonough (1997) explored how parents influenced students, while Freeman (2005) examined the role of parental influences specific to the students' frame of mind. These smaller qualitative studies have contributed greatly to the scholarship on how students make college decisions, particularly the McDonough college choice model and the Freeman college choice model. This study expands on McDonough (1997) by using a sample of African-American students to explore the role of key persons, events, and influences during the period of college choice. Freeman's (2005) research focused on close student relationships such as parents and peers. In this study, I expanded on Freeman's research not only by exploring the role of parents and close peers, but also by allowing students to discuss what persons of influence or what key events assisted or hindered their college-going process.

In conclusion, college choice models are lenses through which to view a student's college choice; I used the Hossler et al. college choice model as a lens to view the students progression of choice, I used the McDonough's college choice model to view the role of persons or environments of influence on student choice, and the Freeman model to view how student mind-sets were altered due to these influences.

I found that these African American students' predisposition phases were limited in that students had desires to obtain degrees or to enter a specific career; yet, students

had not researched the type of coursework required for their desired degree or the type of higher education a particular career would require. Parents, school staff, and policy-makers should use these findings to shape programs and policy designed to encourage students to explore what coursework students will need for a particular career or college degree. Students armed with this information, would be better prepared to make an informed choice of degree or college program to pursue.

In addition, in this study I examined how students diverged from the search phase of the college choice models. I found that students felt bombarded with ambiguous expectations and unclear direction from their high school's guidance department with counselors having little contact with some students, while other students received extensive college counseling. Although students understood that information on colleges was located in the guidance office, five of the nine students opted not to pursue help from the guidance department. One of the students tried to approach her guidance counselor for help; however, her guidance counselor was unavailable to her. Furthering the scholarship on this phase of the college choice model and gaining insight into the needs of students during this phase can lead to the development of policy to ensure all students receive equal counseling along with time and resources allocated to searching for possible colleges to attend.

In chapter V, I explored the choice phase of the college choice model. In this study, the students who entered college typically applied to between 5-8 colleges during their senior year of high school. I found that the students in the current study, either by their own devices or by circumstance, were limited to one college of their potential list of colleges. The choices in these students' cases were to go to that one college or face not



being able to attend college at all. There were several self-imposed and external factors limiting students' college choice such as failure of students to complete applications or to comply with the college's request for more information. Students accepted offers from the first college from which they received admittance letters while foregoing communications from other schools to which they had applied. They faced problems with financial aid paperwork and paying for college. By understanding how the students in the current study chose colleges and limited their choices, future students can make better decisions on which colleges to attend, which could improve the chances of completing their education.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELEVANT RESEARCH THEORY AND LITERATURE

African-American students enroll in college and attain college degrees at much lower rates than that of their White peers. In 2011, data indicated that African-Americans over 25 (non-incarcerated civilians) were least likely to complete a college degree than all other races, yet the most likely of all races to enroll in college (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Although the enrollment gap between African-American and White students decreased from 9.3% in 2003 to 8.4% in 2006 and 4.9% in 2010, graduation rates for African-Americans under 24 years of age have remained static<sup>6</sup>. These statistics illustrate a phenomenon where African-American student enrollment has increased but the graduation rate has remained static and lower than other groups.

An increase in African-American attainment of college degrees would translate into greater economic advancement, as a college education on average equates to higher salary and benefits. In 2005, a person possessing a high school diploma made a gross income of \$31,000 compared to college graduates who earned an annual gross income of \$51,000 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). This translates into an expected lifetime earnings of \$800,000 dollars more for persons who earned a four-year degree than those who have completed high school alone (Baum & Ma, 2007).

Increased education raises not only earnings but also productivity, as knowledge, skills, and problem-solving skills add to efficiency (Becker, 1993, p. 19). The impact of student college attendance and graduation is not limited to the individual student, but is linked to the overall economic health of the country. Therefore, the exploration of

---

<sup>6</sup> Statics were straight percentages from the population of civilian non institutionalized population

college choice, particularly the identification and analysis of what influences affect the college choice process and when, are imperative. Equally, the identification and influences on student college choice will expand the knowledge base for integration into strategies to assist students who desire to obtain college educations and assist them in gaining the knowledge and skills needed to guide them through the college search and application process.

The purpose of the literature review was to collect and review scholarship that pertained to how African-American high school students in an urban school district gathered information about colleges; searched for colleges that met their academic, economical, and geographical needs; and made decisions on if and where to enroll in college after completing high school. I concentrated on scholarship that gave insight into the influences on the students' college choice process as established by theoretically infused, empirical research.

### **Methodology**

I completed an in-depth review of the literature to understand how students choose whether to attend college and which college to attend along with the major influences that assisted or hindered the college choice process. This chapter includes scholarship that addressed the research questions, frameworks, models, theory, methodology, and relevant material regarding student college choice (Cooper, 1998), specifically research that can be applied to African-American students who attend urban high schools. Resources included journal articles, book chapters, books, online articles, websites, and educational databases published from 1960 to the present year. Methodologies of these relevant resources include qualitative studies, multiple method

studies, and quantitative studies based on descriptive, experimental, and explanatory frameworks. I used several databases, including EBSCO, ProQuest, and Eric, searching under the key words *college choice*, *African-American college choice*, and *influences of college choice*. I then reviewed the materials and the reference sections of the materials to find relevant literature. I repeated the process until the reference sections produced no new leads to other relevant literature.

Additionally, I selected the literature for inclusion based on several criteria, evaluating the relevance to my study and the validity in terms of sample selection, sample size, methods of data collection, variables examined, and research questions. I considered primary research studies for which the sampling methodology, sample size, method of data collection, or analysis researchers clearly explained and justified. I considered secondary sources as long as the researchers stated how the researcher obtained and utilized data in their study.

### **Organization of Synthesis**

African-American students desire to attend college, as shown by enrollment statistics, yet even those students who enroll in college do not attain their stated goals. Researchers showed that SES is an indicator of student college enrollment and outcome status, especially in African-American students where lower SES corresponds with lower education attainment (Alwin & Atto, 1977; Hearn, 1984; Hearn, 1991; Hossler, Blouse, & Schmidt, 1990; Karabel & Astin, 1975; McDonough, 1997; Portes & Wilson, 1976; St. John & Noell, 1989; Wang & Gordon, 1993). Researchers probed how students arrived at their college destinations by examining the process of the student's college choice; the way students form ideas about possible college attendance, search for potential schools to

attend, and narrow down their choices of the colleges to which they should complete the application process (Chapman, 1981). Several researchers concentrated on the development of a college choice model which represented the college choice process and the phases of college choice (Chapman, 1981; Litten, 1982; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999; McDonough, 1997). Other researchers focused on the events and influences during each of the phases of student college choice (Freeman, 2005; Mickelson, 1990). Several researchers did not use the college choice model; however, their research is applicable to the influences within the times of the phases of college choice.

### **The Effects of Socioeconomic Status on Higher Education**

The literature on how students choose colleges and the influences and effects that membership in different socioeconomic status (SES) strata and race have on college choice is clear on several points. Scholarly reviews showed that students of low SES differ from students of high SES in what types of colleges they choose; students of low SES tend to attend higher priced schools. As I detail in this section, students are influenced by parents, teachers, and guidance counselors as well as by factors such as financial aid, what resources are available to them during high school, and how students utilize those resources.

There is a plethora of research identifying SES as a major influence on college enrollment and completion. Students with higher SES have a statistically greater chance of attaining a college degree than those students with lower SES (Alwin & Otto, 1977; Hearn, 1991; Karabel & Astin, 1975; McDonough, Antonio, & Horvat, 1997; Portes & Wilson, 1976). First, I reviewed literature that examined how students choose colleges in

terms of colleges' attributes, such as the college's quality, selectivity, and cost. Second, I examined literature that focused on what persons or factors, such as parents, peers, and financial aid, influenced students of varied SES in making college choice decisions. In addition, I reviewed relevant literature on how students of schools classified as high or low SES differed in their college choice, goals, and aspirations and how students utilize college-going resources provided by their high schools.

### **SES and College Attributes**

Researchers used demographics from large data sets to find what influence SES status had on students' college choice by correlating students' SES and their college quality, selectivity, and affluence (Hearn, 1991). The majority of researchers used quantitative methodology employing large data sets and focused on outcomes instead of the process of choice and the influences on students choice. The advantages of using quantitative methods is the establishment of statistical trends using a significantly large population of individuals. Several researchers used qualitative and quantitative methodologies in their data collection, with analysis of higher education trends among students of various SES groups, race, and gender. Through use of qualitative data, researchers gained valuable insight from interviews with students and parents (Alwin & Otto, 1977; Karabel & Astin, 1975; Portes & Wilson, 1976).

The quantitative analysis of choice indicated SES negatively influenced college outcomes (Alwin & Otto, 1977). Alwin & Otto (1977) conducted a two-year study (1964 to 1966), in the state of Washington ( $n = 4303$ ). Data collection included interviews, mailed questionnaires to parents, and high school records of the subject students. Similarly, Hearn (1984) analyzed statistical data collected from first-time

freshman from the 1975 Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CHIRP) and 11th and 12th grade students (n=10,422) using *Studies of the Impact of Student Financial Aid Program* (SISFAP) data. Hearn (1984) confirmed Alwin & Otto's (1977) findings that lower SES negatively correlated with college attendance. Hearn (1984) also found that those African-American students enrolled in higher education institutions were more likely to attend higher-cost institutions. Hearn's research failed to reveal whether higher-cost institutions were either more competitive than other colleges or just more expensive. In addition, because of Hearn's (1984) use of solely quantitative methods, further probing into the reasons students choose or did not choose a specific college were not available.

St. John and Noell (1989) examined how SES influenced college choice utilizing two large national databases (NLS and HSB) for the years 1972, 1980, and 1982 to extrapolate college enrollment trends of students of varied SES and race. Their research confirmed previous studies that higher SES correlated with high college enrollment. St. John and Noell (1989) also introduced evidence that being African-American had a strong negative impact on the students' college attendance despite finding that African-American students were more likely than any other ethnic group to apply to college.

Karabel and Astin (1975) examined the influence of SES, academic ability, college quality, selectivity, and affluence on student achievement and degree attainment. They concluded that elite colleges provided easier access to those students with greater socioeconomic status and annual average incomes. Karabel and Astin utilized data gathered from the 1966 survey distributed by the American Council on Education's Office of Research with a follow-up survey of 251 colleges in 1967. Researchers analyzed 22,079 surveys, using descriptive statistics, cross tabs, correlations, and

regressions to determine the relationship between socioeconomic status and attainment. These findings highlighted a statistical trend of attendance of high SES students to affluent colleges without examination of the factors that occur within the trends.

### **Cultural Ecological Models**

Although this study specifically concentrates on the period of college choice and utilizes the college choice model as a lens of examination, it would be negligent to omit or dismiss studies directly exploring African-American education, particularly scholarship, using Ogbu's Cultural Ecological Models. Although I did not directly analyze "cultural ecological models" as a conceptual model in this study, I have included them because of integration of cultural ecological models in the study of minority student education. In this section I give an overview of the main works of scholarship and conclude with a brief discussion of why these models were not utilized in this study.

Freeman (2005) based her race specific choice model on the works of Ogbu. Ogbu (1974) questioned why it was that minority children who lived in cities did poorly in school. He theorized a relationship in which different groups of minorities viewed education through different cultural lenses. The study was a multi-phase bilingual education project launched in 1968 in Stockton, California, and included an intensive survey of over 100 households in the spring and summer of 1969. Ogbu interviewed 40 of the families from the original 100 households and collected 225 comprehensive surveys from students in the twelfth grade. Ogbu (1974) introduced a conceptual framework that examined the relationship between an individual and his or her cultural surroundings.



Ogbu found that a high proportion of school failures of African-American students were rooted in how students' culture influenced the way students thought about college. This significant approach recognized the relationship of individual perception and culture and how this relationship altered the way groups assessed the value of education and how education benefits persons.

Concepts of influences on education included several key arguments introduced by Ogbu in 1974: (1) Educational attainment is unequal amongst African Americans even when academic ability and SES is held constant, (2) Many relationships exist between a society and its members, and (3) Society encourages methods to reach goals that it views legitimate. Therefore, high proportions of school failures among subordinate minorities is a reaction and adaption to the perceived or actual limit of opportunity available

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) used data collected at Capital High School and outlined a conceptual framework that examined the performance of minority students at a school in a predominantly African-American and low-income area of Washington, DC. The data consisted of ethnographic data from 33 students in their junior year. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) postulated that Black students' academic efforts were hampered by internal and external factors along with in-group factors that, when faced by students, adversely affected students' academic performance. Their research exemplified the importance of analyzing the cultural frame of reference that influenced students, looked beyond just the student and the school, and expanded the analysis to factors, events, and persons that influenced the students' educational and career paths. This research introduced the "Fordham Model," consisting of collective identity, cultural frame of

reference, and peer pressures; it also included “racelessness” in the analysis of student outcome in schools. The Fordham-Ogbu thesis (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) proposed that many Black students viewed school as a subjective process; thus, aspiring Black students received a negative response when successful, or trying to succeed, in their education. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) recommended conducting further research on these negative perceptions of aspiration as an influence on minority education. Ogbu defined this phenomenon as *collective identity*: “a minority group’s cultural frame of reference of ‘who they are’ and a ‘we-ness’ feeling of belonging” (Ogbu, 2008, p. 31).

According to Ogbu (1987), mainstream society relegated *involuntary minorities* such as Native Americans, Black Americans, and Mexican Americans to menial positions and denied true assimilation into mainstream society. Ogbu (1987) defined involuntary minorities (also referred to as caste-like minorities and subordinate minorities) as “people who were originally brought into the United States society involuntarily through slavery, conquest, or colonization” (p. 4). *Voluntary minorities* are those who immigrated to the United States in hopes of better economic and education opportunities. Ogbu and Simons (1994) analyzed the differences of perceptions and values between involuntary and voluntary minorities. Ogbu and Simons (1994) found several negative outcomes that affected involuntary minorities in dominant society, including that they were less economically successful than voluntary minorities and that they experienced greater and more persistent cultural and language difficulties, which decreased education attainment when compared to their voluntary minority counterparts.

Fordham (1999) described student behaviors such as academic participation, certain ways of speaking, and certain behaviors viewed by students as “White” or

“Black.” Black students perceived other Black students who concentrated on school and wanted to go to college as “acting White,” and Fordham noted the negative connotation that “acting White” had to Black students. This collective identity or “we-ness” was a frame of reference where people expressed how others viewed “who they are.”

The Cultural-Ecological Model (CEM) defined by Ogbu (2008) is methodology that uses a multi-level approach to examine minority education and school performance. This model looked at two sets of factors: the system and the minority community factor. Ogbu (2008) defined “the system” as follows:

societal and school factors that included (a) the educational policies of local, state, and national education agencies (segregation, school funding, and staffing), treatment of minority children within the school and classroom, (b) treatment of minority children within the school and classroom, including teacher expectations, the breadth and depth of curriculum, assessment tools and practices, and tracking (c) the rewards that society gives or does not give to minorities for their educational accomplishments, such as employment and wages (pp. 11-12).

In 1987, Ogbu published a journal article, “Variability in Minority School Performance: A Problem in Search of Explanation,” in which he presented a historical background to the anthropologic study of why some minority or poor students do poorly in school, using several anthropological approaches to the study of minority achievement, and summarized the characteristics of the approaches. This paper further explained the duality of involuntary minorities’ cultural frames of reference. Ogbu (2008) defined a cultural frame of reference as a reflection of an ethnic group’s shared sense of how people should behave.

Ogbu concluded that there was strong evidence to suggest that African-American students, parents, and communities believe that education is necessary for career success and introduced a duality student perception: there is one ideal for others and another ideal that is appropriate for them. Ogbu (1987) defined this as the “coexistence of two opposing cultural frames of reference or ideal ways of orienting behavior, one considered by minorities as appropriate for themselves and others as appropriate for White Americans” and concludes that “there are social (including peers) and psychological pressures on minorities not to act according to a White cultural frame of reference

Ogbu (2008) released a book that aimed to clarify the theories introduced in 1986 and presented the “Fordham-Ogbu Thesis,” which was part of the cultural-ecological model based on three factors: (a) societal and school discrimination, (b) some instrumental community factors, and (c) oppositional culture that contributed to low academic performance at Capital High School (p. 14).

Ogbu and Simons (1994) tested Ogbu’s cultural models for the Minority Education Project with pair-wise comparisons between involuntary minorities and voluntary minorities. The sample (n= 2,245) consisted of minority students in an Oakland school district enrolled in Grades 5-12 in 16 schools. The questionnaire consisted of 197 paper and pencil questions and paired 1309 African-American students, 429 Asian-American students, and 507 Mexican-American or Latino students. Ogbu and Simons (1994) used collected data to examine how differences in cultural models, educational orientations, and strategies influenced school performance and how students, parents, and the community viewed success and attitudes towards school.

Ogbu found that voluntary minorities (such as Chinese-American students) considered education important and were less concerned with prejudice and discrimination. Voluntary minorities conformed to dominant society norms to succeed in their academic and post-academic careers more than involuntary minorities (such as African Americans) because the conformity to the dominant society by involuntary minorities saw this conformity as a threat to their social identity.

Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) examined oppositional culture, particularly “the burden of acting White,” that utilized qualitative means to evaluate a national sample of 17,000 high school sophomores in 1990. Data included African Americans (2,197 students), Asian Americans (653 students), and non-Hispanic Americans (13,942 students). Researchers examined involuntary minorities (African Americans), voluntary minorities (Asian-Americans), and dominant (non-Hispanic) students for instances of oppositional culture. Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey investigated the influence of oppositional culture and “acting White”. They concluded that involuntary minorities perceived fewer education returns and occupational opportunities compared to their non-Hispanic and Asian counterparts. The researchers concluded that African-American students were more likely to report a positive attitude toward education and had more optimistic expectations than White students despite the fact that they perceived fewer education returns and occupational opportunities compared to their non-Hispanic and Asian counterparts.

Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) postulated that African-American students exhibited a greater resistance to schools than dominant students (non-Hispanic) and voluntary immigrants (Asian Americans). Researchers analyzed students’ skills,

habits, styles, and efforts. Researchers concluded that teachers viewed African-American students more disruptive and believed that they put in less effort than their non-Hispanic peers. African-American students self-reported they did less homework and were “in trouble more” than their peers. Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) also postulated that high-achieving voluntary minorities (Asian-American students) and involuntary minorities (African-American students) were sanctioned by their peers for their academic achievements and postulated that school resistance accounted for the racial gap in school performances between involuntary and voluntary minorities.

Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) found that involuntary minorities were also less likely than voluntary minorities and dominant counterparts to agree it was acceptable to cheat and to admit they were not troublemakers. The authors concluded their findings contradicted Ogbu’s (1986) CEM and the “burden of acting White” despite strong evidence that supported and cited examples of oppositional culture.

Knight, Norton, Bently, and Dixon (2004) conducted a qualitative study evaluating data collected through individuals, focus group interviews, and critical ethnography of family members of 27 African American and Latina/o students in the 2000-2001 school year. Researchers examined the cultural effects of the students’ immediate family along with distal cultural effects. The researchers questioned how culturally diverse lenses and realities influenced college-bound students and how the interlocked factors of race, class, gender, and spiritual oppression connected to student outcomes.

Ford, Grantham, and Whiting (2008) used the Fordham-Ogbu framework of oppositional culture, particularly the burden of “acting White,” and examined attitude

achievement relationships, “acting White,” secondary resistance, and stereotype threats in gifted Black students in Grades 5-12. Data were collected from 372 students in two school districts in Ohio where the racial makeup was 70% Black. One school district was located in a suburban area and one in an urban area. The researchers examined the behaviors associated with achievement and how gifted Black students spent their time away from school each week. The researchers also analyzed the amount of time, consistency, types of academically related activities of students, peer pressure, and student perspectives on their academic achievement.

There was a conflict between how students and teachers rated their work habits and academic skills. Most students rated their work habits as good or excellent, while teachers expressed concern that Black students had weaknesses in academic skills. These weaknesses prevented teachers from recommending students for the gifted program. Students perceived “acting White” as showing intelligence, enjoying school, speaking standard English, and being arrogant. In contrast, students equated “acting Black” as lacking intelligence, placing a low priority on education, speaking and behaving poorly, and dressing in ill-fitting clothes. The overall conclusion was that underachievement is a learned behavior.

I did not utilize the cultural ecological model because the purpose of this study was to understand why some students who while in high school aspire to attend college maintained their academic paths while other students from the same urban high school deviated from their goals. The cultural ecological model would steer the analysis toward the overall African-American culture, whereas in this study I specifically examined how

students interacted with their parents, friends, and school staff during the last two years of high school and into the first year after high school graduation.

### **SES and Influences on College Choice**

Portes and Wilson (1976) used a combined qualitative and quantitative approach to examine mitigation of the negative effects associated with SES. Portes and Wilson used a sample of 1620 students from 87 high schools who participated in a survey and post-survey interviews. They presented a similar report, using a smaller sample gathered by the Institute of Social Research of the University of Michigan Youth in Transition Project and using a joint qualitative and quantitative methodology. They concluded that the positive effect of high self-esteem and aspirations mitigated the effects of low SES. Portes and Wilson reported their theory that the additive race effect on attainment was a function of the difference in the effect of esteem and aspiration in the education attainment of African-American and White students. They concluded positive attitude and self-esteem were a greater positive influence on African-American students than on White students in the same sample with comparable background and ability.

Hossler, Blouse, and Schmit (1990) used the college choice model to examine how much students and their parents knew about both costs and financial aid for post-secondary education and how demographic factors influenced college choice. Researchers utilized a sample of 4,923 students over the course of their ninth-grade year to one-year post graduation in 21 high schools in Indiana. Researchers surveyed parents seven times between 1986-87 and 1989-1990, and an additional 56 students and their parents were selected from 8 of the 21 schools and participated for in-depth interviews



four times between the 11th and 12th grades. In a separate subset, researchers surveyed 60 students and parents in their sophomore year.

Hossler, Blouse, and Schmidt (1990) found parental encouragement the best predictor of educational aspirations for all sub populations except for Black females, for whom conversations with parents and friends exerted the strongest influence predisposition. In addition, researchers found students expressed little interest about financial aid because it was their parents' responsibility; thus, students lacked the understanding of financial aid that caused a delay in student research of college costs. Hearn (1991) examined the relationship between student characteristics and level of institutional resources using the High School and Beyond (HSB) survey of 3,396 students who attended a recognized post-secondary institution within one year of completion of high school. Hearn reported that student race, ethnicity, gender, and SES had no significant relationship to institutional resources after controlling for student academic characteristics<sup>7</sup> and concluded that there was strong evidence that the primary influence affecting college choice was academic achievement. Hearn concluded that college choice is personal and depends on the subjective traits of the student. Both Hossler, Blouse, and Schmidt (1990) and Hearn (1991) found that personal effects were greater influences than SES, translating a family's positive attitude and encouragement of their students to achieve a higher education into a greater chance of the student attaining a college degree.

Wang and Gordon (1993) reported parents in lower SES households did not emphasize academic achievement to their school-age children, citing distractions in the home. Wang and Gordon also cited additional trends found in low SES student

---

<sup>7</sup> Academic characteristics in this study include test scores, high school grades, academic tracks, extracurricular activities, educational expectations (Hearn, 1991)

households that negatively affected academic achievement. Single parent households of low SES individuals relied on a single income that limited parental involvement.

Students of low SES households were less academically oriented. Students watched more television, read less, lacked access to books, magazines, computers, desks, healthy foods, books, clothes, and school supplies. Students of lower SES households had significantly lower attendance records than their affluent peers.

McDonough and Antonio (1996) examined the SES influences on college attendance. Researchers utilized Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CHIRP) data from 1994. This sample included full time freshmen from 461 U.S. colleges and universities (n=237,777). Students sampled included 9,932 African-American students, 14,477 Asian-American students, 3,804 Chicano/a students and 175,052 White students. McDonough and Antonio (1996) also found that African-American students were more likely than their White, Asian, or Chicano peers to come from low SES families. They found that African-American students were most influenced about their college choices by teachers.

### **Financial Concerns over College Cost**

In their research on college choice, Hossler, Blouse, and Schmit (1990) examined what college cost and financial aid knowledge students and parent possessed and how demographic factors such as race and SES influenced college choice. Hossler, Blouse, and Schmidt (1990) concluded that African-American students expressed little interest about financial aid because it was their "parents' responsibility." This disinterest resulted in a lack of student knowledge of financial aid and delay in student research of college costs and availability of financial aid. McDonough also examined how college costs

influenced students' college choice, finding that students from low SES households understood that their parents would not be able to finance their college education.

Paulson and St. John (2002) examined how changes in the costs of college influence the opportunities of students in different income groups, revealing that rising college tuitions have caused a financial burden on students who receive financial aid packages consisting mostly off loans. Paulsen and St. John (2002) explored how college costs affect college-choice and persistence decisions of students in four different income groups to learn how different financial factors influence student choice. Paulsen and St. John (2002) used the Financial Nexus Model, which examines students' financial reasons for choosing colleges, specifically the following:

the students' perceptions of financial factors, such as the availability of low tuition or high aid, that students view as very important at the time of their initial college choice decisions or financially-related college-choice variables; and measures of the dollar amounts of financial variables that students actually experience at the time of subsequent persistence decisions. (Paulsen & St. John, 2002, p. 193).

Paulson and St. John (2002) utilized the National Postsecondary Study Aid Survey of 1987 (NPSAS87) to perform logistic regression on surveys collected in the fall and spring of students' senior years to examine financial factors on students' choice across social class. Individuals were classified as either low income (n=4,862) where average family income was less than \$11,000, lower middle class (n=7,647) where the average family income ranged from \$11,001 to \$30,000, upper middle class (n=10,120) where average family income ranged from \$30,001 to \$60,000, and upper class (n=4,130)

where average family income was greater than \$60,001. There were two problems with applying the analysis to this study. First, African-American students represented less than 20%<sup>8</sup> of the sample. Second, the analysis section representing the logistic regression did not represent the findings of particular subgroups of classified SES. Paulson (2002) and St. John found that 64% of students in the low-income bracket chose their particular college because of low tuition or student aid and 54% chose their college because it was geographically close to their work or home.

### **The College Choice Model**

I focused on research relevant to each of the three phases of the college choice model. *Predisposition phase*, or the plans that students make for after high school graduation, is influenced by SES, academic ability, peers, parents, organizational factors, pre-college school experiences, and involvement in leadership. The search process examined how students gathered information and began the interaction with potential colleges and universities. In the search phase, students do not use information in a rational manner. In the choice phase, students evaluate their choices and narrow this set down to specific institutions from which they make their final decision.

### **The Chapman College Choice Model**

Chapman (1981) published one of the first college choice models, examining the process and influences relating to student institution choice. Chapman (1981) published one of the first college choice models in an attempt to explain the process and influences on student's institution choice as part of evaluating best practices for student recruitment. Chapman examined multiple student characteristics. The first characteristic was student

---

<sup>8</sup> Paulson and St. John (2002) did not include a racial breakdown of the sample, but noted that Caucasians represented over 80% of the NPSAS sample and Native Americans and Alaskan Natives represented 0.7% of the sample.

educational aspiration and expectation defined as what a person perceives he or she will be doing or will have accomplished at some future time. Second, Chapman examined high school performance defined by GPA and rank. Third, Chapman examined the influence of significant persons such as parents, counselors, other students, teachers, and college admissions officers. Last, Chapman examined college characteristics, including fixed characteristics (cost, financial aid, location, availability of desired courses and programs), and college communications with students (expectations of college life and printed materials). Chapman concluded that in order to understand student choice effectively, researchers should analyze students' current characteristics along with parental, familial, and external characteristics.

Litten (1982) reviewed Chapman's (1981) article on college selection and stated that Chapman's model focused on structural and descriptive variables, while Litten expanded the range of influence to examine "the college choice process, personal, and social phenomena that affected the way it [the process] was conducted" (p. 384). Litten used unpublished "preparatory products" in order to retool the college choice model. Litten examined data for evidence of group differences in six areas: (1) timing of the process and/or its components, (2) the options considered, such as colleges investigated and applied to, (3) types of information desired or sought, (4) college attributes considered, (5) information media used or preferred, and (6) influential persons examined for different groups including race, sex, ability level, parents' educational levels, and geographical location.

Litten concluded that the college selection process is a complex series of activities whereby different groups respond to different recruitment efforts. Litten stated, "A fully

developed model of college choice will have to embrace the various components of the college selection process as well as focusing in its outcomes” (p. 400) and indicated that further research was needed to produce a valid comprehensive model of the influences on how student choose institutions of higher education.

### **The Hossler and Gallagher College Choice Model**

Hossler and Gallagher (1987) expanded on Chapman and Litten’s work and introduced a three-phase college choice model that included predisposition, search, and choice phases. The predisposition phase occurs when students plan for their education beyond high school and ultimately their career. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) concluded that micro-cultural variables dominated the predisposition phase of college choice. Examples of the influencing variables include SES, academic ability, peers, parents, organizational factors, and pre-college school experiences. In this work, which has both micro-cultural and meso-cultural references, Hossler and Gallagher (1987) introduced findings that suggested that different variables have varied influence during certain time periods in the student decision process.

The search process examined how students gathered information and began the interaction with potential colleges and universities. In the search phase, students do not use information in a rational manner. In the choice phase, students evaluate their choices and narrow this set down to specific institutions from which they make their final decision.

### **The McDonough College Choice Model**

McDonough (1997) introduced a revised and refined college choice framework based on three propositions. First, a student’s cultural capital affects the level and quality

of the college education that the student intends to acquire. Second, a student's choice of college will make sense in the context of that student's friends, family, and outlook; i.e., *habitus*. Finally, through a process of bounded rationality, students will limit the number of alternatives actually considered

McDonough utilized qualitative methods and presented case studies examined through the college choice framework to analyze the organizational contexts of individual student choices. McDonough explored student *habitus* as it influenced the students' decisions on college location. This study held gender, race, and relative academic ability constant and considered bounded rationality and school influences; therefore, all participants were White females from weak or strong guidance support systems. McDonough defined the ratio of guidance counselors to students. McDonough described student SES as high if the student's two parents had obtained bachelor's degrees and were employed professionals, while students described as having low SES had parents who did not possess bachelor's degrees and were not professionally employed. The schools' SES was classified as high or low by these criteria: if two-thirds of the student population were classified as high SES, then the school is considered high SES; and if two-thirds of the student population were classified as low SES, then the school was classified as a low SES school. McDonough then matched a low SES student in the high SES school in each of the four participating California high schools to investigate if the low SES student would access and utilize the schools' resources differently because of their or their family's knowledge of college.

McDonough also investigated habitus by additional interviews of the focal student's parent, best friend, and student advisor, noting if the habitus of the friends were different from that of the subject student.

Bloom (2007) collected data from three schools in New York City over the calendar years 2002-2004. Bloom's cohort consisted of 235 student surveys collected and analyzed from a population of 304 high school seniors. The schools had senior classes consisting of 63, 26, and 215 students with a 35%, 57%, 2%, and 6% African-American population<sup>9</sup>. She examined the "critical juncture" between high school, college, and career. Bloom's study examined the knowledge students possessed about college, the differences among the college knowledgeable and unknowledgeable, and student choices in the college search and choice phases of the college choice model. Bloom found that students' college choices were shaped by their individual perceptions. Bloom found students had realistic perspectives regarding risks and obstacles in obtaining a college degree and the benefit of social mobility that education could afford. Bloom examined student perspectives and reactions to pressures and challenges in their academic trajectories, explored how SES influenced student experiences, and how students' experiences and choices translated aspiration into achievement.

### **The Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper College Choice Model**

Unlike McDonough (1997), who used a qualitative methodology to expand the college choice model, Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper (1999) used quantitative analysis to examine the social, economic, and educational factors that influenced how students make

---

<sup>9</sup> The racial breakdown of the first school, population of senior class 63: 35% Black, 57% Latino, 2% White, and 6% Asian/other; the racial breakdown of the second school, population of senior class 26: 13% Black, and 85% Latino, 2% White; the racial breakdown of the third school, population of senior class 215: 18% Black, 28% Latino, 45% White, and 9% Asian/other



college decisions. Hossler et al. conducted their research on a sample of Indiana students from 1986 to 1994. Hossler et al. surveyed a cluster sample of 4,923 students and their parents in January 1987, and subsets of these students were surveyed eight times from 1987 to 1994. In addition to the aforementioned students, from the years 1989 to 1994, 56 students and their parents responded to in-depth interviews 9 times, and 8 students were interviewed for 9 years, from their first year of high school until the fourth year after graduation. Similar to McDonough (1997), Hossler and Gallagher (1987), and Chapman (1981), Hossler et al. used a three-stage model to organize their findings on the three phases of college choice yet did not examine any SES, race, or gender effects on college choice.

In the predisposition phase, findings suggested that any interventions to influence students' educational outcomes should occur during the eighth or ninth grades. As students are greatly influenced by their parents, parents should be central in any interventions. Researchers also found that parental greater concerns were concentrated on how they would finance their child's education, while students did not concern themselves with gathering information on college costs.

In the search phase, guidance counselors and teachers provide the greatest influence on student activities. In contrast to the study participants, during the students' junior year, students concentrated on expanding their list of desirable college characteristics, building a list of potential colleges. By the fall of senior year, students narrow down the list of colleges and apply during October through March. Parents collected financial information during the fall of the students' senior year and applied for financial aid in January. Hossler et al. found that parental support was the greatest

influence during the choice phase. There were two limitations of the Hossler, Gallagher, and Vesper model of college choice. Researchers did not evaluate the race, gender, SES, and high school attributes, major indicators of student attainment in this model. Further, the period of research concentrated on the four years of high school without following the students after their high school graduation.

### **Applications of College Choice Models**

The purpose of utilizing the college choice models is to examine the influences on students' college destinations.

#### **Predisposition**

The *predisposition phase* occurs when students plan their education beyond high school and ultimately their career. Variables, such as influences of parents, siblings, and peers are the dominant influences during the predisposition phase in students' college choice (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987), while teacher and counselors have minimal influence. Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper (1999) found parental encouragement, student achievement, and parental education, respectively, had the most influence on students' post-high school plans. Hossler, Bouse, and Schmit (1990) concluded that for Black females, conversations between parents and friends exerted the strongest influences during the predisposition phase of their college choice. Parents, family members, and peers create a network of persons providing educational resources to students by transmission of messages that affirm or constrain educational advancement (McDonough, 1997).

McDonough (1997) argued that because students have different resources, college choices are contextual. Since researchers have evidenced the predominance of micro-

cultural influences during the predisposition phase, I further explored family and beyond-family influences and the role of parental expectations for their children to go to college. In the search process, students gather information and begin the interaction with potential colleges and universities (Hossler, Schmit & Vesper, 1999). In her extensive research on students' college choice, McDonough (1997) concluded that student college choice made sense in the context of the students' habitus, and students limited the number of college alternatives due to a process of bounded reality and school influences. In the choice phase, students narrow down their list of schools, ultimately selecting their college destination.

Freeman's (2005) research illustrated the connection between students' development of aspirations to go to college and the expectation for the student's college attendance by their parents and family members. Mickelson's (1990) research on abstract and concrete attitudes towards college showed that students whose college attitudes were rooted in examples provided by peers and family members who had benefited from college (concrete attitudes) were predictors of academic achievement.

Freeman (2005) argued that students whose families held expectations of college-going affirmed student's aspirations to attend college. Freeman divided students into three categories: knowers, seekers, and dreamers, based on their development of college aspirations. Knowers are students who have always known they will attend college, seekers come to believe they can obtain a college degree, and dreamers do not believe they can attend college but dream of the possibility of attending.

Freedman (2005) concluded that knowers have advantages in college preparations over seekers and dreamers because they gather more information to make decisions,

make better school-related choices such as which classes and activities to participate in, and have more time to focus on college selection. Seekers rely more heavily on school teachers and counselors for affirmation that they can achieve a college education which often delays their preparations for post secondary attendance. Dreamers are often not focused on school, do not participate in extracurricular activities, and are academically unprepared for college. These students begin thinking about college attendance late and therefore miss valuable preparation time, resulting in a lack of information about college programs and funding.

Mickelson (1990) found that abstract attitudes are ideological in nature; concrete attitudes reflect an individual's direct exposure to persons with positive education outcomes such as having family members who went to college and now have a higher income. Mickelson argued that abstract attitudes are widely shared by students who hold the belief that education directly relates to upward social mobility and therefore are not predictors of behaviors consistent with academic achievement. Additionally, Mickelson argued that concrete attitudes were greater indicators of academic achievement behaviors because students link equitable benefits such as an increase of income to education.

Mickelson showed that only concrete attitudes act as predictors of academic performance while African-American students embrace abstract attitudes, non-predictors of academic achievement. For example, Mickelson concluded that higher peer group attendance to a four-year college had a direct positive effect to student achievement.

Mickelson and Freedman's research in analysis of cultural influences connected both the relationship between conceptual experiences and the formation and completion of education goals. The analysis also examined the role of family and out-of-family

influences as well as how these influences, along with the presence or absence of automatic expectations, affect students' ability to maintain or detour from their academic pathway. In this study, I examined the development of students' college and career aspirations along with their perceptions of persons and events of influence during this phase.

Hurtado et al. (1997) examined college choice using the Hossler and Gallagher (1987) model analyzing college pricing, financial aid, and student perception of quality of colleges to find how different racial or ethnic groups differ in college application behaviors and choice. Hurtado et al. utilized data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88/92) along with the Beginning Postsecondary Student Longitudinal Study (BPS:90/92). Students surveyed in both the 10th and 12th grade were asked how far in school they thought they would go (n=13,684). In the 10th grade 65% of White/Caucasian students answered that they thought they would either finish college or complete graduate school compared to their African-American peers where 61.3% predicted college or graduate school completion. However, when students were asked in their 12th grade year, a higher percentage of African-Americans (69.5%) answered that they planned on finishing college or completing a graduate degrees despite the fact that 45% of African-American students had not applied to college in the 12th grade compared to 33% of White students. Hurtado et al. (1997) also analyzed a smaller group of high achieving eighth-graders (n=4,399) who had scored in the highest quartile of a four-subject cognitive test taking during the students' eighth-grade year (39% Asian-American students, 32% White students, 10% Latinos, and 9% African-American students). Findings revealed that students who are identified as academically gifted

receive a good amount of information about college as indicated by high percentages of students who had taken the SAT's.

Muhammad (2008) used a theoretical base that included Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three-phase college choice model, McDonough's (1997) college choice model, and the Freeman (2005) revised Hossler and Gallagher (1987) college choice model. Muhammad postulated that in order for African-American students to choose colleges, they needed aspiration, ability, and cultural support. Muhammad (2008) conducted a quantitative study to test Freeman's postulation that cultural support is an indicator of African-American student stance toward college, using data from the 1988 follow-up data survey collected in 2000. The total number of participants (n=941) included all African-American students with completed survey data, and predisposition was measured on a 6-point categorical scale where 0 was students who indicated they did not expect to graduate from high school to 5 where students expected to graduate from a college or university with a master's or doctorate degree. Based on cultural and gender trends in student achievement, Muhammad primarily categorized participants by gender and urbanicity but later re-categorized participants by gender only due to the statistical insignificance of urbanicity. Muhammad (2008) produced key findings that gave further insight into the predisposition phase of the Hossler and Gallagher (1987) college choice model and Freeman's (2005) college choice model. Muhammad (2008) confirmed prior findings by Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper (1999) that students' main influence during the predisposition phase was their parents; however, she found that mothers are significantly supportive of these daughters and that the influence of the mother is the strongest factor in the college predisposition. Muhammad (2008) countered Freeman's (2005) and

McDonough's (1997) findings that school counselors are effective influences, finding that guidance effectiveness was limited in schools where parental educational experiences were limited. Muhammad (2008) explained that in schools where parental educational sources are limited, counselor time commitment to college-going activities were limited and therefore minimized the positive effect on students.

### **Search**

In her study, McDonough matched students from low and high SES schools in four participating California high schools to investigate the differences in how low and high SES students accessed and utilized the schools resources for assistance in searching and applying to colleges. McDonough concluded that organizations, families, and social class affect college choice by transmitting college-knowledge to students and creating a *college-going atmosphere*, where student receive affirmations from persons in their environment to participate in higher education. Similarly, Freeman (2005) designated the influence of environmental forces on the directions of students' postsecondary choices *channeling*.

Through examining the role of channeling in students' college choice, Freeman provided evidence that African-American students, particularly first generation college-goers, rely on their school for information and guidance to steer them towards a college education. Beyond strategic assistance in maintaining an educational path towards college, Freeman's study also provides evidence that positive teacher-student and guidance counselor-student interactions motivate students to be proactive in making college decisions. Freeman concluded that in addition to understanding the importance of individual and family influences on college choice, African-American students,

particularly first generation college-goers, indicate the importance of the role that school fulfills in college choice through exposures to teachers, guidance counselors, and school staff that provide information and resources that link students with colleges. While this evidence indicated that students rely on schools for support in gaining access to college, Freeman also related research indicated that urban schools fail to provide adequate academic counseling and academic preparations to assist students in gaining this access (Knight, Norton, Bently, & Dixon, 2004; McDonough, 2004). McDonough's (2004) research offered evidence to support the reliance of students on schools for college information and called for an inclusive education system that would "ensure greater alignment between high school exit skills and the skills required for college entry and success" (p. iv). In addition, McDonough showed the reliance of students on information provided outside of the home by offering evidence that college outreach programs double college-going rates for at-risk students, further demonstrating the importance of making college-going resources available to at-risk students. This evidence again shows that students rely on institutional resources to gain information and insight in order to gain access to college.

### **Choice**

McDonough (1997) concluded that college-bound students make college choices based on their contextual realities. This concept exemplifies Bourdieu's (1974) cultural reproduction model, where education acts as a function of society. Students, receive messages from their social network, which influences their education decisions (McDonough, 1997). McDonough examined how bounded realities influence college choice, describing bounded realities as student limitations of collegiate choices due to



time and resource constraints. For example, in their choices students do not consider all colleges and universities that exist; physical locations, social networks, anticipated goals, and high school context (McDonough, 1997) limit student education choices.

McDonough concludes that “every student filters her college options through lenses of her academic achievement, her economic circumstances, her field of vision, and her values” (p. 151), asserting that college choice is not organized, methodical, and logical, but rather a complex active or passive process based on students’ available resources.

### **Student Success Models**

Perna (2000) examined college choice using an econometric model. Perna (2000) used a cohort (n=11,933) from the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS)--42% White, 35% African-American, and 26% Hispanic. Perna explained college choice using the econometric model stating, “The decision [to enroll in college] is based on a comparison between the present value of a lifetime benefit and the present value of perceived lifetime cost” (Perna L. W., 2000, p. 118). Perna used a sample of students who attended a four-year school, surveying students four times (in eighth grade, in sophomore year of high school, in senior year of high school, and 2-years post-graduation). Perna utilized descriptive and logistical regression during her analysis, finding that White attendance at a four-year university was higher than African-American attendance (42% versus 35%, respectively) and that African-American students had lower family income and lower academic ability than their White peers. Perna (2000) found, contrary to Mickelson (2005), educational expectations, or parental expectations of completion of a college education, is less of a predictor for African-American students than that of their White and Hispanic peers. Perna found that African Americans had less

access to information on how to actually acquire a college education and meet their educational goals despite greater access to information about colleges than their white or Hispanic peers.

More recently, Perna and Thomas (2006) designed a multi-layer conceptual model that used four contexts generating a multi-disciplinary approach to accessing and improving student success. Based on an extensive review of conceptual models across multiple disciplines including education, psychology, sociology, and economics, Perna and Thomas (2006) established 10 key transitions and indicators of student success: educational aspirations, academic preparation, college access, college choice, academic performance, transfer, persistence, post-bachelor's enrollment, income, and educational attainment. The basis of Perna and Thomas' (2006) model is that students and parents are directly influenced by public and institutional policy.

Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, Thomas, and Li, (2008) applied this model to first survey the federal and state programs designed to encourage college enrollment and examine the relationships of dimensions of these college enrollment programs. This included the level of implementation, barriers, populations targeted, and grade-levels targeted. Findings included that only 41% of students of low-income families received financial resources, whereas high-achieving students received the majority of the financial resources. There are several deficiencies in applying the Perna and Thomas (2006) institutional and policy-centered model in a student-centered analysis. First, at the time of this study's completion there were minimal peer-reviewed sources conducted by researchers other than Perna or Thomas where researchers used the student success model to evaluate programs. While in the future researchers can evaluate student outcomes after

implementation on federal, state, and local institutions and policy, this is currently not the case. For example, in the case of Perna et al. (2008), the policy implications from the analysis would suggest that federal and state aid programs should target low-income students; yet, follow-up research to find if a successful model-based aid would close the achievement gap had not been conducted as of this document.

Although I did not directly apply this model, one key component to this analysis is the approach of a multiple discipline evaluation model used for comprehensive analysis of student success. This model shows the significance of using multiple lenses of analysis, including the effect of contextual information, financial information, and educational background when evaluating student educational outcome.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

In this study, I examined African-American students who attended the same urban high school as they formed their academic pathways, specifically the path they traveled to their college destination, or their college choice. I explored student reflections on their academic and career goals during high school and as they arrived at their college destinations and how these students' college choices diverged from the predisposing, search, and choice phases of the college choice models. In examining why this phenomenon occurred, I examined how students interacted with their cultural surroundings such as parents, friends, and school staff during the last two years of high school into the first year after high school graduation. This study focused on the influence of students' environments and how these environments affected the academic trajectories of African American high school students from an urban low-income environment.

The data come from a longitudinal, qualitative study directed by Rebecca Cox, a faculty member in the Department of Education Leadership, Management, and Policy at Seton Hall University. During the first year of the three-year study, she and her graduate student research assistants recruited 24 eleventh-grade students at Rosa Parks High School to participate in focus group conversations about their educational and career goals. During the second and third years, members of the research team interviewed eight of those students during their senior year and nine of the students one year after they had graduated from high school. As one of the research assistants on the research

team, I contacted students after they had graduated from Rosa Parks High School and assisted with the post-graduation interviews.

I composed two groupings from the interview data. The first grouping includes the data gathered from the 2008 focus group discussions with the 24 eleventh-graders. The second grouping consists of the focus group data and one-on-one interview data for each of the nine students who participated in multiple interviews over the three-year period. I utilized a qualitative approach to examine each individual student's frame of reference over the course of three years.

### **The Qualitative Approach**

I chose a qualitative approach, utilizing the method of inquiry to probe how students interacted with their environments because of its descriptive nature, concentration on processes rather than results, use of inductive analysis, and emphasis on participant perspective (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007). This study examined student perspectives about their relationships and identities within their families, schools, and community and the role of these relationships in students' goals. Quantitative methods require the researcher to make assumptions about the strength of relationships, in this case the relationships between students and members of their families, schools, and communities, and then test the hypothesis via a quantitative instrument. Qualitative methodology makes no assumptions about relationships, let alone the strength or influence of hypothetical relationships (Glaser & Strauss, 2010 p. 1). For example, during focus group discussions in the students' junior year, it was revealed that students felt there was an unequal distribution of guidance resources to certain students; students felt their guidance counselors helped certain students, while others did not meet with their

guidance counselors except to schedule classes. Using this information, I was able to explore how the student-guidance counselor relationship influenced college choice during the remainder of the students' junior year and throughout the college application and acceptance process.

In this study, data were collected in three stages, the first was focus group discussions, which, as described in the next section, used open-ended questions focused on the student college choice. These discussions were used to identify factors, events, and persons that influenced the mindset of the students regarding their college destinations, the formation of ideas of their going to college, and ultimately how students came to make their college choice. Specifically, I examined aspects of the students' immediate environments, such as the impact and influences of their parents, peers, and home environments and aspects of their school environments, such as the influence and impact of students' interactions with their teachers, fellow students, and guidance counselors. Last, I explored aspects of the impact and influences of students interactions with their community. The second and third steps were open-ended individual interviews.

The methodology in this study is a meld of the tenets of both grounded theory and institutional ethnography. Institutional ethnography examines an *order*, or an institutional situation (Smith, 2005), such as a school, from a particular perspective; in this case, from the perspectives of the students. The *order*, or institutional context examined in this study, was the education system, including the high school students attended, potential colleges, and the college admission process. I chose to examine the students' perspectives to gain insight into the interworkings of their high school, the

application and college choice process, and a first-hand account of factors which assist or hinder their academic process.

### Site

Rosa Parks High School is a comprehensive high school located in the city of Milton<sup>10</sup>. The poverty rate in Milton is nearly three times the state average (26.1% of the city's population lives at or under the poverty level compared to the state average of 9.4%), and Milton's mean household income is nearly half (\$35,000) of the state's mean household income (\$71,180). At Rosa Parks High School, the percentage of students who received free or reduced lunches during the 2008-2009 school year was 58% and .51%, respectively, while the state average was 29.5% (New Jersey Department of Education, 2008), which indicates the high enrollment of low-income students. The racial breakdown of Milton's population is 53.5% Black, 29.5% Hispanic and Latino, 26.5% White, and 1.2% Asian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

The school's student population racial demographic was primarily African American (97%). The high African-American population (Table 1), along with the school's college-preparatory curriculum, is designed to meet the entry requirements to college. In the city of Milton, there are 18 high schools including Rosa Parks High School. In the eighth grade, students apply to one of six magnet schools or register their choice of 12 high schools. Rosa Parks High School is a business college preparatory high

---

<sup>10</sup> For Census 2000, the Census Bureau classifies as "urban" all territory, population, and housing units located within an urbanized area (UA) or an urban cluster (UC). It delineates UA and UC boundaries to encompass densely settled territory, which consists of the following:

- a) core census block groups or blocks that have a population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile and
- b) surrounding census blocks that have an overall density of at least 500 people per square mile

school and provided a sample of African-American students with aspirations to higher education.

### **Participants**

Focus group participants were recruited during the school's fall, 2007 college fair, at which time 112 of a possible 310 eleventh-grade students completed forms indicating their possible interest in participating in focus group conversations regarding their college and career plans. Of the 44 students who returned the necessary parent permission forms, 37 students actually participated in the 8 focus groups. A summary of each focus group's participants is located in Tables 2 and 3. In the 8 focus groups, there were 28 girls and 9 boys; all participants were African American. The first round of data collection consisted of focus group discussions with 37 students in their junior year in March and May of 2008.

In the spring of 2009, the second year of research, I invited all of the original focus group participants still in attendance at Rosa Parks High School to engage in one-on-one follow up interviews. I, along with a Seton Hall faculty member, interviewed eight students<sup>11</sup>. In the spring of 2010, I contacted all 37 of the students who originally participated in the focus group discussions for follow-up interviews. Nine students participated in this round of interviews. Only female students participated in the 12th grade and post-graduation interviews.

In this dissertation, I present data of the college choice processes of students, concentrating on three years of data from 9 female students. Because I wanted to concentrate on the college decision process experienced by urban students from a low-

---

<sup>11</sup> I, in tandem, interviewed 7 students and one student was interviewed alone by Rebecca Cox, a Seton Hall faculty member. I analyzed all 8 transcripts of interviews.



SES high school, I controlled the research sample for race, and participants were all from the same low-SES urban high school. Researchers have cited gender as an important variable in participation and completion of higher education (Harper, 2012), noting that male students utilize pre-college experiences uniquely. Although it was not my intention to control for gender for the post-graduation interviews, all post-graduate participants were female. Future studies should include both male and female students and studies including data on male student college choice.

In Tables 2 through 6, I summarized the participation of each of the students over the three-year study period.

Table 1

*2008 Focus Groups A-D*

Focus Group A	Focus Group B	Focus Group C	Focus Group D
Natalie Taisha Jaleesa Michaela Francelle	Jackson Cory Aaron Necie Aubrey	Samara Cayla Karina	Eva Charlene Vincent

Table 2

*2008 Focus Groups E-H*

Focus Group E	Focus Group F	Focus Group G	Focus Group H
Linda Denise	Marcia Emma Charlie John Thomas Anna William Nathanial Amy	Lara Cameron Karen Christina	Dominique Joann Andrea Mary Lenny Bella

Table 3

*2009 Students Interviewed during 12th Grade*

Focus Group A & E	Focus Group B & F	Focus Group C & G	Focus Group D & H
Michaela Francelle Linda		Lara Cameron Karen Christina	

Table 4

*2010 Students Interviewed Post-Graduation*

Focus Group A & E	Focus Group B & F	Focus Group C & G	Focus Group D & H
Linda	Necie	Lara Cameron Christina	Eva Charlene Andrea Mary

**11th Grade Focus Groups (2008)**

Focus groups met on March 18, 2008, and May 8, 2008, in the high school library and lasted approximately 60 minutes. Facilitators, consisting of one or two members of the research team<sup>12</sup>, followed the same semi-structured protocol. Facilitators allowed students to have open discussions on the questions and encouraged open dialogue by encouraging students to speak freely and answering college-going and related questions asked by students (See Appendix A). The dialogue began with questions meant to elicit student accounts of a typical day at Rosa Parks and their views of typical Rosa Parks' students. Moderators asked guiding questions and engaged students in discussions of college and career plans as well as how their family, peers, and other adults support their

<sup>12</sup> The research team consisted of graduate students and one faculty member of Seton Hall University's College of Education & Human Services., Department of Education, Leadership, Management, and Policy.

college plans. Students engaged in discussions of how students utilized school resources to plan college decisions.

### **12th Grade Interviews (Spring 2009)**

The research team collectively designed interview questions to engage students in discussions about their academic pathway, including the college application process and their future college plans (See Appendix C for protocol). These interviews gave researchers an opportunity to ask follow-up questions on topics that arose during the focus group discussions. In the individual interviews, students could clarify or elaborate on a one-on-one basis. Interviewers asked guiding questions about the students' plans after graduation, including their summer and fall plans. Additionally, interviewers posed questions about students' search of and applications to colleges, college plans, and their feelings and perspectives about ending their high school career and beginning their college career. These interviews took place during students' lunch period and generally lasted about 30 minutes.

### **Post-Graduation Interviews (2010)**

These interviews lasted approximately 60-70 minutes and took place at various locations, at each individual's convenience. The researchers utilized the guiding interview questions to assist them in engaging students in discussions on their experiences and providing researchers with an opportunity to request clarification of previous answers from the interviewees. At this stage, participants were either attending college or making plans to attend college. Interviewers asked both college attendees and non-college attendees a core group of questions that included what they had been doing since graduation and their current typical weekly schedule, and then asked them to reflect

on their prior high school experiences. In addition to the core group of questions, interviewers asked the current (as of Spring 2010), college students to reflect on their navigation through the college search and application process, to reflect on their academic and career goals and how they had changed since high school, and to describe their college experiences versus their previous expectations. Students not enrolled in college as of the spring of 2010, were asked additional questions on their non-attendance, their future academic and career goals, the steps they will take to reach their goals, and their perceptions of the delay in their college attendance.

### **Data Organization and Analysis**

I used several techniques to organize the data before I performed the analysis. I organized the eight focus group transcripts by assigning each group's transcript an alphabetic label such as Focus Group "A." These transcripts were printed, labeled, and bound. Next, I analyzed the focus group discussions by segmenting the data. These segments were meaningful words, phrases, or dialogue between other participants. I organized these smaller segments by reading each of the student responses and divided the responses by topic (Knodel, 1993). For example, when segmented data referred to student interactions with their peers, it was placed on an excel sheet with other data segments in which students referred to peer interactions (Knodel, 1993; Morgan , 1998). Knodel (1993) defined this type of segment analysis as follows:

an interpretation that is facilitated by the fact that statements can be examined within the context of the broader discussion and in light of information available from other sources based on different methodologies such as surveys, case studies, and in depth interviews (p. 43).

As referenced in Knodel (1993), I ordered the segments by context. For example, if students responded to a guiding question regarding their relationship with peers but the response referenced the students' relationship with their parents, I grouped the response with those referring to parents. I transferred all of the segmented transcript data into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

I reorganized these smaller transcript segments so that they matched up with the focus group discussion question answered and organized the questions by common theme, such as the student's relationships with parents or peers or reflections on a particular factor, event, or person. I used a matrix where the y-axis listed the questions that the facilitators asked and the x-axis listed each student participant's responses. Finally, I printed all of the tables and grids and reviewed them for additional identifications of themes and patterns (Krueger, 1998) (A sample of these tables is located in Appendix K).

Data analysis was a process that included four stages, which included discovering themes, identifying relevant themes, building a codebook, and linking the themes to theory (Ryan & Bernard, 2007). I used several techniques consistent with grounded theory and institutional ethnography to analyze the focus group discussions. I used thematic analysis to examine the themes I identified (sometimes referred to as patterns) for encoding (Boyatzis, 1998). Themes are a "conceptual linking of expressions" (Ryan & Bernard, 2007, p. 87). I assigned a code to each of the themes as a descriptor of what the theme represents. Once I named each code, I defined the characteristics included in the theme and generated a description of how to know when a particular theme occurs.

In the first stage of analysis, discovering themes, I read the focus group transcripts in their entirety three times and reviewed the focus group matrix. The first coding pass, I used several multi-colored pens and highlighters to identify repetitions of topics or themes. In the focus group discussions, one of the identified repetitive themes that emerged when students discussed their parents was how their parents provided support in the college search and application process. I discuss these themes in Chapter III of this manuscript.

Through analysis of junior focus group discussion data, I gained insight into what it was like for the students to be juniors at Rosa Parks High School. I also gained knowledge of student perceptions of and experiences with their community and school and what influenced students during high school as they gathered information and prepared to make their choice of post-secondary planning. I report these results in Chapter 3: Developing Academic Pathways. I utilized data from focus group discussions and developed a timeline of the students who participated over the course of the three-year study. I also presented the timelines for these students in Chapter IV of this manuscript. In Chapter V, Deconstructing College Choice, I utilized the analysis to deconstruct the college choice model by analyzing student responses as they began their college search through application, acceptance, and final decisions of their college destination.

### **Analysis: Interviews**

Similar to the focus group discussion data, I first organized the transcript data for each of the students who participated in the individual interviews. I created a document that had each individual student's responses, including the responses from their focus

group discussion (2008), pre-graduation interviews (2009), and post-graduation interviews (2010). I used the program software Hyper RESEARCH™ version 2.8.3 to assist in organizing and filing the transcripts. Due to the system requirements for Hyper RESEARCH™, I converted the transcript files from Microsoft Word™ to plain text files. I renamed and filed each source file in a separate folder, using a standard USB storage device and secured the device in a locked drawer in my file cabinet. I prepared hard copies of all data, again securing them in a locked file cabinet.

As part of the data management plan, I named all transcription files: the code of the person or persons interviewed, the date that the interview or notes took place and an index number indicating any cross-references given in the interview or notes (CodeDateIndex). If there were duplicates, the file with the earliest time was denoted one (1) after the index; and for each subsequent file, I ordered and numbered the files by time. To protect any source files from being edited, each file was locked from editing by the “read only” function.

As with the junior focus group, I began to segment data collected from the individual interviews that took place in 2009 and 2010. I again used thematic analysis to identify themes present in the interviews and identified these themes with a code. I next developed a codebook of the codes that I used to separate and name segments of data. The development of the codebook used for the individual interviews took several attempts. I began by using a code start list. Miles and Huberman (1994) described a method where researchers tag and identify common themes which would later be reviewed and refined (A complete coding index is located in Appendix B). Coding was completed utilizing source data imported into Hyper RESEARCH™ software version

2.8.3. Using Hyper RESEARCH™ I began to code the focus group data but found that in my attempt not to miss any themes, I had “over-coded” the data, and the result was an incredible amount of codes. For example, if I was dealing with coding for student culture, I had one master code of STU\_CUL to represent student culture; if the student made an observation about student culture, I then coded that STU\_CUL\_OBS; if the observation was negative, I then placed the code as STU\_CUL\_OBS\_NEG. For one master code of student culture, there were 42 codes.

After I had finished coding one section of data, it became evident that this method of coding was too cumbersome, as these codes over-dissected the data, in which the segmented coding areas were so small the segmented text lost its meaning within the context of the statement. I reconfigured the codes, correcting the cumbersome nature of the first coding pass. In this reconfigured coding pass, I eliminated the sub-codes; in the prior example of student culture, all of the statements where students referred to student culture were coded “student culture.”

In the creation of the second codebook, I created a coding system that other researchers could utilize if the research at Rosa Parks or one of the other Milton high schools was the site chosen for another research project. The goal of the creation of a codebook was one of reproducibility and reliability so that there would be clear definitions of each code and when to apply each code. I began the codebook with the creation of parameters on what each code would encompass. I used a modification of MacQueen’s (1998) codebook development format. MacQueen’s goal in creating her project’s codebook was that multiple researchers would be able to code data consistently. My codebook consisted of the following components: the code, a brief definition, a full



definition, when to use, when not to use, and an example (A complete index of the codebook is located in Appendix B).

To begin the second attempt at the coding process, I chose five categories as start codes based on my readings of the transcripts; these codes were based on the five main points I found in my initial readings of the transcripts. These codes included the following headings: Misinformation/Misunderstandings, College Decision Factors, Low Effort/Expectations, Financial Aid, and Transition Issues. I began by defining and formulating the codebook with these five basic codes. I would classify this type of coding a meld of open coding, or using the data to form the codes, and descriptive coding, or using descriptive characteristics to name the codes (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007; Janesick, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1990; Patton, 2002).

As I completed my second coding pass, I began to expand the code list and finalize definitions. For example, one theme was students who referenced the role financial aid had on their college choice. The code tag was STU\_FinAid. I defined this code as any segment of data whereby students identified the role of financial aid in terms of college choice (A completed codebook is located in Appendix B). After I completed coding the entirety of the transcripts, I went through each segment of text, making sure that each of the codes agreed with the definitions.

The finalized code list included the following: Code and Points, College Decision Factors, Financial Aid, Guidance Counselor Treatment Views, High Expectations and High Effort, Incongruence between Goals and Actions, Low Expectations and Low Effort, Misinformation, Outside School Activities, People Perceptions and Views, Plans

to Achieve Goals, Positive Experiences and People, Providing for Others or Self, School Culture, Transition from High School to College (A completed codebook along with detail of the code definitions is located in Appendix B).

Since the goal of this research was to observe and record students' academic trajectories the purpose of a matrix checklist was to assist in exploring the students' views. I completed this matrix in Microsoft Word™. I modeled this matrix in a similar fashion to the focus group data. I separated and listed the topics in the x-axis and then filled in the students' responses in the y-axis. I report the results of this analysis in Chapters III and IV of this manuscript reporting on each of the topics as discussed above.

### **Validity**

Maxwell (1992) defined descriptive validity as "the factual accuracy of their account" or assurances that data were not fabricated, results were not skewed, or that data were not distorted to represent my or any other research personnel's opinion. I assured the descriptive validity of this study through the utilization of digital and audio voice recordings, which enabled moderators to produce verbatim transcripts for the student focus groups, pre-graduation interviews, and post-high school graduation interviews. I printed all of the transcripts in order to have one complete bound hard copy and compared samples of the transcripts against the original recordings. Since Focus Group G's tape had been lost by the group's moderator and I could not verify which persons in the focus group made what statements, the data that was collected from Focus Group G was excluded from the analysis.

Maxwell (1992) reported that when stresses, inflections, and pitch in verbatim transcriptions are unreported there is a compromise in descriptive validity. Within the

analysis section of this report, I used quotes to substantiate findings. I read the memoranda of the moderators of the focus groups and any field notes or memoranda that were written for the duration of this study and reviewed any available taped data, where I noted the general tone and atmosphere of the interview. This distinction of validity can be assured for all of the verbatim accounts that were taped and digitally recorded. The last checkpoint of descriptive validity is the reliability of the collected data. Maxwell (1992) defined reliability as follows:

Reliability, in my view, refers not to an aspect of validity or to a separate issue of validity, but to a particular type of threat to validity. If different observers or methods produce descriptively different data or accounts of the same events or situations, this puts into question the descriptive validity of the accounts (p. 288).

Maxwell (1992) stated that this problem with validity can be resolved if it can be ascertained that "the differences were due to the perspectives and purposes of the observers and were both descriptively valid, given those perspectives and purposes" (p. 288).

Since the purposes of this research were to ascertain the different viewpoints and experiences of students, this variable of reliability does not need to be tested. For example if a student described a false event or their recollection of an event, even if their description was incorrect, the collection of that data was valid because I desired to collect data on that student's perception of the event. If a student reported that he or she felt that his or her guidance counselor did not assist the student in the college search and application process at all throughout high school, we realized that the recollection of the

student may or may not be an accurate description of the events, and as such the reliability of the data that were collected is valid.

The second test of validity was to assure the interpretive validity. Maxwell (1992) describes interpretive validity as being rooted in communication and the language of the peoples studied and how their word choices are an accurate description of their accounts of events and interactions with others. Maxwell added that because of the nature of qualitative methodology and gathering of data there are conscious and unconscious “intentions, beliefs, and values,” stating the following:

Social theorists generally agree that any valid account or explanation of a social situation must respect the perspectives of the actors in that situation, although it need not be centered on that perspective (Bohman, 1991; Harre, 1978; Menzel, 1978 as cited in Maxwell, 1992).

Examples of this type of interpretive validity occur when the subject describes events from his or her perspective. While the descriptive validity is exemplified in the previous student description of interaction with a guidance counselor, an example of interpretive validity would be if the subject stated that the guidance counselor was cross with the student, or a teacher was angry with the students in the class. The student could lack the language skills to reflect and explain what happened in certain situations. The inherent nature of qualitative methodology relies on what subjects recollect and in what context they recollect it. As with descriptive validity, this study was concerned with how students felt and perceived factors, persons, and events; the interpretation of events is the data. In terms of language skills, all the students graduated from high school. Although graduation from high school is not a guarantee of language skills, the semi-structured

interview techniques allowed us to “follow up” so that the subject students’ feelings were described correctly and what they reflected was congruent with what they wanted to reflect.

The third checkpoint was to evaluate the theoretical validity of the study, which Maxwell (1992) defines as “an account’s validity as a theory of some phenomenon” (p. 291). The theoretical validity is the connection between the data and implications based on the data. In order to ensure a valid connection between data and interpretations, I examined several sources as part of the research of theoretical validity, most notably the use of grounded theory methodology (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 2010; Krueger, 1998; Maruyama & Deno, 1992; Maxwell., 1992; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Morgan, 1998; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Walker & Myrick, 2007).

### **The Researcher’s Role**

Mehra (2002) examined the importance of this examination of biases to understand how “one’s self influences one’s research interests,” stating that meaningful knowledge is an awareness of bias. In order to complete this reflective analysis, I examined the possible biases of class, race, gender, and religion. The selection process for this study was one of both interest and opportunity; as both a teacher and student, I was interested in understanding students’ pathways from high school to college. I examined my agenda for performing this study, the personal benefit of completing my doctoral work along with the hope that my research would be informative to the learning community. I also used Mehra’s (2002) research on exploration of bias of qualitative researchers in understanding how my worldview, my education and professional background, and my learning style influenced this study. As a product of Catholic

school, I was concerned that my lack of experience as a public school student would somehow interfere with my ability to relate to the students. While in Catholic school, I was aware that there was an atmosphere of superiority that somehow Catholic school was better than public school. A second concern was that as a teacher I would reference my experiences, good or bad, and project them onto the student participants. Last, I reflected whether my being a different race than the participants would create any potential bias. Although I do not feel that these factors did influence my research design or execution of this study, I both explored these potential sources of bias and introduced measures to monitor objectivity throughout this study. At the beginning of each of the interviews and the focus group discussions, each participant was given a letter of consent that was signed by the student; and if the student was under eighteen, the consent form was also signed by their parent or guardian. The consent form is located in Appendix G. We asked the students to read over the form and then Dr. Rebecca Cox or I went explained the aspects of the study, answering any questions the participants had about the study or the interview process.

For example, I monitored objectivity through procedural checks such as utilizing memoranda and transcripts to assure that I used the voice of the participants throughout the text of the document. Within each chapter, I organized the text so that each student's voice was accurately represented.

### **Limitations**

Several sources of limitations existed during the data collection regarding continued participation after the initial focus group discussions in 2008. Researchers experienced difficulty recruiting and then scheduling interviews with the senior students.

This difficulty continued when participants of the focus group discussion separated from Rosa Parks High School. Several students were not part of the research study due to insufficient contact information, as displayed in Table 4. By the spring of 2010, over 50% of the students had moved to another location, changed, or disconnected their phone numbers. Although I used extensive measures to contact students after their high school graduation, I was able to contact and secure interviews with only nine of the original focus group discussion participants.

Table 5

*Student Contact*

Student Pseudonym	Notation
Aubrey	Aubrey did not show up to a meeting scheduled in March of 2010 <sub>2</sub> .
Cayla	Cayla did not show up to a meeting scheduled in June of 2010 <sub>1</sub> .
Betty	Betty did not show up to a meeting scheduled in April 2010 <sub>1</sub> .
Vincent, Denise, William, Karen, Dominique, Karina, Lenny, Samara, Emma Michaela, Jackson, Cory	No response <sup>1</sup>
Bella, John, Nathaniel, Elizabeth, Joann, Marcia, Aaron, Jalessa, Lila, Trisha, Natalia	Number disconnected <sup>2</sup>
Thomas, Charlie, Amy, Anna	Unable to contact <sup>3</sup>

Notations

- 1 - “no response” indicates that I tried to contact the individual and left messages if able to do so, but that the student did not respond to our requests.
- 2 - “number disconnected” indicates that when trying to contact the student the contact number had been disconnected; because the disconnections were not always permanent, I retried the student’s number, even though disconnected.
- 3 - “unable to contact” indicates that the contact information had changed and the student could not be contacted; in these cases, I reattempted many times to contact the student

## CHAPTER IV

### PREPARING FOR COLLEGE

As discussed in Chapter I, college choice refers to the way students form ideas about possible college attendance, search for potential schools to attend, and narrow down their choices of which colleges to complete the application process (Chapman, 1981; Litten, 1982). As detailed in chapter 1, Hossler & Gallagher (1987) developed their three phase model by reviewing eight previous college choice studies. These eight previous studies examined how student backgrounds, aspirations, achievements, access and availability to colleges influenced attitudes and the ultimate their college selection process through quantitative analysis of large data sets. The Hossler & Gallagher (1987) college choice model could be then utilized by researchers and administrators to examine their own institutions and the process, by which, students moved along the predisposition, search, and choice phases to assess how students choose colleges.

The predisposition phase refers to the time when students develop their plans after compulsory education. In the search phase of this traditional college choice model, students seek out information about and begin interacting with potential post-secondary institutions. McDonough (1997) analyzed qualitative longitudinal data, concluding that the three-stage process of student college choice was contextual based on students' influences and surroundings. These college choice models failed to describe the college choice process the students went through during high school because they neglected urban, low SES, African-American students. In this chapter, I explore the divergence of the college-choice model during the aforementioned college choice models' predisposition and search phases, showing the differences of the process these students in



the current study traveled along in comparison to the previously reported college choice models.

The purpose of utilizing the college choice models is to examine attitudes and influences on students' college destinations during the college choice phases. These include the predisposition phase, where students decide to attend college; the search phase, where students decide which colleges to consider attending; and the choice phase, where students choose their college destination (Chapman, 1981; Chapman, 1984; Litten, 1981; Litten 1982; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999).

In this chapter, I focus particularly on the first phases of the college choice model: predisposition and search. Hossler & Gallagher (1987) expanded these categories to include three major influences of the predisposition phase: school characteristics, significant others, and educational activities. Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper (1999) identified the major influences in the predisposition phase of college choice as students' family background, academic performance, peer influences, and student experiences.

In the three-stage models, the least examined phase is the predisposition phase. The predisposition phase, or the phase in which students make a decision to attend college, is ambiguous in several ways such as when the phase commences or ends and the importance of when or how the students make the decision to go to college and to ultimate college destinations. In fact, since the introduction of Jackson's (1982) and Litten's (1981) three-phase college choice model, there have been no major changes to the structure of the model. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) concluded that the age at which students end the predisposition phase is pre-college, beginning as early as grade school and ending with the commencement of the search phase of the college choice process.

Therefore, three-phase college choice models utilize predisposition as a point of origin or the beginning of the college choice process despite confirming that the age at this point of origin can range over a decade (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Jackson, 1978; McDonough, 1997).

Several researchers, such as Jackson (1982), Mickelson (1990), and McDonough (1997), have moved away from predisposition as merely the decision of going to college, instead looking at the frame of mind (Jackson, 1978; Mickelson, 1990) and the context of the decision within the student's habitus (McDonough, 1997).

I organized this chapter into three sections. First, I describe the overall goals and academic plans of the students, including insights into the students' frame of mind, in order to give some context to the students' decisions. I detail how some students had multiple unrelated career goals that would take completely different academic preparation and examine why students were unconcerned with which college to apply to rather than carefully considering which colleges would be best for their academic needs. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) found that within the search process students have preliminary college values or desired traits they look for in potential institutions. From this set of desired traits, students develop a choice set, a sort of short list of colleges to further research and gather information. In this study, I show the divergence from previous models by showing how individual participants in this study lacked knowledge about the types and varieties of coursework requirements, college programs, and career goals.

Second, I examine the role of students' home environments, including influences from parents, peers, and family members. I explore how parents and family members were supportive of the student's goals. I show how this support was limited to words of

encouragement, as parents and family members had little knowledge to guide the academic and career paths students desired to follow. Without this needed guidance from their parents and family members, students were reliant on the school to provide them with information on how to align their career goals with the needed high school requirements and academic pathways.

Last, I show how faculty and guidance counselors were unable to educate the students how to effectively find information and create a plan to meet their education and career goals. Many students felt that the guidance counselors were unavailable to them, saying the counselors were selective of which students they were going to help in the college process. As of their junior year, many students had not spoken to their guidance counselor beyond class choice for the next year, although many of the students had concerns about completion of prerequisites for college. I show that the result of these factors contributed to a delayed predisposition phase and nearly absent search phase.

### **Academic Plans**

During the junior year focus group discussions, 32 of the 44 student participants spoke about their post-graduation plans. Of the 32 students, 6 students planned to take off some time and then attend college, 23 planned to go to college, and 3 students were unsure if they wanted to go to college. Of the 29 students who wanted to attend college, whether delayed or sometime in the future, 26 had career aspirations.

Of the three students who were unsure if they wanted to go to college, one student wanted to attend either a trade school or college, one student cited his dislike of high school as a reason not to attend college, and one student aspired to either go to college or join a dance company.

Of the 26 students who had specific career aspirations and desired to either immediately or eventually attend college, several students had multiple unrelated academic career plans and were unaware that these career options would require different prerequisites during high school than their majors or coursework during college. Other students wanted to pursue career paths unrelated to their proposed academic paths. An example of this was Taisha, who wanted to have a career in modeling or fashion design after college. Taisha considered only one college, which did not offer a program or major in fashion. Jalessa wanted to be either a cosmetologist or a nurse and discussed enrolling in a college that offered both programs. Cosmetology and nursing have completely different prerequisites and require different academic coursework. The cosmetology licensing board requirements include a high school diploma or GED and 1200 hours of instruction along with passing a board examination (New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety, 2011). To become a registered nurse requires a high school diploma or equivalent along with completion of high school biology, chemistry, and algebra with a C or better average. There are 37 general education credits and 31 nursing credits required, including two semesters of Anatomy and Physiology, two semesters of English, and four semesters of Specialty Nursing classes. After completing required coursework, registered nurses must complete a board examination (New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety, 2012).

Several other students voiced divergent multiple education/career paths. Aaron desired a career as an automotive technician, engineer, or chemical engineer. Linda desired a career in business finance; however, she planned to major in computer science in the fall. Eva wanted to either join a dance company or become a psychologist. One

student, William, stated that he wanted to attend a four-year college so he could own stores, open his own record label, be a rapper, and a professional baseball player. Although the vast majority of students stated that they wanted to go to college and the majority of students had an occupational goal, none of these junior-year students completed many college-going activities or had begun narrowing down a select number of schools to which they were going to apply. The focus group discussions took place in March and May of the students' junior year of high school when, according to the College Board, students desiring to enroll in college should be completing multiple college-going activities. In fact, 26 of the 32 students who spoke about college did not mention any college-going activities. The six students who spoke about various college-going activities described those activities as looking at schools, meeting with representatives of college sports teams, attending college football games, going to college fairs, visiting colleges, and requesting information from colleges. According to the College Board, by a student's junior year, students, along with their parents, should schedule tests such as PSAT, SAT, and SAT subject tests for those students enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) coursework. The College Board also advises that students begin looking at colleges and universities, evaluating schools for their size, location, class size, tuition, and campus activities. Students who wish to take preliminary SAT's or the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMQST) should also have taken these standardized tests to qualify for scholarships and programs associated with the National Merit Program (College Board, 2011). The students' activities were limited in comparison to the activities suggested by the College Board. Students had occupational goals without understanding the role that college would have in preparation to achieve

their goals. This disconnect between what college majors or programs would assist students in achieving their desired career resulted in students not searching out specific programs or colleges based on their academic or career needs.

As students did not have specific colleges they were researching, they named general geographical locations or general college type; for example, desiring to attend an in-state or out-of-state school or a historically Black college or university (HBCU). In this excerpt, Aubrey spoke about her desire to go to college and major in psychology, noting that which college she would attend did not matter.

Aubrey: I want to go to college and major in psychology---doesn't really matter which one.

Moderator: You do not know where you want to go to school yet.

Aubrey: Not real far like not far away as Florida and California so---

Moderator: Like [a school] that is driving distance?

Aubrey: Yes, no further than Virginia.

According to the College Board (2011), by spring of their junior year, students should develop a list of 15 or 20 colleges to request view books and information about financial aid. As students did not complete college-going activities other than attending one or two college fairs, individuals in this study were behind in the ideal process. Students in this study had a maximum of three possible colleges; one student mentioned requesting information about a college during the school's college fair, and only in one focus group did students mention planning visits to colleges.

Several students mentioned possibly playing college sports or entering the military, yet none of the students mentioned filling out the application for ROTC, taking

the ASVAB, or registering with the NCAA eligibility center, all of which are preparations recommended for completion by the end of junior year.

### **Home Environments**

Of the 32 students who spoke during the focus group section, 11 students stated that they had a parent or immediate family member (siblings, uncle, aunt, or cousin) that had attended college, and 13 students stated that a family member had encouraged them to try hard and do well in school. Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper (1999) found that the greatest influence in the predisposition phase of the college choice model were parental expectations and encouragement. While interviewing these students, I came to realize that parental influences included mothers, fathers, family members acting as parents, or appointed guardians. Three students cited persons that acted in the capacity of their parent over the course of their lifetime. When I refer to parents/guardians in this study, I am referring to the person or persons who fulfilled the parental role during the students' academic upbringing, such as with Lara and Linda, whose sisters fulfilled the parental role in their family. Students described three major parental influences in their predisposition phase of college choice: expectations and encouragement, college-knowledge, and financial security and stability.

Students described their parents and families as supportive of their plans to pursue a higher education. Family and beyond family members exhibited this support through verbal encouragement to continue their education; however, this encouragement did not include direction and guidance in the formation of college plans. In a low-income urban environment, the worry and anxiety presented by the potential lack of college acceptance and inability to pay for college influenced the way students viewed college options. With

limited familial and school encouragement, students had trouble envisioning how they would fit into the role of college student. I show that the predisposition phase in low-income students should reflect not only familial encouragement (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999) but also the systems of familial support the student received throughout their compulsory education.

This familial support included the way that students developed their academic pathways because their anxieties about acceptance and financial obligations were met with affirmations that the student would be able to fulfill the role of a college student. For example, Cameron's and Andrea's family's outlook that college was needed in order to pursue a professional degree positively affected their predisposition phase. In contrast, Christina's, Lara's, and Charlene's lack of familial support negatively affected their predisposition phase.

The majority of vocal encouragement by parents included statements that affirmed the importance of doing well in school. For example, Michaela, stated that her parents "stay on her" about doing well in school. Another student, Cory, said that his father always encouraged him to do his best. Other students described their parental support of their decision to go to college as Jackson did, who described that his parents support him "all the way." Aubrey, who planned to attend school immediately after high school, indicated that her family wants her to go to college.

Three students vocalized their parent or family support as an active role or interest in their achieving specified goals, such as pushing them to work hard; however, the support they described did not include direction or guidance of college plans. Linda, who planned to attend college and major in computers, stated that her sister pushed her to



work hard. Denise stated that her brother supported her by wanting his sister to be on the right track. Just as the students were abstract with their college plans, the parents were abstract with their support. Again, the parents encouraged the students but their encouragement was limited to vocal affirmations of education.

Students with parents or guardians who had expectations (n=2) that they would attend college, described a predisposition phase where they understood that part of their academic and career trajectory would include a college degree. Cameron, who attends a private college, lived in a two-parent home where college was “not an option” in that Cameron felt her parents' clear expectations that she would attend college left her with no other option than to aspire to attend college. Because her earliest recollections included the expectation of college attendance, her academic trajectory always included a college degree. Andrea, who also attends a private college, lived in a single-parent household where her mother encouraged her to pursue a college education. Andrea's mother brought her to the college campus where she worked and encouraged Andrea to attend functions on the campus. As with Cameron, Andrea always knew she wanted to go to school and pursue a professional degree.

In contrast, Lara's sister and guardian held no expectations of Lara to finish high school or to attend college. Lara's sister, a taxi driver, felt she could not give Lara advice about her education because she herself had quit high school. The only supportive member of Lara's family was her little brother.

Lara: (My sister) didn't graduate from high school, and her take on it was,

“Whatever you want to do I am not going to stop you.” I think that she felt as if

she would be [a hypocrite] to tell me what to do with school when she herself dropped out.

Interviewer: Was there anyone that was like, "Listen, this is high school you have to get through?" Was there anyone that was positive about high school?

Lara: That would be my little brother. He wanted to see me graduate, and I am the same thing for him [sic].

Interviewer: So you guys inspire each other?

Lara: Yes.

I found that expectations and encouragement did not just influence the decision of whether or not to attend college but also the planning and implementation of students' academic and career trajectories. One such example was Christina, who had no concrete plans for her future but who desired to attend college. Christina's mother encouraged her daughter to go to the local community college and then transfer to a four-year institution. In the segment below, Christina told us that she wanted to go to college and sought advice from her mother. Her mother felt that Christina was "not ready" for a four-year institution and should attend community college so that she could acclimate herself to college life.

Interviewer: So you are going to apply [to both a community college and a four-year institution] and how are you going to decide where to go?

Christina: Well, I want to go [to the local community college] for a couple of years and then transfer to [the private four-year institution].

Interviewer: Is that because it makes the most sense financially? Or just to get into college? What makes you want to go to [a community college] first and then transfer to a four-year institution?

Christina: Well, my mother told me that would be the best way for me to do it. Go to [the local community college] and then transfer. I never thought of it, but she always told me that is the best way I should do it.

Interviewer: So it sounds like your mom has had this idea that you would go to college for a while. Has she always been a person who said, "You should do it this way or this way"?

Christina: She always...my mother knows me very well. Because she tells me, "I know you're not ready for college" and I'm like, "I know." So she tells me what's best or what could be best for me, or what could be a good idea for me.

Interviewer: Now tell me about the conversation where she said you were not ready.

Christina: Because in the beginning I was trying to debate whether I should go to [college] right after high school or should I wait a little while and because I was worried about college and finishing high school, she told me to not worry about college right now and just worry about graduating from high school now and do whatever is best for you [sic].

Interviewer: What is the percentage of chance that you will really start in the fall rather than take a longer break?

Christina: It will probably be one hundred percent.

Interviewer: Yes, what has made you decide to go? How do you know you are ready?

Christina: Because in the fall I will be done with high school and I worried about high school first so and then...

Interviewer: So it is a good strategy, worrying about high school now and then college later?

Christina: Yes. (Christina, 2009)

I found that those students who participated in this study who lived in environments where a college education was a clear expectation planned their academic trajectory knowing they would attend college. Cameron and Andrea were examples of how clear expectations from parents created an atmosphere of a college-going environment (McDonough, 1997). Similar to McDonough (1997), Freeman (2005) concluded that students were more likely to attend college when their families held expectations of college-going and were affirmative to student's college attendance. Freeman divided students into three categories: knowers, seekers, and dreamers, based on their college aspirations.

Knowers are student who have always known they will attend college, seekers come to believe they can obtain a college degree, and dreamers do not believe they can attend college but dream of the possibility of attending. Freeman (2005) concluded that knowers have advantages in college preparations over seekers and dreamers because they gather more information to make decisions, make better school related choices such as which classes and activities to participate in, and have more time to focus on college selection. In this study, Cameron and Andrea are examples of students who are knowers

and voiced how expectations held by their parents influenced their predisposition to college.

The second aspect of family influence that I examined was the influence of the level of "college knowledge" of the family. Beyond the positive influences of parental encouragement and expectations, several researchers have found that students who have relatives who have been through similar experiences have an advantage in using their family members as resources (Ceja, 2000; McClelland, 1990). Parents impart these resources to students through counter-stories, stories where parents share their experiences and where parents actively talk about the college-going process (Knight, Norton, Bently, & Dixon, 2004). In contrast to the previously cited sources, I found that even parents without similar experiences, such as those who attended or graduated from college, positively influence students through counter-stories or stories of successful navigation through college and post-secondary educational experiences. One such example was Andrea's mother who never attended college but consistently talked with Andrea about attending college. Since Andrea's mother worked at a private college, Andrea visited the campus, attended games, and overall felt a part of the college. Another example is Cameron, whose mother attended school out of the country. Even though Cameron's mother did not have specific first-hand knowledge of the American college system, they regularly talked about college. These examples provided regular college affirmations of the expectation that these students would attend school.

The role of the positive college-going affirmations reinforced the expectation of college attendance by the creation of sets of dialogue contributing to the college-going atmosphere. I found that these counter-stories were not exclusive to those students whose

parents attended college. The regular discussions of college and attendance at college events also worked to affirm the expectations parents had for their children to attend college.

Last, I examined the role of parents' financial contribution and stability in how students planned and executed their academic trajectories. The financial influences included providing immediate financial security after graduation and providing a home for the students beyond their 18th birthday. One example of the role of financial stability on college choice was Charlene, who delayed her entry into college in part because her family was going to be moving outside of the county lines. Because of this move, she did not know which local community college she would need to attend. In contrast to Charlene, who would relocate with her mother, Lara was staying with friends temporarily and was depending on completing her academic training to find a job so she could afford a place to live. Lara's guardian was legally responsible for her only until she turned 18 and was only obligated to provide a home for her until she reached the age of majority. In addition to Lara searching for possible colleges, she was also faced with being independent at eighteen years old and having to find a home. While this study affirmed the importance of parental encouragement, I found the greatest parental influence was the financial security and stability provided to the student. Students (n=3) whose parents or guardians provided financial security and stability beyond high school did not have to worry about immediate financial security, having a place to live, and were less likely to have a sense of urgency in the implementation and planning of their academic trajectory.

## **Rosa Parks High School**

Without guidance and direction from their parents and family members, students were reliant on the school's faculty and staff for college information. As of the junior year focus groups, many students had yet to speak to their guidance counselors beyond their class choices for the next year, although many mentioned concerns about financial aid and completion of prerequisites for college.

In Focus Group A, students agreed that they did not receive any help in the college application process from their guidance counselors or during their classes (Natalie, Taisha, Jaleesa, and Francelle, 2008). In Focus Group B, all students planned to go to college and discussed concerns they had in taking the SAT. In this next excerpt, students spoke about a lack of preparation for the SAT, noting that there was a vast amount of HSPA preparation but no available on-site SAT preparation.

Necie: I am worried about SAT scores.

Moderator: Have you taken them yet, the SAT's?

Necie: I took them in December.

Aaron: I took the PSAT.

Moderator: OK.

Jackson: I was supposed to take it in May.

Moderator: You are supposed to take it in May?

Jackson: I don't want to.

[Everyone laughs]

Moderator: What about preparing for the SAT, is there anything at Rosa Parks to help you--like have a class?

[Group laughs]

Aaron: No, they have a program at [the nearby college] I think that you can go to on Saturdays and they help you (Jackson, Cory, Aaron, Neechie, and Aubrey, 2008).

In this next selection, the students talk about some of their coursework and the role of their guidance counselor in the college search and application processes.

Moderator: What other courses, or is there anything class-wise that is particularly related to college?

Aaron: It is just natural, like regular classes--English, math, science, gym, and culinary arts.

Moderator: How often do you speak with your guidance counselors?

Aaron: I [do not] know.

Moderator: Can you make an appointment with the guidance counselors?

Cory: Well, mine [counselor], they just tell me regular things--stay focused, start [doing], preparing for the SAT's and look at the college you want to go to, start researching. Other than that, I [do not] really talk to my guidance counselor.

Moderator: Why not?

Cory: [I do not] have a relationship with--relationship with guidance.

Aubrey: I talk to my guidance counselor.

Moderator: Who is your guidance counselor?

Aubrey: [Identifies her guidance counselor], who is not the same as Aaron's

Moderator: Does she call you out of class, or do you call on her? Do you go to the guidance office and get a pass?



Aubrey: She calls us out.

Moderator: What types of things do you ask her about?

Aubrey: I was asking her about college.

Moderator: Do you talk about your classes and pick out what classes you want to take?

Necie: Sometimes they let you do that and like you can change some of the electives that you do not want, otherwise they just give you courses (Jackson, Cory, Aaron, Neecie, and Aubrey, 2008)

In Focus Group C, the students also reflected on some of the activities they completed or preparations that they were going to do to prepare for college. As with Focus Group B, the students acknowledge that taking the SAT is a step needed to apply to most colleges. Two of the students in Group C wanted to take the June SAT test but were late in registering for the test and could not take it in June. Katrina stated that she met with her guidance counselor for the first time in this school year just a few weeks prior to the March focus group discussions, although last year she had met with him because she had several problems with her schedule. She planned on meeting with her counselor again within the next few weeks because she was concerned about “just being assigned classes.” Samara saw her guidance counselor for the first time in her high school career the day before the focus group discussions to find out about “scholarships and stuff” and found out she had missed the SAT registration deadline. Samara joined a friend of hers to go to speak with the guidance counselor after a teacher said something about going to guidance for college information. Samara added the following comment:

A lot of teachers don't talk to us about that stuff. For important stuff, they'll have an assembly; like for the HSPA, our parents had to come to the school and [there were] a lot of assemblies for the HSPA. They should just do the same kind of thing for the SAT (Samara, Cayla, and Karina, 2008).

Samara added that she regrets that she will be unable to take the SAT in June, because "It's not like the HSPA; you can keep trying until you get a high score." The students in the group felt that the focus of the guidance counselors was on the seniors. Samara, one of the more vocal students, stated that seniors should get another counselor in their senior year to help with scholarships and SAT's, but the other students disagreed, saying that their current guidance counselors will be their guidance counselors again next year.

In Focus Group D, the moderator asked about what activities students had completed to find out information about college or any college-going activities that they had completed. The students collectively felt that attendance at a college fair had offered a lot of good information about schools and had given them the chance to talk to representatives of the college. The moderator then asked the students if they had seen their guidance counselor and if they had discussed going to college or colleges with their guidance counselors. The three students who participated in the discussion stated that they all had the same guidance counselor and that they had only talked to him about class scheduling and grades. In the following excerpt, the moderator probes the students about why they have not talked with their counselor about colleges and asks the students what their thoughts are of their guidance counselor.

Eva: You [cannot] really talk to your guidance counselor as much because he has so much to do as it is, so I try to do my own research versus trying to ask him. Every time I go there to see him, he is never really in the office. I never can catch him, and when I do, he is busy.

Moderator: Could you make an appointment with him?

Vincent: You can do that.

Moderator: If you make an appointment, will he call you down out of class or something?

Vincent: Yeah [sic].

Eva: Probably, I [do not] know. I never made an appointment (Eva, Charlene, and Vincent, 2008).

The students then began to talk about two college fairs that they had attended; one of the college fairs was on campus, while the other was located off campus. The moderator asked the students how else they found, or could find information about college.

Charlene: Probably be in papers and stuff like that in guidance [sic].

Vincent: Yeah, and they say it on the announcement [over the PA system].

Eva: And sometimes they select certain people based on their GPA. But some stuff that they do, they don't let everybody know. OKAY, that's not fair (Eva, Charlene, and Vincent, 2008).

The moderators asked their opinion of the Rosa Park's guidance counselors and the adults in the school with whom the students felt comfortable talking about their futures. Of the 32 students who spoke during the focus group discussions, only two stated that they felt comfortable talking with their teachers about their future plans.

In the next excerpt, students from Focus Group D respond to their moderator, who asked their opinion of their interactions with guidance. Eva was the first student to mention a feeling of favoritism by the guidance department when selecting students to help with college preparations, which will be a topic of discussion in several of the next chapters.

Moderator: Okay, what do you think of the guidance department? What is your opinion of the guidance department here? [giggles from the girls and they look around the room to see who is watching them and what adults are around].

Charlene: They [do not] guide us. They help us with our schedules.

Eva: They do not guide, no they don't. They don't believe--they really--because I think they have favorites. And that's not good when you have favorites because there are other people that want to get involved in activities and stuff and as far as you want like your schedule change--but we have a good reason, but they'll make you wait forever and then some person that is not on your level. . . Like me, I have a good GPA and there is this girl that doesn't. She was able to go in there and change with her snotty [sic] little attitude and [when] I asked for mine, it's always a problem

Vincent: My guidance counselor, he is okay to me because like he let me know what things I need and he tells me that I need to take certain classes by the end of

high school. But the only thing bad is they need more [counselors] because they don't spend enough time with us about college and stuff.

Moderator: How often do you see you see your guidance counselor a year?

Vincent: Once or twice a year.

Charlene: Probably twice this year.

Eva: I have to go to them and ask them.

Vincent: They always tell me about my grades and stuff.

Moderator: And you usually just talk about scheduling? You don't actually talk about college stuff? It is all scheduling and grades

Vincent: Grades, yeah.

Eva: I do my own college stuff (Eva, Charlene, and Vincent, 2008).

While students indicated interest in going to college, students were unable to gain college-going information from their guidance department. Of the 37 students who participated in the focus group discussions, 32 spoke about college plans. Of the 32 that spoke about college attendance, 18 students spoke about meetings with their guidance counselors and three students talked to their guidance counselors specifically about college.

### **Rosa Parks Faculty and Staff**

In the previous section, I explored the students' overall school environment regarding influences on their college choice decisions; in this section I examine specific factors, persons, and events during what is traditionally the search phase of the college choice model. I found that some of the students felt bombarded with ambiguous expectations and unclear direction from their high school's guidance department. The

guidance department at Rosa Parks High School had little contact with some students, while others received extensive college counseling. Although students understood that information on colleges was located in the guidance office, several opted not to pursue help from the guidance department. I found that all of the students viewed the guidance department as “playing favorites” and that the students needed to be proactive in order to receive college counseling from the guidance department.

Eva felt the guidance counselors had favorites and saw times when events or opportunities were offered only to certain students. Cameron affirmed the perception of favoritism although she had a good relationship with her guidance counselor and made sure she kept in contact with him about goals and future plans. Cameron described the dynamics in the guidance department as follows:

Cameron: I know [teachers and guidance counselors] helped us with the college essays and stuff like that, but I think they could of [sic] spent more time doing it-- like I had a good guidance counselor and he helped me, but I don't know about everyone else. I know that some people complain about their guidance counselor like when they went to see them, they weren't there or when they needed help with something, like with SAT stuff or to get [fee] waivers and [their guidance counselors] were not there or they were busy doing something else. Yes, and the effort--sometimes the students go out of their way to go down there and even skip class just to see their guidance counselor and far as like [sic] the guidance counselors don't all do the same for each student (Cameron, 2010).

Andrea made a point to see her guidance counselor on a regular basis and to talk to him whenever she saw him in passing; she felt many students did not get attention

from their guidance counselors because they did not make the effort to see them or seek them out for help. Eva also felt that she had a good relationship with her guidance counselor because she made sure that her guidance counselor knew her and that she was always in his office.

Lara went to the guidance office for information or if she needed something in particular; but other than those occasions, she did not see or talk with her guidance counselor about future school or career plans. In our interview one year post-graduation, Lara described several adversarial situations with her guidance counselor.

Interviewer: How about your guidance counselor--did [he] talk to you about college and requirements?

Lara: Not really. [my guidance counselor] was a new counselor and me and her [sic]--we had some [issues] I did not like. My brother has her now, and there is some stuff that she [has said] to my brother about me, thinking that I wouldn't know about it—like, come on now--when I was there for the most part. I failed the math part of the HSPA all three times, so originally I wasn't supposed to graduate, but I did the SRA and, see, you know everyone know[s] how everyone wants to not do anything, and that is how I was. [My guidance counselor] would call my sister on like every little thing I did; now since my brother is there, she was like, "You're going to end up just like your sister--not walking across the stage." Because I did not walk across the stage, and she is still thinking that I am not going to hear it. He told me what the guidance counselor said, and I am like "What right does she have to tell you that you are going to end up like me?" Like what I did was what I did [sic] (Lara, Student Post Graduation Interview, 2010).

In conclusion, during the focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews, several patterns emerged on how students felt their school, home, and community environments assisted them in achieving their academic goals. The majority of students who expressed that a college degree was their educational goal had not completed many college-going activities, and as of their junior year had yet to begin the college search and application processes. While students attended high school, they received unequal assistance in the college search and application processes, and the students themselves had to become their own education advocates. Evident from the student accounts, guidance counselors ranged in their participation in the student's academic counseling. Students who described their guidance counselor as useful in the college search and application processes often pursued time with their guidance counselor by just showing up without an appointment and maintaining a relationship with their guidance counselors. In contrast, many students were passive in seeking college information from their guidance counselor and waited for their guidance counselor to call them down. There were many students who seemed to receive "preferential" treatment from their guidance counselors, an account confirmed by students who received this treatment and from those students who felt neglected by their guidance counselors. Because students at Rosa Parks relied on the guidance counselors to provide college search and application procedures, the lack of communication between the student body and the guidance department left many students without information. Students also overwhelmingly responded that nothing within their classwork was preparing them for college, and few students felt comfortable speaking with adults at school about their future.



Student preparations for college included taking the SAT; yet several students were unaware of registration deadlines, and students were confused as to how standardized tests such as the SAT test and the HSPA were graded and what their scores represented. There was a lack of connection between work done during high school and their future college education. One issue cited by many students was the minimal input in their course selections during each year of high school, a decision left to the students' guidance counselor. Overall, there was a lack of awareness of how high school coursework and preparations for the HSPA and SAT would connect to their future education along with an inability to understand the needed preparations in the college search and application process.

Each student responded differently to advice and influences in planning and executing their academic and career pathways. Persons of influence included parents, guardians, academic counselors, and peers. Students described the guidance department and their own personal counselors as either immensely helpful or non-existent in their college search and choice phase. Many students felt that the guidance department's main function was to handle scheduling. Several students felt that guidance counselors assigned classes without consulting them or considering their future needs. I have presented evidence that at Rosa Parks High School the student-guidance relationship was student driven, students' perceived that guidance counselors did "certain things for certain students," and students perceived that members of the guidance department unfairly allocated programs and available resources to selected students, often the top academic achievers. Students who were not "top achievers" or "favorites" felt neglected, while even top students made comments that they made it their priority to seek out their

guidance counselor and actively pursued information on resources and programs that could help them to achieve their goals.

Overall, students were reliant on their parents, family, and school staff members to gain information about college. The analysis of data exemplified how students responded to their parents' expectations for them to go to college. Parents provided moral support and relied on the school staff to provide information and support for college-going. As shown previously, not all students accessed or were offered information about the college search and application processes.

McDonough (1997) provided evidence that a student's cultural capital affected the student's intended level and quality of their college education, a student's college choice made sense in the context of the students' habitus, and students limited the number of college alternatives due to a process of bounded reality and school influences. In her study, McDonough matched students from low and high SES schools in four participating California high schools to investigate the differences in how low and high SES students accessed and utilized the schools' resources for assistance in searching and applying to colleges. Similarly, Freeman (2005) designated the influence of environmental forces on the directions of students' postsecondary choices *channeling*. Through examining the role of channeling in student's college choice, Freeman provided evidence that African-American students, particularly first generation college-goers, rely on their school for information and guidance to steer them towards college educations. Beyond strategic assistance in maintaining an educational path towards college, Freeman's study also provides evidence that positive teacher-student and guidance counselor-student interactions motivate students to be proactive in making college

decisions. Freeman concluded that in addition to understanding the importance of individual and family influences on college choice, African-American students, and particularly first-generation college-goers, indicate the importance of the role that school fulfills in college choice through exposures to teachers, guidance counselors, and school staff that provide information and resources that link students with colleges. While this evidence indicated that students rely on schools for support in gaining access to college, Freeman also related research indicating that urban schools fail to provide adequate academic counseling and academic preparations to assist students in gaining this access (Knight, Norton, Bently, & Dixon, 2004; McDonough, 2004). McDonough's (2004) research also offers evidence to support the reliance of students on schools for college information and called for an inclusive education system that would "ensure greater alignment between high school exit skills and the skills required for college entry and success" (p. iv). In addition, McDonough showed the reliance of students on information provided outside of the home by offering evidence that college outreach programs double college-going rates for at-risk students, which showed the effect of making college-going resources available to at-risk students. In this study, I show that college-going resources are unequally available to students; therefore, only students who rigorously pursued their guidance counselor for information received needed information.

## CHAPTER V

### GOING TO COLLEGE

While in Chapter IV, I explored the influences of parents, peers, and high school staff members on students during the predisposition and search phases of the college choice model. In this chapter, I explore the choice phase of the college choice model. In the McDonough (1997) and Hossler and Gallagher (1987) college choice models, the choice phase is the period of time where students develop a list of colleges after searching for compatible colleges. After applying to these colleges, students continue to narrow the list of potential colleges until a final choice remains. Students in this study did not follow this pattern of the college choice model.

In this study, the students who entered colleges in March or May had identified one or two colleges they were interested in attending and had applied to between five to eight colleges during their senior year of high school. In this chapter, I explored how students made their decision about which college to attend. I found that these students were left either by their own actions or by circumstance with one college of their potential list of colleges. The choices in these students' cases were to go to that one college or face not being able to attend college at all. I organized the reasons for their limited choice as either self-imposed limitations or external limitations.

Examples of self-imposed limitations included (a) failure of students to complete applications or to comply with colleges' request for more information, (b) accepting offers from the first college from which they receive admittance letters while foregoing communications from other schools to which they had applied.

The major external limitation was the financial cost to attend college. I found that students decided on a college to attend prior to the processing of all of their financial aid paperwork and before students had received their financial aid reward package. This package would indicate how much of a financial aid reward they would receive. Second, students were so confused by financial aid paperwork that in several cases a financial aid staff member from the college they attended has to complete the student's financial aid paperwork for him or her. Last, students who have to pay not only college-related expenses but also have to contribute to household expenses were limited because their financial aid award had to be enough to cover all of their expenses for the duration they were in school.

### **Self-Imposed Limitations of Choice**

When I examined the students' college application process, I noticed a pattern where students began many applications to different schools but failed to complete their applications. In this section, I review the actual academic trajectory of each of the four students who attended college in the fall, specifically (a) how many schools and what types of schools each of students applied to and (b) how each student decided upon entering his or her ultimate destination.

#### **Eva**

Eva, who ultimately enrolled in a community college, planned to transfer to a public in-state school in two years. Eva's search and choice phases were filled with anxiety, a major factor in her application and choice process. In her senior year of high school, Eva felt stressed about college applications and waiting for acceptances. She felt pressured by her dance teacher to go away from home and became very anxious about

choosing the right path. Eva wanted her post-secondary plans settled by the spring of her senior year so she could focus on the end of school. Eva applied to five colleges in all: two in-state public institutions, one in-state private institution, one out-of-state public institution, one out-of-state private institution, and one community college. Eva received her acceptance into the community college and missed the deadline for one in-state school. Eva received a scholarship from her local community college and immediately decided to accept the scholarship and attend there in the fall. Eva did not follow up on any requests for information sent by the remaining schools to which she had applied. Either the remaining schools rejected her because of low SAT scores or never notified her. Eva received a scholarship to her local community college.

#### **Necie**

Necie started her college search and application process in April of her senior year and applied to three in-state public schools, two in-state private schools, and two out-of-state schools. Necie did not finish the application for one out-of-state school because of high tuition and the other out-of-state school did not reply to her. Because her financial paperwork was not completed, she did not receive any financial aid packages. After speaking to her guidance counselor, Necie applied to the private in-state school's EOP program. When she contacted the school about the EOP funding, the financial aid department offered to fill out and file her financial aid paper work.

#### **Cameron**

Cameron began the college application process in November of her senior year. She applied to ten schools: one historically Black college or university (HBCU), three in-state public colleges, four in-state private colleges, and two out-of-state public schools.

After her first choice college accepted her into the EOF program, Cameron did not complete several of the applications and discontinued her communication with other schools.

### **Mary**

Mary applied to five colleges: three in-state schools, one in-state private school, and one local community college. She did not finish the applications to one in-state public school and one in-state private school. One of the in-state schools rejected her and Mary withdrew her application from the remaining in-state school because she believed she would be required to live on campus. Ultimately, this left her with acceptance to the local community college. In all of these cases, the inability to complete paperwork acted as a factor limiting college choice. In the next section, I more fully describe the role of completion of paperwork, and how difficulty completing financial aid paperwork hampered student choice.

### **External Limitations of College Costs**

The role of college costs on student choice options was a major factor in which schools students considered applying to and attending in the fall. In this section, I explore the role of financing college on students' college-decision options. The students in this study were keenly aware that their college aspirations were contingent on their ability to pay for school. Students navigated their academic pathway through a maze of finding funding, applying to programs, and securing funding for basic living expenses associated with completing their college education. In the focus group discussions and individual interviews, students were concerned with the overwhelming costs of education beyond high school. One common obstacle for students to obtain financial aid was

difficulty understanding and filing proper financial aid paperwork. Several students who lived in alternate family types were unable to answer questions on the FAFSA form. Students who did not understand how to fill out the financial aid questions became dependent on the institution's financial aid department to complete, file, and obtain financial aid or did not complete the process. Another obstacle was the overall out-of-pocket costs of college. Several of the students chose their higher education institution largely by which institution had the lowest tuition after the financial aid office deducted grants and loans from their tuition.

In the focus group discussions, several students' statements gave insight as to what these students' concerns were in planning their academic careers. During Focus Group F of the focus group discussions (Appendix B), the students discussed their goals. One student, Thomas, originally did not plan to attend college because he did not want to burden his family but changed his mind when he realized he could apply for financial aid.

Thomas: At first I wasn't going to go to college because I know my parents are struggling and I didn't want to put them in that financial state; but I realized that if I go to college, I could just get grants and loans and stuff (Marcia, Emma, Charlie, John, Thomas, Anna . . . Amy, 2008).

In Focus Group D, students explained their greatest concerns about applying and attending college. Several students worried in general about how they were going to find the money, while other students worried about paying back the money they would receive from loans if they did not complete school or completed school and could not find a job. In this next selection of text, the students expressed their concerns about financing their



college careers. One student felt pressured because if he attempted school but left before he completed a degree, he would be responsible for a large sum of money.

Interviewer: Okay, what are your biggest concerns about college?

Vincent: My biggest concern is getting into college.

Eva: I am afraid because there is a lot you have to worry about like making payments.

Interviewer: What else are you worried about?

Eva: Making payments and everything and then working, school, research papers; then I participate in a lot of stuff outside of school career-wise--it's crazy.

Interviewer: You participate in a lot of extracurricular activities?

Eva: Then you still want to manage to have fun while you are in college.

Victor: The thing that concerns me is that some people try their hardest and they [do not] get a scholarship, so they have to take a loan. When I went to [college], I [had not] noticed how much money it costs to attend college.

Eva: [laughing] Yes, [college] is expensive. It costs approximately \$30,000.

Victor: It was a lot of money and then you got to pay it back and it's going to be hard if you don't go through with what you thought you were going to do, like if you change your mind and you get all messed up (Eva, Charlene, and Vincent, 2008).

Of the five students who attended college, paying for school was a substantial factor that limited their college choice options. Eva, who was a member of Focus Group D, chose to attend the local community college after she received a full scholarship through a New Jersey program that gives free tuition to the top 10% of each high school

class to attend the community college and extends the scholarship to any public state school if the student maintains a certain GPA. Cameron received tuition assistance through the EOF program at her private institution, and she stated that she would not have been able to afford the tuition had she not received her grants. Mary, who attended a local community college, was very confused regarding how to apply for financial aid and had trouble paying the costs of books and materials. Andrea's acceptance to the private institution was dependent on receiving the tuition remission her mom receives as an employee of the institution.

All of the student participants in this study needed to secure funding from outside sources. Filing the financial aid paperwork needed to apply for federal, state, and college aid was difficult, especially for students with alternative family structures. Necie, Linda, and Lara's non-traditional family situations left them confused regarding how to file their financial aid forms.

Necie's private college financial aid department completed her paperwork and forms, and she remained dependent on her school's financial aid department to assist her in filling out and submitting the proper paperwork for her financial aid in the next few years. Necie's mother passed away when she was eight and she never met her father. She lived with her cousin's family while her uncle acted as her legal guardian prior to her eighteenth birthday. Because she had separate legal and custodial guardians, Necie was baffled about how to answer the questions on her financial aid paperwork; and without the assistance of the college's personnel, she would not have been able to compile the necessary documentation in order to receive financial aid from the government.

In this section of dialogue, Necie answered several questions about college cost and how finances factored in her college choice:

Interviewer: How did you figure out how to pay for college? How did you figure out how to fill out the paperwork needed for the EOF program?

Necie: The people in the office at financial aid at [the college].

Interviewer: Okay, so they really helped you and walked you through that whole process. Did you have any idea of how to do that before you got there?

Necie: No.

Interviewer: Was there anybody at [your high school] that would be able to help you with all that, do you think?

Necie: My [guidance counselor] had told me to apply for EOF because they help you pay for college.

Interviewer: Did you apply to EOF at all those other colleges too?

Necie: I also applied to the EOF program at the [local state school]. I probably would have gone to [the local state school] if my financial aid wasn't so like messed up.

Interviewer: Yes, do you wish that you had worked that or had been more organized about that? Or –

Necie: Yeah, but it was really nothing I could do –

Interviewer: Why?

Necie: Because I did not know what to say, like, yeah.

Interviewer: Right...Yes, that whole financial aid thing is complicated.

Necie: Yes.

Interviewer: And then, you did not hear back from [two private out-of-state colleges. But you did hear back from [her current private college] and they offered you a spot in the EOF program?

Necie: Yes.

Interviewer: What other--were there any other colleges that you heard back from?

Necie: [local state school] they wanted my, like, financial 'cause, um, at the time, my financial wasn't, like, good on FAFSA, so –

Interviewer: "Good" meaning it wasn't filled out properly?

Necie: Yes, they kept send [sic] me letters. And so I wasn't like – but [currently attended private school] was just like, um, just come to the school, and we'll help you fix it.

Interviewer: Oh, That is nice. Okay.

Necie: Yes.

Interviewer: Now, was it – was filling out the FAFSA complicated because your legal guardian isn't even a person you live with, and that is all--all messed up like that?

Necie: Yes (Necie, 2010).

Lara enrolled into a certificate program at a for-profit school. Like Necie, Lara did not understand the FAFSA questionnaire and if not for the financial aid counselors, her forms would have remained unfilled. Lara did not understand how to file income statements required by the FAFSA because Lara has no parents; her sister was her legal guardian until her eighteenth birthday, and she currently lives with a friend.

Lara: [After she chose which classes she needed to obtain the certificate she wanted and calculated the hours and modules that she needed]] I was like I know that these classes are not for free so let's see what the tuition [is] and they showed me the paper with the tuition and I was like well I can't afford this money out of my pocket. I need financial aid and that is when they did it for me and I got financial aid [sic].

Interviewer: Did they help you through the process? Did they guide you through your FAFSA?

Lara: They did it.

Interviewer: If you had to have done that all on your own--could you have done it?

Lara: No.

Interviewer: No.

Lara: No, because I would be sitting there like EKKK so [sic].

Interviewer: Now that you did it once, do you think that you could do it on your own if you had to do it again?

Lara: No, because some questions were like, 'I don't know. . . what does the question . . . what is that thing' [sic].

Interviewer: So they walked you through the financial aid part of it?

Lara: Yes (Lara, 2010).

Linda's problems filling out her financial aid paperwork were also due to an alternative living situation but were also complicated because her father was alive but had been in and out of prison throughout her childhood, and her legal guardian had changed

many times over her childhood. Unlike Lara and Necie, Linda did not find any assistance in her application processes and was considering going to a for-profit training institute although she desperately wanted to attend a four-year school.

Linda lived in New York with her mother and sister until her mother passed away when she was 11. With her father incarcerated, Linda moved several times and changed school districts four times between junior high and high school. In 2006, in her sophomore year of high school, her sister became her legal guardian until several months ago when Linda turned 18.

Linda applied to various community colleges and registered for fall coursework, but due to confusion about whose financial information should be included in her paperwork, Linda was unable to begin school the fall after her graduation. In this segment of dialogue, Linda answered questions regarding the obstacles presented when trying to apply for financial aid and the role of finances in her college choice options.

Linda: The internet website for the FAFSA is more complicated than [when you first go to the website]. I waited. I actually waited [until] the last minute, which was my fault, but I did get on the ball with applying to colleges and stuff like that, and most of the colleges kept asking for my SAT's. So, that's why I had to wait until I took my SAT's, and then once I got my results, I started sending out all my information to the colleges, but it's like another thing that is like I needed help with--filling out my FAFSA. I would have to go to the school and fill it out because I don't understand how . . . none of, like . . . I understand the questions, but it's like with me, they ask about either your mother or your father's information [sic].

Interviewer: Right.

Linda: My mother is deceased, and I don't know where my father is at [sic].

Interviewer: Right.

Linda: So, it's like I only got my legal guardian information. They don't have that on the FAFSA. So, I'll have to go in and do all that. That is another problem that was messing me up. So, um, now with schools, I have to . . . I know I have to go into schools. I can't just go on the Internet and just do it, and if I do when it comes to FAFSA, I'll have to go to the school and do it. So [sic].

Interviewer: You should only have to fill out your FAFSA once.

Linda: Yeah, but having to go back, and back, and fill out, and it was just like so ridiculous. I thought I had to keep filling the FAFSA out [sic].

Interviewer: Yes, probably, because, yes, 'cause you've got a complicated situation.

Linda: I have to bring it because I was going to go to [out-of-county community college]. Everything was finalized with that [college]. They told me to bring in legal documentation stating that my sister is my legal guardian, which are my custody papers. I brought in the custody papers and they didn't accept that. So, I couldn't go. They told me [that is not accepted]. I have nothing else to prove besides the custody papers. So, that didn't work out. I had my classes, my schedule, and everything (Linda, 2010).

A year after graduation, Linda decided to investigate a for-profit institution after she received a postcard from their enrollment department. When she contacted the financial aid office at the for-profit institution, she told them about her complicated

financial aid situation. The financial aid office told her to bring in her forms and the school would assist her in securing financing. Linda felt reassured that the institution would help her secure financing. In the following segment, Linda explains how she became acquainted with the for-profit university that she was considering attending within the next few semesters.

Linda: So, I stayed there, and my plan from now is to work, and I want to go to school too. I want to go to school in September.

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Linda: And I actually found a school that is a pretty decent [for-profit university]

Interviewer: Okay.

Linda: I have six quarters in for--each six quarters is \$6600 and then with financial aid, and they have scholarships for those who have a qualifying GPA

Linda (continued): And I had a 2.7. So, that should help me out because I wanted to go out of state, but it was a lot of money, and like a lot of money in tuition and everything. So, I just said, 'I'm going to find something that I know I'm more comfortable with and pay for tuition.'

Interviewer: Right, is that--does--does--is that including room and board, or are you--you would live there? [sic].

Linda: I would commute

Interviewer: Commute.

Interviewer: So, when did you make this decision to go there?

Linda: Um, it was a probably about around March. They had sent me, um, a postcard, and a lot of colleges send me postcards, but I don't really look at them,



and then I said, "Let me go make an appointment, go down there, and talk" because I was talking to one of my teachers today. She made me feel good, 'cause she [said] like, "You have a lot of potential. Like, why aren't you in school?" I'm like, "That is true. I got a lot of potential." So, I, um, went and talked to [the for-profit college] about everything, you know. Let's see, and I liked it so far, and everything. I just gotta take the, um, you know, the placement tests and stuff like that [sic].

Interviewer: Yes.

Linda: And then from there, we can go.

Interviewer: Right.

Linda: Hopefully, as far as money, if everything goes well, then I will be able to start school in September because I do not want to take out a loan and be too much in debt when I know I am not going to be able to pay it back.

Interviewer: Right.

Linda: Like, that is just not something that is--I am not cool with [sic].

Interviewer: Right.

Linda: Like, you know? Because I know most people that go to college, and they are in debt like \$25,000, \$30,000. Where am I going to get that money from?

Interviewer: Yes.

Linda: I am not going to have money to pay that back. So, I want to make sure it is a comfortable amount.

Interviewer: When that postcard from [the for-profit college] came, why do you think that you paid attention to that when you had not really been paying attention to other ones?

Linda: Because on the postcard it said that they have, um, funding for [school]. They got funding for the students to like to pay for the tuition in scholarships. Most of the other schools, when I call, I always got the runaround about the scholarships, and stuff like that, and you know. So, that one, I saw that, and I'm like, "Well, I don't--they don't never have to put that on a postcard," and then that's what made me, like, really call them, and stuff, and make an appointment to go down there [sic].

Interviewer: That is interesting. So, what other schools have you called and tried to find out about scholarships?

Linda: Um, other schools that I had interest in was, um, [out of state--state school] (Linda, 2010).

Finances were the second major factor in limitation of college choice. For Linda, issues with financial aid limited her ability to attend college, and her dependence on financial aid further limited her college choice options. McDonough (1997) pointed out that students' college choice is limited because of constraints such as knowledge of school, desire of location, costs, etc. The ability to secure adequate financial aid and students' acceptance into the college limited the students' college choice options.

The search phase included the process by which the student sought out information about potential post-secondary institutions and began the interaction between themselves and the potential post-secondary institution. When applying this model to

low-income areas, the financial influences and constraints must be represented as a limitation of choice. None of the nine students that we interviewed talked about looking at a college that would suit them in size, teacher-to-student ratio, or geographical location, but again made decisions based on limited options due to acceptance and financial aid constraints.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the enrollment gap between African-American and White students decreased from 9.3% in 2003 to 4.9% in 2010, there has not been a corresponding increase in graduation rates. Because the average lifetime earnings of persons who have earned a four-year college degree are \$800,000 dollars higher than those who have completed high school alone (Baum & Ma, 2007), an increase in African-American attainment of college degrees would translate into greater economic advancement, as obtaining a college education on average equates to a higher salary and benefits. This study aimed to understand why some students who while in high school aspired to attend college maintained their academic paths while other students from the same urban high school deviated from their goals. I found that these students' college-choice process diverged from the predisposing, search, and choice phases of the college choice models. In examining why this phenomenon occurred, I examined how students interacted with their parents, friends, and school staff during the last two years of high school into the first year after high school graduation.

I examined the current college choice model, deconstructing each of the phases based on my findings. The current college choice model's predisposition phase begins when students decide to participate in post-secondary education (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Students in the current college choice model (McDonough, 1997; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999) would begin their college search by looking at various types of colleges, exploring their costs and size, and evaluating their geographic desirability and academic offerings. The students would decide which college attributes are most important to them, such as having smaller class sizes, offering

a particular academic program, or housing availability. Students would then create a long list of possible colleges, which they would visit, contact the schools, and then narrow their possible choices until they had a short list of colleges for consideration. With a short list of colleges in hand, students would await acceptance letters and financial aid packages; they would consult parents and guidance counselors and make an informed decision as to the best possible college choice for them. As described in Chapter IV and Chapter V, the current college choice model did not fit the group of students in this study. There are two main theoretical implications of the study: (1) examining the students' college choice process and (2) examining the role of financial aid in the choice phase of the college choice process.

It is imperative that these students, representatives of African-American urban high school students, are represented in college choice models. The need to understand how students, especially students traditionally underrepresented on college campuses, need guidance in the college-choice process to assure equality in access to college and equity in educational opportunities. Bloom (2006) stated that applying to college "is not simply a set of bureaucratic steps, a neat list to be checked off" (p. 228), although my findings are in agreement with Bloom that the college choice process is often represented as such. Bloom (2006) describes the transitional process from high school to college as a journey. McDonough (1997) looked at how students use resources specific to their social class in navigation through the college search and application process. In this study I have found that students' success is dependent on how successfully they navigate the obstacles, specifically how to complete the application and financial aid process.

## **Predisposition Phase**

The predisposition phase, the phase in which students make the decision to attend college, remains the least understood phase of the college-choice model (Jackson, 1982; Litten, 1981; McDonough, 1997). This study expands on previous research, moving away from defining the predisposition phase as a period of time and moving towards defining predisposition as a state of mind which must be examined in the context of a student's habitus. In this study, I captured data showing that student predisposition can extend well into the search phase. In Chapter IV, I showed how students' habitus, their parents, peers, families, teachers and guidance counselors offered limited support of the college-going process. I showed that parents were supportive of students going to college; but their support was limited to encouragement, as parents had no contextual knowledge to assist students in obtaining college-going information as only one of the students' parent had attended college. Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper (1999) found parents the most important influence during the predisposition phase, yet I have shown that parents were unable to assist their students with key college-going decisions. Without parents and family to gain access to college-going information, students relied heavily on their school and guidance department, yet as I showed in Chapter V, students could not rely on their guidance counselors to assist them.

In a low-income urban environment, the worry and anxiety presented by college costs limited students' college options. Without familial and school encouragement, students had trouble envisioning how they would fit into the role of college student. The predisposition phase in low-income students should reflect not only familial

encouragement (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999), but also the systems of familial support the student received throughout the phase. This familial support includes the way that students develop their academic pathways because their anxieties about acceptance and financial obligations must be met with affirmation that the student can fulfill the role of a college student. Cameron and Andrea's family's outlook that college was necessary in order to pursue a professional degree positively affected their predisposition phase.

### **Developing a Supportive College-Going Culture**

All the students individually interviewed described a negative academic culture at Rosa Parks High School, absent of a college-going culture. The majority of students interviewed, described classes where teachers spent most of their class time disciplining students and maintaining classroom management. Instead of academic success, students equated obedience, being quiet, and not disturbing class with being a "good student." All but one student described themselves as "good students" because they were not troublemakers and helped teachers with tasks. These students described themselves as "good students" despite cutting classes, not handing in work, and waiting to the end of the grading period to make up months of work. The subordinate culture at Rosa Parks reflected a minority ideology among students who maintained high expectations for themselves and who chose to actively participate in their education.

The influence of the dominant culture on student academic trajectories at Rosa Parks resulted in low expectations of the students by the students and staff and the creation of an environment students viewed as a hindrance to learning. Several students described how their own low expectations stemmed from low expectations teachers and administrators held for them. Going into her senior year, Lara often cut class, and when

she did go to class, did not hand in homework. Although Lara described herself as a good student, she described poor academic habits affirmed by her teacher's willingness to accept low standards.

All but one student described a "good" student as someone who attends class, behaves well in class, and is polite to his or her teachers. The students in this study did not connect academic achievement to being "good" students.

All of the students who commented about the school's academic environment during the focus group sessions and the individual interviews described a negative atmosphere present at Rosa Parks High School and reflected the dominant negative academic ideology amongst the students and staff. Students in Focus Group A described their peers as immature students who outnumber the mature students who want to come to school to learn. One student in Focus Group D stated that the teachers were afraid of the students, while in multiple focus groups and interviews many students stated that most of the teachers were unable to control their classes. This problem negatively affected the academic atmosphere and decreased the amount of instructional time. Both influences resulted in lowered student morale and increased student frustration. Eva and Charlene were in the top 10% of their high school class and were part of the minority ideology present at Rosa Parks High School

In previous years, seniors attended school for only part of the day if they had completed all of their requirements for graduation; however, the school phased out half days and required all seniors to take a full day of coursework during their senior year. Although the school increased the amount of instructional time required for each of the students, the mandated courses were not required for graduation. In addition, the school



administration did not revamp the amount or variety of offered coursework and failed to add more electives, enrichment, or college preparatory courses. Students were required to attend school but were unable to choose courses that interested them or would prepare them for future career choices.

The low expectations in high school translated into students who were unprepared for the rigors of coursework in college. Necie felt unprepared for the higher expectations she found in college. When she started college, she was surprised by how much work, effort, and amount of time each of her college classes required in comparison to her high school coursework. While in high school, Necie was almost never assigned homework; when homework was assigned, she would complete the work during her classes. Now in college, Necie spent three to four hours each week writing and researching for one of her English courses because the expectations were so much higher than her prior experiences.

As of their junior year in high school, students in this study had completed a minimal number of college-going activities such as attending college fairs, researching colleges and universities on the web, or finding the costs of colleges and universities, showing that they did not participate in the college search phases. In the previous chapters, I examined the current college choice model, deconstructing each of the phases to include findings of this current data. The “middle-class” college choice model’s predisposition begins with how students decide to participate in post-secondary education and how they desire to participate in higher education (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). In a low-income urban environment, the worry and anxiety caused by the costs of college influenced the way students viewed college options. Without familial and school encouragement, students had trouble envisioning how they would fit into the role of

college student. The predisposition phase in low-income students should reflect not only familial encouragement (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999), but also the systems of familial support the student received throughout the phase. This familial support includes affirmations that the student can fulfill the role of a college student despite their anxieties about acceptance and financial obligations.

Practice and policy should reflect the need for students to feel that they can fulfill the role of college-goer. This could be completed by educating students about going to college, exposing students to college-goers, and educating parents and guardians on different ways to support their students. Educating parents on the time-frame of when college searches should begin, the deadlines for SAT testing, and SAT preparations, and assisting parents to understand the college application and admissions procedures along with FAFSA and financial aid information would greatly benefit students who, studies have shown, rely on parental support.

### **Parental Support**

One of the emerging details revealed from data collected was defining parental influences that extended beyond mother and father. Administrators and policymakers, along with researchers, need to recognize that the “parental role” can be filled by siblings or other adults who by circumstance fulfill the parental role. This can cause multiple issues because of the difficulties students had with filing parental income on their financial aid paperwork. For Linda, the obstacle presented by this aspect caused her to delay the beginning of her post-secondary education. For Lara and Necie, who had legal guardians, the obstacle presented by the financial aid paperwork left them reliant on the institution they attended to continue to file their financial paperwork.

Experiences with family, parents, teachers, and guidance counselors influenced students positively or negatively. These influences can be affirming towards the college going process and create a positive college-going environment, or influences can be neutral or negative and have ill effects in the creation of a college-going environment. A positive college-going cultural environment is one where factors, persons, and events assist students in the preparations of going to college, including strategies to overcome obstacles on their academic pathways. The idea of a positive college-going environment is not new; McDonough (1997) also reported the affirming college-going culture within school and home environments. This study, however, shows that the role of the habitus is more far reaching than parents, school, and community. This study dissected the ways in which students made decisions about college, noting a complex web of intertwining processes and influences on student decisions.

Just as there are positive environments that encourage college-going, there are negative or neutral college-going environments that do not assist students in preparing for obstacles in their academic pathways. This study examines the magnitude of harm these obstacles of divergence create in students' pathways to college.

There is a need for a new model of college choice, one that allows reflection of the obstacles today's students encounter during their educational process. This should include a model that can accommodate students. This study highlights that students have a general desire to attend college but that students do not concretely make the decision to attend college until well into high school when the search phase should have already begun.

Future researchers, policymakers, and educational practitioners must concentrate on how to assist parents in transitioning from expectations and encouragement to actively engaging in the students' college-going process. Programs should concentrate on teaching parents how to actively participate in the students' decision to go to college and aid in the search for potential colleges for students to attend. They should also provide additional resources and outreach within the high school with the purpose of assisting and educating all students on college-going activities and procedures.

### **Search Phase**

In the search phase of the current college choice model, students sought out information about potential post-secondary institutions and began the interaction between themselves and potential post-secondary institutions. None of the nine students that we interviewed looked at a college that would suit them in size, teacher-to-student ratio, or geographical location. McDonough (1997) pointed out that students' college choice is limited because of constraints such as knowledge of school, desire of location, costs, etc. The students in our study exhibited extremely limited searches for schools. Students found schools through knowing of the schools through friends or family, television commercials, programs run by their school, or through local college fairs. The students' major considerations for choosing schools were costs and the ability of the college or university to provide financial aid, the location of the school, and the college's acceptance of the student.

### **School Staff and Guidance Counselors**

As evidenced by the previous chapters, students at Rosa Parks High School needed to be their own educational advocates in soliciting help from guidance counselors

during their college search and application process. It was also evident that the guidance department unequally distributed college information to certain students. The guidance counselors must be diligent in preparing all of the students for the college search and application process. Guidance counselors must offer this college information and opportunities to all high school students. Teachers, staff, and guidance counselors need to encourage open communication with students about tests, scores, and procedures, making sure that the students understand the processes and expectations of the students who want to go to school. The school district should investigate the feasibility of assigning one particular guidance counselor relating to the college search and application procedures.

Students often did not understand the magnitude and scoring of state, military, and college entrance standardized tests. As a result of the lack of understanding, students were limited in how they prepared for standardized tests, and several students made statements that minimized the importance of retesting because they felt that if they only failed by a few points, then they just needed to try a little harder. Our country lauds itself on the open access of higher education for all, yet access is impeded by disconnects between policy and practice. Open access must include monies, resources, and administrative support to promote and educate students regarding information on the college-going process.. Any policy implementation or future research in regard to improving college enrollment rates should first concentrate on the most feasible and reliable methods of the college-going process and the creation of a high school college-going culture. Administrators need to take active steps to create a process where parents,

guardians, and students can be educated about college-going and the process and procedures of college and financial aid applications.

### **The Role of Guidance Counselors in the College Choice Process**

This study showed students' reliance on school guidance counselors to provide extensive systematic guidance on the college search and application process along with the inability of students to data mine information about colleges without any assistance. Moreover, this study exemplifies that guidance counselors do not have the time to educate each student about college-going activities and the process of searching for and then applying to colleges.

At Rosa Parks High School the student-to-guidance counselor ratio is over 300 to 1. Guidance counselors must provide each student with the following services: individual counseling and advisement; resolving conflicts and identifying development; specific student concerns like grades, peer pressure, and substance abuse; work with administrators, teachers, and staff about student needs; provide professional development on issues such as bullying, suicide, and loss; coordinate special programs for students; meet with parents; and provide students with tools for career development. One solution would be to increase the number of guidance counselors, thus decreasing the number of students for which each guidance counselor is responsible. Another solution would be to hire one guidance counselor whose sole responsibility is to counsel students and their parents on the college-going process. I would also recommend that the guidance department, in concert with all of the departments within the school, develop cross-curricular programming with the goal of expanding college knowledge through activities relating to all aspects of college-going. For example, guidance counselors and English

teachers can partner to implement a curriculum unit on writing college application essays. A cross-curricular partnership with guidance staff and the computer science or business department could be used to create a student run college-going education web page where students can learn about college admissions requirements, scholarship information, and where students can sign up for daily e-mails, text messages, and social media links on college-going activities.

### **Choice Phase**

The current college choice model does not reflect the obstacles faced by certain populations, specifically those low-income students who live in urban centers. The goal of college choice research is to understand how students make decisions about college from the first sparks of interest in pursuing an education or career path. The bulk of prior research concentrated on statistical analysis of large data sets and lacked examination of what trends and patterns mean to the individuals.

Analysis of data and findings suggest that the three-phase model of college choice (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; McDonough, 1997) is invalid for low-income African-American students. In this study, the three-phase model does not give insight into the obstacles these students face during each of the phases of the college choice model. One specific trend highlighted was the student lack of completion of the college application process as a limitation of college choice because students did not complete the application process to multiple institutions.

### **The Role of Financial Aid**

The majority of African-American students make their college choice based on financial decisions whether because of financial aid awards or because of living

arrangements which defray living and moving costs (Hurtado et al., 1997; Paulson & St. John 2002; McDonough & Antonio, 1996). This is congruent with information that African-American students are more likely than other peer groups to come from a low-income or low-SES family (McDonough & Antonio, 1996; Hurtado et al., 1997). The amount of paperwork associated with financial aid and college applications was foreign to this group of students. Hossler, Bouse, and Schmit (1990) found that students felt it was their parents' responsibility to worry about financial aid. In this study, students were worried about financial aid but viewed the FAFSA and financial aid a foreign concept. In their research on college choice, Hossler, Blouse, and Schmit (1990) utilized the college choice model in examination of what college-cost and financial aid knowledge students and parent possessed and how demographic factors such as race and SES influenced college choice. This disinterest resulted in a lack of student knowledge of financial aid and delay in student research of college costs and availability of financial aid. McDonough (1997) also examined how college costs influenced students' college choice, finding that low SES students understood that their parents would not be able to finance their college education.

Finances were a limitation in student college choice. For Linda, issues with financial aid limited her ability to attend college, and her dependence on financial aid further limited her college choice options. McDonough (1997) pointed out that students' college choice is limited because of constraints such as knowledge of school, desire of location, costs, etc. The ability to secure adequate financial aid and students' acceptance into the college limited the students' college choice options. When applying the college choice model to low-income areas, the financial influences and constraints must be



represented as a limitation of choice. None of the nine students that we interviewed talked about looking at a college that would suit them in size, teacher-to-student ratio, or geographical location but again made decisions based on limited options due to acceptance and financial aid constraints. Four of the students chose schools where financial aid paperwork was filled out by their college's financial aid department. Future policy and practice should focus on developing students' abilities to complete the paperwork required by financial aid departments.

### **The Myth of Choice**

In the current college choice model in the choice phase, students evaluate their choice set and narrow this set down to specific institutions from which they make their final decision. (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). The final decision did not come down to one school being more suited to the students' needs. Two main factors of their college choice were acceptance into college and the ability to finance their education. These students decided between choosing one institution and restarting the search and application process over. In the previous chapters, I illustrated the limited decision options available to the students and investigated how college choice was a function of the students' abilities to successfully navigate through obstacles prevalent in urban low-income populations.

I examined obstacles, such as decisions based solely on acceptance into a college, need of immediate financial security, difficulty in completing applications for federal and institutional financial aid, and the limit of college culture present in the students' school and home environments. I examined how these students' college choice processes were inconsistent with the current college choice model. In the current college choice model (Chapman, 1981; Litten, 1982; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; McDonough, 1997) students

develop academic plans, research possible institutions, and then narrow their selections down to several schools where they make their choice. Using the student experiences, I deconstructed the traditional model to include the patterns that I presented in the previous sections. Students' choice of college was a function of being accepted into a college and being able to afford the college. Students in this study stopped the application process once they heard from the first college that accepted them. This phenomenon sets apart these students from the traditional college choice models. Researchers have concluded that college choice is dependent on the experiences of the students (Hearn, 1991; McDonough, 1991); the college choice models lack a component that would allow for measurement of student experiences. I would propose new research dedicated to further expansion of the college choice models. An expanded model would allow for a full examination of students' cultural environments such as parents, family, and schools and continue into overall cultural environments such as the local community and the race-based culture (such as African-American and Chicana/o culture). With these implementations, further research would thus build a more complete model of student college choice.

### **Future Research, Policy, and Practice**

In this study, I analyzed a small sample of female African-American students who came from the same urban high schools. Future studies should include a heterogeneous sample of males and females to examine the role of gender in the college choice process. Since the purpose of this study was to look at how students came to their college destination, we did not examine student academic achievement. Future studies should

seek to understand the differences in how students of different academic abilities go about the college choice process.

### **State/Federal Policy Implications**

This study confirmed prior research that paying for college was a major concern for students. I showed how students navigated through a maze of finding funding, applying to programs, and securing funding for basic living expenses associated with completing their college education.

Implementation of state and federal policies would assist in the integration of college-going curricula as a stand-alone or as part of current core content curriculum standards. As the most influential time for academic interventions are in the eighth and ninth grades, policymakers should concentrate programs and resources geared towards academic interventions during this time.

### **Financial Aid Forms**

One common obstacle I explored was the difficulties students had in understanding and filing proper financial aid paperwork. Several students who lived in alternate family types were unable to answer questions on the FAFSA paperwork. Students who did not understand how to fill out the financial aid questions became dependent on the institution's financial aid department to complete, file, and obtain financial aid or did not complete the process. Policy assuring students equal access to colleges should allocate time and funding to assure that students and parents understand how to file financial aid paperwork along with understanding filing deadlines and procedures. FAFSA administrators should clarify how students with non-traditional households should complete and file paperwork.

## **School Administration**

School administration should implement college-going activities into all the curricula in each of the secondary grades so that students are exposed to college-going activities throughout their high school years. English teachers could create units where students develop their personal statements throughout their high school careers instead of students only beginning to think about a personal statement in their senior year. This multi-year exercise would also serve to expose students to college-going activities from their entry into high school throughout their high school careers. Subject teachers could have students research the graduation requirements of their possible college majors for each of their current subjects.

The school should consider sponsoring a college fair that would include students of all grades. College fairs introduce students to colleges they may not have heard of and allow them to gather information on college programs and services.

School administrators should seek to empower parents by providing them with information, checklists, and guides to assist parents in becoming well versed in the college-going vernacular. Such programs would assist parents in moving from vocal encouragement to becoming active participants in their children's college-choice process.

## **Parents**

Parents and guardians need to support students, not only by vocalizing their support, but also by learning the college search and application process and supporting the students in each of the steps of the process. Parents need education in the process of college application and how they can assist in college application and financial aid paperwork. Future studies and policy should focus on giving parents and guardians the

tools and knowledge to assist students with completion of their college applications.

Parents and guardians should encourage students to complete the application process and make their college choice based on the best possible fit for college choice.

## **Students**

Students must understand the consequences of their college search and choice process and the importance of decisions made during high school. Although research has shown that many factors contribute to college enrollment and attainment, the first step to closing the African American college gap is student awareness of the college choice process. While I have introduced policy implications that will affect students, any policy must contain a component on educating students about their personal responsibility in this process.

## REFERENCES

- Ainsworth-Darnell, J. W., & Downey, D. B. (1998, August). Assessing the oppositional culture explanation for racial/ethnic differences in school. *American Sociological Review*, 63(4), 536-553.
- Akom, A. A. (2008). Reexamining resistance as oppositional behavior. In J. U. Ogbu (Ed.), *Minority status, oppositional culture, and academic engagement* (pp. 191-221). New York, NY, USA: Routledge.
- Allen, B. A., & Boykin, A. W. (1991). The influence of contextual factors on Afro-American and Euro-American children's performance: Effects of movement opportunity and music. *International Journal of Psychology*, 26(3), 373-387.
- Alwin, D. F., & Otto, L. B. (1977, October). High school context effects on aspiration. *Sociology of Education*, 50(4), 259-273.
- Anyon, J. (1980, Fall.). Social class and the hidden curriculum of work. *Journal of Education*, 162(1).
- Aud, S., Hussar, W., Planty, M., Snyder, T., Bianco, K., Fox, K., . . . Drake, L. (2010). *The condition of education*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences.
- Baker, J. A. (1999). Teacher-student interaction in urban at-risk classrooms: Differential behavior, relationship quality, and student satisfaction with school. *The Elementary School Journal*, 100(1), 57-70.

- Barton, P. E., & Coley, R. J. (2008). *Policy information report: Windows on achievement and inequality*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Services (ETS), Evaluation and Research Center.
- Baum, S., & Ma, J. (2007). *Education pays: The benefits of higher education for individuals and society*. Trenton, NJ: The College Board.
- Bean, J. P. (1980). Dropouts and turnover: The synthesis and test of a casual model of student attrition. *Research in Higher Education*, 12(2), 155-187.
- Becker, G. S. (1975). *Human capital*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Becker, G. S. (1993). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis with special reference to education* (3rd ed.). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Becker, H. (1998). *Tricks of the trade: How to think about your research while you're doing it*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Bergin, D. A., & Cooks, H. C. (2002, June). High school students of color talk about accusations of "acting white." *The Urban Review*, 34(2), 113-134.
- Berndt, T. J. (1999). School, friends' influence on students' adjustment to school. *Educational Psychologist*, 34(1), 15-28.
- Berreman, G. D. (1960). Caste in India and the United States. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 66(2), 120-127.
- Bloom, J. L. (2007). *Misreading social class in the journey towards college: Youth development in urban America*. Retrieved from <http://www.tcrecord.org>
- BLS Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2010). *Number of jobs held, labor market activity, and earnings growth among the youngest baby boomers*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor.

- Bogdan, R. C., & Bilken, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Bond, G. C. (1981). Social economic status and educational achievement: A review article. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 12(4), 227-257.
- Botstein, L. (2005). It is only a port of call: Reflections on the state of higher education. In R. H. Hersh, & J. Merrow (Eds.), *Declining by degrees: Higher education at risk* (pp. 209-228). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passerson, J. C. (1977). *Reproduction in education, society, and culture* (2nd ed.). London, England: Sage Publications.
- Bouse, G. A., & Hoosler, D. (1991, Winter). A longitudinal study of student college choice. *The Journal of College Admissions*, 11-16.
- Boyle, R. P. (1966, May). The effect of the high school on students' aspirations. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 71(6), 628-639.
- Cabrera, A. F., & LaNasa, S. M. (2000). *Using national databases to study the college choice of low-SES students*. Cincinnati, OH: Association for Institutional Research.
- Ceja, M. (2000, November). *Making decisions about college: Understanding the information sources of Chicana students*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Sacramento, CA.
- Chapman, D. W. (1981, September-October). A model of student college choice. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 52(5), 490-505.



- Charmaz, K. (2006). Reconstrucing theory in grounded theory studies. In K. Charmaz (Ed.), *Conducting grounded theory* (pp. 123-150). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Chubb, J. E., & Loveless, T. (2002). Bridging the achievement gap. In J. E. Chubb, & T. Loveless (Eds.). *Bridging the achievement gap* (pp. 1-10). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Clark, B. R. (1960, May). The "cooling out" function in higher education. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 65(6), 569-579.
- Coleman, J. S. (1968). *The evaluation of equality of educational opportunity*. Washington DC: U. S. Office of Education.
- Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 94(Supplement), S95-S120.
- The College Board. (2011, February 25). SAT test dates. Reston, VA: Educational Testing Services (ETS).
- Collins, R. (1971, December). Functional and conflict theories of educational stratification. *American Sociological Review*, 36(6), 1002-1019.
- Conchas, G. Q. (2001). Structuring failure and success: Understanding the variability in Latino school engagement. *Harvard Educational Review*, 71(3), 475-504.
- Conklin, M. E., & Dailey, A. R. (1981, October). Does consistency of parental educational encouragement matter for secondary school students? *Sociology of Education*, 54(4), 254-262.

- Cook, P. J., & Ludwig, J. (1997). Weighing the "Burden of 'Acting White'": Are there race differences in attitudes towards education. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 16(2), 256-278.
- Cooper, H. (1998). *Synthesizing research: A guide for literature review* (3rd ed., vol. 2). (C. D. Laughton, Ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Cousins, L. H. (1999). "Playing between classes": America's troubles with class, race, and gender in a Black high school and community. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 30(3), 294-316.
- Diamond, J. B., Randolph, A., & Spillane, J. P. (2004, March). Teachers' expectations and sense of responsibility for student learning: The importance of race, class, and organizational habitus. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 35(1), 75-98.
- DiMaggio, P. (1982, April). Cultural capital and school success: The impact of status culture participation on the grades of U.S. high school students. *American Sociological Review*, 47(2), 189-201.
- DiMaggio, P., & Mohr, J. (1985, May). Cultural capital, educational attainment, and marital selection. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 90(6), 1231-1261.
- DiPerna, J. C., Volpe, R. J., & Elliot, S. N. (2001). A model of academic enablers and elementary reading/language arts achievement. *School Psychology Review*, 31(3), 298-312.
- Dubow, E. F., Tisak, J., Causey, D., Hryshko, A., & Reid, G. (1991). A two-year longitudinal study of stressful life events, social support, and social problem-solving skills: Contributions to children's behavioral and academic adjustment. *Child Development*, 62, 583-599.

- Duncan, G. J., & Magnuson, K. A. (2005, January). Can family socioeconomic resources account for racial and ethnic test score gaps. *The Future of Children*, 15(1), 35-48.
- Ehrenberg, R. G., Zhang, L., & Levin, J. M. (2006, Winter). Crafting a class: The trade-off between merit scholarships and enrolling lower-income students. *The Review of Higher Education*, 29(2), 195-211.
- Evans, G. W. (2004, February-March). The environment of childhood poverty. *American Psychologist*, 59(2), 77-92.
- Fallows, J. (2006). College admissions: A substitute for quality. In R. H. Hersh, & J. Merrow (Eds.), *Declining by degrees: Higher education at risk* (pp. 39-46). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillian.
- Farkas, G., Grobe, R. P., Sheehan, D., & Shuan, Y. (1990, February). Cultural resources and school success: Gender, ethnicity, and poverty groups within an urban school district. *American Sociological Review*, 55(1), 127-142.
- Fergus, E. (2009). Understanding Latino students' schooling experiences: The relevance of skin color among Mexican and Puerto Rican high school students. *Teachers College Record*, 111 (2), 339-375.. Retrieved from <http://www.tcrecod.org>
- Fetterman, D. M. (1998). *Ethnography* (2nd ed., Vol. 17). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Ford, D. Y., Grantham, T. C., & Whiting, G. W. (2008). Another look at the achievement gap: Learning from the experiences of gifted Black students. *Urban Education*, 43(2), 216-239.

- Fordham, S. (1996). *Blacked out: Dilemmas of race, identity, and success at Capital High*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Fordham, S. (1999). Dissin' "the standard": Ebonics as guerrilla warfare at Capital High. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 30(3), 272-293.
- Fordham, S., & Ogbu, J. U. (1986). Black students' school success: Coping with the "burden of 'acting White'". *The Urban Review*, 18(3), 176-206.
- Freeman, K. (2005). *African Americans and college choice: The influence of family and school*. Albany, NY: New York University Press.
- Frey, J. H., & Fontana, A. (1993). The group interview in social research. In L. D. Morgan (Ed.), *Successful focus groups: Advancing the state of the art* (pp. 20-34). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Frisby, C. L. (1992). Issues and problems in the influence of culture on the psychoeducational needs of African-American children. *School Psychology Review*, 21(4).
- Fuligni, A. J., & Pedersen, S. (2002). Family obligation and the transition to young adulthood. *Developmental Psychology*, 38(5), 856-868.
- Furrer, C., & Skinner, E. (2003). Sense of relatedness as a factor in children's academic engagement and performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95(1), 148-162.
- Gallien, Jr., L. B. (2007). School cultural influences. In A. P. Rovai, L. B. Gallien, Jr., & H. R. Stiff-Williams (Eds.), *Closing the African American achievement gap in higher education* (pp. 39-53). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

- Gandara, P. (1999, Winter). Telling stories of success: Cultural capital and the educational mobility of Chicano students. *Latino Studies Journal*, 10(1), 38-54.
- Gibson, M. A. (1997). Complicating the immigrant/involuntary minority typology. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 28, 431-454.
- Gibson, M. A. (1997). Exploring and explaining the variability: Cross-national perspectives on the school performance of minority students. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 28(3), 318-329.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (2010). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New Brunswick, NJ: Aldine Transactions.
- Gottfredson, D. C. (1981, October). Black-White differences in the educational attainment process: What have we learned? *American Sociological Review*, 46(5), 542-557.
- Greenwood, C. R., Delquadri, J. C., & Hall, R. V. (1989). Longitudinal effects of classwide peer tutoring. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 81(3), 371-383.
- Greenwood, C. R., Horton, B. T., & Utley, C. A. (2002). Academic engagement: Current perspectives on research and practice. *School Psychology Review*, 31(3), 328-349.
- Griffen, K., del Pilar, W., McIntosh, K., & Griffen, A. (2012). "Oh, of course I'm going to go to college": Understanding how habitus shapes the college choice process of Black immigrant students. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 5(2), 96-111.
- Hanson, S. L. (1994, July). Lost talent: Unrealized educational aspirations and expectations among U.S. youths. *Sociology of Education*, 67(3), 159-183.

- Harper, S. R. (2012). *Black male student success in higher education: A report from the National Black Male College Achievement Study*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education.
- Hauser, R. M., & Anderson, D. K. (1991, October). Post-high school plans and aspirations of Black and White high school seniors: 1976-86. *Sociology of Education*, 64(4), 263-277.
- Hearn, J. C. (1984, January ). The relative roles of academic, ascribed, and socioeconomic characteristics in college destinations. *Sociology of Education*, 57(1), 22-30.
- Hearn, J. C. (1991, July). Academic and nonacademic influences on the college destinations of 1980 high school graduates. *Sociology of Education*, 64(3), 158-171.
- Hersh, R. H., & Merrow, J. (Eds.). (2005). *Declining by degrees: Higher education at risk*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (1970). Parental involvement in children's education: Why does it make a difference? *Teachers College Record*, 97(2), 310-331.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (1997, Spring). Why do parents become involved in their children's education? *Review of Educational Research*, 67(1), 3-42.
- Horvat, E. M., & Antonio, A. L. (1999). "Hey, those shoes are out of uniform": African American girls in an elite high school and the importance of habitus. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 30(3), 317-342.

- Hossler, D., Schmit, J., & Bouse, G. (1991). Family knowledge of postsecondary costs and financial aid. *Journal of Student Financial Aid*, 21, 4-17.
- Hossler, D., & Gallagher, K. S. (1987, Spring). Studying student college choice: A three-phase model and the implications for policymakers. *College and University*, 62(3), 207-221.
- Hossler, D., Schmit, J., & Vesper, N. (1999). *Going to college: How social, economic, and educational factors influence the decisions students make*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hubbard, L. (1999). College aspirations among low-income African American high school students: Generated strategies for success. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 30(3), 363-383.
- Janesick, V. J. (1998). *"Stretching" exercises for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Jarrett, R. L. (1994, February). Living poor: Family life among single parents, African American women. *Social Problems*, 41(1), 30-49.
- Karabel, J., & Astin, A. W. (1975, March). Social class, academic ability, and college "quality." *Social Forces*, 53(3), 381-398.
- Kerckhoff, A. C. (1976, December). Attainment process: Socialization or allocation. *Social Forces*, 55(2), 368-381.
- Kidd, J. J. (2005). It is only a port of call: Reflections on the state of higher education. In R. H. Hersh, & J. Merrow (Eds.), *Declining by degrees* (pp. 195-208). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Kiyama, J. M. (2010, June). College aspirations and limitations: The role of educational ideologies and funds of knowledge in Mexican-American families. *American Educational Research Journal*, 47(2), 330-356.
- Knight, M. G. (2003, November). Through urban youth's eyes: Negotiating K-16 policies, practices, and their futures. *Educational Policy*, 17(5), 531-557.
- Knight, M. G., Norton, N. E., Bently, C. C., & Dixon, I. R. (2004, March). The power of Black and Lintina/o counterstories: Urban families and college-going process. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 35(1), 99-120.
- Knodel, J. (1993). The design and analysis of focus group studies: A practical approach. In D. L. Morgan (Ed.), *Successful focus groups: Advancing the state of the art* (pp. 35-50). Newbery Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Koyama, J. P. (2007). Approaching and attending college: Anthropological and ethnographic accounts. *Teachers College Record*, 109(10), 5-16. Retrieved from <http://www.tcrecord.org>: www.tcrecod.org
- Krueger, R. A. (1998). *Analyzing and reporting focus group results* (Vol. 6). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kruegers, R. A. (1998). *Developing questions for focus groups* (Vol. 3). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Langhout, R. D., Francine, R., & Jonathan, F. (2007, Winter). Assessing classism in academic settings. *The Review of Higher Education*, 30(2), 145-184.
- Lareau, A. (1987). Social class differences in family-school relationships: The importance of cultural capital. *Sociology of Education*, 60, 73-85.



- Lareau, A. (1989). Home advantage: Social class and parental intervention in elementary education. *Sociology of Education*, 60, 187-223.
- Lareau, A., & Horvat, E. M. (1999, January). Moments of social inclusion and exclusion: Race, class, and cultural capital in family-school relationships. *Sociology of Education*, 72(1), 37-53.
- Levine, A. (2005). Worlds apart: Disconnects between students and their colleges. In R. H. Hersh, & J. Merrow (Eds.), *Declining by degrees: Higher education at risk* (pp. 155-168). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Litten, L. H. (1982, July-August). Different strokes in the applicant pool: Some refinements in a model of student college choice. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 53(4), 383-402.
- Litten, L. H., & Hall, A. E. (1989, May-June). In the eyes of our beholders: Some evidence on how high-school students and their parents view quality in colleges. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 60(3), 302-324.
- Ilg, R. E. (2006). *Change in employment by occupation, industry, and earnings quartile*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Division of Labor Force Statistics. (Monthly Labor Review).
- Lynch, M. (2000). Trends in and consequences of. In S. DAnziger, & J. Waldfogel (Eds.), *Securing the future: Investing in children from birth to college*. New York, NY: Russell Sage.
- Lynch, M., & Cicchetti, D. (1997). Children's relationships with adults and peers: An examination of elementary and junior high school students. *Journal of School Psychology*, 35(1), 81-99.

- Malecki, C. K., & Elliot, S. N. (2002). Children's social behaviors as predictors of academic achievement: A longitudinal analysis. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 17(1), 1-23.
- Marks, H. M. (2000, Spring). Student engagement in instructional activity: Patterns in the elementary, middle, and high school years. *American Educational Research Journal*, 37(1), 153-184.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1989). *Designing qualitative research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Martinez, M. A. (2010). *Traversing literal and figurative borders in South Texas: Mexican American students in college choice*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Research Association, The University of Texas at Austin, TX.
- Maruyama, G., & Deno, S. (1992). *Research in Educational Settings* (Vol. 29). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Mathews, J. (2005). Caveat lector: Unexamined assumptions about quality in higher education. In R. H. Hersh, & J. Merrow (Eds.), *Declining by degrees: Higher education at risk* (pp. 47-60). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Maxwell, J. (1992). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62(3), 279-300.
- McClafferty, K. A., McDonough, P. M., & Nunez, A. M. (2002, April 1-5). What is college culture? Facilitating college preparation through organization change. *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association*, New Orleans, LA.

McClelland, K. (1990, April). Cumulative disadvantage among the highly ambitious.

*Sociology of Education*, 63(2), 102-121.

McDonough, P. M. (1994, July-August). Buying and selling higher education: The social construction of the college applicant. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 65(4), 427-446.

McDonough, P. M. (1997). *Choosing colleges: How social class and schools structure opportunity*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

McDonough, P. M., & Antonio, A. L. (1996). *Ethnic and racial differences in selectivity of college choice*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, NY.

McDonough, P. M., Antonio, A. L., & Horvat, E. M. (1996, November 6). *College choice as capital conversion and investment: A new model*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Memphis, TN.

McDonough, P. M., Antonio, A. L., & Trent, J. W. (1997, January). Black students, Black colleges: An African American college choice model. *Journal for a Just and Caring Education*, 3(1), 9-36.

Mehan, H. (1992, January). Understanding inequity in schools: The contribution of interpretive studies. *Sociology of Education*, 65(1), 1-20.

Mercy, J. A., & Steelman, L. C. (1982, August). Familial influence on the intellectual attainment of children. *American Sociological Review*, 47(4), 532-542.

Merton, R. K., Fiske, M., & Kendall, P. L. (1990). *The focused interview: A manual of problems and procedures* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: The Free Press.

- Mickelson, R. (1990). The attitude-achievement paradox among Black adolescents. *Sociology of Education*, 63(1), 44-61.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Morgan, D. (1998). *The focus group guidebook* (Vol. 1). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Morgan, S. L. (1996, October). Trends in Black-White differences in educational expectations: 1980-92. *Sociology of Education*, 69(4), 308-319.
- Muhammad, C. G. (2008, June). African-American students and college choice: A consideration of the role of school counselors. *NASSP Bulletin*, 92(2), 81-94.
- Neumann, A. (1995). On the marking of hard times and good times: The social construction of resource stress. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 66, 3-31.
- New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety, Division of Consumer Affairs. (2011, April 7). *New Jersey State Board of Cosmetology and Hairstyling*. Retrieved from [www.state.nj.us/lps/ca/cosmetology/cosmoinfo.htm](http://www.state.nj.us/lps/ca/cosmetology/cosmoinfo.htm)
- New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety, Division of Consumer Affairs. (2012, June 6). *The State of New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety, Division of Consumer Affairs*. Retrieved from [www.njconsumeraffairs.gov/nursing/](http://www.njconsumeraffairs.gov/nursing/)
- New Jersey Department of Education. (2005, June 15). *New Jersey Department of Education--Designation of Abbott Districts criteria and process*. Retrieved from <http://www.state.nj.us/education/archive/abbotts/regs/criteria/criteria2.htm>
- New Jersey Department of Education. (2005, October). *Glossary of acronyms and terms*. Retrieved from <http://www.state.nj.us/education/genfo/acronyms.htm>

New Jersey Department of Education. (2008, March 17). *2008 report card data*.

Retrieved from <http://education.state.nj.us/rc>

New Jersey Department of Education. (2008). *West Side 2007-08 school report card*.

Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education.

New Jersey Department of Education. (2009). *State of New Jersey Department of*

*Education Abbott District*. Retrieved from <http://www.nj.gov/education/archive/abbotts/>

New Jersey Department of Education. (2010). *NJ School Report Cards*. Retrieved 2012, from [www.nj.gov/doe](http://www.nj.gov/doe)

Ochs, E., & Copps, L. (2002). *Living narrative: Creating lives in everyday storytelling* (1st ed.). Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.

O'Connor, C. (1999, July). Race, class, and gender in America: Narratives of opportunity among low-income African American youths. *Sociology of Education*, 72(3), 137-157.

Ogbu, J. U. (1974). *The next generation: An ethnography of education in an urban neighborhood*. New York, NY: Academic Press.

Ogbu, J. U. (1981). School ethnography: A multilevel approach. *Anthropology and Education*, 12(1), 3-10.

Ogbu, J. U. (1982). Cultural discontinuities and schooling. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 13(4), 290-307.

Ogbu, J. U. (1987). Variability in minority school performance: A problem in search of an explanation. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 18, 312-334.

- Ogbu, J. U. (2003). *Black American students in an affluent suburb: A study of academic disengagement*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Ogbu, J. U. (2008a). Collective identity and the burden of "acting White" in Black history, community, and education. In J. U. Ogbu (Ed.), *Minority status, oppositional culture, and schooling* (pp. 29-63). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ogbu, J. U. (2008b). Multiple sources of peer pressures among African American students. In J. U. Ogbu (Ed.), *Minority Status, oppositional culture, and schooling* (pp. 89-111). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ogbu, J. U. (2008c). The History and status of a theoretical debate. In J. U. Ogbu (Ed.), *Minority status, oppositional culture, and schooling* (pp. 3-28). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ogbu, J. U. (2008d). Ways of knowing: The ethnographic approach to the study of collective identity and schooling. In J. U. Ogbu (Ed.), *Minority status, oppositional culture, and schooling* (pp. 64-88). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ogbu, J. U., & Simons, H. D. (1994). *Cultural models of school achievement: A quantitative test of Ogbu's theory*. Berkeley, CA: National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.
- Ogbu, J. U., & Simons, H. D. (1998). Voluntary and involuntary minorities: A cultural-ecological theory of school performance with some implications for education. *Anthropology & Education*, 29, 155-188.
- Olneck, M. (2005, Fall). Economic consequences of the academic achievement gap for African Americans. *Marquette Law Review*, 89, 95-104.

- Ostrove, J. M., & Long, S. M. (2007, Summer). Social class and belonging: Implications for college adjustment. *The Review Higher Education*, 30(4), 363-389.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Paulsen, M. P., & St. John, E. P. (2002, March/April). Social class and college cost: examining the financial nexus between college choice and persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 73(2), 189-236.
- Perna, L. W. (2000, March/April). Differences in the decision to attend college among African Americans, Hispanics, and Whites. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 71(2), 117-141.
- Perna, L. W., & Thomas, S. L. (2009, May). Barriers to college opportunity: The unintended consequences of state-mandated testing. *Educational Policy*, 23(3), 451-479. Retrieved from [epx.sagepub.com](http://epx.sagepub.com)
- Perna, L. W., Gerald, D., Baum, E., & Milem, J. (2007, March). The status of equity for Black faculty and administrators in public higher education in the south. *Research in Higher Education*, 48(2), 193 - 218.
- Perna, L. W., Rowan-Kenyon, H., Bell, A., Thomas, S. L., & Li, C. (2008, May/June). A typology of federal and state programs designed to promote college enrollment. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 79(3), 243-267.
- Phelan, P., Davidson, A. L., & Cao, H. T. (1991). Students' multiple worlds: Negotiating the boundaries of family, peer, and school cultures. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 22, 224-250.

- Plank, S. B., & Jordan, W. J. (2001, Winter). Effects of information, guidance, and actions on postsecondary destinations: A study of talent loss. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(4), 947-979.
- Portes, A., & MacLeod, D. (1996, October). Educational progress of children of immigrants: The roles of class, ethnicity, and school context. *Sociology of Education*, 69(4), 255-275.
- Portes, A., & Wilson, K. L. (1976, June). Black-White differences in educational attainment. *American Sociological Review*, 41(3), 414-431.
- Reay, D., Davies, J., David, M., & Ball, S. J. (2001). Choices of degree and degrees of choice? Class, 'race,' and the higher education choice process. *Sociology*, 35(4), 855-874.
- Roscigno, V. J., & Ainsworth-Darnell, J. W. (1999, July). Race, cultural capital, and educational resources: Persistent inequalities and achievement returns. *Sociology of Education*, 72(3), 158-178.
- Rubin, B. (2003). Unpacking detracking: When a progressive pedagogy meets students' social worlds. *American Educational Research Journal*, 40(2), 539-573.
- Sanders, M. G. (1997, Winter). Overcomming obstacles: Academic achievement as a repsonse to racism and discrimination. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 66(1), 83-93.
- Schneider, B., & Stevenson, D. (1999, June 14). The ambition paradox. *Community College Week*, 11(23), p. 4.



- Schneider, C. G. (2006). Liberal Education: Slip-sliding away? In R. H. Hersh, & J. Merrow (Eds.), *Declining by degrees: Higher education at risk* (pp. 61-76). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Schoem, D. (1982). Explaining Jewish student failure. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 13(4), 308-322.
- Schoenfeld, A. H. (1992). On paradigms and methods: What do you do when the ones you know don't do what you want them to? Issues in the analysis of data in the form of videotapes. *The Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 2(2), 179-214.
- Seton Hall University. (2011, January 29). *B.S., Biology, Curriculum, College of Arts and Sciences, Seton Hall University*. Retrieved from [www.shu.edu](http://www.shu.edu):  
<http://www.shu.edu/academics/artsci/bs-biology/curriculum.cfm>
- Sewell, W. H., Haller, A. O., & Ohlendorf, G. W. (1970, December). The educational and early occupational status attainment process: Replication and revision . *American Sociological Review*, 35(6), 1014-1027.
- Smaling, A. (2003). Inductive, analogical, and communicative generalization. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2(1), Article 5.
- Sorenson, A. B., & Hallinan, M. T. (1977, October). A reconceptualization of school effects. *Sociology of Education*, 50, 273-289.
- St. John, E. P., & Noell, J. (1989). The effects of student financial aid on access to higher education: An analysis of progress with special consideration of minority enrollment. *Research in Higher Education*, 30(6), 563-581.

- Staton-Salazar, R. D. (1997, Spring). A social capital framework for understanding the socialization of racial minority children and youths. *Harvard Educational Review*, 67(1), 1-40.
- Steele, C. M. (1997, June). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American Psychologist*, 52(6), 613-629.
- Stiff-Williams, H. R. (2007). The African American achievement gap. In A. P. Rovai, L. B. Gallien Jr., & H. R. Stiff-Williams (Eds.), *Closing the African American achievement gap in higher education* (pp. 1-19). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Stouthamer-Loeber, M., & Bok van Kammen, W. (1995). *Data collection and management: A practical guide* (Vol. 39). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Strauss, A. L. (1987). *Qualitative Analysis For Social Scientists*. Cambridge, UK: The Cambridge University Press.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1994). Grounded theory methodology: An overview. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 273-285). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Suarez-Orozco, C., Pimentel, A., & Martin, M. (2009). The significance of relationships: Academic engagement and achievement among newcomer immigrant youth. *Teachers College Record*, 111(3), 712-749.
- Tierney, W. G. (2002, September). Parents and families in precollege preparation: The lack of connection between research and practice. *Education Policy*, 16(4), 588-606.

- Tierney, W. G., & Hagedorn, L. S. (Eds.). (2002). *Increasing access to college*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Trueba, H. T. (2002). Multiple ethnic, racial, and cultural identities in action: From marginality to a new cultural capital in modern society. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 1*(1), 7-29.
- Tumin, M. M. (1953, August). Some principles of stratification: A critical analysis. *American Sociological Review, 18*(4), 387-394.
- Turner, R. H. (1960, December). Sponsored and contest mobility and the school system. *American Sociological Review, 25*(6), 855-867.
- U.S. Census 2000. (2006). *A half-century of learning: Historical statistics on educational attainment in the United States, 1940 to 2000*. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.
- U. S. Census Bureau. (2008). *New Jersey: Place and county subdivision geographic comparison table 2008 population estimates*. Retrieved from <http://factfinder.census.gov>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). *Educational statistics for 2011*. Washington DC: U.S. Census Bureau.
- U.S. Department of Defense. (2011, February 28). *The ASVAB Fact Sheet*. Arlington County, VA: U.S. Department of Defense.
- U. S. Department of Education. (2004, July 22). *Glossary of terms for No Child Left Behind*. Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/index/az/glossary.html?src=az>
- Velez, W. (1985, July). Finishing college: The effects of college type. *Sociology of Education, 58*(3), 191-200.

- Wadsworth, D. (2005). Ready or not? Where the public stands on higher education reform. In R. H. Hersh, & J. Merrow (Eds.), *Declining by degrees: Higher education at risk* (pp. 23-28). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Walker, D., & Myrick, F. (2007). Grounded theory: An exploration of process and procedure. In A. Bryman (Ed.), *Qualitative research 2* (Vol. 4, pp. 47-62). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Walpole, M. (2003). Socioeconomic status and college: How SES affects college experiences and outcomes. *The Review of Higher Education*, 27(1), 45-73.
- Wang, M. C., Haertel, G. D., & Walberg, H. J. (1993). Toward a knowledge base for school learning. *Review of Educational Research*, 63(3), 249-294.
- Waters, M. C. (1994, Winter). Ethnic and racial identities of second-generation Black immigrants in New York City. *International Migration Review*, 28(4), 795-820.
- Wathington, H. D. (2005). Talking the talk: Rhetoric and reality for students of color. In R. H. Hersh, & J. Merrow (Eds.), *Declining by Degrees* (pp. 185-194). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Yancey, W. L., Ericksen, E. P., & Juliani, R. N. (1976, June). Emergent ethnicity: A review and reformulation. *American Sociological Review*, 41(391-403), 391-403.
- Yell, M. L., & Drasgow, E. (2005). *No Child Left Behind: A guide for professionals*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

**APPENDIX A**

**STUDENT FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

The following are the interview questions that were used by the interviewers in the focus groups:

There are two sections: The first has to do with RPHS and the students' plans after high school. The second has to do RPHS courses and departments that influenced students' decisions.

College Planning Questions:

1. What is it like being an 11th grader here at Rosa Parks High School?
2. What do you see yourself doing after Rosa Parks High School? If it is college, where are you in the process of the college application/search process? If not, what do you see yourself doing (long terms dreams/goals)?
3. How realistic is this plan?
4. Have you always felt that you wanted to go to college? If so, when do you remember knowing that you wanted to go to college? If not, when did you realize that college was not for you?
5. Does your family support you in your decision?
6. Is your decision unique to you, or are your friends planning on doing the same thing as you after Rosa Parks High School?
7. How do your friends feel about your going on to college or going into the workforce? How do other adults feel about your plan?
8. What are you most excited about in going to college?
9. What concerns do you have about going on to college?
10. If college is in your future plans, are you concerned about the money needed for college?

Rosa Parks High School Classes Questions:

1. What classes are you taking currently here at Rosa Parks High School and which are your favorite or least favorite?
2. Are there particular teachers/classes that have influenced you while you have been at Rosa Parks High School?
3. What is your opinion of school in general?
4. What other activities or programs are you involved with in the school or in your community (i.e., sports, church, dance)?
5. According to the administration, there are a lot of opportunities provided for you here at the high school (i.e. free SAT's, college readiness programs, SAT courses, free college applications, college-to-career programs).
  - a. Did you know about these programs and if so how?
  - b. If not, why do you think you never heard about them?
6. What specifically do you do in your classes related to college or life after high school?
7. What is your opinion of guidance at Rosa Parks High School?
8. How often do you meet with your guidance counselor? Do you think this influences your choices regarding school?
9. Whom do you feel most comfortable with at school when discussing college or career plans? How did you gain this feeling of comfort?

## **APPENDIX B**

### **CODEBOOK**





**APPENDIX C**

**FOCUSED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: STUDENTS 1-2 MONTHS PRIOR TO  
GRADUATION**

Interview Protocol Focused Interview: Seniors 1-2 Months Prior to Graduation

1. Plans for after graduation?
  - a. Summer plans/fall plans (work? bridge program?)
2. College (Accepted? When?)
  - a. How did you decide to go there?
  - b. Resident/commuter?
  - c. The application process in detail
3. Family help? Parents' college
4. Friends' plans?
5. Have you had an overall positive or negative year?
6. Most important things that have happened (to you) this spring?
7. Feelings about next year/college?
8. How do you expect things will go?
9. College Application Process
  - a. Applied to how many colleges? When?
  - b. Reasons for picking various colleges to apply to
  - c. SAT
  - d. Application online—who helped?
  - e. Personal Essay Writing
10. Anything nervous about?
11. Classes? Grades—similar to past? AP exams?

12. Overall high-school experience? How do you feel about this being your last year at WS?
13. Would you describe yourself as a good student (why/why not)?
14. How many accepted to?
15. Deposit yet?

**APPENDIX D**  
**COLLEGE DEMOGRAPHICS**

### Who Attends College

In accordance with the profile of undergraduates in United States Postsecondary Education Institutions (2006), fifty-eight percent (58%) of undergraduates attending postsecondary education were women and forty-two percent (42%) were men; however, undergraduates of community colleges were more likely to be women (59%) than those attending four- (4) year institutions. In 2003-2004, sixty-three percent (63%) of all undergraduates were White, while there was fourteen percent (14%) who identified themselves as Black, thirteen percent (13%) who considered themselves Hispanic, five percent (5%) Asian, and less than one percent (1%) who considered themselves as Native American or Pacific Islander. Students in the United States are mostly U.S. citizens with only seven percent (7%) of undergraduates that are not US Citizens. (Profiles of Undergraduates, 2006)(p. 79)

The average age of undergraduates as of December 31, 2008, was twenty-six (26), which is a deviation from the traditional range of eighteen (18) to twenty-two (22) years of age. Only forty seven percent (47%) of undergraduates could be placed in that category. (Profiles of Undergraduates, 2006)(p. 79-80)

Income limitations can be seen in the percentage of undergraduates in the United States who were low income (family income less than \$20,000), where only seven percent (7%) of students attended both less than two-year and more than two-year postsecondary institutions. Students who were married represent over one-fifth of the undergraduate students, while one fourth of undergraduate students had one or more

dependents. Those who attended community colleges were more likely to be single parents than students of four-year institutions. Sixty percent (60%) of students are residents outside of the college campus. Forty-seven percent (47%) of undergraduates had a parent that was awarded a bachelor's degree or higher. (Profiles of Undergraduates, 2006)(p. 80)

On average, undergraduates worked twenty nine (29) hours a week during the school year with one-third of undergraduates reporting that they worked full time, while forty-one percent (41%) reported that they worked part time. Forty-eight (48%) of students identified themselves as working to meet expenses, while only twenty six percent were identified as students. Among United States citizens eighty percent (80%) of undergraduate students were registered to vote while fifty-five percent (55%) reported voting (Profiles of Undergraduates, 2006)(p. 121-122).

Of undergraduate students in 2003-2004, sixty-three percent (63%) of undergraduates received some form of financial aid, averaging \$7400, and one-half of undergraduates received grants. The average undergraduate borrowed \$5800 and received \$4000 in grants. Black undergraduates were more likely than undergraduates of any other racial or ethnic group to receive some type of financial aid (Profiles of Undergraduates, 2006, p. 111).

## APPENDIX E

## NARRATIVES



## **Andrea**

Andrea was born and raised in the city of Milton. After Andrea's mother graduated from high school, she worked as a clerk at one of the local universities. Andrea's parents divorced and her father remarried and had children with his second wife, leaving Andrea to believe that he only wanted his "new family." Andrea had one older sister but would be the first in her family to attend and graduate from college. Andrea's goal was to graduate from college and become a lawyer or involved in law enforcement. Because Andrea always wanted to be a lawyer, she knew she had to attend college. During the end of high school and into her first year at college, she thought about pursuing a field in law enforcement and researched the requirements to apply to the FBI.

Andrea thought of herself as a dedicated high school student who had a great relationship with her guidance counselor and several of her teachers. She felt atypical of Rosa Parks's students because she always knew in what direction she wanted to go. The more typical high school student did not care about his or her education. Andrea spoke extensively with her guidance counselor during the college search and application process and considered him a valued participant in all aspects of her college choice.

Andrea only looked into a few schools, one historically Black college her mother spoke about and the college where her mother worked. Andrea talked with her guidance counselor and mother and decided to apply to only one school; she was accepted into the college where her mother worked and where she would receive subsidized tuition. Andrea made her decision to attend this particular college because of the financial

situation, because she felt she belonged at the school, liked the idea of being close to her family, and because she wanted to be in a diverse environment. Andrea felt she had made the right decision to attend the school where her mother worked because she felt a part of the school from all of the years her mother had brought her to sports events and other college activities.

Financial aid was the main determinant in Andrea's choice. She could not have afforded any college, let alone the costs of the private institution she attends, without financial aid and tuition remission. Andrea borrowed money through the financial aid program so she could pay for room and board, books, and other fees not subsidized. Andrea considered commuting in upcoming years so she would not have to borrow as much money.

Andrea felt high school had left her unprepared for college coursework and the amount of responsibility needed in order to succeed in the college environment and had a difficult time transitioning from high school to college. Andrea had heard there was "no one to hold your hand once you get to college," but until she was in her college classes she did not understand what that meant. In order to succeed in the college environment, she would have to become organized and needed to develop her time-management skills.

She stated that her high school teachers had maintained very low standards and cited several examples of the low-caliber work. In high school, she never wrote more than a three-page paper or worked with the Modern Language Association (MLA) format needed for college level writing assignments. Andrea stated that while in high school she loved math and was often asked by her teacher to tutor other students in the class;

however, when she arrived at college, she was placed into a developmental math class, which she failed and will have to take again.

There were independence adjustments to be made when she moved to a dormitory on campus for her first year. Andrea missed several classes because her mother had been her alarm clock and had kept her on schedule before she started college. She overslept several times and missed classes because she just did not want to get out of bed.

Andrea's current goal is to investigate the major that would best prepare her to for a career at the FBI and possibly continue her education to law school.

### **Cameron**

Cameron emigrated with her parents from "the islands" before she entered the second grade. Cameron is the oldest of three children who lived in a two-parent home, where not going to college was "not an option"; there was no choice but to go to college. Cameron's mother attended post-secondary school outside of the United States and Cameron has several aunts and uncles from both sides of her family that attended college. Cameron's mother worked for an elder care center and her father, a former musician, was displaced from his work in a factory.

Cameron attended the ninth grade academy at Rosa Parks High School and was placed into the regular track academic coursework but began honor track classes when she attended tenth grade. Cameron did not recall anyone talking with her about her academic track or asking if she wanted to participate in the honors program and was surprised when she received her class schedule. Because of the placement in honors classes, she changed her attitude toward school and focused on her classes, stating that "You have to be more focused and more driven to do what you need to do" (Cameron,

2010, p. 6). She described the honors classes as having had fewer students, dedicated teachers, and a higher level of work than regular track classes. Cameron reiterated how she felt that teachers, students, and guidance counselors viewed the students who participated in advanced classes as better. She saw that administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, and staff members treated some students unfairly while certain students were favored and received more attention and assistance.

Cameron was not involved in any extracurricular activities in her sophomore year due to family commitments; however, she was very involved in extracurricular activities in her junior and senior years and described herself as very motivated. She described something inside of her that drove her to succeed and made her upset with herself when she failed.

Throughout high school, she surrounded herself with individuals she viewed as "important" such as teachers, guidance counselors, parents, and friends and stated, "I could have made a bad decision and I wouldn't have ended up here, I know that for sure" (Cameron, 2010). Cameron was a student who was friendly to everyone but selected her friends with extreme care and distanced herself from several people because she "did not want to get caught up in their decisions."

Cameron voluntarily attended extra classes to prepare for the HSPA almost every day and passed the HSPA on her first attempt. Cameron also prepared for the SAT test during her junior year by completing a course on several Saturdays. She sat for the SAT test twice and self-reported a score of 1350. Cameron stated that there was a lot of support from family members and staff members at Rosa Parks High School, but it was

her responsibility to secure the resources to prepare her during the college search and application process.

Cameron's senior year was hectic and consisted of three Advanced Placement (AP) classes and many extracurricular activities. Her viewpoint on high school was "With me, school is very important; when it comes to [school], I don't play around. It's either A's or B's or I try harder. Some people just don't get that or they just don't care and they're not motivated by it, by parents, or by themselves" (p. 19).

She began the search and application process in November of her senior year and applied to ten schools, one historically Black college or university (HBCU), three New Jersey State colleges or universities, four private colleges, and two state schools located outside of New Jersey. At first, Cameron said she was not rejected by any college, yet when re-questioned she stated that she did not finish all of her applications because after she received notification of acceptance into the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) of her first-choice school, she discontinued any other applications.

Cameron paid tuition with the assistance of the EOP program and the school's financial aid package. Her college's EOP summer program lasted over most of the summer before classes began, and the remainder of the summer she worked in a large retail store. Cameron felt that the summer program had a very positive impact on her transition from high school to college. She described the summer program as a mixture of classes on subject content, time management, study skills, preparation for what college would "be like," and how to approach the professors and her classes.

Cameron did not receive any credit from her high school Advanced Placement classes and was unconcerned that she would have to retake coursework. In the fall of her

first year, Cameron had no say in choosing her classes and was unhappy that her classes were all at night. Although Cameron wanted to major in biology and pursue a career in the health sciences, her two semesters' coursework had not contained any science or college-level math courses.

Cameron's goals are to complete her degree and to attend medical school where she wishes to pursue a career as a pediatrician.

### **Charlene**

Charlene has lived with her mother and younger brother throughout her life. Her mother, a high school graduate, worked two jobs in order to provide for Charlene and her younger sibling. Charlene rarely sees her mother and does not know her father. Charlene repeatedly described herself as "not a school person" and did not want to continue with her education. At the end of high school, Charlene decided to take a year off from school with her mother's support on the condition that Charlene would attend college next year. Charlene wanted to take the year off to work and sleep. Charlene's household responsibility included contributing fifty dollars per week towards the household expenses; however, Charlene had been unemployed since her graduation and had not contributed to the household or her living expenses.

In the spring of her junior year, Charlene had a duality of feelings for continuing her education. While she recognized the need of continuing her education to reach her career goals, she disliked school. She feared going to college and failing because she lacked interest in attending school and completing any other coursework.

Charlene had wanted to major in early child education and possibly own her own day care center. During her junior and first months of her senior year, Charlene

participated in a work readiness program that led to an internship at a child care center. The program also counseled the students on interview skills, college readiness, and job readiness. Charlene found the program very interesting, and it helped her focus on what skills she needed to get a job.

After Charlene passed both the Language Arts and Math sections of the HSPA, her focus dropped, which she blamed on a drop in the level of teaching at Rosa Parks High. Charlene did not take the SAT test, did not try to find any information about colleges, and did not research any financial aid programs. Charlene relied on her mother to fill out her financial aid paperwork, but she did not fill out the forms completely.

Charlene knew that college information was accessible in the guidance office but elected not to see her guidance counselor. She felt the guidance counselors did not guide the students and just helped them with their schedules. Her friends did not talk about future plans or going to college.

After graduation, Charlene temporarily worked at a retail store but was fired. She has looked for another job in retail, often spent hours a day looking for jobs on the internet. Since high school, she has searched for jobs, watched a lot of television, and wants to be out in the world with a job in a big company or a larger retail store.

Charlene's goals are to start school in September and eventually own her own day care center. She is unsure what college she would apply to because her family is moving in the next few months and she plans on attending the local community college. Charlene's backup plan was to become a teacher or a veterinarian. Charlene outlined several pathways, several of which were dependent on where she and her family moved.

One plan was to find out the licensing procedure to open a day care center and begin to complete any requirements needed to open a day care center.

Charlene's goal was to attend college and find a job where she works no more than thirty hours a week because she does not want to tire herself out, ideally she would like to work for five, five-hour days.

### **Christina**

Christina lived with her parents and three other siblings but wanted to buy a townhome within the next year. Christina's mother worked at a large retail store, and her father worked as a bus driver. She is the oldest of four children, and has three siblings: a sister one year younger, a sister three years younger, and a brother seven years younger. She described herself as a very dedicated individual, tending to focus on one thing at a time, and achieves goals when she puts her mind to it. Christina was unsure about possible education and career paths because she had many interests in education, modeling, fashion, and design. One of her main influences was her best friend, who mapped out a plan to attend college, start a day care center, and purchase a townhouse within the next few years.

In her senior year, Christina thought that she was on track and was set to graduate in June because although she failed the HSPA, she had completed her SRA. Christina described herself as a good student who mostly obtained A's and B's and felt that she was a good student because she did the best she could, was on time for class, followed directions, respected others, and got good grades. Christina had debated whether to go to college right after high school or take a year off and her mother advised her that she was not ready for college.



After Christina graduated, she wanted to find a job and go to college. She planned to start at the local community college or at one of the local private institutions in the fall of 2010 and major in something that would prepare her for teaching younger children. Christina planned to apply to both schools over the summer and started to complete their applications. She chose the two schools because she had "known something about them." The local community college was the college her mother attended and she had driven past the local private college when she was in the car with her aunt. Christina's mother wanted her to complete her two-year degree at the local community college and transfer into a four-year school to complete her degree. Christina felt she would make a good college student because college would be like normal school and planned to try to maintain her current job at a daycare center part time and enroll in college part time.

When we spoke to Christina in early 2010, she explained that she did not graduate with her class because she had not completed her math and English SRA, and had to go to summer school in order to receive her diploma. She felt sad and was very disappointed in herself that she did not graduate on time and that she did not get to walk with her friends. Christina attempted repeatedly to complete the required work and although she went to the designated area in order to complete her SRA work, the person that was in charge of moderating the student's work repeatedly turned her away.

Christina lost her position at the daycare center where she had volunteered because she did not meet the age requirement of twenty-one, a fact found out only after she graduated. After graduation, her focus was on getting a job. Christina still lived with her family one year post-graduation and worked at two retail stores almost every day

because she needed the money to support herself and her family. School was on her mind, and her aunt, pastor, and several friends pushed her to start school. She hoped to quit one of the jobs and attend school in the fall.

Her plans were to go to a county college for something that would prepare her to buy a day care center or teach, buy a home, and start a business. She stated that her best friend had things planned out in a very detailed manner, and they were going to go to school together, move out together, and start a business together.

### **Eva**

Eva was originally from another metropolitan school in New Jersey and lived with her father and stepmother. She was the youngest of five children, of which one sister and one brother attended some college. In the 11th grade Eva wanted to join a dance company or go to college and major in dance and psychology. She named several schools she thought of applying to; however, she was unsure about college because she worried about money and tests. Eva described infrequent visits to her guidance counselor and felt that guidance picked certain students who had advantages in attending events or participating in programs. She tried several times to approach her guidance counselor, but she could never seem to catch him and had not ever made an appointment. She stated that she does not like teachers who are negative and felt that some teachers thought that because they were from Rosa Parks High School, they would not be able to succeed. In one of the only conversations with her guidance counselor, she was told to try to stay in the top 10% of her class because of the privileges that came with achievement. In her junior year, Eva found out that she had failed the math HSPA and had to complete her math SRA in her senior year.

While in high school, Eva was very concerned about how she would pay for college and manage all of the stresses involved in working, going to school, research papers, outside-of-school activities, and her career and thought of attending community college to reduce the costs of college.

Eva participated in a college preparation program and felt the program influenced her college search and application process because it gave the students detailed instructions on how to apply to school. The program was after school, some weekends, and a portion of the summer. Eva stated that at one program event she walked on the campus of a college and felt like a real college student. The college preparation program encouraged each student to compile a list of schools to look at and provided access to computers to find information about each of the institutions. The program also provided fee-waiver forms so students could apply to the schools without financial restriction. Eva's guidance counselor was also involved in preparing and mailing her applications and made her feel as if she did not have to do everything on her own.

Eva's school rank was in the top 10% of her class and she qualified to participate in the New Jersey Star Student Program (NJ Stars). In the NJ Stars program, students ranked in the top 10% of their graduating class receive free tuition to any New Jersey community college for 5 semesters. If the student graduates from the community college with a 3.2 GPA, he or she receives free tuition to any of New Jersey State's public colleges or universities. In her senior year of high school, Eva applied to two in-state public institutions, one in state private institution, one out of state public institution, one out-of-state private institution, and one community college; and when she did not receive any acceptance or rejection notifications by March, she began to feel anxious.

Eva's dance instructor was a mentor to her and began to talk to her about college when she entered high school and tried to persuade her to attend school out of the area and away from her family. This college-talk progressed and Eva felt pressured to attend an out-of-state school and became stressed and overwhelmed. Eva felt so stressed and overwhelmed that she stopped communications with everyone for several months because she needed space in order to think and make a decision that she would be happy with. Although there was still time to receive acceptance notices when Eva received notification of acceptance into the NJ Stars program, she accepted the offer and made her decision to attend the local community college. Eva had not felt ready to leave her home and her family and decided to stay at home and attend a community college under the NJ Stars program. She felt that if she had attended school out of state and away from her family, she would end up stressed and unable to cope in her new situation.

Once she made the decision, she felt a sense of relief and was finally able to relax. Eva felt that from a financial and personal standpoint she had decided what was best for her at the time. Over the summer, Eva took a remedial math class and she felt calmer once she had completed it because she had difficulty throughout high school.

Eva felt that in college, the professors really made the difference between hard or good classes. Some professors were really hard and made class harder than needed while others were clear and stated exactly what they expected. She began college extremely self-motivated and wanted to do well on her own without depending on her father monitoring her schoolwork.

Eva described transition issues from high school into college such as how much one test counted for toward a final grade and how teachers do not baby the students.

College expectations were in line with her expectations, but the entire way that professors went about teaching and students went about learning was different from what she had experienced in high school. Professors do not tolerate late work, do not spoon feed the students and allow the students their independence.

Eva's goal is to complete five semesters at community college, obtain her degree in psychology at a four-year school, attend graduate school, become a social worker, and help teens and people in need. Eva describes herself as a hard worker focused on her educational goals and serious about obtaining her degree. She wants to help people because she witnessed friends and family members going through pain. In the future, she would also like to teach dance, own a club, own a school, or join a dance company.

### **Lara**

Lara was evasive about her family even after I approached the subject several times. Lara had not lived with her biological parents for several years; at one point she lived with an Aunt, and then her sister acted as her legal guardian until she reached the age of majority several months after she graduated from Rosa Parks High School. Lara's older sister and prior legal guardian, a cab driver, was also guardian to Lara's younger brother, who attended Rosa Parks High School. Lara considered her brother a positive influence because they supported and encouraged each other. Lara's sister had dropped out of high school and felt she could not advise Lara because she did not finish high school herself. Lara's other siblings are significantly older and they do not keep in touch.

In her junior year of high school, Lara wanted to pursue a voice or drama education and career. Lara described herself as passionate about the arts. She took drama and voice classes every year and often skipped her academic classes to go to the

music or drama room. In her senior year, she signed up for Advanced Placement English but dropped the course and instead took honors English. Lara described herself as a good student but admitted later that she had not always attended class, nor had she always handed in completed work. She felt what made her a good student was her participation in many extracurricular clubs; she assisted in after-school activities and had been willing to assist her teachers whenever needed. Although Lara felt that the school adequately prepared her to take the HSPA, she failed the math section of the test. The school encouraged her to complete her SRA to ensure her graduation prior to her retake of the test. Lara felt her senior year was the best of her years at Rosa Parks, was excited about graduation, and had practiced with the music department in preparation for the commencement ceremony.

In May of 2009, Lara had detailed plans after graduation to enlist in the Air Force when she turned eighteen, have adventures, and then go to college and obtain a high paying job. Her uncle, who had previously been in the Air Force, inspired her to enlist. Lara planned to take the ASVAB test, and her next step was going to the library to check out books that would give information on test content and format. If she failed or did not do well, she could take the test as many times as she wanted.

Lara felt nervous, excited, and in control as she prepared to graduate and felt prepared for the air force testing because they only required basic math and English. Lara enjoyed music and had worked with a vocal teacher to record a demo CD. After college, she planned to do something in visual arts, music, or acting.

A few weeks before graduation Lara found she had not met the graduation requirements and was unable to participate in any of the graduation activities, including

the prom and the commencement ceremonies even though she finished all of the requirements in time and should have been permitted to graduate.

When we met with Lara one year after her completion of high school, she lived with her best friend and his mother. Her best friend was a senior at Rosa Parks High School, and her best friend's mother worked in one of the education departments, performing clerical work. She spoke to her family and felt everything was "cool."

After Lara graduated, she described being in a state of limbo and passed time by hanging out with friends and watched a lot of television. One night, while watching television, she viewed an ad for for-profit training institutions and later enrolled to obtain a certificate in the medical care field. Lara financed her education through loans and, if not for school personnel, she would not have completed her financial aid forms because she felt the paperwork was so confusing she would be unable to file them herself.

In the cardiac technician program she has had the same classmates, appreciated how everyone looked out for one another, and offered help whenever she needed it. Lara, who missed class so often in high school, met with her classmates every Friday to study together at the library. I asked if she would consider any of them her mentors and she stated that she would consider all of them her mentors.

Lara's friends cannot believe how dedicated she is toward her schooling and training. Her goals are to finish her certificate program and pursue an education in the fine arts at some point.

### **Linda**

Linda is originally from one of the boroughs in New York and lived with her mother and sister until age 11, when her mother passed away. Because Linda's father

was incarcerated when her mother died, she lived with her maternal aunt who, Linda reports, did not treat her well. Later she moved to a paternal aunt's house. Linda changed school districts four times between junior high and high school and felt like an outsider in her aunts' homes. She felt mistreated and that her aunts used her only to get benefits from the state while she sometimes did not have enough food to eat or clothes that fit.

Linda's mother obtained an associate's degree and stressed education. Linda's sister had attended some college but discontinued when she became pregnant.

In 2006, during her sophomore year of high school, her sister became legal guardian until several months ago when Linda turned 18 and moved to New Jersey. In addition to her sister, Linda lived with her sister's fiancé, a cousin displaced by hurricane Katrina, and her three nephews. Her sister was trained as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) but had been working as a school crossing guard. Her sister planned to go back to school to become a registered nurse in the fall of 2010. Linda often helped in caring for her three young nephews and a goddaughter.

Before she transferred to Rosa Parks High School, Linda was an A or B student. When she moved to Rosa Parks High School, she heard horrible things about the school and one of the security guards warned her of the negativity surrounding the school. At first, she stayed to herself and was slow to make friends. Once she began to have a crowd of friends, she hung out with her friends in the hallway "doing stuff." Her grades went down until her sister found out and told her to concentrate on her work.



In the 11th grade, Linda desired to pursue a major in business finance and wanted to go to a college away from home that offered a computer science program. In her senior year, Linda changed her mind and decided to pursue a career in nursing.

Linda's senior year was very relaxed because she completed most of her requirements and needed to finish English 4, make up gym classes, and complete her math SRA to satisfy the HSPA test. She felt her grades "could be better" and received mostly Bs and Cs at Rosa Parks High School and A's and B's in her last high school. Linda felt the atmosphere in her last school was different and that Rosa Parks was a lazy environment. She describes herself as a good student who got distracted very easily. In her junior year, after Rosa Parks changed the policy to allow students to attend half days in their senior year, the guidance department signed her up for electives that she was not interested in along with her one required English course. She felt she was wasting her time in classes that she had not wanted to be in and often did not go to her elective classes. She barely attended one of her elective courses, did not participate when she showed up, and still received a D. Linda felt school prepared for the HSPA and was proud when she passed the Language Arts section of the HSPA the first try, but failed the math portion three times and needed to complete her SRA for math. Linda thought herself a good student because she completed all of the needed requirements for graduation.

At one point in her senior year, the administration called all of the students who had not completed all of the needed graduation requirements; there were only 100 students who had completed their graduation requirements. Linda knew many students who did not graduate because they had procrastinated too long and always thought they

had more time. She was proud to walk at graduation and to have participated in the graduation ceremony. Ultimately, she felt that she was the same type of person as the other students at RPHS because they had grown up together, yet atypical because she realized she needed to think about her life and career.

Linda took her education and career preparation seriously, knowing she needed an education to become independent and take care of herself. She felt most of her high school classmates thought of their lives as playgrounds and had not realized that after high school they would be on their own. She felt that graduating from high school was one of her biggest accomplishments, second only to when she graduated college and felt sad that her mother was not able to see her graduate. Linda dreamed what it would be like to graduate from high school and felt it was like getting married because she received all of the attention. Linda was one of the first in her family to earn her diploma and described in detail her graduation and the family celebration afterward. The way she spoke reminded me of how women speak about their wedding days, telling us about what she wore and how she felt.

After graduation, Linda spent the summer enjoying her time off, relaxing, and watching television. Linda worked at several jobs in the food services industry, but she was fired after some conflicts with the manager. Linda had loved working in the food services industry because she felt a comradeship and family atmosphere. Linda also worked in a retail store, but she did not like the environment and she quit and applied for a civil service job which would start in a few weeks.

Linda applied to various community colleges and had even registered for fall coursework, but due to several financial aid issues and some confusion about whose

financial information should be included in her paperwork, Linda was unable to begin school the fall after her graduation. Linda applied to two community colleges not local to her because she wanted a change in environment and considered the nursing programs at one college but was worried about the travel time associated because she would be relying on public transportation. She was a good student who was distracted easily, needed a new atmosphere, and wanted to get away. Several months after she graduated, she decided she could not be a nurse because of being squeamish about blood and decided to try to find a program in business management.

Linda ran into one of her teachers who told her that she should be in school because she had so much potential. That statement stuck in Linda's mind and she went home and was thinking about several possible institutions and choices that she could make.

Linda's educational goals were to attend a for-profit institution that she received an informational card from and receive an associate's degree in business administration. Linda contacted the school and was told by a counselor that she qualified for a scholarship and that a financial aid specialist would fill out her financial aid paperwork with her.

### **Mary**

Mary lived with her mother, father, and three siblings. In her junior year Mary wanted to go to college and pursue a career in acting and filmmaking at an out-of-state university. Mary had seen the university's representative at a college fair and from the brochure felt the school was right for her. Mary's most influential teachers were a math teacher and an English teacher who were very attentive. Mary failed the HSPA

Language Arts and Math portions and completed the SRA to graduate from high school. At Rosa Parks High School, the staff felt that it was the students' responsibility to go in search of information for college. Mary stressed several times over the course of our interview that it was only because she kept on top of her counselors that she made it to graduation.

Mary's statements at times were somewhat inconsistent and at times very hard to comprehend. Mary stated since last year she had applied to five post-secondary institutions including two state schools in New Jersey, one community college, and two private universities.

She seemed very confused by the search and application process, but we were able to ascertain through questioning several facts. While in high school Mary applied to two state schools and one private college, and post-graduation she applied to one private university and one community college. In her senior year she was accepted into one state college's EOP program, one state college had rejected her, the community college had accepted her, and she did not complete one application to a private school because there were too many questions.

When we spoke to Mary approximately one year after graduation, she was attending the community college but was trying to transfer to a private institution because of several issues with the community college. The first issue was that she felt forced to take non-credit remedial classes where she received zero for a course that meant nothing and was a waste of her time. Secondly, Mary had financial concerns over the cost of education and had not realized the costs of college beyond the per credit fees. Mary was surprised at how expensive the course materials were and did not realize that some

classes would have more than one book, or even several books. Mary could not afford her books and attended classes without having purchased any books. In one reading class she googled the assigned story and printed out an on-line version. In one of her other courses, Mary grew angry at the “nerve” of the teacher to give her a C- in the class and was very frustrated that two of her peers had dropped the class when they had owned the books.

Mary’s plan was to transfer to a private college and pursue an education that would lead to a career in journalism.

### **Necie**

Necie is an only child whose mother died when she was 8 years old. Her parents were immigrants and relocated to America before Necie can remember. Necie did not know her father. Before she passed away, Necie’s mother said she should attend college because no other women in their family had done so.

After her mother passed away, her uncle acted as her legal guardian; however, for the last five years she had lived with her maternal cousin, his wife, and their three children. Necie’s cousin worked in the food services industry, and his wife was a nurse at an elder-care center.

Necie felt she was an atypical Rosa Park’s student because she just wanted to graduate on time, which was the opposite of her friends in Rosa Parks. A lot her friends did only what was necessary to graduate or transferred to the night school program. Others did not graduate on time or did not graduate.

Necie’s original educational and career goals were to finish college and continue on to medical school but she decided that medical school would take too long. She later

decided she was interested in law or psychology. Necie passed the HSPA for language arts and completed the math SRA in the spring before she graduated. She took the SAT test twice, once in junior year and once in her senior year. Necie began her college search and application process in April of her senior year and applied to three state schools located in New Jersey, two private schools located in New Jersey, and one HBCU. Her guidance counselor helped her prepare her college applications and encouraged Necie to apply to the EOF program.

The summer after graduation, Necie attended her college's EOF program for five weeks and tried to find a part-time job in a retail store. Necie's first year at school disappointed her and she wanted to transfer to another school if she could maintain her EOF status. Necie had many problems completing her financial aid form because of her complicated guardian situation. She turned over her financial and guardianship records to her institution so that one of the financial aid persons could fill out all of the paperwork. Because no one has told her to fill out her own financial aid forms, she does not know how to complete the paperwork and is dependent on the school for her financial aid.

Her college plans are to improve her GPA and explore a possible career as a child psychologist or social work. During weekdays, she did not have much time for activities other than school. She completed 16 credits in the fall and 17 credits in the spring including several basic skills classes. Necie thought the courses were small, the teachers helpful, and utilized free tutoring made available to her by the school, especially in math.

The transition from high school to college was a challenge. Necie described high school as very noisy and college very quiet. The college atmosphere made it easier to

focus, but she could not believe the amount of work involved for each of her classes. She had so much work she worked over the weekends, while in high school she completed all of her work during her classes. She felt unprepared for the rigors of college work and suggested Rosa Parks' teachers should raise their expectations higher. She was surprised at how many hours of reading outside of class were required for her college English class and thought her biology class was "ridiculous" because of the amount of work needed for the course. In her biology class, she really struggled until she asked some girls that were doing well if they would help her. Necie knew that because she was in the EOF program, she had to maintain a certain GPA and needed to ask for extra help in her studies because she wanted to meet the high expectations of her college professors.

Necie was unhappy at the college even though she had just described the courses, services, teachers, and advisers in a very positive light. She felt very isolated at school and the school's geographical location made her feel "left in the middle of nowhere."

## **APPENDIX F**

### **FOCUS GROUP GUIDING QUESTIONS**



### Focus Group Guiding Questions/Topics To Be Discussed

1. How is it being an 11th-grader at WS?
2. What do they see themselves doing after graduating?
3. All said that family supported their plans. Other adults?
4. Guidance/Adults at school?
5. Friends' support?
6. How realistic are their plans?
7. Would you say that you are a typical student here?
8. What classes are you taking? Likes? Dislikes? Teachers?
9. Typical day
10. Homework
11. What in classes has relevance to the future/is helping to plan?
12. What is your opinion of guidance at WSHS?
13. How often do you meet with your guidance counselor?
14. Whom do you feel most comfortable with at school when discussing college or career plans?

**APPENDIX G**

**CONTACT INFORMATION SHEET**

## Contact Sheet

Interviewer:\_\_\_\_\_ Subject\_\_\_\_\_

Number/ID:\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Contact:\_\_\_\_\_

Name of parent/guardian (under 18)\_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to

Contact\_\_\_\_\_

Street Address:\_\_\_\_\_

Apt: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State:\_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone 2: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Facebook: \_\_\_\_\_

Changes to Contact

Info record here

Notes:

---

---



## **APPENDIX H**

### **FOCUSED INTERVIEWS: STUDENTS' POST-GRADUATE INTERVIEWS**

## Post Graduate WSHS Interview Questions

Winter 2009-2010

### Original WSHS Research Questions

1. What academic paths can students pursue through the high school? To what extent do those paths prepare them for college?
2. What are the formal college counseling opportunities available to students?
3. What are the informal college counseling opportunities available to students?
4. To what extent do students at WS participate in a “college-going culture”—whether at home, with peers, in school, or beyond school?
5. What are students’ educational and career goals/aspirations? How do they develop as they advance through high school?
6. How do students approach school/classes/coursework?

### Current Research Questions

1. What paths do these students take after high-school graduation?
2. What has shaped students’ decisions to attend/not attend college? (or decision to continue)

### Current Research Questions regarding College Attendees:

1. What are these students’ current educational/career goals? Have they changed since HS? Who/what have been the biggest influences on these goals?
2. How did they navigate the college search/admissions/enrollment process?
3. Who helped? (family: what kind of assistance did they get from WS staff?)
4. How do they describe their first-semester college experience? How does it compare to their prior expectations?

5. What is their level of engagement/interest in their college courses?

Current Research Questions regarding Non Attendees:

1. What accounts for their non-attendance (given their intent to attend as of 11th grade)?
2. When did they change their minds? Did they apply to any colleges/get in? Is this simply a delay, or decision NOT to go at all?
3. If delay: when might they attend? Where? Who will help them apply, etc?
4. If decide no: when/why did they make this decision/what & who influenced the decision?

Interview Questions

1. What have you been doing since graduating in June? (work, school, family, other)
2. What is your current schedule? (school, work, family, other)
3. Where are you living?
4. What do other adults in the family do?
5. Siblings? What do older siblings do? Do you have to take care of younger ones?
6. Take me through a typical weekday (work, college courses, extra-curricular, social, family)
7. Typical Saturday/Sunday?

Future College

1. Why is college a future goal?
2. Do you have a specific educational/career path in mind?
3. What are the specific steps you need to take to reach that goal?

4. What/who has influenced these goals? (Who of your family/friends have gone/go to college, have similar career goals?)
5. Since when have you had this plan? How have your plans changed since HS?
6. Back-up plan/if you had to do something else, what would it be?
7. Do you have a specific college in mind? Why this college?
8. Where are you in the application process (SAT? have the application? Personal statement?)
9. Do you feel “ready” for college? Why the delay?
10. Do you have any concerns about applying/attending (paying?)

#### Prior School Experience

1. Did you graduate? When? Go to graduation? Did parents/family go? Did you celebrate graduation?
2. What classes did you take in senior year of high school? How would you describe your academic experience in high school? Specifics about different classes— favorite/least favorite?
3. Did you have any teachers who really made a difference/who you admired/meant a lot to you?
4. How did you do? Grade-wise? Would you describe yourself as a good student? How did you approach your work in class/outside of class? What kind of assignments did you do?
5. Did you participate in extracurricular activities or work during high school?
6. What did you get out of high school? What is the value of going to school? (HS/college) Do you think HS prepared you to go to college?



7. What were the most significant things that happened to you in HS?
8. If you could change your HS experience, how would you change it?

**JOB HOLDER:**

1. Where do you work? How many hours per week?
2. Do you keep all the \$ you make?
3. How do you like it? What do you do there? Is this something you want to pursue in the future?
4. What have you learned (about yourself?) by working there? What have you learned about work?

**Social Life/Social Supports**

1. How do you spend your time when you are not working?
2. Friends—new/from HS?
3. Role of family in your life? Other adults who are important to you?

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. What have you been doing since graduating in June? (work, school, family, other)
2. What is your current schedule? (school, work, family, other)
3. Where are you living?
4. What do other adults in the family do?
5. Siblings? What do older siblings do? Do you have to take care of younger ones?
6. Take me through a typical weekday (work, college courses, extra-curricular, social, family)
7. Typical Saturday/Sunday?

## **COLLEGE GOERS:**

1. What college?
2. How/when did you first hear of this college?
3. How did you decide upon that college?
4. What/who were the biggest influences on this path/decision? (Who of your family/friends have gone/go to college?)

### **Search/Application/Matriculation Process**

1. When did you apply/get in/enroll?
2. Did you apply/get in to any other colleges? If so, how did you choose?
3. Tell me about the admissions process (SAT, personal statement, app, recs)
4. Who helped you with this process (family? WSHS staff?)
5. How are you paying for college?

### **College goals**

1. Degree/program/major?
2. Long-term educational/career goals?
3. How/when did you develop these goals/plans? (Have they changed since HS?)
4. Who in your life supports these goals? Who doesn't?

### **General assessment of college experience**

1. How is/did the semester go?
2. Is college what you expected? Why/why not?
3. Overall opinion—how worthwhile are your courses?
4. Will you continue taking classes next semester? If so, what will you take?

### **Course Taking/Level of Academic Engagement**

1. Take me through each course: what are you taking? How did you choose them?
2. How are you doing? Do you like them? What are you getting out of them?
3. What are your goals/expectations for yourself in each course?
4. How are these college courses different from high school? (teachers and expectations)
5. Are you approaching college differently than you approached hs?

#### Transition Issues

1. College experience vs. high school
2. Do you feel like your HS experience prepared you for college? How/How not?
3. Registration process? Did you attend an orientation? Have you met with an advisor?
4. How often? How helpful has that been?
5. What do you wish you knew in hs about college?

#### Social life/Social Supports

1. How do you spend your time when you are not (a) working (b) going to class?
2. Friends—new/from HS?
3. Role of family in your life? Other adults who are important to you?

**APPENDIX I**  
**SUBJECT STUDENTS: DETAILED DESCRIPTION**

### **Student Focus Group Detailed Descriptions**

Focus Group A: Focus Group A consisted of five (5) female students: Natalie, Taisha, Jaleesa, Michaela, and Francelle, who were interviewed in March of 2008.

Focus Group B: Focus Group B consisted of five (5) students, three (3) males and two (2) girls: Jackson, Cory, Aaron, Necie, and Aubrey, who were interviewed in March of 2008.

Focus Group C: Focus Group C consisted of three (3) girls: Samara, Cayla, and Karina, who were interviewed in May of 2008.

Focus Group D: Focus Group D consisted of two (2) girls Eva and Charlene, and one (1) boy Vincent, who were interviewed in May of 2008

Focus Group E: Focus Group E consisted of two (2) girls Linda and Denise, who were interviewed in May of 2008.

Focus Group F: Focus Group F consisted of five (5) girls and two (2) boys: Marcia, Emma, Charlie, John, Anna, William, Nathaniel, and Amy, who were interviewed in May 2008

Focus Group G: Focus Group G consisted of five (5) girls and one (1) boy; no names were recorded by the interviewer. It was later deduced that Lara, Cameron, Karen, and Christina were members of Focus Group G.

Focus Group H: Focus Group "H" consisted of five (5) girls and (1) boy: Dominique, Joann, Andrea, Mary, Lenny, and Bella. There were also three (3) other students who were in attendance but did not participate in any of the discussions.

### **Pre-graduations Interviews**

Senior Interview 1: Christina was interviewed as a twelfth-grade student in May of 2009 and was originally interviewed as part of Focus Group G.

Senior Interview 2: Lara was interviewed as a twelfth-grade student in May of 2009 and was originally interviewed as part of Focus Group G.

Senior Interview 3: Francelle was interviewed as a twelfth-grade student in May of 2009 and was originally interviewed as part of Focus Group A.

Senior Interview 4 and 5: Cameron and Karen were interviewed as twelfth-grade students in May of 2009 and were originally interviewed as part of Focus Group G.

Senior Interview 6: Linda was interviewed as a twelfth grade-student in May of 2009 and was originally interviewed as part of Focus Group E.

Senior Interview 7: Michaela was interviewed as a twelfth-grade student in June of 2009 and was originally interviewed as part of Focus Group A.

## **Graduates from the Class of 2009**

Post-Graduate Interview 1: Necie was first interviewed as part of Focus Group B, was not interviewed as a senior in high school, and then interviewed in June of 2010.

Post Graduate Interview 2: Eva was first interviewed as part of Focus Group D, was not interviewed as a senior in high school, and then interviewed in January of 2010.

Post Graduate Interview 3: Charlene was first interviewed as part of Focus Group D, was not interviewed as a senior in high school, and then interviewed in March of 2010.

Post Graduate Interview 4: Linda was first interviewed as part of Focus Group E, was interviewed in May of her senior year in high school, and then interviewed in May of 2010.

Post Graduate Interview 5: Lara was first interviewed as part of Focus Group G, was interviewed in May of her senior year in high school, and then interviewed in June of 2010.

Post Graduate Interview 6: Cameron was first interviewed as part of Focus Group G, was interviewed in May of her senior year in high school, and then interviewed in March of 2010.

Post Graduate Interview 7: Christina was first interviewed as part of Focus Group G, was interviewed in May of her senior year in high school, and then interviewed in February of 2010.

Post Graduate Interview 8: Andrea was first interviewed as part of Focus Group H, was not interviewed as a senior in high school, and then interviewed in June of 2010.

Post Graduate Interview 9: Mary was first interviewed as part of Focus Group H, was not interviewed as a senior in high school, and then interviewed in July of 2010.



**APPENDIX J:**  
**DEFINITION OF TERMS**

## Definition of Terms

Abbott School District - refers to each of the 28 urban school districts that were litigants in *Raymond Abbott v. Fred G. Burke* decided by the New Jersey Supreme Court on June 5, 1990 (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2005)

Abstract Attitudes - attitudes based on dominant ideology (Mickelson, 1990)

Academic Cultural Symbols - symbols relating to the culture of education shape the ways in which families organized their thoughts about college-going realities; e.g., college rings, caps and gowns, prom, any symbolic marker commercials, football games

Acting White - see the burden of acting white

African-American Achievement Gap – is the observed difference in academic achievement between Blacks and Whites and is present before children begin school, throughout their K-12 experiences, and continues in institutions of higher education (Stiff-Williams, 2007), a contemporary expression used to refer to the differences in the academic performance of sub-populations of students (Stiff-Williams, 2007)

Ambition Index – combined educational, occupational, and material aspirations (Boyle, 1966)

Articulation – Students should have a seamless experience where a college message is communicated from kindergarten to 12th grade. As such, there must be ongoing communication between counselors and teaching staff among all schools in a feeder group. Work being done at each school site should be coordinated with activities at other levels (McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002).

Aspirations - the education that students hope to achieve (Hanson, 1994); wishes or desires expressing an individual's hopes about the future (Chapman, 1981)

Attitude/achievement paradox – the paradox where consistently positive attitudes toward education are coupled with frequently poor academic achievement (Mickelson, 1990)

Autonomous minorities – people who are minorities primarily in a numerical sense.

They may possess a distinctive ethnic, religious, linguistic, or cultural identity. However, although they are not entirely free from prejudice and discrimination, they are not socially, economically, and politically subordinate; e.g., Jews and Mormons in the United States (Ogbu, 1987)

AYP - Adequate Yearly Progress - Under the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, schools not making AYP for any of the state assessments for two consecutive years are designated as in need of improvement. New Jersey has taken a proactive measure to inform schools not making AYP after one year by designating them as Early Warning to assist them in identifying areas in need of attention and to make any necessary adjustments to prevent not meeting AYP for another year. (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2005)

Bounded Rationality – refers to behavior that is rational but limited by the cognitive constraints on decision making; e.g., students do not consider all 3000 or more college choices (McDonough, 1997)

Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Reproduction - a framework for understanding how individuals and organizations interact; how dominant groups stay in dominant

positions; and how rational, thinking, and goal-directed individuals pursue their interests yet manage to create and recreate social structures (McDonough, 1994)

Burden of Acting White - minority students avoiding certain attitudes and behaviors that their cultural frame of reference associates with Whites where the avoidance contributes to the minorities' low school performance, and the students attempt to resolve the tension between the school's demand to behave in ways that result in academic achievement and their peer group's demands not to do so (Ogbu, 2008, p. 3)

CAPA Team - Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement Team consists of educational practitioners, parents, and other individuals assembled, trained, and assigned by the Commissioner and the chief school administrator to implement the CAPA process in low-performing schools to bring about school improvement. The process was formerly known as the Performance Assessment Team (PAT). (New Jersey Department of Education, 2005)

Caste-Like Minorities - people who were originally brought into the United States involuntarily through slavery, conquest, or colonization; these minorities were relegated to menial positions and denied true assimilation into mainstream society; e.g., Native American, Black Americans, Mexican Americans (Ogbu, 1987). Involuntary minorities are less economically successful than voluntary minorities, usually experience greater and more persistent cultural and language difficulties and do less well in school (Ogbu & Simons, 1998)

CEM (Cultural-Ecological Theory of Minority School Performance - explanation of minority school performance (Ogbu & Simons, 1998)

Choice - in terms of college choice, the choice stage at which students choose a school from among those they have considered. Some students consider only one school, perhaps one that is close to home so they can commute. As the academic performance of students and the socioeconomic status of their families increase, the number of colleges considered also increases. High-ability students might apply to five or more colleges throughout the states (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999)

Class-Contextual Discourse - emphasizes the ways in which family wealth affects educational opportunity alone (O'Connor, 1999)

Class-Dominant Discourse —class operates broadly to limit the life opportunities of the poor (O'Connor, 1999)

Clear Expectations - All students are to be prepared for a full range of postsecondary options, and the explicit goals of this preparation must be clearly defined, communicated, and a part of the daily culture of the school, such that students, family, teachers, administrators, and staff recognize the role that each plays in preparing students for college (McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002)

Coexistence of Two Opposing Cultural Frames of Reference - ideal ways orienting behavior, one considered by the minorities as appropriate for themselves and the other as appropriate for White Americans; there are social (including peers) and psychological pressures on minorities not to act according to a White cultural frame of reference (Ogbu, 1987)

Collective Identity - expresses a minority group's cultural frame of reference, people's reference of "who they are" and "we-ness," feeling of belonging (Ogbu, 2008c;

Ogbu, 2008a, p. 31). Another feature that differentiates immigrant minorities from involuntary minorities is the type of social or collective identity they assume vis-à-vis their perceptions of the social identity of the dominant group (Ogbu, 1987)

College Access - process by which educators, policymakers, and administrators attempt to ensure that all individuals eligible for and deserving of college admission are able to obtain it (McDonough, Antonio, & Trent, 1997)

College Choice - attempt to explain the myriad factors contributing to individuals' post-secondary destinations (Plank & Jordan, 2001); process by which college aspirants prepare for and apply to colleges (McDonough, Antonio, & Trent, 1997); the result of a complex relationship between individual agency, family cultural capital, and the structure and organization of the school, to which the student adds the influences of friends, the family's financial situation, an after-school job, as well as other influences (McDonough, 1994)

College Choice Organizational Culture - the values related to college attendance and any beliefs as to whether students should attend "any" college or only "better" colleges (McDonough, 1997, p. 107).

College Choice Organizational Climate - institution-specific current patterns of college choices and behaviors that are manifested in one school in a specific historical period (McDonough, 1997)

College-Going Culture - a school that encourages all students to make an informed decision about available post-secondary options (McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002)

College Partnerships - forming active links between the secondary school and local colleges and universities is vital to the creation of a college culture. This facilitates the organization of college-related activities such as field trips to college campuses or college fairs and the provision of academic enrichment programs, all of which raise awareness of and aspirations toward college (McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002)

College Talk - A college culture requires clear, ongoing communications with students about what it takes to get to college so that they understand what is required and expected of them if they want to stay on a college path. Faculty and administrators share their own experiences and discover their own assumptions about their roles in preparing students for college. Through this “college talk,” a college culture becomes clearer and the college preparation process becomes more effective (McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002)

Community Forces - the dynamics in a minority community; dominant patterns of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in the domain of education that are found in minority communities consisting of frame of reference, beliefs about the role of schooling/school credentials in getting ahead versus the alternative; degree in pragmatic trust or mistrust of schools and those who control the schools, internalization of the dominant group’s beliefs about minority intellectual ability and collective identity (Ogbu, 2008, pp. 12-13)

Comprehensive Counseling Model - In a school with a successful college culture, all counselors are college counselors. All student interactions with counseling staff become opportunities for college counseling. All counselors are informed about

college issues. All decisions about students' coursework and career options are made with all postsecondary options in mind. (McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002)

Concrete Attitudes - reflect the diverse empirical realities that people experience with respect to returns on education from the opportunity structure (Mickelson, 1990)

Construct Validity - the ability to theorize relationships of power among the researchers and the participants (Knight, Norton, Bently, & Dixon, 2004)

"Cooling-out" Process - in higher education, a systematic discrepancy between aspiration and avenue is covered over, and stress for the individual and the system is minimized where the general result is that society can continue to encourage maximum effort without major disturbance from unfulfilled promises and expectations (Clark, 1960).

Coping Strategies to Acting White - see burden of acting White

Counter Stories - also referred to as folk theory, telling positive stories of education including stories of how education led to success (Ogbu, 1987)

Cultural Capital - the widely shared attitudes, preferences, and credentials for social and cultural exclusion (McDonough, Antonio, & Horvat, 1996)

Cultural Difference Model - in terms of Latina/o, not deprived of cultural experiences as they are participants in a different set of experiences (Gandara, 1999)

Cultural Discontinuity Hypothesis - (1) universal discontinuities experienced by all children (some features of schooling are inherently discontinuous with the home and community experiences of all children) (2) primary discontinuities experienced as a transitional phenomenon by immigrants and non-Western



peoples being introduced to Western-type schooling (associated with immigrants attending schools in their host societies and with non-Western peoples being introduced to Western type schools and (3) secondary discontinuities which are more or less enduring among caste-like or subordinate minorities within Western nations (develop after members of two populations have been in contact or after members of a given population have begun to participate in an institution such as the school system controlled by another group (Ogbu, 1982)

Cultural Frame of Reference - a reflection of an ethnic group's shared sense of how people should behave (Ogbu, 2008c, p. 3)

Cultural-Ecological Model (CEM) - model that explores two separate parts of the problem of minority education and school performance: (a) societal and school factors "system" and (b) minority community factor (Ogbu, 2008c, p. 11)

Cultural Inversion - the tendency for members of one population, in this case involuntary minorities, to regard certain forms of behaviors, certain events, symbols, and meanings, as not appropriate for them because they are characteristic of members of another population; at the same time, minorities claim other (sometimes opposite) forms of behaviors, events, symbols, and meanings as appropriate for them because these are not characteristic of White Americans

Distribution of Possibilities - unequal distribution of opportunities for entering into different social and institutional context and for forming relationships with agents who exert various degrees of control over institutional resources (Wellman, 1983)

Dominant Patterns of Belief and Behavior as Focus of Analysis - framework of how groups operate within a society; focuses analysis on the dominant patterns of belief and behavior within different minority groups (Ogbu & Simons, 1998)

Early Expectations - the education that individuals expect to achieve (Mickelson, 1990)

Educational Choice Sequence - includes the formation of aspirations, the decision to attend (opportunity), choice of college, choice and change of major, persistence to graduation, and graduate education. These choices are influenced by family backgrounds, environmental and educational experiences, and policy-related factors, including postsecondary information, student aid, tuition costs, and debt forgiveness (Paulsen & St. John, 2002)

Expectations - what a person perceives he or she will be doing or will have accomplished at some future time. (Chapman, 1981)

Faculty Involvement - School faculty must be active partners in the creation and maintenance of a college culture. They should be kept up to date on important information related to college knowledge (admissions requirements, types of institutions) and be provided with ongoing professional development to allow them to play an active role in preparing students to aspire to, apply to, and attend college. This should include integrating college information and the very idea of college into regular classroom activities. Faculty must make themselves available to parents to answer any questions and make decisions about students' academic futures (McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002).

Family Involvement - Parents and/or other family members must become informed partners in the process of building a college culture. They must be provided with

opportunities to gain knowledge about the college-planning process as well as be made aware that their children are “college material.” The counseling staff must make themselves available to family members to answer any questions and help make decisions about students’ academic futures (McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002).

Financial Nexus Model - examines the effect of student background, perceptions, or expectations about costs (financial reasons for choosing a college), current aspirations, and finances (market based, monetary measures of prices and subsidies) on persistence (Paulsen & St. John, 2002)

Focus Groups – a group interview, with a trained moderator, a specific set of questions and a disciplined approach to studying ideas in a group context (Janesick, 1998, p. 34). Group interviews where a moderator guides the interview while small group discusses the topics that the interviewer raises (Morgan, 1998, p. 1)

Folk Theory of Making It - survival strategies--how one gets ahead in the United States

Fordham’s Theory - (a) collective identity or fictive kinship, (b) cultural frame of reference, and (c) peer pressures, including racelessness

The Fordham-Ogbu Thesis (1986) - part of Ogbu’s cultural-ecological model based on three factors: (a) societal and school discrimination, (b) some instrumental community factors, and (c) oppositional culture that contributed to low academic performance at Capital High (Ogbu, 2008c, p. 14)

Funds of Knowledge - seven forms of institutional funds of knowledge include the following:

1. Institutionally sanctioned discourses or acceptable ways of language and communication
  2. Academic task-specific knowledge or subject area knowledge
  3. Organizational funds of knowledge-knowledge of how bureaucracies operate
  4. Network development knowledge of how to negotiate with various gatekeepers and agents within and outside of the school environment
  5. Technical funds of knowledge such as computer literacy, study skills, test-taking skills, time-management skills, and decision-making skills
  6. Knowledge of labor and educational markets such as job and educational opportunities, requisites and barriers to entry such as knowledge of how to fulfill requisites and how to overcome barriers
  7. Problem-solving knowledge or knowing how to integrate the first six knowledge forms above for purposes of solving school-related problems, making sound decisions, and reaching personal or collective goals.
- (Staton-Salazar, 1997)

Gender-Based Co-narratives - how gender makes a difference in the opportunities available to African Americans (O'Connor, 1999)

Gender-Contextualization Discourse - accounts only for mobility constraints that arise from the sex-typing of occupations or only for female subjugation in the home (O'Connor, 1999)

Gender Dominance Discourse - how women's lives were circumscribed via multiple domains and mechanisms (O'Connor, 1999)

General Socioeconomic Status Culture - the value of a college degree attainment useful for the conversion to occupational, economic, or other capital (McDonough, 1997, p. 107)

Group Dynamics - the process of interaction within a set of people (Morgan, 1998, p. 10)

Habitus - deeply inter-realized system of outlooks, experiences, and beliefs that an individual gets from the immediate environment. A common set of subjective perceptions held by all members of the same class which shapes an individual's expectations, attitudes, and aspirations (McDonough, Antonio, & Horvat, 1996).

HSPA – High School Proficiency Assessment - replaced the High School Proficiency Test (HSPT) in spring 2000 and is used to determine student achievement of the knowledge and skills in the NJ CCCS for language arts literacy and math. Passing all sections of the test is a requirement for receiving a high school diploma. (New Jersey Department of Education, 2005)

Immigrant Minorities - came to America more or less voluntary with the expectation of improving their economic, political, and social status, including Arabs, Filipinos, and Japanese among others (Ogbu, 1987)

Institutional Agents - those individuals who have the capacity and commitment to transmit directly or negotiate the transmission of institutional resources or opportunities; examples of this include information about school programs, academic tutoring and mentoring, assistance with career and decision making and college administration (Staton-Salazar, 1997)

Information and Resources - Students have access to information and resources related to college; this information must be comprehensive, up-to-date and easily accessible.

Although counselors are likely to have primary responsibility for collecting and maintaining resources, school faculty should be aware of what is available and incorporate it into daily classroom practices on a regular basis. (McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002)

Involuntary Minorities - see caste-like minorities

Interviewing - an act of communication, a meeting of two persons to exchange information and ideas through questions and responses and resulting in communication and joint construction of meaning about a particular topic. (Janesick, 1998, pp. 29-30)

Lost Talent - Lost talent occurs when students who show early signs of talent have educational expectations that fall short of their aspirations, have reduced expectations over time, and are not able to realize their earlier expectations. (Hanson, 1994)

Moments of Exclusion - may include placement in a low reading group, retention, placement in remedial courses, and the failure to complete college-preparation requirements (Lareau & Horvat, 1999)

Moments of Inclusion - conceptual framework where there is a coming together of various forces to provide an advantage to the child in his or her life trajectory; these moments may include placement in academically gifted, high track enrollment in a suburban school, encouragement and preparation for applying to college, attendance at an elite college, and use of networks for job placement (Lareau & Horvat, 1999)

Observation - the act of taking notice of something (Janesick, 1998, p. 29)

Ogbu's Cultural-Ecological Model (framework) - There are two separate parts to the problem of minority education and school performance: societal and school factors called the "system" and minority community factors called "community forces" (Ogbu & Simons, 1998); inferior schooling, limited opportunity structure, self-perception and responses to schooling

Oppositional Culture - where members of an oppressed group redefine their indigenous way of talking or behaving resulting in a new way of talking or behaving in opposition to the ways of the dominant groups, their oppressors; as a result, members of the minority group define certain ways of talking, behavior, and self expression as more approaching in opposition to other's ways of talking, behaving, and self expression which they consider appropriate for their oppressors (Ogbu, 2008, p. 10)

Organizational Habitus - the impact of a cultural group or social class on an individual's behavior through an intermediate organization, such as the high school (McDonough, 1997, p. 107). College choice organizational habitus--the specific current patterns of college choices and behaviors that are manifested in schools with similar socioeconomic status environments (McDonough, 1997, p. 108); the concept of organizational habitus connections between school climate and culture (Akorn, 2008)

Organizational Climate - the resultant attitudes and behaviors of individuals with the organizations which are current and malleable; perceptions and attitudes that are the contemporary manifestations of culture (McDonough, 1997, p. 107)

Organizational Culture - an organization's underlying values, beliefs, and meanings that are deeply held, static, and enduring (McDonough, 1997, p. 107)

Positive Racial Socialization - positive attitude toward one's racial (or ethnic) groups of membership that promotes a healthy racial identity as well as an awareness of and constructive responses to racism without promoting racism or discrimination towards members of other racial or ethnic groups (Sanders, 1997)

Predisposition - In reference to the college choice model, predisposition refers to the plans students develop for education or work after they graduate from high school. Students' family background, academic performance, peers, and other high school experiences influence the development of their post-high school educational plans (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999)

Primary Culture Differences - differences that exist before two populations come together; e.g., immigrants before a minority group in the United States. Persons experiencing these differences experience problems in teaching and learning social adjustment due to their customs and behaviors that are different from the dominant group (Ogbu, 2008, p. 8) (Ogbu, 1987)

Race Contextualization Discourse - claims the effect of race and opportunity is contingent on the specific opportunity context (O'Connor, 1999)

Race Dominance Discourse - a mindset where race profoundly shapes social opportunity and mobility in the United States and race is viewed as operating over time and via multiple domains and mechanisms to constrain the life chances of African Americans (O'Connor, 1999)



Race Minimizing Discourse - minimizes the influence of race on social opportunity and mobility (O'Connor, 1999)

Refugees, Migrant Workers, Undocumented Workers, and Bi-Nationals - refugees who were forced to come to the United States because of civil war or other crises in their places of origin are not immigrants or voluntary minorities; they did not freely plan to come to settle in the United States. However, they share some of the dominant group's race, ethnicity, religion, or language (Ogbu & Simons, 1998)

SAT - The SAT is a globally recognized college admissions test that lets one show colleges what one knows and how well one can apply that knowledge. It tests one's knowledge of reading, writing, and math--subjects that are taught every day in high school classrooms. Most students take the SAT during their junior or senior year of high school, and almost all colleges and universities use the SAT to make admission decisions

School Climate - the perception of the school environment by school community members (Gallien, Jr., 2007)

School Culture - includes not only the physical attributes of the school, school culture includes intangible attributes such as satisfaction, morale, trust, and openness, in addition to institutional attributes including norms, beliefs, and attitudes that represent the total within-school environment (Gallien, Jr., 2007)

Search - In terms of college choice, search includes students' discovering and evaluating possible colleges in which to enroll. The model posits that students' searches help them determine what characteristics they need and which colleges offer them (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999).

Secondary Cultural Differences (Alternative Cultures) - perceived and interpreted

cultural practices as alternatives to those of the dominant group (Ogbu, 2008, p. 8)

Social Capital (College Choice) - networks and relationships between students and their

families, peers, communities, and school staff that facilitate the exchange of ideas, information, and opportunities necessary to access and enroll in college

(Martinez, 2010)

Social Identity - see collective identity

Status Mobility System - the socially or culturally approved strategy for getting ahead

within a given population or a given society

Status Problems - external forces that mark a group of people as a distinct segment from

the rest of the population; the group is usually bounded and named (Ogbu, 2008, p. 31)

The System - societal and school factors that are, namely: (a) the educational policies of

local, state, and national education agencies (segregation, school funding, and

staffing); treatment of minority children within the school and classroom; (b)

treatment of minority children within the school and classroom, including teacher

expectations, the breadth and depth of curriculum, assessment tools and practices,

and tracking; (c) the rewards that society gives or does not give to minorities for

their educational accomplishments, such as employment and wages (Ogbu, 2008, pp. 11-12)

Subordinate Minorities - those minority groups who were incorporated into the United

States more or less against their will and include Native Americans (here in the

states before dominant Whites arrived); Mexican Americans of the Southwest and

Texas who were incorporated by conquest and Blacks who were brought here as slaves (Ogbu, 1974)

Subtractive Process - a minority person who learns successfully in school or who follows the standard practices of the school is perceived as becoming acculturated into the American cultural frame of reference at the expense of the minorities' cultural frame of reference and collective welfare (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986)

Talent Lost - described as the occurrence of promising students not reaching their full educational potential (Plank & Jordan, 2001)

Testing and Curriculum - Standardized tests like the PSAT and SAT are critical steps on the path to college. Students must be knowledgeable about these tests and be aware of testing dates. Moreover, the school must make a commitment to providing the resources necessary to ensure both that students are prepared for the tests and that testing fees are not a barrier to any student's ability to take the tests. This includes ensuring access to preparatory coursework like algebra and geometry. Moreover, the school must ensure that students have access to coursework that ensures their eligibility to apply to college upon graduation (McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002).

Uncle Tomism - see the burden of acting White

Universal Culture Differences - those differences between home culture (and language) and school culture (and language) that every child encounters upon entering schools; regardless of particular cultures, all children make a transition from home culture to school culture (Ogbu, 2008c, p. 8)

Voluntary Minority - see Immigrant Minorities

**APPENDIX K**  
**GETTING TO COLLEGE AT ROSA PARKS**

Focus Group A						
Student	Family and Beyond Family Influence	Expectations from Family/Family Influences	Peer Influences	College Going Activities	College Plans	Career Plans
Natalie	Not Answered	Parents ask her about how school went every day when she gets home	Not Answered	Not Answered	At first stated she was unsure of plans, later after hearing several other students plans said that she was going to school right away	Not Answered
Taisha	All Siblings and one parent went to college, her sister is an influence, she is very smart and is good at math	Not Answered	Not Answered	Looked at several colleges, has chosen not to participate in clubs or sports at school	Plans to go to college	Not Answered
Jalessa	Mom is a nurse, best friend's (Michaela) mom is a nurse	Not Answered	Her and her best friend do everything together	Not Answered	Plans to attend a two-year school and possibly take cosmetology or nursing classes	Not Answered
Michaela	Mom is a nurse, best friend's (Jalessa) mom is a nurse	Parents stay "on her" about school	Her and her best friend do everything together	Not Answered	Plans to go to college after graduation	Nurse
Francelle	Not Answered	Her cousin lets her "have it" if she gets under a C in anything, she almost never gets under a C.	Not Answered	Not Answered	Maybe will go to college or trade school	Culinary Arts

Focus Group B						
Student	Family and Beyond Family Influence	Expectations from Family/Family Influences	Peer Influences	College Going Activities	College Plans	Career Plans
Jackson	Two siblings in college, one is about to graduate, cousin is in college and plays on their basketball team	Parents support him "all the way"	Not Answered	Several interviews with college scouts	Wants to go to college and play basketball at a division 1 school	Wants to play professional basketball, live, and in the future may want to be a teacher.
Cory	Father went to college	Father tells him to "do good."	One of the older students he played football with is an influence; he is in the USMC	Not Answered	Plans to take a year off after graduation, then go out of state to attend college	Plans to major in business and be a businessman
Aaron	Not Answered	Started thinking about college because of football scouts and coaches. Mom wants him to enlist in the service. Father attended Rosa Parks. Uncle and little brother who are six are influences because he sees himself as a role model and a person of importance to him.	"people" say that college is different from high school because of the parties and freedom	Went to several football games at a local four-year college.	Plans to go to college	Major in engineering or chemical engineering and eventually own his own car repair shop
Aubrey	Not Answered	Family wants her to go to college	Not Answered	Not Answered	Plans to go to college	Not Answered
Necie	Not Answered	Family supports her decision to go to college, Several uncles on her father's side attended college	Not Answered	Not Answered	Plans to go to college	Plans to major in either psychology or law, possibly go to law school

Focus Group C						
Student	Family and Beyond Family Influence	Expectations from Family/Family Influences	Peer Influences	College Going Activities	College Plans	Career Plans
Samara	Not Answered	Brother played football and he is really successful - helps keep her on track - that is why she is a cheer leader, makes sure she has all she needs	Not Answered	Not Answered	Plans to attend college and then medical school	Pediatrician
Cayla	Not Answered	Brother is older and is taking some classes at the community college	Not Answered	Not Answered	Plans to go to college	Teacher
Karina	Not Answered	Has older sister and brother on mom's side and 3 little brothers from the dad's side. Both siblings started college, but her brother is having some troubles in school	Not Answered	Not Answered	Plans to go o college	Psychologist

Focus Group D						
Student	Family and Beyond Family Influence	Expectations from Family/Family Influences	Peer Influences	College Going Activities	College Plans	Career Plans
Eva	Not answered	Not answered	Not answered	Not answered	Not answered	Dance
Charlene	Not answered	Not answered	Not answered	Not answered	Plans to take a year off and then go to college	Not answered
Vincent	Mother attended community college	Not answered	Not answered	Not answered	Plans to go to college and then law school	Producer now and eventually lawyer

Focus Group E						
Student	Family and Beyond Family Influence	Expectations from Family/Family Influences	Peer Influences	College Going Activities	College Plans	Career Plans
Linda	Not answered	Gets support from her sister and her boyfriend. If it was up to her she wouldn't work as hard but her sister pushes her	Not answered	Visited a few schools and went to college fair	Go to college and major in computers	Not answered
Denise	Some family members went to college, brother goes to trade school	Her mother and brother - Her brother wants her to "do good" because he didn't and he wants her to be right on track from the start.	Not answered	Not answered	Plans to go to college	Nurse



Focus Group F						
Student	Family and Beyond Family Influence	Expectations from Family/Family Influences	Peer Influences	College Going Activities	College Plans	Career Plans
Marcia	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Plans to take a break from school and then when she feels like it go to college and medical school	Pediatrician
Emma	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Plans to go to college	
Sheryl	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Plans to go to college	Pediatrician
John	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Plans to go to college	Become an auto mechanic and relocate out-of-state
Charlie	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Plans to go to two-year school and then transfer to a four-year school for business management	Business Owner
Anna	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Plans to attend two-year school after high school	Own day-care business
William	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Plans to attend a four-year school	Own business like a CD store, clothing store, or record label
Nathanial	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Plans to attend a four-year school to be a camera man	
Amy	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Plans to take a year off from school then go to college and major in business	

### Focus Group H

Student	Family and Beyond Family Influence	Expectations from Family/Family Influences	Peer Influences	College Going Activities	College Plans	Career Plans
Dominique	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Go to college and medical school	Pediatrician
Joann	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Visited a few college	After graduation, may get a job to save up money, then go to college and possibly law school	Lawyer
Andrea	Brother went to college and mother works at college	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Plans to attend college (major in criminal justice) then law school	Lawyer
Mary	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Attended a college fair and requested information	Plans to go to college for film making or acting	Not Answered
Bella	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Not Answered	Plans to attend college (major in criminal justice) then law school	Unsure

## GETTING TO COLLEGE AT ROSA PARKS

<b>Student</b>	<b>Have guidance counselors, teachers, staff at school assisted with college planning?</b>	<b>What they needed to do next to get to college</b>	<b>How often do you meet with your guidance counselor?</b>
<b>Taisha</b>	Not answered	Indicated that she would need to apply "as soon as possible"	Rarely, if ever.
<b>Michaela</b>	Does not talk to her guidance counselor because she wants to do things on her own, if she can do it by herself	Will be making college visits this summer (on which point agreement among all): Nothing in school or in their classes that helps them figure anything out about the future.	Rarely, if ever.
<b>Francelle</b>	Indicated that she has seen her counselor helping kids with financial aid	Not answered	Rarely, if ever.

Student	Have guidance counselors, teachers, staff at school assisted with college planning? What teachers or staff do you feel comfortable discussing your future?	What they needed to do next to get to college	How often do you meet with your guidance counselor?
Jackson	Liked a teacher because they talked about life	- Is open to being a teacher - but wants to live - and play basketball - does not want to take SAT	All stated that they didn't pick their own schedule; the counselors assigned them classes -
Cory	One teacher has asked him to come and talk	He says the next step would be interning - getting a feel for the environment - keep tempo in college - questions moderator if has to do intern hours or something like that in college.	Says that he talked to two of the other guidance counselors who say to keep focused, and to start researching colleges you want to go to. All stated that they didn't pick their own schedule the counselors assigned them classes -
Aaron Athletic build; facial hair; Football; anger management concerns	One teacher, not at RP, told him to do what he has to do and stop fighting - that he would be dead or in jail and that he had to change his work. One gym teacher because he would talk to you. A teacher XX - gives pass so he can talk	Has a thing for cars - maybe follow his uncle who has two shops in other states - says he did self training - wants to work for uncle - if he does go to college, he wants to do science "chemicals" Took PSAT	Didn't know. All stated that they didn't pick their own schedule the counselors assigned them classes -
Aubrey Quiet; petite; very interested in college; Spellman	Likes two teachers; both are strict but make sure you do your work and you understand material	N/A	Stated that you have to make an appointment - she has talked to her asking her about college.
Necie	Named one teacher that helped out when she had a low grade	Took SAT's in December and is worried about it	