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## **Abstract**

This research explored how 47 first generation college students at a private university in the Northeast used non-profit and government-funded college access and support programs to make meaning of their college-going journeys. The participants used college access programs to prepare themselves for, gain access to, and persist at a selective postsecondary institution directly after high school. This research asked what skills and knowledge do first generation college students learn through their college access and support programs? How do first generation college students use the skills and knowledge they obtained through their college access and support programs to help navigate their college-going journeys? Using the theoretical frameworks of Communities of Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005, 2006) and critical theory (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002), I analyzed the participants' counterstories and uncovered how first generation college students used college access and success programs to navigate a historically classed and raced education system. The findings centered the students' stories, showed how college access programs became a form of capital within themselves for first generation college students, and provided students with the resources they needed to matriculate and persist in college. I then critically examined whether or not college access programs contributed to closing the educational gap in the United States and educational reform.

*Keywords:* First generation college students, college access, college experience, college access programs, college success programs, higher education

“My Training Wheels are Off:” How First Generation College Students Made Meaning of the  
Influence of their College Access and Support Programs

by

Staci Allison Weber  
B.A., Franklin & Marshall College, 2001  
M.Ed., University of Delaware, 2004

Dissertation  
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Higher Postsecondary Education

Syracuse University  
December 2016

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“[My younger sister] was in an after school [program], and they had ‘dress-like-a-hero’ day and she wore [my university’s] shirt.” (Joy, Spring 2012)

\*\*\*

I dedicate this dissertation to all the heroes and those dressed like the heroes.

## Acknowledgements

The juxtaposition of this dissertation between my professional, scholarly self and my personal self comes through memories. My dissertation is dependent upon them. Through 47 first generation college students sharing their past experiences on their college-going journey, I gained data for my research. Their stories, their experiences, and their memories are the heart of this paper. The students in this study and those I have worked with have made themselves vulnerable to me. They opened up about their challenges and their triumphs. They have exemplified perseverance and determination. They let me learn from them and asked for little in return. I am forever grateful to the participants in this study and the students that have touched my heart. Thank you.

Thank you, mom and dad, for the investment you have made in my education from an early age; the values you have instilled in me to continuously learn, dedicate myself to social justice, and making this world a better place; and, for your unconditional love, support, advice, and encouragement throughout life's journey. I am beyond thankful and fortunate.

Thank you, Nikki. You have shown me what it means to persevere, be strong, and be brave. Your optimism, laughter, and love of life and people are contagious. Thank you for being my role model, friend, and sister.

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This dissertation research builds on other research that shows the power of mentorship; my personal experience certainly echoes these findings. Mara Daniel gave me the confidence to share my passions and helped me find my voice. The late Barbara Brummett allowed me to continue the work of Helping Hands in college through encouragement and empowerment. Glen Gross then introduced me to Student Activities and imparted on me two great insights, “you don’t need to be in a leadership position to lead” and “you seem to really like leadership development, you should look into higher education.” Both have made all the difference. Ralph Taber and John Bishop have given me countless advice during graduate school, job application processes, and my career. I cannot even count the number of times Bishop has said to me to be patient (I’m still learning this life lesson.) Kris Clarkson, Don Saleh, and Tom Wolfe each taught me about being true to my passions and myself. They showed me how to lead, how to listen, and how to institute change. Their support and mentorship continuously influences my work. Lastly, I would be remiss to not mention Merris Hollingsworth, who left this world all too soon. As my master’s thesis advisor, Merris gave me the confidence to know I could write a dissertation. She introduced me to qualitative research, writing, and presenting, for which I am grateful. My mentors have given me their time, advice, and support. They have fostered in me a passion, a scholarship, and an ability to collaborate with others to challenge systems of injustice, and see the best in people. Thank you.

The foundation of a dissertation comes from experiences, coursework, readings, and people believing in your scholarship. From there, a dissertation grows thanks to a village of faculty, mentors, family, and friends along the way. In the end, though, a dissertation is a reflection of the commitment, the conversations, and the feedback of a dissertation chair and committee. Cathy, Dawn, and Gretchen, thank you for your wisdom, your insight, and your scholarship. I know that you each have many demands on your time; I am so fortunate to have such a strong, thoughtful, and brilliant committee. Your readings of my dissertation, your honest and detailed critiques, and our conversations about the work have pushed me to think in new ways, delve deeper into my data and analysis, and made me a better person, educator, and scholar. Thank you for being role models and teachers.

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## Chapter One: INTRODUCTION

There's also a book I read, I got from a teacher of mine, a Dean of mine, who actually went to Prep [Prep for Prep, a college access and support program], he was a Dean at [my preparatory school]. It's called *The Other Wes Moore*, and it's about two [Black] kids from the same socioeconomic background. Pretty poor, pretty bad neighborhoods. They're both named Wes Moore, but one ended up going to jail for murder, and then one ended up going to private school, going to college, becoming just successful. . . . Just that thought of, the White guilt or whatever, it just makes me think of just how at liberty people are to the system. If Prep for Prep didn't exist or affirmative action didn't exist or whatever, there wouldn't be two Wes Moores. You know what I mean? There would just be one path for things. My eldest brother went to Prospect Heights High School. Pretty crappy, metal detectors, and fights, and stuff. Just no, that's for prisons. No condition that any child should be learning under. I don't think if I go through a metal detector anywhere, in five minutes I'm going to feel comfortable enough to actually learn something and preserve it in my mind. (Darrell, Spring 2012)

Over 99,000 (>80%) high school students have passed through metal detectors and have experienced pat-downs on their way to school each morning in Darrell's school district, New York City Public Schools (New York Civil Liberties Union, 2014). New York City Public Schools have over 5,000 School Safety Agents and 191 armed police officers, while the schools have hired just over half as many (3,152) high school guidance counselors (New York Civil Liberties Union, 2014). Amurao (2013) has shown that secondary schools suspended Black students 3.5 times more than White students, Black students have made up 40% of all

expulsions, and Black students have graduated half as often as White students. This has contributed to the school-to-prison pipeline that Darrell has described and where 61% of prisoners have identified as Black or Latino, 68% of men in prison have not obtained high school degrees, and police have incarcerated one in three Black men in their lifetime and one in six Latino men (Amurao, 2013). Darrell has recognized how Prep for Prep, a college access and support program for high-achieving students of color, has allowed him to escape “the system” and has given him hope for a different future (Darrell, Spring 2012). With broken school and criminal justice systems, researchers have agreed with Darrell that education reform through college access and support programs would reduce the school-to-prison pipeline, close the education gap, and provide for a more equitable future for historically underserved students (Beer, Le Blanc, & Miller, 2008; Dalpe, 2008; Perna, 2002; Perna & Kurban, 2013; Swail, 2000; Tierney, 2002). This study explores how first generation college students make meaning of college access and support programs and how the programs, like training wheels on a bike, influence and lend support to students’ college readiness, access, and experience when students matriculate in college right after their senior year in high school. In this qualitative research, I examine:

- How do first generation college students use college access programs to prepare themselves for, gain access to, and persist at a selective university?
- What skills and knowledge do first generation college students learn through their college access and support programs?
- How do first generation college students use the skills and knowledge they obtained through their college access and support programs as they navigate a selective university?

In 2011, 4% of White students, 8% of Black students, and 13% of Hispanic students between 16-24 years old had not enrolled in high school or earned a high school degree (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Similarly, 12% of the students from the lowest socioeconomic income quartile, 9% of students from the second lowest quartile, 4% of students from the second highest income quartile, and 2% of students from the highest income quartile had not enrolled in high school or earned a high school degree regardless of their race (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). While the high school dropout rate has decreased over the years, education gaps between students' races/ethnicities and socioeconomic statuses have remained (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

The U.S. Department of Education's data on post-secondary education has mirrored the data in secondary schools. In 2013, 39.9% of all Americans ages 18-24 attended college (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Fifty-five percent of the lowest socioeconomic quintile of students enrolled in college directly after high school (College Board, 2008), while 76% of students from low to moderate-income families had hoped to attend college (Elliott, Constance-Huggins, & Song, 2011). Of higher income students, 80% of students from high-income families enrolled in college directly after high school (College Board, 2008) and 92% had wanted to attend college (Elliott et al., 2011). Thus, lower income students aspired to attend college (76%) and attended college (55%) at lower rates than their higher income peers (92% and 80%, respectively) (College Board, 2008; Elliott et al., 2011).

In addition to socioeconomic status, college enrollment differences have existed when researchers controlled for students' race and ethnicity. The College Board (2014) has found that in 2008, 70% of White students enrolled in college within 12 months of graduating high school compared to 62% of Hispanic students and 56% of Black students. The multi-year trends in who

has attended college spoke to the racial inequities in college access, since access for White students has steadily increased since 1975 and access for Black and Hispanic students has fluctuated (College Board, 2014). The fluctuation in college access for people who have identified as Black, Latino/a, and/or lower class has come from changes in educational policies, practices, and personnel and fiscal resources allocated to both secondary and post-secondary institutions. For example, in 2003, the outcomes of affirmative action cases *Grutter v. Bollinger* and *Gratz v. Bollinger* have permitted race-based admissions at universities as long as colleges do not use quotas, point systems, or other mathematical equations that promote race within the application process ("Gratz et al. v. Bollinger et al.," 2003; "Grutter et al. v. Bollinger et al.," 2003). In June 2008 (effective August 2009), Congress passed the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill also known as the Veterans Educational Assistance Act providing people who have served in active duty after September 10, 2001, with additional education benefits (J. Steele, Salcedo, & Coley, 2010). This has mirrored the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (better known as the G.I. Bill) to encourage veterans to pursue higher education (Thelin, 2004). More recent policies and practices such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and *Fisher v. University of Texas* have also positively influenced college access for undocumented students and students of color (Gonzales & Bautista-Chavez, 2014).

Along with educational gaps in race/ethnicity and socioeconomic class, gaps have existed between students depending on their parents' or guardians' highest level of education (Choy, 2001; Saenz, Hurtado, Barrera, Wolf, & Yeung, 2007; Tinto, 2005). Eighty-two percent of children where at least one parent or caretaker had earned at least a bachelor's degree attended college directly after high school, 54% of children whose parents had at most graduated from high school attended college directly after high school, and 36% of students whose parents never

completed high school had attended college directly after high school (Choy, 2001). Students whose parents have had no college experiences comprised 16% of full-time, first-year students at baccalaureate degree-granting institutions (Saenz et al., 2007). Further analysis showed that of the 16% of full-time, first-year students at baccalaureate degree-granting institutions, 38.2% identified as Latino, 22.6% as African-American (non-Hispanic), 16.8% as Native American, 19% as Asian/Asian-American, and 13.2% as White (non-Hispanic) (Saenz et al., 2007). Despite increased access to higher education over the past decades (Adelman, 2006; Conley, 2013; Hossler, Dundar, & Shapiro, 2013; A. Jones, 2013; Perna, 2006b), gaps have continued to exist between first generation, low income students of color and White, non-first generation, middle-class students (Perna & Kurban, 2013).

Along with discrepancies in college readiness and access, students have persisted through post-secondary education at varying rates. Engle and Tinto (2008) defined first generation college students as “students whose parents do not have bachelor’s degrees” (p. 2). Through analyzing data from the National Center for Education Statistics’ Beginning Postsecondary Study (BPS:96/01), Engle and Tinto (2008) found that 26% of low-income, first generation college students left college after their first year compared to 7% of students who did not identify as low-income and first generation. With such high dropout rates, only 11% of low-income and first generation students who enrolled in higher education graduated within six years compared to 55% of non-low-income, non-first generation college students (Engle & Tinto, 2008).

Compared to 11% of first generation, low-income students who have earned their baccalaureate degree, as high as 90% of first generation, low-income students who have used college access programs have graduated a baccalaureate degree-granting institution (see Figure



1) (Engle & Tinto, 2008; The Posse Foundation, 2014). The benefits of higher education include:

- Students’ personal development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993),
- Students’ intellectual growth as they moved from dualistic to pluralistic learners (Perry, 1999),
- Enhancements to the United States’ work force (Geiger & Heller, 2011; Noland, 2013),
- Increased community involvement (Noland, 2013),
- Decreased need for social services (Noland, 2013),
- More complex understanding around social issues when students engaged with students different than themselves (Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004), and
- Higher salaries to help close the economic gap between the poor, the middle, and the upper classes (Noland, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Given these benefits of higher education, enhancing college graduation rates through college access programs provides hope to our future and dismantles the inequities in the United States. Bianka, a first generation college student who used NJ-SEEDS and participated in this research, said in response to learning about the successes of her college access program, “Wow, there is hope in these areas.” This research is about that hope and explores how students like Bianka and Darrell make meaning of their college access and support programs throughout their college-going journey.

### **Purpose of Study and Theoretical Perspective**

Researchers have suggested various ways to lessen the equity gap in college access, such as: increasing the number of high school counselors at secondary schools with low college-

going rates (McDonough, 1997; Perna & Kurban, 2013; Perna & Titus, 2005); providing more college grant aid (money students do not pay back) and decreasing loans (money students pay back to the lender) for low-income students (Heller, 2013; Perna, 2006b); and offering all students competitive secondary curriculums with college preparation, honors, and advanced placement classes (Perna & Kurban, 2013). Researchers also have suggested that nonprofit and government-funded college preparation programs contribute to increasing college access and persistence for historically underrepresented college students (Perna, 2002; Perna & Titus, 2005; Swail, 2000). Hagedorn and Tierney (2002) have agreed and stated, “With a myriad of apparent long-term structural problems [in education], educators and policymakers have turned to discrete solutions that offer an immediate chance for success for today’s students. College preparation programs are one of those purported solutions” (p. 2).

Researchers have conducted quantitative studies on college access programs and learned about the programs’ organizational structures, goals, and targeted population (Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, Thomas, & Li, 2008; Swail & Perna, 2002); other researchers have performed case studies and evaluations on individual college access programs to share best practices (Beer et al., 2008; Coles & Engstrom, 2012; Dalpe, 2008; Stillisano, Brown, Alford, & Waxman, 2013). A need continues to exist for qualitative research that focuses on first generation college students who use college access and success programs, so researchers and practitioners can understand how students come to understand and make meaning of their college access and support programs.

To inform my research questions, I have used critical theory (Bohman, 2013) and Yosso’s (2006) *Communities of Cultural Wealth*. Robertson (2011) has explained critical theory as “guided by a concern for social justice” to challenge structural and social inequalities (p. 2). I,

therefore, have questioned and analyzed institutional and societal structures my participants operated within and have taken their stories and ideologies as truths. By accepting that the structures and systems we (society and, specifically, those with privilege), have built may not serve everyone, allows me to challenge policies, laws, and processes. By accepting that we (again, society and those with privilege) have not heard all people's voices in the past and accepting that my participants' stories and ideologies come from a place of truth, allows me to challenge past beliefs, facts, and perspectives. Through listening and considering new truths and questioning past structures, critical theory has recognized that change must come through both people and culture (human emancipation) and laws and policies (political emancipation) (Bohman, 2013). Along with critical theory, Yosso's (2006) *Communities of Cultural Wealth* has pushed my thoughts, analysis, and discussion on what first generation college students have contributed to secondary and post-secondary education and how first generation college students have used and came to understand college access programs within their college-going journey. *Communities of Cultural Wealth* expanded on the meaning of wealth from accrued financial assets and resources to mean an amalgamation of wealth including aspirational capital, familial capital, social capital, linguistic capital, resistant capital, and navigational capital (Yosso, 2006).

### **Key Terminology**

In this research, I use the following definitions for first generation college students, capital, and college access and support programs. In subsequent chapters, I further discuss these terms.

#### **First Generation College Students**

I use the Higher Education Act's definition of first generation college students:

An individual both of whose parents did not complete a baccalaureate degree or in

the case of any individual who regularly resided with and received support from only one parent, an individual whose only such parent did not complete a baccalaureate degree. ("Higher Education Act," 1965, pp. 9-10)

## **Capital**

Capital refers to skills, knowledge, and assets (Bourdieu, 1986; Yosso, 2005, 2006). For example, navigational capital describes people's ability to work through systems and self-advocate (Yosso, 2005, 2006). Social capital describes people's networks and human resources (Yosso, 2005, 2006). Other forms of capital may include aspirational capital, linguistic capital, and resilience capital (Yosso, 2005, 2006). Yosso's (2005, 2006) understanding of capital built upon and challenged Bourdieu's (1986) concept of capital that focused more on economic capital and cultural capital.

## **College Access and Support Programs**

Based on the National College Access Network's (2011) and National Association for College Admission Counseling's (2016) use of college access and support programs, I define college access programs as nonprofit or government-funded programs or organizations that assist students with college readiness and/or access. Such programs offer students SAT preparation classes (e.g., Chinese-American Planning Council, HEAF, Today's Students Tomorrow's Teachers), provide college application fee waivers (Coles & Engstrom, 2012), help students secure tutoring services (e.g., Minds Matter), build students' academic self-confidence (Coles & Engstrom, 2012), decrease their anxiety about attending college (Hagedorn & Fogel, 2002), increase students' knowledge about college (Tuitt, Van Horn, & Sulick, 2011), give students stipends for summer internships (e.g., HEAF, Today's Students Tomorrow's Teachers), and/or offer workshops for parents about the college experience (e.g., Bronx Works).

Many college access programs also assist students while they transition and/or persist in college. College access and support programs contact the students in college via email, Facebook, or personal visits (e.g., Step Up, Liberty LEADS), arrange for summer internship and/or work opportunities (e.g., Let's Get Ready, Chinese-American Planning Council), and/or offer alumni networking events for students (e.g., ASPIRA, Prep for Prep). Along with community-based college access and support programs, colleges and universities also offer support services through university-based college success programs (e.g., TRIO's Student Support Services Program (SSSP), summer bridge programs, and other in-house support programs).

All the students in this research use at least one community-based college access program; however, not all the students participate in community-based college access and success programs and/or university-based college success initiatives. When I use the terminology "college access programs," "college support programs," and "college success programs" I refer to non-profit, community-based initiatives.

### **Description of Study**

This qualitative study investigates how students make meaning of and understand the role of college access and support programs. Qualitative research provides participants a voice and allows their stories and experiences to shape the findings allowing the researcher to learn how participants understand their "lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, [and] social movements" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11). This deeper understanding of how participants come to understand their own experiences defines meaning making in qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006).

This research took place at a private, Research I university<sup>1</sup> in a mid-sized city in Northeastern United States. At the time of the research, the university enrolled approximately 21,000 students with 14,000 full-time undergraduate students. The student body represented all 50 U.S. states and approximately 120 countries. Fifty-five percent of the full-time undergraduate students identified as women and about 19% identified as first generation college students. Of the total student population, about one-fourth identified as a racial or ethnic minority. Tuition cost just under \$40,000 per year (not including room and board).

To identify participants, I worked with the Director of Financial Analysis where we ran a query of matriculated, domestic, first generation college students on main campus. The query resulted in 2,631 students. Through a mass email and individual follow-up emails, I then yielded 47 first generation college students who had used college access programs. I conducted either interviews or focus groups with the participants.

Student participants utilized over 40 nonprofit and government-funded programs that assisted students with varying components of preparing for and gaining access to college. According to the participants' experiences, some programs also maintained communication and provided resources and programming for the students once they matriculated at the university. The college access programs' structures ranged from ones that met with students in person on a routine basis (e.g., Prep for Prep, College Awareness Symbolizes Hope, Education Alliance) to drop-in programs (e.g., Let's Get Ready, The NELA Center for Student Success) where students stopped by the organization as needed. The programs also varied in selectivity – some programs had an application process (e.g., College Now, Center for Talented Youth, Today's Students Tomorrow's Teachers) and others did not (e.g., On Point for College, Let's Get Ready).

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<sup>1</sup> Information about the university came from the school's website unless otherwise stated. For confidentiality reasons, I did not cite the source.

Programs also started anywhere from elementary or middle school (e.g., Prep for Prep, Harlem Education Activities Fund, GEAR UP) to high school (e.g., Step Up, Liberty LEADS, Questbridge). Some college access and success programs identified as school-centered programs (e.g., Harlem Center, AVID), while others programs were student-centered (e.g., Upward Bound; New Jersey Scholars, Educators, Excellence, Dedication, Success) (Gándara, 2002). Readers can find a complete list of college access and success programs the participants used in Appendix A along with the organizations' contact information and mission statement.

### **Significance of this Research**

The President of the United States, the Lumina Foundation, and the Gates Foundation have all committed to increasing access to and success in higher education as to better meet the future needs of the United States and remain competitive with other countries around the world (Heller, 2013; A. Jones, 2013). Government officials have worked to shape public policies and programs to enhance access for underrepresented students and colleges have expanded their commitments through providing more financial aid, pre-college outreach programs, and retention efforts (A. Jones, 2013; Vaade, 2010). In addition to these current efforts, public policies, secondary schools, and institutions of higher education need to improve their programs and support. As public high schools, for example, still have an average guidance counselor to student ratio of 1:470 (the recommended guidance counselor to student ratio is 1:250) and need to improve their academic curriculum to meet selective colleges' expectations (American Counseling Association, 2014; Keaton, 2012). Research also shows that college counselors and teachers offer better college advisement to middle-income students and students in advanced placement classes than otherwise (McDonough & Calderone, 2006; Perna, 2006b; Perna & Kurban, 2013). Dramatic changes must happen within education to improve the economic

stability of the United States and make it more inclusive of today's students. College access and support programs work towards closing this education and opportunity gap.

The College Board's (2007) *Getting ready, getting in, and getting through college: Expanding options for low-income students* has provided step-by-step recommendations for secondary schools, colleges and universities, and nonprofit organizations to collaborate and improve college access for low-income students (Brooks & Copeland-Morgan, 2007).

Researchers also have argued for the necessity of a thorough evaluation of college access and support programs (Beer et al., 2008; Dalpe, 2008; Perna, 2002; Swail, 2000; Tierney, 2002).

This research answers that call by exploring college access and support programs through the lens of first generation college students. This research works against the deficit model (Wallace, 2014) and older research on first generation college students that positions students as lacking skills and knowledge (Choy, 2001; Terenzini et al., 1994). Through this research, I center first generation college students' counterstories as they move through secondary school and onto a selective, private baccalaureate-degree granting institution; broaden readers' awareness of first generation college students' experiences on college readiness and choice; highlight the skills and the knowledge students bring with them to higher education; and, showcase the work of college access and support programs. With an increased understanding of these concepts, researchers and practitioners can think and act more inclusively to better support first generation college students.

### **Overview of Dissertation**

Chapter 1 introduces the necessity of this work. Chapter 2 presents a theoretical framework and current literature and theory on first generation college students, college access and success programs, and persistence models to illustrate how first generation college students



prepare, apply, and experience college. Chapter 3 details the methodology I used for my research. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present the findings of how first generation college students use college access and support programs to navigate their college-going journey. The chapters unfold in chronological order in that Chapter 4 presents the findings on how first generation college students use college access programs to prepare for college (college readiness). Chapter 5 details how the students use college access programs to matriculate into a selective institution. Chapter 6 analyzes how students use their college access and support programs during their college transition and how the programs prepare students for their college experience. Presenting the data chronologically shows how students negotiate the educational system and the work that first generation college students put into their college-going journey. In the final chapter, Chapter 7, I review the findings and discuss how this work expands on Communities of Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005, 2006) to include first generation college students. I then use Critical Theory (Bohman, 2013) and findings from the research to share new ways to understand college choice models, college admissions, and college access programs. I conclude the paper by reviewing the limitations of the work, proposing recommendations for secondary and post-secondary education, and suggestions for future research.

## **Chapter Two: LITERATURE REVIEW**

This literature review brings attention to first generation college students, informs the study, and provides a clear rationale for the necessity of this work. I begin by discussing and defining first generation college students, and subsequently explore the intersection and the systemic challenges between first generation college students, college choice models, and students' college experience. I then focus on college access and success programs as a method of support during first generation college students' college choice processes and college experiences that supplement the missing resources students need to access and succeed in higher education. The literature review builds upon Lareau's (1987, 2003) research on social structures, education, and socioeconomic status; P.M. McDonough's (1997) research on socioeconomic status and college access; Perna's (2000, 2002, 2006a, 2006b) and Swail and Perna's (2002) studies on college choice and college access programs; and Engle and Tinto's (2008) work on first generation college students. My theoretical frameworks of critical theory (Bohman, 2013; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002) and Communities of Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005, 2006) conclude the literature review and point to the need for research on how first generation college students navigate the structural inequalities in the United States' education system and make meaning of their college access and support programs during their college-going journeys.

### **Defining and Understanding Current Research on First Generation College Students**

Researchers and practitioners have based definitions of first generation college students around students' parents' education. Therefore, students' parents' level of schooling (e.g., high school, community college, baccalaureate-granting college) and/or whether the parents graduated delineated who qualified as first generation college students. The Higher Education Act of 1965 has defined a first generation college student as:

An individual both of whose parents did not complete a baccalaureate degree or in the case of any individual who regularly resided with and received support from only one parent, an individual whose only such parent did not complete a baccalaureate degree. ("Higher Education Act," 1965, pp. 9-10)

The Higher Education Act's (1965) definition has allowed students whose parent(s) graduated with a technical degree, associate's degree, or certificate to utilize federally funded programs just like students whose parents had no more than a high school degree. Likewise, if students' parents went to a baccalaureate degree-granting institution for three semesters and then dropped out, the students qualified as first generation under the Higher Education Act. In addition to the Higher Education Act, many researchers have utilized this definition of first generation college students (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Pike & Kuh, 2005).

Ward, Siegel, and Davenport (2012) disagreed with the Higher Education Act's definition of first generation college students, believing that students with at least one parent who had some college experience had more college knowledge than students who had neither parent take post-secondary classes. Thus, Ward et al. (2012) based their decision on research (Choy, 2001; Ishitani, 2006) that showed any amount of parents' post-high school education benefited their children's college-going journey and The Suder Foundation's (2016) First Scholars' former definition of first generation college students that defined first generation college students as "[students] whose parents have no education beyond high school" (Ward et al., 2012, pp. 4-5). Ward et al. (2012) argued that parents with some post-high school education could provide more support to their children than parents with no post-high school education. While likely true, for students at a baccalaureate degree-granting institution, parents could only support their students through admissions and up to the level of coursework and college they experienced.

While the Higher Education Act (1965) and Ward et al. (2012) divided students into first generation college students and non-first generation college students based on two different definitions of first generation college students, the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) used three categories to understand the research on first generation college students. In X. Chen's (2005) and Ishitani's (2006) quantitative research looking at student attrition, they used two national data sets (NELS:88 and PETS:2000 also called NELS:1988-2000 Postsecondary Education Transcript Study (PETS)) to compare students whose parents had no more than a high school diploma, students who had at least one parent with some college experience, and students who had at least one parent with a bachelor's degree. X. Chen's (2005) study included 7,800 12<sup>th</sup> grade high school students with 28% students whose parents had no more than a high school diploma, 41% students whose parent(s) who had some college, and 31% students whose parent(s) had at least a bachelors degree (p. iv). Of those students, 22% students whose parents had no more than a high school diploma, 42% students whose parent(s) had some college, and 36% students whose parent(s) had at least a bachelor's degree enrolled in postsecondary education (Figure 2) (X. Chen, 2005, p. iv). When X. Chen (2005) analyzed degree completion after 8 years, 43% of the students whose parents had no more than a high school diploma, 39% students whose parent(s) had some college, and 20% students whose parent(s) had at least a bachelor's degree had not earned a degree and were no longer enrolled in college (Figure 3). Another 10% students whose parents had no more than a high school diploma, 8% students whose parent(s) had some college, and 6% students whose parent(s) had at least a bachelor's degree had not earned a degree, but continued to enroll in college. In the same period, 23% students whose parents had no more than a high school diploma, 14% students whose parent(s) had some college, and 7% students whose parent(s) had at least a bachelor's

degree had earned an associate's degree or certificate. Lastly, 24% students whose parents had no more than a high school diploma, 39% students whose parent(s) had some college, and 68% students whose parent(s) with at least a bachelor's degree earned a bachelor's degree or higher. Thus, within 8 years, 53% students whose parents had no more than a high school diploma and 47% students whose parent(s) had some college had not received any degree compared to 26% students whose parent(s) had at least a bachelor's degree. Similarly, more students whose parent(s) had at least a bachelor's degree (68%) graduated with a bachelor's degree than students whose parents had some college (39%) even though more students whose parent(s) had some college initially enrolled in higher education (42%) compared to students whose parent(s) had at least a bachelor's degree (36%). While X. Chen (2005) showed differences between students who had parents with at most a high school degree versus some college experiences, the stark differences laid between students whose parents had or had not earned a bachelor's degree. Therefore, I used the Higher Education Act's (1965) definition of first generation college students for my research, since X. Chen (2005) showed that students who had parent(s) who earned at least a bachelors degree graduated college at higher rates than both students whose parents had no more than a high school diploma and students whose parent(s) had some college experience.

Ishitani (2006) used a subset of the NELS:88 and PETS:2000 datasets where he studied 4,427 students. In his research, the cohort of students whose parents had no more than a high school diploma consisted of 651 students (14.7% of his participants) and the students whose parent(s) had some college experience included 1,541 students (34.8% of his participants). The other three groups in the study included 2,191 students total (50.5%) and included students where one parent held at least a bachelor's degree (26%), students where both parents held at

least a bachelor's degree (23.9%), and unknown (0.6%). Like X. Chen (2005), Ishitani (2006) found "slight" differences in college graduation rates between students whose parents had no more than a high school diploma and students whose parent(s) had some college experience, with more staggering differences between the students whose parents did and did not have bachelor's degrees (p. 881). Ishitani (2006) concluded that students with parents who had no more than a high school diploma were 51% less likely and students with one parent with some college experience were 44% less likely to graduate in 4 years than students whose parents both held bachelor's degrees. Ishitani's (2006) research, like X. Chen's (2005) research, uncovered minimal differences between students with parents who had no more than a high school diploma and students whose parent(s) had some college experience. Ishitani (2006) found the real advantage was between non-first generation college students and first generation college students including both students with parents who had no more than a high school diploma and students whose parent(s) had some college experience. How researchers, secondary schools, community organizations, government programs, and higher education institutions have defined first generation college students affected the financial, the social, and the academic support services available to students (Ward et al., 2012). In addition, the semantics have influenced the research on first generation college students and whose voices were or were not included in the data.

First generation college students more likely have identified as women, parents, older (compared to traditional students aged 18-22 years old), low-income, and most likely Black or Latino/a (X. Chen, 2005; Choy, 2001; Saenz et al., 2007; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). Undocumented students and students who immigrated to the United States from parts of Southeast China, Latin America, and the Caribbean who spoke English as their second language have also commonly identified as first generation college students (Baum

& Flores, 2011; Rodriguez & Cruz, 2009). Both undocumented students and students who immigrated to the United States have often struggled in the education system due to family obligations, limited English language skills, and financial obstacles (Baum & Flores, 2011; Rodriguez & Cruz, 2009; Woodruff, 2013). Through analyzing the U.S. Current Population Survey data, Baum and Flores (2011) listed various pre-high school and pre-college attributes that have contributed to immigrant students' college attrition. For instance, students from Hong Kong, India, Africa, Taiwan, Japan, China, and Korea have done better in college than students from Mexico, Laos, Cambodia, Central America, and the Spanish Caribbean (Baum & Flores, 2011). Children who have moved to the United States at the age of 12 or younger more likely graduated from high school and college than people who have arrived in the United States in their teenage years or beyond (Baum & Flores, 2011). In addition, students more proficient in English and students whose fathers had higher levels of education attainment in their native country have fared better in graduating from high school and accessing, persisting, and graduating from college (Baum & Flores, 2011).

### **First Generation College Students and College Preparation and Choice**

Students' college-going journeys start with college preparation, followed by college choice. College preparation comes through in students' high school classes, engaging in conversations around the college experience, preparing and taking standardized exams, and finding ways to finance a college education. Along with preparing for college, students typically move through stages or steps to gain access to higher education. College choice models capture this process.

## **College Preparation**

First generation college students frequently experienced obstacles with poor college preparation in that they often attended secondary schools with fewer resources and supports than their non-first generation college student peers (Adelman, 2006; Choy, 2001; Hossler et al., 2013). First generation college students have often lacked opportunities to take advanced classes (e.g., honors or advanced placement) (Adelman, 2006; Hossler et al., 2013; Perna & Kurban, 2013) and standardized exams (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Clark, Rothstein, & Schanzenbach, 2009; Hossler & Kalsbeek, 2009; Micceri, 2009; Walpole et al., 2005). In addition, first generation students have struggled to understand how to finance their education (Heller, 2013; Johnson, 2007; Martinez, Sher, & Krull, 2009; Roderick, Nagaoka, Coca, & Moeller, 2008) and researchers have found varying levels of parental involvement (Choy, 2001; Ohl-Gigliotti, 2008; Terenzini et al., 1996).

### **A lack of academic preparation.**

Adelman (2006) argued that prospective college students should enroll in high school curriculums completing at least 3.75 Carnegie units in math (trigonometry, pre-calculus, and calculus) and English (non-remedial level classes), at least 2.5 Carnegie units in science (biology, chemistry, and physics), at least two units of foreign language and social studies, and at least one unit of computer science. One Carnegie unit equals 120 hours of class time; a single subject (e.g., biology, trigonometry) would therefore meet daily for one hour throughout the academic year (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2013). Adelman (2006) also encouraged college-bound students to take at least one advanced placement (AP) class. Since first generation college students have typically attended low-performing and/or minimally-funded high schools, they have not usually had access to these courses (Adelman, 2006; Choy,



2001; Oakes, Rogers, Lipton, & Morrell, 2002; Terenzini et al., 1996). Thus, first generation students (and/or students who identified as Black, Latino/a, or poor) have usually lacked calculus and AP classes (Choy, 2001; Klopfenstein, 2004; Pryor, Hurtado, DeAngelo, Palucki Blake, & Tran, 2009). Since lower-income families have trusted the educational system and have not questioned the schools' authorities in areas such as course registration, students from lower-income families have remained in less competitive and non-college preparatory classes (Brooks & Copeland-Morgan, 2007; Lareau, 1987, 2003). After studying public schools in Texas, Klopfenstein (2004) noted that students enrolled in non-AP courses at schools with AP offerings received fewer resources and less support in their non-AP courses. Klopfenstein (2004) contended that schools redirected their resources from general courses into the smaller AP classes to ensure their success; however, the reduced resources for non-AP courses negatively influenced the quality of those offerings. When first generation college students enrolled in AP courses, researchers found that they took AP exams less frequently than their non-first generation, White, and/or Asian counterparts (Choy, 2001; Pryor et al., 2009). One explanation of first generation college students' reduced participation was the \$92 AP exam fee (College Board, 2016a). Since selective university admissions counselors have looked for AP classes as a cornerstone for well-rounded, college-ready high school transcripts and have used coursework to predict students' collegiate successes, not having the opportunity to take AP classes or exams have disadvantaged first generation college students in the college admissions process (Adelman, 2006; Hossler et al., 2013; Perna & Kurban, 2013).

### **Costly and biased standardized tests.**

Many selective baccalaureate degree-granting institutions have required students to take standardized tests such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the American College Testing

(ACT). In 2016, the College Board charged students \$54.50 to sit for the SAT exam and for students to send their scores to four colleges; additional score reports cost \$11.25 per school (College Board, 2016b). In Spring 2012, when this research took place, students relied on their guidance counselors' knowledge for SAT or ACT fee waivers or students needed to know to ask their guidance counselors about fee waivers. To prepare for the SATs, preparation courses ranged from \$299 to over \$1,000 (Kaplan Test Prep, 2014); individual tutoring services cost even more money. In addition, researchers have found that standardized tests for college admissions favored White male, upper-middle class students (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Clark et al., 2009; Fischer, Schult, & Hell; Hossler & Kalsbeek, 2009; Micceri, 2009; Walpole et al., 2005). C. Steele and Aronson (1995) have argued that students of color underperformed on standardized tests due to societal beliefs and stereotypes in diagnostic settings (called stereotype threat), while they have performed comparable to White students under different testing conditions on the same exam. With strong research supporting stereotype threat (Rodríguez, 2014; C. Steele, 1997; C. Steele & Aronson, 1995), using standardized testing as criteria for selective colleges' and universities' admissions processes have exemplified the inequality in the college choice process. Often, first generation college students have also learned about required standardized college entrance exams later in their high school careers than non-first generation college students (Choy, 2001). Thus, first generation students have less time to prepare for the exams, take the SATs and the ACTs at lower rates than non-first generation students (Choy, 2001; Saenz et al., 2007), and typically have lower scores (Atherton, 2014; 2009; Saenz et al., 2007).

### **The struggles with financing college.**

The costs of college have continued to escalate for students and their families. In the 2013-2014 academic year, tuition, room and board, and fees for students attending a private,

non-profit baccalaureate degree-granting institution averaged \$40,614 (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The costs for a public college or university's tuition, room and board, and fees averaged \$15,640 (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). From 2008-2013, the government increased federal monies allocated for veterans' education and Pell Grants (McDonough, Calderone, & Venegas, 2015; The Pew Charitable Trust, 2015). The government awarded students Pell Grants (up to \$5,775 for the 2015-2016 academic year) based on students' financial needs, tuition costs, full-time or part-time statuses, and lengths of enrollment in college for a year or less (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). While both Pell Grants and veterans' education funds have increased, the amounts have not kept pace with tuition increases (McDonough et al., 2015; The Pew Charitable Trust, 2015). Concurrently, state funding for education has decreased and states have reallocated available monies to public institutions for their operating costs rather than student grants (Ma, Baum, Pender, & Bell, 2015; McDonough et al., 2015; The Pew Charitable Trust, 2015). Therefore, money has no longer followed students to their choice institutions in the form of scholarship, but rather the money has gone directly to universities to use at their discretion. With less state aid available for students and the decreased purchasing power of federal aid, colleges have relied on students and their families to borrow money through federal or private loans. Researchers have found historically underrepresented students were usually loan and debt adverse hindering their ability to finance higher education and influencing their college preparation and journey (Lee & Mueller, 2014; McDonough et al., 2015). Given these policy changes and challenges, first generation college students have struggled to finance college and faced the emotional burden that comes with it.

Researchers also have highlighted the complexities of the financial aid process. Families must learn to understand complicated financial aid forms such as the FAFSA and the College

Scholarship Service (CSS) Profile and know the differences between loans and scholarships and merit versus need-based aid (Heller, 2013; Johnson, 2007). Roderick et al. (2008) found that the FAFSA form served as a significant barrier to Chicago public school students' success in completing their college applications and matriculating into baccalaureate-degree granting institutions. Baccalaureate-degree granting institutions accepted students who completed their FAFSAs more often than students who did not complete their FAFSA (84% of students compared to 55%) (Roderick et al., 2008). Similarly, Heller (2013) found that grants enhanced college access for first generation college students more than loans. Martinez et al. (2009) studied 3,290 first-year students each fall semester for four years and looked at the correlation between parents' education, other factors (e.g., ACT scores, students' employment, funding for college), and college attrition (enrolled or not enrolled at the university). After controlling for other funding sources, Martinez et al. (2009) also found first generation students used scholarships, grants, and loans to pay for college more than non-first generation students who relied on savings and their parents' assistance. Elliott et al. (2011) found that high-income families saved money for college at higher rates (65% of parents saved money for their children's education and 55% of students saved money for college) than low-middle income families (42% of parents saved money for their children's education and 32% of students saved money for college). Between complicated financial aid forms; dependency on scholarships, loans, and grants; and minimal savings for college, first generation college students have struggled with financing college.

### **Engaging in college conversations.**

Conversations about college have changed amongst first generation college students and their families. Choy (2001) and Terenzini et al. (1996) found first generation students talked less

with their parents about college than non-first generation college students. Choy (2001) used three national data sets including the National Education Longitudinal Study, the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, and the Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study, to learn about first generation college students' access and persistence. Choy (2001) found that students whose parents had at least a bachelor's degree discussed standardized tests and college plans more with their children than less formally educated parents. Terenzini et al. (1996) researched 4,000 students from 18 baccalaureate degree-granting colleges and universities and five associates degree-granting colleges as part of a three-year longitudinal study called the National Study of Student Learning. The researchers compared pre-college characteristics of first generation and non-first generation college students and noted that students differed on "encouragement and support from family" (Terenzini et al., 1996, p. 9). Both Choy's (2001) and Terenzini et al.'s (1996) data contributed to the deficit model as they critiqued first generation college students' parents for not engaging in the college process to the same extent as non-first generation students' parents. The researchers, however, did not account for the schools' structures (e.g., if the schools held the college information sessions in the evening when parents worked, if the schools facilitated the programs in English or in parents' native languages) and how that affected parents' attendance and participation (Choy, 2001; Lareau, 2003; Terenzini et al., 1996). More recently, research on first generation college students has showed their parents engaged in conversations with their children about college (Irlbeck, Adams, Akers, & Burris, 2014; Ohl-Gigliotti, 2008; Wang, 2014). Ohl-Gigliotti (2008) conducted qualitative research with 12 parents of nine first generation college students and found that despite parents' unfamiliarity with the college search process and college experience, parents wanted their children to attend college and asked their children about it. Parents

conveyed the importance of college by discussing the benefits of white-collar jobs compared to blue-collar work, emphasizing success (defined as entering the middle class), and encouraging their children to have plans for their future (Ohl-Gigliotti, 2008). One parent provided examples of how she inserted the benefits of college into conversations throughout childrearing. If asked about getting a dog or a car, the mother responded, “When you get out of college and you get your own house then you can have a Great Dane” or “When you get out of college and get a good job, you can get that kind of car” (Ohl-Gigliotti, 2008, pp. 118-119). Thus, first generation college students’ families may not have engaged in college conversations in the same ways as their non-first generation peers (Choy, 2001; Terenzini et al., 1996); however, educators and researchers should not dismiss the parental support first generation college students received (Irlbeck et al., 2014; Ohl-Gigliotti, 2008; Wang, 2014).

### **College Choice Models**

College choice models have highlighted the process students used to matriculate into postsecondary education and have provided insight into the systemic disadvantages and privileged structures (i.e., secondary and post-secondary education) first generation college students have faced and have navigated during their college choice processes. The use of these models has further necessitated the role and the need of government-funded and nonprofit college access organizations to help students understand and transcend the high school to college pipeline. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) have offered a basic three-stage model on college choice that described historically traditional college students’ experiences. Attinasi’s (1989) work has expanded on Hossler and Gallagher (1987) to look at historically non-traditional students. Lastly, Perna’s (2006a) model has combined economic and sociological models of college access for the most inclusive college access model.

Hossler and Gallagher (1987) have identified three phases for college choice: predispositions, search, and choice. *Predispositions*, phase one, focused on the students' characteristics and interests in pursuing post-secondary education; the importance of socioeconomic status and scholastic ability; and the influence of parents, peers, and co-curricular activities. The *search* stage moved parents and students into a more engaged part of the college process where students (and families) visited college campuses, students prepared for and took the SATs, and students (and families) met with college and high school guidance counselors. Colleges and universities played an active role in the search stage as they focused on marketing to and recruiting prospective students. The final stage, *choice*, involved students making decisions about their future and which schools to apply to and attend. Colleges and universities provided outreach to students during this time to help sway students' decisions.

Hossler and Gallagher (1987) based their commonly referenced model (as in Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; McDonough, 1997; Perez, 2010; Perna, 2000) on an extensive literature review and research conducted by D. Chapman, 1981; R. Chapman, 1984; G. Jackson, 1982; and, Litten, 1982. These researchers utilized high school student participants from across the United States, interviews with high school guidance counselors, and reviewed public policies and college marketing material to formulate their college choice theories (D. Chapman, 1981; R. Chapman, 1984; G. Jackson, 1982; Litten, 1982). As a limitation to his study, Litten (1982) discussed the small numbers of participants who identified as students of color and/or first generation college students. Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model has reflected this limitation as it failed to recognize or name how different populations of students, like first generation, low-income, and/or older college students endured more complex college choice processes (McDonough, 1997) even though the steps of the students' college choice processes compared. For example,

Hossler and Gallagher (1987) noted the impact of peers and parents on the predisposition phrase, but did not discuss the role of high school guidance counselors, extended family members, and community organizations or leaders. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) also noted parental involvement and encouragement through saving for college, which has marginalized parents who could only lend support in non-monetary ways (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). In addition, the model did not recognize the role of community colleges and students who transferred between institutions. First generation and low-income college students' college choice processes came through in Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model when they discussed the role of colleges and noted the importance of colleges' financial aid packages and merit awards to help drive students' decisions (Hottinger & Rose, 2006; Pryor et al., 2009). Hossler and Gallagher (1987) offered a basic three-stage model on college choice that described historically traditional college students' experience; Attinasi (1989) has expanded on Hossler and Gallagher (1987) to look at historically non-traditional college students.

Attinasi (1989) conducted open-ended interviews with 18 Mexican American students eight to 11 months after their first year in college for his study on college access and persistence. Based on an analysis of the interviews, Attinasi (1989) separated the college experience into two broad categories: getting ready and getting in. These categories came from Attinasi (1989) coding the data and then reducing the codes into sub-categories. *Getting ready* presented a model of college access and *getting in* explained how students navigated the college campus to persist. Getting ready consisted of five categories: initial expectations, fraternal modeling, mentor modeling, indirect simulation, and direct simulation. *Initial expectations* included parents, teachers, and classmates talking and telling stories about college throughout students' childhoods. Attinasi (1989) defined *fraternal modeling* as students whose siblings went to



college and shared their first-hand experiences with the study's participants. *Mentor modeling* involved a counselor, a teacher, or another adult who assisted students with college preparation. *Indirect simulation* unintentionally or covertly informed students about college. For example, high school teachers who commented that their research paper requirements compared to first-year college course requirements sent messages to their students about the work in college. Unlike indirect simulation, *direct simulation* involved students making intentional decisions to prepare themselves for college such as visiting campuses, meeting with college representatives, or taking the PSAT or the SAT.

Attinasi's (1989) work emphasized the importance of socialization and recognized that if current institutional structures (secondary and post-secondary institutions) changed their approach to student recruitment and success, they could better meet the needs of Mexican American students. For example, Attinasi (1989) has suggested colleges would recruit additional Mexican American students if secondary and post-secondary institutions incorporated modeling or experiential learning into the college process (Dewey, 1938). Experiential learning has often benefited students of color (Ortiz, 2004) and students from lower-class backgrounds since their childhoods have promoted learning through play, rather than learning in more formal, structured settings (Lareau, 2003). Attinasi (1989) has encouraged schools to take a multi-faceted approach to building college-going mindsets in their students.

Perna (2006a) has developed her college access and choice model based on an analysis of qualitative and quantitative literature and has taken a multi-theoretical approach involving economical and sociological models to construct a single theory that applied to students across different racial and ethnic groups and socioeconomic classes. Perna's (2006a) model of college access included four layers that built upon each other and directly influenced students' demand

for higher education, the supply of resources, and the expected benefits and costs that influenced students' college choices. Layer one, *individual's habitus*, captured Bourdieu's (1986) habitus (or social structures) cast onto individuals based on their families' demographics, histories, cultural capital (skills and knowledge), and social capital (networks). This layer recognized how students' race, class, and gender influenced their college choice process and how students entered the college choice process with differing knowledge and resources. Layer two, *school and community context*, included resources and support students could access such as guidance counselors and teachers. Perna (2006a) noted how this layer captured McDonough's (1997) contribution to the literature on *organizational habitus* where teachers, administrators, mentors, and other structures within the K-12 system promoted or hindered college access. Layer three, *higher education context*, included the role of higher education and recognized the power colleges and universities held over those who gained entry into their institutions. While Hossler and Gallagher (1987) also mentioned the role of institutions influencing the college choice process, they did not frame it within the context of power but focused on college recruiting and marketing efforts. Thus, Perna (2006a) distinguished colleges and universities as potential change agents responsible for who gained access to higher education and who did not. Perna's (2006a) fourth layer, *the social, economic, and policy context*, recognized how external policies, programs, and current events influenced students' college-going process. This layer represented the zeitgeist and the social and the political economies of the education systems that influenced students' decisions. Thus, Perna's (2006a) four layers have captured sociological and economical benefits and challenges making the model more comprehensive and inclusive for all students.

### **College Experience and Persistence**

Patterns in college persistence and graduation rates of first generation college students have compared to what researchers have found in college access (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Sixty percent of first generation students left college after their first year and 11% of low-income and first generation students who enrolled in higher education graduated within six years compared to 55% of non-low-income, non-first generation college students (Engle & Tinto, 2008). At private, baccalaureate degree-granting colleges, low-income and first generation students graduated at a rate of 43% compared to their advantaged peers who graduated at a rate of 80% (Engle & Tinto, 2008). With high dropout rates and low college graduation rates, researchers studied student persistence to learn why colleges have often struggled to retain first generation college students.

Different success strategies in academic affairs and student affairs have contributed to deeper, more engaged learning and student persistence. Through the National Survey of Student Engagement, Kuh (2012) has named ten high-impact student success strategies: first year seminars, undergraduate research, common intellectual experiences, diverse/global learning, service learning and community-based learning, learning communities (Engstrom, 2008; B. L. Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, & Gabelnick, 2004), writing intensive courses, capstone courses and projects, collaborative assignments and projects (Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000; Engstrom, 2008; Nelson Laird, Chen, & Kuh, 2008), and internships. These practices have contributed to deeper learning and students' academic, personal, and general gains (Kuh, 2012). In addition, student engagement and persistence have improved when faculty challenged and supported students (Nelson Laird et al., 2008), students have faculty mentors and academic advisors (Barefoot, 2000; Duffy, 2007; Engstrom & Tinto, 2008; Light, 2001; Skahill, 2002;

Tinto, 1993), students have experienced high faculty-student interactions (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), and professors have validated students' abilities and voices in the classroom (Rendón & Muñoz, 2011). Students who have friends on campus (Hurtado & Carter, 1996; Soria & Stebleton, 2013; Stebleton, Soria, & Huesman, 2014) and have lived on campus also have increased persistence and sense of belonging (Skahill, 2002).

While students' engagements in academic and student affairs and high school GPAs have most often predicted college persistence and success, economic factors have also contributed (R. Chen & St. John, 2011). R. Chen and St. John (2011) found students at their first time institutions from high socioeconomic backgrounds persisted 55% more than their peers from low socioeconomic backgrounds (70.63% versus 44.10%). R. Chen and St. John (2011) also found that a 1% increase in non-need based aid increased persistence rates by 1%, where a 1% increase in need based aid increased persistence rates by 2%. As such, financial aid rewards contributed to college students' persistence and success.

In addition to financial obstacles, first generation college students continued to face institutional barriers in student and academic affairs (Kuh, 2012). For example, Engstrom and Tinto (2008) have found curricular learning communities helped first generation and low-income student success; however, first generation college students still had less academic self-confidence (Núñez, 2009), lower GPAs (X. Chen, 2005; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004), received less feedback from faculty (Terenzini et al., 1996), and faced more challenges in the classroom (Atherton, 2014) compared to non-first generation students. Employment (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Perna, Cooper, & Li, 2007), campus engagement (Pike & Kuh, 2005; Tinto, 2005), sense of belonging (O'Keeffe, 2013; Ostrove & Long, 2007; Soria & Stebleton, 2013; Stebleton

et al., 2014), and mental health challenges (Stebbleton et al., 2014) have also affected first generation students' persistence more than non-first generation college students' persistence.

### **The struggle to balance work and college.**

Working for 1-15 hours a week had a positive correlation on student retention; however, once students worked 16 hours or more a week, work had negatively affected students' success at obtaining their bachelor's degree at both private and public institutions (Perna et al., 2007). Engle and Tinto (2008) found that 17% of first generation students worked between 1-20 hours a week and 63% worked over 20 hours. After six years, of the 17% of first generation college students working between 1-20 hours a week, 46% earned their bachelor's degree, 25% earned a certificate or an associate's degree, 16% were still enrolled in school, and 13% were no longer enrolled (or graduated) (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Comparatively, first generation college students who worked over 20 hours a week after six years, 31% earned a certificate or an associates degree, 14% earned their bachelor's, 35% were still enrolled in school, and 30% were no longer enrolled (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Thus, first generation college students who worked 1-20 hours a week earned a bachelor's degree at a rate of 32 percentage points higher than those who worked over 20 hours a week. Comparing first generation college students and non-first generation college students who worked similar hours also showed large gaps in graduation rates. Seventy-eight percent of non-first generation college students who worked 1-20 hours a week earned a baccalaureate degree (compared to 46% of first generation students) and 41% of non-first generation college students who worked over 20 hours earned their bachelor's degree (compared to 14% of first generation college students). These statistics have illustrated the impact of working on graduation rates and have highlighted how working affected first generation college students' persistence more than non-first generation college students. Scholars have argued that

work limited students' time to engage in campus involvement, social activities, and schoolwork (e.g., studying, tutoring, attending faculty office hours) contributing to first generation college students persistence or lack thereof (Furr & Elling, 2000; Pike & Kuh, 2005; Tinto, 2005).

### **A search for belonging.**

Students who have felt a sense of belonging (often called *fit* in higher education literature) in college often adjusted and persisted better than students who have not felt as though they belonged (Gummadam, Pittman, & Ioffe, 2016; O'Keeffe, 2013; Ostrove & Long, 2007; Soria & Stebleton, 2013; Stebleton et al., 2014). First generation college students, students of color, and/or lower income students have harder times fitting into campus life than non-first generation college students, White, and/or middle and upper class students (Gummadam et al., 2016; Hurtado & Carter, 1996; O'Keeffe, 2013; Ostrove & Long, 2007; Soria & Stebleton, 2013; Stebleton et al., 2014; Waterman, 2012). The differences in demographics, values and mission, written and unwritten cultures, and rhetoric have made it hard for first generation college students to feel part of either space (Lubrano, 2004; Terenzini et al., 1996).

Ostrove and Long's (2007) quantitative study at a small, liberal arts college similarly concluded that low-income students and first generation college students have lacked a sense of belonging on campus. Ostrove and Long (2007) reached out to 800 students and received a 41% response rate yielding 322 completed surveys to study the relationships between students' subjective and objective social class with students' sense of belonging. Subjective social class came from students' self-identifying as poor, working class, lower middle class, middle class, upper middle class, or upper class. The researchers measured objective social class based on students' families' income, parents' education, and parents' jobs. The results of the study showed that both subjective and objective social class predicted students' sense of belonging;

therefore, predicting students' academic adjustment, social adjustment, and quality of their college experiences. This supports research on academic and social integration (Braxton, Vesper, & Hossler, 1995; Tinto, 1993). Lower income students did not feel a sense of belonging on their college campuses affecting their academic and social adjustments, college experiences, and persistence (Hausmann, Ye, & Ward Schofield, 2009; Ostrove & Long, 2007).

### **Mental health challenges.**

College students battling mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and stress have often experienced trouble with their academics, time management, social interactions, and persistence (Zhao, 2010). As part of the Student Experience in the Research University survey yielding 58,017 student participants from six large public universities in California, Stebleton et al. (2014) found more first generation students than non-first generation college students reported a need for, but not using, counseling services. First generation college students said they did not seek out counseling due an inconvenient location of counseling services (84.5%), not knowing about the services (80.4%), the therapists' hours not working with the students' schedule (77.8%), and/or not having time for therapy (76.1%) (Stebleton et al., 2014). In addition to using less counseling resources, Stebleton et al. (2014) have found that first generation college students experienced increased stress and depression while in college than their non-first generation counterparts.

Gloria and Castellanos's (2012) findings mirrored those of Stebleton et al. (2014). Gloria and Castellanos (2012) conducted in-depth interviews with seven first generation Latina college students (five undergraduate students and two masters students), two Latina/o university personnel who worked with students (an academic director and an academic advisor), and one non-Latino/a mental health provider from the university. Gloria and Castellanos (2012) found

first generation Latino/a college students experienced homesickness, depression, and stress from being physically away from home and balancing family relationships, isolation and not feeling included on a predominantly White campus, and low self-esteem and self-efficacy due to the hostile campus environment and feelings of “differentness” and like an “outsider” (p. 91). In addition, the college employees and mental health counselor noted that first generation Latino/a students had different coping mechanisms and knowledge of campus resources than second generation Latino/a students negatively impacting first generation students’ stress management, homesickness, and depression. As such, first generation college students’ mental health and availability of resources affected their persistence.

### **The role of families.**

First generation college students have often felt straddled between their families/ home communities and college (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; London, 1989; Lubrano, 2004; Rendón, 1992; Terenzini et al., 1996; Waterman, 2012). Using the framework of Stierlin (1974) (in London, 1989) on separation and family roles, London (1989) collected life histories of 15 first generation college students from lower income and working class families that attended different colleges throughout Boston, Massachusetts. London’s (1989) findings have showed how first generation students struggled to balance college and home in three ways: bound and delegated, delegated, and expelled and delegated. *Bound and delegated* students struggled with how to care for their families while they simultaneously received the message to go to college (London, 1989, p. 148). Since the students’ parents and grandparents did not know what college entailed, they inadvertently conveyed mixed messages to their college-going students expecting them to participate in home activities, but also wanting them to study and do well academically. *Delegated* students felt pressured to represent the family by going to college, fulfill their parents’



and grandparents' dreams of going to college, and/or break the cycle of working class and blue-collar work through going to college. While many students understood their educational pathways since a young age, students have questioned their independence and personal and identity developments throughout their college-going journey due to their parents' pressures. For example, one participant questioned religion, sexual orientation, and feminist thought during college, because it clashed with her parents' values and why they wanted her to attend college. Lastly, *expelled and delegated* students felt pushed away from their families and excluded. For example, students who could not travel home from college for holidays or family events may describe feeling excluded and isolated from their families. As such, students felt alone and disconnected both at home and at college.

In contrast to London (1989) whose research framed students' relationships with their families during college as a struggle, Waterman (2012) has found that Native American students who went home frequently used home as a bridge between Native and non-native cultures. As such, "home-going" contributed to students' success (Waterman, 2012). Waterman conducted interviews with 54 self-identified Haudenosaunee college graduates. Thirty-five of those students lived on-campus during college and 26 of them had the ability go home on the weekends (due to proximity of the reservation and their college). Nineteen of the 26 students went home every weekend or at least once a month. Waterman (2012) found that of those 19 students, "home-going" allowed for college success and persistence as students found their homes (family and land) to be their greatest place of support (p. 199). Waterman (2012) has re-framed the role of family from one that had worked against collegiate success to a framework of support and encouragement.

**Negotiating resources.**

Banks (2006) interviewed 12 Black female college students from four different institutions of higher education (including community colleges and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions) who mostly identified as first generation college students and poor, lower class, or working class. Banks (2006) has found that “Black women undergraduates employ[ed] a variety of conceptual understandings, reworked discourses, and specific strategies to be successful in college” (p. 236). For example, Banks’s (2006) participants negotiated and navigated their relationships with college employees, so the women benefited from the employees’ knowledge and resources. When employees used negative or racist discourse, the Black women worked to not let that affect their drive for success or their ability to gain the knowledge the employees offered them. Banks (2006) discussed how the Black women worked against traditional social norms (privileging White, middle and upper socioeconomic classes) and educators’ low expectations set for historically underrepresented students.

**A Background on College Access and Success Programs**

First generation college students have often prepared, accessed, and experienced college differently than their non-first generation college peers. To better support first generation college students throughout their college-going journey, Engle and Tinto (2008) have recommended policymakers and educators: (a) improve academic preparation for college, (b) increase financial aid for college, (c) increase transfer rates to four-year colleges from community colleges, (d) ease the transition to college, (e) encourage academic and social engagement on the college campus, and (f) promote (re)entry to college for young and working adults who previous left without earning their degree (pp. 28-29). In addition, researchers have looked into innovative strategies such as non-profit and government-funded college access and

support programs as a purported solution to improve college access and completion for first generation college students (Coles & Engstrom, 2012; Perna, 2002; Thelin, 2004; Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002).

Nonprofit and government-funded college access and success organizations have helped underrepresented students gain entry and persist in a system historically known to cater to the elite and the privileged classes (National College Access Network, 2011; Thelin, 2004).

Hagedorn and Tierney (2002) defined, “College preparation programs as enhancement programs that supplement a school’s regular activities” (p. 2). Hagedorn and Tierney (2002) found that most college access programs have assisted students’ transition from high school to college, improved their study skills and academics, and/or provided personal and academic counseling. Over 2,500 college access and success programs have joined the National College Access Network, “To build, strengthen, and empower communities committed to college access and success so that all students, especially those underrepresented in postsecondary education, can achieve their educational dreams” (National College Access Network, 2011, para. 1; 2012).

College access and success programs have achieved this mission as shown through their graduation rates that have outperformed national data on comparable populations of students. Constantine, Seftor, Martin, Silva, and Myers (2006) conducted research on government funded college access program, Talent Search, in three states (Texas, Florida, and Indiana). The researchers followed a cohort of students starting in the ninth grade through three years after the students projected high school graduation year. In Texas, the findings showed that students who participated in Talent Search had a high school graduation rate of 86% compared to 77% of students in the same year that did not participate in Talent Search. Sixty-two percent of Talent Search students also completed college financial aid paperwork (such as the FAFSA) for the first

time compared to 35% of students that did not use Talent Search, which Roderick et al. (2008) have found predicated college enrollment. As such, 51% of students who used Talent Search attended a public Texas college or university after high school graduation where 33% of students who did not use Talent Search attended a public Texas college or university. In Florida, 84% of Talent Search students graduated high school compared to 70% of students who did not use Talent Search and 52% of Talent Search students completed financial aid forms for the first time compared to 33% of students that did not use Talent Search. Fifty-one percent of Talent Search participants in Florida attended a public Florida college or university after graduation where 37% of students who did not use Talent Search attended a public Florida college or university. Constantine et al.'s (2006) findings confirmed that students in Florida, Texas, and Indiana who used Talent Search graduated and enrolled in college at higher rates than students who did not use Talent Search.

Like government funding college access programs, research on non-profit college access and support programs have demonstrated successes college graduation rates of first generation, low-income college students. Let's Get Ready (2016) located in Boston, Massachusetts and New York, New York, has sent 92% of their student participants onto college after high school and has graduated students from college at five times the national average for low-income students. The Posse Foundation (2014) has reported college graduation rates at 90%. Similarly, New Jersey SEEDS (2015) cited that 97% of their high school students enrolled in college in 2015-2016 and 93% of their students have continued to persist in college. With six-year college graduation rates for first generation, low-income college students at 11% from all baccalaureate degree-granting colleges and 43% for first generation, low-income college students at private colleges, college access and support programs' college enrollment and graduation rates have

greatly outperformed national averages (Engle & Tinto, 2008) (Figure 1). These statistical differences and achievements convey the necessity of further research on college access and success programs.

### **A History of College Access and Support Programs**

As the decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 propelled a change in public education and university enrollment to declare separate was not equal, the government launched its college readiness initiative. In 1964, 1965, and 1968, Federal TRIO Programs launched Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services Program (SSSP), respectively, to prepare and support low-income, first generation college students starting in secondary school and continuing through college (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Simultaneously, the government collaborated with universities for their first financial aid incentive targeted to low-income students called the Federal Work-Study program through the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (FinAid, 2013). Funding for the work-study program came from both the colleges and the government. College administrators hired work-study students to work on-campus and in nonprofit organizations throughout the community. Ideally, students' incomes through work-study would help offset their college expenses. A year later, the Higher Education Act of 1965 furthered the government's financial support towards higher education to include Perkins Student Loans and the Education Opportunity Grant (later renamed Pell Grant) (FinAid, 2013).

Just after a commitment from the government came in the 1960s to better support higher education, the nonprofit sector reached out to support low-income students. In 1968, the Harlem Center for Education (2013) began in East Harlem to ensure minority students received academic services in secondary school and additional support throughout college. A schoolteacher with

the support of Columbia University's Teachers College started Prep for Prep in 1978 to offer academic support to low-income students of color, assist them to enroll in college preparatory high schools, and attend selective colleges upon graduation (Prep for Prep, 2012). In 1986, Motivating Our Students Through Experience (MOSTE) (2012) began with 35 female students and mentors. While many of these college access and support programs started just after the TRIO programs and federal financial aid incentives, other community agencies began as early as the second Morrill Land Grant Act of 1890. In 1889, the Educational Alliance (2010) started in New York City to help Jewish immigrants transition to the United States. While The Educational Alliance continues to serve the Jewish community in 2016, they also provide resources to all low-income families. Many of the students in this study who came to the United States with their families from China utilized the Educational Alliance's family services and Edgies, an afterschool program started in 2009. Henry Street Settlement (2013) had a similar trajectory, helping families in Manhattan's Lower East Side beginning in 1893. It now offers a variety of programs, including college readiness and access initiatives (Henry Street Settlement, 2013). The National College Access Network (2011) came together in 1995 as a 501(c)(3) to provide resources and networks to the growing number of college access and support organizations.

### **Research on College Access and Support Programs**

While college access and support programs have increased (Saunders & Serna, 2004) due to inadequate public schools and universities' commitment to heighten college access to underrepresented students (Hagedorn & Tierney, 2002), the research on such programs has remained limited (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002). Most of the current literature focuses on single programs (e.g., case studies, program evaluations, best practices) and/or quantitative research

based on program administrators' responses. As such, a gap remains in the literature on qualitative evaluations of the programs and how program participants use and perceive the programs.

In collaboration with The College Board, The Education Resources Institute (TERI), and the Council for Opportunity in Education, Swail and Perna (2002) administered a mixed-methods study in 1999-2000 looking at college access programs throughout the country. Through focus groups with the programs' directors, Swail and Perna (2002) have concluded that successful college access programs must have clear missions and visions; target students early in their educational journey and involve parents; foster collaboration within their communities; have solid finances; exhibit professionalism and prioritize personal development; and use proven practices, technology, and standardized processes (pp. 30-31). Swail and Perna (2002) also found 57% of college access programs affiliated with colleges and universities, while secondary schools coordinated 16% of the programs, and community organizations oversaw 13%. Sixty-two percent of programs targeted specific populations of students (Swail & Perna, 2002). The special populations included 80% low-income students, 71% first generation college students, 69% minority students, 39% high achieving students, 38% low achieving students, 36% high schools students at risk to dropout, and 22% gifted and talented students (some programs targeted students in more than one category) (Swail & Perna, 2002). In addition, Swail and Perna (2002) found that 66% of college access programs provided services for their students year round, 15% only served students over the summer, and 18% of college access organizations helped students during the academic year.

Following Swail and Perna's (2002) study, Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, et al. (2008) analyzed 103 state and federal programs in five different states (Maryland, Pennsylvania,

California, Georgia, and Florida) by looking at demographics, financial support, and academic backgrounds of the students using selected college access programs. Through the data analysis informed by the theoretical frameworks of Perna (2006) and St. John (2003), Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, et al. (2008) devised a typology of state and federal programs. The results showed that 41% of government-funded programs targeted low-income students, 26% focused on high-achieving students, 13% on both students who came from low-income families and succeeded academically, 9% on students attending particular institutions (e.g., state schools), and 7% of the programs did not target any specific student population (Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, et al., 2008). In addition, 90% of the state and the federal programs provided students with solely financial support for higher education (e.g., grants, loans), 6% provided academic support, 3% provided both academic support and information on college, 1% only provided information on college, and less than 1% provided academic and financial support or financial support and information on college (Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, et al., 2008). None of the state or the federal programs in the typology provided students with all three forms of support (financial support, academic support, and information on college) (Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, et al., 2008). In addition, Perna et al. (2008) found that 88% of state and federal programs sent monies directly to students for college (i.e., through scholarships), where the remaining 12% of monies went indirectly to the students through their high schools and/or college programs. Perna et al.'s (2008) research captured the college access programs' services based on the programs', not the students', perspectives.

### **Examples of College Access and Success Programs**

To best understand the work of college access and support programs, Prep for Prep and On Point for College serve as two examples. Based in New York City, Prep for Prep relies on



New York City's public, charter, and parochial lower and middle schools to nominate students of color to apply (Prep for Prep, 2012). Interested students go through a rigorous application process in fifth grade before the program enrolls them in sixth grade (Prep for Prep, 2012). Once enrolled, students complete the required Prep for Prep curriculum and then apply to independent college preparatory schools throughout the Northeast. Prep maintains their relationships with the students throughout high school, assists students with their college admissions process, and supports students during college. Prep's support comes through tutoring; emotional guidance; and helping the students obtain internships, jobs, and leadership experiences. In 2012, Prep for Prep had 757 students enrolled in college and had graduated 2,129 students since 1978 (Prep for Prep, 2012).

On Point for College, initially based out of Syracuse, New York, primarily serves first generation college students of color from low income backgrounds (On Point for College Inc., 2010). On Point for College's team holds office hours in community centers throughout Syracuse to assist with students' college admissions process and provide social and emotional support. On Point for College also offers campus visits to New York colleges about three times a week. The summer before college, On Point for College takes their students shopping for college essentials and hosts an orientation to aid in the students' transitions. To assist with retention efforts, On Point for College coordinates students' transportation to campuses in the fall and over school breaks; maintains frequent contact with the students through phone calls, text messages, and school visits; and identifies on-campus advocates for the students to call upon for additional support. Students also receive assistance with career and internship preparations and placements. Like, Prep for Prep, On Point for College does not work solely with one college or university making it a student-centered program (Gándara, 2002). From 1999-2011, On Point

for College served over 4,000 students and has helped 78% of them enroll in college and 62% graduate or continue to persist (Coles & Engstrom, 2012). In recent years, On Point expanded and opened offices in Utica, New York.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Theoretical frameworks have allowed researchers to collect, analyze, and present data from a particular lens to further support and ground their research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Shavelson & Towne, 2002). Similarly, theoretical frameworks let readers understand the researchers' approach to their research questions, methodology, and analysis. As previously discussed, college preparation, college choice, and students' college experiences have reflected systems of privileges and capital; therefore, the tenets and assumptions of critical theory (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002; Robertson, 2011) and Communities of Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005, 2006) have provided frameworks to challenge the racial and the classist systems and structures of education and recognize first generation college students' capital.

### **Critical Theory**

Critical theory developed at the Frankfurt School started in post-World War I Germany with Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). At that time, given threatening, tumultuous Germany, the three Jewish philosophers fled to the United States (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). As they juxtaposed the racial and the classed systems and climate in Germany with their perceived freedom in the United States, the theorists embraced and considered the power and privileges different people and groups held and who determined who held that power and privilege (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). The ideology and integration of race, class, gender, possibility, power, justice, religion, education, and other social institutions have shaped the construction of critical theory (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). As such, critical

theory was “guided by a concern for social justice” (Robertson, 2011, p. 2) and “disrupt[ed] and challenge[d] the status quo” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002, p. 87).

To understand how power, privilege, and inequality as posited in critical theory played out within society, Weber (2010), an intersectional scholar who studied the “interrelationship” of race, socioeconomic class, gender, and sexuality, has detailed how micro social-psychological levels and macro structural levels of oppression each intersected within three social domains (ideological, political, and economical) (p. 26). Examples of macro structural levels of oppression within education have affected students’ schooling and policies (e.g., redlining, bussing), neighborhood resources (e.g., funding after-school programs, community health centers), and funding (e.g., Pell Grants). Micro social-psychological levels of oppression and micro-aggressions (subtle jabs and insults) have occurred between students and their teachers or professors, classmates, and school administrators (Banks, 2006; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Weber, 2010). Solorzano et al. (2000) have provided examples of micro-aggressions that ranged from faculty members doubting the integrity and the honesty of Black students’ academic performance to peers pointedly not inviting Black students into study groups or group projects. Black students also have discussed their feelings of belittlement and invisibility when White students talked about affirmative action and assumed colleges accepted Black students to fill quotas rather than because of the students’ intellectual abilities (Solorzano et al., 2000). Both macro structural and micro social-psychological levels of oppression have broken down the power structures captured in critical theory and showed how power and privilege (and lack thereof) influenced students’ college-going journeys, successes in college, and racial climate on campus. Through critical theory, students have become contributors and teachers allowing

students to make meaning of their own experiences and allowing researchers, administrators, and educators to challenge the systems (e.g., education, housing) as broken.

### **Communities of Cultural Wealth**

According to Bourdieu (1986), capital has existed in three forms: economic, social, and cultural. Economic capital has included finances, savings and investments, and income (Bourdieu, 1986). Social capital has come through connections and networks that have varying characteristics or benefits (Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural capital has entailed knowledge and skills acquired over time and an appreciation for tangible goods such as artwork or jewelry (Bourdieu, 1986). Each form of capital has affected people from childhood through adulthood, since Bourdieu (1986) believed that some people have capital and others do not. This then equated to people from higher income backgrounds having more capital and people from lower income backgrounds having less; thus, promoting a dichotomy between “the haves” and “the have nots.” Bourdieu (1986) did not consider social mobility or how a given time, political environment, or culture affected capital; rather, Bourdieu framed capital as stagnant. In addition, Bourdieu (1986) built his understanding of capital through researching the academic success of school-aged children from different socioeconomic backgrounds. As a result, his work based capital on financial and economic benefits, while negating the capital that arose from people with less financial resources and/or people who gained capital due to other identities or experiences aside from socioeconomic status (Hodgson, 2014).

Yosso (2005, 2006) challenged Bourdieu's (1986) concept of cultural capital that viewed people from lower socioeconomic classes as lacking or deficit capital. Yosso (2005, 2006) cited Collins, 1986; Crenshaw, 2002; and Matsuda, 1991 to contextualize and define Critical Race Theory and re-center capital from an upper-class, White lens to communities of color. Along

with Critical Race Theory, Yosso (2005, 2006) framed her research through Oliver and Shapiro's (1995) work expanding the measurement of wealth from using salaries or earnings to include accumulated wealth such as earnings, assets, and stock portfolios. Using Critical Race Theory and Oliver and Shapiro (1995), Yosso (2005, 2006) centered the experiences of people of color and looked at a community's accumulated capital instead of an individual's capital transforming cultural capital into cultural wealth. As such, Yosso (2005, 2006) has recognized that people of color have their own forms of cultural wealth including: aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, navigational capital, resistant capital, and social capital. Aspirational capital has described people's ability to imagine and work towards a dream beyond their current reality. Linguistic capital has included communicating in multiple languages and cross-cultures and using techniques like oral histories and storytelling relying on strong listening skills, paying attention to detail, and engaging the listener. Familial capital has embraced the importance of family and the strong kinship between people's immediate family members and extended family (who may or may not be related). Familial capital has also included an understanding of emotional competencies and collective identity. Triandis (2001) defined collective identity and collectivism as people "interdependent within their in-groups (family, tribe, nation, etc.) [who] give priority to the goals of their in-groups, share their behavior primarily on the basis of in-group norms, and behave in a communal way" (p. 909). Navigational capital has entailed people of color's ability to understand and navigate institutions and systems not created or designed for their successes. Such capital has recognized people's ability to triumph over seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Resistant capital has consisted of people of color's determination to continue forward despite their situations. Lastly, Yosso's (2005, 2006) social capital has likened to Bourdieu's (1986) social capital, in that it included people's networks and connections.

Given Yosso's (2005, 2006) work against the deficit model on cultural wealth and showing through counterstories how Chicana/Chicano communities put time, dedication, and effort into making raced and classed systems work for their children and future generations, other researchers (Banks, 2006; Clothey, 2016; DeNicolo, González, Morales, & Romaní, 2015) have utilized her theoretical framework and expanded on her research. For example, Clothey (2016) considered how Uyghurs, a marginalized population in China, navigated the dominant ideology and policy in China through a cultural wealth framework. Through communities of cultural wealth, Clothey (2016) identified a need to restructure education to recognize Uyghurs' culture, language, and values to sustain Uyghur traditions. DeNicolo et al. (2015) studied a bi-lingual third grade classroom through reviewing homework and testimonios (written or oral telling of persons' lived experiences), classroom observations, and informal and formal interviews with the students and the teacher. DeNicolo et al. (2015) showed the intersections of "aspirational wealth and bilingualism"; "linguistic capital and familia [family or kin]"; and, "bilingualism, consejos [advice], and navigational capital." These themes highlighted the importance of bi-lingual education in building students' cultural wealth and agency, while the teacher worked against English-based testing and school systems and policies (DeNicolo et al., 2015). Banks's (2006) work on Black women attending college and negotiating their available resources, also expanded on Yosso's (2005, 2006) cultural wealth. Banks (2006) showed how Black women used their time, dedication, and capital to navigate educational systems and how much of their work went unnoticed.

### **Conclusion**

Yosso's (2006) work on communities of cultural wealth and other researchers who drew upon her theoretical framework, broadened the research on traditionally underrepresented people

and communities through working against the deficit model and giving scholarly space to counterstories, narratives that expressed cultural wealth and success. Similarly, first generation college students navigated the challenges of the educational system and found ways to make the system work for them through the influence of their college access and success programs. With the support of college access and success programs, first generation college students have persisted and graduated high school, matriculated in college, and graduated college at rates nine times higher than the national average (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Prep for Prep, 2012; The Posse Foundation, 2014).

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### Chapter Three: METHODOLOGY

This study explores how first generation college students make meaning of the influence of their college access and support programs. It delves into how students use their college access and support programs to navigate their college preparation, their college choice, and their college experience. The research questions that guided this work include:

- How do first generation college students use college access programs to prepare themselves for, gain access to, and persist at a selective university?
- What skills and knowledge do first generation college students learn through their college access and support programs?
- How do first generation college students use the skills and knowledge they obtained through their college access and support programs to help navigate a selective university?

Since the research questions ask “*How do college access and success organizations influence first generation college students?*,” qualitative research best serves this study. Qualitative researchers examine, “*How z influences y*” (Eisenhart, 2005, p. 245). Qualitative methodology allows researchers to get a deeper understanding of people’s lives and explore how people make “meaning” and “make sense of their lives” and their own experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006, p. 7; S. Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). To answer qualitative research questions, researchers must recognize their own positionality and theoretical assumptions, then collect, analyze, and present their research to expand on current research and understandings (Chavez, 2008; Couture, Zaidi, & Maticka-Tyndale, 2012; S. Jones et al., 2006). Therefore, in this chapter, I first discuss my social location and theoretical assumptions that influenced the data collection and analysis of



the study. Then I outline the steps I took to collect my research and include background on the setting and my participants (Biklen & Casella, 2007).

### **Positionality and Role of as a Researcher**

When I started this research, I brought with me my identity and my own theoretical assumptions about the world, as I cannot separate my own experiences, perceptions, and ideologies from my work (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Couture et al., 2012). I grew up in the 1980s and 1990s in Baltimore County about 15 minutes outside Baltimore City. As a child, I remember Mayor Kurt Schmoke declaring Baltimore “The City That Reads,” in effort to promote literacy in the home and in the school system. While Baltimore painted, “The City that Reads” on park benches and bus stops, I grew up in a home filled with books where my parents read to me regularly. I attended a private, college preparatory school starting in first grade where all my classmates graduated from high school and continued directly onto baccalaureate degree-granting universities or colleges. My parents held advanced, professional degrees and raised me (and my younger sister) with Jewish customs and values that had emphasized education. Through my Jewish learning and experiences, I also learned about tzedek (social justice) and tikkun olam (betterment of the world) (Feld, 2010). Together, these Hebrew phrases captured what has motivated my studies, my career, and my volunteerism.

My research interests in first generation college students, college access and retention, and college access programs started with my work at Juniata College and our pre-orientation programs. As Director of Student Activities, I developed a campus initiative to increase overall retention rates on campus, but failed to successfully engage first generation college students. In addition, from 2007 to 2009, Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Central Pennsylvania formally matched me with a little sister. Through our relationship, I learned about the inequities in the school

system; I saw how easy it was for her to give up the fight. At 10 years old, my little sister knew that she did not have a college fund and she felt college was beyond her reach. Simultaneously, I saw how her mother and I could work together to best give her the support she needed. I understood math and report cards; her mother understood why she closed up when life got tough. At 10 years old, my little sister was still open to learning, impressionable, and saw the good in people. Our conversations and time baking cookies showed me that education had to go beyond the school's walls to include emotional, physical, and academic support. My work with Big Brothers, Big Sisters and Juniata College led me to study first generation college students, college access, and retention.

As personal, professional, and community engagement connected me to this work, it also became part of my doctoral experience. Publicly engaged scholarship transformed the idea of the "ivory tower" metaphor of higher education being isolated from the surrounding community to a place where the academy and the community learned and informed each other (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Ellison & Eatman, 2008; Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco, & Swanson, 2012). While I do not consider my dissertation a form of public scholarship, I felt my graduate career mirrored the concept - what I learned in the classroom complemented my role as a research assistant and my role as a student employee. In the classroom, I focused my papers and studies on first generation college students and college access and retention. As a research assistant, I conducted interviews and focus groups on first generation college students for two different college access and support programs (before I collected my dissertation data). In addition, I worked in the Office of Enrollment Management with The Posse Foundation, KIPP Through College, and Say Yes to Education (all different types of college access and support programs). In my role with Posse, a highly selective and structured college access and success program, I

traveled with the university contingent to Atlanta, Miami, and Los Angeles for the final piece of the Posse Scholar selection process in both December 2011 and 2012. I spent spring and summer 2012 helping the inaugural Posse Scholars prepare for college and joined the Atlanta Scholars in July 2012 for an outdoor retreat where we engaged in team-building exercises and discussed expectations of each other and college life. For the 2012-2013 academic year, I served as the designated mentor for the 12 Posse Atlanta Scholars and met weekly with them. We celebrated birthdays and Thanksgiving together, shared meals, attended school events, and frequented the nearby coffee shop and frozen yogurt store. I shared my research topic with the Atlanta Posse Scholars to ensure transparency in both my role as their mentor and as a researcher. The Posse Scholars were not my research participants; however, they became a part of my work and me. Many of them reflected themes consistent with my participants' stories and as I researched and learned more about first generation college students and the experiences of students of color on predominantly White campuses, I felt as though I facilitated better group and individual meetings. For example, I learned through my research and readings how first generation college students felt pulled between two worlds of college elitism and their families' lower, working class reality (London, 1989; Lubrano, 2004; Rendón, 1992; Terenzini et al., 1996). Before the Posse Scholars went home for winter break, I asked questions like, "How do you think it will feel to go home?," "Are you nervous or anxious about going home over break?," "Do you think going home will feel different after being on campus for several months?" Then, upon the students' return, we processed how they felt over break and what they had experienced. My research made me a better mentor and practitioner and, similarly, my work in the field has made me a better researcher.

Since college, I have pursued my doctorate and held a few different positions in my field. In each school I attended and role I assumed, I have learned more about the inequities in higher education and the systemic barriers that hinder college student access and success for traditionally underrepresented college students. For example, I have seen how students who enter college without taking AP tests have less flexibility with course selection and paths to degree completion. I have seen how non-first generation college students mimic their parents' behaviors with self-advocacy, questioning authority, and asking for exceptions that first generation college students do not know to do (Lareau, 1987). I have seen students struggle through classes with racist or xenophobic professors, because no other professors teach that required course needed for graduation. These inequities fuel my work and contribute to the necessity of this research.

While my experiences contributed to my role as a researcher, I remained an “outsider” with my participants (Collins, 2004). As I collected data, I remained cognizant of the power dynamics within the room and the capital both the informants and I carried. The students in the study all identified as first generation college students and most were students of color from low-income backgrounds. As a non-first generation college student who identified as a White, upper-middle-class woman this gave me privileges my participants did not hold. Mindful of our differences, I worked to earn the students' trust through asking questions, paraphrasing their responses, using non-verbal listening skills (e.g., nodding my head, imitating their body language), and reiterating how much I valued the students' experiences, stories, and expertise (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Couture et al., 2012). In addition, I took courses, wrote papers, and conducted a thorough literature review on first generation college students before meeting with my participants allowing me to better understand their lives, communities, and cultures.

My experience and listening skills benefited me in my interview with Lilly when she spoke about her current relationship with friends and family back home in Houston, Texas. Lilly described how her friends had “different perspectives . . . I just couldn’t connect with them.” While I had not personally lived this struggle, through my experience and academic studies I could empathize with Lilly trying to balance her two differing worlds. This contrasted to my conversation with Nicolas on financial aid. I asked Nicolas about his summer before college:

Nicolas: . . . Over the summer, I was really excited to see my financial aid package officially . . .

Staci: Wait, how did that differ from the financial aid package that you got earlier?

Nicolas: Just officially in the sense that my parents signed up for the ten-month plan, so my mom knew how much she was going to be paying every month. I guess it just became more official than just receiving an estimated package. ‘Cause when you receive your first financial aid, it’s just estimated apparently.

Staci: Oh, I didn’t realize.

In my interview with Nicolas, I remained transparent with him about my lack of knowledge on financial aid. If I had known that the university did not solidify students’ financial aid packages until the summer before students’ first semester, I may have asked Nicolas different questions. This questioning highlighted my role as an outsider and my ignorance likely hindered my ability to ask more complex and in-depth questions. In addition, such transparency and lack of awareness on financial aid may have precluded Nicolas from trusting me as an interviewer or ally. While I hoped I made myself vulnerable, authentic, and trustworthy through my questions and emotions, I cannot negate how all the participants (not just Nicolas and Lilly) likely saw me

as an outsider and how that influenced my work (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Collins, 2004; Marecek, Fine, & Kidder, 1997; Twine & Warren, 2000). Given my empathy, studies, experience, and listening skills, I hope I allowed the participants to feel comfortable and engage openly, so they could speak their truths and share their voices for this research.

In my roles as a practitioner and a researcher, my passion has driven my work. When I walked into the room for focus groups and interviews, when I analyzed data, or wrote the chapters in this dissertation, I brought with me every part of myself. I carry certain privileges of being a White, upper-middle class, non-first generation college student that influenced me as an interviewer, a researcher, a writer, and a citizen. As a passionate, committed learner and activist, I recognize that each person I talk with has something to teach me.

### **Theoretical Assumptions**

Theoretical assumptions guided my data collection, analysis, and writing and the methodologies I used allowed readers to see how I made sense of the world and, therefore, made sense of my research. My theoretical assumptions included critical theory and Communities of Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005).

#### **Critical Theory.**

As I entered into this research, I have brought with me a belief that many of the structures and systems within our society are raced and classed, which has prevented equal opportunities. I have assumed that my participants experienced dominance and oppression on both micro social-psychological levels and macro structural levels (Solorzano et al., 2000; Weber, 2010). As participants shared their voices, stories, and truths, critical theory has allowed me to come from a social justice ideology, envision different structures and systems, and believe in challenging the

deficit model that framed students as lacking knowledge, ability, and intellect (Wallace, 2014). As such, critical theory influenced my research topic, data collection, analysis, and writing.

### **Communities of Cultural Wealth.**

Yosso's (2005, 2006) Communities of Cultural Wealth also worked against the deficit model and allowed me to ask and learn, what first generation college students and college access and success programs have to offer and contribute to students' college-going journey and college success. Communities of Cultural Wealth shifted the focus of students and college access programs from being solely learners and receivers of information to serving as informants, teachers, contributors, change agents, and leaders. I came into this work with the assumption that first generation college students and college access programs both brought transformative cultural capital (Yosso, 2005, 2006) and other positive traits and characteristics.

### **Procedures**

In this section, I describe the setting where the research took place and zeitgeist of spring 2012, my participants, and the process I went through to collect, code, and analyze my data (Biklen & Casella, 2007).

### **Setting**

This research took place at a large, private, Research I university in a mid-sized city in northeastern United States. The school's campus is sandwiched between one neighborhood with high poverty rates and another neighborhood with student rentals and middle and upper-middle income homes. My data collection and most of the data analysis and writing took place before the Black Lives Matter movement gained momentum throughout the country. As my editing and re-writing continued, George Zimmerman escaped responsibility of Tayvon Martin's murder and more Black men and women had lost their lives in police brutality. In addition, the leadership

and priorities of the institution where this research took place changed and prompted a sit/teach-in to protest cuts to student scholarships and advocacy programs. This political landscape reminds readers that, “Truth is tentative and never absolute because meaning changes depending on the context for the individual” (Benzies & Allen, 2001, p. 544). The context of Spring 2012 influenced the truths of the participants and me, as the researcher.

The university enrolled approximately 21,000 students at the time of the study from 11 undergraduate schools and colleges. Of those students, about 13,000 were full-time undergraduate students, about 6,000 were full-time graduate or law students, and about 2,000 students attended the university as either undergraduate or graduate part-time students. Undergraduate admissions accepted just under 50% of the full-time applicants (The Princeton Review, 2014). Fifty-five percent of the full-time undergraduate students identified as women and about 20% identified as first generation college students. About 25% of the total student population identified as a racial or an ethnic minority. In 2011-2012, tuition cost students about \$36,000 per year (not including room and board that averaged \$14,500) and the school utilized need-blind admissions criteria; this approach did not consider students’ financial situation in the admissions decision-making process.

### **Participants**

In this research, I used the Higher Education Act of 1965’s definition of first generation college students:

An individual both of whose parents did not complete a baccalaureate degree or in the case of any individual who regularly resided with and received support from only one parent, an individual whose only such parent did not complete a baccalaureate degree. (“Higher Education Act,” 1965, pp. 9-10)



This definition included all first generation college students that would most likely use and benefit from additional resources and support based on their parents' education and college knowledge. As X. Chen (2005) and Ishitani (2006) had founded, only small differences regarding college access and success existed between students whose parents had no more than a high school diploma and some college experience; therefore, including both cohorts of students in this research seemed most founded.

To identify potential participants for this study, the Director of Financial Analysis and I queried a list of potential first generation college students. To narrow the matriculated students down to first generation college students, I relied on the students' college application, *The Common Application for Undergraduate College Admissions*, and financial aid material, *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA). The second page of The Common Application had a section titled "family" that asked students to complete questions on parent 1, parent 2, legal guardian, and siblings. The application gave space for students to write in information such as "college (if any)" and "graduate school (if any)," along with the degrees and the years obtained (Common Application Colleges, 2014). The university labeled students to be first generation if students did not indicate if their parent or guardian had graduated from college with a bachelor's degree. If students indicated that their parents or guardian had at most a high school degree, some college experience, an associate's degree, or a degree from a technical college, the university staff entered the students as first generation college students (as did I in my research). In addition, if students left this section of their application blank, I added them to the query of first generation college students as to include any potential first generation students on campus. Upon later communication with the potential participants, I would confirm students met my definition of first generation college students.

To supplement The Common Application, I used the FAFSA form as another method of identifying first generation college students. The FAFSA asked in questions 24 and 25, “Highest school your father completed?” and “Highest school your mother completed?” and provided answers: (1) middle schools/ Jr. high, (2) high school, (3) college or beyond, or (4) other/unknown (U.S. Department of Education, 2012-2013, p. 3). Students who responded 1, 2, or 4 to both questions qualified for my study. Since students completed a FAFSA for each academic year, the school had more than one FAFSA on record for students in their second year of study and beyond. Therefore, if a student answered questions 24 and 25 with (1), (2), or (4) in any given year during their tenure at the university, I included the students in my initial list of first generation college students.

Unlike in my definition of first generation college students that specified parents had to complete a baccalaureate degree-granting college, FAFSA did not specify the type of college (e.g., technical college, associate’s degree-granting, baccalaureate degree-granting) parents must have completed. Thus, students whose parents received their technical or associates degree were not included in the FAFSA query of first generation college students. While a limitation to my research, those first generation college students missing through the FAFSA query likely received an invitation to participate in my study through the Common Application query. If I only used FAFSA data to drive my potential participant list, it would have been insufficient given my definition of first generation college students.

The university did not differentiate between students whose parents attended college in the United States or abroad; therefore, the university defined students whose parents graduated with a bachelor’s degree or the equivalent from a university outside of the United States as non-first generation college students. These students, however, might have considered themselves

first generation college students, because they were the first in their family to go to college in the United States. If those students marked on the FAFSA that their parent(s) completed college, but left their parents' education level blank on the Common Application, then the students received an invitation to participate. If the students marked on the FAFSA that their parent(s) completed college and wrote the university their parent(s) attended on the Common Application, then the students did not receive an invitation to participate in my research. Thus, if students' parents graduated from universities abroad, students wrote the names of the universities on the Common Application, and students considered themselves first generation college students, I likely did not include them in my query.

In addition to the selection criteria above, I asked the Director of Financial Analysis to include in the query only domestic college students who matriculated on main campus. I made these decisions because international students have different college application, transition, and college experiences than domestic students and do not complete the FAFSA, since they do not qualify for federal or state student aid (Jose Maria, Joaquin, & Julio, 2006). In addition, I wanted to ensure my participants enrolled at the university's main campus and did not attend a satellite campus in another state or country during spring 2012 given that I planned to conduct interviews and focus groups for my data collection. Students studying abroad in spring 2012, who met the previous qualifications for first generation college students, did not receive an invitation to participate. The unintended effect of requiring students matriculate and take classes on main campus eliminated part-time students from my research, since the university coded part-time students as being on a satellite or separate campus. This negated the voices of many first generation college students who worked full-time and took classes part-time (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Since part-time students, like international students, have different priorities and

commitments that affect their college experience and do not qualify for financial aid like full-time students (Eddy, Christie, & Rao, 2006; Townsend & Wilson, 2006) this potential limitation also helped narrow the research to a more specific population of students.

The final query from the FAFSA and the Common Application yielded 2,631 participants. Out of the 2,631 students, 1,599 students met my previously outlined qualifications as first generation college students based on both their FAFSA and Common Application. Another 672 students indicated first generation status on their FAFSA, but not on their Common Application and 295 students indicated they identified as first generation on the Common Application, but not on the FAFSA. A fourth group of 65 students did not submit a FAFSA and did not indicate their guardians' education levels on their college application.

Once I identified the potential participants, I contacted them through their university email account (Appendix B). The email stated that I was "conducting research on college access for first generation college students." I continued, "If you identify as a first generation college student and used a college access program/organization to help you with your college search, application process, or financial aid/FAFSA forms, then you qualify to be part of this research." I ended with a general description of college access programs: "Any type of college access program or organization (aside from your high school guidance counselors) to help you with your college search and application process." I found that students who replied to my email and used college access programs understood the qualifications and students who replied to my email but did not use college access programs expressed confusion. The email asked students to participate in two focus groups or two interviews. I estimated that each would last 45-60 minutes. Students would receive \$20 in cash at the conclusion of their second engagement. Due

to the volume of emails and restrictions placed by the university's email system, I sent the invitation out over three days (approximately 750 students received the invitation per day).

After verifying that the students qualified for the research in that they used a college access program and met my definition of first generation college students, I worked with them to find a mutual time to meet. D. Morgan (1997) encouraged researchers to create homogeneous focus groups so students would feel more comfortable speaking. Therefore, I tried to coordinate the focus groups based on students' matriculation year (e.g., first-year students, sophomores, juniors, seniors), so students would have another commonality in addition to being first generation college students. Students' varied schedules, however, made that level of coordination difficult. While focus groups spanned matriculation years, the focus groups still promoted homogeneity since all of the students identified as first generation college students and all the students in the focus groups identified as students of color and most came from families with earned incomes under \$50,000. These demographics reflected other researchers' findings on first generation college students where most first generation college students came from low-income households and identified as students of color (Choy, 2001; Terenzini et al., 1996). If a student could not attend a focus group or preferred to meet individually, I arranged to meet with the student for an interview. The participants and I scheduled the follow-up interviews or focus groups in person after our first meeting. The night before or morning of the students' interviews or focus groups, I confirmed our meeting time and location.

This recruitment process generated 58 seemingly qualified applicants. Of those 58 students, seven students did not show up for their first interview or focus group. I gave the students the opportunity to reschedule, but none did. Another student, a senior, had enrolled in the master's program for the fall where I served as a teaching assistant and received an interview

for a graduate assistantship where I served on the selection committee. To avoid bias in the graduate assistant selection process and future classroom interactions, I did not interview her. Three other students from the 58 did not qualify as first generation college students. One student, for example, was included because his FAFSA from the 2011-2012 academic year (the year of the research or the “current year”) listed his mother’s education as “unknown” and said his father graduated high school (putting him on my list of potential first generation college students). This student’s FAFSA from his “cohort year,” a student’s first academic year on campus, showed that his mother had a college degree. As previously mentioned, if there was a discrepancy in the FAFSA, I included the student as a potential participant. The student later explained to me that he completed his FAFSA with his mother as “unknown” to potentially maximize his financial aid package. The recruitment process generated 47 first generation college students who each used at least one college access program.

Forty-seven students participated in this study (Appendixes C and D). Based on FAFSA, 21 students’ parents had at most completed middle school, 48 students’ parents had completed at most high school, four students’ parents had completed college, and 21 students had marked off unknown/other or left the question about parents’ education blank. When I cross-referenced the students’ FAFSA, Common Applications, and interviews of the four parents who completed college, those parents had not earned a baccalaureate degree so met this research’s definition of first generation college students. Similarly, of those 21 students who marked off unknown/other or left the question blank on FAFSA regarding their parents’ education, 15 of the students answered unknown/other or left the question blank for their fathers’ education (as opposed to their mothers’ education). After interviewing the students, I learned those 15 students either grew up without their biological father or saw him sporadically.

In the query from the Director of Financial Analysis in Enrollment Management, I also received demographic information about the participants from students' FAFSA and the Common Application. Information from the Common Application, like race and ethnicity, students could check all the boxes that applied and update their information post-matriculation through the student portal. The breakdown of the participants included 30 students who identified as female and 17 as male. Fourteen students identified as Black/African American; 13 as Asian; six as Hispanic/Latino; three as Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino; two students as Black/African American and Puerto Rican; two as Mexican; two as Puerto Rican; one student as American Indian/Alaska Native, Hispanic/Latino, and White; one as Mexican and Hispanic/Latino; one as Mexican and White; one as White; and, one student did not report her race. The parental income for the students' cohort year (the first year the students matriculated on campus) averaged \$33,094.21 and the current year (the students' most recent FAFSA form, 2011-2012 at the time of the research) averaged \$35,117.32. All but six of the participants met the school's definition of low-income of familial earnings under \$50,000. During the interviews, I learned that 31 students came to the university from New York; two from Oregon; two from California; two from Florida; two from Massachusetts; and one student each from Connecticut, Michigan, Washington, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Tennessee, Texas, and Rhode Island. Twelve students immigrated to the United States of America before college. Of the 35 students born in the United States, at least eight of those students identified as first generation Americans (students whose parents immigrated to the United States from another country). At least 19 students mentioned that they spoke two languages during the interview or focus group (ten students spoke Spanish, seven spoke Chinese, one spoke French, and one spoke Taishanese.) None of the students in the study self-identified as undocumented or homeless at the time of the

interview or the focus group; however, two students discussed being undocumented during high school. Eighteen first-year students participated in the study, 15 sophomores, six juniors, and eight seniors. All the seniors planned to graduate that spring and all the other students planned to persist that following fall semester. All the students in this study lived in college-owned housing or lived off-campus with roommates; no students commuted from home. All the students in this study also matriculated into college directly after high school. While this enrollment pattern and most students living on a residential campus represented the undergraduate population at the students' university, it did not coincide with national trends on first generation college students (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Núñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998; Tinto, 2005). The 47 first generation college students in this research discussed using over 40 college access programs and many students referenced the same programs. Twenty-seven students used more than one college access and/or success program during their college-going journey and at least 17 students participated in university-based college success programs including federally funded TRIO programs, state initiatives, or university-funded programs.

While numbers (Appendix C) provide an overview of the students who participated in the study, Appendix D details students individually and summarizes their college access and success programs. I do not provide percentages of the above demographics because the students in this study worked hard to stay on an academic path and not become a statistic. To protect students' confidentiality and identity, I used pseudonyms for students, students' mentors and friends, college access program personnel, state-funded initiatives, and university offices and programs. I also retracted the names of students' secondary schools to further the students' anonymity. Unless the college access programs' names jeopardized the anonymity of the students or the university, I maintained their actual names.



## **Data Collection**

After identifying the participants, I collected, transcribed, coded, and analyzed the data. I then used my findings and quotations from both the student interviews and focus groups in chapters 4, 5, and 6. My role as a researcher and theoretical assumptions informed my data collection, analysis, and writing.

### **Collecting data.**

Overall, I conducted 17 open-ended focus groups and 37 interviews with 47 participants. An open-ended format allowed me to have questions and topics to cover, but still let the participants' responses guide the conversations (A. Morgan, 2011). In addition, an open-ended format allowed me to ask follow-up questions and broach topics based on the direction of the focus groups or interviews (A. Morgan, 2011). The interviews and a few of the small focus groups took place in a faculty member's office in an academic building and the other focus groups occurred in a conference room in a shared academic and administrative building. Twenty-seven students participated in two rounds of focus groups and two students participated in the first round of focus groups, but did not show up for their second scheduled focus group or the "make-up" focus group. Using focus groups allowed the participants to hear each others' stories and agree, disagree, and react to them (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). This exchange in dialogue allowed the participants to lead the conversations, talk about what mattered most to them, and jog each others' memories about their experiences (D. Morgan, 1997). The focus groups ranged from two to six students depending on students' availability and attendance. While having smaller focus groups came with an additional financial expense (more audio recordings to transcribe) and put more pressure on each participant to contribute, the smaller focus groups allowed me to learn more about each participant (D. Morgan, 1997).

Jawad Cipriani co-facilitated approximately one-third of the focus groups with me based on his availability. When I served as a teaching assistant and instructor in fall 2011 and spring 2012, respectively, Jawad had enrolled in both those courses. He had a firm understanding of college student development and college access and retention. Jawad self-identified as a Black, first generation college student from a working-class family and wrestled with the complexities of privilege, racism, and classism within his own life and K-16 educational experiences. Jawad grew up in New York City and worked at a college access and success program after college. Jawad's identity as an insider and presence during the focus groups likely put some of the participants at ease (Collins, 2004). Since Jawad's story related to the students, I believe he likely gained the students' trust more easily than I did benefiting my data collection. In addition, Jawad may have focused on details during the focus groups that I overlooked (but he knew mattered) or skimmed over information that I dwelled on as an outsider (Duneier, 2000). For example, Jawad had a thorough understanding of New York City's public high schools as a former student and as an education professional who had worked in the city. While I asked detailed questions about the New York City public school system, Jawad had a firm understanding of it. As D. Morgan (1997) suggested, Jawad and I did not take an active role in the focus groups; instead, we allowed the focus groups to flow freely so participants felt comfortable expressing their thoughts and experiences. We facilitated the focus groups, posed initial and follow-up questions, and encouraged participants to share their stories (D. Morgan, 1997). All the focus groups took the full hour allotted and several could have gone longer.

Eighteen students participated in two one-on-one interviews. The first set of interviews lasted about 45 minutes. The second set of interviews ranged from 30 minutes to the full hour. While the interviews covered the same topics as the focus groups, the interviews permitted more

in-depth conversations allowing me to better understand the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). The participants' stories guided the questions and the dialogue.

All the interviews and focus groups took place from March 2012 through May 2012. Students received \$20 as compensation for their time after the second interview or focus group. I quickly learned from the participants that the \$10/hour participants made through my research was several dollars more than most students' hourly wages. In addition, the interviews fell towards the end of the academic year when some students had ran out of federal work study hours and had minimal cash.

In the first round of focus groups and interviews, I provided some background on the research and reviewed issues of confidentiality. I then asked the participants to read the informed consent form (Appendix E) and to sign two copies (one for themselves and one for me). I used two audio-recorders to capture the interviews and the focus groups. Once the students completed the paperwork, I asked the participants about themselves (e.g., their families, where they grew up, and their schooling) and their college preparation and search processes (Appendix F). Since many of the students' college access programs tied into their middle or high school experiences and the students knew I required them to participate in a college access program to qualify for the research, the participants usually brought up their college access program(s) on their own. As needed, I asked the participants clarifying questions or to elaborate and provide examples.

The second round of interviews and focus groups centered on the students' transition into college and college experience (Appendix F). I usually started by inquiring about the students' summers between high school and college. At the end of the second interviews and focus groups, I asked the participants, "What are you most proud of over the course of your lifetime?"

This question came from my work with On Point for College where I served as a research assistant and interviewed dozens of first generation college students. I had wanted to end the interview with the participants feeling positive about themselves, so I asked the students, “What are you most proud of in terms of your journey so far?” This question helped me better understand students’ journeys as it allowed the students to further reflect on their lives and provided additional insight into overcoming their struggles. Bogdan and Biklen (2006) recommended that researchers collect data until data saturation, the point where the participants’ experiences and stories sounded repetitive. After meeting with 47 participants twice, I felt like I had accomplished data saturation.

### **Transcribing.**

Coinciding with the data collection, I paid transcribers through the financial support of The NASPA Foundation and College Student Personnel Association of New York State, Inc. to type out the audio interviews and focus groups verbatim. The transcribers all received the same directions (Appendix G) regarding the transcription process and my expectations. After transcribers finished, I combined the students’ two interviews into one document (e.g., I merged Meredith’s first interview and Meredith’s second interview into a single file). I then had a different person from the initial transcribers proofread the single file (Meredith’s first and second interviews) for accuracy. Thus, no one person transcribed and proofread the same transcript(s).

### **Coding and analysis.**

Once graduate students transcribed and proofed the interviews and the focus groups, I converted all the Microsoft Word files into Rich Text Format (RTF). I uploaded the focus groups and the interviews into qualitative software coding tool, Atlas t.i (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). Coding entailed using short phrases that summarized each sentence or paragraph of data

(Charmaz, 2006). My “initial [coding] phase involved naming each word, line, or segment of data” in the focus groups (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). For example, VII. *College Process* → VIID. *College Process-Role of Parents* → VIIDii. *College Process-Role of Parents-Doesn't know about process*. To best keep the participants’ stories and experiences centered in the research, the initial coding also included “*in vivo* codes” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 55). *In vivo* codes directly captured the wordage of the participants in the codes, so I did not lose the participants’ language while coding (Charmaz, 2006). After coding the focus groups, I developed 1330 codes (Appendix H). I then conducted a preliminary analysis of the data (Charmaz, 2006).

After the preliminary analysis, I revisited the findings and the initial code list and “use[d] the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize large amounts of data” into a more refined list of 113 codes for the interviews (Appendix I) (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). This allowed for a more manageable data set and allowed me to concentrate on arguments (the purpose of the research or points of focus) that began to emerge during the preliminary analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Charmaz, 2006). Once completed, I analyzed all the data in its entirety looking for common themes. Part of the data analysis included printing the interviews and the focus groups, so I could more easily read them and immerse myself in the data. I also pulled out and summarized each student’s story from the focus groups. This allowed me to better understand each student and read his or her story straight through rather than segmented due to the dialogue within the focus group. As I coded, read, and re-read the interviews and the focus groups, I made short notes and wrestled with ideas and emerging topics. Several topics (descriptive arguments) and themes (concepts, ideas, or theories) continuously arose as I analyzed the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). These findings shaped Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

After writing my first draft, three people provided me with feedback on Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Two of the three people identified as Black, first generation college students, and participated in a college access and support program. Both students read the drafts the summer after their first year of college. The third reader identified as a White, non-first generation woman in the university's higher education administration doctoral program who recently completed her first full-time year of study. One of the two undergraduate students and the graduate student read each chapter and then provided me with feedback. Each phone call with the undergraduate student and meeting with the graduate student lasted about an hour. Both of their critiques of the first data chapter helped me write the second and third data chapters. The second undergraduate student then read the revised chapters (with the previous readers' feedback incorporated in the new drafts) and gave me written feedback after he completed all three chapters.

The two undergraduate students' reviews doubled as "member checking," since they matched the criteria required of my participants (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1999). Their feedback allowed me to see if they identified with my participants and saw their own stories within my data analysis. In addition, they reflected with me on my voice and position as an outsider in the writing (Collins, 2004). For example, after the first undergraduate student read and gave me feedback on the first data chapter, I asked her if she saw herself in the data. She said yes, and then proceeded to work her way through the sections of the chapter and how she identified with them. I then asked her if she felt like the person who wrote this chapter came from a place of privilege. Her response was, "No, but the person also didn't use a college access program." When I inquired further, she said how the value and the importance of college access and success programs did not come through in my writing. The student then added that she knew how much

I valued such programs, and she did not hear my voice in the writing. This student's feedback served as a turning point for me in my writing and helped me find my voice as a writer and a scholar. My writing shifted from more formal writing where I detached myself from the work to writing from the heart where I let my passion and commitment for first generation college students and college access and retention seep onto the pages. To gain the readers' trust as an outsider, I needed my authenticity, commitment, and passion to come through in my words. If I remained distant or aloof from my research, then the voices and the stories of my participants would get lost and as a researcher, a person, and an advocate – I failed.

## **Chapter Four: COLLEGE PREPARATION AND COLLEGE-GOING MINDSET**

I've always known I wanted to go to college, I just didn't know how. . . . So, [my college access programs<sup>2</sup>] provided me with the how - what I need to do and what I need to be involved in. (Gabriella, Spring 2012)

In this chapter, I start to explore “the how,” how first generation college students, like Gabriella, used their college access programs to prepare for college. I open the chapter by analyzing how students and families develop, connect, and benefit from relationships with college access programs, their staff, and their volunteers. I then discuss how students used the support of college access programs to enroll in secondary schools, take additional high school and college classes, receive supplemental academic assistance, solidify internships and explore careers, and prepare for the SATs. I conclude this chapter by showing how college access programs build a college-going mindset and lifelong skills for many first generation college students.

### **Students' Connections to College Access Programs**

Students formed both tangible and emotional connections with college access programs. Students often learned about the programs through their own social networks, their families' networks, or through other college access programs. Through these connections, students built strong relationships with their college access programs' employees and volunteers that they compared to family members.

### **Students' and Families' Social Networks**

Students' and families' social networks helped students connect with college access programs. Marcus recounted how his sister's high school guidance counselor put him in touch with his college access program, Let's Get Ready:

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<sup>2</sup> Since this chapter focuses on college readiness and access, I will refer to all the programs as college access programs, even though some of them also offered college support services.



[My sister's] high school curriculum and programming, their counseling people had this program and ours, my assistant principal of my counseling program didn't really know about this. So, [my sister] told me, "You know you're about to apply to college right? So, my counselor told me about Let's Get Ready and forwarded me the email of this woman named Rebecca Simpson. She's gonna arrange to meet with you in Manhattan and she's gonna help you with your common application, with your essay, basically everything that is involved in the college application process."

While Marcus received minimal support from his own guidance counselor, his sister connected him with Rebecca at Let's Get Ready. Through Marcus's sister utilizing her social capital and Marcus utilizing his social capital (of his sister), Marcus connected with Rebecca and described it as, "Profound because it was just me and her [and] . . . we got much more in-depth [than my guidance counselor.]" Marcus benefited from his sister's connection and Let's Get Ready's individualized and detailed assistance.

Similar to Marcus, Morgan's mother and brother put her in touch with her college access program. Morgan talked about how she learned about Women in Natural Science (WINS):

My brother did a program that was similar, but it wasn't an all-girls' program, it was just a mix. Then, he told me about this new program they were starting up, and at first I wasn't interested, but my mom was like, "You might like it, you do a lot of interesting things." And, so I went to the interview, there was a huge interview process I had to go through, so I went through all of that. I had one foot in the door because they knew my brother, so that was nice.

Morgan's involvement with her college access program came from her family's social networks. In addition, Morgan's mother, who did not attend college, promoted a college-going mentality by encouraging Morgan to join WINS.

Roger learned about his college access program, On Point for College, through his "Mom [who] knows the guy who runs part of [the program.]" Roger described how when his mom first encouraged the connection, he did not see the benefit in joining; however, after several visits, he saw the value in On Point for College's services. Roger continued:

I didn't want to be at On Point; I didn't see the point 'cause I, at the point, I wanted to get into college and I just defaulted on [his local public community college or public university]. I figured, I'm so big and bad that I didn't need On Point's help, but my mom made me go to On Point because she knew they could help me. And, it was only until the third or fourth visit that I realized how grateful I should be.

As Roger said, his mother recognized the value of a college access program before he did demonstrating his parent's commitment to a college education and how parents who did not attend college themselves still encouraged and supported their children during the college choice process (Hossler et al., 2013; Ohl-Gigliotti, 2008).

Darrell shared a similar experience on how he connected to Prep for Prep. Darrell's mom and dad moved to New York in 1985 from Trinidad. Darrell recalled, they "came here because they wanted, there's a lot more here like education." Darrell's parents had no more than a high school diploma and wanted something different for their sons (Darrell had two older brothers). When Darrell's classmate's mom called Darrell's mom to tell her about Prep for Prep, she took advantage of the opportunity. Darrell recollected:

It was a group of us, we were all friends, some of us lived pretty close to each other - I lived two blocks from one kid, and our parents knew each other. So, we went to school together. And, I think his mom told my mom about [Prep for Prep] and, then, but they all shared information with each other.

Darrell's explanation of how he learned about Prep for Prep mirrored many other students in this research and Perez and McDonough's (2008) findings on how Latina/o college students made decisions about college based on their networks of family members and friends.

Like Perez and McDonough's (2008) findings, the first generation college students in this study also supported Yosso's (2005) and Bourdieu's (1986) research on social capital and networking. As the participants told their stories about how they connected to their college access programs, the students' networks and their parents' networks became essential to the process. In addition, these examples showed the parents' commitment to higher education and connecting their children to college access programs. Ohl-Gigliotti (2008) also found first generation college students' parents who identified as White with some college experience encouraged and promoted a college-going mindset. This research with parents of first generation college students of color supports and builds on Ohl-Gigliotti's (2008) findings. In this study, students shared how their parents used their navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) to ensure their children would receive educational support and services.

### **College Access Program Networks**

Students' original college access programs often connected and referred students to other college access programs. These other programs offered services that complemented students' initial college access program or mirrored the original organization and provided additional resources. This collaboration modeled Yosso's (2005) familial capital and National College

Access Network's (2011) social justice mission in that the programs recognized the value of collective support in furthering students' success rather than working in silos or against each other. Blake's initial college access program (GEAR UP) connected him to two other programs, Brown University's summer program and ACE (Architecture, Construction, and Engineering) Mentor Program, to provide Blake with support and opportunities that GEAR UP did not offer. Blake described:

Because of GEAR UP and they put you in the right path and told you what college was about. And, then one day, one of my counselors, her name's Melissa, she came up to me and she said, "Hey, we're looking for somebody to go represent our institution at Brown University and, I think we, I think you might be a right fit." So, that encouraged me to pick up my grades even more, do well.

Melissa connected Blake with Brown University where he had the opportunity to take college level courses, spend time on a college campus, and interact with other students interested in pursuing college. These experiences further motivated Blake to do well in high school, mirroring Attinasi's (1989) research on "getting ready" where Mexican American students used direct simulation, such as college visits, to learn about college life. Ways of "modeling" or mimicking the college experience helped first generation college students gain a better understanding of college and promoted a college-going mindset (Attinasi, 1989). In addition, when Blake discovered his passion for architecture, Melissa recommended that Blake participate in ACE Mentor Program. ACE offered Blake different services than GEAR UP, since ACE focused on architecture, construction, and engineering, and GEAR UP focused broadly on academics, college applications, and essays. Since Blake's college access programs had different missions, he received support for his overarching pre-collegiate needs through GEAR

UP, direct simulation opportunities through Brown University's program, and more targeted support for high school students interested in architecture through ACE.

Similarly, Alex learned about the Center for Talented Youth (CTY) through the Harlem Education Activities Fund (HEAF). When I asked Alex how he initially learned about HEAF, he responded:

[My parents] didn't tell me anything. They just said, "You're going to do this." I just said, "Okay." But, I presume that they did some basic internet research. And they, also, my mom has a lot of people in her job [as a courthouse clerk] that she talks to a lot about what their kids do. So, I know there's a behind the scenes network going on there. . . . So, I don't know how she found out these things, but once she got me into one thing, she would network with people there to find out about other programs related to that program, and that just kept going on.

Alex recognized how his mother networked to learn about different college access programs. He concluded by talking about how HEAF became part of this network:

[HEAF] had a lot of resources there that they, that my mom used to help her find out about multiple programs for me to enter into and benefit from. . . . [HEAF] helped my mom find out about the CTY, Center for Talented Youth. And, that was most of my summer programs for about three years.

HEAF introduced Alex's mom to CTY. CTY provided Alex the opportunity to take classes geared towards gifted students, travel throughout the United States, and live on college campuses.

Similarly, the YMCA connected Julianna to other programs they offered and College Awareness Symbolizes Hope New York (CASH NY). Julianna remained active in the YMCA

since she was 4 years old. She took advantage of her YMCA network as she traveled with the YMCA's Global Teens to Panama for community service, received internship experiences through Teen Career Connection, and took part in Leaders Club aimed to bring together "different students from all different high schools. All different ages from 14 to 20." In addition to the YMCA connecting Julianna to various services within their own organization, the YMCA connected Julianna to CASH NY. Julianna recalled, "[The YMCA] would tell us about other programs where we can do college tours, which was how I found out about the CASH program." Julianna went through an interview process to get into CASH NY and agreed to their strict attendance policy. Julianna described the application process:

They were typical interview questions as to why you want to be in CASH? How you can benefit from CASH? And, in the near future, after you have graduated from your CASH class, do you think that you would be a positive asset to help other students? Stuff like that. And, you would meet various mentors, and you had to write an essay, of course, a personal statement, just giving a little spiel on your situation and how this program would benefit you because they didn't just want to let any high school student into the meetings.

Once accepted, Julianna and her peers went on a free trip where they visited historically Black colleges and universities; had weekly meetings to talk about topics such as financial aid, budgeting, time management, and college life; and received mentorship opportunities. Julianna's experiences with CASH NY complemented the services she received from the YMCA.

Jia's college access program, The Educational Alliance (nicknamed Edgies) through the Boys and Girls Club, nominated her for The Posse Foundation's Posse Scholarship, a full-tuition college scholarship that offered pre-collegiate and collegiate support for a cohort of students all

attending the same university. Jia remarked, “[Edgies] recommended me for Posse. You know about Posse, Posse Foundation? And, then I was a finalist for Vanderbilt University.” Like other college access programs’ referrals, this recommendation from Edgies to Posse demonstrated the intimate network between college access programs. Jia continued to say how Posse relied on nonprofit organizations to nominate potential Posse Scholars. She said, “Posse’s just a program where you’re, the nonprofit organizations recommend you.” This structure epitomized how college access programs supported and depended on one another. It also echoed Swail and Perna’s (2002) and Vaade’s (2010) findings of how increased collaboration between non-profit organizations, secondary schools, colleges, and communities enhanced visibility of the programs, their services, and opportunities to support students. In addition, it modeled collectivism and collaboration to the first generation college students (Chapter 6) (Triandis, 2001).

### **Redefining Families**

Along with students physically connecting to college access programs, students connected emotionally. Though all the participants in this research lived with at least one family member, their college access programs filled an important role for the students regarding developmental and educational support and social mobility and, for many, became family. Joy lived with her mother and three younger siblings in New York. One of Joy’s college access programs, Pathways to Professions, paired her up with a mentor. Joy described how the program assigned mentors:

We were paired up with a mentor based on a survey we took about what careers we wanted to pursue and our majors and what our hobbies and interests were. And, I was, I told them I wanted to major in business and I was interested in

interior design, so I got paired up with someone who worked in an interior design company that sold windows or something. And, I was really excited about it because I felt that survey really works, it was a perfect match.

Joy used the terminology “big sister” to further connote the relationship she had with her mentor.

Joy stated:

I did have just that one mentor who I was with all the time and that was cool to me because it felt like I had a *big sister* [emphasis added], because I’m the oldest child, so I had nobody really to ask about anything, so it did help me a lot.

Joy compared her mentor from her college access program to a “big sister,” and used their relationship to talk about college and shared interests. Braithwaite et al.’s (2010) typology of volunteer kin described Joy’s relationship with her mentor as “supplemental family,” since Joy’s mentor fulfilled the role of big sister (p. 397).

Karina’s counselor, Betty, from Next Venture Generation Foundation, became a mother figure to her. She discussed how they spoke regularly and dined together. Karina also told how she relied on Betty for advice:

[Betty] was the person who I went to Ireland with when I was studying there, so *she became like my mom* [emphasis added]. So, I still call her for Mother’s Day, we still go to lunch, if anything ever happens, if anything good happens academically, I’ll call her.

Karina described how Betty was like a mother figure, particularly around academic issues. For Karina, Betty’s role started as a volunteer kinship centered on convenience, since she had knowledge about academics; however, their continued relationship showed how Betty also served as extended family (Braithwaite et al., 2010). Karina’s



relationship with Betty showed her ability to capitalize on her network and call Betty when needed. Karina continued to talk about how she viewed Betty as part of her family and how her college access program was like a family:

I talk to her about what I'm doing in the future and my [biological] mom will call and she's like, oh Betty is over. So, we really, really *became a family* [emphasis added] because there are only 13 of us in the program and they split all of us up between five counselors, so she's really been hands on and stuff. . . . She was our academic guide and who helped us through college.

While Karina formed a close relationship with Betty, Betty did not replace Karina's biological mother, but rather supplemented her role, especially when it came to academics and college. As a first generation college student, Karina utilized Betty's knowledge and experience as a college graduate to help her during her college-going journey.

Alex considered the people he met through HEAF like family:

They've [the adults in HEAF] all been to and through college they, I won't say they market themselves as, but they were a support group, or a *family* [emphasis added], a secondary family for me. I mean, I was with them almost every day of the week for a while, and we spent certain summers together, we spent weekends together, you build bonds with these people.

Alex formed close relationships to the people in HEAF because of the amount of time they spent together. In addition to Alex describing HEAF like a family, he also called them a "brotherhood" and "sisterhood." Similarly, Gabriella compared MOSTE (Motivating Our Students Through Experience) to being a family. She said, "Since my mentor backed out when I was in high school, they have other people that come and, basically, mentor us. So, it's *a big*

*family* [emphasis added], it's really cool." Gabriella recognized how the whole program supported her, not just her immediate mentor. Later in the interview, Gabriella also used this analogy when she spoke about an upcoming trip with some of the MOSTE high school students and mentors. Gabriella responded to the question, "What is your relationship like now with your college access program?"

I do a lot with them. They helped me so much that I want to help them, too.

Actually next week I'm going, the college access program that I am in, they funded 10 girls to come to [New York] City. I'm from California, so it's a really big deal because we got free flights and girls aren't paying anything. . . . So, I'm going to visit the girls and talk about [my university] and I'm really excited.

*We're like a family* [emphasis added.]

Gabriella described MOSTE as a family when reflecting back on her college search process and used the terminology of family to describe her relationship with them as a sophomore in college. Just as MOSTE provided emotional, academic, and financial support to Gabriella, she reciprocated support when she met with the high school MOSTE students in New York City. When I asked Gabriella about financing her upcoming trip, she said, "They did give me \$12,000, I think it is, in scholarship. So, it's a \$65 trip [to New York City] so, I don't mind paying that just to go. They are, they're going to events and they're paying for me to go to that." Just as most biological families involved give and take, Gabriella recognized the necessity for reciprocity within her MOSTE family and demonstrated this financially, instrumentally, and emotionally (House, 1987).

The way students described their relationships with individual members of their college access programs and talked about their college access programs at large expanded upon Tierney

and Venegas's (2006) research and family studies literature on fictive kin to include college access program employees and volunteers. Researchers have well documented "the existence of families outside of blood and legal kin relationships" and often referred to these relationships as *fictive kin* or *volunteer kin* (Braithwaite et al., 2010, p. 389; Fordham, 1986; Stack, 1974).

Within the Black community, fictive kin dated back to the slavery of Africans in the United States when people relied on each other during the Transatlantic crossing of slave ships, when White people sold Black families across southern states, and when Black women served as maids for the children on the plantations regardless of bloodlines (Crosbie-Burnett & Lewis, 1999; Dill, 1999). Since the 1600s, the Black community has remained "pedi-focal" where they placed children at the hearts of families and encouraged and expected communities to rally around child rearing (Crosbie-Burnett & Lewis, 1999, p. 456). Yosso's (2005) work on familial and social capital captures this community and pedi-focus. The Mexican and Latin American cultures also shared a history of fictive kin due to war, changed borders, and Catholicism's practice of baptism that extended godparents or *compadrazgo* into families (Braithwaite et al., 2010; Dill, 1999; Kemper, 1982). Likewise in the early 1900s, the Chinese community brought boys to the United States by creating fake documentation called paper sons, that assigned Chinese boys with Chinese men in the United States, since fathers could sponsor and bring over their relatives (Dill, 1999). Once immigrated to the United States, immigrant communities relied on fictive families, since blood related families spanned different continents (Coontz, Parson, & Raley, 1999; Ebaugh & Curry, 2000). Tierney and Venegas (2006) loosely connected fictive kin or volunteer kin to the college search process through the role of peer counselors in high school. While the students in Tierney and Venegas's (2006) work did not name their peers as family, Tierney and Venegas described a social capital and network that existed between peers with college

knowledge and peers without. During the interviews and focus groups in this research, students named “family” or family members to communicate the fictive kinship and the intimacy of their relationship with their college access programs. Students’ fictive kin through their college access programs mirrored Yosso’s (2005) familial capital and Triandis’s (2001) collective identity, shared values and practices within a group or a community. These relationships did not diminish the role of students’ biological families; the relationships communicated the importance of college access programs’ staff and volunteers and disrupted the mainstream definition of family.

### **Navigating Secondary Education with the Support of College Access Programs**

Students relied on their college access programs to help them matriculate into competitive high schools such as New York City’s specialized high schools or private, preparatory schools. In addition, students used their college access programs to take additional high school and college courses, receive supplemental academic assistance, and gain career and internship guidance.

### **College Access Programs as a Conduit to Secondary Education**

To navigate secondary schooling and students’ K-12 education, students turned to their college access programs. Students differentiated between secondary schools based on their location, reputation, graduation rates, course and co-curricular offerings, and safety records. Students recognized the difference between high schools and worked hard to ensure they attended high schools that would increase their likelihood of learning, success, and getting into college. Carli’s college access programs, for example, offered rising high school students classes to prepare for New York City’s Specialized High Schools Admissions Test (SHSAT). Carli explained, “[Henry Street Settlement] prepped us for high school . . . they help us to prep [for

SHSAT], like the SAT prep.” Carli compared the preparation she received for New York’s SHSAT to the college SAT prep she received later in her academic career through Henry Street Settlement. Henry Street Settlement enhanced students’ abilities to enroll in one of nine specialized schools in New York City “that serve[d] the needs of academically and artistically gifted students” (The New York City Department of Education, 2016, para. 4).

Similarly, Darrell and Jacob both received support from Prep for Prep to ensure their admissions and matriculation into college preparatory secondary schools. Darrell said, “[Prep for Prep] help[s] you get into independent school, so . . . you have interviews with your prospective [secondary] schools, in the same way that you apply for colleges and you have your interviews with your prospective colleges.” Prep for Prep served as a conduit for Darrell and Jacob to get into college preparatory schools, while Prep for Prep simultaneously modeled the college application and interview process. Darrell’s interviews for preparatory school gave him valuable experience in middle school enhancing his verbal and non-verbal communication skills that benefitted him for his college admissions interviews (discussed further in Chapter 5).

For Bianka, New Jersey Scholars, Educators, Excellence, Dedication, Success (NJ SEEDS) helped her get into a private, college preparatory boarding school. Bianka’s brother became involved in Resources Offered in Gifted And Talented Education (ROGATE), who introduced him to NJ SEEDS. Once involved, the benefits of NJ SEEDS became apparent and Bianka’s dad spoke to the program coordinator to also get Bianka involved:

My dad was like this is a really good opportunity for our family to advance further than the typical eighth grade [education] and then high school and college. . . . My dad’s like, “Let’s talk to the, to the [brother’s] leader, the corporate guy,” and then we did, and [the leader from SEEDS] was like, “You can just apply to

boarding schools.” I was like, “I didn’t know you can do that.” He’s like, “Yeah, just try.”

With the newfound knowledge that anyone could apply to boarding schools and with the emotional support of NJ SEEDS, Bianka and her brother put in their applications to a private, boarding school. Bianka continued:

They offered us pretty much a full ride, because we had really good grades. So, we got in, and it’s a \$48,000 school a year. It’s more expensive than some colleges. So, we got in, and then we stayed there for 4 years, and every year they gave us financial aid, luckily.

The school’s financial aid package allowed Bianka and her brother to attend. Bianka described the importance of NJ SEEDS and going to a college preparatory school:

For me, I knew immediately when my brother was introduced to New Jersey SEEDS that it was important, because in my town, boarding school, when you think of boarding school, you think, “You will never get there. That’s only for rich people.” And, since we’re all Hispanic, for us, mostly rich people is White people. So, we were always like, “We will never go there, we have to take the regular route,” which is just regular public high school, where you have metal detectors and pregnant girls walking around. That type of life is what we expected, and we were okay with it.

Bianka saw how NJ SEEDS interrupted the raced and the classed education system that catered to “rich people.” Since Bianka believed that only wealthy, White people had the privilege of attending boarding schools, she did not think she would have the opportunity to attend and disrupt the “type of life we expected” of “metal detectors and pregnant girls.” Therefore, when

Bianka learned about NJ SEEDS and applied to and gained admission to the boarding school, she recognized how her college access program helped her “advance” her and her family’s lives.

Bianka recounted:

SEEDS, just the way the opportunities, they presented to us was huge. It was like a lottery. Who would have ever thought that us, coming from what we know we came from, would have gone to boarding schools? So, I knew immediately that this program was something really good to take advantage of this, in the, especially since we were located in Newark, [New Jersey]. You think of Newark, you think of “oh, my God, there’s so much crime, there’s, no one’s going to make it. No one’s going to make it in Newark.” That’s what you really think about it. But when you see SEEDS and kids going to all these boarding schools, going, getting into colleges like Syracuse and Cornell and stuff like that, you think of, “Wow, there is hope in these areas.” So, I knew immediately that this program was important, I knew that I was going to, if I tagged along with them, even though, I snuck in, in a way, I knew that I was going to make it here. Or, not here, but I knew I was going to make it to the top.

As in the previous quotes, Bianka saw life in the same dichotomy of Bourdieu (1986) with “us,” Hispanic and poor where “no one’s going to make it” and “they,” White, upper class. Once Bianka connected with NJ SEEDS and secured herself a spot in a boarding school the dichotomy dissipated and she realized that “there is hope in these areas.” Bianka saw how attending a college preparatory school would build up her cultural capital via a well-resourced school, additional social networks, and academic and collegiate support and put herself and her family on a more supported path towards college and career success. College access programs built

students' aspirational capital as they gave students' hope for a life with possibilities and "mak[ing] it to the top" (Yosso, 2005, 2006).

### **Additional High School and College Courses**

First generation college students in this study also used their college access programs to take additional high school and college courses. Students used these courses to pursue specific interests or gain knowledge and skill sets outside what their schools offered. Sierra connected with an array of summer field experiences through Girls, Inc. that took her throughout Kentucky and Tennessee. Sierra discussed how Girls, Inc. connected her to a program focused on science and math:

I'll tell you what [Girls, Inc.] did do. Through them, I found summer programs to participate in. . . . The first place I went to was during my, I think it was my sophomore summer, I mean, my freshman summer [of high school]. I went to Kentucky. They had a math and science program in Kentucky.

Sierra then continued to talk about another summer access program (also in Kentucky) she did the following summer:

I applied to a different summer program [the following year]. It was also in Kentucky; however, I loved this program. It was Upward Bound, Carter G. Woodson Program. . . . We had a technology center. I was a part of the technology center. We worked with robots and different things like that, and it was pretty fun. They had a poetry group, and I joined that group.

These additional courses offered Sierra more science, math, and technology than she had at her public school in Tennessee. Sierra summarized the programs and said, "They talked to us about different things like [what] the public schools don't teach you." Sierra recognized how her



college access programs filled in gaps from her public schooling to give her a more well-rounded education.

In addition to the educational component, these programs provided Sierra with a positive space compared to her elementary and middle school years. Sierra described her youth:

I felt lost. I didn't know where I belonged or why I was here on earth. So, I was trying to figure that out, my purpose. . . . I used to get picked on a lot when I was smaller. . . . I used to get bullied when I was little, so I was not a happy kid.

While Sierra did not enjoy her first summer program, she reminisced about the positive culture and people in Upward Bound. She recalled, “And, [Upward Bound] had an awesome culture. People there were awesome; staff always made sure everybody felt welcomed.” Sierra appreciated this warmth, openness, and “get[ting] out of the house when [she] was smaller, because [she] really hate[d] being at the house,” since she did not get along well with her mother or extended family and got bullied in school.

Sam also participated in Upward Bound, took summer courses, and resided on a college campus at least one summer while in the program. Sam described:

You have to do Summer Academy for six weeks . . . on Eastern Michigan’s campus. And, you take classes through Upward Bound, so not like real college classes, I guess, but they bring in teachers that these classes count for credit at your high school.

The classes Sam took at Eastern Michigan provided him with high school credits, exposed him to life on a residential college campus, and created a college “frame of mind,” as he described. Sam’s reflection on the benefits of Summer Academy echoed Vaade’s (2010) findings of how colleges that hosted college access programs developed a college-going culture for students.

Sam continued, “You stayed in a dorm. There were college aged residential advisors, [I] got the college experience, ate the food.” Sam felt like he benefited from exposure to a college campus and residence halls. Attinasi (1989) named this type of college exposure direct simulation, and noted how it helped promote a college-going mindset in students.

Julie’s college access program, Minds Matter, connected her with a program similar to Sam’s Summer Academy that took place on a college campus and exposed her to a college environment. Julie told, “The summer after my junior year, I got a scholarship to study at Georgetown, which I, where I took psychology for 3 credits and those credits counted toward my [college] major, so that was perfect.” Julie talked about another benefit of taking credits at Georgetown in that living on a college campus helped her transition to college:

Mine [Julie’s transition] was relatively easy because my older sister was here [at the same university]. . . . I would always joke how I actually experienced dorm life before she did because when I was in Georgetown, that was the summer before she went to college, so she would always be asking me questions how dorming was like. So, transitioning to [college] was easy because of the Georgetown program and because my sister was here.

Julie’s Georgetown summer helped her know what to expect of residential college student life; therefore, easing her transition to college. Similarly, Julie’s experience helped her sister who had not participated in a summer-away. This example of peer mentorship and dependency on college-going friends and same-generation family members (e.g., cousins, siblings) repeated itself throughout my research (and is further discussed in Chapter 6) as students turned to each other. This behavior compared to Perez and McDonough’s (2008) findings on Latina/o students who relied on their expanded social capital and networks during the college application process.

The researchers used the term chain migration to explain how Latino/a students often gathered information about college from family, friends, and teachers through hearsay to navigate their college-going journey (Perez & McDonough, 2008, p. 260).

Meredith also discussed how college courses as part of a dual enrollment program through College Now eased her transition to college. She said, “I took Marketing 101 . . . since the community college I went to was business focused. . . . So, it was stressful, but I got a taste of how it was [in college.]” Meredith’s College Now courses gave her an indication of the work level expected in college courses:

[College Now courses] definitely helped me transition [to college], because the workload was very similar [to college]. I understood college grading and [the] syllabus much quicker, as well. I think without the process of College Now, I wouldn't have understood the percentage value of midterms and finals.

Meredith also learned how to read a syllabus and how different requirements in the course carried different percentage values. This level of understanding allowed Meredith to better manage her time and stress, since she knew how some course requirements weighted more than others in her final GPA.

### **Supplemental Academic Assistance**

First generation college students used their college access programs to provide supplemental academic assistance with their high school coursework and learning. Matthew did his homework with the staff and the volunteers at Crotona Achievement Program. Matthew stated, “We spent a majority of our time going over homework, depending on what year, most of the freshman, sophomores, and juniors who were in high school, we pretty much went over homework.” Matthew commented that his mother “worked a lot, she had two jobs,” so

Crotona's homework assistance benefited Matthew since his mother could not help him after school.

Leigh's mentor nurtured her interests in science and connected her to academic programming that complemented her school's curriculum. Leigh participated in Women in Science where she attended weekly labs with biology or chemistry students at Boston College (BC) throughout her sophomore and junior years. She did not receive credit like the aforementioned students taking formal classes; however, she benefited from the experience:

[Women in Science] took place in Boston College, and it was every Saturday morning, and we would just come in and we would just do labs with the biology or chemistry students that were in BC . . . That was so amazing.

Leigh spoke about the new information she learned and how the program helped her decide to become pre-med:

And the other [reason] . . . that I want to become a doctor . . . was Women in Science and Boston College. And, we just learned science there and different things we could do with our biology or chemistry degree, or stuff like that. And, I was like, "Okay, I enjoy doing these labs, learning about biology and stuff."

The supplemental academic programming Leigh received through Women in Science exposed her to college biology and chemistry college students, labs, and ignited her passion for the medical field further developing her aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005, 2006).

Alishea talked about how her tutor/mentor piqued her interested in biology, connected her with a zoologist, and helped her pass math class:

She actually contacted her friend who was a zoologist for me and that really helped a lot. And, she was also the reason why I also passed math, which was

always difficult for me. I probably wouldn't have graduated if I didn't pass that math course. So, I'm grateful for that. . . . She not only tutored me, she explained things that I understood, because I have a learning disability, so I didn't really get half the stuff in class, but she took the time with me, and really, actually explained things.

Alishea credited her tutor from the Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP) for helping her pass math class and explaining the material in a way she understood. The additional time and teaching STEP provided to Alishea "helped a lot" and ensured her success.

Both Alishea's and Leigh's supplemental academic assistance sparked their interests in fields where women of color were underrepresented (Committee on Underrepresented Groups and the Expansion of the Science and Engineering Workforce Pipeline, 2011). For Alishea, the mentorship she received from her engineering club teacher (who connected her to STEP), her STEP tutors, and her mentor from AVID (a college access program Alishea started in middle school) helped her realize her potential. Alishea had grown up in a low-income family, where her mom did not work due to an accident. Alishea recounted, "[I had] problems at my house," so "when I realized there were people who were trying to help me get into college and move on . . . [and I] really couldn't let them down." Alishea's story mirrored Zaff et al.'s (2003) findings that school related co-curricular activities provided students positive relationships with adults, structure to students' lives, and a safe space for students outside their homes.

### **College Access Programs and Career Exploration**

Students used their college access programs to assist them with career exploration through internship opportunities starting in high school. Julie reflected on how Minds Matter

connected her with internship opportunities and how the process of solidifying the internship developed her interviewing techniques:

Minds Matter did provide [internship] opportunities and then you have to apply and go through an interview. Which I think was why I learned that, what kind of person, what kind of interviewer I am, and through that I've also learned interviewing techniques and all that stuff. So, that's a good learning process, too.

Minds Matter's internship interviews helped Julie improve her communication skills and reflect on herself as a professional, career woman. Gaining this experience through Minds Matter gave Julie the opportunity to practice her interview technique and style before applying for a job.

Julianna provided a similar story through her experiences with Teen Career Connection through the YMCA:

I was a part of . . . Teen Career Connection. That's how I was able to work for the New York Philharmonic when I was in the tenth grade. It's an internship program and you had to apply [and] write an essay. So, through the YMCA, I learned how to do a lot of applications, because everything, there is always an application for everything. Even if they knew they were going to accept you, you still had to do an application or an essay. So, it's teaching you how to really fill out forms.

Julianna recognized that the YMCA intentionally helped her improve her written communication and application skills by requiring her and her peers to apply to programs that would accept them regardless. This allowed Julianna to both explore a career in the arts and gain practice presenting herself through a paper application, which would help both in her college search and future career.

Quaeisha attended Legal Outreach at Brooklyn Law School that exposed her to mock trials and law internships:

I was in a program called Legal Outreach. It was a college-bound law program. . . . I applied to it during eighth grade . . . And so we did work [at Brooklyn Law School] for the summer and we did law and we did a mock trial. . . . Then as you progress [through high school], you get more opportunities in the, your summer is always full. So, the summer of my freshman year, we interned at law firms. So, I interned at five firms. . . . Clifford Chance, Skadden, Goodwin Procter, Ropes & Gray, and other ones, but they're really good, good New York City firms.

The summer opportunities complemented Legal Outreach's program during the academic year where the students met weekly to focus on writing workshops and SAT preparation. During this time, Legal Outreach continued to place an emphasis on law through offering students internship opportunities, mock trials, and debates:

[Legal Outreach] prepares you for college. So, we did, but it was still law-based, so we did law internships, we did debates, we did more mock trials, we had writing workshops, SAT classes, Saturday writing classes, vocabulary competitions, all the boring stuff. We did that.

Legal Outreach helped Quaeisha prepare for college and learn more about a law career.

Quaeisha concluded:

I just was interested in law, so I was, "Okay, this will help me figure out whether I want to be a lawyer or not." That was my reason for doing it and my mom's reason for putting me in the program.

In the end, Quaeisha decided against becoming a lawyer and applied to the school of communication. Regardless, the opportunities Quaeisha received helped her learn about law careers, exposed her to different professional environments and work cultures, expanded her social and professional networks, and helped her better focus on what she wanted in a career. While Legal Outreach helped Quaeisha with her college-going journey, they also worked with her on career aspirations and post-college options. This support furthered Quaeisha's aspirational capital letting her see herself in a professional environment such as a law office (Yosso, 2005, 2006).

Melissa, Blake's mentor from GEAR UP, recommended that Blake participate in ACE (Architecture, Construction, and Engineering) Mentor Program:

I said that I was interested in architecture to my mentor, Melissa, and she was just like, "Hey, I got a really good program, it's called, ACE Mentor [Program] and you go into this state competition." I was like, "Alright, for sure, let's do that." So, I got into it and I was just in it for the next three years, and so that's when I finally knew what I wanted to do.

Blake's father's colleague had originally spurred Blake's interest in architecture. Knowing this, Melissa connected Blake with the ACE Mentor Program who offered Blake different services and support than GEAR UP:

. . . such as [the student participants] become interns and they take on this big project and they presented at the end of the year to a board of architects and designers. . . . And you design, well I was in it for three years, we designed, a veteran home, a veteran community, and we designed something like, ah, renovations to Yankee Stadium and what else? I think it was a renovation to



Cooper Union.

Like Quaeisha, Blake's work with his college access programs furthered his aspirational capital and motivated him to study harder (Yosso, 2005, 2006). Blake described how the older students in the program, drawing on familial capital and peer-to-peer support, also had a positive impact on him (Yosso, 2005, 2006). He said, "I met students that were seniors and juniors [in high school] and so they, influenced me in a way to do better in school." Blake's internship experience and state competitions solidified his interest in architecture:

I think, [ACE] helped me a lot in coming [to college,] as well, because it's hands on stuff like having to deal with clients, having to deal with pitching your ideas in the architecture industry or in the art industry in general. You have to communicate really well with your client and with your team members. . . . And, that's why I'm here, well originally I came for, I applied to architecture, but I didn't get in so, I'm doing interior design because it's hand-in-hand and I'm minoring in architecture.

Blake's college access program gave him tangible experiences in the field, peer mentorship opportunities, and leadership experiences on teamwork and communication. Blake also told how GEAR UP helped him improve his public speaking skills and contributed to his long-term goals:

I liked the way that [GEAR UP] enforced public speaking. I'm not very good at it but my advisor she was really aggravated by how many people or how many times the word "um" and "like" would be said. And, so when you were talking to her, she would, in a very aggravating manner, raise her hand and start counting on her fingers 1-2-3-4. And, you would pick up on that and then you would avoid it. And so, with that being said, [my] public speaking became better.

Blake connected his advisor's feedback to benefiting him in his career:

Being in the field of art, you have to pitch things be able to network with other people, network with other firms, network with clients, stuff like that. So, you have to have that good technique on how to keep calm and say what you gotta say without distracting others with words like "like" and "um."

Blake appreciated and learned from the workshops, field experience, and internships through GEAR UP and ACE, because he recognized how they would each propel him forward in his art career.

Gabriella participated in a general, all-encompassing college access program rather than one specific to a career trajectory like Blake's and Quaeisha's programs. However, her appreciation and realization of the importance of college access programs rolled over into her college major and impending career. She said, "My major right now is public policy, so I want to help other first generation students get to college." Gabriella's college access program's staff saw her through her college-going journey and continued to help with her job search. Gabriella said, "They have been helping me with my cover letters, reading over them." For Gabriella, Upward Bound's staff gave her the resources she needed to get into college and be successful, while also modeling a potential career path working for a college access and support program.

First generation college students received opportunities through their college access programs that enhanced students' job applications, public speaking, and interviewing skills to building their professional networks and field experience. For students whose social networks might not have included lawyers, architects, or other white-collar professionals these programs expanded the students' capital. In addition, it furthered students' aspirational capital (Yosso,

2005, 2006), the students' hands-on experience, and the students chance to see and learn more about potential careers before deciding on a college major or career path.

### **College Access Programs and Standardized Test Preparation**

Along with a college prep curriculum and AP classes, high scores on standardized exams like the SATs and the ACTs became a gateway to accessing the more selective colleges and universities throughout the United States. As students from higher income backgrounds utilized private college counselors and tutors to help them with standardized tests (McDonough, 1994), first generation college students in this study used their college access and success programs to help them study and prepare. While McDonough (1997) has shown that first generation college students learn about standardized tests later in their college-going journey than non-first generation college students, the students in this research did not allude to that educational or informational gap. Many students in the research mentioned that their college access programs offered SAT classes. For example, Michelle said, "So, I did SAT prep through [Let's Get Ready]. And, so they helped me with that." Michelle then talked about financial aid and other support her program offered. For the students that did talk more in depth about the SATs, the conversations centered around finding an SAT class rather than on the exam itself.

Jia learned about the importance of doing well on her SATs and attended two different college access programs' SAT preparation courses before deciding on a program. She first told how Educational Alliance's SAT prep program "gave you books and everything and they, and we had tests, we had practice tests." While Jia seemed to like that the program gave her study resources, she felt like "Educational Alliance was really big . . . I just felt like they didn't focus enough on individuals." Instead, Jia preferred Henry Street Settlement, a smaller program with approximately 20 students (as opposed to 60) and "they had instructors who like really broke it

down.” How Jia tried different programs and learned that she benefited from smaller classes demonstrated Yosso’s (2005) navigational capital in that she learned and found what she needed to ensure her success.

Bianka also spoke about connecting with an SAT preparation class after she did not do well on the first exam and felt pressured at her boarding school to bring up her score. When Bianka looked up courses, though, she recalled, “It was \$1,000, and I was like, ‘I can’t do that.’” Bianka then asked her brother to email their college access program and she learned that they offered the same program for \$200. After taking the course, Bianka recalled, “I scored better [the second time]. . . . What I learned from The Princeton Review is what I used when I took the test, and I did better, and that helped me out.” Bianka felt pressured to succeed on the SATs and score higher than she originally did. When I inquired about the pressure to do better, she said, “Our school always emphasized on it, they were like, especially once you got to junior year, they were like, ‘Okay, you guys, this is the year.’” While Bianka felt pressured to do well on the SATs, most first generation college students in this study did not dwell on the tests, their scores, or their meaning during the focus group or interviews unlike the test-obsessed culture often depicted in books and documentaries (Abeles, Congdon, Attia, Constantinou, & Adler, 2009; Chandler, 1999; Kamenetz, 2015).

### **College Access Programs Establish and Encourage a College-Going Mindset**

College access programs gave first generation college students the idea, the motivation, and the desire that they, too, could attend college. The programs instilled a college-going mindset in students to help them realize their potential of getting a post-secondary degree. Tom succinctly said, “With Liberty LEADS . . . I found that college is the choice for me.” Sierra

noted that her college access programs “tried to provide an environment where the students were thinking about college.”

Lisa and Blake had similar experiences with GEAR UP. Lisa moved to New York from Peru when she turned 7 years old. She was the oldest of her three siblings. Her parents’ annual income was just over \$22,000, so her and her family lived below the poverty line (Federal Register, 2012). Lisa credited her involvement in GEAR UP with helping her realize that she could attend college. Lisa said, “[GEAR UP] encouraged me a little because they always emphasized college stuff, and I didn’t think I was going to go to college back in middle school.” Lisa realized her college-going potential when GEAR UP offered SAT prep classes, after school tutoring, and adult mentors. Before GEAR UP, Lisa thought, “Oh well, I’m going to be a hobo.” With GEAR UP’s support, though, Lisa developed a college-going mindset that coincided with financial security and aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005, 2006).

Blake had a similar experience to Lisa regarding GEAR UP. He said, “I went to a school with 5,000 kids and a lot of those kids ended up flunking out, dropping out. They just went down bad paths.” Blake’s college access program familiarized him with college. He said, “I became familiar with the whole college experience from sophomore year [of high school], . . . because of GEAR UP and they put you in the right path and told you what college was about.” GEAR UP set Blake up for success and developed his college-going mindset by assigning him with a mentor and connecting him with other college access programs (through Brown University and ACE Mentoring) based on his interest and academic ability. As Bianca said earlier in the chapter, how her college access program gave her “hope in these areas,” the students’ stories here connote the same hope and aspiration (Yosso, 2005, 2006).

Jacob's development of college-going expectations came through his college access program, his college preparatory school, and his peers. Jacob recounted how in the fifth grade, he realized that getting through Prep and going to an independent, private school, would allow him to go to college:

Prep tells you in fifth grade that if you do Prep, and stay through the program, and stick with it and everything, you will go to college, you will go to a good college.

But, when I was younger, I didn't think of – I just, basically, felt that time, it was just going to take so long, that it was, that I was never going to be in college.

And, then I realized that I was going to be in college once I got to [the preparatory school], and the senior year class got all their college acceptances and everything.

Basically, just talking to different people, they just let you know that, "Don't be afraid of the process," because with [the preparatory school's] reputation, and them helping you, and everything like that, you're going to get into college.

For Jacob, Prep for Prep served as a conduit for him to navigate his K-16 educational journey and see college as a viable option through staff member's positive reinforcement (an important component of validation theory) and encouragement and older students embarking on their college application process. Prep for Prep and his preparatory school expanded his social network to include college-going peers and cultivated a college-going mindset that let him see college in more doable, realistic terms.

While college access programs helped build students college-going mentality, they also made college a viable option. For Sam, this meant showing him how to make college a reality. Sam knew he wanted to go to college, because his parents had instilled the expectations to go to college. He iterated how he thought of college as the next step after high school:

For me, personally, it was like [college is] going to happen. Just the way I was raised; my parents always required that I did my best, not necessarily straight A's. I have a super smart sister, and she's the more academic one. We, we both did pretty well in school, but the thing was just always do your best and then so college was just the next step after high school, I never really thought about it differently than that.

While Sam's parents seemed to encourage Sam and his sister to continue their education, Sam's classmates and him did not talk about college and Sam admitted that, "[college] was an afterthought." For Sam, that is where "Upward Bound program at Eastern Michigan University, . . . helped [him] to be in the frame of mind." Upward Bound helped Sam propel his pre-established college-going mindset into a reality, thus offering encouragement and resources to get Sam through the college search. Upward Bound provided Sam the resources he needed to access college; therefore, reflecting the second layer of Perna's (2006a) college choice model, "school and community context" (p. 117).

Gabriella had a similar experience to Sam where her parents had instilled in her expectations to attend college, but her college access program provided the additional encouragement and resources she needed to become college ready and apply:

I've always been into getting higher education just cause my dad works a lot, so I don't want him to be working like that. So, if you're working in demolition, you don't get a retirement. So, I don't want him to be one of the old men that works there.

Gabriella saw her father work hard in the construction industry and knew she did not want a blue-collar job where she would not receive retirement benefits. Since Gabriella's parents did

not attend college, though, she relied on a college access program to help make higher education a reality. When I asked Gabriella when she realized she would go to college, she replied:

Seventh grade, it's when it hit me. 'Cause the one [email] that I sent you [about] the Motivating Our Students Experience, that started me off thinking about college and stuff and my dad's always been like, "You're going to college." It was not ever "if," it was always, "You're going to college."

Gabriella's dad's career and rhetoric around "when, not if," developed Gabriella's college-going mindset, and her work with MOSTE helped her realize college would be a feasible option.

Along with MOSTE, Gabriella recognized the work of Upward Bound:

A lot of organizations that I was into, like Upward Bound, just like motivating us to just stay, really just made it possible. Especially 'cause college is so expensive and stuff. They taught me, just different scholarships that I could apply to, and just helped me go . . . I've always known I wanted to go to college, I just didn't know how. So, they provided me with the how.

For both Gabriella and Sam, the collaboration between their family's values and college access programs' encouragement and resources sparked a college-going mindset and provided on-going support to transcend through their college-going journey. Yosso's (2005) work on familial capital mirrored this shared sense of community, family, and values that influenced both Gabriella and Sam to allow them to have the right support structures, as first generation college students, to matriculate and persist in higher education.

### **College Access Programs and Lifelong Skills**

Along with college access programs helping students navigate secondary education, career exploration, standardized test preparation, and college access (Chapter 5), students'



college access programs provided personal and professional development opportunities to enhance students' leadership and communication skills, intercultural knowledge, and sense of responsibility. Students acknowledged how their college access programs fostered and contributed to the students' college-going journey.

Carlos received leadership opportunities through his college access organizations. He first described the leadership opportunities that ASPIRA and Youth Bridge offered him, "Through ASPIRA, I was Community Service Chair and through Youth Bridge, I was Diversity, Diversity in the Workplace Chair." Through these roles, Carlos developed:

Email etiquette . . . phone etiquette, just even time management like in terms of figuring out deadlines for planning, . . . how to manage or how to work in groups with people your age. That was one of the main things that I actually got from it. . . . Set out agendas, create minutes, or just create a task for whoever's on my team and things like that.

Carlos then connected these leadership skills to his engagement in campus life:

It became really easy for me to just contact other organizations around the [university] area and just go out and do community service, because I had already done all those things [in high school]. I had already knowledge on how to plan those [events] and how to contact people.

Carlos felt at ease interacting with people, community organizations, and campus clubs, because of his experiences with ASPIRA and Youth Bridge. He learned about engagement, professionalism, time management, and facilitating meetings. Carlos continued:

[I learned through my role in ASPIRA] things that you're supposed to have, that you develop professionally. . . . So, I think that helped me a lot in becoming an

involved leader on [my university] campus, it set me up for that. For being able to come on campus and just join organizations and be able to work with them effectively.

The leadership skills Carlos received through his college access organization helped him become more engaged in college life. As researchers found, student engagement in college benefited students' sense of belonging on campus, decision-making skills, teamwork, and critical and analytical thinking (Kuh, 1995, 2012; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008; O'Keeffe, 2013). ASPIRA's and Youth Bridge's opportunities expanded Carlos's college knowledge and readiness to include collegiate success.

Julianna's college access programs also advanced leadership skills that she then applied in college. Julianna's involvement with the YMCA started at a young age and continued through her teenage years where she participated in Global Teens, Career Connections, Team Club, and Leaders Club. Julianna continued:

The organizations allow me to time manage, so as I said before, I like to keep myself busy. Because with these organizations it really gives me time where I have to allocate to homework, because I don't have a lot of time to just say, "Okay, I can hang out all day and then do my homework later," because I don't have later. . . . So, I have to make sure I study, pace myself, and keep up-to-date with my work.

Like Carlos, the YMCA taught Julianna time management skills. Time management skills often contribute to reduced college students' stress levels and enhance their college experiences (Krumrei-Mancuso, Newton, Kim, & Wilcox, 2013; Macan, Shahani, Dipboye, & Phillips, 1990). Julianna also reflected how good time management skills and her co-curricular

involvement during high school helped her make friends in college and would likely help her transition to a management career:

I feel like it [the leadership opportunities] gives me, it's, a simulation for the real life. 'Cause I'm [a] management [major] and in the near future, I don't know exactly what type of management I want to go into, but I want to go into some type of management. And, taking on leadership positions and senior roles in any organizations allows me to know how to become more of a people person and work with people from different backgrounds. And, I feel like it allows me to gain friends. So, if you don't have a lot of friends when you first come in [to college], the organizations, you sometimes meet your best friends in these organizations.

Julianna saw how campus engagement helped her make friends, which contributed to her sense of belonging (Gummadam et al., 2016; O'Keeffe, 2013; Ostrove & Long, 2007; Soria & Stebleton, 2013; Stebleton et al., 2014). While Julianna touched on leadership roles allowing her to work with people from diverse backgrounds, she spoke more about the advantages that came from diverse social circles:

I like organizations like that because you meet people who are similar to you 'cause sometimes you meet friends in college or in high school and they don't really, they're not, they don't really join organizations or maybe they are just your friends that you eat lunch with or just your friends that you party with. But, the people in the organizations, you meet people who are really passionate about community service. People who really have a lot going for themselves and maybe be the next future CEOs and stuff. And, you have a lot more in common because

sometimes it is, you do have all different types of friends. So, I feel like in these organizations, I am able to meet a lot of productive friends who keep me going and who have the same interests as me.

Julianna articulated the benefits of having diverse friend groups and how they fulfilled her academic, social, and career needs. Similarly, Hackett and Hogg (2014) found that people who surrounded themselves with a diverse peer group with mutual values, interests, or goals felt more connected to their communities and Kuh (2012) found that diverse and global learning aids in college student persistence. Julianna's academic, social, and career networks created a mutual support system on a campus, many hours from home. Julianna summarized her relationships and captured the familial capital that students learned through their college access programs and later applied in college, "They help me out, I help them out" (Yosso, 2005, 2006).

For Lucas, his mentor from the Fulfillment Fund taught him a success strategy to ease into a new situation by taking his hands out of his pockets and relaxing:

I remember actually what the first college [visit] that we went to . . . it [was] Cal State . . . it was my first time out of the house, first time ever being really away from my parents. When it was dinner time, one of my counselors [from the Fulfillment Fund] approached me, Grace, that's her name, and she told me that everybody was getting food and I was just there, just standing outside with my hands in my pockets. It was completely out of my comfort zone and I was trying to put myself in that shell and she just came up to me and was like, "You're nervous, aren't you?" and I'm like, "Yeah. What am I supposed to do here?" And, she's like, "Ok, first of all, take your hands out of your pockets. Relax."

Lucas lived with his aunt in El Salvador until he moved to California when he was 11 years old to live with his mom and step dad. Lucas had not left California since he moved, so, naturally, he felt nervous on his college visit. His college access and success program's counselor, Grace, calmed him down:

She just talked to me and we got food, I went and sit down with them, I got to know them better and I just hang out. I felt in that comfort zone, out of my house, which was really weird. It was weird, but that was one of the life lessons that I vividly remember because it was really, it's something very small.

Grace built upon Lucas's linguistic capital (Yosso, 2005, 2006) and taught him the value of non-verbal communication, physically opening up to new experiences, and using talking as a tool for relaxation and connecting with people. While Lucas described Grace's advice as a "life lesson," he did not connect it to college. Lucas did use Grace's advice, though, when he felt homesick his first month on campus:

Just having someone to talk to, and like complain to. . . . Let it out . . . instead of drowning with all these things that you have. So, that's how we [Lucas and his hallmate] coped with it and we're still very good friends. He's one of my best friends now.

Lucas moved past feelings of homesickness through talking, as Grace suggested, reiterating the value of relationships and importance of belonging to students' college-going experience (Gummadam et al., 2016; O'Keeffe, 2013; Ostrove & Long, 2007; Soria & Stebleton, 2013; Stebleton et al., 2014).

Lilly also learned the importance of opening herself up to new experiences and developed her intercultural communication skills when she traveled to Argentina. Knowledge is Power

Program (KIPP) required their students to participate in summer programs so students remained engaged throughout the summer and experienced learning outside the classroom. KIPP helped Lilly find the right opportunity and a scholarship to cover the costs of a service-learning trip to Argentina where she would go with other students from the United States, live with a host family, and volunteer. Lilly decided to travel to Argentina to “open up just a little bit.” Lilly described her experience:

[The students] all were located at Rosario [in Santa Fe, Argentina] and we all had different host families and we all did the same volunteer work. But, I felt like even within the group of the United States, I learned a lot about where they're coming from, their perspectives on life. And, just their interests. For example, my family, we don't, well, not my family, just reading in general, just read, just because it wasn't a big thing. And, then I went to the study abroad program this girl had brought a big book and she was just reading for fun.

The idea of “reading for fun” surprised Lilly; however, mirrored research where children in low income homes have gotten exposed to less vocabulary words and books than children from higher income families (which contributed to their overall literacy development and academic readiness) (Coley, 2003; Gee, 1989). Lilly's communication skills expanded as she learned from her peers and everyone she met in Rosario.

I just felt like that was, that was really good and it motivated me to just, there's different people, and how they just think. It made me want to be more like that, more active and just better myself. And, reading does help, so improving your skills and writing and just communicating with others, and that's an example, I just learned about different ways of living. And, as far as the Argentinean culture,

history, [and] background.

Through traveling and volunteering, Lilly gained an intercultural knowledge from watching, conversing, reading, and surrounding herself with people from different cultures and backgrounds. Lilly also demonstrated how she moved from autonomy toward interdependence (Chickering & Reisser, 1993):

[Traveling] just made me more independent. And, then another, and [my family] didn't believe me, 'cause I told them from the start I was going to go to school [out-of-] state. And no one believed me until I got that letter and I told my dad, "I want to go." So, it just goes to show that I did grow as a person. Even though I didn't realize it back then, reflecting now, I did grow as a person and I'm more open to like different, different views, [and] different cultures.

Through KIPP's assistance, Lilly took a risk and pushed herself outside her comfort zone by traveling abroad. Lilly's experience in Argentina helped her develop her communication skills through opening herself up to new experiences, reading, and engaging in conversations with people of all ages from diverse backgrounds. In addition, it gave her the confidence to attend college out-of-state, made her more independent and open-minded, and enhanced her college readiness so she could better acclimate to college.

Jia experience with YMCA's Global Teens in Thailand also opened her up to new cultures, ways of thinking, and influenced her college major:

They send a group of 16 students with two chaperones over to the local YMCA in different countries, so I chose to go to Thailand. And, it was really nice there.

They provided, we lived in a hotel, because in Thailand, it's really still developing. So, where they had the bathrooms they had to still squat and

everything, but the hotel had real bathrooms, real showers. Because if we actually lived in a host family's house, we had to use a bucket of water to take a shower and everything. But, then, it was pretty fun times, it was only two weeks. It was great.

Jia's experience through Global Teens exposed her to poverty in an underdeveloped country. While Jia's family lived in New York City just above the poverty line, what she experienced in Thailand made her question her own identity within a larger, global context. Jia reflected on what she learned through her experience:

Although it was just two weeks, it was just with a new group of people and seeing how somewhere else is. . . . And, there is so many poor people, because we worked at an orphanage, and we also worked at a school that served half orphans and 50% of the lowest income people. And, they're just so happy. They look, they come to school in uniforms that don't look as clean. We also worked with street children, and they literally lived on the streets. . . . And, it just made me appreciate what I had a lot more here. . . . I came back and I felt so lost, because I wasn't doing something every day like going to visit the kids in the orphanage or something.

Jia's trip to Thailand showed the value in experiential learning as a persistence strategy, since it helped her make meaning of her travel and sense of purpose (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Kuh, 2012).

Just after Jia returned from Thailand, she moved away to start college. Simultaneously, doctors in New York City diagnosed Jia's father with cancer. Jia's father's illness coupled with her recent travels to Thailand through the YMCA and her experiences with Edgies and Henry



Street Settlement (two other college access programs) influenced Jia’s college-going journey and her “desire to help” as she did in Thailand:

Seeing all the problems in my community, [a neighborhood in New York], and seeing people suffer, and you just don't want that to happen. I remember seeing an old lady just pushing carts of cans, because they collect a lot of those canned sodas and they bring them down [to a recycling drop-off center where the state pays up to \$.08 per can or bottle recycled], and there's a desire to help them; probably because we are helped. All of these college access programs are free programs to help you. To help the community that needs to be helped.

Jia saw how the “desire to help” went full circle and benefited her – “to help the community that needs to be helped.” Jia’s travel with her college access program, furthered Jia’s aspirational capital and built on her familial, collective identity (Yosso, 2005, 2006). Once in college, Jia decided to pursue a career in public health, so she could better educate and serve her community.

Janey’s experience with Project Reach taught her about other cultures, open-mindedness, and communication when they promoted and hosted conversations on race, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation with a diverse group of high school students. Janey explained:

There was one summer where [Project Reach] had us go out to other organizations and tell other organizations what we’re about. . . . A lot of what I had to do was just facilitate workshops. We had workshops on racism, classism, homophobia, so it’s helped me just not be afraid to talk to people. . . . I grew up in Chinatown and it was just only Asian people. I, for me, I like working with Asian people, but also working with White people, Latino people, Black people, people of all different races, color, personality. . . . I’m proud that I know people

of all different types of backgrounds and because I enjoy working with people and I am passionate about working with people that's what I'm really proud of throughout my whole lifetime.

Janey's appreciation for working with people and facilitating workshops on social justice lead her to her major. Janey continued, "I'm a sociology major; I'm really interested in education policies. So, I try to get involved with, in the education field as much as possible, 'cause I like working with students." Janey continued to share the different ways she incorporated this into her work study jobs and volunteer positions during college such as working with refugees on Saturdays and participating in Literacy Corp. Janey said:

I'm part of the Live Blog and we're actually facilitating a workshop at [a local high school] . . . April 20<sup>th</sup>. And, basically we're gonna go in and talk to the students about our process: getting into college and what college is about, giving them an idea of options after high school.

Janey used her facilitation and communication skills and her appreciation for diversity that she learned through Project Reach in college. Janey's experiences with Project Reach and college engagements reflected community-based learning and global/diversity learning, two high impact practices Kuh (2012) found that helped increase college students' persistence.

Along with students developing leadership and communication skills and intercultural knowledge, college access and support programs cultivated students' independence and sense of responsibility. Tom's college access and success program, Liberty LEADS, connected him with summer opportunities that fostered his independence:

I was told [by Liberty LEADS] that we had to do something during the summer, and they were like, there's an opportunity to study abroad. So, I was like,

“Okay,” and I really wanted to study in Spain. And, they covered about all of it, except for \$300 for both the airfare and the studying. And then, I went to school and I asked them for money, so it was basically all covered, and, well, the program did not only that, they also had leadership programs and so, every summer, I would do something affiliated through them, or they would help me find something to do during the summer. And, that got me into becoming more independent of myself and growing and seeing what I want to do.

Tom believed that traveling to Spain and participating in leadership programs during high school through Liberty LEADS helped him gain his independence and sense of responsibility. Students’ search for independence would likely help in their transition to a residential college and balancing their college and family lives (London, 1989).

Like Tom, Yong also thought his college access program, Educational Alliance, contributed to and furthered his independence:

I changed as a person. I feel [Educational Alliance] definitely made me more resourceful, more independent. And, I mean, I was always the one, I mean, personally, the main reason I decided to look for a job was so I could buy more food for myself because I felt bad for taking my parents money to buy food.

‘Cause I never got an allowance, so when I needed money I would just ask them for it. And, I felt bad about that because, I loved eating, so I would just buy a bunch of food. I didn’t want to waste my parents’ money, so I was, if I wanted something I would afford it myself.

Yong continued to describe how Educational Alliance further cultivated his independence, an in particular financial independence:

I guess college never really changed my, the program itself never really changed my mind set, but it more reinforced the idea of, if I want something I should just get it done myself. If I had resources to help me take advantage of it, be grateful to them for it, but ultimately, I'm always going to be independent. I would just always do my own thing, be resourceful. I guess, the program just helped me reinforce that character.

Yong's reflection on Educational Alliance showed how they validated his drive to be autonomous and resourceful to take initiative (Rendón & Muñoz, 2011). The organization did not try to make Yong something he was not, but rather fostered his agency as an individual.

Students' college access programs helped them develop their leadership, communication, and intercultural skills and independence to become more college ready. While some students clearly articulated how these personal growths contributed to their college transition and success, other students demonstrated it through stories that utilized their newly acquired skill set or had research support the connections (e.g., better time management contributes to college success).

### **Conclusion**

For many first generation college students in the study, their college-going mindset and college preparation started at a young age. Parents who immigrated to the United States often did so to ensure their children a better education and future. Families worked hard to "disrupt the status quo," so their children went to well-resourced schools with competitive curriculums that would put their children on the path to college, economic stability, and career options (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002, p. 87). To make this feasible, parents (and students) used their social and professional networks to connect with college access programs. As this research showed, these initial connections to one college access program launched students' college-going

journey and served as a springboard to summer opportunities, supplemental classes, internships, and abroad experiences. Most notably, students' established relationships (e.g., siblings, parents, teachers) connected them to their college access program, and new relationships (e.g., college access program volunteers, advisors, and mentors) guided students through their college-going journey. Thus, these relationships and the skills college access programs taught students laid the foundation of students' college-going journey.

## **Chapter Five: COLLEGE ACCESS**

First generation college students rely heavily on their college access programs during the college search and college choice phases (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987) of their college-going journey. This chapter explores how first generation college students in this study use their college access programs to expand their networking and college knowledge, college application and writing skills, and understanding of financial literacy to aid them in their college search and choice process.

### **College Access Programs and the College Search Process**

Participants' college access programs help them learn about and connect with different colleges, including their current university. To help students navigate the college search process, college access programs sponsor visits to college campuses, connect students directly with colleges and professional networks, provide students with college application strategies, assist students with their college essays, and provide financial literacy and support.

### **Getting a Feel for College Life**

Participants went on college visits and tours sponsored by their college access programs to learn more about types of colleges and to get a feel for campus life. Janey visited regional schools with Henry Street Settlement. She explained, "The only colleges I actually visited was Stony Brook, Binghamton, Cortland, and that's really about it, I didn't visit a lot of colleges. . . . I visited Binghamton and Cortland with Henry Street Settlement." Janey recognized the value in touring college campuses to get a sense of college life. Janey reflected, "I feel that in order for a student to apply for college they have to see the college." She continued:

Unless [students'] first hand experience what it's like to be on the campus, and if they see if they like it or not, then they'll choose, if they choose to go or do not

choose to go. . . . 'Cause I feel like that would impact the students the most.

Janey recognized that visiting colleges helped students make informed decisions about whether they liked certain schools. Janey also learned how the expense for visiting campuses foreshadowed the expense of attending a university out of state:

Also visiting colleges, getting there is expensive, so that's probably why I didn't go [visit] either cause, if I wanted to go to a college in California to visit, it's, plane tickets are what, \$400? So, I didn't, it wasn't even cross my mind [to visit schools out of state].

The campus visit process provided Janey with more insight into both college fit and costs. Janey's campus visits to solely in-state schools mirrored McDonough's (1997) findings on lower-income students attending state school and schools closer to home due to family obligations and travel costs.

Unlike Janey's program, Alex's program took him throughout the country:

They took us on college tours every semester, every year, excuse me, every year. So, we would choose a region of America where we'd rather go. Up north, down south, or Midwest, and they would pick a handful of renowned colleges in those areas, and we would visit as much of them as we could, over, I think, a week. It was usually during spring break.

Alex's college access program did not limit their school visits to in-state and Alex did not discuss the perceived costs of attending schools further from home:

We would just hop from college to college, just talking to students, talking to admissions officers. Getting a feel for the campus, trying to, I don't know, feel what college would be like if we were there. So, we would go there and picture

ourselves in college. It was fun.

Alex did not discuss learning more about his interests and potential major of architecture or civil engineering on these visits, but rather focused on “getting a feel for the campus.” Sarah also thought participating in her college access program’s college visits helped her understand what college would entail. She said, “[GEAR UP] encourage[d] you to participate and everything ‘cause it was, it was not only just college tours, [it was to] go to see what college feels like by attending [and] to go sleep over there.” Sarah emphasized both the importance of visiting and spending the night on campus to experience college life. Quaeisha’s college access program sponsored college tours and helped her learn about different types of school. Quaeisha said, “We’ve done a series of college tours because they wanted us to know whether we would be comfortable at a big school or a small school, a more urban, or suburban, a more college town, or city.” Quaeisha benefited from her college tour to learn about the variety of institutions of higher education and their geographical locations. The importance of college visits to get a “feel” for collegiate life relates to students seeing themselves on that college’s campus and feeling like they belong. Since a sense of belonging connects to students’ persistence (Gummadam et al., 2016; O’Keeffe, 2013; Ostrove & Long, 2007; Soria & Stebleton, 2013; Stebleton et al., 2014), campus tours help with both college access and success.

Jia and Sierra both emphasized the importance of campus visits through reflecting on missed opportunities during their college search. Jia explained:

I guess the only thing that I wish I had done more, as a high school student, is to go see more schools and get a feel of what other college camp-, like colleges are like. ‘Cause I’ve felt, I don’t know how college was supposed to be, like which campus, like what, what kind of colleges are out there. [Our school] is what I



envisioned as the colleges in movies where they always show the college campus, and everything, and then I didn't. I wish I had looked more where I was going.

Jia expressed later in the interview that she enjoyed her university; however, she had only come to campus once before for her sister's graduation ceremony. Like many first generation college students, Jia had not taken a campus tour or visited many campuses far from her home city (McDonough, 1997). Jia believed her college access program mostly visited schools the program administrators thought students in the program could afford, would get accepted into, and attend. Jia explained:

[The tours] being that it was geared towards the low-income, they were trying to just bring kids into college, and just going to college was not enough for me, in a way. So, they'll bring you to some like Ivy Leagues and reach schools, and primarily, a majority, they focused on some state schools, [since] the chances of getting in is higher. So, they just showed us schools that didn't really, they didn't really travel as far, they only traveled in that area, Connecticut, Boston, just, and then New York State. I would have enjoyed going somewhere further, like go to Cali for a visit, but then everything, it's, there's funding and everything.

Jia understood the cost benefit of her college access program with limited funding, visiting colleges within a driving distance that accepted a higher percentage of applicants as it allowed the organization to meet more students' needs. Jia, however, would have rather visited more school further away.

While Jia wished to visit more college campuses, Sierra believed her college access program should have further vetted the campuses they visited to make sure the campuses' policies supported students from low-income backgrounds. For example, Sierra spoke about a

college's judicial system that had a monetary fee associated with different school violations. Sierra did not think her college access program should have encouraged her to consider a university that would charge her \$50 for walking on the grass:

I hated some of the things that [my college access program] did like taking me to Fisk University. . . . It's, down there, you walk on their grass, you get charged \$50 the first time, you get charged \$75 a second time, you did it a third time, you're going to get a huge fine and they're going to put you on probation or something for walking on the grass.

Fines associated with judicial violations prevented Sierra from applying to certain universities, because the fines affected students from lower-income families more so than families with discretionary money. Most students seemed to prefer gaining exposure to an array of college types and locations; however, students realized how financial constraints and reaching the majority of students' needs (e.g., financial needs, college acceptance rates) took precedence in how college access programs planned campus visits. Therefore, many first generation college students in this study saw how finances affected their college search process starting with their campus visits or lack thereof (McDonough, 1997; Perna & Jones, 2013).

### **Connections Between College Access Programs and the University**

For several first generation college students in this study, employees and mentors from their college access programs connected the students to their current institution by putting the students in touch with a specific person they knew on campus. Morgan learned about her current university through the leader of Women in Natural Sciences (WINS). Morgan's participation in WINS included museum visits, "a camp trip, just at the Poconos, [and] . . . climb[ing] waterfalls," amongst other activities. Through these trips, Morgan and the program coordinator

developed a mentee/mentor relationship, and she recommended Morgan apply to the university's summer program for high school students. While Morgan submitted her application too late, she still "found out about [my current institution] through the program, WINS." Then, come junior year, Morgan's interest in the same university resurfaced during a college tour through WINS:

I think [WINS] didn't start the college tours maybe until junior year of high school, and . . . she [the program coordinator] paid for everything . . . [and] let us ask questions when we went on the college tours and see what we were interested in. And, the schools she took us to were schools that maybe all of us had a chance of getting in. They weren't too competitive or too low on the, but it was great, it was beneficial, I got to actually see the schools that I didn't know anything about.

That's how I found out about [my current institution].

The woman that led WINS first introduced Morgan to her current university when the woman encouraged Morgan to apply for the college's summer program and later during a college tour. Morgan then had another positive experience connected with the university when someone from the institution spoke at her high school and conducted on-site interviews. Morgan said, "I took advantage of that and signed up and after I heard them talk about college, . . . it went great. I knew they weren't really big on diversity, but I knew they had a really good design program." So, Morgan "took the risk," applied, and attended. WIN's program coordinator's connection to Morgan's current university showed how college access programs expanded their students' networks and the value of social capital during students' college search processes (Yosso, 2005, 2006).

College access programs also connected students to their current institution through the university's Office of Student Achievement. The Office of Student Achievement housed the

state-funded college support program (STATE) and the federal government's Student Support Services Program (SSSP). STATE and SSSP provided academic, personal, and career counseling to assist students during their university tenure. In addition, students received additional financial support for tuition, books, and fees. Aileen's mentor, Chanell, from Harlem Educational Activities Fund (HEAF), connected her to the university's SSSP:

Chanell had speakers from the certain universities come and speak to a group of students. . . . So, I went to one of those meetings and I met my SSS[P] counselor now. And, I asked her a question and she told me what you have to be like, what you have to do to get into [her university], the application and everything. So, through that small meeting that [Chanell] had with my counselor, Rita, that's how I found out about [my university], because I wasn't originally going to apply.

Through Chanell bringing in speakers from different universities to HEAF, Chanell introduced Aileen to Rita, an SSSP counselor from Aileen's current university. Just like Morgan, Aileen's college access program's coordinator connected her with her current institution, showing the benefit of personal relationships between students and their college access programs. In addition, Chanell connected Aileen to Rita before Aileen arrived on campus. Coles and Engstrom (2012) found this practice of having college access programs identify a campus advocate before students attend college has helped students' college experience.

Gabriella's college access program, *Motivating Our Students Through Experience* (MOSTE), encouraged her to apply to her university:

The amazing woman [from MOSTE] that I was talking about, I did not want to apply to [my current institution], 'cause I thought it was too much of a reach school. My grades weren't that good, but she would not leave me alone about it

[laughs]. She just kept telling me to apply to it, so I applied to it, and then I got in. She, I looked into the school, 'cause it was private, predominantly White, and so back then I loved diversity, I've always been in diverse schools. But, she just told me about different programs, I looked. I loved [the school's tagline/central program], and when I saw that I was like okay.

Gabriella learned about her current school through “the amazing woman” from MOSTE whose continued persistence and encouragement convinced Gabriella to apply. Conversations like this expanded on first generation college students' college conversations with parents (Chapter 2) as college access program's employees served as fictive kin (Chapter 4) and engaged with students about college fit and choice (Choy, 2001; Ohl-Gigliotti, 2008; Terenzini et al., 1996).

### **Applying to College Strategically**

College access programs developed different strategies to enhance students' college application process. These strategies and techniques included identifying potential colleges during the search process, ways to ensure students applied to a range of colleges, and tools to improve students' written application and interviews.

#### **Applying to a range of colleges.**

Tom explained how Liberty LEADS in Bronx, New York, made him apply to safety, 50/50, and reach schools. He said, “[Liberty LEADS] made it mandatory for three safety, three if you're not sure you'll make it or not make it, and then three that are really hard to get into.” Tom continued that “[Liberty LEADS] wouldn't write me a recommendation if I didn't use that [method of applying].” Tom did not understand the significance of this practice, as he admitted that he only focused his time on learning about the 50/50 schools, and applied to safety schools and reach schools simply to get a recommendation letter from Liberty LEADS:

For my safety, I had Stony Brook. And, I did a couple [applications] that were free that they mailed me. So, I did Fordham and I did a couple schools in Boston, but it was all for free. And, then for the school that I may get into, I targeted more toward what I wanted to do and what I wanted at the college, so those were Penn State, Rutgers, [my current university], BU. And, then for the harder one, I did Cornell, NYU, and then that was only to get the recommendation from [Liberty LEADS].

While Tom did not understand Liberty LEADS' application philosophy, he followed the process to ensure their recommendation letter. Presumably, Liberty LEADS used this method of three safety schools, three 50/50 schools, and three reaches based on their experience that students increased their chances of admittance when they applied to colleges of varying selectivity.

Mary summarized the importance her college access program's employees in helping identify where to submit college applications. Mary said about Chinese American Planning Council's Project Gateway's team:

[It's] somebody to guide you through the steps and somebody to help you choose what colleges to go to. And, not just, when you go to the guidance counselor and they'll tell you, "This is your reach, this is your target, this is your safety."

Somebody to really see what your interests are and guide you towards the right school, if you're interested in this certain topic, they'll be like, "Oh, this is a really good school for whatever you're interested in." . . . Really just somebody to guide you through the entire process.

Mary distinguished how the people at her college access program differed than her high school guidance counselor, because her college access program knew her interests, so could better

recommend colleges that would match her needs. As Mary and other students worked with their college access programs to apply to college this expanded on Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) search phase where guidance counselors, parents, and adults helped students navigate college applications. In addition, it reflected Attinasi's (1989) mentor modeling as students turned to college access programs' staff who understood the college application process.

Jacob had two college guidance counselors that assisted him with his college search, one at his college preparatory school and one at his college access program, Prep for Prep. Jacob described how both counselors used the same application strategy for college, but his counselor at his college access program encouraged him to apply to harder schools. Jacob explained:

Yeah, so [Prep] really, after you get in high school, and they really just start helping you move towards the college process. And, they give you a second college advisor. [My preparatory school] had a really good college advising system, and my college advisor, Sheryl, was really nice and helpful, but Prep literally gives you another one. You almost make a different list of schools with Prep.

Both of Jacob's college advisors helped him create lists of potential colleges; however, the lists differed. Jacob thought this difference stemmed from his preparatory school focusing mostly on high school grades and Prep depending on their networks with different colleges and universities. Jacob continued:

With [my preparatory school], the college list I had was the school, . . . they really base it around the grades falling into the averages and stuff. But, with Prep your list is literally, the schools are just literally better, because Prep has connections with colleges and stuff, too.

Just like in the previous section, the relationships between college access programs and individual colleges benefited the students during their college application process and showed the value of college access programs' social capital (Yosso, 2005, 2006). Prep for Prep had a network and understanding (social and a cultural capital) around first generation college students and college access that the program tapped into when working with their high school juniors and seniors.

### **College application essays.**

During the interviews and the focus groups, students emphasized the importance of their college access programs' assistance with their college application essays and portfolios. Simultaneously, students critiqued the essay questions for not highlighting first generation college students' experiences and assets. The students' reflections on the admissions process mirrored Wiessbourd's (2016) research on the need to better recruit college students focused on "concern for others and the common good" (p. 1).

### ***Essay topics.***

Kristina talked about the impact of socioeconomic class as she reflected on her college essay and how QuestBridge worked to highlight the talents of first generation college students from lower-income backgrounds by requiring supplemental essays:

I'd say the Common App is really limited and doesn't allow you to see a person fully, you just see test scores and things like that, whereas [QuestBridge's supplemental college application] allowed us to explain our lives more and that's the main difference, I would say, between the Common App.

I asked Kristina to further elaborate on the limitations in the Common Application and the differences between QuestBridge's supplemental application and the Common Application:



[The Common Application] just, it only allows one essay, the questions aren't necessarily about your life. I mean, technically, you probably could have put whatever essay question you want, . . . but QuestBridge allowed, it required three or four essays, I think, and all of them were specific to low-income. . . . It allowed you to frame yourself in an "I overcame it" way, which always looks good for college.

Kristina believed that the current common application "limited" lower-income students because the questions did not highlight their resistance capital, ability to work through challenges (Yosso, 2005, 2006). While Kristina assumed that college admissions staff would appreciate an "I overcame it" college essay, she recognized the importance of representing herself in the college search through positive attributes and displaying how she has handled adversity.

Julianna agreed with Kristina and thought the college essay should focus on students' backgrounds and "overcom[ing] your past history," since students' past histories aligned with the importance of history for people of color (Weber, 2010) and collective identity (Triandis, 2001).

Julianna expanded on her thought process:

I would say maybe offer more options to do more essays and with the essay topics reach various points. So, maybe one essay regarding your family background or family history. . . . I feel like [the application essays] should allow you to tell [colleges] about your history, what are you doing in high school to better yourself and to overcome your past history if it was good or not so good.

Along with the common application inquiring about how students "overcome your past history," Julianna also thought the common application should ask about students' families. For first generation college students who valued familial capital (Yosso, 2005, 2006), it felt

incomplete to not talk about their families in a process where colleges wanted to learn about their applicants.

Janey's college access program told her, "For your personal statement, just be yourself." Janey internalized this to mean she should write about her challenges. Janey passed this advice along to other students:

When you write your personal statement, write about your challenges, 'cause that's what a lot of people want to see in the admissions office. They want to see the challenges you've been through and how you overcame it and that's what, 'cause that actually shows your personality and shows your character, and I feel like those are the strongest personal statements.

Like Kristina and Julianna, Janey believed college admissions staff appreciated reading stories where students overcame past challenges. Kristina, Julianna, and Janey all felt that college admissions committees could not get to know them through the college essay unless they shared about overcoming past obstacles. For these students, their resistance capital extended beyond a skill set or ability to include part of their identity. Overcoming obstacles defined Kristina, Julianna, and Janey as people.

### ***Writing the essay.***

College access programs' advisors helped students develop concepts and topics for their college essays, edit the essays for content and grammar, and provide students feedback to make the essays stronger. Jia described, "We started, I think writing our personal essays in junior year or something. . . . The counselors would read over your essays." Students commented that the assistance they received from their college access programs on their college essays helped get them into college and helped improve their overall writing abilities.

Gabriella told how her college access program helped her perfect her college essay and enroll in a selective institution:

They had this amazing woman come and help us with writing our essays. She was really good with that and started, she starts, she's actually a producer and has her own organization. . . . And, then [they] provided us with exercises on how to write an amazing essay. She would look over it [and] we had to send her a new draft every Friday.

This woman provided Gabriella with the academic support to produce a strong college essay, an important piece of the college admissions application for baccalaureate degree-granting institutions (Clinedinst, Koranteng, & Nicola, 2015). In addition, by setting deadlines for revisions, Gabriella's college access program enforced the importance of time management and working on a larger project by breaking them down into manageable parts.

Yong credited his college access program for teaching him about writing when they helped him with his college essay. He reflected, "I had some really good college essays and [an Educational Alliance employee] . . . taught me more about writing essays than I did through all four years of high school, so it was a valuable experience." Yong, a bioengineer whose college had a writing requirement to graduate, saw the benefits of a strong foundation in writing.

As part of Alex's application to schools of architecture, he needed to compile and submit a portfolio. Unbeknownst to Alex of what that entailed, an employee at HEAF who graduated from Parsons The New School for Design, an art and design college, assisted him in the same way Gabriella and Yong received assistance with their college essays. Alex talked about his support systems:

First, the architecture portfolio, they really want art more than anything else. So, I

know, one of the workers at HEAF, she is a Parson's graduate, and she helped me and another friend of mine, work together to draw still lifes and one or two extra pieces to put into our portfolio that we didn't really get a chance to do elsewhere. But, it was basically just, it wasn't a class for it; she just tried to help us, because she was the artsy worker in the program. So, she just helped us with that because she knew what to do because she's been through the process before.

Alex depended on the HEAF employee's knowledge and experience for his portfolio. Alex recognized that without HEAF, he would not "get a chance to do [his portfolio] elsewhere." So, even though Alex attended a small, specialized high school in New York City the macro-structural oppression that affected school resources inhibited Alex's success as he did not have access to resources and networks in high school that mirrored what HEAF offered (Weber, 2010). Alex recognized that "HEAF . . . did their best just with the knowledge that they knew about the college application process, since they've been through it time and time again." Alex saw his college access program as essential to his college choice process, since they had personnel resources (social capital) and experience on compiling portfolios (cultural capital) that neither he nor his high school possessed.

### **Financial Literacy and Support**

The first generation college students in this study depended on their college access programs for support and assistance on financial literacy including financial aid and scholarships.

#### **Financial aid process.**

Participants used their college access programs to learn about financial aid forms, such as completing the FAFSA and College Scholarship Service (CSS) Profile. For example, Janey

relied on Henry Street Settlement to complete her financial aid paperwork. Janey described how a career counselor helped her with every step of FAFSA starting with the personal identification number (PIN) and password:

She was a career counselor there [at Henry Street Settlement], and she really helped me and she really helped me more with FAFSA. I had no idea, what is a PIN? Like how for FAFSA you need to do all the PINs and stuff, and a password. So, I had no, going into it, I had no idea what anyone was talking about.

The career counselor at Henry Street Settlement made the financial aid process more manageable by breaking it down into smaller steps, starting with establishing a PIN. For Janey, this individualized, tangible support allowed her to complete her FAFSA and get answers to questions she had throughout the process.

Meredith navigated through FAFSA, but could not figure out the CSS Profile. In School Youth (part of the Chinese American Planning Council) gave Meredith the assistance she needed:

I finished the first part of FAFSA by myself, but then CSS [Profile] was mind blowing. I was just like, "No." I did not know how to do it, my mom didn't know how to do it. So, [In School Youth] helped me a lot, cause they've been doing it for years and a lot of people were in that program and they needed help, too. So yeah, that was a huge chunk of why I did [In School Youth] too, cause I had no idea how to do it.

Meredith recognized how she and her mother did not have the familiarity with the CSS Profile to initially complete the financial aid paperwork on their own and appreciated In School Youth's experience with financial aid forms and instrumental (tangible) support (House, 1981).

Nicolas also described the complexities with financial aid and how he relied on the assistance of his college access program, College Planning Center of Rhode Island, throughout his time in college:

[My college access program] helped me with the filling out the FAFSA, filling out the CSS Profile because for my sister's school, they didn't even require that, so that's a first thing that was new to us. . . . [College Planning Center of Rhode Island] talked to us a lot about, they gave us, I remember, we had a meeting on loans, talking about loans, subsidized versus unsubsidized, how we go about taking out loans, how much you do want to take out.

The College Planning Center of Rhode Island provided Nicolas with transparency on the financial aid paperwork and loans as they broke down the complexities of the financial aid process.

Leigh received advice from her college access program, Let's Get Ready, about financing college and not letting money deter students from attending college. Leigh reiterated this advice to her cousins:

I have some cousins right now that are juniors [in high school] and they're going to apply to colleges next year. So, and I tell them, not to be afraid of the money, because I knew a lot of students back in high school, that they didn't apply to schools they wanted to because they thought like, "I don't have the money for this."

Tierney and Venegas (2006) have found that peer support on financial aid, like Leigh gave her cousins, provided students with socio-emotional and informational support that make college more accessible. I asked Leigh to talk further about why she gave her cousins this advice:

I just always tell them, “Don’t be afraid of the money. There’s options. There’s loans, there’s scholarships, and financial aid is, there’s going to be opportunities that are going to help you. So, don’t be afraid of that.” ‘Cause I know one of my cousins, they always tell, well, one of my uncles always tells my dad, “It’s so much money, how I am going to afford this?” My dad’s just like, “Don’t worry about that now, worry about him getting in, and then worry about, see what your options are.”

Leigh and her father understood the complexity of financing college; they also knew that a college and a medical school education (Leigh’s post-bachelor’s degree plans) would be worth the investment. Leigh and her father’s approach of “don’t be afraid of the money” countered the research on financial literacy of other first generation college students who were usually debt averse (Lee & Mueller, 2014). I asked Leigh where she learned about her financial options and approach to spending:

My dad. But, I feel like my dad learned that from . . . Let’s Get Ready. [Let’s Get Ready] enforced that, because when they were talking about financial aid, they were talking about how there’s going to be options for you, there’s not just one thing, there’s different options and stuff like that, and they enforced that. But I know my high school didn’t [enforce it], the guidance counselor. So, Let’s Get Ready did say something about that.

Let’s Get Ready changed Leigh’s and her father’s understanding of financial capital (Bourdieu, 1986), so she recognized the options available to students and the value of going into debt for a college education. Leigh’s story also demonstrated the relationship and understanding Let’s Get Ready had with students’ families and the importance of educating both students and their

families on the college search process. By bringing families into the college process, Let's Get Ready embraced students' familial capital (Yosso, 2005, 2006) and Let's Get Ready demonstrated their understanding of and appreciation for the collectivist mentality of their participants (Triandis, 2001).

Roderick et al. (2008) found that completing the FAFSA increased students likelihood of applying and attending college; therefore, the individualize, tangible support (House, 1981) that college access organizations provided first generation college students and their families with financial aid forms likely had a positive impact on students' college search and application process. The first generation college students in this study relied on their college access programs for assistance with financial aid so students, like Michelle, could, "afford college and for [them] to have like a fighting chance."

#### **Fee waivers.**

Baccalaureate-degree granting colleges and universities often required students to pay an associated fee with their admissions application. When implemented, these fees range from \$10 to \$90.00; therefore, they became quite costly for students and their families (Common Application Colleges, 2014). At the time of data collection, the university in this study had a \$70 application fee. Through the National Association for College Admission Counseling's (NACAC) "Request for Admissions Application Fee Waiver," college access programs could sign-off on fee waivers for students who met NACAC's criteria (e.g., eligible for free and reduced school lunch) (National Association for College Admisssion Counseling, 2014). While the waivers allowed students to submit their applications free of charge, students sometimes thought it meant that their college access program paid for the application fees on the students' behalf. NACAC's program did not cost the college access programs any money in application



fees just the time and the resources spent with the students to complete the paperwork. Colleges and universities who accepted the fee waivers incurred the expense in return for broadening their application pool. Even though the first generation students in this study did not fully understand the fee waiver process, they understood the outcome and spoke about it as part of their college choice process. For example, Alex took advantage of the fee waivers and applied to a large number of colleges. Alex said, “I applied to basically 25 colleges, . . . because my college access program paid for most of the forms.” While Alex did not understand how the fee waivers worked, he knew he did not have to pay.

Like Alex, Sarah may not have fully understood the fee waiver process, but she knew she would not incur any fees. Sarah described how she utilized GEAR UP, “I applied to a lot of schools and through GEAR UP we got our application waived all the time, so I didn’t have to pay for any of the fees or anything. . . . ‘Cause they were like \$75.00.” Sarah recognized how she could apply to many schools, since she did not need to pay the application fees. Charlotte also spoke about the application fee waivers. In particular, she noted how she joined TERI (her college access program) for the benefit of receiving fee waivers:

Another reason why I went [to TERI] was because I applied to a lot of different colleges and so the application fees was a lot for applying for so many, but they give out I think about ten free forms so that you don’t have to pay for the application fee.

Charlotte sought out TERI so she could benefit from the application fee waivers and apply “to a lot of different colleges.” While high school guidance counselors could complete fee waivers for qualified students, Charlotte went to TERI instead. This reiterated the obstacles first generation college students have faced when working with their high school guidance counselors such as

counselors having a high case load, minimal time to focus on the college search process, and not having a full understanding of financial aid (American Counseling Association, 2014; McDonough & Calderone, 2006; Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Thomas, et al., 2008). Alex, Sarah, and Charlotte's stories showed the importance of application fee waivers and how application fees stood as a financial hurdle in the college search process.

Unfortunately, fee waivers only helped the students who gained access to them. Thus, students not connected to college access programs, students at under-resourced high schools, or students at predominantly wealthy high schools where the guidance counselors did not serve many or any students who qualified for waivers may not have known about the program. Nicolas shared, "My [high] school was private, so they didn't offer fee waivers, so I feel like that's prevalent, 'cause not everybody that goes to private school is rich." Had Nicolas's high school guidance counselor known about fee waivers, the counselor could have submitted the forms on Nicolas's behalf. As McDonough and Calderone (2006) found, college guidance counselors at private high schools, like where Nicolas attended, used their own preconceived notions of affordability and guided students to enroll in colleges along those lines. For example, one guidance counselor in McDonough and Calderone's (2006) study recommended low-income students attend community colleges and/or commute as an affordable option. This showed a lack of knowledge on scholarships, loans, and available financial aid at baccalaureate degree-granting institutions. Guidance counselors' college-going knowledge dictated how different populations of students did and did not receive support.

### **Scholarships.**

In addition to college access programs helping students apply for financial aid, college access programs helped students identify and secure scholarships. These scholarships came from

external partners, foundations, and/or directly from college access programs. In addition, some college access programs established partnerships or memorandums of understanding with colleges and universities to sponsor scholarships for their students who matriculated.

***Scholarships through college access programs.***

Many college access programs provided students with assistance to apply for scholarships and gave students scholarships as part of their participation in their college access programs. Shanay received help on scholarship applications from the Black Youth Leadership Development Program and the Next Generation Leadership Program. Shanay first told about the Black Youth Leadership Development Program, “They had people come in and talk, and I know they gave out brochures, they gave us lots of stuff about money and how to save money and scholarship stuff.” Shanay’s program brought in speakers to discuss scholarships and saving money to educate students about resources and financing college. When the Black Youth Leadership Development Program merged into the Next Generation Leadership Program, Shanay continued to utilize their resources:

Then [Black Youth Leadership Development Program] turned into NGLP, the Next Generation Leadership Program, and I went there too. And, that was more geared towards, it separated us more towards age and they gave us scholarship stuff, because I remember going to the lady, and she just gave me just the whole book. “Here, this thing’s for scholarships, and make sure you apply to all your schools on time.”

At Next Generation Leadership Program, administrators separated their participants based on age to better target the scholarship resources they provided for Shanay and her peers.

While Shanay's program provided scholarship resources for their participants, Rebecca and Jia received scholarships from their college access programs. Rebecca told how, "[Miami] CAP [College Access Program] is just money. . . . You're awarded the money." While, Rebecca also participated in Upward Bound that offered other college support services, CAP solely gave students scholarships based on their GPA. Jia also received a scholarship directly through her college access program, The Educational Alliance. She told how the staff helped her find scholarships and gave her one for her first year. She said, "They offered you a lot. . . . They nominated you for certain scholarships [and] I got a scholarship through them for \$2,500, freshman year." Rebecca and Jia received their scholarships based on their high school GPA and scholarship application essays, respectively. These findings reflected a national study (Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, et al., 2008) where most college access programs gave students monetary assistance and/or guidance on applying for scholarships, grants, and loans.

Yong described how The Stanley Isaac Center provided him with a financial scholarship after working there for the summer:

The place I worked at [over the summer before college] itself it was called the Stanley Isaac Center, it was an after-school program. They actually had a scholarship within their company . . . and I actually won a \$3,500 check and a laptop, which have helped me out a lot.

While Yong got paid \$2,000 for his summer employment, he also received additional monies and a laptop from the Stanley Isaac Center. Yong described his appreciation for the laptop, "My old laptop was actually it was really crappy, so this new laptop, I actually use it all the time for my work and everything."

Gabriel had a similar arrangement to Yong, where Gabriel worked at Tutor Corps (part of the Guadalupe Center) and participated in their college access program. Gabriel committed to attend Tutor Corps' college access workshops and help younger students enrolled in the Guadalupe Center's after school program with their schoolwork. In return, Tutor Corps paid him for his services, gave him a scholarship for college, and helped Gabriel with his college search process. Gabriel explained the scholarship component of the program:

For every year you worked, you would get a \$4,000 type of scholarship for college. And, Tutor Corps was really big on, before you even got hired, they'd make sure you had the grades and, you had to [have] the scores are already set up for you to actually make it into college. 'Cause, I guess, their philosophy is, they don't want to put, invest money in you if you're not actually going to college.

Gabriel knew that Tutor Corps sought college bound students for their program, because the program made a financial investment in their students. Knowing Tutor Corps' philosophy further instilled Gabriel's belief and confidence that he was college material reflecting the importance of validation for first generation college students (Rendón & Muñoz, 2011). Gabriel stated, "Tutor Corps and they were pretty much the driving force [of why I went to college]. They were the counselors that I didn't have in high school." Gabriel concluded how Tutor Corps "provides counseling for [their students] . . . financially, emotionally, anything" both during high school and college. Like Coles and Engstrom (2012) found with On Point for College, wraparound services such as Tutor Corps' structure gave Gabriel comprehensive support (e.g., emotional, informational, instrumental) (House, 1981) allowing him to succeed and, in turn, provide similar support through tutoring younger students in the program. Therefore, Gabriel

made an investment in Tutor Corps and Tutor Corps invested in him reflecting how students' relationships with their college access programs became mutually beneficial.

*Scholarships through university partnerships with college access programs.*

In addition to college access programs helping students understand the financial aid processes and awarding scholarships to their students, some programs partnered with institutions where the university awarded students in those college access programs additional funding. Lorena discussed two college access programs that had institutional partnerships. The first college access program, University Challenge, brought together the university and its local community. Lorena first learned about University Challenge's scholarship in middle school, "In middle school we, I signed up for the [University] Challenge. . . . [As] long as you get 80 [percent] or better cumulative [GPA], than you're automatically guaranteed a spot at [the university.]" Lorena's school district enrolled approximately 19,000<sup>3</sup> students in K-12 and had six middle schools. Of those students, 85% qualified for the free and reduced lunch program, 53% identified as Black, 28% as White, 12% as Hispanic, 6% as Asian, and 1% as Native American/Alaskan. Through the university investing in University Challenge, they committed to putting financial resources into a low-income, racially diverse community by giving each student applicant an individualized financial aid package. Ideally, this program instilled a college-going mindset in students starting in middle school and, if the students matriculated in the university, they enriched the diversity and experiences of campus and academic life, while not being far from home.

Lorena's second college access program, Say Yes to Education, provided students with funding for an array of colleges rather than just one like University Challenge. Say Yes to

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<sup>3</sup> For confidentiality, I did not cite these numbers; however, I retrieved them in February 2016 from the school district's webpage.

Education collaborated with community colleges and public and private baccalaureate degree-granting institutions throughout the state giving Lorena flexibility in her college search. Lorena explained:

When I heard that as long as you were [a city resident] exclusive for four years then you could, then [Say Yes to Education] will pay for your college, I know they paid, you can go to two year or four year [schools], so I was like, “Four year, definitely, I’ll get into four year.”

Lorena signed up for University Challenge in middle school with the assumption that she would later enroll in the partnering university. Say Yes to Education renewed Lorena’s commitment to a “four year” institution and expanded Lorena’s college options, so she had more choice in her education. While University Challenge and Say Yes to Education helped Lorena realize that she could afford college, Lorena’s work with On Point for College, another college access program, also supported her college choice process. Lorena reflected, “I know [On Point’s counselor] did help me with a lot, a lot of financial aid stuff, ‘You need to have this in by this day.’” Lorena relied on her high school guidance counselor, On Point counselor, and Say Yes to Education staff to help her matriculate into a private university without having to “take out \$50,000 worth of loans every single year.” Lorena took advantage of four college access programs (she also used AVID) to make college a viable option. This demonstrated Lorena’s ability to navigate multiple resources and the relationships these programs had with the public schools, the city, and the local colleges and universities (Yosso, 2005, 2006). Using different college access programs allowed Lorena to get the critical components of college access programs (e.g., financial support, early exposure to college, promoting academic achievement) starting in middle school to successfully navigate her college readiness and choice processes (Perna, 2002).

Darrell recollected how his university offered a scholarship for Prep for Prep students. [Prep for Prep] get[s] a lot of the schools to either make grants or scholarships for Prep on behalf of the students, so I know here at [this university] there's a Prep for Prep scholarship. . . . So, not that Prep is funding, but [the university] promises to grant so and so amount a year, I don't know how much the grand total is. . . . So, Prep doesn't automatically allow you to get accepted into a school, but if you're accepted [there's scholarship money].

The relationship that Darrell described between his college access program and university modeled a sustained partnership that benefitted the college access program, the college, and the student participants. The college access program profited through a private institution offering financial support to their matriculated students. The university benefitted in that a well-established and notable non-profit organization with high achieving, well prepared, socioeconomically and racially diverse students will market the university to their students and encourage them to apply. Lastly, the students received additional scholarship monies and knew that the university has committed to their overall success as demonstrated from the partnership with their college access program (in addition to the financial commitment).

David's program, Today's Students Tomorrow's Teachers (TSTT), partnered with colleges and universities similar to Prep for Prep:

There's 21 partnering colleges with TSTT that if you go to them, they will give you half off the tuition. [My current university] is one of them, Fordham is one of them, UConn was one of them, Manhattan was one of them, Marist was one of them, so all the schools I looked at were TSTT schools, and they have a contact person at the schools you could reach out to.



As David told about the relationships between TSTT and different universities, he also mentioned how these partnerships shaped his college choice process. While this limited David and the participants in their college choice process to 21 schools, David valued TSTT's financial contribution to college as he iterated, "[TSTT is] definitely financially helpful. It pays for, well, they don't pay, it's the [university] grant, but for half and that's definitely helpful." David saw the partnership between his college access program and the 21 colleges and universities as "a great option for anyone who wants to be a teacher." As with Prep, the collaboration acted as a feeder program to the university, since TSTT had limited financial partner institutions.

While these partnerships mostly garnered positive feedback from the first generation college students, Jia understood how they could also narrow students' selection of colleges and universities. A community member recommended Jia for The Posse Foundation. If accepted, Jia would have received the support of The Posse Foundation's pre-collegiate training program and mentorship and full-tuition from the selected university. Knowing these benefits, Jia went through all three components of The Posse Foundation's application process (large group interviews, personal interviews, and small group interviews). As Jia moved through these stages, she had to decide which of The Posse Foundation's partner colleges she would apply to early admissions (The Posse Foundation near her had about ten partner institutions across the country). Jia did not make it past the third round of interviews and become an award recipient, but reflected on her experiences:

It's really weird 'cause I really didn't know any of the schools under, the schools under Posse. They're more liberal arts colleges and Vanderbilt was the biggest one, the biggest name one, so I just searched and, "Oh, if you're gonna do any, do Vanderbilt."

Jia selected Vanderbilt due to its partnership with The Posse Foundation, then based her decision on school size and name recognition. While most of the participants did not discuss how the partnerships between the universities and their college access programs negatively affected their college-going journey, Jia's interest in attending a large school showed a limitation that came with college access programs having partnerships with some schools and not others. Thus, while the programs helped the students prepare (Chapter 4) and access (Chapter 5) higher education, the programs may have limited the students' choices.

While The Posse Foundation may have limited students' college and university choices based on their college partnerships, they opened the door for their students to participate in the Early Decision (ED) program. Early Decision has allowed students to apply to a single college in the fall semester and if the college accepts the students, the students must matriculate at that institution. Colleges have favored ED because it has helped lower their yield ratio (yield = number of students who deposit/number of students college admit) and better predict and shape their incoming class size (Avery, Zeckhauser, & Fairbanks, 2004; G. Chapman & Dickert-Conlin; M. Kim, 2010). Students have felt that ED has alleviated the pressures of applying to multiple colleges and has increased their chances of admittance, since colleges have accepted a higher percentage of applicants through ED than regular decision (Avery et al., 2004; G. Chapman & Dickert-Conlin; M. Kim, 2010). While ED has its benefits, the programs' deadlines not aligning with financial aid deadlines has become an inequity and disadvantage for students who need to consider financial aid packages in their college choice process and benefit from comparing financial aid packages from more than one institution (Avery et al., 2004; G. Chapman & Dickert-Conlin; M. Kim, 2010). As such, ED has not been a viable option for

students dependent on financial aid. The first generation college students in this study applied to their current institution through the regular admissions process.

As first generation college students, the participants in this study utilized their college access programs through each step of their college search. While many participants discussed the role of their high school guidance counselors, students benefited from the additional cultural and social capital that their college access programs provided such as visiting college campuses, introducing students to university representatives, providing students support for their college essays, and helping students expand their financial literacy. In addition, students turned toward their college access programs as safe places to receive emotional support and validation when they questioned the fairness of the college application process (from a raced and classed perspective) and their own identity development as people of color from lower-income backgrounds (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; B. W. Jackson, 2001; J. Kim, 2001).

### **College Access Programs and the College Choice Process**

After students worked with their college access programs to identify and apply to colleges (college search), the programs assisted students with their college choice process. For first generation college students in this study, applying to and getting into college and applying for and receiving financial aid were integral and integrated pieces of the students' college choice processes (McDonough et al., 2015; Santiago, 2013). Thus, students used their college access programs to navigate the costs of attending and deciding where to attend college.

Alex decided to attend his current university based on finances and academic reputation. He said in discussing how he made his decision on where to attend college,

Mine was . . . mostly finances and the fact that, well, when I applied, they were ranked number two in architecture. They, when you give them your portfolio to

the architecture department, they automatically enter you into receiving one of the architecture scholarships. And, it pays for your tuition forever, unless you, as long as you maintain a certain GPA. So, I got that and because I got that, they were basically, “Come to [our university], we’re paying for your tuition.” So, I did, basically. So, between that and them being ranked number two in the nation, that’s why I chose to come here over other schools.

Alex came to his current university because they offered him a scholarship and a strong academic program building upon research on how first generation, low-income students make their decision on where to attend college based on financial aid, academic programs, and college prestige (McDonough et al., 2015; Santiago, 2013).

Meredith’s decision-making process compared to Alex. She told about how she decided which school to attend. Meredith said, “The biggest factor was [the university] giving more money to me.” Meredith discussed getting into three schools and her and her family’s thoughts:

At first [my family] really wanted me to go to Boston University, but they gave me no aid, so I didn’t go at all. So, that wasn’t even one of my choices, ‘cause I couldn’t go . . . for \$50,000 for school per year. I can’t pay for it. My mom definitely can’t pay for it! Where am I gonna get money? Me working in the summer is \$1,000.00. What’s that going to do? That’s not even one tenth of the price.

After Meredith eliminated Boston University due to the lack of financial aid, she visited her current institution to talk to their Office of Financial Aid about giving her additional funding:

I also went to the Financial Aid office [at my current university], because I needed more money. . . . I stopped by to talk to them and really tell them what

my financial situation was and how much more do I need. So, . . . they actually gave me \$3,000 more and what they asked me was why I need more and according to my mom's finances I could pay for it.

Meredith's desire to go attend college (aspirational capital) and ability to self-advocate (linguistic capital) earned her an additional \$3,000 from financial services (Yosso, 2005, 20016). For Meredith to get this additional funding, she shared a lot of personal information with the Office of Financial Aid. Meredith continued, "I told them my mom can't [afford tuition] 'cause she is living off food stamps, we both are and we can't afford it." Meredith's decision to enroll in her university heavily depended on the financial aid she received.

As Meredith told the Office of Financial and me about securing an additional \$3,000, Meredith told a parallel story describing her childhoods and teenage years living in poor, lower, or working class neighborhoods. My questions to the students did not center on students' socioeconomic backgrounds; however, the lived experiences of poverty intersected with the students' stories and selves, Meredith's story being one example. While many students talked about being poor and normalized their experiences, other students saw how micro social-psychological levels and macro structural levels worked for or against them in different realms (e.g., education, housing) like Darrell's story that opened Chapter 1 and Bianka's story in Chapter 6 (Weber, 2010). While students did not name social reproduction in the interviews, students described it. Bourdieu (1977) defined social reproduction through *habiti*. People developed or inherited *habiti* or "system[s] of dispositions" or characteristics due to social structures and life experiences which served as the foundation for social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 214). Families' socioeconomic status, race, residential community, school system, and political climate predetermined people's *habiti* before birth (Bourdieu, 1977). The *habiti*, then,

served as a “series of moves [‘actions’ and ‘reactions’] which [were] objectively organized as strategies without being the product of a genuine strategic intention” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 73). Therefore, *habiti* became reproduced or cyclical (through the series of actions and reactions) and repeated themselves throughout generations. While the participants did not use language of social reproduction or *habiti*, the cycle of poverty wove throughout their stories, especially surrounding their college search and choice processes.

Marcus’s talk on college choice also told about his experiences of poverty. Marcus applied to seven colleges and received acceptance from three schools. He recalled how he narrowed down his choices to his current institution:

My main concern was the money, my mom didn't even have \$1,000 to put to college, so that was the real obstacle. So, when I first got acceptance letters and they told me the price and how much aid I would get, I did the math. And, I would only be paying only \$1,000 less for the public schools because they would give me less aid, because the fact that they were cheaper and [my school now] gave me a whole bunch of financial aid, and it wasn't even that much more expensive than public school. So, the fact that I got a lot of aid from this private institution, I thought it would be, honestly, I thought just the fact that I'm in a private institution, would be more significant for me. So, I picked [this school] based on its reputation and the fact that they gave me a substantial amount of financial aid.

Marcus liked the idea of attending a private school over a public school, because of the school’s reputation and that they gave him, “A whole bunch of financial aid.”

While most students did not further consult with their college access programs once they received acceptance letters on where to matriculate, a few students asked their programs to either help them negotiate better financial aid packages or process their decision. Yu asked Project Gateway to help her secure additional funding:

I was trying to choose between three, among three colleges. . . . I wanted to go to Ithaca, 'cause they have a health profession program, but that is too expensive for me. So, basically I eliminated them. And, then it was between [a state school] and [my current school]. At the beginning, I really wanted to come to [here], but the financial package was pretty expensive. And, then I know that my other two friends, they got into this program called SSS[P] and then I was trying to ask, "Oh, can I also get into this program," stuff like that. I wrote [SSSP an] email, called them, stuff like that, but they were like, "Oh, we'll think about it," stuff like that. That was the time I also ask Project Gateway to speak to one of the staff that work here. Then they helped me through, they helped me through the process . . . and then they give me more money than [the state school], so I chose to come [here].

Yu's use of Project Gateway to help her negotiate a better financial aid package at her current school further demonstrated the importance of social capital and college access programs' partnerships with colleges and universities. It also reaffirmed for Yu her ability to self-advocate and navigate obstacles within her college-going journey by reaching out to Project Gateway.

Gabriella made her college decision based on the college's financial aid package and location. When I asked Gabriella how she decided on where to attend school, she replied, "The

money, basically.” Gabriella then elaborated on how she utilized her college access program to reassure her on her decision:

[My current institution] provided me with the most money and then . . .

Motivating Our Students Through Experience, they would be like, “It’s a once in a lifetime college. Do you want to college in the same place you’ve been living or do you want to explore and try different areas of interest?” So, then I was, yeah, they kept, they always motivated us to go out of state. So, I was like okay, I just went out of state.

Gabriella based her college decision on finances and the ability to live in a new region of the United States. As other researchers (McDonough et al., 2015; Santiago, 2013) have found, participants in this study used the university’s reputation, location, and academic programs to make their decision on where to attend; however, students’ financial aid award and ability to self-advocate for additional money played a substantial role in their final decision .

### **Conclusion**

Throughout the college search and choice process, students told stories that emphasized the relationships they developed with their college access programs and the relationships college access programs developed with colleges and universities. These relationships guided students’ campus visits; college lists of safety, 50/50, and reach schools; college application essays; and, understanding of and securing financial aid. As these steps reflected the general trajectory of college students’ college search and choice processes (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Perna, 2006a); the first generation students in this study showed the necessity of naming college access programs in college choice models since the programs served as a catalyst for campus visits, college applications, and connecting the students to their current university.



As students learned more about the college-going process and college life, students also learned more about themselves and social issues. For example, as students reflected on the college essays, they struggled to understand how an admissions team could come to know them if the colleges did not ask about overcoming obstacles and family histories. As first generation college students, students of color, and low-income students, they saw how their raced and classed lives and their capital did not have a place in the college application process. Students started to see the macro structural levels of oppression within higher education (Weber, 2010). As one student reflected after going on a campus tour, how would a school support, understand, and include students from lower-class families when they invoked a \$50 fine on students when they walked across the grass? From the start of students' college search process, the first generation college students in this study wrestled with "Who am I?" and finding their place within a privileged higher education system (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

## **Chapter Six: COLLEGE TRANSITION AND EXPERIENCE**

While college choice models (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Perna, 2006a) end once students make their decision on where to attend college, students' college-going journeys continue. As such, many college access programs have realized the importance of a seamless transition for first generation college students as they go from high school to college to ensure their persistence and success. For example, Gabriella told how MOSTE re-structured their college access program to help their students in college. Gabriella said, "It's More-MOSTE when you're in high school, it's Post-MOSTE, they just started Post-MOSTE, for when you're in college. To retain us in college." While not all college access programs offered structured support services such as "Post-MOSTE," students used the knowledge and the skills they learned from their college access programs (Chapters 4 and 5) to transition into and persist through college. As Jacob summarized about his college access program, "They follow you, literally, the rest of your academic career, and pretty much the rest of your life." This chapter will discuss how college access programs "follow you . . . the rest of your life" by offering informational support, on-line mentoring, peer-to-peer support, and volunteer opportunities throughout students transition to college and college experience. The chapter then discusses when students and college access programs missed the opportunity to further their relationship or when students connected with university-based support programs and became less dependent on their community-based programs.

### **Transition and Retention Strategies**

College access programs recognized that staying connected to students during their college transition and college experience looked different for different students. Both students

and their college access programs relied on informational support, email and social media, peer-to-peer support, and/or volunteering and giving back to stay connected and engaged.

### **Informational Support**

Several college access and support programs helped their current college students through their college transition and experience by providing informational support to students such as assisting them with course registration, financial aid, scholarships, and internship and career placement (House, 1981). Students' college access and support programs worked with students to ensure they had good classes and class schedules for their first semester. Quaeisha explained:

When you do your college schedule, you had to show it to Legal Outreach and they would be like, "Okay, that class? You shouldn't take that class. You should take this class," because they wanted you to make sure you had a foundation to have a good GPA. So, we pick our classes, we show it to them, and then we change them around if, "Okay, you shouldn't take this class, you should take this entry level or you should probably read," we had to, it's just a lot. We had to bring the descriptions that come with the classes that we selected and show it to them and then they had alumni that went to our school so they would tell, they would communicate with them and be like, "Okay, how was this class? Don't take that right now, so just wait."

Legal Outreach's staff met with Quaeisha to review her schedule. These conversations taught Quaeisha the importance of reading course descriptions before she enrolled in classes and utilizing her networks to get more information about the classes and the instructors. In addition, Legal Outreach spoke to Quaeisha about the course times:

[Legal Outreach] wanted us to start off with a schedule that was like our high school schedule, so they didn't want us to have a lot of gaps in our day. . . . They wanted us to transition normally. My schedule now is horrible because I have a bunch of 2 hour gaps and 3 hour gaps. So, Legal Outreach wanted us to start early and finish in the afternoon like high school, start at 8AM, get out at 3PM. . . . I had one break and that was lunch, basically, to go get something during lunchtime.

Legal Outreach demonstrated to Quaeisha that she should choose classes each semester based on course descriptions, professors, other students' feedback, and class times. While Quaeisha did not know all the right questions to ask her college's academic advisor when choosing classes her first semester, Legal Outreach knew to involve themselves in Quaeisha's course selection. Legal Outreach's experience working with other first generation college students, their alumni networks, and their understanding of course selection gave Quaeisha the resources and the support she needed for a good academic foundation. Quaeisha concluded about her transition to college and first semester, "[Legal Outreach] is very involved and it worked, because I didn't feel overwhelmed or anything. I felt like I could do all that, go home, do my work, and then go back, just like high school." Quaeisha's description of Legal Outreach's approach reflected the importance of providing first generation college students with academic support, so students have the resources they need to transition and persist in college (Coles & Engstrom, 2012; Engle, Bermeo, & O'Brien, 2006; Mangold, Bean, Adams, Schwab, & Lynch, 2002; Nora & Crisp, 2008).

Meredith told how she received informational support from Chinese-American Planning Council and In School Youth (ISY) at the end of her first year. Meredith said:

The ISY's . . . been contacting me. They just emailed me. They wanted to know if I got my fall tuition. They wanted to know if my financial aid changed [for my sophomore year] and they also wanna know how I'm doing in my classes. So, I mean they've been keeping track only on grades and financial aid.

In School Youth made sure Meredith checked her financial aid package for her sophomore year and did not assume it would remain unchanged. As a first generation college student, Meredith and her family may not have known to delve that deep into her aid package. She said, “[Chinese-American Planning Council has] just been getting in contact with me, I'm probably gonna visit them during the summer and tell them how my financial aid is.” At the end of Meredith's first-year on campus, she continued to depend on her college access programs for financial aid assistance. She also imagined that her relationship with Chinese-American Planning Council would continue, but change accordingly as she progressed through college:

I know they would try to figure out junior year-junior year my college year, they would try to figure out what you're gonna do in the future. . . . Maybe a loan plan? How to pay out your loans the smart way? So, I guess later on in the years of college, they'll teach me more stuff? Like how to get yourself out of the debt that you came in with and the right choices?

Meredith believed her college access program would “teach me more stuff” throughout college. Just as students did not know “the how” of the college application process (Chapter 5), students also did not know “how” once they were in college, so turned to their college access programs for informational support (House, 1981).

Lucas's college access and success program used scholarship money (instrumental or tangible support) as an incentive to keep participants engaged and provide them with informational support thereafter (House, 1981). Lucas explained:

One of the programs who helped me come to [college], I keep in contact with them all the time. They have this scholarship program, which is, they give us \$750 per semester for the first two years. To apply for that scholarship, even though you already got it, they require an application, your transcripts to see how you're doing with grades and stuff like that, in a letter to the sponsors. And, you basically just tell them, "How was your experience in college?"

The Fulfillment Fund's requirement to submit a new application held their scholarship recipients accountable during a time when first generation college students' frequently stopped or dropped out of school (X. Chen, 2005; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Ishitani, 2006). Through the Fulfillment Fund's monetary incentive and application process, they promoted persistence and had the opportunity to provide mentorship to the students during their transition and first two years in college. In addition to the requirements, Lucas continued:

On top of that, . . . I write letters to them, letters as in emails, just telling them what I'm doing now, if I started a new project, when I started [a Spanish TV show]. . . . I just tell them about my progress, "I really like this class, I really like what I'm doing as a journalist. I got to interview these people, some of them have been famous. I interview celebrities. Then, I started my radio show program. It's in Spanish, too." I email them about it.

Lucas emailed people from the Fulfillment Fund to share his different accomplishments throughout college. Meanwhile, the Fulfillment Fund used this information to provide Lucas

further support through connecting him with people in his field. Lucas reflected, “They put me in contact with someone from the program who I haven’t worked with before. She used to be a journalist and now she’s putting me in contact to get internships.” Through the Fulfillment Fund’s scholarship requirements and Lucas’s continuous contact, Lucas expanded his social networks and received career development, an important part of mentorship (Nora & Crisp, 2008; Yosso, 2005, 2006).

### **On-line Mentoring**

Students and college access and support programs frequented on-line mentoring platforms including email, Facebook, and LinkedIn to stay connected during students’ transition to college and college experience (Ware & Ramos, 2013). Andy’s connection to and support from his college access and success program came through Facebook. Andy said, “I didn’t really contact [Liberty LEADS] much. It was only when there was an internship opportunity that they will recommend me or if they posted it on Facebook and I’ll ‘like’ it and they’ll get back to me.” Andy stayed loosely connected to Liberty LEADS through Facebook by liking some of their posts. While Andy commented that they would get back to him, he did not elaborate on this communication. This reflected research Ware and Ramos (2013) conducted on college students, college access programs, and on-line mentoring outlets such as Facebook. Ware and Ramos (2013) found that students used Facebook to receive informational support including details on the college application process, financial aid deadlines, and contact information, but not for psychosocial or emotional support.

Mercedes talked about her two college access and support programs, Let’s Get Ready and Columbia Mentoring. Mercedes relationship with each program evolved differently over her

first year in college as she used her navigational capital to meet her varying needs (Yosso, 2005, 2006):

I was part of Let's Get Ready and I was also part of this program, this mentoring program, called Columbia Mentoring program. And, the Let's Get Ready program, I'm not, they, I get emails from them about opportunities, internships, or jobs. Or, if they have workshops for resumes or other things regarding networking workshops, that's like the only emails, that's the only thing, the only communication we have between them. I'm closer with my, I'm more, I communicate more with my mentor from the Columbia Mentoring program. Even though it was more for juniors and seniors [in high school] and we were doing the [college] application process, but we still talk. So, whenever I go back home to New York we always meet up and just talk about my major or my decisions.

Mercedes' connections with her two college access programs differed based on their structure, her relationships with the programs, and what forms of support Mercedes needed as a first year student. Let's Get Ready shared informational support such as career opportunities and resume workshops with Mercedes via email. While Mercedes did not mention responding to Let's Get Ready's emails or attending workshops they offered, she had read the emails and knew the services Let's Get Ready offered. Mercedes connections with Let's Get Ready came across as passive; however, she made an effort to stay connected with her mentor from Columbia Mentoring. Mercedes and her mentor talked about decisions she made during college and her major. This reinforced Coles and Engstrom's (2012) findings about college access programs meeting students "where they are" developmentally and academically (p. 14). It also aligned



with Ware and Ramos (2013) findings that students used face-to-face mentoring for emotional support and on-line resources for informational support.

Bianka maintained communication with her former mentors from SEEDS through personalized emails. Bianka explained why she took the time to write emails:

Where we grow up . . . if something good comes into your life, I feel, we, you shouldn't forget it. You shouldn't just, use it, take advantage of it for your benefit, and leave it. You should always keep in touch with the people who helped you the most, 'cause you never know when you might even need them later again. So, I keep in touch with . . . people from SEEDS because they were, they helped me get to where I am, so I feel like if I didn't, it would be ungrateful of me. It would be, it just wouldn't, I would feel bad. That's like taking advantage of them, using them, benefiting, going somewhere, and then just forgetting where you came from, and I will never forget where I came from.

Bianka's explanation of why she maintained communication with her mentors reflected her gratitude and appreciation for the opportunities she received and earned. Similarly, they reflected her commitment to her history and culture, as Bianka continued to talk about her life in Venezuela and her family's immigration to the United States:

I won't forget that we, me and my brother, shared a broken-down crib in a little house in Venezuela, eating nothing, being poor. I would not forget, those are my roots, and I feel the same way about the people who are being the counselor. If they help you, they're important; they helped you get to where you are. So, I always keep in contact with anybody who has helped me.

Bianka understood how people throughout her college-going journey shaped the educational experiences she received in a similar way that Venezuela, Bianka's family, and her family's immigration to the United States shaped Bianka and her family's history, collective identity, and memory. Bianka, recognizing the importance of her past and her support system, used email to stay connected with people and share her story. Similar to how Yosso (2006) wrote *Critical Race Counterstories Along the Chicana/ Chicano Educational Pipeline* as a counter narrative to share her research, Bianka's emails offered a counter narrative to the initial expectations she had for herself and others had for her. Bianka reflected on those early expectations:

We have to take the regular route, which is just regular public high school, where you have metal detectors and pregnant girls walking around. That type of life is what we expected, and we were okay with it.

Bianka's use of email captured her linguistic capital and became a tool for self-reflecting, expressing gratitude, educating others, maintaining connections during her college transition and college experience, and "disrupt[ed] and challenge[d] the status quo" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002, p. 87; Yosso, 2005, 2006).

Joy used Facebook and email to stay connected with the former director of Step Up. Joy said, "Right after I graduated, the supervisor of my program switched to another program called Computers for Youth. . . . We have each other on Facebook and each other's emails and stuff, so we're always updated on each other's lives." As students transitioned to college and persisted, students and college access programs depended on on-line tools such as Facebook and email to stay connected and disseminate information.

## Peer-to-Peer Support

Participants from the same college access and success program who all attended the same university became another form of support and helped ease students' transition to college (Coles & Engstrom, 2012; The Posse Foundation, 2014). Carlos described his experience walking around campus and seeing familiar faces from ASPIRA and Youth Bridge.

I remember myself walking through the quad the first day of classes, freshman year, and somebody screamed my name, and they were like, "Carlos!" I was like, "Hey!" and it was somebody from ASPIRA. And, it was so crazy. . . . There's literally three of us here at this school, well, four with somebody that came in this year, and it was crazy to find people from the program. There's also two people from Youth Bridge here at [school], and every time, what I try to do now is try to get more people from my programs in.

Carlos unexpectedly had a network of peers from his college access and support programs on campus. While Carlos did not articulate the value in having a support system through ASPIRA or Youth Bridge, he demonstrated the importance through making a conscious effort to recruit additional students from ASPIRA to come to his university. The support system Carlos found and worked to replicate demonstrated the importance of peers (Hurtado & Carter, 1996; Soria & Stebleton, 2013; Stebleton et al., 2014), peer mentors (Attinasi, 1989; Crisp & Cruz, 2009), fictive kin (Braithwaite et al., 2010; Tierney & Venegas, 2006), and familial capital to enhance students' sense of belonging and persistence in college (Yosso, 2005, 2006). It also paralleled Attinasi's (1989) findings on Mexican American students who broke down their college transition into three geographical realms: physical, social, and academic. Students then used the techniques of "getting to know" and "scaling down" to make a larger school less overwhelming

by building relationships with a smaller cohort of students (such as those from the same college access program) (Attinasi, 1989). Carlos continued to discuss his work with the Office of Student Achievement to host an overnight event for prospective students:

What I do now with [ASPIRA prospective students], I'm the person that hosts them. For example, when I came here to [this] university, we weren't hosted by anyone, so we just did the whole admissions trip. But, at the other schools that we visited were ASPIRA alumni who hosted us and bought us food and gave us workshops on what STATE stands for, SSS[P], and all of those programs. . . . I'm the president of the Office of Student Achievement here, which is like the STATE and SSS[P], and what we do is basically through our funding, we just buy them food and give them a whole tour, and all of this stuff is done by OSA students. So, about 60 [ASPIRA] students come in October, and then we . . . first serve them lunch, . . . talk about our experiences in ASPIRA, and then all of us just talk about our experiences in college, in general. . . . And, then we just break up and give them a tour depending on whatever their interests may be or just whatever we might be doing on campus or things that we've done on campus.

The way Carlos utilized his resources by connecting ASPIRA and OSA, STATE, and SSSP mirrored the networks between college access programs (Chapter 4) and the collaboration between college access programs and universities (Chapter 5). Carlos utilized his social and navigational capital to arrange for prospective students' overnight; however, he also modeled the practices of his college access programs and values of familial capital and collectivism (Triandis, 2001; Yosso, 2005, 2006).

Jacob and Darrell both participated in Prep for Prep in New York City and roomed together in college. Jacob talked about his relationship with Darrell:

My [college] roommate was at Prep with me, also. We went to the same high school. . . . ‘Cause we were, I didn’t know him at Prep [in middle school], we weren’t really friends in Prep, but then we went to high school together. And, once you’re in, once you get to a school and other Prep kids are at it, you know who they are because you just see the Prep shirts. . . . And, through conversation and we became really good friends in high school. We were both in Prep, we both went to [the same preparatory school]. And, then, when we found out we were both coming to [the same university]. We were roommates; we decided we were definitely going to be roommates.

Jacob summed up his experience with Prep for Prep and attending his preparatory school:

I just got really lucky. . . . Basically [the preparatory school] made the transition really easy . . . [because] I had like a roommate I'd been really, really good friends with all of high school and I knew him from Prep.

For Jacob, the peer-to-peer support he had in Darrell eased his transition to college. While Carlos had several ASPIRA students on campus, Jacob saw the benefit of having one “really good friend” from his college access and support program on his college-going journey.

Nicolas, a first-year student, saw the benefits of a peer network and mentorship through the relationship he had with Carol, a sophomore, also from the College Planning Center of Rhode Island. While Nicolas did not know Carol before matriculating at their current university, the shared commonality of both coming to campus from Rhode Island and utilizing the College Planning Center of Rhode Island forged a support system. Nicolas said, “When I met Carol, she

was a sophomore friend, so I feel like she was really comfortable in her environment, so I felt like it made me more comfortable in my environment.” Nicolas continued:

[I would like] more peer advisors [and] peer mentors who have been in the [college] process before, who could understand the process. . . . I like how [the College Planning Center of Rhode Island] tries to set the program where if you go to, if you’re in this program and you go to a college, you become a part of it - lifelong.

Nicolas appreciated his relationship with Carol on campus and recognized the benefit of having peer advisors, mentors, and “lifelong” support through the College Planning Center of Rhode Island to help him feel a sense of belonging on campus. This echoed the literature on peer mentors positively contributing to first year undergraduate students’ transition to college and first year success (Crisp & Cruz, 2009) and the importance of students’ sense of belonging to aid in students’ continued persistence (Gummadam et al., 2016; O’Keeffe, 2013; Ostrove & Long, 2007; Soria & Stebleton, 2013; Stebleton et al., 2014).

### **Volunteering, Giving Back, and College Uplift**

Volunteering, giving back, and “college uplift” also became a defining factor for many of the participants’ college experience. Students went back to their college access programs over school breaks to volunteer or found ways, like Carlos, to support the work of their college access programs while away at college. Quaeisha discussed how she went back to Legal Outreach to talk with high school students about their college experiences:

Our spring breaks are different [times], but I go and I talk, we all have to, we don’t have to, but we all do. We go back and we talk to students about our college experiences and we have to wear our college shirts, ‘cause some of them

are interested in the colleges that we go to. So, we just tell them the academic, the social, what to expect, what not to expect.

Quaeisha volunteered her time over spring break to talk with rising college students about the college experience just as, “[other] people came back and spoke to [her].” These visits helped the high school students develop a college-going mindset and started them on their college search process (Chapter 5), while they kept Quaeisha connected with Legal Outreach.

Quaeisha’s time with rising first generation college students also challenged the deficit model by building a college-going mentality in first generation college students and role modeling what current college students looked like (e.g., first generation college students, students of color, and students from low income families) (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002; Robertson, 2011).

Jacob also stayed connected to Prep for Prep through volunteer and work opportunities: I realized, I guess, mid-junior year [of high school] that what I want to do, I want to help and give back. . . . Prep literally put me in a place where I realized that these opportunities are there and for me not to take advantage of them and try to succeed and do the most that I can would be a complete waste of resources.

Similar to why Bianka kept in touch with her mentors, Jacob made the most of the resources Prep for Prep provided for him and wanted to share his knowledge and commitment to success:

I can't coast with the opportunities Prep has given me, because that would literally be a slap in the face to the greatest opportunity I've ever been offered. So, I have to, I have to do well for myself, but it really would be a huge disappointment to my parents and Prep, the Prep community for me not to take full advantage of what I'm given.

Jacob recognized the time and the work other people put into his success; therefore, he wanted to meet their expectations, utilize the resources he had available to him, and give back to the same community. This reflected the value of familial capital and setting high expectations for first generation college students (Rendón & Muñoz, 2011; Yosso, 2005, 2006). It also demonstrated the value of college access programs developing “a culture of caring and commitment” based on giving their students “unconditional support, encouragement, and guidance” (Coles & Engstrom, 2012, pp. 17-19). Students appreciated the “culture of caring” their college access programs provided them and emulated it by returning to their college access programs to volunteer (Coles & Engstrom, 2012).

Nicolas talked about his current relationship with the College Planning Center of Rhode Island. He reflected on how he continued to use his college access and success programs for informational support, “I do go back [to the College Planning Center of Rhode Island] every year to fill out my FAFSA and my CSS Profile.” Nicolas continued, “I also do drop-ins [at my college access program], which is over my, our breaks, I can come and mentor a rising senior or a current senior who is looking into the college process.” Just as Nicolas went back to the College Planning Center of Rhode Island for help with financial aid paperwork, Nicolas went to volunteer with the rising college students. This demonstrated how students gave back to their college access programs and how the relationships between students and their college access and support programs evolved during students’ time in college.

These stories of giving back and volunteering spoke to Gaines’s (2010) “racial uplift,” a way successful Black people helped less successful Black people flourish. Racial uplift reflected the proverb, “lifting as we climb.” The first generation college students in this study challenged the deficit model and naturally and effortlessly displayed patterns of uplift as they volunteered



with their college access programs. They also demonstrated these same behaviors as they spoke and interacted with each other during the focus groups. For example, students in one focus group shared with each other how to maximize their work-study monies and meal plan accounts on campus. In another focus group, one student offered a peer that they go get coffee after the focus group to talk further about her feelings of loneliness and lack of belonging that she expressed as we spoke. I came to call first generation college students “lifting” other first generation college students, “college uplift.”

The nature of college uplift expanded on Yosso’s (2005, 2006) Communities of Cultural Wealth. It built upon familial capital and collectivism where groups of people shared and worked towards similar goals or values (Triandis, 2001). College uplift reflected aspirational capital as first generation college students helped other students see that college was obtainable (Yosso, 2005, 2006). College uplift also complemented students’ resistance and navigational capitals as students worked together to overcome obstacles; stay focused; and find support in mentors, college access programs, university resources, and each other, so they could navigate and overcome the challenges within their college-going journeys. The impact of college uplift on first generation college students and their communities built on the framework of Communities of Cultural Wealth in that “Cultural capital is accumulated, like a deposit in the bank, but cultural wealth is meant to be shared” (Yosso, 2006, p. 46). As such, college uplift promoted a college-going mentality in and provided assistance for rising college students, strengthened the current college students’ connections with their college access programs, and served as a transition and retention tool for the participants.

### **Missed Opportunities and Faded Connections**

While students, like Jacob, shared stories on how their college access programs “followed” them throughout college, other students shared how their programs did not offer ongoing support or offered support, but the students chose not to use it. Some of the reasons students’ connections with their college access programs faded included students’ desires to become more independent, students’ beliefs they did not need additional supports, programs not offering services that met students’ needs, and students’ lack of connections with their programs. For example, Roger told, “When I got my schedule for [the summer bridge program], [On Point] helped a lot narrowing down the choices.” Roger’s college access program helped him determine his first college schedule to make sure he enrolled in courses that would give him a strong foundation for his academic career. After receiving this informational support (House, 1981), Roger said, “my training wheels are off” as he felt ready for college and only “talk[ed] to [On Point] once in a while,” since he now felt more prepared for college. While On Point continued to reach out to Roger, he consciously decided that he had the tools he needed based upon prior support he received.

Unlike Roger, Charlotte would have liked additional support services during her college transition and experience; however, her program’s structure and lack of personal relationships did not allow for it. Charlotte reflected on her current relationship with her college access program, “My program, it wasn’t a one-to-one program. It was just more me going to them when I need help for financial aid, so I don’t really have a relationship to, with them to begin with.” Charlotte felt that her program’s structure prevented her from developing a meaningful relationship with them and receiving college support services. Later in the focus group, when I asked Charlotte about an ideal college access program, Charlotte responded:

I would design a program that . . . help[s] students defining what they want to do for their major, because I didn't really have an idea of what exactly I wanna do coming in. So, I ended up, not switching around, but I took several different courses in different majors just to figure out what I wanna do.

Charlotte recognized the benefits of college access programs establishing and maintaining personal relationships with their students through college, since Charlotte's ideal college access program included academic support around classes and choosing a major.

Michelle lost her connection with her college access program since she did not have a personal relationship with them. Michelle said:

I don't really keep in contact with them, 'cause the college access program, there wasn't really a set person. So, it's just they send me emails for events and stuff sometimes. So, if I want to do something, there's that. I have the option to go, but I usually don't because, because they have those networking things and it's usually for business people and I don't want to do business, so there's really no point in me going.

Michelle's college access program provided informational support to their students via email; however, there was not a "set person" who gave Michelle the type of support she sought. If Michelle had developed deeper personal relationships with the staff and volunteers, Michelle may have maintained her relationship with the organization and have seen the potential benefits of attending networking events outside her immediate interest area.

Initially, Julie benefited from both on-line and personal mentoring through Minds Matter; however, as her mentors became busier she lost connections with her college access program. Julie described, "I'm part of the Minds Matter Alumni group on LinkedIn and I subscribe to their

alumni network from, on the website.” Julie then continued to talk about her relationships with the two mentors assigned to her:

I’ve had my mentors for 3 years before entering college. And, then once I got to college, they got a new mentee. . . . I was [her two mentors] first mentee, like both [mentors], they’d never had a mentee before. I was their first one, so, we’ve kept in touch for freshmen year. They actually send care packages. They’re really sweet about that and birthdays we catch up. And, they both work in New York City. And, I’m from New York City, so we would hang out when I would go back for Christmas or the holidays.

While Julie’s mentors initially kept in touch, their relationships had waned over the past three years. Now they exchange emails about once a year:

As time goes by, they have lives, too. And, they’re busy. And, one of them is engaged, I think, and one’s considering grad school and they’re starting to have families and pets and stuff. . . . I actually just emailed them a few weeks ago telling them how I’m doing. And, one of them replied, the other one, I think, is out of the country. But, I mean we just talk like once a year probably.

Julie’s connection to Minds Matter was through her mentors rather than with the program itself. Therefore, when Julie’s mentors invested less time into mentorship, Julie lost the support of and connections to the program. Julie had her mentors’ support during her college transition and first year; however, additional support services throughout college may have benefited her. Julie’s, Michelle’s, and Charlotte’s stories showed the value of and desire for sustained personal relationships with students’ college access programs so they received continued support and resources. Their stories and experiences reflected the importance of personal, caring

relationships between college access programs and their students (Coles & Engstrom, 2012; Engle et al., 2006) and mirrored the literature on the benefits of mentorship during college to aid in students' persistence, academic and career success, and leadership development (C. Campbell, Smith, Dugan, & Komives, 2012; T. A. Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Freeman, 1999; Mangold et al., 2002; Nora & Crisp, 2008).

Alex's story was less about a faded connection and more about his desire to become independent. Alex explained why he turned to HEAF less:

They've called me sometimes. I've called them. But after first year, calling during the semester ceased, well, at least in the sense of seeking help from them or, yeah, I, stopped calling them to seek help because I started to get, I started to figure things out. And, I wanted to learn how to do things on my own, just because I feel like I was too dependent on my people to do things for me when I was not before college, so I was trying to learn how to be more independent, be an adult.

While Alex wanted to become more independent, he described his "transition into first year was pretty abrupt, hectic, unexpected, and complete culture shock." While HEAF had workshops centered on brotherhood and Black, male identity development as a first generation college student at a predominantly White institution, Alex could not combat the disorientation and the "culture shock" he felt coming to college. Alex's feelings reflected "racial battle fatigue," the anxiety, frustration, and helplessness that many Black men experienced on predominantly White college campuses (Harper, 2012; Harper et al., 2011; W. A. Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007).

Alex described how he tried to cope and overcome the culture shock and the stress:

In the beginning, I would sleep a lot that was my coping mechanism whenever

things would get too crazy or too stressful, or unmanageable, I would, my body would just literally shut down. And, I would sleep for hours and days, and people couldn't wake me up, they would shake me, play music, and then you'd have to kick me and throw me out of bed or something. So, I would sleep anywhere and everywhere then after a while, I realized that was very unproductive, so I just kept trying different things. . . . I would, sometimes I stress ate, sometimes I worked for four days straight with no sleep. So, I was just trying a whole bunch of things. I would starve myself, I would feed myself, I would deprive myself of sleep, or I would oversleep, I would - I was just trying a crazy amount of things, so from the coping, I really I don't know what I did, but I just did everything, I tried, not drugs or anything.

Alex had a difficult transition to college and experienced extreme behaviors from sleeping all the time to not sleeping at all and gorging himself with food to starving himself. Alex felt as though the school's culture also mitigated the academic advisor's role and peer mentors had too many other commitments to truly mentor new students. He said:

We get academic advisors [through the college], but they don't really stress them. We don't know about them. We have things called peer advisors, as well. But, they're in [the same college] too, so they're very, very busy; they visit you once in a while, they're basically a student-run organization, they're really not an organization, they're just a bunch of people. . . . I don't know, it was very difficult.

While Alex may have liked a more personal relationship with his academic and peer advisors, Alex's perception of his academic advisor reflected Baker and Griffin's (2010) findings that faculty advisors traditionally advise students on course selection, general education and major

requirements, and academic guidance, but do not meet students' emotional and psychosocial needs. Alex continued, "There were outlets I could have called. The people who work at HEAF, they might have been able to help me over the phone, but they couldn't have come up continuously." HEAF tried to reach out to Alex during this time and Alex knew he had them as an "outlet;" however, his extreme behaviors, desire for independence, and self-described characteristics of being "very stubborn, . . . and keeping a guard up all the time" worked against him receiving emotional, psychosocial, and academic support. While Coles and Engstrom (2012) found college access programs need to be persistent in their communication with their students, students must also want the assistance. HEAF's employees availed themselves to Alex; however, Alex's behaviors, thoughts, and actions showed how continued relationships between college access programs and their participants must be mutual and include two-way communication and desire for support. While Alex and HEAF had a missed opportunity in working together, improved collegiate support through Alex's academic advisor and/or peer mentor may have eased Alex's transition.

Both of Elizabeth's college access programs closed impeding their ability to offer on-going support services. Elizabeth said, "[STYLES] doesn't exist anymore, unfortunately, because of budgeting, it got cut." Along with STYLES closing, College Now, her other college access program with a partnership between a local community college and different high schools for students to take college level classes, faltered. Elizabeth went into more details:

College Now, I don't even know what happened to it, and my . . . high school . . . is changing, and it's going from, it was really, really good, and now it's going down. And, it supposedly was on the news a year or two ago, that it was closing down because it was doing so poorly. So, I don't even know what happened with

[College Now] or, I just never kept in touch with them or anything.

Changes in Elizabeth's high school affected College Now's success. Thus, Elizabeth lost contact with STYLES and College Now due to closures and restructures, respectively. These changes reflected the fiscal challenges that nonprofit organizations have faced during a time where Americans have less disposable income and the government has not recovered its financial contributions to the same levels since the financial cutbacks in the 1980s (Salamon, 2012; Sontag-Padilla, Staplefoote, & Gonzalez Morganti, 2012).

### **Transitioning from Community-Based to University-Based Support Services**

As some students shared their stories about losing contact with their college access programs during one part of their interviews or focus groups, they later shared stories about support programs they used sponsored by their university. Their support programs, much like their college access programs, focused on retention of first generation, low-income students and/or students of color. For example, the university's Office of Student Achievement housed the federally funded TRIO Student Support Services Program (SSSP) and a similar state-funded program (STATE). SSSP and STATE assigned students a counselor to meet with regularly during college to provide holistic support through coaching, referral services, and academic and social advisement. Students also received tutoring and writing center support, assistance with class scheduling, financial aid, and career development. SSSP and STATE counselors and services complemented the support students received from their academic advisors or colleges. SSSP and STATE students also received full scholarships to participate in the university's six-week summer bridge program to help ease students' academic and psychosocial transition to college.



Matthew shared how he lost contact with Crotona Achievement Program, but found support in his current university's summer bridge program and SSSP. Matthew said:

I lost contact with [Crotona Achievement Program] as time progressed. I guess after I got into college, I spent, I don't know my contact with them was pretty limited. . . . New people [Crotona staff] came in and the people I worked with left, so because of that we lost contact with them. Because, the program, most of the people I knew, and just, they already went to different places and I just, I don't know, I just started losing contact with all of them.

Matthew's experience with Crotona staff reinforced the findings from the previous section showing the importance of personal relationships between students and college access programs' staff members and volunteers (Coles & Engstrom, 2012; Engle et al., 2006). As Matthew lost contact with Crotona, he received support from STATE and participated in the university's summer bridge program:

[The summer bridge program] was pretty much all of my summer [before college]. It was actually really fun. . . . [It was] less responsibility than during, for the fall actual semester. So, it got the students used to campus and used to taking classes and knowing where the buildings were and everything.

Matthew noted the benefits of participating in the summer bridge program. He said, "we get a few classes out of the way and . . . it was free." Spending his summer away from home focused on college and academics aligned with Matthew's past summer opportunities through Crotona where Matthew attended summer college and career development programs before his junior and senior years in high school. In addition to the summer bridge program, Matthew "lived in the [summer bridge program's] learning community for engineers. And, that was my major, so I

knew my classmates before the school started and knew all of my neighbors who are all in the learning community.” As Engstrom and Tinto (2008) found, academic living-learning communities such as Matthew’s engineering learning community have benefited low-income, first generation college students and student persistence. Crotona Achievement Program provided wraparound services for Matthew during high school and Matthew found similar hands-on support services through the summer bridge program, engineering learning community, and his STATE advisor. Inasmuch as Matthew’s relationship with Crotona waned, Matthew noted that he inquired about Crotona’s summer volunteer opportunities:

I actually looked up the program awhile back and I was actually pretty much thinking of being one of their grad students like [my mentor] was with the kids over the summer, but something else came up and now I don’t think I’m gonna be able to do it.

Despite lost connections with his program, Matthew still considered volunteering with Crotona over the summer and reached out to them. His actions echoed Gabriella’s sentiments about her college access program to “having someone always there; it’s a little backbone.” When Matthew felt tentative about summer plans, he relied on his “backbone” reflecting Yosso’s (2005, 2006) familial capital.

When I asked Yu about her current relationship with Project Gateway she responded, “I didn’t contact them at all.” Project Gateway, though, had connected her with SSSP before she left high school to help Yu get a better scholarship package. Yu said, “I also ask Project Gateway to speak to one of the staff that work here [at SSSP]. Then [Project Gateway] helped me through, they helped me through the process . . . for getting to SSS[P].” While Yu and Project Gateway did not continue their relationship after high school, Project Gateway’s

relationship with SSSP set Yu up for collegiate success. As discussed in Chapter 5, the social capital of college access programs helped their students connect with colleges. This same capital helped students' college transition and persistence. In addition to Project Gateway connecting Yu with SSSP, Yu said, "My other two friends [from Project Gateway], they got into . . . SSS[P]." Yu and her two friends attended Project Gateway in high school, matriculated at their current university, and received support from SSSP. Therefore, Yu benefited from both Project Gateway connecting her to SSSP and from peer-to-peer support (as discussed earlier in Chapter 6) on campus.

Julianna shared, "[CASH NY] helped me get into college or getting into the realm of how things go. I feel like the communication like that ends and then they just go onto their [new] students." While communication may have ended for Julianna, she also participated in STATE and attended the summer bridge program. Outside of academic support programs, Julianna named her co-curricular activities: the dance company, Fashion's Conscience ("an organization that represents minorities who are interested in the fashion industry because minorities are underrepresented in the fashion industry"), University Union Concerts, campus ambassadors through admissions, and National Association of Black Accountants. Julianna's co-curricular involvement modeled how she moved through the YMCA, her other college access program. Julianna participated in YMCA's Global Teen program to travel abroad, Career Connection, Leader's Club, and Team Club. Just as Julianna learned and navigated the YMCA, she did the same in college. In the focus group, Julianna demonstrated college uplift when she asked another student who struggled with making friends, "Have you ever tried joining organizations on campus? 'Cause usually in organizations you meet [people] all over campus and our years, different years. That usually helps, you should try." Julianna took the skills she learned through

the YMCA, applied them to her own experience in college, and had recognized the benefits of student engagement as a way to make friends and feel a sense of belonging on campus, so passed along the advice to a peer (Gummadam et al., 2016; Hausmann et al., 2009; O'Keeffe, 2013). Along with joining student organizations, Julianna talked about how she used different campus offices for support such as the Office of Financial Aid's financial literacy series, the tutoring center, and the writing center. While Julianna has not stayed connected with CASH NY and YMCA, she used the navigational, leadership, and communication skills she learned from her access programs in college (Banks, 2006; Yosso, 2005, 2006).

Carli's relationship with Henry Street Settlement ended because one of its centers closed. Carli recalled, "They closed down one of the branches. So, I just lost contact with the counselors. I think they got laid off. . . . It was not too long ago, right after the summer before I came [here]." Carli lost contact with Henry Street Settlement and learned through an email that cited the branch's closure due to government budget cuts. While this may have impacted Carli's collegiate success, her participation in the university's summer bridge program and STATE aided in her transition to college and persistence. Carli told:

I think [the summer bridge program] is a good experience for me cause they helped me to like transition from high school to college. And, it's also the first time that I'm leaving home and separating my parents. So, I think it prepared me for my freshmen, I can't say prepared, but at least I get some sense of what's going on and how's the college life.

Carli experienced the benefits of the university's summer bridge program and contrasted it with a friend of hers who did not attend. Carli continued:

I think summer program is really good for anybody, because it allowed freshmen to just come in and they don't know what's going on. And, they can't adapt to the environment

and all that. So, [my friend who didn't do the summer bridge program] was having trouble with life in general.

Carli's experience with the summer bridge program mirrored other research showing that summer bridge programs helped low-income, first generation college students, and/or students of color make friends, "scal[e] down" a large university (Attinasi, 1989, p. 255), meet faculty and administrators before classes began, and learn to navigate a predominantly White university (Harper, 2012). Carli also talked about going to her STATE counselor when she had questions about college. Carli said, "I'm really close with [my counselor], so he helps me out with, a lot with decision making and college life and everything. . . . He just gives me a lot of advice." How Carli relied on her STATE counselor compared to Mercedes's mentor from Columbia Mentoring where Mercedes commented, "we always meet up and just talk about my major or my decisions." The relationships between students and their mentors and students and their university-based support programs reflected the same familial capital and relationships students discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 with their college access programs (Yosso, 2005, 2006).

Most of the students in the study who received university-based support did so through OSA. Students not admitted to the university through OSA, found support in other areas of campus such as a program sponsored by the Multicultural Affairs Office called Succeeding. Karina described Succeeding as "a first year transitional program for minority students, so it's supposed to keep, it's for retention purposes, that'll really help you transition to new place, into college." Karina recognized the value in Succeeding and took it upon herself to enroll. While Karina's teachers and counselors helped connect her with her college access program, Karina decided to join Succeeding on her own. This decision reflected Karina's agency and assuring of her own collegiate success. Like other students that volunteered with their college access

programs, Karina took on the role as a Succeeding Intern for her junior year. She said, “Now that I’m a junior, it was something that I want to do to give back, cause [Succeeding] really helped me.” Karina’s commitment to rising students of color reflected her familial capital and college uplift (Yosso, 2005, 2006).

Tom talked about his involvement in Succeeding and how it influenced his college experience:

It gave me stuff to do, so there would be a lot of workshops and, . . . we would meet every weekend, and they’ll do workshops on time management and how to talk in interviews. So, it was helpful with getting a job and interviewing for a job, and it helped me in how to study and manage my time. And, this [second] semester [in the program] it’s not mandatory, but there’s many programs that focus more on professionalism and personal development, so you’ll go if you have time. But then we also meet with the advisor, I think, once or twice a month, um, a semester.

While Tom did not receive support from his college access programs, he received an advisor and support on time management, studying, and job interviews from Succeeding. The informational support (House, 1981) Tom received mirrored the support other students received through OSA or their college access programs. In addition, it reflected the literature on high-impact success strategies students’ need to better their persistence and college experience (Kuh, 2012).

While not all the students received on-going support from their college access programs, many of them received support services through one or more of the structured university success programs, instead. Despite the reasons why students lost connections with their college access programs, the students in this study recognized the benefits of having extra support services to navigate college in the same ways they had supplemental support in secondary school.

## Conclusion

Successful partnerships between first generation college students and college access programs came through programs offering different forms of support through different channels (House, 1981; Nora & Crisp, 2008; Ware & Ramos, 2013); building personal relationships with students (Coles & Engstrom, 2012; Engle et al., 2006); and, providing students with resources and volunteer opportunities. Tutor Corp encapsulated many of the success strategies to ensure students' college transition and persistence. For example, Gabriel discussed different forms of support. He said, "Bethany provides counseling for [students] during their four years at college, so then if they have any trouble they can talk to her, financially, emotionally, anything, they can just talk to her." Gabriel also talked about academic support and role modeling:

Or, like Gabriella said [about how she used her college access program], if I'm having trouble [in classes] I can talk to them and they understand. Then [Tutor Corps' employees] give me advice, like all the people on staff there. They've actually been through college so they are like, "Yeah, you can do this or that." If you're having a problem, they always find resources. They email a bunch of links to me, "Here, check this and this and this."

Gabriel received holistic, wraparound mentoring including emotional support, informational support (e.g., academic and financial support), and role modeling (House, 1981; Nora & Crisp, 2008).

Along with the mentorship Gabriel received, Tutor Corp had built in retention strategies for their students' continued persistence through scholarship packages; varying modes of communication; establishing new relationships with program personnel; and, encouraging

volunteering and giving back to the organization. Gabriel described his current relationship with his program:

My relationship is actually pretty good with my old program [Tutor Corps] because we still work together. 'Cause every semester they have to send out a check to [school], but aside from the money they're, actually, there for me any time. Sometimes my counselors they just hit me up, "Hey, how are you?" To say, "Hi" and sometimes I do the same thing. Or . . . if I'm having trouble I can talk to them and they understand.

Like Gabriel, all the students in the study that received semester or yearly scholarships from their college access programs maintained contact with their organizations, as the money served as an incentive and promoted persistence, accountability, and communication. Gabriel also discussed how his counselors would "hit him up." His reference to counselors in the plural broadened his relationship with Tutor Corps from being associated with just a single person to many people. As other students discussed the turnover of staff and the loss of connections with their mentors, Gabriel's communication with more than one employee at Tutor Corp increased his chances of sustaining his relationship with the organization. Even if one of his counselors left the organization, Gabriel connected to a network of people within Tutor Corp, including senior leadership like Heidi:

[Heidi] is always trying to stay in touch. She gets on Facebook she's like, "Hey, how are you?" And, all types of stuff so she's not, even though she's up there, she's hanging out with the kids. She's a really good person.

Tutor Corp also integrated new people into Gabriel's network. Gabriel described how he had met Bethany during his first year in college. He said, "This past year they actually hired



someone to be the college coordinator/ counselor and her name is Bethany. And, she now works with the college students.” Gabriel told how Tutor Corp seemed to prioritize personal relationships through strengthening past relationships and developing new ones to sustain students’ connections to the program.

Along with Gabriel connecting with multiple people from Tutor Corp, they reached out to him in different ways. Gabriel used email and phone calls to keep in touch with Bethany and other counselors and used Facebook with Heidi. This gave Gabriel multiple forms of communication depending on what worked best for him at any given time (Ware & Ramos, 2013).

Lastly, when Gabriel went home over breaks, he volunteered at Tutor Corps. Gabriel said, “Just to give back for all they do for me, during breaks I go back and I work at their office. Sometimes I put in a bunch of free hours, just to do it.” Gabriel’s relationship with Tutor Corps has turned into a partnership where he helps them through volunteering and they help him by providing the financial and emotional support he needs during his college-going journey.

Tutor Corps has supported their students through maintaining and creating new personal relationships, using multiple forms of communication, ensuring ways students return to them for continued support, and creating opportunities for students to give back to the organization. While not all non-profit college access and support programs offered these services, students used their social and navigational capital to connect with university support programs when their college access programs no longer met their needs (Yosso, 2005, 2006).

## Chapter Seven: DISCUSSION

This past August 2016, I walked around Boston, Massachusetts with a college graduate who had received The Posse Foundation's full-tuition scholarship, pre-collegiate training, and college mentorship from his alma mater. This former Posse recipient had recently moved to Boston to now pursue his graduate career at Boston University. As we talked he said, "I need to find the Brandon<sup>4</sup> for Boston University." Brandon was the Posse liaison on his undergraduate campus, an advocate for Posse, and a role model for the Posse Scholars. This student knew if he found "the Brandon" at Boston University, it would ease his transition to graduate school and booster his success as a graduate student. As a recent Posse alumnus, this student saw the value in college access and support programs and the personal relationships developed through them. My role as a researcher and my passion for my work comes from counterstories like these that challenge the deficit model and the school-to-prison pipeline (Amurao, 2013; Harper, 2012; Hurtado & Carter, 1996; Moore, 2011; Robertson, 2011; Suskind, 1998; Yosso, 2006). The stories of my participants and the students I work with fuel this research and reflect the need for further research, funding, and support for first generation college students.

In this research, I conducted qualitative interviews and focus groups to capture how first generation college students made meaning of the influence of their college access and support programs. Forty-seven first generation college students from a selective, private, mid-sized university participated in this study and shared with me their college-going journeys. Students' stories started as early as elementary school and continued through college. In this chapter, I review, synthesize, and make meaning of the findings through Communities of Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005, 2006) and critical theory (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002; Robertson, 2011) by

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<sup>4</sup> Brandon is a pseudonym.

trying to work against the deficit model and share ways first generation college students seek college readiness and choice and experience college to aid in their continued success and persistence. This allows me to place social justice at the forefront of the discussion by considering how we can continue to support first generation college students through challenging institutional structures and systems that perpetuate social reproduction, and build on the work of college access and support programs. I then discuss the limitations of this research, provide recommendations for improving college access and success, and suggest future research ideas based on this study.

### **Expanding on Communities of Cultural Wealth**

This research expanded on Yosso's (2005, 2006) Communities of Cultural Wealth with Chicana/Chicano students to include both first generation college students and college access and support programs. As the first generation college students talked about and participated in college access and support programs, the research showed how students were agents of their own successes and the college access programs, within themselves, became a form of and brokers of cultural wealth. Understanding how first generation college students and college access programs both aligned with Yosso's (2005, 2006) work and how college access programs become a form of cultural wealth impacts how researchers, educators, and administrators value college access and support programs, understand first generation college students, and look at first generation college students' college-going journeys.

First generation college students and college access programs expanded on Yosso's (2005, 2006) linguistic, navigational, social, resistant, aspirational, and familial capital. For example, college access programs further developed students' linguistic capital when the organizations helped students with their college and financial aid applications (Chapter 5). The

assistance college access programs provided enhanced students' writing skills and built up their vocabulary around financial literacy. In Chapter 6, the research showed how students and college access and support programs communicated with each other through different means, such as Facebook, phone calls, email, and LinkedIn, depending on what worked best for their relationships (Ware & Ramos, 2013). The flexibility and understanding of individualized communication reflected the students' and their college access programs' linguistic capital (Coles & Engstrom, 2012).

First generation college students and college access programs displayed navigational capital through employing different strategies similar to Banks's (2006) research on Black women navigating college. In Chapter 4, students navigated their secondary education with the assistance of college access programs through supplemental tutoring and coursework, admissions into competitive secondary schools, and/or admittance into specialized programs based on students' interests (e.g., architecture, science). Students also used college access programs to help them navigate their college search and choice processes (Chapter 5) as programs took students on campus visits, provided SAT preparation and financial aid advisement, connected students with universities, and helped students strategize on where to apply for college. In Chapter 6, first generation college students used their college access programs to help them navigate their college transition and experience and find supports when their connections to their college access programs dissipated. First generation college students and college access programs worked together to navigate secondary and post-secondary school systems to better position students for their future and provide college uplift to the students in this research and rising first generation college students.

First generation college students' social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Yosso, 2005, 2006) (e.g. parents, siblings, teachers) connected students with college access programs and mentors, then college access programs' social capital further expanded the students' social networks. In Chapter 4, students' social capital or their families' social capital introduced students to college access programs. Students then benefited from the social networks of their college access programs when their original program introduced students to other college access organizations, internship opportunities, and mentorship experiences (Swail & Perna, 2002; Vaade, 2010). In Chapter 5, college access programs used their social capital to connect students with universities and university employees to help students throughout their college choice processes. As programs used their social capital to support students, they also expanded the students' social networks. Students demonstrated their expanded social capital through peer-to-peer support, when students in the same college access programs mentored and supported each other during students' college transitions and helped prospective students learn about college from current college students. As such, social capital existed between students and college access programs, between students' families and college access programs, between college access programs, between college access programs and institutions of higher education, and between students involved in the same college access programs.

Students demonstrated persistence and resistance capital (Yosso, 2005, 2006) as they worked through challenges within the school systems as shown in Chapter 4, overcame obstacles related to financing college in Chapter 5, and navigated different support structures to ease their transition to college and persist in Chapter 6. Students' persistence and resistance capitals throughout their college-going journey showcased their own agency, independence, and ability to prepare for college, apply, and persist while they also attended under-resourced schools, cared

for younger siblings, and worked long hours. Students and their parents recognized the value of college access programs and students seized the opportunity to participate re-enforcing their own agency and the role of the programs in students' college-going journeys.

First generation college students and college access programs also expanded on Yosso's (2005, 2006) aspirational capital. While some students entered their college access programs with the intentions of going to college, other students desire to attend college came from the work of their college access programs. College access programs promoted and instilled college-going mindsets and confidence in the students' abilities to go to college (Chapter 4). Students discussed how this allowed them to believe in themselves and see college as a viable option. Chapter 5 also expanded on students' aspirational capital as college access programs gave students the wherewithal on how to move through the college search process. In Chapter 6, students discussed how they returned to their college access programs over school breaks to volunteer with middle and high school students, instill in them college-going ideals, and build their aspiration and confidence to attend college. Students' aspirational capital countered the deficit model as students and college access programs yearned for a better future and both demonstrated college uplift as a way to meet their aspirations and missions.

Lastly, first generation college students and college access and support programs expanded on Yosso's (2005, 2006) familial capital. As first generation college students connected with college access programs, the programs became extensions of the students' families and/or fictive families as described in Chapter 4. The importance of family and familial capital came through in Chapter 5 as students talked about their college application processes. Students struggled to understand how colleges who desired to learn about prospective students could refrain from talking about students' families and histories. This importance of familial

capital aligned with the students' collectivist mentality (Triandis, 2001), and further explained students' natural inclination towards college uplift and supporting each other through their transitions to college and college experiences (Chapter 6). At the heart of familial (and social capital) came relationships that students had with their families, college access programs, their mentors, and their peers. These meaningful relationships launched and sustained students' college-going journeys.

As this research expanded on Communities of Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005, 2006) to include first generation college students and college access programs, college access programs became a form of cultural wealth within themselves. The students in this study did not use college access and support programs to enhance their resumes, the students used college access programs to work against the deficit model, uplift them, and get to and through college. College access programs served as the "invisible" toolbox for the "invisible" work first generation college students did to meet their families' and their own college-going aspirations (Banks, 2006, p. 246). As Gabriella said, college access programs became a "backbone" for the students. Like a backbone, these college access programs were an essential part of students' educational journeys and a vehicle for teaching cultural wealth and promoting social mobility.

### **A Pathway for Education Reform**

A critical theoretical perspective throughout this research allows researchers and practitioners to look at how first generation college students access and persist in college and challenge the structures of education to become more inclusive. Critical theory shows how our current education system does not support the successes of historically non-traditional college students. As such, using critical theory to analyze these findings provides insight into the contributions of college access programs and highlights the inequities of educational models.

While college access programs do not serve all students, educators, practitioners, and advocates can still learn from these programs and students own agency to bring us closer to more inclusive education based on equity and students' needs. Specifically, the student participants challenged college choice models, college admissions processes, and college access and support programs.

### **Re-envisioning College Choice Models**

Many students in this study approached their college search in different ways than Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) and Perna's (2006a) college choice models described in Chapter 2. For example, Hossler and Gallagher (1987) and Perna (2006a) did not recognize or name college access programs as part of their college choice models. The models relied on students' families, teachers, and high school guidance counselors to inform students about college; therefore, reflecting a college choice process that privileged students from college-educated families and/or students who attended secondary schools with high school guidance counselors that supported college exploration, search, and choice for first generation, low-income students. For example, the college choice models promoted high school guidance counselors providing students with a timeline of the application process and strategies on applying to a range of colleges, while parents or caregivers took their high school juniors and seniors on campus visits. For students to move through Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) phases in this way, students had to attend schools with high school guidance counselors who had the time to focus on individual students' college searches. In addition, students had to come from households where their parents or caregivers recognized the value in visiting college campuses, could take time off work to make the visits, and incur associated travel costs. Many of the first generation college students in this study could not readily access their high school guidance counselors or receive the individualized attention students needed given the counselors' large case loads (American



Counseling Association, 2014; Keaton, 2012). Similarly, parents of first generation college students encouraged and expected their children to attend college; however, first generation college students' parents or caregivers did not often have the wherewithal to know what their students needed to move through the college search and choice processes (Ohl-Gigliotti, 2008). As such, first generation college students and their families turned to their college access programs to assist them with their college preparations and college searches (Chapters 4 and 5). Given the role of college access programs in the first generation college students' college predisposition and search processes, college choice models should name college access programs and the unique needs of first generation college students. By leaving out the work first generation college students go through negates the additional steps they take (Chapter 4 and 5) to make college a feasible option and misinforms first generation college students, their families, and others on their college search process.

College choice models should also name the work surrounding financial aid and literacy the students needed and ascertained. This involved working with their college access programs to research and complete scholarship applications, apply for state and federal aid, and understand differences between subsidized and unsubsidized loans. The intricacies of financing college required students understand finances and long-term planning, a privilege that students who could afford college did not need to learn.

Another nuance college choice models should name includes the work students and college access programs dedicated to building students' academic self-confidence and college-going mentality so they were college-ready. This supports Rendón and Muñoz's (2011) research on validation theory and the importance of positive feedback and building up students' academic and interpersonal selves. To do this, many of the college access programs in this study ensured

students participated in supplemental coursework, mentorship opportunities, and summer programs. In addition to the time and work that went into the logistics of the college search process, students cultivated relationships with the people they met along the way to build their social and support networks. This dissertation showed how college access and support programs have helped first generation college students navigate current systems in ways that reflect and empower them to use their assets and agency.

### **Creating an Inclusive College Admissions Process**

As first generation college students reflected on their college application process, students unveiled the macro-structural inequalities within higher education and how that disadvantaged them in their college search and choice (Chapter 5). Students focused on their college essays, fee waivers, and access to standardized test preparation courses. Students also reflected back on how essential their college access programs were to their college admissions process to make it more inclusive. To open the college admissions process up to all first generation college students and not just those who utilized college access programs, educators need to make the “invisible” work (e.g., building college-going mentalities, taking additional high school courses, writing supplemental college essays) first generation college students and college access programs do more visible (Banks, 2006).

In Chapter 5, the research showed how students appreciated when their college access programs had them write additional college essays that addressed how they overcame challenges and spoke about their families, histories, and cultures. These supplemental questions allowed students to better express themselves and allowed their capital to come through in their application process. Students felt confined to the traditional college application process and did not feel like college essay requirements best captured who they were and their strengths. A more

inclusive common application would address these themes rather than rely on college access programs or individual colleges to develop them.

Other obstacles that students faced in their college application process included application fees and SAT preparation courses. As students mentioned in Chapter 5, many of them joined college access programs for college application fee waivers. Finding ways around fee waivers would make the admissions process more inclusive and empower low-income students to apply to colleges without the extra step of finding a person to approve and sign-off on application fee waivers. For example, students who received free and reduced lunches could have access to a website where they could obtain their own college application fee waivers to attach with their college applications. Similarly, students in the research relied on SAT preparation courses through their college access programs (Chapter 4). Students understood the importance of the SATs and took advantage of the free preparation courses their programs offered to increase their score and be a more competitive college applicant. The extra work students spent on preparing for the SATs (a test biased towards students of color and women) worked against an inclusive application process (Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999; C. Steele, 1997; C. Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Institutions of higher education should align their missions and values with the way they assess incoming students. For example, if colleges prioritize diverse, civic-minded citizens, then students who perform spoken word poetry about their personal experiences with institutional racism and government redlining would rise as top applicants despite not having AP History classes on their high school transcripts. Researchers have found that non-cognitive variables such as positive self-concepts or confidences, realistic self-appraisals, ability to understand and deal with racism, preference for long-range goals, strong support systems, successful leadership

experiences, demonstrated community service, and field experience predicted college success for non-traditional college students (Sedlacek, 1996; Sedlacek & Brooks, 1976; Tracey & Sedlacek, 1985; Tracey & Sedlacek, 1987). Therefore, students and colleges would benefit from improved graduation rates and a more inclusive college admissions process.

### **The Future of College Access Programs and Education**

College access programs provide researchers and practitioners with the necessary insight for education reform as they expand on how we approach student supports, services, and funding. College access programs became extensions of students' families; therefore, to learn from the college access programs, education reform must extend outside of the classroom into students' lives and homes. Educators, guidance counselors, and social workers need to engage students and their families. For students to learn, students need holistic support in all aspects of their lives. If parents cannot provide that support due to their work schedule, finances, or other barriers, schools must step in and help the students. This does not mean taking students out of their homes, it means looking at raising children from a familial capital and a collectivist perspective (Triandis, 2001; Yosso, 2005, 2006). Educators must challenge the current structures that prevent success.

College access programs have raised the level of expectations for their students and challenged students to take supplemental coursework, participate in summer programs, and delve into science labs and internships during high school. When college access programs set standards and expectations, students met them. Education reform in secondary and post-secondary schools must learn from college access programs and set higher student standards and expectations. This includes providing students with access to college preparatory curricula, inside and outside the classroom. As Rendón and Muñoz's (2011) work on validation theory

reflected, when teachers believed in their students, challenged their students, and supported their students, students often met those expectations.

Lastly, for educational reform and a more sustainable college access model, secondary schools need to hire more guidance counselors. To meet the recommended guidance counselor ratio of 1:250, the number of guidance counselors needs to nearly double (the current ratio is 1:470) (American Counseling Association, 2014; Keaton, 2012). Based on the value participants placed on the relationships they had with their college access programs' staff and the literature on mentorship (C. Campbell et al., 2012; T. A. Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Freeman, 1999; Mangold et al., 2002; Nora & Crisp, 2008), an even lower ratio than 1:250 would better serve first generation college students and provide them with more individualized attention.

College access programs are changing how many first generation college students gain access and succeed in college. Funding is coming from foundations (e.g., Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, Kellogg Foundation, The Lumina Foundation, National College Advising Corp) and gaining momentum from cities and their constituents (e.g., Boston, Massachusetts's Success Boston) to support these programs and initiatives. Additional human and financial resources and support further validates the work the programs are doing and highlights their agency and ability to change past trends in education and close the education gap. It is with this momentum and collaboration that will allow educators, researchers, and policy makers to implement long-term solutions.

### **Limitations of this Study**

The limitations of this study do not negate the students' stories and voices, they rather explain how the study may have gone differently if I made different decisions as a researcher or

if a different researcher conducted this work. As I went through each stage of the dissertation process and reflected back, I have learned where limitations exist in my work.

### **Positionality**

I am a White, upper-middle class woman who does not identify as a first generation college student and did not use a college access program to navigate my college going journey. For the participants in my study, I was an outsider (Collins, 2004). As much as I approached my data collection, analysis, and writing with a critical theoretical lens and worked to understand the classed and raced systems my participants experienced, I had not lived through those same experiences. Therefore, based on Harper (2015) and conversations with my committee, I decided against using Critical Race Theory in this research. As such, being an outsider affected my research as the participants in this study may have censored their language and stories during data collection when they talked with me about their lives and college-going journeys. As an outsider, I may have asked questions that an insider would not have asked or I may have glossed over important points where an insider would have dug deeper. Similarly, when coding my data, the codes reflected my positionality and what I believed noteworthy. While I used “*in vivo* codes” to capture the participants’ words within my coding process, an insider may have chosen different words or phrases than I did (Charmaz, 2006, p. 55). Lastly, in writing this dissertation, I sifted through 100s of codes and over 1,000 pages of student interviews and focus groups. In the end, this dissertation reflected what I thought was most pertinent to first generation college students’ college-going journeys. Had an insider led this same research and/or used Critical Race Theory as a framework, they would have likely garnered different data, selected different themes and quotes, and came to different conclusions.

## **The Participants**

The design of my study looked at first generation college students who used at least one community-based college access program and attended a selective, private university full-time in Spring 2012. I sent out an email to 2,631 seemingly qualified first generation college students inquiring for those who used a college access program to please participate. This call for participants led to 47 students. While 47 students allowed for data saturation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006), it represented a small percentage of the students I emailed. While I do not know the reason for this yield, I imagine most students did not use college access programs, the time of the year precluded students, and/or students filtered my message or did not check their email within the time restraints specified. While this may have limited my research and deserves further exploration, the participants involved willingly shared their stories and provided rich data.

After Spring 2012, I do not know if the participants persisted at their current university, graduated, transferred to another college, or dropped out. None of the participants in the study had taken time off between high school and college or had transferred to the university from a community college or a baccalaureate degree-granting institution. Most of the students travelled at least 100 miles from home to the university with many students travelling 250 miles or more. Therefore, the participants in this study did not reflect the national data on first generation college students who typically attended community college, took time off of school between high school and college, went to college close to home, and took classes part-time and worked full-time (Adelman, 2006; American Association of Community Colleges, 2012; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Núñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998; Pascarella et al., 2004; Saenz et al., 2007; Tinto, 2005). Instead, this research represented a path to college more traditional of non-first generation

college students as it provided first generation college students with entrée into a selective, private university the summer after high school.

While my research has a place in the literature on first generation college students, college access and persistence, and college access programs, readers should only compare these students to themselves, first generation college students at this selective, private university who utilized at least one college access program and agreed to meet with me in Spring 2012 on two separate occasions.

### **Location of the Research**

My research took place at a private, Research I institution; therefore, this research may not apply or relate to first generation students who attended community colleges; small, private liberal arts colleges; or public, state universities. In addition, some college access programs only supported students who attended specific schools (e.g., partner colleges and universities, regional schools); therefore, had the students in my research attended another institution, their relationships with their college access programs may have looked different.

### **Definitions and Language**

By the time I started to design my study, I had already spent two years of my doctoral program reading articles and books on first generation college students, college access and support programs, and college access and retention. I had immersed myself in full-time graduate student life and this small piece of the world's knowledge. This type of study and my own privileges caused me to assume that some words and phrases (e.g., first generation college students, college access programs) were commonplace, when they were not. While my dissertation advisor and committee members made me aware of the privileged language I used, I also realized my assumptions when I solicited my request for participants. Students who did not



use college access programs greatly struggled to understand the terminology of college access and success programs. Similarly, I should have written my definition of first generation college students in the initial solicitation email to alleviate lack of clarity. This challenged my assumptions around language and pushed me to think more thoroughly around the terminology and vernacular I used.

### **Conducting Interviews and Focus Groups**

Within the data collection process, I could have better captured conversations that happened before and after the formal interviews or focus groups and prepared better follow-up questions. For example, at the end of the interviews or focus groups, I asked, “Is there anything else that we haven’t touched on along the lines of what we’ve been talking about that you want to share?” If no one did, I would thank the participants and turn off the recorders. Once I turned off the recorder, the participants continued to talk and asked me questions as they gathered their belongings. On more than one occasion during these conversations, I had wished I captured the comments on the recorder. In six instances, I actually turned the recorder back on with the participants’ permission. Just as these conversations typically happened at the end of the interviews and the focus groups, they also happened while the students and I waited for other participants to show up for their second focus groups (after people grew more comfortable with each other and me). These missed conversations served as another limitation to my research.

There were also opportunities within the interviews and focus groups for me to dig deeper. While I gathered 100s of pages of transcribed interviews and focus groups, as I analyzed my data, I noticed that questions such as, “How was this important to your college career?” or “What did the experience mean to you?” allowed the participants to reflect on their own

experiences rather than just describe them. Students' responses to these questions seemed richer and more complex than when the students simply described their college access programs.

### **University Support Programs**

I went into this research focused on non-profit and/or government funded college access programs housed outside the university where this research took place. While all the students used such programs, many students also spoke about SSSP, STATE, and the university's summer bridge program. Since these programs were not the initial focus of my study, I did not have questions about SSSP, STATE, or the summer bridge program outlined in my semi-structured interview and focus group questions (Appendix F). Therefore, I only learned about students' experiences with the university's support programs if the students brought them up during their interviews or focus groups, which served as a limitation to my research.

### **Recommendations for Improving College Access and Success**

Based on the participants' stories, the following recommendations allow for educational reform and improve college access and support for first generation college students. To present the recommendations and highlight the need for structural and systemic changes in both secondary and post-secondary education, I utilized Weber's (2010) macro-social structures and micro social psychology and three domains of expression (polity, economy, and ideology).

Political macro-structural recommendations begin with amending policies and practices in secondary schools to ensure all students receive a competitive, college preparatory curriculum and resources that supplement and complement students' schooling after the school day and over summer breaks. Students in the study relied on their college access programs to help them navigate secondary schools and provide supplemental academic coursework (Chapter 4). If all schools had rigorous, college preparatory coursework and adequate resources, students would

have an easier time navigating school. In addition, the students in this study relied on their college access programs for tutoring and more directed study opportunities (Chapter 4). With ample funding and resources, students could receive tutoring and directed study through their teachers, aids, or school volunteers.

At the college level, students in this study emphasized the importance of their college access programs providing college application fee waivers and helping students complete their FAFSA (Chapter 5). If higher education and the Department of Education collaborated and maximized the potential of technology, they could streamline and simplify the admissions process, so students' parents' tax returns generated the FAFSA and automated SAT preparation course waivers, SAT tests waivers and preparation courses, and college application fee waivers. The information could also connect with external scholarships and state financial aid to ease the college application and scholarship processes. Better use of technology would make components of the college search easier, less emotionally taxing for students and families, and more equitable. Changing systemic and structural policies and practices of secondary and higher education based on the research findings would help enhance college access and success for both first generation college students and non-first generation students.

A change in macro-structures through increased economic resources would also increase first generation college students' college preparation, access, and success. Currently there is a disparity in the United States between secondary schools due to their neighborhoods, tax laws, and school districts (Grant, 2009; Ushomirsky & Williams, 2015). This disparity contributes to gaps in resources inside and outside the classroom. With increased financial resources underfunded schools could offer additional guidance counselors, more student organizations and leadership opportunities, increased mentorship programs, and internship and travel opportunities

like participants received through their college access programs (Chapter 4). Within higher education, increases in Pell Grants and state scholarships would lower expected families contribution (EFC) to tuition costs and, in turn, lower the amount of students' loans and debt. Similarly, if colleges shifted their financial aid models from merit-based aid to need-based, lower-income students would receive more financial support making college a more viable option. As students discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, students utilized their college access and support programs before and during college to assist them on financial literacy and aid.

Along with political and economical changes in K-12, the dominant ideology of society must also change. The participants commonly told stories of how their mentors and college access programs built their college-going expectations and instilled in them (starting at a young age) that they had value and college potential (micro social psychological) (Chapter 4). Everyone who interacts with young people must promote these same messages and beliefs. Teachers, communities, and families need to move beyond deficit model rhetoric and practices that disempower students and promote the school-to-prison pipeline. Rather, communities must believe and demonstrate that every young person has the right and the ability to go to college. In addition to re-defining the "traditional college student" ideology, society needs to re-define and expand our definitions of leadership (Chapter 6). Oftentimes, western culture associates leaders and leadership with extraversion, power, and individualism. The participants in this study expanded on this definition of leadership showing the importance of collectivism through fictive families (Chapter 4) and peer-to-peer support (Chapter 6). This expanded view of leadership requires a dominant ideological shift and calls into question how higher education reads and evaluates college applications. For example, if the common application defined leadership based around Yosso's (2005) communities of cultural wealth, the common application essays (or other

forms of expression) may focus on students' histories and overcoming adversity, and place equal emphasis on students' time volunteering, traveling, working, and/or caring for family members.

Researchers, educators, and advocates also need to re-visit the intersection of micro social psychological levels with polity, economics, and ideology within secondary and higher education. For secondary schools that serve large English as a second language (ESL) populations, this may include implementing a policy where schools distribute all parent/caregiver communications in parents' native languages. Colleges may consider launching first generation cultural centers, so first generation college students have a place on campus where they can meet people like themselves, feel safe, and find resources and support to ensure their success (similar to how some students used their college access programs as safe places to congregate). Colleges may also mandate on-going diversity and sensitivity training for their employees, so the college can better serve the students they admit. Lastly, colleges should review their policies and practices to make sure they do not bias low-income or first generation college students. For example, implementing fees or fines within the community and judicial standards process impacts different students differently (as Sierra noted in Chapter 5).

Economically, secondary schools and colleges should ensure students have the necessities to learn. This starts with safe places to live and sleep, three healthy meals a day (with attention given to the end of the month or semesters when food stamps and meal plans may run low), and school supplies (e.g., books, notepads, calculator). If schools and colleges require work conducted on-line (e.g., completing on-line college applications, scholarships, and financial aid forms), then both schools and colleges need to ensure students have access to computers and internet connections. For college students that live-on campus, colleges should also ensure students have residence hall room necessities such as alarm clocks, pillows, and blankets. In

addition to these necessities, colleges should reward students' persistence through increased student scholarships (ideally, the increase would at least mirror tuition increases) and compensate students for peer-to-peer support and college uplift since both come at a cost for first generation college students and become invaluable to the colleges' admissions and retention rates (Chapters 5 and 6).

Lastly, ideological changes need to take place within micro social psychological structures in secondary and post-secondary schools. Schools need to address intercultural dialogue, mental health, and students' transitions from high school to college. For example, students talked about using their college access programs for intercultural dialogues, combating biased behaviors, and seeking role models for people like themselves (e.g., other first generation college students, immigrants, women of color). Students need these resources and similar mentorship within their schools. Through Alex, we also saw how he may have benefited from counseling services. As students harbor more responsibilities and the mental health crisis grows within the United States (Gallagher, Gill, & Sysko, 2000; Pedrelli, Nyer, Yeung, Zulauf, & Wilens, 2015), educators and practitioners need to address students' psychosocial needs earlier to ensure students' future success and ensure first generation college students feel safe, supported, and heard.

In addition, many students relied on their college access programs the summer before college to provide psychosocial and academic support as students prepared to attend college (Chapter 6), while other students utilized the university's summer bridge program to aid in their college transition. Students who did not participate in the university's summer bridge program expressed interest in participating to ease their transition to college. Thus, colleges should rethink the summer before college and the best resources and support for first generation college

students. Without college access or summer bridge programs, many first generation college students may lack the informational and psychosocial support they need to successfully prepare and transition to college.

Based on the data from this study, these recommendations address the macro-social structures and micro social psychological needs of first generation and low-income college students. These recommendations focus on what secondary schools and higher education can do to support students. I did not focus on the role of college access programs because I believe for the United States to support first generation college students, we need to move the services college access programs offer into our schools to meet the needs of all first generation college students. Until we get to holistic support in the school system, though, schools, colleges, and college access programs should continue to collaborate and learn from each other. As first generation college students rely on college uplift, our education system needs similar uplift through short-term education reform from college access and success programs to better learn what first generation college students need for a successful college-going journey.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Educators, policy makers, and secondary and higher education administrators would benefit from additional research to better shape educational reform. Future researchers may ask:

- How do first generation students who attend community colleges make meaning of the influence of college access and success programs to navigate their college-going journey? What role do these programs have in students transferring from community colleges to baccalaureate degree-granting institutions?
- How does students' participation in college access programs influence their post-college pathways?

- Does college uplift compare in first generation college students who use and do not use college access programs?
- How do college access and success programs influence students entering STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) majors and careers?
- How do college access and support programs respond to college students that stop or dropout of higher education?
- How would using the theoretical frameworks of Communities of Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005, 2006) and critical theory expand researchers and practitioners work in classroom pedagogy, career and graduate preparation and studies, and student affairs?

A comparative study between first generation college students that use and do not use college access programs to navigate their college-going journey would also inform researchers, educators, and policy makers on how to better serve first generation college students and enhance the structures and systems within secondary and post-secondary education. In addition, through my work as a practitioner in higher education and my literature review on first generation college students and students' college experiences, I recognize the need for more research on first generation college students and the mental health crisis facing all college students and institutes of higher education (Eiser, 2011). While most of the literature on mental health looks at students' use of counseling services (e.g., frequency, availability), higher education administrators could use more research on the intersection of mental health and first generation college students to identify trends and recommend proactive and reactive support structures that students will use. For example, with a growing number of first generation college students who emigrated from Asian countries like China, colleges may consider offering Eastern or Asian medicines such as cupping or coin rubbing. Other wellness programs may include



having life coaches for students that prefer a holistic approach to self-improvement outside of counseling or therapy. College access and support programs can likely aid in this evolving crisis by introducing students to mental health counselors and stress relief techniques at an early age, work to challenge the stigmas regarding mental health, and teach self-care.

### **Final Thoughts**

The quote in the title of this dissertation, “my training wheels are off,” served as a metaphor for how students made meaning of their college access and support programs. Training wheels lent support and balance; they offered stability, and security when children learned to ride a bike. College access and support programs compared in that they too lent support, balance, stability, and security when students faced the unfamiliar challenges of navigating college. When Engstrom and Tinto (2008) summarized, “Access without support does not equate to meaningful opportunity,” they reinforced the importance of training wheels and how colleges that admit students from low-income families, students of color, and/or first generation college students, must also offer support services to those same students to ensure their success (p. 21). This research builds on both providing access to higher education and what modes of support allow for “meaningful opportunity” for first generation college students. Through the non-profit and government funded college access programs in this research and the counterstories of the 47 first generation college students, I hoped to challenge secondary and post-secondary schools to revisit their current processes and structures and work to meet the needs of today’s students. We need to better serve our students and create a more inclusive pipeline to college to ensure all first generation, low-income students access and graduate college at the rate of those who use college access programs (Engle & Tinto, 2008; The Posse Foundation, 2014).

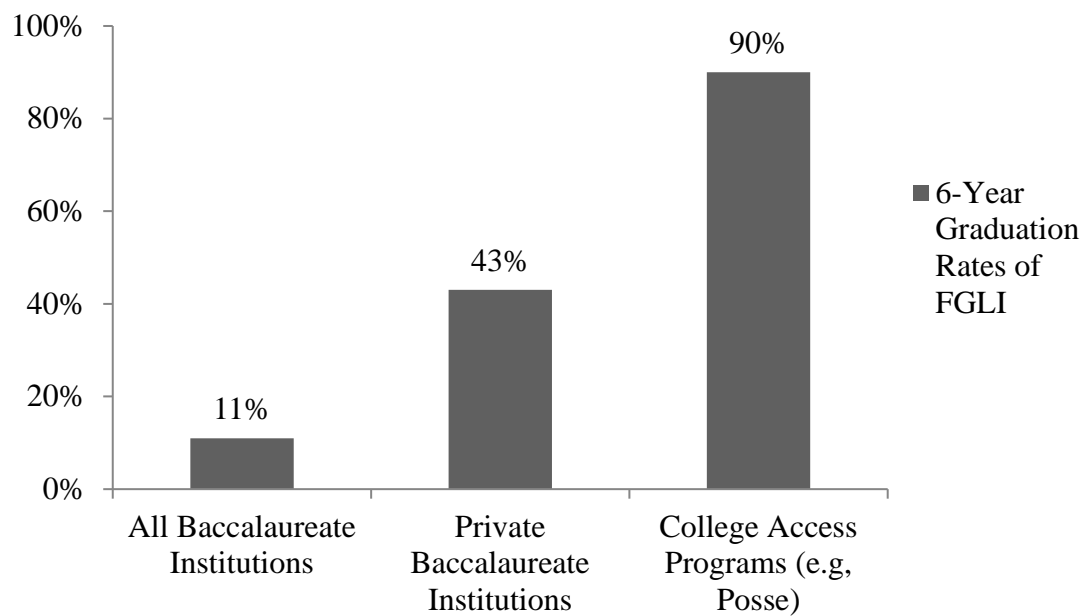
**Figure 1. First Generation, Low-Income College Students Graduation Rates**

Figure 1. National graduation rates of students who have received baccalaureate degrees from all baccalaureate degree-granting institutions, private colleges, and college access programs (Engle & Tinto, 2008; The Posse Foundation, 2014).

**Figure 2. High School and College Enrollment of 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Students**

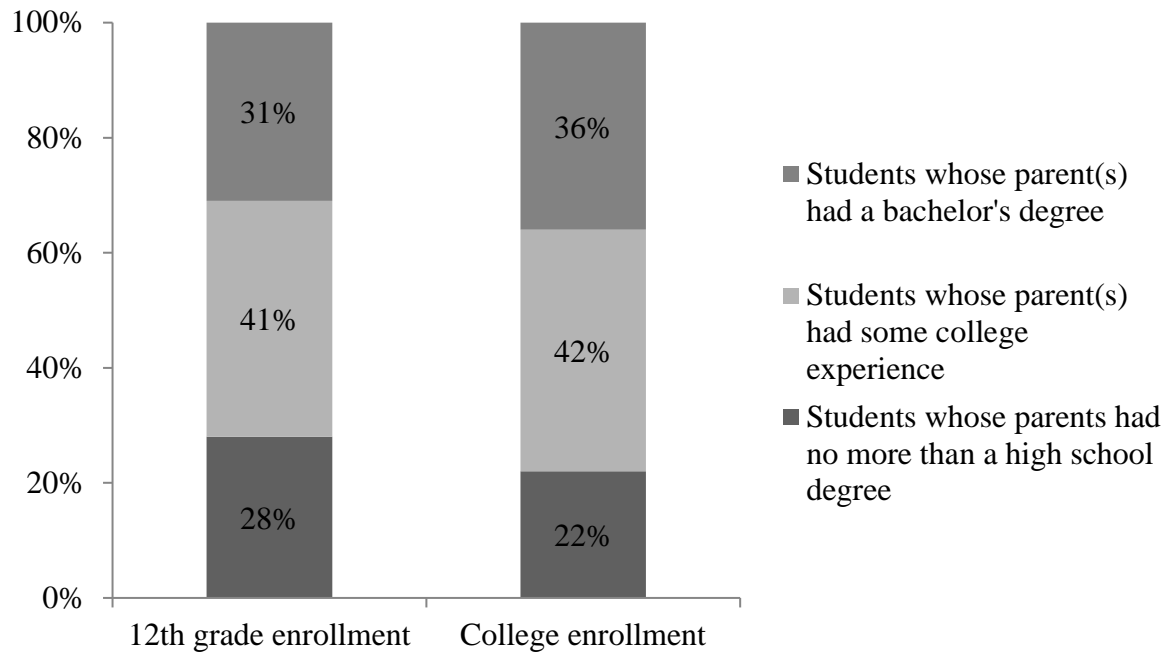


Figure 2. The percentage of 12th grade students enrolled in high school in 1992 and then the percentage of those students who enrolled in college between 1992-2000 by parents' college attainment (X. Chen, 2005).

**Figure 3. Degrees Students Received Based on Parents' Education Attainment**

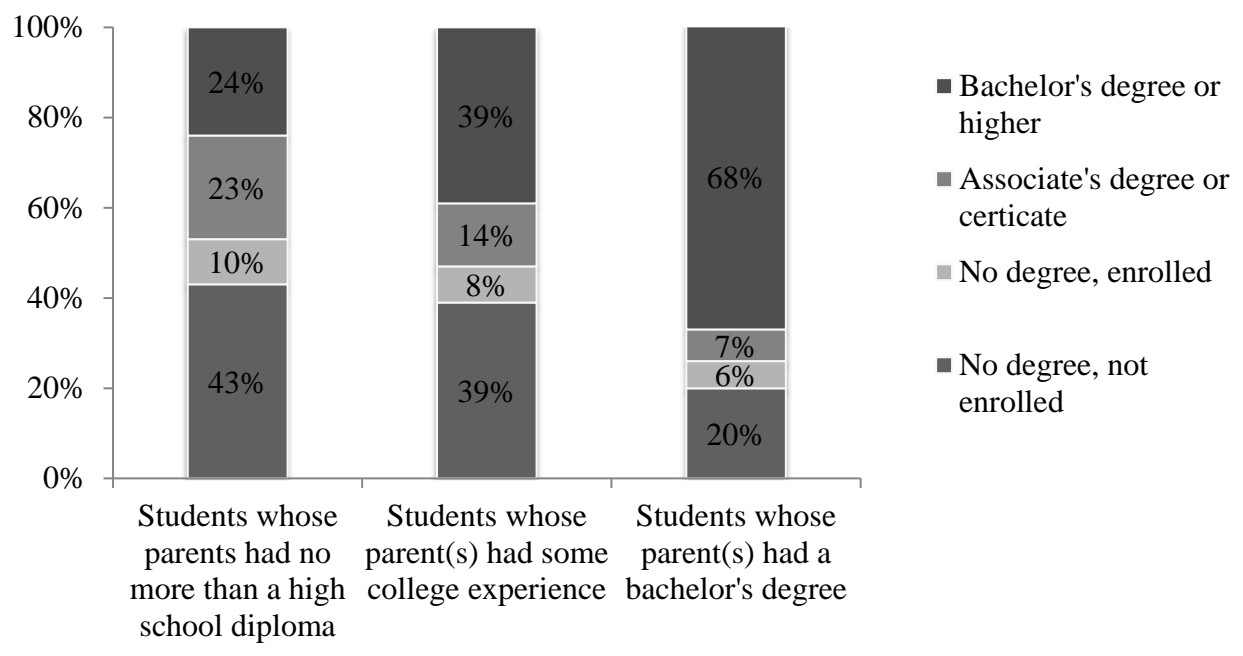


Figure 3. Percentage of students who received degrees in 2000 based on parents' college attainment (X. Chen, 2005).

### Appendix A: Participants' College Access Programs

<b>College Access and Success Program<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>	<b>Website</b>	<b>College Access Programs' Mission Statement or Program Description</b>
ACE (Architecture, Construction, and Engineering) Mentor Program	150 S. Washington Street, Suite 303, Falls Church, VA 22046	(703) 942-8101	www.acementor.org	The mission of ACE is to engage, excite, and enlighten high school students to pursue careers in architecture, engineering, and construction through mentoring and to support their continued advancement in the industry.
ASPIRA of New York	630 9th Avenue, Suite 302, New York, NY 10036	(212) 564-6880	www.aspirany.org	To foster the social advancement of the Puerto Rican/Latino community by supporting its youth in the pursuit of educational excellence through leadership development activities and programs that emphasizes commitment to the community and pride in the Puerto Rican/Latino culture.
AVID	9246 Lightwave Ave, Suite 200, San Diego, CA 92123	(858) 380-4800	www.avid.org	AVID's mission is to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society.
Black Youth Leadership Development Program (Part of Next Generation Leaders Program, NGLP)	Greater Rochester Chapter, 50 Prince St., Rochester, NY 14607	(585) 241-4261	www.redcross.org/ny/rochester/programs-and-services/youth-leadership	The Youth Leadership Program (YLP) of the Greater Rochester Chapter of the American Red Cross was created for the purpose of developing high achieving and diverse young leaders across Monroe County at the high school level.
Boys and Girls Club	1275 Peachtree Street NE, Atlanta, GA 30309	(404) 487-5700	www.bgca.org	To enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.
BronxWorks (home to Teen Action Program)	1595 Bathgate Ave., Bronx NY, 10457	(646) 393-4000	www.bronxworks.org	BronxWorks helps individuals and families improve their economic and social well-being. From toddlers to seniors, we feed, shelter, teach, and support our neighbors to build a stronger community.
Center for Talented Youth (CTY) (Funded by Next Generation Fund, NGF)	5801 Smith Avenue, #400 McAuley Hall, Baltimore, MD 21209	(410) 735-4100	www.cty.jhu.edu	CTY's broader mission is to be a national voice that supports and encourages academic talent and achievement; to help in locating and nurturing talent from all neighborhoods and nations; and to engage in, and communicate, meaningful research to advance the understanding of teaching the world's most capable young people.

<sup>5</sup> The college access and success programs listed represent most of the programs used by the study's participants. I provided the organizations' contact information to make this research more accessible and useful to potential readers (2011).

<b>College Access and Success Program<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>	<b>Website</b>	<b>College Access Programs' Mission Statement or Program Description</b>
Children's Aid Society (Hope Leadership Academy)	105 East 22nd Street, NYC, NY 10010	(212) 949-4800	www.childremsaid society.org	The Children's Aid Society helps children in poverty to succeed and thrive. We do this by providing comprehensive supports to children and their families in targeted high-needs New York City neighborhoods.
Chinese American Planning Council	150 Elizabeth Street, New York, NY 10012	(212) 941-0920	www.cpc-nyc.org	CPC's mission is to improve the quality of life of Chinese Americans in New York City by providing access to services, skills, and resources toward the goal of economic self-sufficiency and integration into the American mainstream.
College Awareness Symbolizes Hope (CASH) NY	Not available	(212) 202-7544	www.nyBlackmba.org	The sole mission of the C.A.S.H Program is to provide African-American high school students with awareness, education, and information of the economic, financial, and social advantages of graduating from high school and matriculating through college.
College Now	16 Court Street, 3rd Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201	(718) 254-7350	www.collegenow.cuny.edu	The goal of College Now, much like many dual enrollment programs, is to help students meet high school graduation requirements and prepare for success in college, both academically and socially. In addition, program administrators have designed program activities with the goal of enhancing performance on Regents and CUNY placement exams so that students will be able to enroll in college without the need for remediation.
College Planning Center of Rhode Island	400 Bald Hill Road, Warwick, RI 02886	(401) 736-3170	www.cpcri.org	Our ongoing mission is to provide you with free, accurate, and accessible information on all aspects of the college planning process. Our professional counselors provide FREE one-on-one advising and assistance on all aspects of college planning, from selecting schools to completing financial aid forms.
Crotona Achievement Program (part of South Bronx Educational Foundation)	Crotona Park North · Bronx, NY 10460	(718) 861-1426	www.sbef.org	South Bronx Educational Foundation's mission is to foster the development of young people so that they may go on to lead productive lives and build healthy families.
Fulfillment Fund	6100 Wilshire Boulevard, Ste 600, Los Angeles, CA 90048	(323) 939-9707	www.fulfillment.org	For 35 years, the Fulfillment Fund has been inspiring, engaging, and empowering students in need so they can go to college, graduate, and have every opportunity to achieve their full potential.

<b>College Access and Success Program<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>	<b>Website</b>	<b>College Access Programs' Mission Statement or Program Description</b>
Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP)	1990 K Street, N.W., 7th Floor, Washington DC 20006-8524	(202) 502- 7802	<a href="http://www2.ed.gov/programs/gearup/index.html">www2.ed.gov/programs/gearup/index.html</a>	GEAR UP is designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.
Girls Inc.	120 Wall Street, New York, NY 10005	(212) 509- 2000	<a href="http://www.girlsinc.org">www.girlsinc.org</a>	To inspire all girls to be strong, smart, and bold.
Harlem Center for Education	2161 2nd Avenue, New York, NY 10029	(212) 534- 2766	<a href="http://www.harlemctred.com">www.harlemctred.com</a>	Aid and inspire economically disadvantaged youth in New York City in the pursuit of higher education and career achievement by providing them with knowledge, skills, guidance, and understanding.
Harlem Educational Activities Fund	2090 Adam Clayton Powell Junior Boulevard, New York, NY 10027	(212) 663- 9732	<a href="http://www.heaf.org">www.heaf.org</a>	The Harlem Educational Activities Fund or HEAF is a comprehensive, nonprofit supplemental education and youth development organization that helps motivated students develop the intellectual curiosity, academic ability, social values, and personal resiliency they need to ensure success in school, career, and life.
Henry Street Settlement	334 Madison Street, New York, NY 10002	(212) 349- 2770	<a href="http://www.henrystreet.org">www.henrystreet.org</a>	Henry Street Settlement opens doors of opportunity to enrich lives and enhance human progress for Lower East Side residents and other New Yorkers through social services, arts, and health care programs.
In School Youth	Not available	Not available	<a href="http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/jobs/isy.shtml">www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/jobs/isy.shtml</a>	The goals of the ISY program are to ensure that participants graduate from high school, pursue college education, and develop career goals.
Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP)	135 Main Street, Suite 1700, San Francisco, CA 94105	(415) 399- 1556	<a href="http://www.kipp.org">www.kipp.org</a>	KIPP builds a partnership among parents, students, and teachers that puts learning first. By providing outstanding educators, more time in school learning, and a strong culture of achievement, KIPP is helping all students climb the mountain to and through college.
Legal Outreach	36-14 35 <sup>th</sup> Street, Queens, NY 11106	(718) 752- 0222	<a href="http://www.legaloutreach.org">www.legaloutreach.org</a>	Legal Outreach prepares urban youth from underserved communities to compete at high levels by using intensive legal and educational programs as tools for fostering vision, developing skills, enhancing confidence, and facilitating the pursuit of higher education.
Let's Get Ready	50 Broadway, 25th Floor, New York, NY 10004	(646) 808- 2760	<a href="http://www.letsgetready.org">www.letsgetready.org</a>	The mission of Let's Get Ready is to expand college access for low-income high school students by providing free SAT preparation and college admission counseling.

<b>College Access and Success Program<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>	<b>Website</b>	<b>College Access Programs' Mission Statement or Program Description</b>
Liberty LEADS	610 West 112th Street, New York, NY 10025	(212) 875-4511	<a href="http://www.bankstreet.edu/liberty-leads">www.bankstreet.edu/liberty-leads</a>	To build a community in which underserved and underrepresented youth create positive futures for themselves and others by increasing their motivation, embracing personal accountability and strengthening their academic and leadership skills within the context of civic engagement and lifelong learning.
Mind Matters	1120 Avenue of the Americas, 4th Floor, New York, NY 10036	(212) 626-6585	<a href="http://www.mindsmatter.org">www.mindsmatter.org</a>	Our mission is to transform the lives of accomplished high school students from low-income families by broadening their dreams and preparing them for college success.
Motivating Our Students Through Experience (M.O.S.T.E.)	645 West 9th Street, Suite 110-376, Los Angeles, CA 90015	(213) 537-9157	<a href="http://www.moste.org">www.moste.org</a>	The mission of MOSTE is to empower girls from underserved areas of Los Angeles County to become the next generation of college educated women.
NJ Scholars, Educators, Excellence, Dedication, Success (SEEDS)	494 Broad Street Suite 105, Newark, NJ 07102	(973) 642-6422	<a href="http://www.njseeds.org">www.njseeds.org</a>	New Jersey SEEDS changes the lives of motivated, high-achieving students from low-income families by transforming their educational opportunities. We ensure that our students have the knowledge, skills, access, and support to thrive at the nation's finest schools and colleges.
On Point for College	1654 West Onondaga Street, Syracuse, NY 13204	(315) 362-5003	<a href="http://www.onpointforcollege.org">www.onpointforcollege.org</a>	To open the door to higher education for the inner city youth; to break down the barriers that hinder potential students from entering college; and to provide support that empowers them to succeed.
Prep for Prep	328 West 71st Street, New York, NY 10023	(212) 579-1390	<a href="http://www.prepforprep.org">www.prepforprep.org</a>	Prep for Prep develops leaders through access to superior education and life-changing opportunities. Since 1978, Prep has identified New York City's most promising students of color and prepared them for placement at independent schools in the city and boarding schools throughout the Northeast. Once placed, Prep offers support and opportunities to ensure the academic accomplishment and personal growth of each one of our students.
Project Gateway (Part of Chinese American Planning Council)	150 Elizabeth Street, New York, NY 10012	(212) 941-0920 ext.147	<a href="https://cpc-nyc.org/about-us">https://cpc-nyc.org/about-us</a>	Project Gateway provides high school students with individualized college counseling and financial aid application.
Project Ready (Part of the National Urban League)	265 North Clinton Avenue, Rochester, NY 14605	(585) 325.6530	<a href="http://iamempowered.com/programs/project-ready">http://iamempowered.com/programs/project-ready</a>	The mission of the Urban League of Rochester, NY is to enable African-Americans, Latinos, the poor, and other disadvantaged to secure economic self-reliance, parity and power, and civil rights.



<b>College Access and Success Program<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>	<b>Website</b>	<b>College Access Programs' Mission Statement or Program Description</b>
QuestBridge	115 Everett Avenue, Palo Alto, CA 94301	(650) 331-3280	www.questbridge.org	QuestBridge aims to create a singular place where exceptionally talented low-income students can navigate educational and life opportunities. QuestBridge recruits, develops, and supports motivated low-income students - beginning in high school through college to their first job - to be successful at American's best college, graduate schools, and companies.
Sisters Together Achieving Results	P. O. Box 19501, Rochester, NY 14619	(585) 234-0448	www.sisterstogether.org	Sisters Together Achieving Results, Inc. educates young women in life skills, utilizing prevention strategies to enrich their quality of life.
Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP)	1419 Salt Springs Road, Syracuse, NY 13214	(800) 333-4733	www.lemoyne.edu/Learn/Programs-for-High-School-Students	The Le Moyne College Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP) prepares historically underrepresented and economically disadvantaged students for college, and their pursuit of careers in math, science, technology, and the health-related or licensed professions.
Taylor Michael's Scholarship Program (Part of the Magic Johnson Foundation)	Not available	(310) 246-4400	www.magicjohnson.com	The Magic Johnson Foundation works to develop programs and support community-based organizations that address the educational, health and social needs of ethnically diverse, urban communities.
TERI College Planning Center (part of American Student Assistance)	700 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116	(617) 536-0200	www.asa.org	TERI promotes educational opportunities for all people of all ages and backgrounds. We pursue this goal through the administration and guarantee of loan programs for students at all education levels, and through our management of college access programs targeting underserved individuals, who are often the first generation in their families to go to college.
The Educational Alliance	197 East Broadway, New York, NY 10002	(212) 780-2300	www.edalliance.org	The Educational Alliance is a community-based organization offering a wide range of programs that integrate education, social services, arts, and recreation throughout Downtown Manhattan. We are a Jewish organization, serving people of diverse ethnic, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds who live, work and learn in our neighborhoods. We strive to nourish the total person, strengthen family connections, and build inclusive communities.
The NELA Center for Student Success	309 23rd Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98144	(206) 461-5366	www.nela.net	The Centers serve students through the Mentor 2 College program. Mentor 2 College is a curriculum designed to equip high school seniors with the necessary tools to become successful college applicants.

<b>College Access and Success Program<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>	<b>Website</b>	<b>College Access Programs' Mission Statement or Program Description</b>
Today's Students Tomorrow's Teachers (TSTT)	3 West Main Street, Suite 200, Elmsford, NY 10523	(914) 345-3444 ext. 23	www.tstt.org	To recruit, mentor, and train culturally diverse and economically challenged students from high school through college and place them as effective teachers and committed leaders who strengthen schools and communities.
Tutor Corp (part of the Guadalupe Center)	509 Hope Circle, Immokalee, FL 34142	(239) 657-7711	www.guadalupecenter.org	The mission of the Guadalupe Center is to break the cycle of poverty through education for the children of Immokalee, Florida.
Upward Bound (Part of the Federal Government's TRIO programs)	1990 K Street, N.W., Suite 7000, Washington D.C. 20006-8510	(202) 502-7586	www2.ed.gov/programs/trioupbound/index.html	Upward Bound provides fundamental support to participants in their preparation for college entrance. The program provides opportunities for participants to succeed in their precollege performance and ultimately in their higher education pursuits.
Women in Natural Science (WINS)	1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia, PA 19103	(215) 299-1000	www.ansp.org/education/programs/wins/	Women In Natural Sciences (WINS) is a free after-school and summer science enrichment program at the Academy of Natural Sciences. Since its founding in 1982, WINS has introduced hundreds of high school girls to future careers in science and other professions by providing hands-on science workshops, career and college exploration, and positive youth development.

## **Appendix B: Solicitation Email**

Good afternoon,

I am a doctoral student in the School of Education here at XX University. I am conducting research on college access for first generation college students like yourself. If you identify as a first generation college student and used a college access program/organization to help you with your college search, application process, or financial aid/FAFSA forms then you qualify to be part of this research and make \$20.00!

Your participation will include two one-hour interviews or focus groups. In the interviews or focus groups, we will talk mostly about your college admissions process and then spend some time talking about your time here at XX. You won't need to do anything in preparation; I am just interested in hearing your story. As a thank you for your time, you will receive \$20 at the end of the second meeting.

If you are interested in participating, everything we talk about will be confidential and only my dissertation committee members and another graduate student assisting with the research will have access to the data.

Again, if you are a first generation college student and used any type of college access program or organization (aside from your high school guidance counselors) to help you with your college search and application process, you qualify for the study and \$20! Please let me know your availability for us to meet.

I look forward to hearing back from you.

Cheers,

Staci Weber

### Appendix C: Participant Overview

<b>Total Participants</b>	47
<b>Gender<sup>6</sup></b>	
Female	30
Male	17
<b>Race</b>	
American Indian/Alaska Native-Hispanic/ Latino-White	1
Asian	13
Black-Hispanic/ Latino	3
Black/ African American	14
Black/ African American-Puerto Rican	2
Hispanic/ Latino	6
Mexican	2
Mexican-Hispanic/ Latino	1
Mexican-White	1
Not Reported	1
Puerto Rican	2
White	1
<b>Class Year</b>	
First-Year	18
Sophomore	15
Junior	6
Senior	8
<b>Average parental income<sup>7</sup></b>	
Cohort year (students' first year they matriculated on campus)	\$33,094.21
Current year (2011-2012, academic year of data collection)	\$35,117.32

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<sup>6</sup> Gender, race, and class year came from the students' undergraduate admissions application.

<sup>7</sup> Average parental income came from the students' FAFSA (financial aid) form.

### Appendix D: Participants

Name	Year	Gender	Race	Family Income	Population of Home City	High School	College Access and Support Programs
<b>Aileen</b>	First-year	Female	Hispanic/ Latino	<\$25,000	1,000,000+	Public school	<p>Harlem Education Center: A person from the organization came to campus twice a week to assist Aileen with college applications, FAFSA, and her resume. Aileen also received tutoring, SAT prep, and went on college visits with program. No retention support.</p> <p>Double Discovery at Columbia University: Aileen took college classes and SAT prep through the program. She received a mentor who stayed in touch with her throughout her first year of college.</p> <p>Global Community Internship: Aileen received an internship experiences for 2 weeks over the summer.</p>
<b>Alex</b>	Sophomore	Male	Black/ African American	>\$50,000	1,000,000+	Public school	<p>HEAF: Alex attended brotherhood groups and SAT Prep. The program also took him college tours, provided portfolio assistance, and helped him develop a network. Once in college, HEAF offered alumni events to former participants.</p> <p>Center for Talented Youth: Alex took summer courses at Hawaii Pacific University, University of California Santa Cruz, and Notre Dame.</p> <p>Cooper Union Saturday program: Alex took architecture classes and received portfolio preparation at Cooper Union.</p>
<b>Alishea</b>	First-year	Female	Black/ African American	<\$25,000	75,000-150,000	Public school	<p>STEP (Science, Technology, and Engineering Program): Alishea learned about STEP through her engineering club and received a mentor, went on college visits, and participated in career shadow days. Alishea and her math teacher remain in touch, but she does not maintain contact with the program.</p> <p>AVID: Alishea participated in AVID from middle school through high school.</p>

Name	Year	Gender	Race	Family Income	Population of Home City	High School	College Access and Support Programs
<b>Bianka</b>	First-year	Female	Hispanic/ Latino	\$25,000- \$50,000	150,000-500,000	Private school	<p>NJ SEEDS: Bianka received support to gain access to private preparatory schools. NJ SEEDS also provided Bianka with financial assistance for SAT prep classes.</p> <p>National Student Leadership Conference: Bianka attended University of Maryland for a 10-day program focused on science and medicine. She met doctors, went to museums, and participated in labs.</p>
<b>Bing</b>	Sophomore	Male	Asian	\$25,000- \$50,000	500,000- 1,000,000	Public school	<p>NELA: Bing joined NELA his junior year of high school. He received, mentorship, helped with financial aid, and college admissions.</p>
<b>Blake</b>	First-year	Male	Mexican	>\$50,000	1,000,000+	Public school	<p>GEAR UP: Blake's high school partnered with GEAR UP through Lehman College. GEAR UP gave Blake a mentor and connected him with a summer opportunity at Brown University.</p> <p>Macy's Honors Program: Blake attended field trips and activities through Macy's Honors Program.</p>
<b>Carli</b>	Sophomore	Female	Asian	\$25,000- \$50,000	1,000,000+	Public school	<p>Henry Street Settlement: Carli received a mentor, Regents preparation, and SAT prep through Henry Street. The organization also helped her secure summer employment and took her on college tours. Henry Street Settlement provided limited retention assistance as one branch of the program closed after her senior year in high school.</p>
<b>Carlos</b>	Sophomore	Male	Black/ African American and Hispanic/ Latino	<\$25,000	1,000,000+	Public school	<p>ASPIRA: ASPIRA provided Carlos with SAT preparation classes, college visits, and leadership experience. ASPIRA also nominated Carlos for Posse and helped with his transition to college. He has continued to receive support from the program while in college.</p> <p>YouthBridge: Carlos served as Diversity Chair in YouthBridge and met students with different religious and racial backgrounds and from other college access programs.</p>
<b>Charlotte</b>	Junior	Female	Asian	\$25,000- \$50,000	500,000- 1,000,000	Public school	<p>TERI: Charlotte received help on financial aid forms and received college application fee waivers. She used TERI's services 3-4 times and met with a different person each time.</p> <p>Harvard College Prep: Charlotte received SAT preparation and help with her personal statement through Harvard College Prep. She also visited Harvard's campus and received a student mentor.</p>

Name	Year	Gender	Race	Family Income	Population of Home City	High School	College Access and Support Programs
<b>Darrell</b>	First-year	Male	Black/ African American	<\$25,000	1,000,000+	Private school	Prep for Prep: Prep for Prep provided Darrell with coursework in middle school and then assistance to apply to a private, college preparatory high school. Once enrolled in high school, Prep helped Darrell with his college search. They continue to keep in touch.
<b>David</b>	Senior	Male	White	>\$50,000	Suburb of 1,000,000+	Public school	Today's Students Tomorrow's Teachers: Provided David with internship opportunities and 50% of his tuition by attending a partner university. Retention support comes through workshops twice a year and having a campus representative available for questions.
<b>Elizabeth</b>	Senior	Female	Hispanic/ Latino	\$25,000- \$50,000	1,000,000+	Public school	<p>STYLE: Elizabeth received college search, application, resume, and cover letter assistance. In addition, she went with STYLE on trips geared towards teamwork. Elizabeth said that she received support during college for one year before the program lost funding and closed.</p> <p>Big Brothers Big Sisters: Elizabeth had a "big sister" who had a college degree served as a mentor and assisted Elizabeth with finding internship opportunities. After Elizabeth's high school graduation, her and her mentor lost touch.</p> <p>College Now: Elizabeth took a college level class at her high school through College Now.</p> <p>Peter J. Sharp: Through Peter J. Sharp, Elizabeth enrolled in SAT prep and received a waiver for the SAT test.</p>
<b>Gabriel</b>	First-year	Male	Mexican	>\$50,000	<25,000	Public school	Tutor Corp: Gabriel tutored middle school students throughout high school at Tutor Corp and, in turn, received financial compensation, college access support services, and a college scholarship. Tutor Corp staff served as Gabriel's college guidance counselors, provided him with summer employment in high school and college, and gave him on-going support during his first year in college.

Name	Year	Gender	Race	Family Income	Population of Home City	High School	College Access and Support Programs
<b>Gabriella</b>	Sophomore	Female	Mexican and Hispanic/Latino	<\$25,000	75,000-150,000	Public school	<p><b>MOSTE:</b> Gabriella received mentorship and financial assistance from MOSTE. She also said they taught her about empowerment, etiquette, and college life skills. During college, Gabriella kept in touch with MOSTE students.</p> <p><b>Taylor Michael's Scholarship Program:</b> Gabriella received an internship opportunity.</p> <p><b>Upward Bound:</b> Upward Bound gave Gabriella financial aid and scholarship information, took her on college visits, provided her with the opportunity to take on-line classes, and connected Gabriella to other students from Upward Bound at her university. Gabriella continued to utilize Upward Bound for collegiate support.</p>
<b>Jacob</b>	First-year	Male	Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino	\$25,000-\$50,000	1,000,000+	Private school	<p><b>Prep for Prep:</b> Jacob started Prep for Prep in middle school where he met with his cohort twice a week during the school year and all day over summer vacation for supplemental coursework and assignments. Once Jacob completed the pre-high school requirements, Prep helped Jacob apply to and enroll in a private, college preparatory high school. During high school, Jacob met with Prep's post-enrollment counselor every 6 weeks to discuss Jacob's academics and summer opportunities. He also had a college advisor who functioned like a guidance counselor and took him on college visits. In college, Jacob attended Prep dinners on campus and advised middle school Prep students over the summer.</p>
<b>Janey</b>	Sophomore	Female	Asian	<\$25,000	1,000,000+	Public school	<p><b>Henry Street Settlement:</b> Henry Street Settlement paired Janey with a counselor/mentor who assisted Janey with her college application and financial aid forms. Janey also traveled with Henry Street Settlement on college visits.</p> <p><b>Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP):</b> SYEP helped Janey find summer employment.</p> <p><b>Project Reach:</b> Janey used Project Reach as a community center to hang out, receive tutoring, and participate in workshops about discrimination and acceptance. During high school, Project Reach also offered Janey a job.</p>



Name	Year	Gender	Race	Family Income	Population of Home City	High School	College Access and Support Programs
<b>Jia</b>	Sophomore	Female	Asian	\$25,000-\$50,000	1,000,000+	Public school	<p>Education Alliance Teen Center (part of the Boys and Girls Club) (nicknamed Edgies): Jia received SAT prep and assistance with her college application from Edgies. Jia also hung-out and socialized in the space. During college, Edgies offered students different programming over breaks.</p> <p>Henry Street Settlement: Jia used Henry Street Settlement for SAT preparation and assistance with her college applications. Jia also traveled with Henry Street Settlement to visit college campuses.</p> <p>Global Teens (part of YMCA): Jia traveled to and volunteered in Thailand with Global Teens.</p> <p>APEX (Asian Pacific Expansion) and Manpower: Jia received SAT prep from APEX and Manpower.</p>
<b>Joy</b>	First-year	Female	Puerto Rican	<\$25,000	1,000,000+	Charter school	<p>Step Up Women's Network: Joy received a mentor through Step Up Women's Network. She did not receive retention support, however, the director of Step Up changed jobs and worked with a college access program Joy's brother used so they re-connected through the latter program.</p> <p>Young Luminaries (part of Step Up): Joy received an internship through Young Luminaries.</p> <p>Pathways to Professions: Joy received a mentor based on major and interests through the all-female Pathways to Professions. She connected with her mentor about once a month and emailed her every a couple times a week. The Pathways to Professions employees helped Joy draft the emails.</p>

Name	Year	Gender	Race	Family Income	Population of Home City	High School	College Access and Support Programs
<b>Julianna</b>	Junior	Female	Black/ African American	<\$25,000	1,000,000+	Public school	<p>CASH NY: Julianna met with CASH NY once a week and received assistance with her college applications and financial aid forms. CASH NY also took Julianna and other students on college tours. Throughout the program, Julianna received mentorship and advice on budgeting and surviving college. Julianna kept in touch with the program throughout college and received continued psychosocial and financial support.</p> <p>YMCA: Julianna participated in multiple college readiness programs through the YMCA including: Global Teens where she travelled abroad, Career Connection, Leaders Club, and Team Club which provided college preparation and campus tours.</p>
<b>Julie</b>	Junior	Female	Asian	<\$25,000	1,000,000+	Public school	<p>Minds Matter: Minds Matter helped Julie organize her college search process, assisted with the logistics of the college application process, provided internship opportunities, and taught Julie networking skills. Julie kept in touch with her mentor from Minds Matter and returns to the program over school breaks to speak with current high school students.</p>
<b>Karina</b>	Senior	Female	Black/ African American and Puerto Rican	>\$50,000	<25,000	Private school	<p>Center for Talented Youth (CTY): Through CTY, Karina took high school and college classes and lived on college campuses for three summers during high school.</p> <p>Goldman Sachs Leadership Program: Karina received mentors through the Goldman Sachs Leadership Program.</p> <p>Next Generation Venture Fund: Karina participated in Next Generation from 6th -12th grade. Next Generation assigned Karina a personal counselor, paid for CTY, and provided her with the opportunity to travel to Ireland.</p>
<b>Kristina</b>	First-year	Female	Not reported	\$25,000- \$50,000	25,000-75,000	Private school	<p>QuestBridge: Kristina received a college counselor who helped her with college applications through QuestBridge.</p>

Name	Year	Gender	Race	Family Income	Population of Home City	High School	College Access and Support Programs
<b>Leigh</b>	First-year	Female	Hispanic/ Latino	>\$50,000	500,000- 1,000,000	Catholic school	<p>Let's Get Ready: Boston College ran Let's Get Ready and offered Leigh and her peers SAT preparation, advice on the college process from admission's counselors, financial aid and scholarship assistance, help with college applications, and college preparation workshops (e.g., budgeting, roommates, socializing/parties). Let's Get Ready also held financial aid workshops for students' parents.</p> <p>Women in Science: Leigh learned about science and what you could do with a chemistry or biology degree. Through Women in Science, Leigh visited Boston College and Harvard Medical School.</p> <p>High School Health Careers Program: Leigh received a five-week summer internship at University of Massachusetts Medical Center through High School Health Careers Program. The internship included morning lectures from doctors or medical students and shadowing a physician in the afternoon. Leigh also received her CPR certification.</p>
<b>Lilly</b>	Sophomore	Female	Mexican and White	<\$25,000	1,000,000+	Charter school	<p>KIPP: Lilly attended a high school that focused on college access and success where they regularly talked about college and required students to take part in summer programs. KIPP also provided Lilly and her peers support during college to ensure her persistence.</p>
<b>Lisa</b>	First-year	Female	Hispanic/ Latino, American Indian/ Alaska Native, and White	<\$25,000	Suburb of 1,000,000+	Public school	<p>Geoli: Lisa participated in Geoli, a leadership program for women of color. She met weekly with the program starting in the 7th grade. Lisa appreciated that her mentor was also an immigrant like herself.</p> <p>GEAR UP: Lisa attended afterschool activities, SAT prep, and tutoring through GEAR UP.</p>

Name	Year	Gender	Race	Family Income	Population of Home City	High School	College Access and Support Programs
<b>Lorena</b>	Sophomore	Female	Black/ African American	\$25,000- \$50,000	75,000-150,000	Public school	<p>On Point: Lorena began using On Point at the end of 11th grade/early 12th grade and received assistance with her college application and financial aid. Before college, Lorena also went with On Point to the local mall to purchase basic college necessities.</p> <p>University Challenge: University Challenge, sponsored by the local university, guaranteed college admission to middle school students in the city schools if they maintained over a 3.0 high school GPA.</p> <p>Say Yes to Education: Lorena received financial assistance through Say Yes to Education.</p> <p>AVID: Lorena participated in AVID starting in 6th grade under her teacher's advisement.</p>
<b>Lucas</b>	Sophomore	Male	Hispanic/ Latino	\$25,000- \$50,000	1,000,000+	Charter school	<p>Fulfillment Fund: The Fulfillment Fund provided Lucas with a mentor in the 10th grade, took him to college fairs and on college visits across the country, and provided application fee waivers. They also provided Lucas a college scholarship in his first and second year, which helped keep Lucas connected to the program.</p>
<b>Marcus</b>	Sophomore	Male	Black/ African American and Puerto Rican	<\$25,000	1,000,000+	Public school	<p>Let's Get Ready: Marcus met with the counselor from Let's Get Ready one time to determine which college he should submit applications, receive application fee waivers, and get help with his college essay.</p> <p>Door: Marcus received SAT prep once a week from Door.</p>
<b>Mary</b>	Junior	Female	Asian	\$25,000- \$50,000	1,000,000+	Public school	<p>Chinese American Planning Council's (CPC) Project Gateway: Project Gateway assigned Mary a mentor who helped with college applications, her college essays, financial aid, and SAT prep. CPC also doubled as a community center and offered social space.</p>
<b>Matthew</b>	Senior	Male	Puerto Rican	\$25,000- \$50,000	1,000,000+	Catholic school	<p>Crotona Achievement Program: Matthew received homework assistance, PSAT and SAT preparation, and a space to gather and socialize through Crotona Achievement Program. They also sponsored a 2-week camp the summer before Matthew's 11th and 12th grade years that focused on college and career development.</p>

Name	Year	Gender	Race	Family Income	Population of Home City	High School	College Access and Support Programs
<b>Mercedes</b>	First-year	Female	Black/ African American	\$25,000- \$50,000	1,000,000+	Public school	<p>Columbia Mentoring Program: Columbia Mentoring Program paired Mercedes with a college student at Columbia University. The mentor helped Mercedes with her college applications and shared advice on co-curricular activities. The two met weekly throughout 11th and 12th grade to discuss college prep and met outside the designated hour on Fridays for social activities. Mercedes and her mentor kept in touch during college through text messages and reconnect in person when Mercedes comes home over breaks.</p> <p>Let's Get Ready (hosted by Harlem Center): Mercedes received SAT preparation and financial aid assistance through Let's Get Ready.</p>
<b>Meredith</b>	First-year	Female	Asian	<\$25,000	1,000,000+	Public school	<p>Chinese American Planning Council (CPC): Meredith started with CPC in the 11th grade. She went with the program on college visits, received help to secure an internship and work experience, and remained in contact with CPC during college.</p> <p>In School Youth (part of CPC): In School Youth helped Meredith with financial aid and summer employment.</p> <p>College Now: College Now paid for Meredith to take community college classes.</p>
<b>Michelle</b>	Sophomore	Female	Hispanic/ Latino	\$25,000- \$50,000	1,000,000+	Public school	<p>Children's Aid Society's Hope Leadership Academy: Michelle received weekly workshops throughout the school year and daily over the summer where they discussed risks, rewards, financial literacy, and goal setting.</p> <p>BronxWorks's Teen Action Program: Michelle received community service opportunities through BronxWorks's Teen Action.</p> <p>Let's Get Ready: Let's Get Ready provided Michelle with college readiness including SAT preparation and financial aid assistance. During college, Let's Get Ready hosted alumni networking events. Michelle did not attend, though, because the events focused on business, which was not her major.</p>
<b>Morgan</b>	Senior	Female	Black/ African American	<\$25,000	1,000,000+	Charter school	<p>Women in Natural Science: Morgan went with WINS on college tours, museum visits, and camping trips. They also connected her with science internships.</p>

Name	Year	Gender	Race	Family Income	Population of Home City	High School	College Access and Support Programs
<b>Nicolas</b>	First-year	Male	Black/ African American	<\$25,000	75,000-150,000	Catholic school	College Planning Center of Rhode Island: College Planning Center assisted Nicolas with financial aid, application fee waivers, SAT preparation, and college applications.
<b>Phillip</b>	First-year	Male	Black/ African American	\$25,000- \$50,000	150,000-500,000	Catholic School	Urban League's Project Ready: Project Ready was a mentorship program for Black men. Phillip met with them during the week and on Saturdays to get help with his homework and college preparation. Phillip noted that he learned life skills like safe sex, etiquette, writing, and conflict resolution. He believed that the program emphasized grades and provided minimal retention support.  Summer of Opportunity: Helped Philip find summer jobs.
<b>Quaeisha</b>	Sophomore	Female	Black/ African American and Hispanic/ Latino	<\$25,000	1,000,000+	Public school	Legal Outreach: Legal Outreach worked with Brooklyn Law School and held mock trials, hosted internships, administered writing classes and SAT preparation, and vocabulary review sessions for Quaeisha and her peers.
<b>Rebecca</b>	Senior	Female	Black/ African American	\$25,000- \$50,000	150,000-500,000	Public school	Upward Bound: Rebecca lived on a college campus over the summer where she took classes and received SAT preparation. Upward Bound also helped her with college applications and deciding where to apply.  College Access Program: The College Access Program assisted Rebecca with her financial aid and provided her a scholarship. She applied each year to re-new her funding.
<b>Roger</b>	Sophomore	Male	Black/ African American	<\$25,000	75,000-150,000	Public school	On Point for College: On Point helped Roger with financial aid and selecting his summer classes. The program offered support throughout college.
<b>Sam</b>	Junior	Male	Black/ African American	<\$25,000	<25,000	Public school	Upward Bound of Eastern Michigan University: Upward Bound helped Sam establish a college-going mindset, assisted him with his homework, brought in speakers, took him and his peers on campus tours, provided standardized test preparation, and covered college application fees. Upward Bound also hosted a Summer Academy for 6 weeks where Sam took high school classes for credit and stayed in a residence hall.  Travis Smiley Foundation: Sam attended the Travis Smiley Foundation's Leadership Conference.

Name	Year	Gender	Race	Family Income	Population of Home City	High School	College Access and Support Programs
<b>Sarah</b>	First-year	Female	Asian	<\$25,000	500,000-1,000,000	Public school	GEAR UP: GEAR UP collaborated with STEP UP and The Story Project to provide Sarah with mentorship, college tours, homework assistance, SAT classes, and waive the cost of college application fees.
<b>Shanay</b>	First-year	Female	Black/ African American	<\$25,000	150,000-500,000	Public school	Black Youth Leadership Development (BYLD): Shanay went on college tours, heard speakers, and received financial aid assistance through BYLD.  Next Generation Leader Program: Shanay received summer opportunities and financial aid assistance through Next Generation.
<b>Sierra</b>	Senior	Female	Black/ African American	<\$25,000	500,000-1,000,000	Public school	Girls Inc.: Sierra started Girls, Inc. in the 7th grade where she talked about topics not covered in class (e.g., sex education). Girls, Inc. connected Sierra with Upward Bound.  Upward Bound: Sierra took a writing class, worked with robots, and joined a poetry group when she spent her summer with Upward Bound.  Bridge Builders: Sierra attended Bridge Builders, a weeklong program focused on intercultural dialogue.  Pre-Environmental Engineering Program (PEEP): Sierra learned about PEEP through TRIO. She received hands-on science education and a stipend to participate.
<b>Tom</b>	First-year	Male	Asian	>\$50,000	1,000,000+	Catholic school	Liberty LEADS: Tom traveled to Spain through Liberty LEADS. He credited the organization for helping him develop a college-going mindset. He lost contact with Liberty LEADS, because he sought independence.
<b>Wei</b>	Senior	Female	Asian	<\$25,000	1,000,000+	Public school	Project Gateway (through CPC): Project Gateway helped Wei with college applications, college essays, and answering questions. They also served as a community center with afterschool programming.

Name	Year	Gender	Race	Family Income	Population of Home City	High School	College Access and Support Programs
<b>Yong</b>	Sophomore	Male	Asian	<\$25,000	1,000,000+	Public school	<p>Educational Alliance: Yong received SAT preparation, college application assistance, mentorship opportunities, summer employment, and retention outreach through Education Alliance.</p> <p>Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP): SYEP offers students summer employment through a lottery system. Unfortunately, Yong did not receive a placement.</p> <p>The Stanley Isaac Center's College Career Prep: Yong received a \$3,500 scholarship and a laptop.</p>
<b>Yu</b>	Junior	Female	Asian	<\$25,000	1,000,000+	Public school	Project Gateway (through CPC): Yu received financial aid assistance, and SAT preparation through Project Gateway.



## Appendix E: Informed Consent

The role nonprofit college access programs play to facilitate college student access and success<sup>8</sup>

My name is Staci Weber and I am a graduate student in XX University's School of Education. I invite you to participate in a research study that looks at your college admissions process. If you are interested in participating, please read the information below and let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

I am interested in learning about college students who utilized a college access program or organization during their college search and application process. For this study, I will conduct interviews or focus groups with those students.

The interviews and focus groups conducted will be recorded for research purposes. All information collected will remain confidential. Participants' identities need to be retained, so they can be associated with their responses; however, I will assign a pseudonym (fake name) to each person I speak with to protect all confidentiality including their name and remarks. Since my data is for my dissertation, I am working with a committee of three faculty members in the School of Education and another graduate student who will also have access to the data I collect. Like me they will observe strict confidentiality.

While there are no direct risks to you for participating in this study, you may expose yourself (emotions, academic history, and family background) to me during our time together. To help make you more comfortable in my presence, I will make sure to give you time to get to know me, as well. I recognize the challenges you face in your work, schooling, and/or daily life, so I certainly do not want to inhibit your success.

After learning more about the study, you have the right to refuse to take part and withdraw from the study at any time. If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints, please contact me, Staci Weber, at 410-591-2928. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may also contact the XX University Institutional Review Board at 315-443-3013. If you are comfortable participating, please sign below and give one copy to me and please keep one copy for yourself.

All of my questions have been answered. I am over the age of 18, give permission for the researcher to record my interview, and wish to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of researcher

<sup>8</sup> I adapted the language for this Consent Form from XX University's Office of Research Integrity and Protection's website on September 14, 2009.

## Appendix F: Interview and Focus Group Scripts

### Interview Script #1

#### Introduction

Thank you for meeting with me today. I am a graduate student here at XX University in the School of Education and my research looks at college access. In particular, I am interested in speaking with students, like yourself, that have used a college access program or organization that possibly helped them with their college process. Today will be the first of our two interviews. The first interview will be a way for me to learn more about you, your family, and your time in high school. Then, our second interview will focus more on your time at university. In order to make sure I capture everything you say, I would like to record this interview. Is that alright? Please know that everything you say is confidential and I'll change your name in all my work to keep your anonymity. If you are uncomfortable with a question I ask, you don't need to answer it or you can end the interview; no questions asked. Sound good? Please read and sign the following informed consent form, which further explains confidentiality and your rights to end the interview. [Allow participant to sign two copies of the form. One copy for him/herself and one for me.] Thank you. Do you have any questions before we get started?

#### Interview #1

#### Background:

- Can you please tell me about yourself?
- Where did you grow up? (City, move around)
- What was your family like? (Who raised you, siblings, relationship with parents, parents' education)
- What was high school like for you? (Type of school, atmosphere of school, high school classes, size of classes, friends)
- How did you spend your time outside of school? (After-school activities, work experience, helping with siblings or older family members)

#### College-going mentality:

- When did you decide you wanted to go to college?
- Why did you decide to go to college?
- Did you know other people while you were in high school who were going to college?

- Had anyone in your family gone to college?
- What did your family think about you going to college?

College search:

- Can you please tell me about your college search process?
- How did you know where to even start?
- Did anyone from your high school help you with your college search? How so?
- When did you first learn about [insert college access program's name]?
- What was your first interaction with [insert college access program's name] like?
- Did other students at your high school or friends of yours utilize [insert college access program's name]?
- Can you please talk about interaction you had with staff members or volunteers from [insert college access program's name]?
- How else did [insert college access program's name] help you with your college search and application process? (Financial aid, college visits, SAT prep, applications, learning about colleges, college essay, recommendation letters)
- What was your parent's role in your college application and decision making process?
- How did you learn about your acceptance to XX University? (Hard copy, email)
- What was your immediate reaction?
- How did you decide to attend XX University? (Financial aid, location of school, academic program, XX pride)
- Looking back on your college search process, how could have made it easier for you?
- What advice would you give a sibling or cousin who was a junior or senior in high school?

## Focus Group #1 Script

### Introduction

Thank you for meeting today. I am a graduate student here at XX University in the School of Education and my research looks at college access. In particular, I am interested in speaking with students, like yourself, that have used a college access program or organization that possibly helped them with their college process. Today will be the first of our two meetings. The first focus group will be a way for me to learn more about you, your family, and high school. Then, the second focus group will focus more on your time at university. In order to make sure I capture everything you say, I would like to record this interview. Is that alright? Please know that everything you say is confidential and I'll change your name in all my work to keep your anonymity. If you are uncomfortable with a question I ask, you don't need to answer it or you can leave the focus group; no questions asked. Sound good? Please read and sign the following informed consent form, which further explains confidentiality and your rights to end the focus group. [Allow participants to sign two copies of the form.] Thank you. Before we start, I will ask that you please remember to say your name before you start speaking. This will help me when we go back through the recordings. Do you have any questions before we get started?

### Focus group #1

#### Background:

- What was your family like? (Who raised you, siblings, relationship with parents, parents' education)
- What was high school like for you? (Type of school, atmosphere of school, high school classes, size of classes, friends)
- How did you spend your time outside of school? (After-school activities, work experience, helping with siblings or older family members)
- How would you describe your childhood?

#### College-going mentality:

- When did you decide you wanted to go to college?
- Why did you decide to go to college?
- Did you know other people while you were in high school who were going to college?
- Had anyone in your family gone to college?

- What did your family think about you going to college?

College search:

- Can you please tell me about your college search process?
- How did you know where to even start?
- Did anyone from your high school help you with your college search? How so?
- When did you first learn about [insert college access program's name]?
- What was your first interaction with [insert college access program's name] like?
- Did other students at your high school or friends of yours utilize [insert college access program's name]?
- Can you please talk about interaction you had with staff members or volunteers from [insert college access program's name]?
- How else did [insert college access program's name] help you with your college search and application process? (Financial aid, college visits, SAT prep, applications, learning about colleges, college essay, recommendation letters)
- What was your parent's role in your college application and decision making process?
- How did you learn about your acceptance to XX University? (Hard copy, email)
- What was your immediate reaction?
- How did you decide to attend XX University? (Financial aid, location of school, academic program, XX pride)
- Looking back on your college search process, how could have made it easier for you?
- What advice would you give a sibling or cousin who was a junior or senior in high school?

## Interview Script #2

Hi. It's good to see you again! How are you? In our last interview we focused on your pre-college experience. I would like to take our time today to learn more about your college experience. Sound good? Again, same "rules" apply. If you feel uncomfortable at any point in the interview, you may decide to not answer the question or end the interview all together. Ready to start?

Transition to college:

- Can you please talk a little about how you spent the summer before college? (Work, took time-off, Summer Bridge, orientation)
- Did you attend any programs for accepted students at XX University or other schools you got into? What were those like?
- What was your transition to XX University like?
- What was the hardest part about your transition to XX?
- Looking back on your transition, how could have it been made easier for you?
- What are you most proud of regarding your transition to XX University?

College:

- What has been the best part about college?
- What has been hard for you?
- What about college has surprised you or been different than you imagined it to be?
- Can you please tell me about your relationship with [insert college access program's name] since you came to XX University?
- When you have a question about college, whom do you ask?
- If you were to go back to [insert college access program's name] and talk to the students there about college, what words of advice would you offer?

Post-College:

- What are your summer/graduation [depending on participant] plans? (Find out if the college access program helped arrange for jobs/internships).

Concluding questions:

- If you could run a [insert college access program's name] type of program, what services would you offer assuming money is not an issue?
- Can you please share any life lessons or values you have learned through [insert college access program's name]?
- Thinking back through the whole college process, what do you wish you knew back then that you know now?
- What are you most proud of over your lifetime?

## Focus Group #2 Script

Hi. It's good to see you each again! In our last interview we focused on your pre-college experience. I would like to take our time today to learn more about your college experience. Sound good? Again, same "rules" apply. If you feel uncomfortable at any point, you may decide to not answer the question or leave the focus group all together. Also, please remember to say your name before you start speaking. Ready to start?

Transition to college:

- Can you please talk a little about how you spent the summer before college? (Work, took time-off, Summer Bridge, orientation)
- Did you attend any programs for accepted students at XX University or other schools you got into? What were those like?
- What was your transition to XX University like?
- What was the hardest part about your transition to XX?
- Looking back on your transition, how could have it been made easier for you?
- What are you most proud of regarding your transition to XX University?
- Can you please tell me about your relationship with your college access organization since you came to XX University?
- When you have a question about college, whom do you ask?

Post-College:

- What is everyone's summer plans?
- How did you decide what to do this summer?

Concluding questions:

- If you could run a college access program, what services would you offer assuming money is not an issue?
- Can you please share any life lessons or values you have learned through your college



access program?

- Thinking back through the whole college process, what do you wish you knew back then that you know now?
- What are you most proud of over your lifetime?

## Appendix G: Transcriber Protocol

Thank you each for your willingness to transcribe!

Here are the details:

### FORMAT:

Please type them in Times New Roman, 12 pt font with normal 1" margins. Single space the document, but please put a full space between speakers. For example:

Staci: Please tell me about XYZ.

Participant's name: Here's all about XYZ.

At the top of the document please write the student's name, date of the interview, and the college access program the student used. Interviews should be saved with the same title as the file WMA file I send you (minus the WMA extension, obviously). Please transcribe the interviews verbatim and keep in all the "likes" and "you knows." You do not need to transcribe my introduction or anything I say at the very end, so that should save you a chunk of time! :o) If you have questions, please let me know. If you can't understand something please just write in the time of the missing information and put it in block parenthesis like [ xx:xx ].

### PAYMENT:

After you finish transcribing, please save the document in Dropbox and send me an email. I will then cut you a check or pay you in cash- whatever you prefer.

In the off-chance that you do not transcribe your interview before the end of the semester. I'll email you to follow-up. If I need to re-assign the interview to someone else, I can't pay you for any of the work you did (I can only pay folks for finished products). (Sorry. I just need to keep tabs on my budget.)

Listed below are common acronyms and names you may come across throughout the interviews, which will hopefully help your transcribing go a bit smoother.

Thank you so much for your willingness to transcribe! This is a huge help!

Have a great week,  
Staci

P.S. Remember to use the program "Express Scribe" (free on-line) and hot keys to make things easier on yourself!

- STEP = Science Technology Engineering Program
- STATE = State funded college support program

- EOP= Education Opportunity Program
- SSS = Student Support Services
- TAP = Tuition Assistance Program
- FAFSA
- SUNY ESF
- LeMoyne, Fordham, BMCC (Borough of Manhattan Community College), OCC (Onondaga Community College), FIU (Florida International University), Miami Dade
- SOE = School of Education
- AVID
- IB or IB curriculum = International Baccalaureate
- Regents or Regents diploma = New York State standardized testing
- AP classes = Advanced Placement
- Summer Bridge = A program at XX University for first-year students to come to school the summer before their first-year and take 6 credits and get better adjusted to campus/college life.
- CSTEP = I forget the "C" - it's something like counseling or college, Science Technology Engineering Program. It's a support program for students in STE.

## Appendix H: Focus Group Codes

- IAi. Family-structure-nuclear family  
 IAia. Family-structure-nuclear family-really big family  
 IAib. Family-structure-nuclear family-picture perfect  
 IAii. Family-structure-lives w/ elder/importance of elder  
 IAiii. Family-structure-sibling  
 IAiiia. Family-structure-sibling order-oldest  
 IAiiib. Family-structure-sibling order-youngest  
 IAiiib1. Family-structure-sibling order-youngest-(older sibling(s) college grad/student/college track)  
 IAiiib2. Family-structure-sibling order-youngest-(older sibling(s) NOT college grad)  
 IAiiib3. Family-structure-sibling order-youngest-(older sibling(s) in/pursuing post-BA)  
 IAiiic. Family-structure-sibling order-middle  
 IAiiic1. Family-structure-sibling order-middle-(older sibling(s) in/pursuing BA or post-BA)  
 IAiiic2. Family-structure-sibling order-middle-(older sibling(s) didn't go to college)  
 IAiiic3. Family-structure-sibling order-middle-(older sibling(s) college grad/student/college track)  
 IAiiid. Family-structure-sibling order-only child  
 IAiv. Family-structure-single mom  
 IAiv1. Family-structure-single mom-works several jobs  
 IAiv2\*. Family-structure-single mom-father not always around (still contributed)  
 IAiv2. Family-structure-single mom-father not always around  
 IAiv3. Family-structure-single mom-grandparents helped raise kids  
 IAiv4. Family-structure-single mom-father passed away  
 IAix. Family-structure-parents divorced  
 IAvi. Family-structure-extended family live w/  
 IAvia. Family-structure-extended family live w/-or at least referenced  
 IAviaa. Family-structure-gender-only son  
 IAviab. Family-structure-gender-only daughter  
 IAviii. Family-structure-half/step-siblings  
 IBi. Family-household-taking care of  
 IBii. Family-household-small home  
 ICi. Family-parenting style-"free"  
 ICii. Family-parenting style-"Careful"  
 ICiii. Family-parenting style-raised sibling differently  
 ICiv. Family-parenting style-"strict"  
 ICv. Family-parenting style-supportive  
 ICvi. Family-parenting style-gave students everything  
 ICvii. Family-parenting style-changed in college  
 ICviii. Family-parenting style-"adult" relationship  
 IDi. Family-parents-hardship  
 IDia. Family-parents-hardship-disability  
 IDib. Family-parents-hardship-can't/doesn't work  
 IDic. Family-parents-hardship-ill/death  
 IDid. Family-parents-hardship-older  
 IDie. Family-parents-hardship-housing issues  
 IDie. Family-parents-hardship-long hours working  
 IDif. Family-parents-hardship-father left family  
 IDig. Family-parents-hardship-city/neighborhood  
 IDih. Family-parents-hardship-job  
 IDii. Family-parents-sacrifice  
 IDiii. Family-parents-values  
 IDiiia. Family-parents-values-Safety  
 IDiiib. Family-parents-values-education  
 IDiiib2. Family-parents-values-education (not valued)  
 IDiiib3. Family-parents-values-education (neutral)  
 IDiiib4. Family-parents-values-education (angry re distance)  
 IDiiic. Family-parents-values-after school/summer programs  
 IDiiid. Family-parents-values-not being a product of her environment  
 IDiiie. Family-parents-values-motivational/encouraging  
 IDiiif. Family-parents-values-comparative  
 IDiiif. Family-parents-values-finding solutions  
 IDij. Family-hardship-economic  
 IDik. Family-parents-hardship-education  
 IDiv. Family-parents-job  
 IDiva. Family-parents-Job-network  
 IDix. Family-parents-home country  
 IDixi. Family-parents-recognize opportunities  
 IDv. Family-parents-storytelling  
 IDvi. Family-parents-social security (receive)  
 IDvii. Family-parents-education  
 IDviii. Family-parents-education-helped parent w/ their hw.  
 IDviii. Family-parents-travel to "home country"  
 IEi. Family-relationship w/ parents-asks for things  
 IEii. Family-relationship w/ parents-exploits  
 IEiii. Family-relationship w/ parents-advice  
 IEiv. Family-relationships w/ parents-money  
 IEiva. Family-relationships w/ parents-money-conscious of parents' income  
 IEix. Family-relationship w/ parents-"family problems"  
 IEv. Family-relationships w/ parents-Didn't talk things over  
 IEvi. Family-relationship w/ parents-"done a lot for me"  
 IEvii. Family-relationship w/ Parents-felt like parents had high expectations/pressure  
 IEviii. Family-relationship w/ parents-mom had student as teenager  
 IEx. Family-relationship w/ parents-"biggest friend/biggest burden"  
 IExi. Family-relationship w/ parents-good  
 IExii. Family-relationship w/ parents-encourage  
 IExiii. Family-relationship w/ parents-not close  
 IExiv. Family-relationship w/ parents-close  
 IEXV. Family-relationship w/ parents-communication  
 IF. Family-finances  
 IFi. Family-finances-mother supports whole family  
 IFii. Family-finances-father supports whole family  
 IGia. Family-misc-incarceration-Uncles  
 IGib. Family-misc-incarceration-brothers  
 IHi. Family-relationship w/ family-siblings  
 IHia. Family-relationship w/ family-siblings-"prized"  
 IHib. Family-relationship w/ family-siblings-outsider  
 IHic. Family-relationship w/ family-siblings-follow their lead  
 IHid. Family-relationship w/ family-sibling-seeks advice  
 IHie. Family-relationship w/ family-siblings-financially all contribute  
 IHif. Family-relationship w/ family-sibling-gives advice

- IHig. Family-relationship w/ family-sibling-enjoyed college
- IHih. Family-relationship w/ family-sibling-raised younger sibs
- IHii. Family-relationship w/ family-close
- IHiii. Family-relationship w/ family-changed during college
- IHij. Family-relationship w/ family-sibling-drugs
- IHik. Family-relationship w/ family-sibling-back on track
- IHil. Family-relationship w/ family-sibling-only constant in each other's life
- IHim. Family-relationship w/ family-sibling-close
- IHin. Family-relationship w/ family-sibling-not close
- IHio. Family-relationship w/ family-sibling-disability
- IHip. Family-relationship w/ family-sibling-role model
- IHiv. Family-relationship w/ family-travel
- II. Identity
- IIA. Identity-characteristic
- IIAi. Identity-characteristic-risk taker
- IIAii. Identity-characteristic-"prove myself"
- IIAia. Identity-characteristic-"prove myself"-parents
- IIAib. Identity-characteristic-"prove myself"-others
- IIAiaa. Identity-characteristics-dependency
- IIAiaa1. Identity-characteristics-dependency-family members
- IIAiaa2. Identity-characteristics-dependency-CAP
- IIAiaa3. Identity-characteristics-dependency-seeks independence
- IIAiaa4. Identity-characteristics-dependency-NPO
- IIAiaa5. Identity-characteristics-independence
- IIAiaa5. Identity-characteristics-independence-doing it all on her own
- IIAiv. Identity-characteristic-learning disability
- IIAix. Identity-characteristic-hard to connect w/ people
- IIAv. Identity-characteristic-feel bad spending family's money
- IIAvi. Identity-characteristic-kept to one's self
- IIAvii. Identity-characteristic-on your own mentality, no one there to help
- IIAviii. Identity-characteristic-knows what needs to be done, just needs to do it.
- IIAx. Identity-characteristic-proud
- IIAxa. Identity-characteristic-proud-hesitant/hard Q
- IIAxb. Identity-characteristic-proud-everything done is part of something bigger
- IIAxc. Identity-characteristic-proud-happy v. proud
- IIAxd. Identity-characteristic-proud-linked w/ achievements
- IIAxe. Identity-characteristic-proud-linked to other people
- IIAxf. Identity-characteristic-proud-deserving (or not)
- IIAyg. Identity-characteristic-proud-overcoming obstacles
- IIAyg1. Identity-characteristic-proud-overcoming obstacles-internal struggle
- IIAyg2. Identity-characteristic-proud-overcoming obstacles-parents
- IIAyg3. Identity-characteristic-proud-overcoming obstacles-school
- IIAyg4. Identity-characteristic-proud-overcoming obstacles-money
- IIAxh. Identity-characteristic-proud-aware
- IIAxi. Identity-characteristic-Stubborn
- IIAxii. Identity-characteristic-happy
- IIAxia. Identity-characteristic-happy-linked to self
- IIAxiii. Identity-characteristic-never feeling good enough
- IIAxix. Identity-characteristic-nerd
- IIAxj. Identity-characteristic-proud-independence
- IIAxk. Identity-characteristic-proud-time management
- IIAxl. Identity-characteristic-proud-self doubt
- IIAxm. Identity-characteristic-proud-career path
- IIAxx. Identity-characteristic-funny
- IIAxxi. Identity-characteristic-crazy
- IIAxxii. Identity-characteristic-outgoing
- IIAxxiii. Identity-characteristic quiet/shy
- IIAxxiv. Identity-characteristic-push self
- IIAxxiv. Identity-characteristic-religion
- IIAxxix. Identity-characteristic-passive
- IIAxxv. Identity-characteristic-musician/music
- IIAxxvi. Identity-characteristic-caregiver
- IIAxxvii. Identity-characteristic-making a difference
- IIAxxviii. Identity-characteristic-staying busy
- IIAxxx. Identity-characteristic-scared/anxious
- IIAxxxi. Identity-characteristic-ashamed
- IIAxxxii. Identity-characteristic-underachiever
- IIAxxxiii. Identity-characteristic-determined/motivated
- IIAxxxiv. Identity-characteristic-lazy
- IIAxxxix. Identity-characteristic-popular
- IIAxxxv. Identity-characteristic-not a good student
- IIAxxxvi. Identity-characteristic-developing confidence
- IIAxxxvii. Identity-characteristic-a good student
- IIAxxxviii. Identity-characteristic-recognizes privileges/blessed
- IIAxxxviii. Identity-characteristic-strong/strength
- IIAxxxx. Identity-characteristic-altruistic/helpful
- IIAxxxxi. Identity-characteristic-listens
- IIAxxxxii. Identity-characteristic-a planner
- IIAxxxxii. Identity-characteristic-appreciation
- IIAxxxxiii. Identity-characteristic-goal oriented
- IIB. Identity-lives in
- IIBi. Identity-lives in-city
- IIBi1. Identity-lives in-city-low income
- IIBi2. Identity-lives in-city-drugs
- IIBi3. Identity-lives in-city-a few people go away
- IIBii. Identity-lives in-high school (name)
- IIBiii. Identity-lives in-university's home town
- IIBiv. Identity-lives in-another country
- IIBv. Identity-lives in-suburbs
- IIBvi. Identity-lives in-Hispanic area
- IIC. Identity-originally from
- IICi. Identity-originally from-China
- IICii. Identity-originally from-age when moved
- IICiii. Identity-originally from-moved here bc
- IID. Identity-lacked support
- IIE. Identity-lacked outlet
- IIF. Identity-passions
- IIFi. Identity-passions-discovering
- IIFi. Identity-passions-fulfilling
- IIG. Identity-networks
- IIGi. Identity-networks-reach out
- IIGii. Identity-networks-how and what is communicated
- IIGiii. Identity-networks-surround yourself w/ like minded people
- IIGiv. Identity-networks-variety of friends
- IIGix. Identity-networks-CAP
- IIGix. Identity-networks-school

- IIGv. Identity-networks-NPO
- IIGvi. Identity-networks-housing
- IIGvii. Identity-networks-internet
- IIGviii. Identity-networks-lacked
- IIH. Identity-major/school
- III. CAP (name)
- IIIAi. CAP-travel-abroad
- IIIAii. CAP-travel-continental
- IIIAiii. CAP-travel-career fairs/shadowing
- IIIB. CAP-learned about program-school
- IIIBia. CAP-learned about program-school-elementary
- IIIBib. CAP-learned about program-school-middle
- IIIBic. CAP-learned about program-school-high
- IIIBii. CAP-learned about program-parents
- IIIBiii. CAP-learned about program-learned about other opps through CAP
- IIIBiv. CAP-learned about program-sibling's friends
- IIIBv. CAP-learned about program-friends
- IIIBvi. CAP-learned about program-siblings
- IIIBvii. CAP-learned about program-engagement activities
- IIIBviii. CAP-learned about program-mail
- IIIC. CAP-started program
- IIICi. CAP-started program-high school
- IIICii. CAP-started program-middle school
- IIICiii. CAP-started program-child (before middle school)
- IIID. CAP-summer opportunity
- IIIDI. CAP-summer opportunity-travel
- IIIDia. CAP-summer opportunity-travel-being away from home
- IIIDib. CAP-summer opportunity-travel-"big kid"
- IIIDic. CAP-summer opportunity-travel-more away--> less homesick
- IIIDid. CAP-summer opportunity-travel-couldn't track
- IIIDie. CAP-summer opportunity-travel-community service
- IIIDif. CAP-summer opportunity-travel-college campus
- IIIDii. CAP-summer opportunity-leadership opportunity
- IIIDia. CAP-summer opportunity-leadership opportunity-summer camp
- IIIDiii. CAP-summer opportunity-financial support
- IIIDiva. CAP-summer opportunity-classes-on a college campus
- IIIDivb. CAP-summer opportunity-classes-exposure to colleges
- IIIDv. CAP-summer opportunity-jobs
- IIIDvi. CAP-summer opportunity-community service
- IIIDvii. CAP-summer opportunity-research
- IIIDviii. CAP-summer opportunity-college prep
- IIIEi. CAP-teaches-independence
- IIIEii. CAP-teaches-future plans
- IIIEiii. CAP-teaches-Black manhood
- IIIEiv. CAP-teaches-leadership
- IIIEix. CAP-teaches-giving back
- IIIEvi. CAP-teaches-edu enrichment
- IIIEvii. CAP-teaches-personal benefit
- IIIEviii. CAP-teaches-Black identity
- IIIEviv. CAP-teaches-organization
- IIIEvv. CAP-teaches-stepping outside comfort zone
- IIIEx. CAP-teaches-student values CAP experience
- IIIEx1. CAP-teaches-student does not recognize CAP experience
- IIIExi. CAP-teaches-etiquette /public speaking
- IIIExii. CAP-teaches-life skills
- IIIExiii. CAP-teaches-empowerment
- IIIExiv. CAP-teaches-cultural enrichment
- IIIEix. CAP-teaches-determination/hard work
- IIIExv. CAP-teaches-job preparation
- IIIExvi. CAP-teaches-networking
- IIIExvii. CAP-teaches-communication
- IIIExviii. CAP-teaches-interpersonal skills
- IIIExx. CAP-teaches-professionalism
- IIIExxi. CAP-teaches-time management
- IIIExxii. CAP-teaches-valuing engagement
- IIIExxiii. CAP-teaches-pushes students outside comfort zone
- IIIExxiv. CAP-teaches-academic area (i.e. science)
- IIIFi. CAP-requirements-merit based
- IIIFii. CAP-requirements-interview
- IIIFiii. CAP-requirements-application
- IIIFiiia. CAP-requirements-application-selective
- IIIFiiib. CAP-requirements-application-none
- IIIFiv. CAP-requirements-nomination/recommendation
- IIIFix. CAP-requirements-submit report card/transcript
- IIIFv. CAP-requirements-parental involvement
- IIIFvi. CAP-requirements-background
- IIIFvii. CAP-requirements-colleges of interest
- IIIFviii. CAP-requirements-who would most benefit
- IIIFx. CAP-requirements-summer component
- IIIG. CAP-college process
- IIIGi. CAP-college process-applications
- IIIGia. CAP-college process-applications-paid for by CAP/fee waivers
- IIIGib. CAP-college process-applications-CAP helps fill in the holes
- IIIGic. CAP-college process-applications-didn't help
- IIIGii. CAP-college process-financial aid
- IIIGia. CAP-college process-financial aid-FAFSA
- IIIGia1. CAP-college process-financial aid-FAFSA-help complete
- IIIGia2. CAP-college process-financial aid-FAFSA-help understand
- IIIGiib. CAP-college process-financial aid-scholarships
- IIIGiib1. CAP-college process-financial aid-scholarships-recommend for
- IIIGiic. CAP-college process-financial aid-financial literacy
- IIIGiic. CAP-college process-financial aid-retention support
- IIIGiv. CAP-college process-college essays
- IIIGv. CAP-college process-learned about process
- IIIH. CAP-college prep
- IIHi. CAP-college prep-SAT prep
- IIHia. CAP-college prep-SAT prep-covered costs
- IIHib. CAP-college prep-SAT prep-successful
- IIHic. CAP-college prep-SAT prep-unsuccessful
- IIHid. CAP-college prep-SAT prep-not Kaplan/Princeton
- IIHie. CAP-college prep-SAT prep-Kaplan/Princeton class
- IIHif. CAP-college prep-SAT prep-choice of classes
- IIHii. CAP-college prep-college tours
- IIHia. CAP-college prep-college tours-organized
- IIHia. CAP-college prep-college tours-organized (geared for low-income-schools in state or ivy)
- IIHib. CAP-college prep-college tours-attended
- IIHiii. CAP-college prep-classes
- IIHiii. CAP-college prep-recommendation letters

- IIIHiiia. CAP-college prep-classes-after school
- IIIHiiib. CAP-college prep-classes-weekends
- IIIHiiic. CAP-college prep-classes-once a week
- IIIHiiid. CAP-college prep-classes-summer
- IIIHiiie. CAP-college prep-classes-homework
- IIIHiiif. CAP-college prep-classes-writing/math
- IIIHiiiv. CAP-college prep-where to apply
- IIIHiiix. CAP-college prep-college fair
- IIIHiiix. CAP-college prep-college survival
- IIIHv. CAP-college prep-over night visits
- IIIHva. CAP-college prep-over night visits-first time away from home
- IIIHvi. CAP-college prep-classes for credit
- IIIHvia. CAP-college prep-classes for credit-HS credit
- IIIHvib. CAP-college prep-classes for credit-college credit
- IIIHvic. CAP-college prep-classes for credit-exposed to college profs
- IIIHvii. CAP-college prep-living on a college campus
- IIIHviii. CAP-college prep-pushes colleges
- IIIHx. CAP-college prep-time management
- IIIHxi. CAP-college prep-mentors
- IIIHxii. CAP-college prep-guest speakers
- IIIHxiii. CAP-college prep-landing internships
- IIIHxiv. CAP-college prep-co-curricular engagement
- IIIHxv. CAP-college prep-college classes/expectations
- IIIHxvi. CAP-college prep-major
- IIIHxvii. CAP-college prep-test prep
- IIIJi. CAP-program background-age range
- IIIJii. CAP-program background-location
- IIIJiia. CAP-program background-location-drew students from different schools
- IIIJiii. CAP-program background-demographics
- IIIJiia. CAP-program background-demographics-non race based
- IIIJiiib. CAP-program background-demographics-diverse
- IIIJiv. CAP-program background-Students served (drew from)
- IIIJiv. CAP-program background-provide mentors
- IIIJiva. CAP-program background-provide mentors (doesn't)
- IIIJivb. CAP-program background-provide mentors (current college students)
- IIIJix. CAP-program background-partnerships w/ colleges
- IIIJix. CAP-program background-size
- IIIJixa. CAP-program background-size-program growing
- IIIJva. CAP-program background-funded
- IIIJva1. CAP-program background-funded-govt
- IIIJva2. CAP-program background-funded-private donors
- IIIJvi. CAP-program background-programs w/in programs
- IIIJvii. CAP-program background-structured
- IIIJviiia. CAP-program background-structured-met once or twice a week
- IIIJviiib. CAP-program background-structured-met once every two weeks
- IIIJviiic. CAP-program background-structured-met for 5-6 hours/week
- IIIJviiid. CAP-program background-structured-met every school day
- IIIJviiie. CAP-program background-structured-engage over summer
- IIIJviiif. CAP-program background-structured-met 4 times total
- IIIJviiig. CAP-program background-structured-program grew w/ students to meet need each year
- IIIJviii. CAP-program background-mission
- IIIJviiia. CAP-program background-mission-STEP
- IIIJviiij. CAP-program background-structured-part of a larger organization
- IIIJx. CAP-program background-single gender program
- IIIJxi. CAP-program background-co-ed
- IIIJxii. CAP-program background-cohort orientation
- IIIJxiii. CAP-program background-employee/volunteer turnover
- IIIJxiv. CAP-program background-history
- IIIJxivl. CAP-program background-history-prestige
- IIIJxv. CAP-program background-cost to student
- IIIJxvi. CAP-program background-engage students
- IIIK. CAP-Alumni
- IIIKi. CAP-Alumni-events
- IIIKia. CAP-Alumni events-attend
- IIIKib. CAP-Alumni events-haven't attend
- IIIKic. CAP-Alumni events-no events
- IIIKid. CAP-Alumni events-networking
- IIIKii. CAP-Alumni-volunteers
- IIIKiii. CAP-Alumni-hire students
- IIIKiv. CAP-Alumni-graduate school
- IIIL. CAP-communication
- IIILi. CAP-communication-email
- IIILia. CAP-communication-email-during college
- IIILii. CAP-communication-if you need help ask for it
- IIILiii. CAP-communication-came into HS
- IIILiv. CAP-communication-should have reached out
- IIILix. CAP-communication-stay connected/build network
- IIILv. CAP-communication-Facebook
- IIILvi. CAP-communication-ended
- IIILvii. CAP-communication-reached out to student
- IIILviiia. CAP-communication-reached out to student-follow up
- IIILviii. CAP-communication-transition
- IIIM. CAP-college-going mentality
- IIIN. CAP-network
- IIIO. CAP-college decision
- IIIOi. CAP-college decision-ED
- IIIOii. CAP-college decision-financial package driven
- IIIOiii. CAP-college decision-out of state
- IIIP. CAP-volunteer
- IIIPi. CAP-volunteer-participant
- IIIQ. CAP-retention
- IIIQi. CAP-retention-communication
- IIIQia. CAP-retention-communication-check in
- IIIQib. CAP-retention-communication-help w/ FAFSA
- IIIQic. CAP-retention-communication-help w/ survival tips
- IIIQid. CAP-retention-communication-help w/ time management
- IIIQie. CAP-retention-communication-Facebook/email
- IIIQif. CAP-retention-communication-reached out to student
- IIIQig. CAP-retention-communication-linked in
- IIIQii. CAP-retention-follow-up
- IIIQiii. CAP-retention-no relationship
- IIIQiv. CAP-retention-value in continued support
- IIIQix. CAP-retention-person who sole job is this
- IIIQv. CAP-retention-covered transportation to college

- IIIQvi. CAP-retention-"shampoo and stuff... send me money"
- IIIQvii. CAP-retention-wish support continued
- IIIQviii. CAP-retention-visits when goes home
- IIIQviii1. CAP-retention-visits when goes home-does not
- IIIQx. CAP-retention-financial
- IIIQxi. CAP-retention-still connects to one person (informal)
- IIIR. CAP-support
- IIIRi. CAP-support-family
- IIIRii. CAP-support-spent time together
- IIIRiii. CAP-support-"been through college"
- IIIRiv. CAP-support-cared for students
- IIIRix. CAP-support-problems at home/school
- IIIRv. CAP-support-want students to succeed
- IIIRvi. CAP-support-helpful
- IIIRvii. CAP-support-advice
- IIIRviii. CAP-support-homework/class selection help
- IIIRx. CAP-support-encouragement/motivation
- IIIRx. CAP-support-narrow minded/unhelpful/limited
- IIIRxi. CAP-support-compile list of where to apply
- IIIRxii. CAP-support-role model
- IIIRxiii. CAP-support-continue through college
- IIIRxiv. CAP-support-attend school events
- IIIRxix. CAP-support-similar interests
- IIIRxv. CAP-support-resources/recommendations
- IIIRxvi. CAP-support-limited mentoring
- IIIRxvi. CAP-support-met w/ different person each time
- IIIRxvii. CAP-support-formal
- IIIRxviii. CAP-support-informal
- IIIRxx. CAP-support-tutoring
- IIIRxxi. CAP-support-not in this alone
- IIIRxxii. CAP-support-engage students
- IIIS. CAP-job/intern
- IIISi. CAP-job/intern-support
- IIISii. CAP-job/intern-future opportunities
- IIISiii. CAP-job/intern-resume assistance
- IIIT. CAP-participation
- IIITi. CAP-participation-free
- IIITii. CAP-participation-jump back and forth btw CAPs
- IIITia. CAP-participation-jump back and forth btw CAP-compare programs/services
- IIIU. CAP & family
- IIIV. CAP-student engagement
- IIIW. CAP-why CAP?
- IIYY. CAP-resources
- IIYi. CAP-resources-social workers
- IIJ. Identity-motivation
- IIJi. Identity-motivation-nothing at home for me
- IIJii. Identity-motivation-surround self w/ good.
- IIJiii. Identity-motivation-be above her past
- IIJiv. Identity-motivation-best education
- IIJix. Identity-motivation-giving others same opportunities
- IIJv. Identity-motivation-fear
- IIJvi. Identity-motivation-career
- IIJvii. Identity-motivation-making a difference
- IIJviii. Identity-motivation-financial
- IIJx. Identity-motivation-self motivation
- IIJxi. Identity-motivation-"be something"
- IIJxii. Identity-motivation-luck
- IIJxiii. Identity-motivation-peers
- IIJxiv. Identity-motivation-work/work hard
- IIJxv. Identity-motivation-mother's commitment
- IIJxvi. Identity-motivation-mentor's support
- IIJxvii. Identity-motivation-family success/collectivism
- IIJxviii. Identity-motivation-do it just to do it
- IIK. Identity-demographics
- IIKi. Identity-demographics-race
- IIKii. Identity-demographics-first gen
- IIKiii. Identity-demographics-ethnicity
- IIKiii. Identity-demographics-ethnicity-home country
- IIKiv. Identity-demographics-citizenship
- IIKv. Identity-demographics-low income
- IIKvi. Identity-demographics-disability
- IIIL. Identity-family
- IIIM. Identity-co-curricular interests
- IIIN. Identity-language
- IIINi. Identity-language-English
- IIINia. Identity-language-English-student
- IIINib. Identity-language-English-parents
- IIINib1. Identity-language-English-parents-dependent on children
- IIINic. Identity-language= English-when learned the language
- IIIV. Identity-class year
- IJi. Family-siblings-went to College
- IJii. Family-siblings-Graduated college
- IJiii. Family-siblings-connected to NPO
- IK. Family-aunts, uncles, cousins
- IKi. Family-aunts, uncles, cousins-assisted w/ schooling
- IKii. Family-aunts, uncles, cousins-assisted w/ college process
- IKiii. Family-aunts, uncles, cousins-served as mentor
- IKiv. Family-aunts, uncles, cousins-went to college
- IL. Family-support
- ILi. Family-support-no support
- ILii. Family-support-hoped for a "better" school
- IM. Family-communication
- IMi. Family-communication-call home every three weeks
- IMii. Family-communication-doesn't call home often
- IMiii. Family-communication-w/ HS
- IMiv. Family-communication-networks
- IMv. Family-communication-calls home every week
- IMvi. Family-communication-calls home every day
- IN. Family-relationship w/ neighborhood
- INi. Family-relationship w/ neighborhood-not driven
- INii. Family-relationship w/ neighborhood-into illegal activities
- INiii. Family-relationship w/ neighborhood-not supportive
- INiv. Family-relationship w/ neighborhood-not connected
- INv. Family-relationship w/ neighborhood-change during college
- INvi. Family-relationship w/ neighborhood-uplift
- IP. Family-death
- IVA. Travel-abroad
- IVB. Travel-continental
- IVCi. Travel-reasons for travel-educational
- IVCii. Travel-reasons for travel-see family
- IVCiii. Travel-reasons for travel-Cultural
- IVCiv. Travel-reasons for travel-didn't like home town
- IVCv. Travel-reasons for travel-parents desire to "help better" participant
- IVCvi. Travel-reasons for travel-study abroad
- IVCvii. Travel-reasons for travel-lived abroad



- IVCviii. Travel-reasons for travel-service  
 IVCviii. Travel-reasons for travel-vacation  
 VAi. School-chose HS-b/c CAP  
 VAii. School-chose HS-b/c demographics/language (bi-lingual/immigrants)  
 VAiii. School-chose HS-b/c parents/student said she wants to go public school  
 VAiv. School-chose HS-b/c better than neighborhood school  
 VAix. School-chose HS-only good school in neighborhood  
 VAv. School-chose HS-wanted arts/academic balance  
 VAvi. School-chose HS-took exam, got in  
 VAvii. School-chose HS-family member  
 VAviii. School-chose HS-lottery system  
 VAx. School-chose HS-language (bi-lingual)  
 VAx. School-chose HS-only school in neighborhood  
 VB. School-location  
 VBi. School-location-travel to  
 VC. School-K-8 school  
 VCi. School-K-8 school-lower school  
 VCii. School-K-8 school-middle  
 VCiia. School-K-8 school-middle-didn't go  
 VD. School-Skipped grades  
 VE. School-high school (name)  
 VEi. School-high school-demographics  
 VEia. School-high school-demographics-mostly like participant  
 VEib. School-high school-demographics-not like participant  
 VEic. School-high school-demographics-diverse  
 VEic1. School-high school-demographics-diverse-more than current university  
 VEid. School-high school-demographics-same sex  
 VEid. School-high school-demographics-immigrants  
 VEiia. School-high school-barriers-language  
 VEiii. School-high school-CAP  
 VEiia. School-high school-CAP-cancelled classes  
 VEiv. School-high school-college prep  
 VEiva. School-high school-college prep-guidance counselors  
 VEivb. School-high school-college prep-SAT prep  
 VEivc. School-high school-college prep-where to apply  
 VEivd. School-high school-college prep-Where to go  
 VEive. School-high school-college prep-Fin aid  
 VEivf. School-high school-college prep-application  
 VEivg. School-high school-college prep-PSAT/SAT  
 VEivh. School-high school-college prep-college tours  
 VEivj. School-high school-college prep-resources  
 VEivk. School-high school-college prep-guest speakers  
 VEix. School-high school-application process  
 VEixa. School-high school-application process-toured high schools  
 VEixb. School-high school-application process-took standardized tests  
 VEixc. School-high school-application process-interviews  
 VEixd. School-high school-application process-application to complete  
 VEixe. School-high school-application process-visited before attending  
 VEixf. School-high school-application process-researched school  
 VEixg. School-high school-application process-didn't know what she was getting herself into  
 VEixh. School-high school-application process-lottery system  
 VEixj. School-high school-application process-ranked school (NYC)  
 VEv. School-high school-size  
 VEva. School-high school-size-school  
 VEvb. School-high school-size-classes  
 VEvc. School-high school-size-small  
 VEvd. School-high school-size-large  
 VEve. School-high school-size-crowded  
 VEvi. School-high school-type  
 VEvia. School-high school-type-private prep  
 VEvia1. School-high school-type-private prep-received funding to attend  
 VEvia2. School-high school-type-private prep-boarding  
 VEvia3. School-high school-type-private prep-boarding (left home at 13)  
 VEvib. School-high school-type-Catholic  
 VEvic. School-high school-type-public  
 VEvic1. School-high school-type-public-specialized  
 VEvic2. School-high school-type-public-"bad"  
 VEvic3. School-high school-type-public-"good"  
 VEvid. School-high school-type-new  
 VEvie. School-high school-type-low graduation rates  
 VEvif. School-high school-type-poor  
 VEvig. School-high school-type-wealthier (because of neighborhood)  
 VEvih. School-high school-type-bilingual  
 VEvii. School-high school-classes  
 VEviiia. School-high school-classes-AP/Honors  
 VEviiia1. School-high school-classes-AP/Honors-more interesting classes  
 VEviiia2. School-high school-classes-AP/Honors-none/minimal offered  
 VEviiib. School-high school-classes-regular  
 VEviiic. School-high school-classes-geared towards college  
 VEviiid. School-high school-classes-college courses  
 VEviiie. School-high school-classes-all day/long day  
 VEviiif. School-high school-classes-"easy classes"  
 VEviiig. School-high school-classes-had majors  
 VEviiih. School-high school-classes-tracking system  
 VEviiiii. School-high school-learning disability  
 VEviiij. School-high school-classes-tutoring  
 VEvij. School-high school-type-undergoing lots of changes  
 VEx. School-high school-graduates  
 VExa. School-high school-graduates-didn't go to college  
 VExb. School-high school-graduates-attend college  
 VExc. School-high school-graduates-join army  
 VExi. School-high school-support  
 VExia. School-high school-support-teachers  
 VExib. School-high school-support-questioned  
 VExic. School-high school-support-guidance counselor  
 VExii. School-high school-race  
 VExiii. School-high school-had far to travel to get to school  
 VExiv. School-high school-decision making  
 VExv. School-high school-engagement  
 VExva. School-high school-engagement-arts  
 VExvb. School-high school-engagement-leadership  
 VExvc. School-high school-engagement-internship  
 VExvd. School-high school-engagement-tutoring

- VExvi. School-high school-problems  
 VExvii. School-high school-problems-hated HS  
 VExviii. School-high school-problems-not dropping out  
 VExvix. School-high school-problems-safety  
 VExvix. School-high school-communication  
 VExvix. School-high school-communication-visits  
 VExvix. School-high school-communication-email/facebook  
 VExvix. School-family-went w/ sibling(s)  
 VExvix. School-family-went without sibling(s) (went to different schools)  
 VExvix. School-family-provided parents w/ workshops on college process (fin aid)  
 VExvix. School-network  
 VExvix. School-network-helped learn about school to attend  
 VExvix. School-network-after school activities  
 VExvix. School-friends  
 VExvix. School-friends (K-12)-communication  
 VExvix. School-friends (K-12)-go to college  
 VExvix. School-friends (K-12)-go to college-residential or not  
 VExvix. School-friends (K-12)-commonalities  
 VExvix. School-friends-CAP  
 VExvix. School-friends (K-12)-not motivated  
 VExvix. Rhetoric  
 VExvix. Rhetoric-"CAP"  
 VExvix. Rhetoric-descriptions including race  
 VExvix. Rhetoric-"Safety" (College choice words)  
 VExvix. Rhetoric-socially constructed  
 VExvix. College Process  
 VExvix. College Process-search  
 VExvix. College Process-search-location  
 VExvix. College Process-search-selectivity  
 VExvix. College Process-search-started on his own  
 VExvix. College Process-application  
 VExvix. College Process-application-# of schools  
 VExvix. College Process-application-Reason behind app  
 VExvix. College Process-application-mark off race  
 VExvix. College Process-application-college essay  
 VExvix. College Process-application-interviews  
 VExvix. College Process-application-interview-locations  
 VExvix. College Process-application-portfolio assistance  
 VExvix. College Process-high school  
 VExvix. College Process-high school-HS/Guidance counselor  
 VExvix. College Process-high school-HS/Guidance counselor-go to classes  
 VExvix. College Process-high school-HS/Guidance counselor-meet w/ all the students  
 VExvix. College Process-high school-HS/Guidance counselor-involved  
 VExvix. College Process-high school-HS/Guidance counselor-not involved  
 VExvix. College Process-high school-HS/Guidance counselor-fin aid  
 VExvix. College Process-high school-HS/Guidance counselor-one counselor lots of students  
 VExvix. College Process-high school-SAT prep classes  
 VExvix. College Process-high school-learn about and take SAT/PSAT  
 VExvix. College Process-high school-teachers  
 VExvix. College Process-role of parents  
 VExvix. College Process-role of parents-not supportive  
 VExvix. College Process-role of parents-doesn't know about process  
 VExvix. College Process-role of parents-wouldn't do it for us  
 VExvix. College Process-role of parents-financial aid  
 VExvix. College Process-role of parents-didn't help w/ application  
 VExvix. College Process-role of parents-away from home  
 VExvix. College Process-role of parents-supportive  
 VExvix. College Process-role of siblings  
 VExvix. College Process-went on college tours  
 VExvix. College Process-went on college tours-visited current university  
 VExvix. College Process-went on college tours-visited current university (w/ CAP)  
 VExvix. College Process-went on college tours-visited current university (w/ MSP)  
 VExvix. College Process-went on college tours-never visited current university  
 VExvix. College Process-went on college tour-bad experience  
 VExvix. College Process-went on college tour-good experience  
 VExvix. College Process-went on college tour-should have gone on more  
 VExvix. College Process-went on college tours-went where she knew people  
 VExvix. College Process-college-going mentality  
 VExvix. College Process-college-going mentality-not a lot of kids go (from home city)  
 VExvix. College Process-college-going mentality-not a lot of kids go (from school)  
 VExvix. College Process-college-going mentality-kids go (from home city)  
 VExvix. College Process-college-going mentality-kids go (from school)  
 VExvix. College Process-college-going mentality-conscious decision to attend  
 VExvix. College Process-college-going mentality-Decision made for me  
 VExvix. College Process-college-going mentality-always assumed/knew  
 VExvix. College Process-college-going mentality-raised that college was next step  
 VExvix. College Process-college-going mentality-mom's dream  
 VExvix. College Process-college-going mentality-pressure to attend  
 VExvix. College Process-college-going mentality-other students weren't doing anything... didn't want that.  
 VExvix. College Process-college-going mentality-"path of least resistance"  
 VExvix. College Process-college-going mentality-wanted to get away from home life/town  
 VExvix. College Process-college-going mentality-expand horizons  
 VExvix. College Process-college-going mentality-started in 10th grade  
 VExvix. College Process-college-going mentality-started in 7th grade

- VII Gxxii. College Process-college-going mentality-fostered by school
- VII Gxxiii. College Process-college-going mentality-developed when decided on major/interests
- VII Gxxiv. College Process-college-going mentality-started in 11th grade
- VII H. College Process-majors
- VII Hi. College Process-majors-when decided
- VII Hii. College Process-majors-how decided on
- VII I. Money
- VII IA. Money-juggling
- VII IB. Money-participant
- VII IBi. Money-participant-doesn't like spending parents' money
- VII IBii. Money-participant-housing
- VII IBiii. Money-participants-self supported
- VII IBiv. Money-participants-STATE
- VII IBv. Money-participants-insecurities/sacrifices
- VII IC. Money-not making much money
- VII ID. Money-college decision
- VII IE. Money-supported through SSSP
- VII IH. Money-responsibility shared amongst family members
- VII IJ. Money-classism
- VII IJi. Money-classism-unspoken
- VII IJii. Money-classism-privilege
- VII IJiii. Money-classism-on campus
- VII IJiv. Money-classism-language
- VII IK. Money-family
- VII IKi. Money-family-didn't/can't offer much support
- VII IKii. Money-family-can offer support
- VII IL. Money-role of peers
- VII ILi. Money-role of peers-lie to hide
- VII ILii. Money-role of peers-charity case
- VII ILiii. Money-role of peers-help navigate loop holes/save money
- VII ILiv. Money-role of peers-developing network
- VII ILv. Money-role of peers-upperclass students
- VII ILvi. Money-role of peers-don't understand class
- VII ILvii. Money-role of peers-supportive
- VII IM. Money-Work study
- VII IN. Money-financial aid
- VII INi. Money-financial aid-navigating the forms/aid
- VII INii. Money-financial aid-working w/ the fin aid office
- VII INiia. Money-financial aid-working w/ financial aid office-positive
- VII INiib. Money-financial aid-working w/ financial aid office-negative
- VII INiv. Money-financial aid-types of aid
- VII INix. Money-financial aid-refund check
- VII INv. Money-financial aid-paying loans back
- VII INvi. Money-financial aid-playing the game
- VII INvii. Money-financial aid-need it ... ask
- VII INviii. Money-financial aid-STATE
- VII IO. Money-university
- VII IOi. Money-university-spends its money
- VII IP. Money-middle class
- VII IPi. Money-middle class-morals
- VII IPii. Money-middle class-lifestyle
- VII IQ. Money-mentors
- VII IR. Money-bookstore account
- VII IS. Money-travel
- VII IT. Money-savings
- VII IU. Money-cost of current university
- VII UI. Money-cost of current university-books
- VII UIi. Money-cost of current university-food
- VII IV. Money-keeping up w/ the Jones
- VII IW. Money-two worlds/dichotomy
- VII IX. Money-financing/budgeting
- VII IXi. Money-financing/budgeting-navigating the system
- VII IXii. Money-financing/budgeting-average spending
- VII Yi. Money-Bursar-acct. hold
- VII J. College Process-why attend college
- VII K. College Process-role of peers
- VII Ki. College Process-role of peers-helped w/ college process
- VII L. College Process-political systems
- VII M. College Process-on one's own
- VII N. College Process-role of environment
- VII O. College Process-overnight visit
- VII P. College Process-religion
- VII Q. College Process-reached out/networked
- VII R. College Process-role of family
- VII S. College Process-financial aid
- VII T. College Process-current university
- VII Ti. College Process-current university-Admissions office
- VII U. College Process-SAT
- VII Ui. College Process-SAT-practice
- VII Uii. College Process-SAT-taking exam
- VII V. College Process-luck
- VJ. School-comparative education
- X. College Decision
- XA. College Decision-why current university
- XAi. College Decision-why current university-financial
- XAii. College Decision-why current university-"Right school for me"
- XAiii. College Decision-why current university-away from home
- XAiv. College Decision-why current university-friend/sibling from home graduated from current university
- XAv. College Decision-why current university-other schools waitlisted or didn't get in
- XAvi. College Decision-why current university-solid program
- XAvii. College Decision-why current university-#1 choice not enough \$
- XAviii. College Decision-felt comfortable on campus
- XAviv. College Decision-why current university-family
- XAvv. College Decision-why current university-CAP
- XB. College Decision-by myself
- XC. College Decision-role of parent
- XD. College Decision-role of environment
- XDi. College Decision-role of environment-Race
- XE. College Decision-role of peers
- XF. College Decision-financial aid
- XG. College Decision-Scholarship in action
- XH. College Decision-applying
- XHi. College Decision-applying-ED
- XHii. College Decision-applying-regular
- XI. Race
- XIA. Race-college process
- XIB. Race-Chinese & Black [relations]
- XIC. Race-mixed ethnicities

- XID. Race-friendships
- XIE. Race-segregation/racism
- XIF. Race-racial Uplift
- XIG. Race-ethnicity
- XIH. Race-political movement
- XII. College Transition
- XIIAi. College Transition-leaving home-first time away from home
- XIIAii. College Transition-leaving home-not first time away from home
- XIIB. College Transition-STATE
- XIIBi. College Transition-STATE-Mentorship
- XIIBii. College Transition-STATE-like peers
- XIICi. College Transition-culture shock
- XIICia. College Transition-culture shock-work load/academics
- XIICib. College Transition-culture shock-diversity
- XIICic. College Transition-culture shock-change in city size
- XIICid. College Transition-culture shock-change in school size
- XIICie. College Transition-culture shock-weather
- XIID. College Transition-coping
- XIIDi. College Transition-coping-sleeping
- XIIDii. College Transition-coping-eating
- XIIDiii. College Transition-coping-going okay
- XIIDiv. College Transition-coping-not okay
- XIIDiva. College Transition-coping-not okay-guilt
- XIIDivb. College Transition-coping-not okay-alone
- XIIDivc. College Transition-coping-not okay-lost
- XIIDivc. College Transition-coping-not okay-no support/guidance from home
- XIIDive. College Transition-coping-not okay-sleeping
- XIIDivf. College Transition-coping-not okay-budgeting
- XIIDix. College Transition-coping-goes home
- XIIDv. College Transition-coping-tough skin
- XIIDvi. College Transition-coping-trial and error
- XIIDvii. College Transition-coping-set priorities/time management
- XIIDviii. College Transition-coping-better decision making
- XIIE. College Transition-classes
- XIIEi. College Transition-classes-active learning
- XIIEii. College Transition-classes-study habits
- XIIEiii. College Transition-classes-too many credits
- XIIEiv. College Transition-classes-hard
- XIIF. College Transition-start to figure it out
- XIIG. College Transition-support
- XIIGi. College Transition-CAP support
- XIIGia. College Transition-CAP support-none/minimal
- XIIGib. College Transition-CAP support-summer travel
- XIIGii. College Transition-OSA/STATE support
- XIIGiii. College Transition-OMA support
- XIIGiv. College Transition-MSP support
- XIIGv. College Transition-support-peers
- XIIGvi. College Transition-support-ODS
- XIIH. College Transition-summer start
- XIII. College
- XIIIA. College-stopping out
- XIIIAA. College-networks
- XIIIAAi. College-networks-alumni
- XIIIAAii. College-networks-other professionals
- XIIIAi. College-stopping out-financial
- XIIIAii. College-stopping out-academics
- XIIIAiii. College-stopping out-family
- XIIIAiv. College-stopping out-travel
- XIIIB. College-Wells Link
- XIIIBB. College-residence life
- XIIIBi. College-Wells Link-positives
- XIIIBia. College-Wells Link-positives-meet people
- XIIIBib. College-Wells Link-positives-helpful
- XIIIBic. College-Wells Link-positives-leadership skills
- XIIIBid. College-Wells Link-positives-tips about classes
- XIIIBie. College-Wells Link-positives-job opportunities
- XIIIBif. College-Wells Link-positives-encouragement
- XIIIBig. College-Wells Link-positives-engagement opps
- XIIIBih. College-Wells Link-positives-mentorship
- XIIIBii. College-Wells Link-find out about program
- XIIIBiii. College-Wells Link-why participate
- XIIIC. College-role of peers
- XIIICC. College-time management
- XIIICi. College-role of Peers-meeting new people
- XIIICii. College-role of peers-bonding
- XIIICiii. College-role of peers-divisions w/in friends
- XIIICiv. College-role of peers-like peers
- XIIICix. College-role of peers-family
- XIIICv. College-role of peers-understanding peers (don't just call home for money)
- XIIICvi. College-role of peers-navigating system
- XIIICvii. College-role of peers-support
- XIIICviii. College-role of peers-similar place in life
- XIIICx. College-role of peers-academics
- XIIICxi. College-role of peers-networking
- XIIICxii. College-role of peers-hobbies/interests/co-curriculars
- XIIICxiii. College-role of peers-diversity
- XIIICxiv. College-role of peers-"unlike" peers
- XIIICxv. College-role of peers-money
- XIIID. College-academics
- XIIIDD. College-stress
- XIIIDI. College-academics-w/drew from class
- XIIIDIi. College-academics-change focus
- XIIIDIii. College-academics-probation
- XIIIDIv. College-academics-major
- XIIIDIv. College-academics-professors
- XIIIDIvi. College-academics-learning how to study
- XIIIDIvii. College-academics-differ from HS
- XIIIDIviii. College-academics-students more academically oriented
- XIIIDviv. College-academics-speakers
- XIIIDx. College-academics-diversity in classroom
- XIIIDxi. College-academics-students less academically oriented (engaged outside the classroom)
- XIIIDxii. College-academics-class registration
- XIIIE. College-completion
- XIIIEE. College-internships/work
- XIIIEi. College-completion-delayed
- XIIIF. College-study abroad
- XIIIFI. College-study abroad-role of parent
- XIIIFii. College-study abroad-expense
- XIIIFiii. College-study abroad-fin support from college
- XIIIFiv. College-study abroad-distance from home
- XIIIG. College-role of family
- XIIIGi. College-role of family-calling home
- XIIIGii. College-role of family-sibling graduated college

- XIIIGiii. College-role of family-supportive  
 XIIIGiv. College-role of family-difficult at home w/o child  
 XIIIGxi. College-role of family-academics  
 XIIIGv. College-role of family-financial  
 XIIIGvi. College-role of family-may not know how to help but try  
 XIIIGvii. College-role of family-motivational  
 XIIIGviii. College-role of family-keeps student connected to family  
 XIIIH. College-role of CAP  
 XIIIJ. College-support  
 XIIIJi. College-support-counseling center  
 XIIIJii. College-support-Learning Disability  
 XIIIJiii. College-support-STATE  
 XIIIJiv. College-support-SSSP  
 XIIIJix. College-support-first gen  
 XIIIJv. College-support-financial aid  
 XIIIJvi. College-support-school/college  
 XIIIJvii. College-support-DSA  
 XIIIJviii. College-support-none  
 XIIIJx. College-support-McNair  
 XIIIJxi. College-support-study abroad  
 XIIIJxi. College-support-writing center  
 XIIIJxii. College-support-tutoring center  
 XIIIJxiii. College-support-tutoring center-run out of hours  
 XIIIJxiii. College-support-faculty/advisor  
 XIIIJxiv. College-support-networks/networking  
 XIIIJxv. College-support-career services  
 XIIIJxvi. College-support-CSTEP  
 XIIIK. College-retention  
 XIIIKi. College-retention-assisted w/  
 XIIIL. College-workload  
 XIIILi. College-workload-less resp. than homelife  
 XIIILia. College-workload-less resp. than homelife-lazier  
 XIIILN. College-varied experience  
 XIIIO. College-segregated  
 XIIIOi. College-segregated-predominant group  
 XIIIP. College-engaged  
 XIIIPi. College-engaged-current university student activities  
 XIIIPia. College-engaged-current university student activities-culturally specific  
 XIIIPii. College-engaged-university town church  
 XIIIPiii. College-engaged-parties  
 XIIIPiia. College-engaged-parties-culturally specific  
 XIIIPiv. College-engaged-RA  
 XIIIPix. College-engaged-learned from experiences  
 XIIIPixa. College-engaged-learned from experiences-leadership  
 XIIIPixb. College-engaged-learned from experiences-time management  
 XIIIPixc. College-engaged-learned from experiences-mimics real life  
 XIIIPixd. College-engaged-learned from experiences-helps w/ major  
 XIIIPixe. College-engaged-learned from experiences-communication skills  
 XIIIPixf. College-engaged-learned from experiences-interpersonal skills  
 XIIIPixg. College-engaged-learned from experiences-meet people  
 XIIIPv. College-engaged-limited due to Money  
 XIIIPvi. College-engaged-through college/school  
 XIIIPvii. College-engaged-to meet people/met ppl  
 XIIIPviii. College-engaged-campus offices  
 XIIIPx. College-engaged-time management  
 XIIIPxi. College-engaged-south campus  
 XIIIQ. College-role of Greek Life  
 XIIIR. College-going home (for breaks)  
 XIIIRi. College-going home (for breaks)-nothing changed  
 XIIIRii. College-going home (for breaks)-bittersweet  
 XIIIRiii. College-going home (for breaks)-doesn't like  
 XIIIRiv. College-going home (for breaks)-does rarely  
 XIIIRix. College-going home (for breaks)-great  
 XIIIRv. College-going home (for breaks)-relaxing  
 XIIIRvi. College-going home (for breaks)-travels  
 XIIIRvii. College-going home (for breaks)-comfortable  
 XIIIRviii. College-going home (for breaks)-different/weird  
 XIIIS. College-development  
 XIIIS. College-development-spirituality  
 XIIISi. College-development-gaining independence  
 XIIISii. College-development-growth  
 XIIISiii. College-development-self discovery  
 XIIISiv. College-development-what's important  
 XIIISv. College-development-self worth  
 XIIISvi. College-development-leadership skills  
 XIIISvii. College-development-dev confidence  
 XIIISviii. College-development-manage stress  
 XIIISviv. College-development-working through tough times  
 XIIISx. College-development-time management  
 XIIISxi. College-development-catch up to peers academically  
 XIIISxii. College-development-internships  
 XIIISxiii. College-development-graduate school  
 XIIISxiv. College-development-finances  
 XIIIT. College-rankings  
 XIIIVA. College-campus services-Writing Center  
 XIIIVB. College-campus services-STATE  
 XIIIVC. College-campus services-tutoring Center  
 XIIIVD. College-campus services-career services  
 XIIIW. College-unanswered questions  
 XIIIW. College-unanswered questions-financial  
 XIIIW. College-unanswered questions-bookstore account  
 XIIIWiii. College-unanswered questions-work study  
 XIIIWiv. College-unanswered questions-how to connect w/ students (college choice)  
 XIIIX. College-communication  
 XIIIXi. College-communication-email, skype, FB  
 XIIIXii. College-communication-power of asking  
 XIIIXiii. College-communication-power of telling your story  
 XIIIY. College-expectations  
 XIIIYi. College-expectations-individual puts on self  
 XIIIYii. College-expectations-of profs  
 XIIIZ. College-uplift  
 XIIJ. College Transition-missed family  
 XIIK. College Transition-role of parents/family  
 XIIIL. College Transition-role of peers  
 XIIILi. College Transition-role of peers-residence life  
 XIIILia. College Transition-role of peers--residence life-roommate  
 XIIILial. College Transition-role of peers-residence life-roommate-chose before coming to current university

- XIIIIa2. College Transition-role of peers-residence life-roommate-assigned by current university
- XIIIIb. College Transition-role of peers-residence life-hall mate
- XIIIIc. College Transition-role of peers-residence life-south campus
- XIIIIid. College Transition-role of peers-residence life-learning community
- XIIIIi. College Transition-role of peers-friend from home
- XIIIIii. College Transition-role of peers-making friends
- XIIIIiv. College Transition-role of peers-class mates
- XIIIIv. College Transition-role of peers-"year" mates
- XIIIIvi. College Transition-role of peers-diversity
- XIIIIvii. College Transition-role of peers-summer interns
- XIIIIviii. College Transition-role of peers-worried about not making friends
- XIIIM. College Transition-arrive at current university
- XIIIMi. College Transition-arrive at current university-came by herself
- XIIIMii. College Transition-arrive at current university-came w/ boyfriend
- XIIIMiii. College Transition-arrive at current university-came night before move-in
- XIIIMiv. College Transition-arrive at current university-flew in
- XIIIMv. College Transition-arrive at current university-first time on campus
- XIIIMvi. College Transition-arrive at current university-role of local community
- XIIIMvii. College Transition-arrive at current university-shopped a lot here
- XIIIN. College Transition-adventure
- XIIIP. College Transition-role of sibling
- XIIIPi. College Transition-role of sibling-went to school together
- XIIIQ. College Transition-residence life
- XIIIT. College Transition-weather
- XIIIU. College Transition-time management
- XIIIV. College Transition-academics
- XIIIVi. College Transition-academics-major
- XIIIVii. College Transition-academics-school
- XIIIV. College Transition-networks
- XIIIV. College Transition-moving (physically)
- XIIJ. Race-Theology
- XIIK. Race-code switching
- XIIL. Race-residence life
- XIIM. Race-classroom
- XIV. Summer Bridge
- XIVA. Summer Bridge-participate
- XIVAi. Summer Bridge-participate-STATE
- XIVAii. Summer Bridge-participate-OSA
- XIVAiii. Summer Bridge-participate-financial aid helped cover costs
- XIVB. Summer Bridge-classes
- XIVBi. Summer Bridge-classes-three classes/ take credits
- XIVBii. Summer Bridge-classes-remedial/pre-requisites
- XIVBiii. Summer Bridge-classes-better yourself
- XIVBiv. Summer Bridge-classes-FY experience type class
- XIVC. Summer Bridge-positives
- XIVCi. Summer Bridge-positives-get used to campus/come to campus
- XIVCii. Summer Bridge-positives-take classes
- XIVCiii. Summer Bridge-positives-feel ahead of others/heads up
- XIVCiv. Summer Bridge-positives-mentorship
- XIVCix. Summer Bridge-positives-meet people
- XIVCixa. Summer Bridge-positives-meet people-same \$ background
- XIVCv. Summer Bridge-positives-acad asst/acad adjustment
- XIVCvi. Summer Bridge-positives-leadership skills
- XIVCvii. Summer Bridge-positives-service
- XIVCviii. Summer Bridge-positives-intern/job asst
- XIVCxi. Summer Bridge-positives-time management
- XIVCxi. Summer Bridge-positives-tutoring
- XIVCxi. Summer Bridge-positives-segway to college
- XIVCxi. Summer Bridge-positives-live on own
- XIVCxiv. Summer Bridge-positives-free
- XIVCv. Summer Bridge-positives-LC
- XIVCv. Summer Bridge-positives-fun
- XIVDi. Summer Bridge-negatives-miss out on summer
- XIVDii. Summer Bridge-negatives-can't work and earn money
- XIVDiii. Summer Bridge-negatives-cliques
- XIVDiv. Summer Bridge-negatives-not much to do on campus
- XIVDv. Summer Bridge-negatives-doesn't emulate college
- XIVDvi. Summer Bridge-negatives-lots of rules
- XIVE. Summer Bridge-professors
- XIVEi. Summer Bridge-professors-support
- XIX. Future
- XIXA. Future-career
- XIXAi. Future-career-giving back to community
- XIXAii. Future-career-Arts
- XIXAiii. Future-career-Politics
- XIXB. Future-Graduate school
- XIXC. Future-Research
- XIXD. Future-Move away from home
- XIXE. Future-make money
- XIXEi. Future-make money-support parents
- XIXF. Future-trepidations about what lies ahead
- XIXG. Future-better life
- XIXJ. Future-work/life balance
- XV. Mentorship
- XVA. Mentorship-positive traits
- XVAi. Mentorship-positive traits-helpful
- XVAii. Mentorship-positive traits-patience
- XVAiii. Mentorship-positive traits-supportive
- XVAiii. Mentorship-positive traits-supportive-what support looks like
- XVAiii. Mentorship-positive traits-supportive-motivates
- XVAiii. Mentorship-positive traits-supportive-helps focus
- XVAiii. Mentorship-positive traits-supportive-encourages
- XVAiii. Mentorship-positive traits-supportive-"being there"
- XVAiii. Mentorship-positive traits-supportive-your best interest in mind
- XVAiii. Mentorship-positive traits-supportive-cares about you
- XVAiii. Mentorship-positive traits-supportive-emotional
- XVAiii. Mentorship-positive traits-supportive-financial
- XVAiv. Mentorship-positive traits-know resources
- XVAv. Mentorship-positive traits-helps find jobs
- XVAvi. Mentorship-positive traits-similar backgrounds

- XVAvii. Mentorship-positive traits-academic  
 XVAviii. Mentorship-positive traits-advice  
 XVB. Mentorship-negative traits  
 XVBi. Mentorship-negative traits-lacked  
 XVC. Mentorship-in concept, not in practice  
 XVD. Mentorship-peer  
 XVE. Mentorship-communication  
 XVF. Mentorship-networked  
 XVFi. Mentorship-networked-professionals from different companies  
 XVG. Mentorship-ended  
 XVH. Mentorship-formal  
 XVI. Work  
 XVI A. Work-learned about  
 XVI Ai. Work-learned about-program  
 XVI Aii. work-learned about-on-line resources  
 XVI Aiii. Work-learned about-current university resources  
 XVI Aiv. Work-learned about-connections  
 XVI Av. Work-learned about-on his own  
 XVI Avi. Work-learned about-trying to find  
 XVI Avii. Work-learned about-friend  
 XVIB. Work-experiences gained  
 XVIBi. Work-experiences gained-work environment  
 XVIBii. Work-experiences gained-first hands on exp in career field  
 XVIC. Work-student asked to be challenged  
 XVID. Work-type  
 XVIDi. Work-type-volunteer  
 XVIDii. Work-type-job  
 XVIDiii. Work-type-internship  
 XVIDiv. Work-type-at/in current university  
 XVIDv. Work-type-didn't work  
 XVIDvi. Work-type-Food services  
 XVIDvii. Work-type-Residence life  
 XVIDviii. Work-type-Student Center  
 XVE. Work-What jobs count to be proud of  
 XVIF. Work-hours  
 XVIFI. Work-hours-no time to work  
 XVIFii. Work-hours-too stressed  
 XVIFiii. Work-hours-pay  
 XVIG. Work-purpose  
 XVIGi. Work-purpose-send home to family  
 XVIGii. Work-purpose-school supplies  
 XVIGiii. Work-purpose-family told her to get a job  
 XVIGiv. Work-purpose-make money  
 XVIGiva. Work-purpose-make money-found job that pays the most  
 XVIGivb. Work-purpose-make money-pay bills  
 XVIGivc. Work-purpose-make money-save  
 XVIGix. Work-purpose-better life  
 XVIGix. Work-purpose-college  
 XVIGv. Work-purpose-work study  
 XVIGvi. Work-purpose-don't know what to do w/ her life  
 XVIGvii. Work-purpose-help family  
 XVIGviii. Work-purpose-improve self/gain exp  
 XVIGx. Work-purpose-study abroad  
 XVII. Work-age started  
 XVII. Classes  
 XVII B. Classes-Peers  
 XVII C. Classes-motivation  
 XVII Ci. Classes-motivation-buckle down and do the work  
 XVII D. Classes-roller coaster  
 XVII E. Classes-grades  
 XVII F. Classes-community college  
 XVII Fi. Classes-community college-additional credits  
 XVII Fii. Classes-community college-easy (compared to HS/AP)  
 XVII G. Classes-Stress  
 XVII H. Classes-reading/writing/presentations  
 XVIII. Ideal CAP  
 XVIII A. Ideal CAP-college prep  
 XVIII Ai. Ideal CAP-college prep-education enrichment  
 XVIII Aii. Ideal CAP-college prep-tools for success (beyond academic)  
 XVIII Aiii. Ideal CAP-college prep-test prep  
 XVIII Aiv. Ideal CAP-college prep-travel opps  
 XVIII Aix. Ideal CAP-college prep-teach college prep  
 XVIII Av. Ideal CAP-college prep-studying at universities (over summer)  
 XVIII Avi. Ideal CAP-college prep-teach self-motivation  
 XVIII Avii. Ideal CAP-college prep-teach students how to apply themselves  
 XVIII Aviii. Ideal CAP-college prep-identify major/interests  
 XVIII B. Ideal CAP-college process  
 XVIII Bi. Ideal CAP-college process-tours  
 XVIII Bii. Ideal CAP-college process-college applications  
 XVIII C. Ideal CAP-college transition  
 XVIII Ci. Ideal CAP-college transition-academic adjustment  
 XVIII Cii. Ideal CAP-college transition-meeting people  
 XVIII Ciii. Ideal CAP-college transition-help provide/find college items  
 XVIII Civ. Ideal CAP-college transition-summer orientation  
 XVIII D. Ideal CAP-create college-going mentality  
 XVIII E. Ideal CAP-staff  
 XVIII Ei. Ideal CAP-staff-personable  
 XVIII Eii. Ideal CAP-staff-understanding  
 XVIII Eiii. Ideal CAP-staff-good w/ kids  
 XVIII Eiv. Ideal CAP-staff-approachable  
 XVIII Eix. Ideal CAP-staff-provide support  
 XVIII Ev. Ideal CAP-staff-someone to go to  
 XVIII Evi. Ideal CAP-staff-motivator  
 XVIII Evii. Ideal CAP-staff-develop student passions  
 XVIII Eviii. Ideal CAP-staff-provide resources  
 XVIII F. Ideal CAP-retention  
 XVIII Fi. Ideal CAP-retention-help w/ student development  
 XVIII Fii. Ideal CAP-retention-mentorship  
 XVIII Fia. Ideal CAP-retention-mentorship-regular meetings  
 XVIII Fiii. Ideal CAP-utilize alumni  
 XVIII G. Ideal CAP-leadership  
 XVIII H. Ideal CAP-application process  
 XVIII Hi. Ideal CAP-application process-students  
 XVIII Hii. Ideal CAP-application process-parents (too)  
 XVIII Hiii. Ideal CAP-application process-g geared to minority  
 XVIII Hiv. Ideal CAP-application process-g geared to ESL  
 XVIII Hv. Ideal CAP-application process-g geared to low SES  
 XVIII Hvi. Ideal CAP-application process-g geared to ppl struggling  
 XVIII Hvii. Ideal CAP-application process-g geared to FG

- XVIIIHviii. Ideal CAP-application process-based on character
- XVIIIHviii. Ideal CAP-application process-benefits of application process
- XVIIIJ. Ideal CAP-characteristics
- XVIIIJi. Ideal CAP-characteristics-flexibility
- XVIIIJii. Ideal CAP-characteristics-instill college-going mentality
- XVIIIK. Ideal CAP-networks
- XVIIIKi. Ideal CAP-networks-other CAP programs
- XVIIIKii. Ideal CAP-networks-people from a variety of fields
- XVIIIKiii. Ideal CAP-networks-program alumni
- XVIII L. Ideal CAP-study abroad opp
- XVIII M. Ideal CAP-financial aid
- XVIII Mi. Ideal CAP-financial aid-scholarships
- XVIII Mii. Ideal CAP-financial aid-financial literacy
- XVIII Miii. Ideal CAP-financial aid-FAFSA
- XVIII Ni. Ideal CAP-job/internship assistance
- XVIII O. Ideal CAP-psychological support
- XVIII Oi. Ideal CAP-psychological support-mental development
- XVIII Oii. Ideal CAP-psychological support-personal development
- XVIII P. Ideal CAP-exposure to resources/ network(s)
- XVIII Q. Ideal CAP-role of parents
- XVIII Q. Ideal CAP-structure
- XVIII Qi. Ideal CAP-structure-require parent participation
- XVIII Qii. Ideal CAP-structure-have programs target specific students to better meet their needs
- XVIII Qiii. Ideal CAP-structure-Increase outreach/school partnerships
- XVIII Qiv. Ideal CAP-structure-start program early (lower/middle school)
- XVIII Qix. Ideal CAP-structure-volunteer base
- XVIII Qvi. Ideal CAP-structure-start program
- XVIII Qvia. Ideal CAP-structure-start program-HS
- XVIII Qvib. Ideal CAP-structure-start program-middle school
- XVIII Qvii. Ideal CAP-structure-be organized
- XVIII Qvii. Ideal CAP-structure-continue through college
- XVIII Qvii. Ideal CAP-structure-create small groups
- XVIII Qviii. Ideal CAP-structure-very structured organization
- XVIII Qx. Ideal CAP-structure-programs w/in program
- XVIII Qxi. Ideal CAP-structure-diverse experiences
- XVIII Qxii. Ideal CAP-structure-utilize mentors
- XVIII Qxii. Ideal CAP-structure-utilize mentors-peers
- XVIII Qxii. Ideal CAP-structure-utilize mentors-adults
- XVIII Qxiii. Ideal CAP-structure-meet students where they are at
- XVIII Qxiv. Ideal CAP-structure-provide secondary school support (i.e. staying on track, classes)
- XVIII R. Ideal CAP-compared to actual CAP
- XVIII Ri. Ideal CAP-compared to actual CAP-wants more support
- XVIII S. Ideal CAP-help navigate loops
- XVIII T. Ideal CAP-summer
- XVIII Ti. Ideal CAP-summer-classes
- XVIII Tii. Ideal CAP-summer-college campus
- XVIII U. Ideal CAP-summer-graduate school asst.
- XVIII V. Ideal CAP-summer-transportation
- XVIII J. Classes-classism
- XVIII K. Classes-different perspectives
- XVIII L. Classes-summer
- XVIII J. Work-focus
- XVIII Ji. Work-focus-Social services
- XVIII Jii. Work-focus-finance internship
- XVIII Jiii. Work-focus-marketing
- XVIII K. Work-couldn't find job
- XVIII K. Work-spending
- XVIII L. Work-career aspirations when younger
- XVIII M. Work-working your way up the ladder
- XVIII N. Work-help family w/ business
- XVIII P. Work-perks
- XVIII Q. Work-summer
- XVIII R. Work-career oriented
- XVIII J. Mentorship-dual role (i.e. college counselor & teacher)
- XVIII K. Mentorship-continue to see
- XVIII L. Mentorship-meet students where they're
- XX. Financial Aid
- XXA. Financial aid-race
- XXI. Admissions
- XXII. Advice on college
- XXIII. Gender
- XXIII A. Gender-heterosexism
- XXIII B. Gender-teenage pregnancy
- XXIII C. Gender-classroom
- XXIV. Two different worlds
- XXV. Travel
- XXVI. Challenges w/in education
- XXVII. Academic confidence



## Appendix I: Interview Codes

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| I. Family                            | IIIS. CAP-job/intern                                      |
| I1. Family-structure                 | IIIT. CAP-mentorship                                      |
| I2. Family-death                     | IIIU. CAP & family  |
| I3. Family-parents                   | IIIV. CAP-family analogy                                  |
| I4. Family-siblings                  | IV. Travel  |
| I5. Family-finances                  | V1. School-K-8 School                                     |
| I6. Family-misc                      | V2. School-high school (name)                             |
| I7. Family-non-immediate family      | V2i. School-high school-demographics                      |
| I8. Family-support                   | V2ii. School-high school-barriers                         |
| I9. Family-communication             | V2iii. School-high school-CAP                             |
| II. Identity                         | V2iv. School-high school-college process prep             |
| II1. Identity-characteristic         | V2v. School-high school-academics                         |
| II10. Identity-class year            | V2xi. School-high school-support                          |
| II11. Identity-collectivism          | V2xix. School- high school- college courses               |
| II12. Identity-language              | V2xv. School-high school-engagement                       |
| II13. Identity-peers                 | V2xvii. School-high school-communication                  |
| II1a. Identity-characteristic-pride  | V2xviii. School- high school-"application" to high school |
| II2. Identity-lives in               | V2xx. School-high school-college (attendance)             |
| II3. Identity-immigrant              | V3. School-family   |
| II4. Identity- networks              | V4. School-network  |
| II5. Identity-major/school           | V5. School-friends  |
| II6. Identity-motivation             | V6. School-comparative education                          |
| II7. Identity-demographics           | VI. Rhetoric  |
| II8. Identity-family                 | VII. College Process                                      |
| II9. Identity-interests              | VII0. College Process-prep (to apply)                     |
| III. CAP (name)                      | VII1. College Process-search                              |
| IIIA. CAP-travel                     | VII14. College Process-barriers                           |
| IIIB. CAP-learned about program      | VII2. College Process-application                         |
| IIIC. CAP- started program           | VII3. College Process-high school                         |
| IIID. CAP-summer opportunity         | VII4. College Process-role of parents                     |
| IIIE. CAP-teaches                    | VII5. College Process-role of siblings                    |
| IIIF. CAP-requirements               | VII6. College Process-college-going mentality             |
| IIIG. CAP-college search             | VII7. College Process-majors                              |
| IIIH. CAP-college application prep   | VII8. College Process-decision where to attend            |
| IIII. CAP-college prep               | VII9. College process-role of peers                       |
| IIIJ. CAP-program background         | VIII. Money   |
| IIIK. CAP-alumni                     | VIII1. Money-financial aid                                |
| IIIL. CAP-communication              | VIII2. Money-classism                                     |
| IIIM. CAP-application process to CAP | VIII3. Money-college expenses (outside tuition)           |
| IIIN. CAP-network                    | XI. Race/Ethnicity  |
| IIIO. CAP-financial aid (or support) | XII. College transition                                   |
| IIIP. CAP-volunteer                  | XIII. College   |
| IIIQ. CAP-retention                  |   |
| IIIR. CAP-support                    |   |

XIII AA. College-networks  
XIII BB. College-residence life  
XIII C. College-peers  
XIII CC. College-time management  
XIII D. College-academics/professors  
XIII DD. College-stress  
XIII EE. College-internships/work  
XIII F. College-study abroad  
XIII G. College-family  
XIII H. College-CAP  
XIII J. College-support  
XIII K. College-retention  
XIII P. College-engagement  
XIII S. College-development  
XIII V. College-campus services

XIII X. College-communication  
XIII Y. College-expectations  
XIII Z. College-uplift  
XIV. Summer Bridge  
XIX. Future  
XV. Mentorship  
XVI. Work  
XVII. Work-internship  
XVIII. Ideal CAP  
XXIII. Gender  
XXIV. Two different worlds  
XXV. Travel  
XXVI. Challenges w/in education  
XXVII. Academic confidence  
XXVIII. Advice for new student

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Zhao, N. (2010). Intervention for mental health among college students. *Psychology Research*(1), 23-26.



# Staci Allison Weber

## EDUCATION

University of Delaware, Newark, DE

M.Ed. in Student Affairs Practice in Higher Education, May 2004

Franklin & Marshall College, Lancaster, PA

B.A. in Psychology, May 2001

## HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

- Dean, Division of Student Affairs, Pine Manor College, Chestnut Hill, MA, November 2015 - present
- Associate Director, Academic Services, Babson College, Babson Park, MA, November 2013 - August 2015
- Assistant to the Vice President of Enrollment Management, Enrollment Management, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, May 2011 - October 2013
- Director, Student Activities, Juniata College, Huntingdon, PA, June 2004 - July 2009

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- Research Assistant, On Point for College, Inc., Syracuse, NY, October 2010 - August 2011
- Research Assistant, Say Yes For Education, Syracuse, NY, July 2011 - August 2011
- Research Assistant, Imagining America, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, October 2009 - August 2011

## COLLEGE TEACHING and TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP

- First Year Seminar, Instructor, Babson College, FYS 1001, Fall 2014
- Research on the College Student, Instructor, Syracuse University, HED 712, Spring 2012
- Graduate Interest Group Seminar, Instructor, Syracuse University, HED 601, Fall 2010, Fall 2011, and Fall 2012
- Practicum Seminar, Instructor, Syracuse University, HED 730, Spring 2010, Spring 2011, Spring 2012, and Spring 2013
- Lab in Learning Communities, Teaching Assistant, Syracuse University, HED 611, Fall 2009, Fall 2010, and Fall 2011

## AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

- Chancellor Award for Public Engagement Nominee, Syracuse University, 2013
- Certificate in University Teaching, Future Professoriate Program, 2012
- Phi Kappa Phi, Syracuse University, 2010
- Alice Distler Award, Leadership and Volunteer Service, Franklin & Marshall College, 2001
- Graduate Student of the Year Nominee, American College Personnel Association, 2004