

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: “MAKING OUR LIVES”: THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF URBAN HIGH SCHOOL CULTURES TO THE FUTURE SELVES OF BLACK AND LATINO ADOLESCENT BOYS

Roderick LaMar Carey, Doctor of Philosophy, 2015

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This dissertation sought to answer the following research question: How, if at all, are Black and Latino adolescent boys’ conceptions of their future selves shaped by school culture within an urban high school context? To answer this question, this study drew from various theoretical concepts of individuals’ futures (see Kao & Tienda, 1998; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Nurmi, 1991; 2005), to utilize the term “future selves” to consider participants’ goals for post secondary education, employment, and life conditions – summed up in *college*, *career*, and *condition* or the “Three C’s.” Findings centered on cultural power as operationalized within the school culture, utilizing an intersectional framework (Collins, 2009).

This ethnographic case study, which foregrounded the voices of 3 Black and 2 Latino (Salvadoran) teenaged boy participants, was conducted in one urban charter school in the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. over the course of eight months. Qualitative methodological approaches were used to understand the relationship between participants’ future selves and salient facets of the school’s college-going culture.

Themes from the school culture included how the participants’ experiences with self-segregation, differential treatment along racial lines by teachers, and the lack of

teacher diversity, proved a diversity dilemma at the school. Getting good grades, showing effort, and avoiding trouble were hallmarks of success, and potential for leadership and college. Lastly, college going was valued more than any other life outcome.

Within the college domain of future selves, participants reported varied experiences with the school's college-going culture. Selective support from teachers and administrators, college major interests, their own self-doubts, and race were key factors in participants' college choice processes. Given the career and life condition domains, participants were judicious, held realistic conceptions of their future life conditions, and wanted careers that afforded them the ability to take care of themselves and their family.

Theoretical, research, and practice implications for this study include, among others, the importance of greater equity in school cultures, and the need for broadening college-going cultures to consider not only the college or post secondary goals but also future career and presumable life conditions for Black and Latino boys.

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CULTURES TO THE FUTURE SELVES OF BLACK AND LATINO ADOLESCENT
BOYS

by

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Dedication

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a *future*.”

Jeremiah 29:11

Dedicated to My Parents

Mrs. Claire LaMar Carey

And

Mr. Harmon Roderick Carey

With Honor and Love

Acknowledgments

I was drawn to the idea of earning a Ph.D. from an early age. While I did not understand fully what doctoral level work entailed, I knew that the title was respected and that earning one required many years of schooling, a lot of reading, and at the end, you had to write a whole book by yourself about some topic.

As I grew up, those early and somewhat naïve conceptions stuck with me, even as I developed research interests, interacted with other doctorate degree holders, and even enrolled into the Ph.D. program at the University of Maryland College Park.

What I did not anticipate when thinking about earning a doctorate was the psychic and emotional obstacles, the stress and strain on myself and others, and the amount of love, support, and care that I would need to make it through this process. So, while I did write this whole book about Black and Latino boys' futures, I certainly did not do it alone. Thus, these next few paragraphs serve to acknowledge many of those who contributed to ensuring that I stayed on this journey till completion.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Vignette 1: Who Will They Become? What Will They Do?

After five years of studying education in college and graduate school, I began my career as a high school English teacher in predominantly Black and Latino urban Washington D.C. schools. Often when I talked to students about their futures, boys said they wished to “Play in the NFL,” or “Open my own clothing line,” or many of my female students wished to “Do hair.” These career aspirations reflected what made sense for their futures given what was salient and attainable for them through messages within broader U.S. culture. My students were intellectually capable of so much more than their visions of adulthood in neighborhood contexts and through what was displayed in media. Students who wished for white-collar work were unsure of how to secure it. They wished for large homes, but thought only careers in entertainment and athletics would help them secure that lifestyle. They wanted the trappings of middle-class lives, but did not understand the type of career or education necessary for the life they desired.

Vignette 2: Testing and College-Going Culture?

In addition to teaching the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, *Oedipus Rex*, and other canonical texts in the World Literature curriculum, as a tenth grade teacher I was charged with tailoring instruction and creating supplemental lessons to prepare students for the D.C. CAS, the high stakes assessment taken by all public school tenth graders at the time. The work my colleagues and I did in the classroom prepared students academically with the needed skills, and the teachers and administrators worked to create a school culture that elevated the test and the tenth graders who geared up to take it. We tutored them, we fed them, and we even printed tee shirts and invited musical acts to rally support and

excitement for these students. Many times our focused approach on the test worked and students performed well.

After my students left my class, they entered the 11th and the 12th grades and eventually graduated. One hundred percent were accepted to four-year colleges or universities, and although most students eventually attended college, few graduated.

Vignette 3: Promise and Potential

Black and Latino boys¹ grow up with as much promise and potential as any other children. They have hopes, desires, and aspirations, and while many grow up with few economic resources, they have the right to a quality education to secure the type of life best suited for their own unique potential. However, they continually run into numerous obstacles within and outside of schools that block their upward mobility. The media portrays Black boys as if they are worthy of futures only in professional athletics or entertainment. Latino boys are portrayed as future laborers, gardeners, or construction workers. Many people believe that these are the only futures available for these populations and while policies and practices geared at the futures of young Black and

¹ Concerning terminology, I have chosen to utilize the term “boy” more so than “male” or “young men” in referencing the Black and Latino participants in this study. I chose to do this for numerous reasons. The term “male” is not problematic in and of itself. However, there are deep roots in the negative social imagery constructed by the term “Black male,” in particular. First, I believe these two groups have been discussed in such a negative light that, terms like “Black male” and “Latino male” hold problematic connotations and implications in social discourses. Usually “Black male” or “Latino male” accompany some negative statistic, some crime story on T.V., or are accompanied by some stereotypical notion. Second, I wish to reclaim the purity and innocence of Black and Latino boyhood and the dignity of Black manhood. The term “Black male,” for instance, infantilizes Black men, by lumping grown men into silos with boys or teens, while it simultaneously adultifies (see Ferguson, 2000) Black boys, by making them appear older and more calculating in their decision-making than they are. Thus, where available, I make every effort to use the term “boy” to describe a male under the age of 18, the term “man” to describe a male over the age of 18, and the term “males” when describing boys and men together as a gendered grouping.

Latino boys, are implemented in schools and social institutions - some helpful (i.e. mentoring programs), some not (i.e. prison industrial complex) - I wonder what society has in store for these two groups?

Reflection: How Do We help Black and Latino boys *Make Their Lives*?

These three vignettes drew on my experiences teaching in urban schools and shed some light on how I approached this research study. I am a Black male teacher educator and researcher, who sought to understand a facet of what I view as one of the most salient educational research agendas: the futures of Black and Latino boys. While the curriculum and testing arrangements steered the culture of our school and also how I approached much of my work with students, as a classroom teacher I thought that what was missing was a concerted and intentional approach of understanding both how students viewed their future possibilities and how they could attain them. My school prepped students for testing and academic success, and worked diligently and strategically to get them accepted into college. Although our students' futures were at stake and were our sole focus, the reputation of our charter school was also at the center of our work. Balancing these two sometimes seemingly conflicting aims was a challenge with which other educators continually wrestled in our daily work with students. In spite of our efforts, students frequently misunderstood how to attain their hopes, desires, and dreams for broader life outcomes beyond college acceptance. This study served as my opportunity to address this dilemma.

How do Black and Latino males think about and act upon their futures, and, given the current climate of high stakes accountability, how can educators within urban contexts create school cultures that better suit the development of realistic and fulfilling

futures for students? How can we broaden college-going school cultures to better meet the needs of Black and Latino boys in particular? What great futures are we helping students make for themselves? These questions were the heart of this project.

Introduction

Drawing from the concepts of “possible selves” (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and “future orientations” (Nurmi, 1991; 2005), I utilized the term “future selves” as a framework through which to view how Black and Latino boys conceptualize their future through the frames of three particular facets of life outcomes: post secondary education, employment, and life conditions. I used three frames to guide the following examination of the possible futures of Black and Latino males: *condition*, *career*, and *college*. These frames refer, respectively, to: (1) their present condition with regards to their social positioning in U.S society, (2) their career and employment paths, and (3) their possibilities for attending and succeeding in post secondary institutions.

School culture remains critical in influencing the successes and failures of Black and Latino males in urban schools (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009; Rodríguez, 2008). This study examined how school culture functioned in ways that stimulated, sustained, limited, and sometimes even constricted the future selves of Black and Latino teenaged boys. However, unique to this study, was the use of a theoretical framework that viewed interlocking domains of structural, disciplinary, interpersonal and cultural power (Collins, 2009) as salient in the workings of schools. While this dissertation reflects research that considered structural, disciplinary, and interpersonal domains of power operating in schools, the findings centered on cultural power as operationalized within the school culture as the main context to understand the future selves of Black and Latino boys. To

fully understand how participants conceived of their future selves within the influence of their school's culture, this study drew from ethnographic methods to understand the nature of the culture of the school and the participants' understandings of their future selves and the relationships between them.

Statement of the Problem

The futures of Black and Latino boys within urban communities are a highly politicized phenomenon within larger societal discourses on healthcare, housing, employment, and crime among others. As Black and Latino boys grow up, many find that school and community violence, experiences with early fatherhood, unemployment, and low rates of college completion mar their futures. These realities point to troubling life outcomes, leaving many wondering what the future holds for Black and Latino boys. Given these social problems, politicians, policy makers, and practitioners across the country have implemented numerous programs in public schools designed to remedy the social inequalities that have proven devastating for both the present realities and future trajectories of Black and Latino males.

Perhaps the most alarming educational statistic is the abysmally low high school graduation rates. The Schott Foundation for Public Education reported in 2012 that 52% of Black males and 58% of Latino males graduated from high school in four years in 2009-10 (Holzman, 2012). Given troubling statistics like these, scholars continue to interrogate the reasons for the educational challenges faced by Black and Latino boys (Anderson, 2008; Dancy & Brown, 2012; Ferguson, 2000; Gibbs, 1988; Howard, 2008; Kunjufu, 1985; Noguera, 2008; Noguera, Hurtado, & Fergus, 2012; Polite & Davis, 1999; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009).

The urgency for addressing educational disparities between Black and Latinos and their White counterparts is paramount, as scholars have documented that outcomes related to the achievement gap have sustaining negative impacts on students' college degree attainment, job placement, financial stability, and eventual life outcomes (Datnow et al. 2010; Jencks, 1992; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz, & Casserly, 2010). In addition to the role pre K-12 education plays in shaping the future life outcomes of children in low-income communities in particular, few issues are more salient for the futures of Black and Latino school children within urban contexts than the policies and practices of their schools.

National and local school reform efforts address inequalities for historically marginalized students, however, U.S. schools have failed to remedy poor educational experiences for Black and Latino boys in pre K through 12 schooling. Driving the work of teachers, administrators, and policy makers is a climate of high stakes accountability, which attempts to level the educational playing fields for U.S. school children in public educational settings across the country. The current high stakes movement has led to an increased focus on preparing youth for college and careers. Federal school reform measures such as No Child Left Behind (2002) and Race to the Top, the proliferation of charter schools, teacher assessment and accountability measures, and Common Core standards aim to stimulate higher outcomes so that U.S schoolchildren become more competitive in the national and global marketplace. However, Black and Latino boys disproportionately attend schools deemed underperforming and under resourced in equally underserved communities.

Thus, in spite of numerous reform measures, far too many Black, Latino, Native American and certain Asian group (e.g. Vietnamese, Cambodian, Samoan) students struggle to achieve school success. Ironically, while the students are the objects of school reform for improved learning and outcomes, little attention is given to how schools serve as places where future life outcomes are imagined and enacted for students, particularly some of the most vulnerable student groups – Black and Latino boys. While standardized assessments can tell us some things about what is going on in schools, they certainly cannot give an accurate and more holistic picture into the experiences students have that may or may not augment their achievement in schools. Thus, while tests and increased standardization offer us some insights, an overreliance on these measures has left little room for other ways to understand students and how they experience schools.

Rationale

This study privileged participants' voices and lived experiences to reveal how nuances, norms, and assumptions that often operate invisibly in urban high school cultures serve as key influences on how Black and Latino males conceptualize their future selves. Psychologists, social workers, and others have traditionally explored aspects of possible selves and future orientations using quantitatively based measurement tools (see Brown & Jones, 2004). In this ethnographic case study, observations of students and teachers in formal and informal spaces, pertinent school artifacts and documents, interviews of students, and a focus group served as evidence that foregrounded the voices of these teenaged boy participants in their life narratives.

The demographic shift of U.S. school children to a more racially and ethnically diverse population, coupled with punitive disciplinary policies, and external testing

mechanisms, has had a disproportionately negative effect on Black and Latino boys during the last decade (U.S. Census, 2010). The extant literature's more narrow focus on specific policies and practices has not permitted a more full explication of how power undergirds school cultures in ways that suppress, rather than unleash, youths' future selves.

Research Questions

This study was interested in adolescents' meaning-making processes as they both conceptualized and acted upon influences within their school surroundings, a salient context where future selves develop. Specifically, I was interested in how they understood and prepared for their futures in relation to post secondary education, potential career interests, and the quality of life they envisioned for themselves. The study was thus guided by the following research questions:

1. How, if at all, are Black and Latino adolescent boys' conceptions of their future selves shaped by school culture within an urban high school context?
 - a) What is the culture of the school, as evidenced by beliefs and perceptions, social interactions, symbols, and normative practices?
 - b) How do Black and Latino adolescent boys conceive of their future selves?
 - c) What relationships exist between facets of school culture and how Black and Latino adolescent boys conceive of their future selves?

Research Design

Since I sought to understand context, culture, and individuals' meaning-making processes and everyday experiences, I took a qualitative, ethnographic approach to research, which was most optimal for this study (see Miles & Huberman, 1994). This

qualitative case study of 5 Black and Latino high school boys focused on the relationship between school culture and students' experiences and understandings of their future selves.

Definition of Terms

More extended definitions for terms used are explored in chapters two, three, and four. Here, I note how I defined and operationalized the term “future selves” and then I provide a brief description of school culture.

I draw from scholars investigating the concepts of “possible selves” (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and “future orientations” (Nurmi, 1991; 2005), to conceptualize what I call “future selves”². Future selves are the images and ideals of self in the future that individuals conceive and that influence motivation and behavior in various contexts. As conceptualized in this study, how adolescents construct future selves is influenced by their past experiences, contact with families and neighborhoods, school contexts, and media which signal what is possible in terms of their home lives, economic livelihoods, family status, or life condition, (e.g. condition), their vocation (e.g. career), and their post secondary education (e.g. college). This study examined Black and Latino males' future selves in the context of either intersecting or incongruent notions of what is realistic, attainable, and likely for their futures within the domains of what I call *conditions*, *careers*, and *college*. This study viewed school cultures as comprised of the prevalent belief systems, values, expectations, and assumptions that operate through symbols,

² Some scholars have utilized the term “future selves” in broader studies to illuminate how individuals think about their futures. They have also used “future selves” as a proxy for “possible selves” going back to some of its earliest iterations (see Markus & Nurius, 1986). Thus, while the terminology is not unique, how I use it in this study is my own conception.

traditions, and interactions both between and among students, teachers, administrators and staff within school spaces.

Conceptual Framework

My conceptual approach to schools was influenced by intersectionality framed in the scholarship of sociologist Collins (2009). While studies utilizing intersectionality differ in their approaches and findings, what remains constant is a close consideration of how and where power operates in relationship to both identity and macro-level dynamics in the lived experiences of marginalized individuals. This study drew from the intersectionality of how the school culture in the research site was constructed and used as an analytical tool to understand the findings.

This dissertation posits that schools operate as a site of power in the lives of both students and educators. The conception of power used in this study is not based on an individual power that is wielded by any one person, or a power that resides solely in the hands of a few members, such as administrators and teachers. Rather, the conceptual model that I propose views power, particularly cultural power, as a key part of a system or an “intangible entity that circulates within a matrix... to which individuals stand in varying relationships” (Collins, 2009, p. 292).

Collins (2009) wrote that systems of power are organized as a “matrix of domination” (p. 294), in which four interrelated domains of power, namely, *structural*, *disciplinary*, *cultural*, and *interpersonal*, organize oppression for marginalized individuals by producing and reinforcing unequal power relations. Drawing from Collins (2009), I posit that schools reflect and enact *cultural power*, which is comprised of the values, beliefs, and commonsense norms traditionally reflected in broader U.S. society

and usually upheld by the actions of administrators, teachers, and others in power in schools. Culture, as a domain of power, works in and through school practices at all levels and, thus, is infused within school culture. Chapter two of this dissertation broadens and extends this brief description of the conceptual framework used in this research.

Scope of this Study

Gender is a key factor influencing the educational experiences of adolescents (Howard, 2014; Polite & Davis, 1999; Hall & Brown-Thirston, 2011). Research has shown that young women and girls, especially those from marginalized racial groups in preK-12 settings, find difficulty securing school academic and social success for a variety of reasons (see Letendre & Rozas, 2015). However, this study focused on Black and Latino boys, and analyzing the experiences of young women was beyond the scope of this project. Young women of color experience school in different ways than young men of color, a phenomenon explored in recent research (see Evans-Winters, 2005; Leadbeater & Way, 2007; Morris, 2007). Studies have also considered how Black immigrants from Africa and the countries of the Caribbean (Awokoya, 2012; Roxas & Roy, 2012; Waters, 1999) navigate identity processes in various schooling and social contexts. However, the purpose of this study was to investigate the schooling experiences of Black and Latino boys who were born in the United States. Particularly, this study investigated African American boys with generational ties to the United States and Latino boys of Salvadoran heritage.

Significance of Study

This study contributes to literature, policy, and practice in two ways. First, it positions power as a salient feature of school culture, in comparison to more prevailing studies of school climate and culture. In doing so, this study sought to tease out cultural power, which operates in broader U.S. society, and to see how this was infused within schools and influenced how students viewed their potential futures. Secondly, allowing students to assess both their own meaning making in schools as well as their learning environments through a qualitative lens broadened the picture of urban schools present in the literature, and permitted space for interventions and potentially blocking policies which unconsciously limit students' future hopes, dreams, and aspirations. This dissertation thus illuminates more clearly the relationship between schooling processes and how students view and act upon their futures.

Chapter two explores salient literature relevant to this study and more closely describes the theoretical framework. Chapter three describes the epistemological grounding of this research and the methodological choices made in this study. The school culture at the school site is described using rich description in chapter four, while chapter five considers how the college domain of participants' future selves was understood and shaped. Chapter six examines how participants conceptualized career and condition. And finally, chapter seven concludes with a summary and discussion of key findings and offers implications and considerations for future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

In this chapter I explore research regarding how school cultures inform Black and Latino males' conceptions of their future selves. This includes research on: (1) sociological and social psychological self-concepts of the future; (2) The social conditions, career trajectories, and college preparation of Black and Latino males; and (3) school cultures and their impact on student outcomes. First, I consider literature that examines the futures of Blacks and Latinos through three related constructs: aspirations and expectations, possible selves and future orientations. I draw from these constructs to posit a working definition of future selves as a way to understand how Black and Latino males conceive of how their lives will be in the future. To contextualize the futures of Black and Latino boys, I discuss historical experiences of Black and Latino boys and men before discussing their current conditions as related to employment and career trajectories, their experiences within K-12 schools, and their enrollment in college. In addition, I review literature on urban school culture. Lastly, this chapter also investigates how intersectionality was used to inform the conceptual framework of this study.

Aspirations and Expectations

Scholars have used various psychological conceptualizations to understand how individuals understand and act upon their futures. These include time perspective, future time orientation or to what extent an individual considers their past, present, and future in their decision making (Gjesme, 1975, 1979; Hoornaert, 1973; Lewin, 1942), and temporal extension, which considers how far into the future an individual can see possibilities and direct their actions (Lessing, 1972). I consider work that has examined three related constructs: aspirations and expectations, possible selves, and future orientations.

Research shows that many Black and Latino students have high aspirations for their futures (e.g., graduating from college) yet hold unrealistic ideas about how to obtain their desired futures, or act in ways that are incongruent with achieving their goals (MacLeod, 1987; Yowell, 2000; Yowell, 2002). In Yowell's (2000) mixed gender study of 38 students in the eighth grade of Mexican and Puerto Rican descent, results showed that participants believed that working hard in their coursework, alone, would get them into college. After high school, they desired to go to college, have a career, and have a family — in that order. However, few talked of *completing* college. Further, many saw their educational careers ending at age 18, demonstrating a lack of concrete understanding of the actions and time needed to achieve their goals. Yowell attributed this misalignment to the lack of role models and educational resources in their immediate social contexts.

Kao and Tienda (1998) conducted large-scale quantitative and qualitative studies with White, Asian, Black, and Latino adolescents in Chicago. They found that Black and Latino high school students revealed in their focus groups limited understandings of what white-collar work entailed. They spoke of becoming a lawyer, secretary, veterinarian, or pediatrician in ways that showed their misunderstandings about the nature of these varied career options and the type of training needed to secure these jobs. On the other hand, White and Asian students held more concrete understandings of their future attainments and how to achieve them. In MacLeod's (1987) study of White and Black low-income, male high school students, White participants held clearer understandings of obstacles to achieving their goals and, thus, had difficulty articulating their future aspirations because of known barriers. Blacks, however, held unrealistic expectations, believing that if they

worked hard they would make it. The Black students' more optimistic outlooks were attributed, in part, to a misunderstanding of the blocked opportunities they faced, a reality with which their White counterparts were more familiar. Studies like these reveal the dissonance present in Black and Latino adolescents' concepts of their futures.

The disconnect between what students hope for themselves and what they think will actually happen has been explored in research on *aspirations* and *expectations* (Bohon, Johnson, & Gorman, 2006; Kao & Tienda, 1998). In the context of research on educational advancement, educational aspiration is an individual's desire to achieve high levels of education. An expectation is an individual's assessment of their own likelihood of achieving these levels of education (Bohon et al., 2006).

Bohon et al. (2006), using survey and interview data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health of 1994-95, compiled data from 16,545 Latino (i.e. Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Mexican), Black, and non-Latino White middle school and high school students and quantitatively measured their college aspirations and expectations. Aspirations were captured with questions such as, "How much do you want to go to college?," while questions such as, "How likely is it that you will go to college?" (p. 212) were used to capture expectations. Findings showed that Mexicans had weaker than average (and weaker than Whites and Blacks) aspirations and expectations than other groups. Also, Cubans had stronger than average aspirations and expectations in comparison to the other groups. Puerto Ricans, however, held lower aspirations than Blacks and lower expectations than both Blacks and Whites. Differences were attributed to factors ranging from parent and home characteristics, academic skills, and levels of disengagement. College aspirations and expectations are generally lower for Blacks and

most Latinos than Whites; however, these differences vary widely among Latino sub groups. When examining the experiences of Latinos, it is important to disaggregate by national origin, social class, and region, as certain groups are more vulnerable to hardships than others. For instance, the specific historical nature of cold war politics enhanced the resources available to Cubans upon arrival, bolstering educational and economic levels above other Latino groups (MacDonald, 2004).

Yowell (1999) showed that when students engage in activities that encourage them to reflect on their futures, such as journal and essay writing, their processes of attaining academic goals became clearer and more likely to occur. In addition, the role of schools in helping students to set realistic goals and work towards them is particularly important for low income students, whose parents may lack knowledge about preparation for college (Yowell, 2002). Studies have also cited the need for college-prep work to extend beyond the guidance counselor's office to the inner fabric of the school through the creation of a culture that promotes and supports college-going (Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Knight-Diop, 2010; McKillip, Godfrey, & Rawls, 2012).

The aspirations and expectations literature overlaps with the literature on possible selves as another useful construct to understand how adolescents think and act toward their futures.

Possible Selves

Another construct framing scholarly understandings of the futures of adolescents is "possible selves" (Markus & Nurius, 1986). According to Markus and Nurius (1986), possible selves relate to how individuals think about their potential and their future, and they represent specific, individually significant hopes, fears, and fantasies. Possible

selves represent three varying, yet complementary, levels of self-concept. What an adolescent might dream of becoming or the “hoped for self” consists of abstract wishes or fantasies, which are not well grounded in evidence or an understanding of how to achieve hoped for goals. Moreover, adolescents often do not behave in a manner that would help them to secure those goals. The “expected self” is grounded in a more realistic understanding of the scripts, strategies, and behaviors needed to achieve goal actualization. And finally, the “feared self” represents what the individual hopes to avoid by engaging in actions that are unlike those with whom the individual has connections (e.g. family and community members) (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

The experiences from which students draw to create their self-concepts and possible selves derive from their educational, socio-cultural, and historical contexts, media representations, and immediate social experiences and relationships (Oyserman, 2002). Significant others such as parents, peers, teachers, and role models as well as the media provide examples of possible selves which students can instantiate (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). In addition, what is possible for students is reflected in culturally significant metaphors, stories, and symbols, which are shaped by contact with U.S society (Oyserman & Harrison, 1998). For immigrant youth, the context of their country of origin may also be salient.

Achieving balance between possible selves, or a realistic connection between one’s aspirations, expectations, fears, and behaviors, has been shown to be key in school success (Oyserman & Markus, 1990). According to these authors, it is particularly vital that schools and teachers serving adolescents from low-income urban environments consider how these students create and sustain possible selves. This is because possible

selves can be not only inspired and reinforced in schools, but they can also be constrained and confined through the socialization processes that occur in these spaces.

Stereotypes of Blacks (Steele, 1997; Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995) as unintelligent and Latinos (Conchas, 2001; Hundley & Graham, 2001; Kao, 2000) as lazy, manual laborers, who are academically deficient, and disengaged from school are shown to have a significant impact on their academic self-concepts and performance. Similarly, Graham (2001) found, in a diverse pool of students, that teachers viewed Latino and Black boys as least likely to work hard on their academics, follow school policies and procedures, and earn good grades. Studies have also shown that discussing negative perceptions of Blacks and Latinos in academic settings gives rise to “stereotype threat” (Steele, 1997, 2003), a phenomenon whereby individuals achieve lower and attribute lower achievement to stereotypes about their own racial/ethnic group.

Stereotype threat is the “threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype, or the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm that stereotype” (Steele, 2003, p. 111). In a situation where a particular group is stereotyped as doing poorly (e.g., in standardized test taking), individuals from that group fear performing in ways that may prove the stereotype to be accurate. This would give rise to the feeling of being judged by some attribute of group identity (e.g. racial or linguistic) as opposed to more objective and individual measures (Steele, 2003). As such, individuals may withdraw from academic tasks for the sake of psychic comfort, to avoid the stress that arises in situations where they are stereotyped as underperforming (Steele, 2003).

Given this reality, understanding possible selves in relation to individuals’ identities and social contexts is critical for students (Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995), as

schools are sites where negative, racial, ethnic, and gender stereotypes can cause psychological distress, school withdrawal, and academic failure. It is important to consider how racial/ethnic group membership and schooling contexts shape Black and Latino male adolescents' beliefs about themselves, as their beliefs about themselves, for instance, are construed not only from ideas about "what people like me become" but also "what people *not* like me become" (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). These beliefs stimulate a variety of "me's" and "not me's" that are based on in-group norms informed by what members perceive and by what others in the individual's social context believe is possible (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). In this regard, possible selves are both individualized and distinctly social as they relate to past experiences, feelings, and characteristics of what others think of who and what one may become (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

Developing realistic conceptions of hopes and dreams and planning for the actions needed to achieve them is crucial during adolescence. What is possible in an adolescent's life is uniquely tied to how they actually conceive of their futures and how they are oriented toward that future. Thus, "future orientations" (Trommsdorf, 1983; Nurmi, 1991, 2005) is another useful construct in understanding how adolescents conceive of their futures selves.

Future Orientations

Nurmi (1991, 2005) posits that future orientations include thoughts, dreams, and expectations one has for possible future events. These, in turn, provide motivation that influences and guides the attainment of goals. Nurmi (2005) notes that the concept of future orientation is both complex and broad. Future orientations embraces various kinds

of expectations (content of future orientation), how far into the future such expectations are expected to occur (extension), how people think about the factors influencing their futures (control beliefs), and the kinds of tools they develop to attain their goals. Nurmi noted that cognitively, individuals process knowledge about the future by exploring, planning, and making decisions about future opportunities and estimating the likelihood of future events. Motivationally, individuals form goals, values, and commitments pointed toward those future attainments, in addition to forming concerns, doubts, and fears about attaining less desirable life outcomes. Lastly, the affective component of future orientations includes the emotions and attitudes, such hope, fear or despair, that accompany an individual's evaluation of their attainment or progression toward future outcomes.

Nurmi (1991) further noted that how individuals perceive of their future originates from the knowledge, beliefs, and schemata formed during the course of their lives, in the society in which they live (for Latino youth, this may include both the U.S. and their own or their parents' countries of origin). The processes through which adolescents compare their interests and values to the career and educational opportunities available to them will ideally lead to the construction of realistic, as opposed to unrealistic, career goals (Nurmi, 2005). After setting goals, adolescents must plan actions that will provide them access to their future goals.

According to Nurmi (2005), most research on future orientations has been carried out among adolescents because the concept of future and future-related decisions play a particularly important role at this life stage. Adolescents develop more mature cognitive skills, are given increased autonomy and responsibility, and encounter social pressures to

transition into adult roles (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2006). Adolescents are expected to make many decisions concerning their future lives, and if they do not have clear expectations for their futures or see present behaviors as connected to future ambitions, they are more likely to engage in behaviors that can negatively alter their life courses (e.g., early parenthood, criminal involvement, and high school dropout) (Trommsdorf, 1983).

Brown and Jones (2004) researched how African American students engaged in academic work in spite of the stigma they face as a member of a minority group (see Steele, 1997) in an educational setting. Drawing from a conception of “future time orientation,” the authors conducted a survey with 334 African American students between the ages of 13 and 18 years across two high schools. They found that students with high levels of future orientations tended to have higher grades. In addition, students who indicated strong orientations toward the future tended to see education as more useful in attaining success later in life and, subsequently, saw value in academic work. Also, McCabe and Barnett (2000) noted that future orientations can serve as protective factors for low-income students or minority groups, as they encourage students to dream and hope for better possibilities of the future, setting the stage for actions that increase goal attainment. Thus, adolescent conceptions of their futures are essential in their attainment of academic success and their resilience in sustaining success in the face of familial or community challenges that make attaining their goals difficult.

What are Future Selves?

Future selves are the images and ideals of self in the future that individuals conceive which influence motivation and behavior in various contexts. As conceptualized in this study, how adolescents construct future selves is influenced by their past

experiences, contact with families and neighborhoods, school contexts, and media which signal what is possible in terms of their life conditions, economic livelihoods and future marital and family status (e.g. condition), their vocation (e.g. career), and their post-secondary education (e.g. college). This study examined Black and Latino boys' future selves in the context of either intersecting or incongruent notions of what was realistic, attainable, and likely for their futures within the domains of what I call *condition*, *career*, and *college* or *The Three Cs*. For instance, an adolescent might hope to live in a mansion and then become a physician, but underperform in school, which would hinder the possibility for attaining these goals. This represents a misalignment in his conception of his future self, as this adolescent's desired life condition is incongruent with his engagement in the college-going process, making it virtually impossible to secure a career as a physician.

Similar to previously researched understandings of future orientations, possible selves, and other similar constructs, future selves develop within institutional and sociocultural contexts, in which normative beliefs and expectations provide the basis for individuals' conceptions of their futures and plans (Nurmi, 1991). Family, neighborhoods, and media are all important in creating images of Black and Latino boys' future selves, and school remains a key, yet understudied context which shapes how future selves are developed, maintained, altered, reified, supported, or invalidated, discouraged, or negated. According to Nurmi (2005) an adolescent's capacity and ability to set goals and plan sub-goals in order to achieve larger goals can be enhanced by information about the future adult society the adolescent will enter and the opportunities available. Students can gain information about what society holds for them in the future and the most optimal

procedures for achieving goals through their involvement with parents and other adults, peers, media, and school. However, while parents, media, and adults outside of school serve influential roles in how youth see themselves in the future, the adults and peers in their schools were the focal point of this study.

Studies that have considered relationships between school factors and adolescents' conceptions of their futures have done so by working to disaggregate variables like school size (Chen & Vazsonyi, 2012), type (i.e. public versus private school) (Lee et al., 1998), location, and SES (Chen & Vazsonyi, 2012; Khattab, 2005). Other literature has considered that positive and nurturing school climates support future expectations of students (Anderson, 1982; Antrop-González and De Jesús, 2006). In their study of African American students, Brown and Jones (2004) noted that students who indicate strong orientations toward the future tended to see education as more useful for reaching later life success and subsequently indicated higher perceived value for academic pursuits. Brown and Jones also viewed school climate, and the practices and policies of schools, as salient to consider when understanding how students adopt future orientations and are motivated to learn. However, largely missing in the literature were recent, qualitative accounts of students' lived experiences of conceptualizing their futures within the context of schooling. School culture, remains unexplored as a source for understanding how Black and Latino males might conceive of their future selves. In addition, while research suggests that many Black and Latino students experience a disconnect between their educational aspirations and expectations to date, few studies have examined this issue using qualitative methods which allow the voices of students to be heard (see Yowell, 2002). More research that captures students' perspectives is needed

to better conceptualize how and why they understand and act upon their educational possibilities in particular ways. This fills in this void in the literature.

In order to understand how Black and Latino boys conceptualize their futures, I posit that it is important to consider how scholars have considered the previous schooling experiences of these groups more generally. Thus, before exploring salient literature on the current state of Black and Latino males, in the following section I consider the past selves, or rather the historical experiences of Black and Latino males in U.S. society.

The Past Selves of Black and Latino Males

Many Latino and Black male students find themselves at the bottom rungs of the achievement ladder on most measures of student performance (Conchas & Vigil, 2012). Scholars have continually shown that their status in schools mirrors their struggles in larger society such as joblessness, incarceration, and poverty (Noguera, 2008; Polite & Davis, 1999; Conchas & Vigil, 2012). Aligning their plight in urban centers and schools are harmful societal narratives that have pervaded social discourses around Black and Latino males. While they embody diverse interests and experiences, their social and school lives are characterized through monolithic narratives that depict Black and Latino male youth as violent predators “damaged beyond repair” (Harding, 2010). Black males are consistently viewed as products of low-income, single mother headed homes who embrace street culture and value and display maladaptive codes of behavior and immorality (Brown, 2011). Howard (2008) notes that throughout history, narratives of the Black male as the “docile or bewildered slave,” “the hyper-sexed brute,” “the gregarious Sambo,” or as a “pimp,” athlete, or entertainer have plagued popular discourses. In addition, Black males are viewed as athletic but unintelligent, angry, violent, and lazy,

and as criminals, drug dealers, and gang bangers (hooks, 2004; Stevenson, 2004).

According to Howard (2013), “Loathed in various environments, applauded in others, perhaps no other group of people are emulated yet despised simultaneously to the extent that Black men are today” (p. 55). Latino males are also viewed as gangsters and drug dealers and as both docile and violent (Entman, 2006; López, 2003; Noguera & Hurtado, 2008). These images pervade the minds of the general public and of Black and Latino males themselves, devaluing their worth and potential, and influencing how they perceive of their own value in schools and communities (Rios, 2011).

Social scientists have also contributed to how we understand and perceive Black and Latino males. Brown’s (2011) critical account of scholarship on Black males from the 1930s to the present, documents major themes in the social science literature focused on this group. Citing classic work from scholars like Frazier (1932), Brown notes that, from the 1930s – 1950s, studies on Black families' struggles to both assimilate into mainstream culture and navigate urban centers, positioned Black males as struggling to secure employment in racially stratified northern centers. Narratives of them as “absent and wondering” were paralleled by myths of them as socially irresponsible, footloose, and sexually promiscuous. Black boys were viewed as delinquent, because their fathers were aberrant and evasive (Brown, 2011).

In the 1960s, the work of Kenneth Clark (1965) and other psychologists chronicled Black men's struggles with unemployment and racial discrimination and their growing frustration with their lack of power in their own homes and communities. From this perspective, Brown (2011) noted that Black males were viewed as being “powerless,” “castrated,” and “emasculated,” and prone to impulsive behavior and

academic underperformance. Hannerz (1969) and other social researchers in the late 1960s through the 1970s, viewed Black males as being “soulful” or “adaptive.” In this regard, Black males' behaviors were not always viewed as evidence of cultural deficits, but as cultural adaptations to their environments.

However, as the 1980s and 1990s unfolded, Black males in urban areas saw themselves hyper-criminalized by zero tolerance policies and law enforcement practices. Drug economies, gun violence, and gang activity intensified in urban centers along with the increased criminalization of Black, as well as Latino, males that accompanied the problems of inner city life (Alexander, 2012). Key works from Gibbs (1988), Kunjufu (1985), and Polite & Davis (1999) alarmed many within the scholarly community, creating the impression that Black males were “at risk,” “in crisis,” or “endangered.” These terms became buzzwords in popular media and social discourse. Brown (2011) revealed that, overall, research on Black males has created a dominant and unfortunately narrow narrative that has profoundly shaped how most educators and the general public understand the social and educational experiences of Black males.

While the literature on Black males is vast, research focused on the challenges confronting Latinos is less robust. MacDonald (2004) noted that the study of Latino people in the U.S. emerged early in the twentieth century but did not begin to flourish until after the Chicano Civil Rights era of the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, literature focusing specifically on Latino males is only beginning to surface, which has led some scholars to characterize their experiences as invisible to most (Noguera & Hurtado, 2012). However, public discourse around Latino males is rife with images that have inaccurately portrayed

this group as monolithic³ and caught in precarious binds. For instance, Latino men, particularly migrants and immigrants, have been viewed as both integral to the economic structures of society and as a threat to the social order (Noguera & Hurtado, 2012). While Latinos hold a vast array of jobs within the US economy, they are continually perceived as cheap labor (Chavez, 2008 as cited in Noguera & Hurtado, 2012).

The characterization of Latino males, particularly regarding Mexican men, as both cheap labor and as illegal can be traced back to two post World War II intervention programs: *The Bracero Program* and *Operation Wetback*. The Bracero Program, set up by an agreement between the U.S and Mexico, recruited Mexican nationals as temporary guest workers in the booming World War II era agribusiness sectors, primarily in California and Texas, but also in the Pacific Northwest and Midwest (Gonzales, 2009). Men desperate for work, mostly in their 20s and 30s, enrolled at high rates for this program. Compared to U.S. standards, the pay was low, the housing inadequate, and food of poor quality, yet the program employed nearly 5 million individuals throughout its 22-year duration from July 1942 to December 1964. Despite the stipulations of their contracts that they return to Mexico, many braceros remained in the U.S. Thus, drawing upon both racist and economic rationales for dismantling the program, stalwart opponents from labor unions highlighted the possibility for illegal workers to remain in the U.S., depress wages, and displace "American" workers. As the Bracero program slowed in the 1960s, factory farmers still had access to desirable labor sources who were undocumented and referred to as *mojados* (wetbacks) or *alambristas* (fence-jumpers).

³ Where information is available, I will disaggregate data on Latino males by country of origin, and generation status.

Although farmers profited immensely, undocumented and guest workers were a source of apprehension among U.S. citizens especially during the xenophobic Cold War era.

“Operation Wetback,” which began June 17th 1954, was initiated by the U.S. Border Patrol and conducted as a military operation. Over one million people—including many who were in the U.S. legally—were apprehended and returned to Mexico in 1954, which assuaged nativist fears. However, when the Bracero program terminated in 1964, illegal immigration patterns exploded (Gonzales, 2009). The success of both the Bracero program and Operation Wetback highlight key tensions in understandings of Latino males in the United States. Mexican and Puerto Rican males (see Briggs, 2002) were considered cheap labor, docile, and good workers, but they were also viewed as threats to workers in industry and as intruders.

U.S. media outlets reify images of Latino males as chauvinists, who are docile but reliable workers, willing to accept the least desirable work for the lowest wages (Noguera & Hurtado, 2012). Rarely seen in major network television or in film (Hoffman & Noriega, 2004), and underrepresented in network news coverage (Montalvo & Torres, 2006), authentic images of Latino males are largely missing from popular discourse. Stereotypical images of them as unintelligent, lazy, and violence-prone gangsters, drug traffickers who wreak havoc on inner-city streets, however, are cemented in the minds of the general public (Entman, 2006; Noguera & Hurtado, 2008). Given the public perceptions of and scholarly discourses around Black and Latino males, it is evident that both groups have been misunderstood and misconstrued, cited as both victims and culprits in their own social and educational struggles.

Condition, College, and Career: The Three C's Governing the Present and Promise of Black and Latino Male Futures

Given their historical experiences with regards to education, employment and quality of life, it is essential to examine the present state of Black and Latino males within US society and their possibilities for the future. I use three frames to guide the following examination of both the current state and possible futures of Black and Latino males: *condition*, *career*, and *college*. These frames refer, respectively, to: (1) their present condition with regards to their social positioning in U.S society, (2) their career and employment paths, and (3) their possibilities for attending and succeeding in post-secondary institutions.

I conceptualize *condition* to encompass how Black and Latino males⁴ are faring with regards to health, economic stability, and the criminal justice system. This frame has some overlap with the second frame, *career*, in which I discuss the earnings, employment, and career status of Black and Latino males. In a final frame, *college*, I discuss their high school graduation and college – going rates. As academic success in K-12 schooling is key for college admission and success, *college*, as a broad frame, encompasses the academic, school-based trajectory, which prepares Black and Latino boys for success (or failure) in postsecondary education (i.e. college).

The Condition of Black and Latino Males

Factors related to health, fatherlessness, neighborhood conditions, and the criminal justice system all impact the life outcomes of Black and Latino males. Murphy, Xu, and Kochanek, (2012) reported that in 2010, White males lived an average of four

⁴ This study will focus on the experiences of African American boys—those who are descendants of enslaved Africans in the United States—and 2nd generation or higher Latino boys. In other words, this study will not include Blacks or Latinos born outside of the U.S. mainland.

years longer than Black males, while the White male infant mortality rate was nearly one half of Black males. Black and Latino males are more likely than their White counterparts to be born to unwed mothers, which increases their chances of growing up in fatherless homes and remaining in poverty (McLanahan, Haskins, Garfinkel, Mincy, & Donahue, 2010). Blacks and Latinos are also more likely than any other racial/ethnic groups in the U.S. to live in neighborhoods plagued by violence and to become victims of homicide (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). Further, many Black families and Latino families, which are disproportionately low-income, must navigate raising children within unsafe neighborhoods, with limited community resources, and while working multiple jobs or long hours.

For Latino parents, these adverse conditions are often exacerbated by difficulties with the English language (Hernandez, 2004). Despite local and federal attempts to increase health care access for low-income families, Latino and African American children miss significant amounts of school because of chronic, yet preventable, illnesses like toothaches, poor eyesight, and asthma (Gándara, 2010; Rothstein, 2004). Gándara (2010) points out that lack of access to proper health care is exacerbated for Latinos because health care resources are not equally distributed among lower and upper income communities. This is also true for Black families. Additionally, despite evidence of tremendous need, adequate mental health care continues to be out of reach for many Black and Latino children (Katoaka, Zhang, & Wells, 2002). Optimal educational outcomes continue to elude Latino and Blacks, in part, because children whose basic needs are not met are not able to fully engage academically (Gándara, 2010; Rothstein, 2004).

In addition to health disparities, many Black and Latino families find that their values conflict with how those in power in the U.S. define what is normal and acceptable, especially around issues of how families should support their children's education. In recent years, this has become a salient issue for Latino families struggling to adapt to both U.S. society and schools.

In a qualitative study of ten newly arrived Mexican families, Valdes (1996) found that these families brought with them values, beliefs, and strategies for survival that they acquired in their native country (as was true of European immigrants in previous centuries). Most parents wished for their sons to be hardworking and honest, raise close families, and have *todo lo necesario* (the basic necessities of life). Contrary to typical U.S. perspectives of success, these families did not speak of job titles, power, or prestige, but rather hoped their children would make an honest living, marry someone who cared for them, and settle close to other loved ones (Valdes, 1996). This value system did not fully account for the types of parent-child activities needed to stimulate high academic achievement for children in U.S. schools. Valdes's findings were similar to other researchers who have found that to be well educated in Latino culture, or *ser buen educado*, concerns having good manners, respect for the elderly, and devotion to the family (Valenzuela, 1999). While parents in Valdes's study viewed education as important, family activities did not revolve around children's school lives, as parental beliefs about their own success and failure as parents were not tied to their children's academic performance. What these families discovered was that their wishes for their children, rooted in Mexican understandings of the "good life," were devalued in the U.S. Old world familial values and parenting codes of conduct collided with U.S. values, and

this proved deleterious for their children in schools, as teachers misunderstood how Mexican families engaged in their child's schooling, and students struggled to navigate the school, family, and neighborhood contexts.

Black and Latino males struggle to navigate various contexts that have diverging value systems. The struggle these youth have to find success in their homes, neighborhoods, and schools are exacerbated by the economic constraints, which have left many of their families struggling to get out of poverty.

The recent economic crisis commonly referred to as the *Great Recession of 2007-09* (see Saez, 2012), exacerbated previously disproportionately high rates of poverty among Blacks and Latinos particularly with regards to wealth accrument, as indicated by home ownership and accrued savings in both bank and retirement accounts⁵. In 2010, the average income for Whites was twice that of Blacks and Latinos, a gap that has stayed relatively stable since 1983 (McKernan, Ratcliffe, Steverle & Zhang, 2013). However, income disparities paled in comparison to the wealth disparities. The 2007-09 recession brought about sharp declines in wealth among families of color. Latinos, whose wealth was primarily tied to home equity, saw their wealth decrease by over 40%. Blacks, who were hit hardest in their retirement accounts, saw their wealth fall by 31%. White families, in contrast, saw their wealth decrease by 11% during this same time period, by 2010, their average wealth was six times that of Black and Latinos (McKernan et al., 2013).

⁵ According to the McKernan et al., (2013), wealth is measured by total assets minus total liabilities/debt. Assets are the sum of financial assets, such as bank accounts, stocks, bonds, and 401ks/IRAs, and nonfinancial tangible assets like homes and other real estate, businesses, and vehicles. Liabilities include both unsecured debt, like credit card balances, and secured debt like mortgages and vehicle loans.

The typical Black or Latino child in an urban or suburban area spends approximately half of their childhood living in a neighborhood where 20% or more of families have incomes below the poverty line (Harding, 2010). This is indicative of the fact that the percentage of Blacks and Latino children under the age of 18 living in families below the poverty line is higher than the national average. In 2011, higher percentages of Black (39 %) and Latino (34 %) children were living in poverty than White (12 %) and Asian (14 %) children (Aud et al., 2013)⁶. Specifically, among Latino groups, poverty rates are highest for Hondurans, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans (Motel & Patten, 2012). Data also show that among public school students in 2009-2010, higher percentages of Blacks (37 %) and Latinos (37 %) attended high-poverty schools than did Asians (12 %) and Whites (6 %) (Aud et al., 2012).

Household poverty, employment, and the educational status of community adults are strongly associated with what Burd-Sharps and Lewis (2012) refer to as youth “disconnection.” In the U.S., 14.7%, or one in seven young adults ages 16 to 24 are disconnected—that is, neither working nor in school. In a study of the 25 largest metropolitan areas, Black youth have the highest rates of disconnection, at 22.5%, while Latinos have the second-highest rate, at 18.5%. The gender gap in rates of youth disconnection is largest among Blacks. Nationally, 26% of Black young men are disconnected, as compared to 19% of their female counterparts. Among Latinos, rates of disconnection are higher among young women than young men, as out-of-school Latino

⁶ In 2011, approximately 15.9 million, or 22 % of children under the age of 18 were in families living in poverty (Aud et al., 2013). It is important to note that 36% of Native Americans/Alaskan Natives children live in poverty, making them second to Black children in poverty rates. In 2011, the poverty threshold for a family of four was \$22,811.

young men are more likely to be in the workforce than their female counterparts (Burd-Sharps & Lewis, 2012).

Research shows that, historically, economic instability and hiring discrimination have created devastating outcomes for working class males of color (Anyon, 1997; Neckerman, 2007; Sugrue, 2005). While blatant discriminatory practices aimed at Blacks and Latinos were evident prior to the 1960s (Anyon, 1997; Neckerman, 2007; Sugrue, 2005), research shows that race-based discrimination persists in employment and housing (Pager & Shepherd, 2008). Further, studies show that in the era of deindustrialization in the 1970s through the 1990s, working class men in the U.S. experienced profound job losses when traditionally male-dominated, manufacturing work was outsourced to other countries (Fine & Weis, 1998; Wilson, 1996). The disappearance of employment opportunities for working class and poor Black and Latino men in inner cities and the economic decline of their neighborhoods created the conditions for increases in drug trafficking and other illicit, economic activities. Some men were drawn into these activities in search of both economic stability and social standing within their communities (Wilson, 1996). Failing economies created the space for illicit activities, contributing to the increased criminalization, surveillance, and incarceration of Black and Latino males.

Incarceration. According to data from the U.S. Department of Justice, in 2011, 93% of all prisoners were male (Carson & Sabol, 2012). More than half (52%) of white male prisoners were age 39 or younger, compared to 63% of Black and 68% of Latino male prisoners (Carson & Sabol, 2012). Among youth between the ages of 18 and 19, Black males were imprisoned at more than 9 times the rate of White males (Carson &

Sabol, 2012), and Black males between the ages of 20 and 24 were imprisoned at about 7 times the rate of White males of the same age. Between 6.6% and 7.5% of all 25 to 39 year old Black males were imprisoned in 2011, while slightly fewer than 3% of Latino males in that age range were imprisoned (Carson & Sabol, 2012). It is important to note that these numbers do not reflect the total of those under correctional supervision in the U.S., as they do not include those on probation (convicted offenders not incarcerated) or parole (under community supervision after a period of incarceration) (Rumbaut et. al, 2006).

While not imprisoned, Black and Latino youth on probation or parole and with warrants for their arrest are still bound within a web of surveillance, as they are subjected to increased scrutiny from law enforcement and other authorities (Rios, 2011). When Black and Latino males move from incarceration to probation, for instance, they are subjected to being stopped, searched, reported, and further stigmatized by probation officers, police, and school personnel (Rios, 2011). Findings like these support assertions by Hurtado, Haney and Hurtado (2012) who argue that no meaningful analysis of educational achievement among Latino men can ignore the impact and influence of the criminal justice system. Black and Latino male youth who get stuck in a cycle of criminality can begin to feel like helpless and unaccepted outcasts even in their own communities (Rios, 2011).

In a study of both U.S born and foreign-born immigrants, Rumbaut et al. (2006) report that among immigrant young men (e.g. Mexican, Filipino, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Chinese, and other Asian and Latino groups), a set of critical school events and experiences are highly predictive of incarceration. These include: (1) having

been physically threatened more than twice in high school; (2) being suspended between eighth and twelfth grades; (3) “inactive” school status (indicative of transience or instability); (4) low GPAs; and (5) involvement with illicit drugs. While the era of mass immigration has coincided with an era of mass imprisonment, paradoxically, incarceration rates are lowest among immigrant young men, even among the least educated; however, they increase sharply for the second generation (Rumbaut et al., 2006).

Second generation immigrant boys of color, primarily those from low income communities, may adopt the behavioral patterns of other low income boys, which makes them a target for increased scrutiny by community members, teachers and the police. Conversely, first generation boys may still hold high hopes for the better life sought after by their parents. These hopes may keep them from engaging in activities that would lead to imprisonment. Similar to trends seen in disparate incarceration rates between first and second generation Latinos, academic achievement rates and educational aspirations have been shown to be lower among U.S. born youth than newer immigrant groups (and migrant youth, in the case of Puerto Ricans). Focusing on Mexican immigrants, Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (1995) attribute this disparity in achievement to the notion that recently arrived immigrants respect authority more and display higher achievement motivational levels than their U.S. born and White counterparts. Furthermore, students in low-income, urban communities are more likely to attend schools that resemble prisons in terms of security measures and the involvement of law enforcement (Brown, 2013). Schools within urban contexts have been subject to numerous local and federal mandates

that emphasize control and punishment rather than learning. These conditions are undoubtedly salient in how youth conceive of their futures.

Catalyzing the harsh disciplinary climate in schools were federal mandates in the 1990s such as the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994, which required expulsion for students bringing firearms to schools, regardless of the circumstances (Hall, 2006; Nolan, 2011). This legislation came at a time of high levels of gun violence in urban areas and a number of school shooting incidents occurred – primarily in White areas, ironically – causing policy makers and police departments to seek policies to curb violence and drug related crimes in schools. Zero tolerance policies were implemented in schools in all 50 states, which brought swift and harsh punishment to students committing even minor infractions, and federal funding for schools was contingent on the adoption of these policies (Nolan, 2011). The harsh criminal mandates spurred by zero tolerance shifted the control of schools from teachers, administrators and parents to police, subsequently ushering students into the criminal justice system for infractions previously managed by school personnel (Nolan, 2011). The increased surveillance, coupled with heightened police presence, created school cultures that shifted the focus of urban schools significantly further towards to student control.

Anderson, Su, and Theoharris (2009) in their alarmingly entitled book, *Our Schools Suck*, present a startling case study of Fremont High School, a 5,000 student urban school in Los Angeles, with an 87% Latino and 13% Black population. They paint a dismal picture of an over-crowded school building, where students have to pass through an elaborate gate system that mirrors that of a prison, attend classes with upwards of 50 students, and are subject to classrooms that are overheated May and frigid in January.

They must contend with a constant parade of substitute teachers and, even worse, have to compete for time with only one college counselor to aid them with applications and financial aid documents.

Due to of the prevalence of crime and violence, especially fighting, students at Fremont are greeted daily by LAPD officers and are educated in a gated and locked facility where a “complex bureaucracy and surveillance system regulates anyone wishing to enter or leave the school” (Anderson et al., 2009, p. 74). Not only does the exterior of the school convey a sense of punitive confinement, but the interior of the building with its “prefab gray architecture and few windows” (Anderson et al., p. 74) mirrors that of a juvenile detention facility or prison, which certainly does not create a welcoming learning environment. What messages are students receiving about their worth and their futures when their school mirrors a jail—a noisy, prison-like climate, where windows and doors are locked and students are regularly “paraded through the halls in handcuffs” (Anderson et al., p. 74)? Is it reasonable to imagine that, in such environments, students may come see the attributes of prison as normal and, thus, prison as a more plausible outcome for their future adult lives?

In her ethnographic study of the discipline policies and practices in a large high school in New York, Nolan (2011) returned to the school where she once taught, as a doctoral student, to study what was once a familiar space. Nolan reports that a school, which once assumed parental-like support and caring responsibilities, now took on the responsibilities of the criminal justice system. Urban Public High School teemed with struggling and alienated Black and Latino youth, who were constantly subjected to scrutiny from New York police officers who played the role of school “safety agents.”

Students were confronted for taking too long to get to class, for yelling in the hallways, wearing a hat, and were met daily with metal detectors, scanners, and cameras which transformed the physical space of the building from one of learning to one of prison-like conditions. A culture of learning was supplanted with a culture of order, discipline, and policing, as students were “picked up” in the hallways for minor infractions, and “did time” in the detention room. Classroom conflicts became a “police matter” and school infractions were viewed as criminal offenses, which removed power from teachers to solve and remedy behavioral concerns. Many times students were taken to local criminal and juvenile courts for school disciplinary concerns, all of which worked to create a school that mirrored more of an auxiliary penal institution and less of the type of supportive learning community that marginalized, low-income students of color needed.

In his ethnographic study Rios (2011) drew on the perspectives of 40 Black and Latino urban “at promise”⁷ teen males to understand the consequences of how the ubiquitous punitive practices in the U.S further marginalize these young men in Oakland, CA. Rios (2011) defines *criminalization* as the process by which styles and behaviors are deemed as deviant and are treated with shame, exclusion, punishment, and even incarceration. Rios found that criminalization occurred outside of the law, crossing social contexts, and followed Black and Latino adolescent males into their neighborhoods, schools, and throughout numerous other social institutions, all of which created what he referred to as a *youth control complex*. This form of sustained and ubiquitous criminalization was supported by a system in which schools, community centers,

⁷ Instead of using the more popular moniker “at risk” to describe Black and Latino youth living in marginalized conditions, Rios (2011), like others, uses the term “at promise” as an attempt to interrupt the stigma the label “at risk” has come to symbolize for this population.

families, and the media treated Black and Latino males as if their actions and everyday behaviors were criminal activities (Rios, 2011). Even non-delinquent Black and Latino males who performed well in school found themselves subjected to the same scrutiny, surveillance, and suspicion from adults who participated in the youth control complex (Rios, 2011). Accounts by Anderson et al. (2009), Nolan (2011), and Rios (2011), reveal the ways in which the criminal justice system and urban school discipline policies intersect to diminish the schooling experiences of marginalized Black and Latino males, in particular.

However, while Black and Latino boys continue to be subjected to educationally and socioeconomically marginalizing conditions, they find ways to adapt to and resist harmful structural forces like severe school discipline policies. For instance, in mix-gender qualitative study of Latina/os, Cammarota (2004) found that Latino boys cut class to resist the failure and criminalization they receive from teachers and administrators, evidenced in school practices. More specifically, Latino boys cut class and hung out with friends to replace the antagonistic relationships fostered in school discipline practices with more positive relationships found in peer networks. Cammarota further notes how important it is for teachers and administrators to foster positive relationships with Latino boys, so that they may see being a student as a salient facet of their persona.

While cutting class has negative academic and social repercussions for school outcomes, Black and Latino boys also show resilience, or the ability to overcome adversity (see Horn, Chen & Adelman, 1998), in ways that contribute to school success. Through adult-child mentoring relationships (Hall, 2006; Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 1995), athletic participation (Stevenson, 2003) and involvement in extra-curricular or

supplementary educational endeavors (Bridglall, 2005; Carey, 2012; Fashola, 2003; Gordon & Bridglall, 2005; Woodland, 2008), Black and Latino boys can develop the tools needed to positively resist social forces working against them in their schools and communities.

Although Black and Latino boys can be resilient to the numerous factors impacting their life conditions and educational trajectories, it is essential that we fully understand how their conceptions of their future selves are greatly influenced by what they experience in their neighborhoods and families. Schools are only one place that influences youths' conceptions of their futures. Health disparities, cultural clashes between home and school values, economic hardships faced by families of color, and their rates of involvement in the criminal justice system all work to create the present and possible future conditions that Black and Latino males navigate when conceptualizing their futures. These factors create the condition of Black and Latino males, and have significant overlap with the career trajectories and employment status of this group.

Career Trajectories and Employment Status of Black and Latino Males

In spite of the very strong labor market of the 1990s, employment gaps between young Black men and those of comparable Latinos and Whites grew (Holzer, Offner, & Sorensen, 2005). To account for this decline Holzer et al., posit that two important developments occurred during the 1990s impacted the employment status of Black men: (1) growth of a large pool of Black male ex-offenders; and (2) increased enforcement of child support policies. Black male ex-offenders face great obstacles in securing employment, partly because of employers' reluctance to hire them and partly based on their own poor skills, lack of work readiness, and alienation from the world of work

(Holzer et al., 2005). The effects of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), welfare reform policies, and the increased crackdown on “dead beat dads,” greatly harmed the employment and income status of Black men. The EITC provided support mostly for custodial parents. As most Black young men with children are not custodial parents, they were virtually excluded from the financial benefits of this program. Further, the child support system exacted a high cost on the already meager earnings of young Black men. Thus, the EITC and the child support policies of the 1990s worked to discourage them from making money in formal labor markets and encouraged them to earn money through alternative routes, including crime (Holzer, et al., 2005). Many low income Black and Latino adolescent males born in the mid-1990s, were raised by mothers and fathers directly impacted by the effects of these two developments. The economic context of the 1990s is important in understanding the condition of today’s Black and Latino adolescents, as parents of the students in this proposed study might have been directly impacted by this context. However, currently, the wage gap, and the status of jobs traditionally held by Latinos, in particular, provides key insights into how the future career landscape looks for this group.

According to a report on the first quarter of 2013, compiled by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013), the median weekly earnings of part time White, Black and Latino men were relatively similar - \$226, \$235, \$228 respectively. However, the earning gap is far wider for *full time* employees when delineated by race/ethnicity and gender. Data shows that the median, weekly income for White men working full time was \$802, while for Black men it was \$622, and for Latino men it was \$575. These numbers reveal that, across racial/ethnic groups, the earning potential of males is more equitable for part time

employment, which traditionally requires fewer skills and lower educational attainment than full time employment (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013).

As noted previously, when examining the experiences of Latino males, it is important to disaggregate by generational status, national origin, social class, and region, as certain groups are more vulnerable to hardships than others. For instance, Puerto Rican males are more likely to drop out of school than Cubans and South Americans (Torres & Fergus, 2012). They also have higher rates of unemployment than men all other Latino groups (Torres & Fergus, 2012). Drawing from data from Current Population Survey, in 2008, over half of Latino males (e.g. Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central American and South American) were employed in the construction and maintenance, or production and transportation fields (Torres & Fergus, 2012). Mexican American and Central American male workers are less likely than Cubans, South Americans, and Puerto Ricans to work in white-collar professions like management and sales (Torres & Fergus, 2012).

In a study of how gender differences played out in the experiences of 30 high achieving, young Black men and women in a low-income high school, Hubbard (2005) found that Black females were far more specific about their future career goals and what educational paths would help them secure their desired careers (e.g. psychologists, lawyers, or businesswomen). While the Black females opted for four-year institutions, most Black males in her study were far less specific about their future occupational goals but very specific about their goal to play sports. The desire to participate in college-level sports as a prelude to “going pro” was a primary impetus for these young Black males’ aspirations. While both male and female high achieving students in her study received support and encouragement to go to college from their participation in the school’s

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program, Black boys were especially encouraged by their coaches to pursue athletics. This encouragement to pursue athletics proved particularly salient in how Black boys viewed sports as their greatest opportunity to succeed. Hubbard's study reveals that even among academically high achieving students of color, males often view athletics as a main career option.

Research has shown that too often Black and Latino boys are not exposed to a wide array of career options. Stimulating the interests of males of color in fields like science and engineering is a significant step in directing their career trajectories (Hrabowski, Maton, & Greif, 1998), and school personnel sometimes steer Black and Latino students away from high level math and science courses that will stimulate career interests in engineering (Brown, 2002). In a qualitative study of Black male undergraduates at a predominantly White university, Moore (2006) found that while strong parental encouragement and strong aptitude in math and science courses are important in steering young Black males, in particular, into careers in engineering, schools are an invaluable resource in the career trajectories of young males of color. Schools can be places where a strong interest in math and science can be stimulated by increased support through fulfilling relationships with teachers and administrators, and through meaningful enrichment programs and academic experiences.

The data shows grave income disparities that, in part, reflect how Black and Latino males are moving (and not moving) into jobs and careers. There is significant overlap between how Black and Latino males conceive of their careers given both their social conditions and how prepared are for post-secondary educational opportunities (i.e. college). Thus, the importance in understanding both the condition and career outcomes

of Black and Latino males must be viewed through the lens of schooling which can both bolster and hinder how they conceive of their future selves. In the next section I consider the educational state of Black and Latino males to underscore issues related to their high school graduation and college attendance rates, experiences in upper-level courses, disproportional discipline rates, and interactions with teachers in schools.

Collegiate and Academic Standing of Black and Latino Males

Graduation rates. In a report entitled, *The urgency of now: The Schott 50 state report on public education and Black males*, Holzman (2012) reported that all racial/ethnic groups have seen increases in male graduation rates. However, while the national graduation rates in 2009-10 show a 10 percentage point increase for Blacks and a 12 percentage point increase for Latinos over the last 10 years, still, only 52% of Black males and 58% of Latino males graduated from high school in four years. Seventy-eight percent of White, non-Latino males graduated in 4 years, which reflects an increase of seven percentage points in that same 10-year period. This indicates Black/White and Latino/White male graduation gaps at 26 and 20 percentage points, respectively. In addition, data also reveal that in 2009-2010, in 38 of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, Black males had the lowest graduation rates among Black, Latino and White, non-Latino male and female students. In 11 states of the 50 states, Latino males' graduation rates were the lowest.

This data indicates that although the Black and Latino graduation rates are rising, the gap between Black and White males has only decreased three percentage points in the last 10 years. According to John Jackson, President and CEO of the Schott Foundation, this means that without a significant “large scale” systematic intervention, it could take

another 50 years to close the existing graduation gap between Black and White males (Holzman, 2012).

Interestingly, despite disparate high school graduation rates, Black males are not underrepresented in U.S. colleges (Toldson & Lewis, 2012). Currently, 12.7 million Black males, who are 18 years of age and older comprise 5.5 % of the U.S. adult population and a comparable 5.5 % of all college students. White male students comprise 27% (Toldson, 2012 as cited in Toldson & Lewis, 2012). However, only 16 % of Black males 25 and older completed four-year degrees, as compared to 20 % of Black females and 32 % of White males. Latino males, however, are underrepresented. Gándara and Contreras, (2009) note that Latinos, as a whole, remain the most undereducated major population group in the country. Although Cubans outperform White students in college attainment, the overwhelming majority of Latinos (the largest percentage of whom are of Mexican⁸ descent, followed by Puerto Ricans), do not attend degree-granting colleges, and those that do attend often do not graduate (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Overall, 13% of U.S. Latinos ages 25 and older have at least a bachelor's degree, compared with 28% of the total U.S. population of the same age (Motel & Patten, 2012). Salvadorans (7%), Guatemalans (8%) and Mexicans (9%) have the lowest rates of college completion among Latinos, as fewer than one-in-ten adults ages 25 and older hold bachelor's degrees (Motel & Patten, 2012). According to data from 16 million Latino males compiled in the 2009 Current Population survey, less than 10 % were college graduates (U.S Census Bureau, 2009).

⁸ Mexican Americans make up roughly two-thirds of all Latinos in the U.S., while Puerto Ricans make up the second largest subgroup living on the mainland (Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

Findings like these are indicative of concurrent educational challenges plaguing Black and Latino males prior to college. These include high dropout rates, school resources that limit the possibility of college attainment, and experiences within schools that hinder academic progress. Research also shows that Blacks and Latinos from lower income homes have limited access to college visits and exposure to information related to college matriculation (McDonough, 2007) and have difficulty securing seats at elite schools because of discriminatory admissions criteria that favors students from wealthy families with a higher likelihood of giving back large sums of money (Golden, 2006).

Blocked access to higher-level courses. Black and Latino boys have difficulty securing seats in competitive colleges because of factors related to course offerings. For instance, data from the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2012) reports that for schools serving the largest proportions of Black and Latino students, only 65% offer Algebra II, only 40% offer Physics and only 29% offer Calculus, which can disqualify applicants from admission to state flagship schools. In addition to the lack of optimal course offerings, Black and Latino students are also hindered in college access by factors related to school academic tracking structures.

Scholars have found that Black and Latino students are disproportionately tracked into lower level classes (Oakes, 2005) and excluded from gifted and talented programs (Ford, 2006). Further, many are at a significant disadvantage in selective college admissions because they have not taken higher-level math courses, which may make it extremely difficult to enter into math or science based careers (Moore, 2006). However, even students who have the potential to take higher-level courses often do not. For instance, the College Board determines that students who perform well on the

Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) have a 60% or higher than average likelihood of having success in Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Subsequently, these students are deemed to have “AP potential.” However, hundreds of thousands of “AP potential” students neither took an available subject AP test on which they would have been likely successful, nor attended a school that offered the subject (College Board, 2012).

According to data from the College Board (2012), in an analysis of more than 300,000 students in the graduating class of 2012, who had “AP potential,” Blacks and Latinos with the same level of readiness as Whites and Asians were less likely to take AP level coursework. For instance, among 10 Asian/Asian American/ Pacific Islander students with high potential for success in a particular AP math course, 6 take that course, while 4 in 10 White, 3 in 10 Latino, 3 in 10 Black/African American, and 2 in 10 American Indian/Alaska Native students do. Further, only While Blacks made up 9.2 % of the total population of test takers, they constitute only 4.4% of those who scored 3 or higher on AP tests. Latinos made up 17.8% of total test takers, with 15.9% scoring a 3 or higher. However, Whites made up 56.4% of all test takers and 61.9% of students who scored a 3 or higher⁹.

⁹ According to data from the National Center for Educational Accountability, minority and low-income students who took AP courses, particularly those who scored a 3 or higher on the AP exam had a higher likelihood of obtaining a college degree in five years. These numbers indicate that Blacks and Latinos are less likely than their White or Asian counterparts to both have access to AP courses and take them when they are available. They also are less likely to have their score count for credit in college, and graduate in five years (see <http://media.collegeboard.com/digitalServices/pdf/ap/rtn/9th-annual/9th-annual-ap-report-single-page.pdf>).

The low high school and college graduation rates for Black and Latino boys are greatly influenced by the troubles many encounter when securing better academic standings within schools, such as in AP course-taking. However, other non-academic factors like school discipline practices and retention policies also pose great challenges for Black and Latino males.

Other school factors: Discipline and retention. In understanding how school policies and practices hinder the optimal academic development of Black and Latino boys, researchers have cited school disciplinary practices as key to consider. Many have revealed that students of color—especially African Americans—are disproportionately subjected to disciplinary sanctions (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Skiba et al., 2002; Townsend, 2000; Wallace et al., 2008). While males of all races and ethnicities are more likely than their female counterparts to receive disciplinary sanctions in K-12 schools, Black males are at an especially high risk (Gregory, et. al., 2010).

Toldson and Lewis (2012) cite that in the 20 largest school districts, Blacks accounted for the majority of students receiving one or more suspensions in all but six districts. Districts with the greatest disparity between rates of Black student enrollment and suspension included the highly touted Montgomery County Public School District in Maryland, where Blacks made up only 23% of the overall enrollment rates, but comprised 52 % of those suspended. Together, Black and Latino students accounted for the majority of suspensions in all 20 districts. Across all districts, Black students were over 3.5 times more likely to be suspended or expelled than their White counterparts. While Black students accounted for 42 % of law referrals in schools, when combined with Latino students, these groups accounted for more than 70 % of school related

arrests. Black boys, in particular, are prone to risk for greater disciplinary sanctions even prior to adolescence.

In her ethnographic study of 11 and 12 year old boys in an elementary school, Ann Arnett Ferguson (2000) investigated how Black boys' behaviors were viewed and interpreted in comparison to White boys'. She found that many of the Black boys were constantly in trouble and disciplined more harshly than their White peers. This occurred largely as a result of how their actions were interpreted. Because these Black boys were deemed "unsalvageable" and "bound for jail cells" by their teachers, their rule-breaking practices were viewed as sinister, fully "stripped of any element of childish naïveté" (Ferguson, 2000, p. 83). Black boys were viewed as mannish, intentional wrongdoers and thus, "adultified" in the eyes of teachers and administrators, while White boys' actions were considered innocent and punished with "persuasion and edification" (Ferguson, p. 90). As Black and Latino boys become disengaged because of the stigma attached to their disproportional rates of detention and suspension, they become more susceptible to dropout and failure (see Gregory, et. al., 2010; Rios, 2011; Skiba et. al., 2000).

Gender differences are key to consider in schooling outcomes. In particular, gender gaps in school achievement are wider among students of color than they are for Whites. Studies have found that Black boys display a greater decline in self-concept (i.e. how one views and evaluates themselves considering facets of self like abilities and past experiences, see Wylie, 1974) and academic achievement (e.g. GPA) than females as they transition from freshman to senior year in college (Cokley, 2002). Disparities have been shown at the elementary and secondary school level, as well. In a study looking at the impact of students' race and gender on teacher perceptions in elementary schools,

Rong (1996) showed that girls of color, in particular, more quickly grasp the social and behavioral norms practiced in typical classroom discourses than their male counterparts. Girls have shown higher levels of social and cultural capital that include higher parental expectations and more fluent bilingualism, all of which contribute to an ease in movement between school, community, and home (Goyette & Conchas, 2002). Research shows that Latina females are more likely than Latino males to have higher grade point averages, spend more hours on their homework, hold higher perceptions of school-climate and school support (López, Ehly, & Garcia-Vázquez, 2002) and are more likely to complete high school (Wojtkiewicz & Donato, 1995).

On the other hand, boys of color have greater difficulties in moving between school, community and home. School policies reify notions of Black and Latino boys as deviant, while school discipline practices continually prove deleterious to how boys of color perceive their learning environments (Katz, 1997; López, 2002; Rios, 2011). In schooling environments, Black and Latino boys are more likely to be viewed as having behavioral problems, or to be labeled as “problems,” than their peers from other racial and ethnic groups (Ferguson, 2000; Fine, 1991; Lewis, 2003; López, 2002; López, 2003). Studies have shown schools as places of conflict (López, 2003), as the interactions between young men of color and their teachers and administrators are often marked with strife or apathy (Lynn et al., 2010). For instance, if police patrol the hallways, metal detectors greet students daily, and random locker raids occur regularly, schools become places where those who enter operate in fear and suspicion, making it difficult to teach and learn (Kunjufu, 2013). School cultures that support these disciplinary policies reify notions of Black and Latino males as deviant, dangerous and deficient.

Limited exposure to Black and Latino male teachers. Teachers remain key factors in the success or struggle of Black and Latinos to secure school success. Research has consistently linked school underperformance to failures in the link between teaching and learning in schools (Jackson & Moore, 2006). However, a wide cultural gap exists between the current teacher population and the demographics of increasingly diverse classrooms (Milner, 2010). Studies confirm that teachers can and do harbor negative perceptions of their students of color, which hinder their ability to succeed. Findings from a mixed-gender study exploring the relationship between risk and resiliency factors and academic achievement, suggest that Black students are at an increased risk of being viewed negatively by their teachers (Spencer, 2005). In an elementary school study of the relationship between student ethnicity of and teachers' expectations, McKown and Wienstein (2008) found that teachers held higher expectations for White and Asian students than for their Black and Latino counterparts, which contributed to achievement gaps seen at the end of the academic year.

Lynn, Bacon, Totten, Bridges, and Jennings (2010) studied the persistent school failure of Black male high school students, within a low-performing school situated in a middle-class suburban district. In this school, Black males scored lower on standardized assessments, were overrepresented in special needs classes, and had significantly higher suspension, expulsion and dropout rates. Lynn et al. found that the school culture was tainted with a spirit of hopelessness and defeat, and that teachers and administrators, some of whom were Black, blamed students, their families, and their communities for their school failure.

Some of these negative perceptions might be caused by misunderstandings of the cultural know-how of Black boys. For instance, Banks (1996) notes that the knowledge derived from personal experiences in students' home lives and community cultures might conflict with the "mainstream academic knowledge" being conveyed at school. While parents and community members draw from their own cultural know-how to socialize children to the norms of home, community and family, teachers and other educational stakeholders draw from their own cultural know-how and the curriculum and pedagogical assumptions of the school. Gay (2000) notes that while most teachers do not expound racist ideologies, they might be cultural hegemonists who expect students to behave according to the school's cultural standards of normality.

Deficit-based thinking among teachers is highlighted by ideologies positing the blame for school failure on individual students and not the social forces imposed upon them (Valencia, 1997; Valencia & Black, 2002). Teachers viewing students through deficit lenses may seek to purge students of their own cultural-based knowledge and replace or remediate, not complement, their ways of knowing with dominant and more mainstream cultural knowledge, norms, and behaviors (Valencia, 1997). Researchers have continually found that teachers who view students from deficit perspectives usually harbor low expectations, which contributes to low academic achievement (Barry & Lechner, 1995; Irvine & Irvine, 1983; Irvine & York, 1993; Sleeter, 2001).

For instance, Davis (2003) found that Black boys enter school with high regard for their schools and their teachers, however, this optimism declines as they move through the early grades. Increased awareness of school and social barriers and the negative messages they receive from their teachers contributes to this decline. It is

important to note that scholars have found that teachers of color may harbor negative perceptions of students of color (see Lynn, et al., 2010). In addition, scholars have also found that White teachers can build crucial bridges to students of color in their classrooms and be successful at stimulating achievement among diverse student groups (Milner, 2010). However, Black and Latino boys still have few role models who look like them working within schools.

According to data compiled from the U.S Department of Education, 85 % of teachers are White, and 75 % are female (Aud et al., 2011). This means that Black and Latino boys will spend the majority of their P-12 classroom experiences with teachers who share neither their gender nor their racial/ethnic identity (Landsman & Lewis, 2006). This lack of male-presence in schools is problematic, particularly given that over 70 % of Black and 50% of Latino children are born to unwed mothers, and many are growing up in homes with no fathers (McLanahan et al., 2010). Moreover, Kunjufu (2013) points out that fatherlessness is even more problematic if we consider that in most schools, Black boys will rarely see another Black man, and if they do, he will not be a classroom teacher. In school, Black boys are more likely to see Black men in the role of a custodian, a security guard, or a Physical Education teacher. Kunjufu's assertions align with research findings showing that few Black and Latino males teach in K-12 schools. Drawing from the U.S Census' American Community Survey (ACS) from 2009, Toldson and Lewis (2012) report that the Black and Latino male teachers together make up a little over 3% of the K-12 teaching force, which is gravely disproportionate to the number of Black and Latino male students (approximately 17%) occupying classroom seats. Thus, when

looking for ways to ameliorate achievement gaps, attention must be drawn to the significant lack of males of color in the teaching force.

In addition to having few male teachers, studies have shown that Black and Latino students are disproportionately taught by novice or inexperienced teachers (Milner, 2006), and in urban schools, where most Black and Latino males are concentrated, teacher turnover rates are high (Ingersoll, 2001). One study showed that teachers seek transfers out of urban schools populated by Black and Latino students due to the characteristics of the students themselves – in particular, their race and achievement levels – and not because of compensation (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004). In their quantitative study, Hanushek et al., speculate that teachers who may want to live closer to the schools where they teach, avoid schools serving high populations of Blacks and Latinos because they prefer to not live in the communities neighboring these schools. This trend highlights indirect racial undertones, which are particularly problematic for the schooling outcomes of students. If teachers leave urban schools because of the characteristics of the students or their communities then this suggests that they may have harbored negative perceptions of their students while they were in charge of stimulating their learning and achievement.

It is essential that we consider the school-based structural factors that work to impede the success of Black and Latino boys. Blocked access to higher level courses because of tracking, school discipline factors, cultural gaps between school and student, and the lack of access to male teachers of color all point to how difficult it is for schools to adequately prepare Black and Latino males for college or post-secondary training. While this review is not exhaustive, the intent was to provide much of the context underlying the current condition, career status and college trajectories of Black and

Latino males. While some of the studies cited previously considered how school culture played out in the lived experiences of Black and Latino male students, the following section will closely explore what culture is, how it operates within schools and show its relation to student outcomes.

How have Scholars Conceived of *culture*?

There is no precise and widely accepted definition of the term “culture,” as different scholars, theorists, and researchers approach the meaning and usage of the term in various ways (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Lecompte & Preissle, 1993). Most broadly, when conceptualizing culture, most ethnographers and anthropologists are interested in interpreting how individuals within social groups make meaning both of each other and their environment. However, while the individual is a central actor, culture extends far beyond the individual. This foundational construct – the salience of moving beyond the individual – is key in understanding culture as the basis of extending or re-creating culture among social groups and implies the explicit teaching and learning involved in cultural reproduction (see Bourdieu, 1977). Individuals do not just create a culture, nor are they just given or choose to adopt one. Individuals are taught culture intentionally and unintentionally through interactions with other cultural group members; they learn it through similar languages and discourse, and their survival and success within a culture depends primarily on how well they master and reproduce the most desirable of cultural norms (see Anderson-Levitt, 2006; Wolcott, 1987).

Studies of School Culture

Schools are designed to convey academic skills and content knowledge, while simultaneously work to “socialize students toward the norms, values, and behaviors that will promote their success in society at large” (Garcia & Guerra, 2006, 107). The cultural

knowledge taught in this socialization process is consistent with the dominant concepts, paradigms and experiences of mainstream society (Banks, 1996). For instance, students are expected to sit quietly in class, raise their hands to be called on, wear “appropriate” clothing, and adhere to other middle-class norms for professional social interaction. In this regard, traditional schooling can be viewed as a tool for dominant cultural transmission, as the norms, values, and beliefs of the dominant group are most likely to be reflected in the curriculum and pedagogical practices of teachers (Garcia & Guerra, 2006). However, as schools reflect dominant societal values, research has shown that low-income students of color continually struggle to find success because of hidden and subtractive practices at work in schools or institutions (Valenzuela, 1999). Valenzuela, in her ethnographic study of a Mexican-American youth in a high school in Houston, Texas, found that "underachieving" students were neither anti-social nor lazy. Nor did they oppose education. Rather, she found that students opposed *schooling*, viewing their schooling processes as disrespecting and devaluing various facets of their identities. Valenzuela (1999) posited that schools like the one she studied are *subtractive* and “are organized formally and informally in ways that fracture students’ cultural and ethnic identities, creating social, linguistic, and cultural divisions among the students and between the students and staff” (p. 5). Studies like Valenzuela’s points to the need to consider the invisible norms and practices operating within schools that are best studied through the lenses of school cultures.

A construct similar to school culture, referred to as “school ethos,” references the sharing of attitudes, values, and beliefs that bond various individuals within a school community (Grant, 1988). It is sometimes used in concert with school culture and school

climate to understand the “quality of life” of the school (Gant, 1988). More specifically, school climate, usually understood by researchers through survey data from parents, students and faculty, is associated with the social and mental health, welfare, and safety of school community members. It is directed at understanding how schools promote the mental, social, and academic welfare of school members, and because it is aimed at understanding the myriad and seemingly intangible workings of schools, school climate is another term usually linked to understandings of school culture. In a recent review of over 200 articles since 1970s on school climate, Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, Higgins-D’Alessandro (2013) posit five main facets of school climate: (a) Safety (e.g. rules and norms, physical and emotional safety), (b) Relationships (e.g. respect for diversity, school connectedness and engagement), (c) Teaching and Learning (e.g. social, emotional, ethical, and civic learning; service learning, support for professional relationships), (d) Institutional Environment (e.g. physical environment, resources, supplies), and (e) the School Improvement Process (e.g. the school reform measures in place).

In institutional-based conceptions of culture, the unit of analysis is the organization or society at large framing the actions, beliefs, perceptions and interactions of individual actors (Small, Harding and Lamont, 2010). Scott (1995, as cited in Small, Harding and Lamont, 2010) posits three conceptions of institutions: as formal rules of codified behavior seen as laws or rules, as norms of appropriate behavior enforced through informal sanctions, and as taken-for-granted understandings framing how actors perceive their circumstances. Other scholars have considered culture differently especially in many recent studies examining factors related to school culture and minority students’ school leaving patterns.

For instance, drawing from Argyris's (1999) notion of organizational culture as "theories of action," Patterson, Hale, and Stessman (2007) posit that in school settings, faculty and staff might engage in cultural practices that seem effective to them, but may not be experienced as such by students and their families. In this regard, dissonance might reside between the theories of action utilized by faculty and other school personnel and those utilized by students and their parents (Patterson et al., 2007). In their study of an urban high school, Patterson, Hale, and Stessman (2007) investigated how contradictions between students' home cultures and the structure and culture of the school contributed to the high level of dropout. Utilizing a qualitative case study, Patterson et al. found that while administrators and teachers espoused a value of student diversity, the manner in which they talked about students, particularly 1st generation Latino students, showed evidence of unacknowledged deficit beliefs and little regard for students' academic, cultural, and social needs. Many teachers and administrators blamed Black and Latino students and their families for their lack of success and utilized instructional practices that did not respond adequately to student needs. Negative assumptions about families' economic status and desire for academic success worked in concert with other beliefs and practices to create a culture of bureaucracy (see Argyris, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1997) and further disconnection between school and familial culture.

While some studies look at school cultures as operating broadly, others look at specific cultures working in and among faculty and students, which might create detrimental outcomes. In their research on the disproportional numbers of minority students in special education, Harry and Klingner (2006) considered the beliefs and

attitudes held by school personnel about both academically struggling children and special education to comprise a *culture of referral* in schools. Key to teachers' and administrators' beliefs were how they viewed students' low performance or behavior as indicative of what Harry and Klingner noted as "something else" – like invisible norms, assumptions, and beliefs – at work in the minds of teachers, or rather how much they felt the student belonged among other students given their academic or social adjustment. In their interviews and observations, Harry and Klingner (2006) found that administrators' beliefs and policies were stronger determinants of student placement in special education than the characteristics of the children themselves.

One of the major contributions of scholars investigating school culture is the consideration of how school cultures work in the realm of small school reform and dropout prevention (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009). Research has shown significant correlations between smaller school settings and lower dropout rates, higher attendance, (Raywid, 1998; Wasley, et al., 2000), and the higher achievement among Black and Latina/o students (Rodríguez, 2008) and Black male students, in particular (Conchas & Noguera, 2004). While much is known about some of the favorable outcomes related to small schools, little is known about how small school create cultures of higher achievement and how students respond and participate within this culture.

Brown and Rodríguez (2009) investigated the dropout experiences of two Latino males within the context of the cultural and structural aspects of school. They move beyond explanations of school dropout that locate the problem within the individual (i.e. race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or other factors that place students "at risk" for dropping out) or institution (i.e. family background, school size, school location, policies

and practices within the school) (Rumberger & Rodríguez, 2002 as cited in Brown & Rodríguez, 2009). Instead they view individual and institutional factors as linked and co-constructed. Through examining different aspects of schooling that are thoroughly entangled and pertain to both institutional aspects of schools and individual experiences of students, Brown and Rodríguez note that the greatest possibility for understanding of why students leave school is in understanding how structures and school culture impact students' decisions to engage with or leave school. From this perspective, for instance, the effect of being a low-income Latino male student cannot be isolated from how schools normally respond to low-income Latino male students. Factors including low academic expectations, menial curriculum, lack of caring, gendered and racialized stereotypes and overburdened staff – elements of school culture – contributed to why participants became disengaged in school. Findings suggested that educational neglect and social and intellectual alienation were institutional effects that impacted both the educational experiences of students and their eventual decisions to dropout.

Rodríguez (2008) situated his study of two urban high school cultures within the discussion of the larger discourse on the small school movement in educational reform. Drawing from the voices of 20 low, middle and high achieving students across one large and one small school, Rodríguez conducted semi-structured interviews and observed students in classroom and in non-classroom contexts like the cafeteria, and in the hallways, to analyze the role that personalization played in the culture of the school. The concept of personalization is often associated with research supporting the notions that stronger student-adult relationships lead to increased student engagement and more favorable academic outcomes (see Conchas, 2001; Fine, 1998; Stinson, 2010). Rodríguez

(2008) considered school culture through the lens of three facets of personalization, which significantly influenced their experiences across the two schools: the personal feel of relationships, the role of respect, and how a healthy balance of encouragement and support effectively served student needs.

Balance between high expectations and high support is key (Katz, 1999), as studies have found that care is an essential component within school cultures that bolster the success of low-income minority students (Antrop-González & De Jesús; 2006; Valenzuela, 1999), findings from other studies warn against losing the importance of rigor in educators' efforts to care for students. In a study of a small urban high school, Rivera-McCutchen (2012) found that while school practitioners showed high levels of care for students, by attending to their affective needs (e.g. "soft care"), students were not held to high academic standards (i.e. "hard care"), which led to future academic underperformance and a lack of college-readiness. In this study, the same teachers who remained responsive to students' emotional needs held deficit-laden notions of their academic capabilities.

Other studies have found the need to create deliberate college-going cultures within high schools (Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Knight-Diop, 2010; McKillip, Godfrey, & Rawls, 2012). College-going cultures are highlighted by a rigorous academic curriculum, an attention to how youth develop college plans and aspirations, a clear mission statement, and college services that are both coordinated and collective (Corwin & Tierney, 2007). Key to creating college-going cultures is the alignment between institutional goals and practices and interpersonal structures of care operating within schools (Knight-Diop, 2010).

Knight and Marciano (2013) extends this work, and drawing from culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994), discusses facets of what makes up a culturally relevant, school wide, college-going culture. Such a school culture incorporates aspects of the cultural backgrounds of students, particularly as these relate to all elements of the college-going process beginning in the ninth grade, if not earlier (Knight & Marciano, 2013).

While schools are charged with conveying academic and social skills to students, they do so within a school culture that is both unique to the school but also reflective of the larger values of the society within which it is situated. Schools also convey the knowledge skills and dispositions needed for success within U.S. society, and many times for Black and Latino males within urban contexts, the culture of the school runs contrary to the cultures of the homes, neighborhoods, and families from which students come.

Summary

When viewed together, these bodies of literature string together scholarly understandings of how Black and Latino adolescent males conceive of their futures given their historical experiences, their current status with regards to their condition, careers and college preparation, and how school culture might be a key site for exploring how future selves are developed and sustained. How Black and Latino adolescent boys conceive of their futures given the overlapping frames of condition, career, and culture, remains a crucial point for understanding the school cultures within which students spend a majority of their day. However, while studies have considered the educational aspirations, possible selves, and future orientations of adolescents, few have seriously considered the perspectives and voices of Black and Latino males given the contexts of

their schools in an in-depth way. Even fewer studies have considered this group through the lens of a qualitative inquiry using school culture as a central variable of analysis, and no studies appear to take up this subject using intersectionality as an analytical tool. Studies, like Hubbard's (2005), continue to urge researchers to consider how gender and race identities prove salient in the school achievement of students of color. Thus, this study sought to draw lines of understanding between how Black and Latino boys conceive of their future selves and the cultures that operate within their schooling environments using an intersectional tool for analysis. Parents, community, and other social factors impact how Black and Latino boys think and act on their futures, however, given the salience of school and its role in the lives of adolescents, this study worked to determine the connections that existed between school cultures and these students' future selves. The next section will provide a model for schools that centralizes school culture as operating within a complex system of interlocking power domains. This conceptual framework utilizes intersectionality as a theoretical lens to make sense of school cultures.

Conceptual Framework

My conceptual approach to schools is influenced by intersectionality framed in the scholarship of sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (2009). In the following section, I will briefly discuss the theoretical and historical underpinnings of intersectionality. At its core, intersectionality considers how multiple categories of difference interact within the contexts of social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of both the distribution and use of power (Davis, 2008). Legal theorist Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) brought significant scholarly attention to "intersectionality" as a tool for understanding how the multiple intersecting dimensions of race and gender impacted the employment experiences of women of color.

In this work, she posited that neither gender- no race-based lenses, alone, could adequately explain the nature of oppression experienced by women of color (Crenshaw, 1989). Two years later, intersectionality gained more attention with Crenshaw's (1991) groundbreaking piece on the political and representational aspects of violence among women of color. Interactions between power, privilege and penalty, based on identity markers, as described by Crenshaw, not only work against women of color. They also negatively impact men who are marginalized by race, class, age, ability-level, and sexual orientation. Interlocking dynamics of oppressive power are present in the lives of all people. While they work to marginalize some and privilege others based on facets of social identity.

Most early writings on intersectionality focused solely on “the experiences of Black women, to the exclusion of other women of color and of men” (Manuel, 2006, p. 177). This focus is understandable, given that intersectionality developed in response to, particularly second wave, White feminist perspectives, which silenced the voices of Black women. Black women and others promoted intersectional arguments during what would be called the third wave of feminism, a movement which began during the early 1970s that brought voice to the experiences of from multiple racially and ethnically marginalized groups. For instance, Latina feminism, which similarly engaged issues of sexuality, race, class, and gender, emerged during the 1970s and 1980s, and was hallmarked with Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) classic volume *Borderlands/La Frontera*. In addition, Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa's (1981) edited volume, *This Bridge Called My Back*, reflected the diversity of women of color across racial and ethnic lines

and highlighted the intersectional writings of some of the most widely regarded third wave feminist thinkers of the era.

While most widely used by scholars in gender and ethnic studies, intersectionality has been used to investigate the experiences of marginalized individuals in fields and disciplines across the spectrum of academic inquiry and social theorizing. Scholars investigating inequality and marginalization in public policy (Manuel, 2006), teaching and learning in preK-12 education (Grant & Zwier, 2011; Irizarry, 2007), college teaching and higher education (Dill, 2009; Jones & Wijeyesinghe, 2011), political science (Hancock, 2007), and health care (Zambrana & Dill, 2006), to name a few, have all drawn on intersectionality as a basis for framing approaches to difference and inequality.

In education literature, increased attention has recently been given to the importance of race, class, gender, etc., intersections, for practice and policy. For example, some educational researchers have considered identity markers of race, gender, class, and geography (Howard, 2008), while others have looked considered race, class, gender and ability (Connor, 2006), language (Irizarry, 2007), and sexual orientation (Akom, 2009; McCready, 2004). Scholars choosing intersectionality as a tool to understand the schooling experiences of marginalized youth of color find that intersections between various facets of students' identities are salient in understanding why some students may display higher academic outcomes than others. For instance, school policies aimed at improving achievement outcomes for Black and Latino boys may fall short of their goal if students' gender or race, alone, are considered in programmatic implementation.

Intersectionality seeks to tease out the sometimes-invisible nuances of various social identities. For example, how a middle-class Black boy might experience a school

policy differently from a Black boy from a low-income family. A Latino boy born in the United States might not benefit from a program focused primarily on the needs of Latino immigrants. A Black boy whose mother attended, even if she did not graduate from college, might reflect a little more of the cultural know-how about college going than a boy whose mother did not attend college at all. As a result, the mother with college experience would be able more easily facilitate the college going process of her son, based in part because of her familiarity of the process. Intersectionality, in this example, helps one unpack how his race transforms when intersected with his class. School policies or programs aimed at supporting Black and Latino males, which use practices that essentialize students' identities based on one or two identity markers like gender and race, may prove ineffective in helping students who may have different experiences because of intersections of race, gender, religion, language, sexual orientation, or class.

Davis (1999) investigated how race, gender and sexuality intersected in a suburban, middle school setting and how social and experiential forces within this context informed these identities. He found that normative masculine codes permeated the school culture, and were reified and affirmed by teachers, administrators and subsequently, other students. However, these codes were constructed by interconnections of race, class, sexuality and gender, and simply categorizing Black males through racial lenses essentialized them, and closed off understandings of how the complexity of their multiple positions were nurtured, performed and even perfected at school (Davis, 1999). School cultures worked to confirm hetero-normative hypersexuality among males where Black boys, whose gendered expressions did not fit the prescribed raced and gendered

notions of Black boyhood, were demonized as “gay” regardless of whether or not they were actually attracted to males.

Davis, drawing from Hunter (1993 as cited in Davis, 1999) posits the term *sissy* as particularly useful because of its usage primarily within the Black community to describe gay and gender non-conforming males. To Davis, Black sissies, who were constructed by the cultural weight of the racial and sexualized myths of Black males, occupy a complex social space in schools. This complexity was reified in schools because Black sissies, who defy both racial and gender codes in school contexts, were constantly juggling and negotiating their legitimacy and place within these two groups.

According to Davis, schooling practitioners must seek to build more inclusive school spaces, as traditional school cultures worked to create monolithic developmental zones for students, which both stifled the engagement, creativity of students and promoted the formulation and performance of incomplete identities.

While studies, like Davis’s (1999), utilizing intersectionality differ in their approaches and findings, what remains constant is a close consideration of how and where power operates in relationship to both identity and macro-level dynamics in the lived experiences of marginalized individuals. This study draws from intersectionality in both how school cultures are conceived and will be used as an analytical tool to understand findings.

This study posits that schools operate as a site of power in the lives of both students and educators. The conception of power used in this study is not based in an individual power that is wielded by any one person, or a power that resides solely in the hands of a few members, such as administrators and teachers. Rather, the conceptual

model that I propose views power as an “intangible entity that circulates within a matrix... to which individuals stand in varying relationships” (Collins, 2009, p. 292).

Collins (2009) writes that systems of power are organized as a “matrix of domination” (p. 294), in which four interrelated domains of power, namely, *structural*, *disciplinary*, *cultural*, and *interpersonal*, organize oppression for marginalized individuals by producing and reinforcing unequal power relations. According to Collins (2009), “The structural domain organizes oppression, whereas the disciplinary domain manages it. The hegemonic [i.e. cultural] domain justifies oppression, and the interpersonal domain influences every lived experience and the individual consciousness that ensues” (p. 294). Further, Collins notes that in the U.S, “the particular contours of each domain of power illustrate how intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation are organized in unique ways” (p. 294). Thus, considering power domains is essential in understanding the multiple forms of oppression faced by various marginalized groups.

Drawing from Collins (2009), I posit that schools reflect and enact *cultural power*. Cultural power is comprised of the values, beliefs and commonsense norms traditionally reflected in broader U.S. society and usually upheld by the actions of administrators, teachers and others in power in schools. Culture, as a domain of power, works in and through school practices at all levels and, thus, is infused within school culture.

This study views school cultures as comprised of the prevalent belief systems, values, expectations, and assumptions that operate through symbols, traditions, and interactions both between and among students, teachers, administrators, and staff within

school spaces. School cultures act as a critical link between the other domains of power working in schools. School cultures both justify and reflect the ways schools organize themselves (i.e. structural domain) to manage school members (i.e. disciplinary domain) and they influence and govern ways that individuals interact with each other (i.e. interpersonal domain) through sometimes-invisible commonsense norms (i.e. cultural domain). Thus, school cultures influence and are influenced by various intersecting domains of power that make up how schools are structured, organized, and operated to serve the needs, direct the actions, and shape the beliefs and understandings of students, school staff, faculty, and administrators¹⁰.

In the following section, I discuss in more detail how intersecting domains of power, particularly how structural, disciplinary, and interpersonal domains operate as power in schools and serve as key facets of the model I use as a conceptual framework. While structural, disciplinary and interpersonal domains inform this proposed dissertation, understanding school cultures, as encompassed in the supposed shared beliefs among students, teachers, and administrators, is the focal point of this study in an effort to understand how power works as an entity to influence how Black and Latino males conceive of their future selves.

An Intersectional Power Model for Urban School Culture

Earlier in this chapter I explored salient literature on how the condition, post-secondary education/college trajectories, and career status of Black and Latino males, revealed numerous ways males of color continue to be situated at the bottom of many indicators of school achievement (e.g. disproportional school graduation rates, college

¹⁰ Students are not the only ones whose psychological and emotional needs are met in schools. Teachers, administrators, and staff rely on schools to give them a sense of purpose, belonging, and satisfaction.

completion rates, suspension and expulsion) and socioeconomic wellbeing (e.g. imprisonment, unemployment). While each of the domains of power described by Collins (2009) work to perpetuate the underperformance of Black and Latino males within schools this study is particularly interested in understanding how the *cultural domain*, operationalized in school cultures, shape students' conceptions of their future selves.

Hegemonic cultural ideologies found in symbols and images, work to create and maintain a "system of 'commonsense' ideas that support the right to rule" (Collins, 2009, p. 302), and further subjugate individuals based on race, class, gender, and sexual orientation differences. The commonsense and taken for granted way that schools operate is supported by discourses and practices that position it as the most ideal cultural norm.

School cultures are infused with commonsense discourses that support cultural hegemonic practices. *Cultural hegemony*, posited by Antonio Gramsci (1929-1935/1971), is a concept wherein the cultural norms, styles, beliefs and practices of those representing the dominant and mainstream of a society are privileged over and at the expense of the cultures of all other groups. These dominant cultural norms, beliefs, and traditions work to create "common sense" understandings of structures among those within both the dominant and non-dominant populations. Individuals adopt common sense understandings as a means to cope with privilege or the oppression they face as a result of their status within the cultural hegemony. However, the perceptual limitations of common sense can blind individuals to the broader structures that work to maintain their privilege or oppression.

Cultural hegemonic practices prevail in settings where dominant cultural, political, social, or class ideologies collide or compete with those of sub-dominant ethnic,

cultural or racial groups. One example is found in Paul Willis's (1977) study of a group of working-class English males in school. The "lads" rejected the value of securing an upper-level career and the subsequent higher social positioning that comes with accepting the dominant cultural values of the school. To the "lads," schoolwork was for "sissies." When school officials worked to enforce the value of schoolwork or "mental labor," the lads actively resisted by appropriating working-class values and acting-out brashly against "sissy" teachers. These students appeared to reconcile with and even take pride in the idea that they would be relegated to low-level menial manual labor. According to Willis, this was based on the values and cultural beliefs imbued in their families and among other working-class community members' assumptions of future job prospects. For the lads, even though manual work was dirty, exploitative, exhausting, and held in low-regard, it was also manly and active.

While the lads in Willis's (1977) study actively resisted school as an affront to their own cultural values, ultimately, their actions reinforced lower-caste social and economic positioning and, thus, cultural hegemonic processes. While Willis's participants were White working class males in a British context, it is especially important to note that cultural hegemonic practices and cultural transmission occurring in schools can be problematic particularly for ethnic and linguistically marginalized students, especially for Black and Latino males. While Black and Latino boys may act counter to school practices (e.g. skipping classes they deem boring or disengaging from academic work that does not related to their lived experiences), they in essence further compound their problems and receive further marginalization within the school community through sanctioning.

Given hegemonic cultural ideologies, the cultural/hegemonic domain reflects common-sense understandings that are pervasive in broader US culture and are mirrored in the school culture. School cultures are comprised of the sights, sounds, and even the smells of what is common and valued in society. Conversely, behaviors, knowledge, and norms devalued in society are sanctioned or stifled in schools. For schools, the hegemonic domain operates within both the social and academic curriculum. The social curriculum describes the lessons students learn, both explicit and implicit (by teachers, peers, administrators), about how to think and conduct themselves. One way this curriculum is taught is through a system of rewards and sanctions. Students are rewarded for conforming to the model of a "good student," as defined by the culture of the school. Jules Henry noted this trend 50 years ago, when he wrote "School metamorphoses the child, giving it the kind of Self the school can manage, and then proceeds to minister to the Self it has made" (1963, p. 292). In this regard, children most successful in school are not only those who score the highest on exams, but those who adhere to both the encoded and hidden rules of "proper" behavior as dictated by schools. Students who do not look, sound, or act in ways that society deems normal, are often the same students who do not meet the social standards set forth by the school. And far too often, these students encounter barriers to social success, due to racism, ethnocentrism, gender- and class-biases, and homophobia.

The cultural/hegemonic domain speaks to what is traditional and accepted in broader social discourses, and reified in the school. For instance, it may be commonsense that males play football, while females cheerlead at their games. This is a gendered notion supported by dominant U.S culture and mirrored in high schools across the nation.

The ways that Black and Latino males walk, dress, and interact with their peers, teachers and coaches are sometimes viewed as violating school and broader, social norms (Rios, 2011). This reflects a mismatch between students' home and community cultures, and the practices of schools, which are supported by White middle-class ideologies (Irvine, 1990). Schools often respond to these mismatches by invalidating the home and community cultures of students of culture. However, work by Luis Moll and his colleagues (Gonzales, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Moll & Gonzalez, 2004) shows how schools could tap into the *funds of knowledge* students bring into the classroom, and use culturally specific understandings to bridge gaps between family and community knowledge and school-based academic content. In addition, teacher dispositions and school practices that reflect culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and culturally responsive (Gay, 2000) pedagogy, have been shown to bolster the school successes of ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse students. Culturally relevant/responsive pedagogy encourages teachers and other practitioners to capitalize on the linguistic and cultural understandings of their students in the processes of teaching and learning.

More recently, scholars have questioned whether pedagogy that responds to students' cultural understandings is enough. Paris (2012) posits the need for *culturally sustaining pedagogy*, an approach that fosters a continuity of multicultural influences of a diverse population to achieve pluralistic and democratic aims in U.S. society. In this regard, culturally sustaining pedagogy not only responds to students' cultural know-how, but also works to sustain the "cultural and linguistic competence of their communities

while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence” (Paris, 2012, p. 95).

Thus, cultural or hegemonic ideologies shape what counts as knowledge in schools, and what knowledge is worth sharing. School cultures are influenced by hegemonic ideals that are based in a shared understanding of how schools work and should work. When students comply with practices shaped by hegemonic notions, they are rewarded. When students do not comply, schools often respond with sanctions that take the form of suspension, academic failure, isolation, and even expulsion. As the academic curriculum itself provides evidence for what counts as valid knowledge in schools, the decisions teachers make in the classroom, as instructional leaders, are paramount in this domain. Questions that I considered within the cultural domain of power included the following:

- What’s commonsense at the school and how is this reinforced through invisible norms governing visible practices?
- What is valued at the school?
- What counts as validated knowledge?

Summary

This conceptual framework clearly pinpoints power as a crucial element in the make-up and functioning of schools through the consideration of the structures, disciplinary components, and interpersonal workings of a school. From this perspective, school culture, which reinforces power hierarchies and "justifies oppression" (Collins, 2009, p. 294), is central to how students understand themselves within schools and broader society. Thus, this framework for understanding power in schools considers how

the institution organizes itself and functions in a way that shapes Black and Latino males' imaginations of their future selves.

This study examined how school culture functions in ways that stimulate, sustain, limit, and constrict the future selves of Black and Latino males. This study centered on school culture as a main context to understand the future selves of Black and Latino boys. The following chapter details the methodology I employed during the study both the school culture and the future selves of Black and Latino boys.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into how the culture of their high school contexts shapes how Black and Latino male adolescents conceive of their “future selves.” In this regard, this study was interested in adolescents’ meaning-making processes as they both conceptualize and act upon influences within their school surroundings, as a salient context where future selves develop. Specifically, I was interested in how they understood and prepared for their futures in relation to post-secondary education, potential careers, and the quality of life they desire for themselves. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How, if at all, are Black and Latino adolescent boys’ conceptions of their future selves shaped by school culture within an urban high school context?
 - a) What is the culture of the school, as evidenced by beliefs and perceptions, social interactions, symbols, and normative practices?
 - b) How do Black and Latino adolescent boys conceive of their future selves?
 - c) What relationships exist between facets of school culture and how Black and Latino adolescent boys conceive of their future selves?

Research Design

Since I sought to understand context, culture, and individuals’ meaning-making processes and everyday experiences, I took a qualitative, ethnographic approach to research, which was most optimal for this study (see Miles & Huberman, 1994). In particular, this study was conducted as a qualitative case study. The case study will focus on the relationship between school culture and students’ experiences and understandings of their future selves.

This case study employed qualitative methods. According to Morgan (2011), qualitative inquiry “encourages people to make sense of experiences as [they] develop in the course of daily life” (p. 1). Using this approach, this study sought to understand how participants’ made sense of their everyday experiences in school and how these experiences related to their conceptions of their future selves. Interviews and participant observations are signature qualitative data collection methods used to elicit understandings and gather information about contextual factors. These two techniques were used to make accessible what participants were thinking and provide for in-depth descriptions of the school culture.

In addition to keeping within the qualitative methodological tradition, this study took an interpretivist epistemological perspective. Interpretivism holds that individuals make subjective meanings of the worlds within which they work, live, and operate and direct these meanings toward certain objects or things, like school, for instance (Creswell, 2007). These subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically and are not produced by individuals alone but, rather formed through interactions with others. In this regard, study participants negotiate meaning through their schooling environments differently based on their individual experiences with, for example, family history, experiences with race, class, and gender, relationships with teachers, and how others view them. Using an interpretive lens, I sought to understand how and why participants made meaning of their experiences in both similar and different ways.

Merriam (2009) defines a qualitative case study as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 43). This study was bounded by both space and time. Data collection occurred in one school, over the course of an eight-month period

(November 2013 to June 2014). According to Yin (2003), case study is an advantageous methodological approach when examining a phenomenon within its real life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. This is the case of Black and Latino males' conceptualizations of their future selves and school culture, which is just one of numerous influences on these conceptualizations. Further, given that their understandings of their future selves were both influenced by and directed toward school contexts, how students view their future lives in relation to school and the school itself are inextricably linked. Thus, utilizing a case study approach was a means to tease out the relationship between the school culture and the conceptions of Black and Latino adolescent boy participants.

While this study was not an ethnography in traditional, anthropological terms, it did use ethnographic approaches which are closely aligned with qualitative methods. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) state that, "the value of ethnography as a social research method is founded upon the existence of [naturalistic] variations in cultural patterns... and their significance for understanding social processes" (p. 9). I used an ethnographic approach to examine relationships between aspects of culture and social processes such as academic instruction and interactions between participants and teachers. An ethnographic approach most aptly captures how participants' understandings of their how future selves develop within the cultural context of their schools. The goal was to paint a holistic picture of the school culture by searching for the logical, cohesive pattern of ritualistic ideas and behaviors that characterized the school (Fetterman, 2010).

As noted in chapter two, this study views school cultures as comprised of the prevalent belief systems, values, expectations, and assumptions that operate through

symbols, traditions, and interactions both between and among students, teachers, administrators and staff within school spaces. To study school culture, this study sought to understand cultural meaning within the school through the use of observations captured in field notes. In addition, I examined participants' understandings of the school culture and their future selves, through observations of their social interactions with others and other observed evidence of school culture.

Anderson-Levitt (2006) posits that cultural meaning making occurs in the minds of individuals, who interpret situations and generate behaviors privately. Interviewing is a useful technique to elicit private meaning and for making public what people are thinking. Anderson-Levitt also posits the need to observe social interactions between individuals to see how cultural meaning making occurs. In addition, probing communications such the school website newsletters, and announcements can prove salient to understanding cultural meanings. Lastly, Anderson-Levitt notes that artifacts provide evidence for culture. Building signage, banners, classroom displays and even classroom arrangements are all artifacts that give insight into what is valued, supported, and overtly meaningful in school spaces. Thus, interviews, primarily with participants, and observations of formal and informal school spaces helped to illuminate the culture of the school.

Site Selection

Data was collected from a charter school in a large Mid-Atlantic urban district. Schools in the city mirror residential segregation. According to national data, in 2013 the city's overall population was 49.5% Black, 43.4% White, 10.1% Latino, and 3.9% Asian. However the traditional public schools and public charter schools are overwhelmingly

Black. In particular, 85% of students in public charter schools are Black. However, Metro Collegiate is one of the only charter schools in the city to which White families send their children, and data reveals that this mostly occurs at the elementary level. Further data about racial and ethnic demographics will be considered closely in chapter four.

Metropolitan Collegiate Public Charter School

While some charter schools in the city were founded by lawyers, some by social workers, and others by educational business conglomerates, Metro Collegiate is unique in that it was founded by teachers and families united for the purpose of creating a special school environment for racially diverse students. In a city with over 60 charter schools, Metro Collegiate continues to remain competitive and desirable for families across the racial spectrum.

Many in the city view Metro Collegiate as an outstanding school, with high-level academics, dedicated teachers, all housed within a state-of-the-art facility. Many students were excited, engaged, and parents from all over the city clamored to enroll their children. This study worked to tease out some of the invisible facets that made up this school community, by closely keying in its culture.

Metropolitan Collegiate Public Charter School, is a thriving urban learning center serving nearly 800 diverse students between kindergarten and grade 12. Founded in 2000, Metro Collegiate was created by a group of elementary school teachers and parents, and it has grown into one of the most successful and sought after charter schools for families in the area. Because of its history serving racially diverse students, Metro Collegiate is a school that prides itself on its diversity in terms of race, income level, and academic background. Drawing students from all over the city, Metro Collegiate primarily serves

students from nearby neighborhoods. Metro Collegiate resides in a quiet predominantly middle-class Black neighborhood in an area of town where many middle-class White families are beginning to purchase homes.

Metropolitan Collegiate Public Charter School was chosen as a site for this study because of its racial diversity. In addition, the principal was interested in supporting boys of color, particularly Black boys, and saw my study as an opportunity for Black boys to reflect on their future life outcomes, and their experiences within school. Because of this alignment between my interests and the principal's interest, access was granted and the study began.

Participant Consent and Confidentiality

Informed, voluntary consent was obtained from all participants through a consent form written in standard American English—this includes an assent form for participants under the age of 18. At the request and recommendation of Metro Collegiate's principal, the letter accompanying the consent form also was translated into Spanish for parents who needed this. Interestingly, rarely did participants request the Spanish version. My understanding as to the reason behind their disinterest in the Spanish language letter was that many participants were accustomed to explaining these school-related documents to their parents.

At the start of each interview, participants were informed about the nature and purpose of the study, how the data would be used, and what would be expected of them if consent were given. Participants were encouraged to ask me questions throughout the durations of the study and were informed that they may withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.

All of my participants were under the age of 18 and were given consent forms for their parent/guardian to sign and an assent form, which they were asked to sign.

Participants either returned these forms to me, or to Mr. Webber, a reliable supporter of my study. He kept these in his locked classroom, in an envelope in his desk and would provide these for me when students turned them in to him.

It is important to note that the content of this project did not involve any form of deception. The information that was discussed in the interview was described to the participant fully in advance. Participants, were invited to ask me questions about my research process, and most did.

The confidentiality of the school and participants was accomplished through several means. The name and location of the school site was replaced with the pseudonym *Metropolitan Collegiate Public Charter School*. Participants chose a pseudonym of personal significance to them during the initial interview, which was used on all documents related to this study. Great care was taken to protect the identity of participants and the name and location of the school site. Electronic files were secured only on my two private computers. Data was transcribed via an external service (Verbal Ink), but other than that, only I had access to the material collected. Collected data, such as transcriptions and audio-taped recordings will be kept for ten years and then deleted. Written data will be shredded and other computer data will be deleted and files, erased.

Data Sources

Data sources for this study included individual interviews with students, informal conversations with faculty and staff, a focus group interview with four of the five student participants, observations, and artifacts and documents analysis.

Student individual interviews. Interviewing is necessary when the researcher cannot observe how people interpret the world around them (Merriam, 2009). To grasp how student participants understood the culture of the school and their future selves, this study utilized an in-depth interviewing method posited by Seidman (2013). This involves conducting a series of three separate interviews with each participant. Drawing from Seidman (2013), the purpose of the first interview is to put the participants experience in context (See Appendix A). Participants were asked to tell as much as possible about their life in light of both schooling and their hopes for the future. The purpose of interview two was to concentrate on the present lived experiences of participants as it pertains to school (See Appendix B). Participants were asked to focus on what about their typical, daily schooling experiences and to share examples of everyday occurrences in schools. The purpose of the third interview was to have participants reflect on the meaning of their schooling experiences in relationship to the future (See Appendix C). The goal was to urge participants to make sense of how interactions among school-based factors shape their experiences of school and their conceptualizations of their futures in particular ways. Interviews were semi-structured to allow for flexibility for more organic conversations to emerge related to their individual experiences captured in previous interviews. Participants had opportunities to raise issues that may not be directly reflected in the interview protocol, and they were given the space to respond to issues pertinent to ideas that emerged from their previous interviews, school occurrences, and from their own lived experiences. However, the protocol provided specific guideposts to participants to reflect more specifically on issues that were pertinent to the study.

Student interviews occurred after school, usually in the Dean of Discipline's office suite, Mr. Webber's empty classroom space, a conference room, or in the library. Interviews occurred over the course of the eight-month study, with each interview scheduled at least two or three days apart. Given participant schedules, some interviews occurred months apart. Spreading interviews out like this was avoided as much as possible, however, participant extra-curricular, athletic, or academic tutoring schedules sometimes did not allow the time for after school interviews. All interviews were audio recorded using a digital recording device, uploaded to a secure folder, and saved using only participants' pseudonyms. Interviews were then immediately uploaded to the digital file repository for Verbal Ink, the transcription service used for all interviews and the focus group.

School personnel interviews and observations. In addition to student interviews, I also interviewed two other key school personnel. Mr. Webber, the only Black male teacher of an academic subject (history and public speaking) was interviewed two times. While his interview data does not appear within this study, participants discussed him often, and he and his classroom were key sites for observations to occur. In addition to Mr. Webber, Mr. Madison, the Dean of School Culture was also interviewed twice. Some data from his interviews are used in Chapter four. Mr. Madison was responsible for disciplinary concerns, and given participants' relationships with him, data from observing interactions between students and himself are also included. Other school personnel were observed in relationship to their interactions with student participants, but they were not interviewed. Interviews with Mr. Webber and Mr. Madison were centered on understanding the school culture and how the school is preparing and supporting

Black and Latino male students for academic and social success, college, and careers (See Appendix D). These interviews were conducted at the school during their lunch periods, planning periods, and after school. Similar to student interviews, Mr. Webber and Mr. Madison's interviews were audiotaped, uploaded to Verbal Ink and transcribed within a week of the interview.

Informal conversations. Over the course of this study, I had many informal conversations with adults at the school who interacted with or are mentioned as significant by the participants. For example, conversations were had with the principal, the athletic director, the art teacher, a science teacher and many other teachers who currently worked or previously worked with the participants in various manners. This data was not audio recorded. However, many times this data was captured in field notes.

Observations. Observations of participants were conducted in their classrooms and other school spaces like the hallways, gym, the college placement office, the cafeteria, during assemblies and on three field trips. The purpose of these observations was to document participants' interactions with peers, teachers, coaches, and administrators. Through observations of students in natural settings within the school, I was able to better understand the norms, practices, school rituals, and power hierarchies that influenced students' conceptions of their future selves.

Participants were primarily observed in their history course with Mr. Webber, who was open to me not only observing his class, but occasionally participating in various classroom activities. I chaperoned two day long field trips, served as a judge for classroom and school-wide National History Day competitions, and I worked with students in small groups on various projects when asked. These experiences provided me

an intimate look into this one particular teacher's dealings with his classroom and students, all of whom are participants in this study. Mr. Webber was also one of the longest serving teachers on record, having worked at Metro Collegiate for seven years. During his seven years, Mr. Webber had also taught in Metro Collegiate's middle-school level, and because of his longevity, he was particularly familiar with the school culture, had taught three participants while they were in middle school, and watched many students mature through the school.

Participants were observed in various other more informal contexts, but Mr. Webber's class was the key site for observing students in academic contexts. Field notes from these observations were written up and analyzed as a key source of data.

Documents and artifacts. Important school documents and artifacts were also collected and analyzed in order to gain further insight into the school culture and experiences revealed by participants in interviews. Particularly, the school course schedule and student handbook provided key insights into the policies and practices governing both student and teacher norms. The student handbook also detailed the vision, mission, and history of Metro Collegiate, and this information was used as data to understand the school culture explored in the following chapter. The school's website was also a key data source, as it contained updates, announcements, and images salient to how the school not only shared information but also marketed itself to the community. Classroom decorum, hallway decorations, and signage were also key data sources, and photographs were taken of these and used in analysis. These images provided insight into the happenings of the school, and helped to indicate what the school valued and supported. For instance, banners of colleges and universities adorning hallways and

classrooms and the school's governing principals were all featured prominently. In addition, various school events like dances, the weekly empanada and lemonade sales, student groups seeking members, and school dances were all advertised throughout the year. Photographs of these were taken and sometimes discussed in interviews with participants to understand how they experienced these messages. In addition, when these images were not discussed in interviews, they were uploaded with the field notes and analyzed to understand school culture.

Focus group interview. After all but one final student interview was conducted, four student participants – two Black and two Latino – gathered for a focus group interview. This group consisted of all participants from the study, with the exception of one, who could not attend. The purpose was to collectively theorize on the purposes of education in their lives and futures and their future selves, more generally. Another purpose of this focus group was to provide an opportunity for group members to build on each other's ideas, thus a social constructivist epistemic stance supports this methodological choice (Merriam, 2009). The focus group was held in a conference room at the school, lasted approximately 90 minutes, was audiotaped, transcribed and used to understand school culture and various facets of their future selves.

Member checking. After each interview, the audio file was uploaded to the Verbal Ink website to be transcribed. After usually four or five days, transcripts were returned to me, and I would re-check these with the audio file to ensure greater accuracy. At the beginning of follow-up interviews with participants, most student participants were given the opportunity to review their previous interview transcripts for accuracy and clarity. Participants were either given a hard copy to review, or were able to look directly

onto my personal laptop to read their transcripts. Given the time delays between receiving transcripts from the company and meeting with participants, some students were unable to see their transcripts immediately prior to their next interview. However, every attempt was made to ensure that students were able to see their own interview transcripts.

Participants and Recruitment

Recruitment Rationale

Juniors were chosen for the purposes of this study for a few reasons. First, they have had more experience with the school culture than freshmen or sophomores, as they attended the high school longer. In addition, while students engage in the college-going process prior to junior year (see Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000), the official college *planning* process (e.g. PSAT/ACT tests, reviewing solicitation materials from colleges, and the preparation of college application materials) typically begins during junior year. According to research, by 11th grade, students are usually beginning to collect information regarding their post-secondary education and develop concrete plans for both attending and funding their college educations (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999). Since this study sought to understand how school cultures worked to shape how Black and Latino boys conceptualized their future selves, capturing their responses during their 11th grade year would prove optimal to understand the influence of the college-going culture at Metro Collegiate. Particularly, unlike ninth and tenth graders, who traditionally gather information about college through their family and peer networks, 11th graders begin to develop expanded networks of individuals, including school personnel, who provide college-related materials and support college-going processes (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999).

In November of 2013, I met with the principal of Metro Collegiate to garner her recommendations for students who might be interested in participating in this study. I left that initial meeting with a list of ten students, and I shared some of these names with Mr. Webber, the teacher who was first to allow me access to his class. He recommended a few more students and introduced me to some. I gave them permission slips with instructions on how to get them filled out and have them returned. Students were to return these slips to Mr. Webber, who agreed to collect these in an envelope. Early in December, I was also allowed to present my project to all juniors in their class meeting. Approximately 12 students took permission slips during that meeting, and four returned them to Mr. Webber within a few days, while two more returned them after a week. Students were enticed with a University of Maryland College Park tee shirt if they returned their permission slips and were chosen to participate. This served as a key incentive for some participants, while others seemed not to care.

Between the last week of November and the first two weeks of December 2013, I spent time at Metro Collegiate gathering contextual data and doing general observations prior to beginning interviews. After receiving a few permission slips, I discovered that I needed more Black males, as most of the students who returned the permission slips were Latino. During this introductory period I gained critical access to Mr. Webber's class and was afforded the opportunity to chaperone a field trip to a local museum, serve as an informal judge during a debate in his history class, and used time to talk with students who appeared interested in interviewing with me.

The overall study enlisted nine students in total who were interviewed: five Black and four Latino. However, not all students who were interviewed are included in this

study. Three of the initial interviewees were seniors, and while I considered including them as participants, keeping the study focused on juniors permitted me to observe multiple participants at once in 11th grade classrooms. Also, as more juniors returned permission slips and agreed to interview, the need lessened to have seniors in the study. Participants were also difficult to pin-down for interviews. This was the case with another Black junior, who after completing one interview, missed numerous other scheduled interviews. This participant was behind many other students because of previous class failures, found himself in trouble constantly, and while the Dean of School Culture urged him to meet with me to discuss his future, he eventually dropped out of school during April.

Participants

Study participants include 5 US-born Black and Latino male high school students. Three participants are Black, while two are Latino, of Salvadoran heritage. All participants have attended the school for a majority of their high school career. Participants were given the opportunity to choose their own pseudonyms and did so for various reasons including liking of the name, their own interests, dispositions, and ideals of themselves.

Samuel is a 17-year-old Black boy, who lives nearby the school in a house with his mother, twin brother and younger brother. Currently unemployed, his mother previously held a job that afforded her a decent salary that made it possible for Samuel and his two brothers to have a modest, but stable life. As she looks for work, Samuel recognizes that home stability is waning, and as he slowly grows out of his clothes, and

his eyeglasses break, funds are not there to replace and replenish some of these necessities.

Samuel is an introspective and quiet student. He dabbled in skateboarding, but he was known among his peers to be one of the most avid video gamers at Metro Collegiate. Teachers liked Samuel, and while he was never the most stellar student, he kept up in his classes, never bothered his fellow peers, never found himself in trouble, and worked well in groups. His grandparents lived close to the family, and provided a key resource to them as they grew up.

Malik is a 17-year-old Black boy, who lives in a quiet neighborhood five miles from Metro Collegiate. Malik has attended Metro Collegiate throughout most of his elementary, middle, and high school career, and has a family well known throughout the school for their long tenure at the school. Malik is a relatively quiet, reserved student, who causes little stir among his peers and teachers. He is known to be quite intellectually skilled, but struggles with reading, writing, and completing homework and assignments on time.

Born in the city, he moved with his mother, father, and older sister to Florida, Georgia, and then back to the city when he was a young boy. Malik credits all of the moving to his father's career as a chef in high-end restaurants. Currently, Malik lives with his mother, a local high school administrator, his 20-year-old sister, and his uncle. Malik's father had been terminally ill during our interviews. Many years prior, a minor illness turned terminal when doctors missed an abscess on his spine, which caused Malik's dad to be paralyzed from the chest down. Malik's father has spent the past four years living in hospitals and rehab facilities.

While Malik's mother made a decent income as a dean at a local public high school, the family has struggled with the loss of the father's income and incurring some of the costs of his hospital stays and rehabilitation. To help relieve some of the financial burden, Malik's uncle, his dad's brother, moved into the family home. Three years earlier, Malik's sister graduated from another local charter school and attended a small private college in North Carolina for a semester before discontinuing her education to return home and work at the airport.

For many years, Malik, along with his mother and sister, visited their father in the hospital everyday after school. Trying to parent from his bed grew tough for Malik's father, and as his illness further incapacitated him, Malik and his relationship with his father grew more and more strained. At the time of the interview, Malik rarely visited him, choosing instead to devote more time with his grandmother. When not in school, or visiting with his grandmother, Malik is an avid video gamer. He enjoyed venturing throughout the city with his friends, and watching them skateboard in the various parks set up throughout the area.

King, a Black boy, was 16 when we met, but turned 17 two days after our second interview in late winter. After spending nearly three months conducting classroom observations with a few students that showed interest in participating in my study, I began to recruit students based on teacher recommendations and their interactions with students in classes. In Mr. Webber's lively, engaging, and student centered 11th grade World History course, one particular lesson featured a trial where Christopher Columbus was interrogated by students for the travesties done during his exploration and conquer of

the Americas. King was a captivating and vocal participant in this trial, and after asking for his participation, he agreed.

King was suave, well dressed, athletic, and was a leader among his peer group. His dreams of playing in the NFL were hampered by the school's lack of a football team; however, he and a few others played for another charter school that allowed Metro Collegiate students to join. Because of his boundless energy, his wit, and his opinionated disposition, he found himself involved in teacher and students disputes more often than many other participants. However, those who knew him well recognized his passion, his leadership abilities, his astounding intellect, and his courage to speak his mind. King settled conflicts between students and teachers by confronting unproductive attitudes of peers and telling them that they "need to chill out" when disputes arose.

King and his 12-year-old sister have attended Metro Collegiate off and on for the past five years. King transferred from Metro Collegiate during his ninth grade year to Lincoln High School [pseudonym], the highest ranked non-magnet, non-charter public school in a prosperous section of the city. Lincoln attracted students from all over the city, but most come from the prosperous area surrounding the school. His father allowed him to transfer there for sports, as King excelled in track and field, basketball, and football. After spending a year and a half there, he began to get into conflicts with students from rival neighborhoods. After a large group of students threatened to jump him in what would have been a massive fight, his father un-enrolled him from Lincoln and moved him back to Metro Collegiate.

Lucas, a 17-year-old Salvadoran boy, was consistently one of the top students in his class, achieving nearly a perfect GPA. He came to Metro Collegiate for his

sophomore year, and he quickly became one of the most popular among his peers and teachers for his humble demeanor, stellar work ethic, and fierce determination for academic and extra-curricular advancement.

Lucas grew up all of his life in Parkside Views [pseudonym], the predominantly Latino section of the city. His grandmother, mother, and father, and little brother shared a modest rented home in the area. Lucas's dad is a painter, and his mother cleans office buildings at night. Lucas shared a bedroom with his brother till 2009 when, after his grandmother died from complications related to sickle cell disease, he was able to have his own room.

Perdido, a 17-year-old Salvadoran boy, shared a small apartment with his 13-year-old sister, mother, and father. Perdido's apartment building and low-income neighborhood is mostly Black with a rising Latino population, and is 1.5 miles away from school. Perdido's father is a gardener who has worked to advance himself in a local home and business landscaping company, while Perdido's mother cleans office buildings. The family shares a modest two bedroom, one bath apartment that at one time also housed other relatives, including an uncle who slept in a hammock fashioned across two beams in the living room. Perdido shares his room with his 13-year-old sister. Privacy is tough to achieve, sharing is the law of the home, and invariably his parents find themselves breaking up intense fights and arguments between Perdido and his sister about lengths of time in the shower, dirty clothes strewn about the room, or who spent more time on the family's video gaming system. Perdido's parents moved from El Salvador before he was born to escape poverty and secure a better life for themselves and their future family.

More background information will be shared about each of these participants particularly in chapters four and five.

Researcher Positionality, Risks, and the Research Process

Within the criteria for interpretivist inquiry, Lincoln (1996) writes, regarding researcher positionality, “For standpoint epistemologists, a text which displays honesty or authenticity ‘comes clean’ about its own stance, and about the ‘position’ of the author” (p. 58). Coming clean is important to interpretivists because for them, “Detachment and author objectivity are *barriers* to quality, not insurance of having achieved it” (Lincoln, 1996, p. 58). Therefore, noting how my own positionality, especially regarding how my own gender, racial, and class identity, informed my interpretations of participant responses is important to note.

I came to this study as a former high school English teacher who has worked for years in school settings similar to Metro Collegiate. Thus, I bring both my views of schooling informed by my experiences as a teacher, my unabashedly high hopes and dreams for higher levels of Black and Latino male school achievement, and my own narrative as a Black male to this work. I recognize that while I share the same racial and gender identity as many of my participants, I did not share the same life experiences. For instance, only one of my participants – Malik – had a birth parent who graduated from college.

Conversely, both of my parents graduated from college, and my father has two advanced degrees. My future was shaped through an early assumption that I had no choice but to go to college, and my parents provided every resource needed to ensure that reality occurred. I realize that my parents earned enough money to assure their dream for

my education was achieved, and I recognize that this was not the case for my participants. In addition, my parents provided supplementary educational experiences that provided me professional role models. Through my involvement in both the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church and the local Roman Catholic Church (St. Anthony of Padua), the Boy Scouts of America, sports teams, and music lessons, I was able to explore my own future self beyond the walls of my school and local community. These experiences afforded me tremendous privilege, capital, and life lessons to which some of my participants did not have the opportunity to have, and I acknowledge that fully. I worked to consistently challenge my assumptions and thinking regarding how my age, class, race, gender, and all of the intersections between these various facets of my identity played out in how I interacted with my participants and how I intellectualized their experiences for the purposes of making meaning.

Researching at Metro Collegiate posed great challenges and great rewards. While the principal granted me access to the site, I had to forge my own connections with teachers, students and other administrators. Making connections proved to be quite challenging, as students, were difficult to track down, and few teachers were open to having me observe their classrooms.

Some of the greatest challenges were found in my own interactions with participants. Chasing down participants to interview became a normal occurrence, and on any given day, participants would cancel interview appointments at the last minute, or not show up for scheduled interviews. Since I did not spend every day at Metro Collegiate, some days I would travel to the school for the sole purpose of interviewing a student after the end of day bell rang. Texting participants the day interviews were scheduled was a

crucial task, but since three participants did not have reliable cell phone access, some days I would be disappointed to discover that they had already left.

Some of my participants were quite hesitant to participate in the study at all, let alone share their deepest reflections on themselves, their families, educational histories, and future desires. While some students like Malik and Lucas agreed to be interviewed without prompting, I actively sought out King, Perdido, and Samuel. When students initially agreed to be interviewed, many appeared alarmed or perplexed as to why I chose them. Usually I chose them because of their presence in class, their stature among their peers, or based upon the advice of teachers. Sometimes I had to use one participant to encourage another participant to agree to be interviewed. This happened in the case of Samuel. I asked Malik if he would encourage Samuel to return his permission slip.

Student participants also were hesitant to share facets of their lives including possible gang involvement, alcohol or marijuana use, experiences with violence, sexual encounters, and the inner-workings of their families. On two occasions in early interviews, Perdido shared information only after the recording device was turned off. As months passed, and participants saw me around the school more, I believe their trust in me grew. Relationship building was key to help assuage their hesitations, and as the interview cycle progressed, participants were willing to share more than in previous interviews about some touchy subjects.

As a former teacher, I knew that the success of my study, as seen in the depth of the candor of participant interviews, was based at least in part on mutual trust that comes from a solid relationship. Scholars write continually about the importance for teachers to build relationships with students (see Milner, 2010), and I utilized this knowledge in my

interactions with participants. Building relationships with students occurred beyond interview and observation time. For instance, I traveled with participants on three field trips. Instead of sitting with the teacher or other adult chaperone, I sat with Samuel on the bus to and from one of the field trips, and was able to build a relationship by checking in with him using light banter. I checked on participants via text messaging, offered them advice, and was frequently around the school. Mr. Webber asked me to serve as a judge during three separate classroom debates. Participants were able to see me during those times, hear my perspectives, and get to know me outside of the role of interviewer and observer.

To attend to their perceived unease, I assured them that I would protect their stories, and that no teacher or administrator would be able to connect them to their critiques of teachers or the school generally. During interviews, I showed my appreciation by always bringing in snacks and drinks for participants to enjoy during our time together. This gesture was appreciated and became expected.

To attend to other facets of positionality, I was careful and intentional in how I talked with and around them. I would incorporate slang, avoid academic jargon, and allowed them to call me by my first name if they wished. Participants were free to use profanity, pose questions about my life choices, and while informality grew between participants and I, so did mutual respect. Once, after attending an out of state meeting, I drove nearly two hours back to Metro Collegiate to interview King. When I arrived, he was gone, and after calling him, he later texted me that he left school for track practice. Our relationship had grown to where I was able to comfortably call him and honestly convey how dismayed I was for driving two hours to meet him and not find him there. He

understood that a simple text message could have saved me time and energy, and that he needed to work on his poor communication skills. While I was apprehensive about confronting him, he told me how much he appreciated the feedback or the “grown man lesson.” Relationships with my participants eventually blossomed. By the end of the year, participants always acknowledged me in the hallway, and many greeted me with confidence and sincerity. Outside of interview time, we discussed their summer plans, I offered them advice on casual matters, and some referred to me as their mentor, a title I proudly hold to this day.

During the research process, analytic memos were used to track how my thinking evolved along these personal lines, in particular, and to ensure that my analysis and interpretations accurately accounted for the perspectives of my participants. These memos captured my thoughts, excitements, anxieties, and frustrations as the research process evolved. Also, each day when I would leave the school, I would usually create an audio recording of my initial thoughts as I drove home to ensure that my initial hunches were recorded.

Data Analysis

Some data was analyzed during the research time at the school. Particularly, each transcribed interview was read and edited prior to follow-up interviews with participants. In qualitative case study methodology, the process of data collection and analysis is recursive and dynamic (Merriam, 2009), thus data was collected and analyzed simultaneously. Emergent findings from observations and interviews informed semi structured interviews and gave key insights into what to look for in observations and other data sources. This approach allowed for the constant refining and adjusting of observation tools, interview protocols and other research tools that are authentic to how

the study unfolds. Specifically, this approach allowed me to listen and read participants' voices to create follow-up questions for individuals and the focus group interview. A very key usage of some of this initial mining of the data was to inform some of the broader themes discussed with participants in the focus group. While some base-level analysis was conducted during the study, all coding and detailed analysis occurred between July and October of 2014, when all observations, interviews, and the focus group, were completed. Data was analyzed and organized around each sub-research question.

Before describing the coding and analyzing process, it is important to provide a brief glossary of terms used for the coding process.

Glossary of Terms

Code Family: This is a grouping of codes along thematic, or relational lines. The user creates code families to group pertinent codes.

Frequency Count: A frequency count is the number of times a particular code is used across various units of data (e.g. participant interviews, field notes, documents).

Query: A query is an analytical search function used to retrieve coded data. After a user defines the conditions for searching, the *query tool* functions by retrieving data grouped by codes or code families (e.g., all quotations coded with both “college” and “school culture”).

Sub-question #1 and #2

What is the culture of the school, as evidenced by beliefs and perceptions, social interactions, symbols, and normative practices? How do Black and Latino male students conceive of their future selves?

Step One

As the first step of analysis, I began analyzing field observations and documents to understand the school culture. During the research process between November 2013 and June 2014, I wrote analytic memos constantly to capture my initial thoughts on daily occurrences in the school and on ideas shared by participants. These analytic memos provided key insights that served as base-lines for more complex ideas uncovered through coding and initial themetizing.

I used Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software to code the analytic memos and field note write-ups for evidence of the school culture as perceived by the messages, values, beliefs, perceptions, operating at the school. Drawing on the domains of power framework, I coded for cultural forms of power. I looked for evidence of which behaviors are rewards and which are sanctioned as well as what knowledge is privileged and what knowledge is devalued. I also looked for evidence that these may be related to race, gender, and/or language. Coding was both deductive and inductive. Deductive codes were broad for the domain of school culture. Examples of deductive codes from field notes and observations included hallway, cafeteria, discipline, field trip, school dance, and school assembly, and others. In addition to data drawn from observations, participant interviews were an even greater source of data for school culture. Deductive codes from participant interviews included those mentioned above, were more narrow in their focus, and included athletics, Black teachers, Latino teachers, daily routine, discipline – being loud, discipline – fighting, discipline – dress code, favorite class, habits of successful students, school failure, and perceptions of teachers, diversity, race, and of white students.

After all the interviews of two participant interviews were coded, more codes emerged inductively. These emerged as significant to the participants and their experiences, but were not reflected in my preexisting definition of school culture. I went back to field notes and observations with inductive codes like relationships with teachers, differential treatment of students, subjective grading, smart kids, dislike of school, reading, writing, and working hard in school. Sixty-eight codes in total were used to understand school culture, alone.

While uncovering aspects of the school culture from participant interviews, I also began initial coding for evidence of how participants conceived of their future selves. Particularly, I worked to find evidence of how student participants perceived their lives in the future, as related to post-secondary education, careers, and quality of life. Deductive codes were drawn from literature, my conceptual framework, and from my analysis of observations and documents. Initially, I worked to understand college, career, and condition broadly as deductive codes, but numerous iterative codes became present. College, for instance, was eventually delineated into over twenty different sub-codes including college choice, college counselor, college major interest, college preparedness, and early influences on college interest.

I constantly engaged in an iterative process, which accounted for data that both corroborated and contradicted my prior judgments of the data. For instance, I returned to the student handbook constantly to confirm school rules and uncover other areas of the mission to look for in the data.

Step Two

After coding all of the participant interviews, field notes, and documents, I went back to code the data again. This was a vital step, because with each participant came new inductive codes. For instance, Malik's initial round of coding landed 97 codes for his four interviews; however, when I added Perdido, more codes became evident, increasing the number to 120. I reviewed each participant this second time considering these additional codes. It is important to note that some codes were not particularly salient for some participants. For instance, codes such as El Salvador, parents' immigration narrative, and Spanish language usage, were naturally not salient to Black participants' experiences.

Once the data was coded a second time, I had over 190 codes used in total. With these codes, I looked for patterns both within and across participants. I also looked for and sought to explain in memos to myself discrepant data, which encompassed evidence that diverged from emergent patterns.

Step Three

In the third step, I began to investigate frequency counts for each code. A frequency count is the number of times a particular code is used for a unit of data. Codes with low frequency counts between 1 and 5 were reconsidered and many were merged with other more robust codes possessing five or more frequency counts. Codes with high frequency counts 50 and 90 were reconsidered, as well. To me, this number suggested that the code might have been too broad, so I investigated these and broke some codes apart into more specific sub-codes.

This prompted a third round of coding to investigate areas where particularly low frequency and high frequency codes were present in the data. As a result of this third round of coding, over 200 codes were eventually created. Code families were created to align some of the codes along themes. Specifically, a code family is a term used in Atlas.ti software to group a set of codes along thematic or relational lines. For instance, all 21 codes related to college (e.g. college major interest, college minor interest, expected difficulties in college) were entered into the one code family called “college.” This code family and others like it were used to compare large groups of related codes, or families, with others. Code families were also created for condition and career, for instance. These code families created even larger code families that I considered for each individual participant. For instance, college, career, and condition became the family “future selves.” I looked for emerging patterns held true across all or the majority of participants, and the ideas that emerged that were different from most participants. I considered examples of any overall difference in how Blacks and Latinos understood their future selves, and looked to see if there were any overlap or consistencies across participants given race. Within this stage of data analysis, the goal ultimately was to understand how the Black and Latino male participants conceive of their future selves and to describe any similarities and/or differences among them.

Sub-question #3

What relationships exist between facets of school culture and how Black and Latino male adolescents conceive of their future selves?

Step Four

To answer this question, I brought together the data and findings used to answer questions #1 and #2, in order to understand the relationships between school culture and how student participants conceived of their future selves. Specifically, after codes were refined, and some placed in families, I ran queries and produced query reports to see the relationship between various codes and code families. The query tool on Atlas.ti made it possible to see where codes overlapped and occurred con-currently. Queries were run between school culture and future selves to see how these various facets overlapped and to see where the divergences occurred for participants. Using these queries, I analyzed the data for patterns among codes, code families, and did so by each participant. From these patterns, I identified broader themes about how and in what ways school culture relates to participants' conceptualizations of their future selves.

These overlaps became salient themes that were written up. First, I spent time analyzing the data on school culture specifically. Weeks were spent writing about the context of the school. Particularly, I spent time mining databases for public records of achievement score data, and I revisited analytic memos that I created during my time at the school. After writing about the context, I returned back to the query tool to look for salient themes on school culture. I developed themes that were significant to the culture of the school and how the student participants experienced it. This was challenging, as different participants held varying views on the school and its culture. Comparing and contrasting various participants' perceptions on the school culture was done and written up thematically. In particular, the school culture was considered thematically, though

various participants experienced facets of the school culture differently. This data is captured in chapter four.

Themes were drawn up across participants' views on college, career and condition. College was the most robust finding, particularly given the salience of the school's college-going culture. As a result of how robust college was and how salient it was to the future selves of participants, it is explored in great detail in chapter five. Participants had less to say about their future selves along the lines of condition and career, which is why both were included in chapter 6. This data was consistent also with how few messages were present within the school culture along the lines of supporting students' future selves for their careers and life conditions.

Summary

This chapter described my research design, methodological framework, and it also justified my social constructivist/interpretivist lens. I described how my own positionality informed my work with Black and Latino boy and the urban school that served them. This chapter also provided insight into how I interviewed participants, conducted observations, and analyzed documents and other artifacts. This chapter also described the data analysis process that was utilized given my case study method.

Chapters four will explore the school culture at Metro Collegiate, while chapters five and six will describe participants' conceptions of their future selves of college, and career and condition respectively. Chapter seven will conclude with a summary of key findings, a discussion, implications and considerations for future research.

Chapter Four: School Culture

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the school culture of Metro Collegiate Public Charter School. Using rich description, this chapter begins with an exploration of the community and city in which the school is situated. Next, this chapter will offer a present-day description of the K-12 Metro Collegiate Public Charter School, in addition to a brief recounting of its history. After a description of the school grounds, the elementary school, and the middle school, the high school will be discussed in detail as a key source for understanding the school culture.

This chapter will then explore four salient themes that emerged from the study data concerning the prevalent belief systems, values, and norms underlying the school culture of Metro Collegiate. First, Metro Collegiate placed value on creating a racially and ethnically diverse learning environment in which all students could achieve at high academic levels. Second, a disconnect existed between the school's values pertaining to diversity and students' lived experiences. Third, teachers and administrators emphasized the importance of demonstrating effort, getting good grades, and meeting school staff's behavioral expectations as indicators of student success, potential for school leadership, and college. And fourth, four year and two year college going is emphasized above all other post secondary options for students.

Context Setting: Rising from the Ashes

Metro Collegiate, like many charter schools in the city, came about amid an educational climate where low standardized test scores, high teacher turnover, and school violence often plagued many city district schools. In the years leading up to Metro's founding, the city drop out rate hovered around 10%, one of the highest in the United States (Chapman et al., 2011). Even more alarming were the low rates of graduation,

which continually hovered around 48% for Black males and 57% for Latino males within the city (Holzman, 2006). Families and teachers in search of new and innovative ways to stimulate learning started the school during a time when many families in the city were yearning for different options for their children. In 1996, charter school legislation was approved, which made charter schools possible in the city. In 1999, with the successful completion and acceptance of the application, the founders of Metro Collegiate were granted a charter.

In the year 2000, 135 five preK-5th graders began at Metro Collegiate. The school flourished in a predominantly Latino section of the city called Parkside Views, despite its location in a rented space above a local convenience store. The area surrounding the former school building in Parkside Views is vibrant with residential complexes, Latin American food stands and restaurants, historic apartment buildings, homes, and theatres, with many undergoing renovations. Four years later, the school expanded to nearly 250 students and moved one block to a renovated church building.

As Metro gained popularity, the school expanded again to include a high school in 2008. The administration and board of trustees began to search for larger facilities to hold the growing student population. To fulfill the educational aims and growing student population, the school thus acquired a lease on a defunct school building that the city decommissioned in the early 1990s. For approximately a decade, various charter schools had utilized the space, yet all failed and closed, rendering the building available to Metro Collegiate. When the school moved in, new windows and roofing, upgrades to the gym and auditorium, and many other capital improvements were urgently needed. After an extensive renovation, the school is considered one of the “greenest” in the city, as it was

the first in the area to use triple pane super energy efficient and environmentally friendly windows. “Flush less” urinals equip the boys’ bathrooms, slanted ceilings reflect outside light into classroom spaces, and eco-friendly fume-less paint covers the hallway and classroom walls.

Metro Collegiate lives within a city of pockets. There are bustling pockets of town where business, industry, and politically important people hustle between buildings, over-priced salad shops, and coffee shops. People struggle in other pockets, where projects, high-rise low-income dwellings, and street violence are evident.

There are pockets of tremendous wealth and influence, where Brown men carefully manicure homes. These men wear green uniform shirts, stained brown pants, sunglasses, and adorn their heads with a damp cloth underneath baseball caps of sorts to shield themselves from the punishing sun, and cool themselves from the thick humidity. In the fall and winter months, these men layer up and brandish leaf blowers attached like book bags to their backs. Latina women adorned in smocks, aprons, and other covers of their trade arrive to office buildings either early morning or late, when this 7:00am to 7:00pm town settles. Between 7 and 7, these women bus back to their homes in residentially segregated communities that teeter painstakingly close to gentrification, to prepare early morning meals for their families.

Options for working-class Black families are more diverse and provide more opportunities for upwardly mobile. Some Black men work on the busy public transit system, which runs above and below ground buses and trains. Others work in positions like security guards, food service, and cafeteria workers, in the postal service, and as sanitation workers. Office buildings offer low-level and entry-level work administrative

work that provide a stable income for primarily the Black women who hold jobs in these roles. Middle and upper middle class Blacks, who hold jobs in the city, chose to live in the nearby suburbs where land, yet still pricey, is more affordable.

Whites rarely work in either of these types of blue-collar positions. White men and women are mostly young and recent transplants to the city and hold jobs in government, non-profits, education, and consulting.

Most Black and Latino children live in areas where White people are new or recent arrivals. While gentrification is rampant in the city, White people rarely venture into many neighborhoods dominated by Black families dwelling in apartment buildings. Whites still avoid areas where extreme violence is prevalent, and still rarely come to any of the historic neighborhoods across the river. However, Metro Collegiate, sits in a quiet predominantly middle-class Black neighborhood where White people have begun to purchase homes.

Welcome to Metro Collegiate

In the morning, teenagers lingered throughout the four-block radius of the school. A popular corner store up the street from the school was a final stop for snacks, Arizona teas, energy drinks, and candy. Students, some traveling as long as an hour by public transportation arrived to the school grounds, met and gathered in small circles to walk to school. Crossing guards carefully minded the bustling traffic of parents and community members, as students safely arrived to the side of the street where the expansive school resided.

At the base of the lawn that sloped upward near the stairs of the front door was an electronic marquee that scrolled announcements about PTA meetings, picture re-takes,

and fundraising campaigns. Parents with children and teenagers gathered at the front door to enter. At the entrance, people pushed the button on the soaring glass doors to be “buzzed in” by the administrator who sits at the desk and whose duties include but are not limited to greeting families, welcoming visitors, and locating children for mid-day doctor appointments. She is a pleasant White woman, who sometimes is joined by others including a young Latina woman who helps communicate with Spanish-speaking parents. As one enters, they are consumed by the energy of parents, students, and school workers all eagerly ushering kids to their respective classrooms. The first floor teems with light peering in from the front door, and reinforced by the lightly painted walls. To the left of the entrance is the donor wall, where families who donated to the capital campaign had their names typed on paper and taped to a wall designed with colored construction paper. Welcoming signs and posters advertising upcoming events reinforce reminder messages that did not make the marquee.

This is Metropolitan Collegiate Public Charter School, a thriving urban learning center serving nearly 800 diverse students between kindergarten and grade 12. Metro Collegiate, founded in 2000 by a group of elementary school teachers and parents, has grown into one of the most successful and sought after charter schools for families in the area.

The elementary school occupies the first of three floors in the building. White, Black, Latino, and Asian elementary school students walk in straight lines to and from brightly colored classrooms, with student artwork and assignments adorning the classroom and hallway spaces. In the morning, parents, some who drive, some who walk, and some who bus in, hold hands with their little ones to assist them as they dodge the

older kids and traverse up the two flights of stairs to the entrance to be buzzed in. White parents appear to dress for work in downtown offices, schools or organizations, while other parents of color dress in traditional attire from India or North African countries. Some Black parents drop kids off in shiny cars, while others hurry their children through the door adorning the uniforms of their trade. Latino fathers wearing painters' whites, gardeners' browns and greens, or mechanics' blues, with hands hardened from their toil, usher children into schools to add, subtract, read, and create their way to "better."

Energy abounds in the morning, as tiny voices from elementary students and booming voices from teenagers meld with parents, teachers, and administrators guiding and directing individuals around the cramped yet welcoming space. English is predominantly spoken, but parents and children speaking Spanish, French infused African languages, and various Asian tongues also add to the sound and energy that proliferates.

The lobby has two open stairwells that go up the stairs to the middle and high school floors. And, in the absence of parents, sleepy middle and high school students drop their little brothers and sisters off in their classrooms before meeting friends to head up one of these flights of stairs. On the second floor, middle school students buzz about noisily. Teachers, seeking a few more minutes to prepare for the day, must now divide their attention to watch eager students. Fewer White and Asian students are enrolled in the middle school division; however, the racial diversity is evident and rarely seen in many other re-segregated city schools.

The high school occupies the top floor and has four hallways and windows facing inwardly to a playground utilized by elementary school students. Two hallways are

devoted to meeting rooms, offices, and stairwells, and two contain mostly classrooms. High school grade levels designate classroom hallways – ninth and tenth share one, and the 11th and 12th grade share another. The underclassmen/women hallway teems with student work samples, reminders of good behavioral habits, and colorful posters about important school events. The 11th and 12th grade hallway's main feature is an entire wall dedicated to the pennants and posters of various colleges and universities. With the exclusion of going to the gym, the cafeteria, and the music room on the first floor, rarely do students find themselves outside of their assigned hallway, and as a result they rarely interact with peers outside of their grade level. A large common area is a feature of the high school. It is used for class meetings, large presentations, science fairs or expositions as they are called, and a dance studio. College posters and student projects adorn the walls, and a large papier-mâché statue stands colorfully near the bay windows that take up one of the walls facing the street.

Each hallway has giant windows that allow ample light in, which makes the corridors open and bright. Students own the space of the hallways, but are monitored closely by teachers who stand two steps to the left or right of their classroom entrances to gently usher kids on to class, or to remind them of missed assignments, or after school responsibilities, or detention. The doors are made of glass panels, and large glass panels flank one side of each doorway. This glass opens the hallways to the amplified energy in each classroom, giving a unity between the hallway and classroom spaces.

The traditional image of dark, dank, and dreary urban schools has no bearing at Metro Collegiate. The renovations to this dated school building metamorphosed the space into an open, colorful, and visually appealing learning center. The school is bright, new,

and shiny. Everything still "works," and it is filled to the brim with students and energy. No space is wasted, but it is clean and uncluttered. Black and Brown teens take up the room and create vibrancy. A White or Asian student is rarely seen, and when they do appear, they seem out of place, given the rather limited diversity present on the high school floor.

Black and Latino boys, wearing brightly colored sneakers, boat shoes, or boots are always hitching up sagged pants as they walked down the off-white floors of the corridors. Soccer style tapered Adidas warm up pants, slim cut jeans and khakis, jogging pants with hoodies are also normal among most boys. Teenage girls, some with big hoop earrings, flashy makeup, big hair, and stone-washed jeans, some alone, and some in packs, go in and out of classrooms. There are no uniforms at Metro Collegiate. But the dress code prohibits cut-off or tank top shirts, high heels, ripped clothing, and any other attire deemed inappropriate. Boys saunter down the hallway with their arm dangling across the shoulder of girls, both seemingly unconcerned with the rules that forbid public displays of affection until a teacher intervenes. Most students walk through the hallways, but an occasional boy juts between couples and groups pivoting and spinning to avoid peers, with sneaker squeaking against the linoleum floor.

Posters and announcements for various local scholarship and essay competitions, many still creased in the tri-folded manner in which they were sent to the school, adorned many walls. Advertisements for student organizations appeared near frequented spots like the water fountains. Some days signs advertised an empanada and lemonade sale to benefit the 11th grade fundraising committee. Other signs celebrated specific cultural icons – a sign left from Hispanic heritage month featured famous Hispanic Athletes. The

Gender Sexuality Alliance had a large permanent poster near the Dean of Students Office urging for participation in their weekly lunch meetings. Signs reminded students of the dress – hat day, twin day, class color day – for varying days of the Spring Spirit Week. School dances occurred a couple times throughout the year, and teachers sat near the back stairwell selling tickets for \$5.00. Some signs were seasonal, like the hand drawn poster stating that the Committee for Lots of Love Day will deliver three roses, a note, and some chocolate to whomever for \$7.00 in the spirit of friendship.

The community values of courage, compassion, contribution, integrity, and self-discipline were boldly painted in 5-inch black letters on hallway walls. Dozens of handmade college pennants decorated the wall facing the college placement office with the names of students who had been accepted into various schools. Students' art pieces covered the walls and spilled out on the floor in front of the art classroom in the corner of the 11th grade hallway. While these were carefully positioned, students seemed to pass by with little regard.

Each hallway was designated for each grade-level. The ninth and tenth grade hallway was most monitored by teachers. Students at these levels were greener to the culture and expectations of Metro Collegiate, so the ninth and tenth graders hustled around with more concern for getting into trouble. Eleventh- and 12th graders were more into themselves and each other than the pace of the school. They were cool, looked up to, and they bent more rules. Some had been at the same school since kindergarten, and they knew each other well. Faculty turnover is low and students in the upper grades knew how to get over and around teachers, their rules, and their gazes. They missed detention often,

were more frequently late for school and class, and held less concern for the rules than ninth and tenth graders.

School Culture

This study views school cultures as comprised of the prevalent belief systems, values, expectations, and assumptions that operate through symbols, traditions, and interactions both between and among students, teachers, administrators and staff within school spaces. Particularly, this study utilizes an intersectional power model to consider culture. School cultures reflect cultural power operating broadly in society. As noted previously, and drawing from Collins (2009), cultural power is comprised of the values, beliefs and commonsense norms traditionally reflected in middle-class White norms in broader U.S. society and usually upheld by the actions of administrators, teachers and others in power in schools. Culture, as a domain of power, works in and through school practices at all levels and, thus, is infused within school culture.

Metro Collegiate's school culture reflected broader socio-cultural norms that were upheld by the teachers and administrators in Metro Collegiate. In this regard, Metro Collegiate's school culture mirrored, in many ways, what is valued based on White, middle-class norms, in U.S. society. Conversely, Metro Collegiate sanctioned or stifled the behaviors of students who devalued or acted counter to middle-class, White societal norms. For instance, students who spoke, acted or dressed in typically "urban" styles, or students who were loud, or students who resisted adhering to the cultural norms of the school risked disciplining, school failure, and exclusion. Students who did not desire to attend college also received little support from school staff for alternative life paths. The purpose of this chapter is to unpack various facets of the school culture, and not

necessarily prove that cultural power operated through school practices. However, at the root of the norms, values, and beliefs governing the school culture was cultural power.

There were four aspects of the school culture at Metro Collegiate, which emerged as significant to participants' schooling experiences and the ways in which they conceived of their futures. First, the school valued having a racially and ethnically diverse environment in which all students could achieve at high academic levels. Second, school diversity along racial, class, ethnic, and linguistic lines is evident; however, a closer examination reveals a disconnect between how diversity is valued by the school and the lived experience of diversity, particularly by students. Data reveals patterns of student self-segregation, achievement disproportionality, and inequities. Third, student success is distilled into three core messages – show effort, achieve good grades, and avoid getting into trouble. Academic rigor and high behavioral expectations for students solidified a competitive climate. And lastly, given the prevailing salience of college-going, the school culture foregrounds college-going above any other post secondary outcome for students. To provide evidence for both the school culture and how students experience it, observational data and the voices of three Black and two Latino males will be incorporated.

Metro Collegiate's Valuing of Diversity

Racial and Socioeconomic Diversity at Metro Collegiate

Like here, like, it's pretty diverse. We have, like Hispanics, we have African Americans, Asians, we have almost everything. There's not a lot of, like, White students here.

- Lucas, 17 year old Latino male junior

This section will explore how diversity was manifested at Metro Collegiate. In particular, this section will consider how diversity shifts were understood through the lens of one participant. Metro Collegiate is a school that prides itself on its diversity in terms of race. The opening sentence of the Mission Statement states that “[Metropolitan Collegiate] enables a diverse group of students to meet high expectations.” One of the reasons why Metro Collegiate placed value on creating a racially and ethnically diverse environment so that all students can achieve at high academic levels is because it reflects a salient and common ideal many schools adopt. At its core, Metro Collegiate strives to create a school where all students, regardless of race, income-level, or even previous educational experiences can achieve high academic results in a learning community of dedicated, primarily young, hard working teachers. In this regard, Metro Collegiate represents what is typically valued by numerous stakeholders involved in contemporary urban educational reform.

One of the first things one notices when coming through the doors of Metro Collegiate is the racial and ethnic diversity of its student body. Table 1 illustrates the demographic diversity of Metro Collegiate across the various school levels. For instance, in the elementary school, Black and Latino students made up 35% and 34% respectively, while White students make up 23% and Asian students, 2%.

Table 1*Demographics of Students across Schools (For 2012 -13 School Year)*

	Elementary School (<i>n</i> = 325)	Middle School (<i>n</i> = 298)	High School (<i>n</i> = 321)
Characteristics of Students			
Race-Ethnicity (%)			
White	22.8	7.0	1.9
Black/African American	35.1	33.2	40.5
Latino/(a)	33.5	51.7	54.2
Asian American	1.8	4.7	1.9
Other	6.8	3.4	1.6
Special Education Students (%)	9.5	19.1	19.6
English Language Learners (%)	28.3	29.9	15.6
Students receiving Free and Reduced Meals (%)	55.4	74.2	79.1

In the middle and high school, the percentage of White students was dramatically lower than in the elementary school. While the percentage of Asian students rose a bit in the middle school, from 2% in the elementary school to 5% in the middle school, it fell again in the high school to 2%. The White student population, which was nearly one quarter (23%) in the elementary school, dropped to 7% in the middle school and 2% in the high school.

There was a greater proportion of White and Asian students in the elementary and middle school. In addition, particularly the elementary school, given the larger White population, reflected greater racial diversity than the middle school and the high school. As students moved up to the high school, the numbers of White students in particular,

plummeted. This left some of the Black and Latina/o students who had attended Metro Collegiate since elementary school wondering where their White peers had gone. One was Malik, a 17 year old Black male junior. He began attending Metro Collegiate in the third grade and remembered the significantly higher numbers of White students in his classes.

Malik: It was basically White, mostly, partially Black and Hispanic. But now it's more Black and Hispanic, and all the whites have gone to different schools.

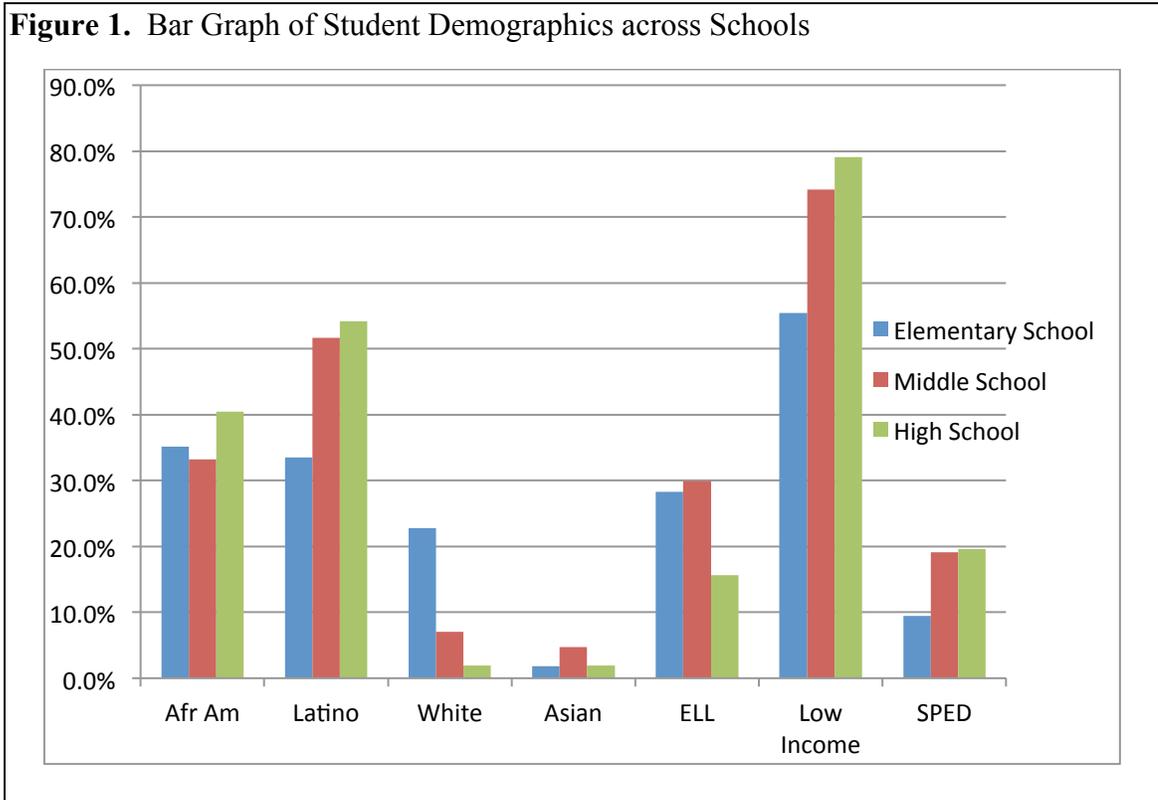
RC: Why do they leave, Malik?

When I asked Malik why White students leave the school, he was puzzled at my inquiry. After some thought, he described how one of his closest White friends left Metro Collegiate for Poly High, a large, rigorous college prep public magnet school. Poly High has a 36% White population with only 20% of students receiving free and reduced-priced meals (FARMs), in comparison to the 79.1% FARMs population at Metro. Speculating on why White students left Metro Collegiate in the upper grades, Malik said,

Malik: I think maybe because their parents didn't want them in the school with Black kids, they just want them to be in a school— I mean, this school is a really good school, but I think they wanted their kids to be in one of the best schools, for some students. But I guess they really don't want to be with black kids.

Malik's assertions revealed an interesting connection between race and his sentiments of a good school. For Malik, parents' decision to un-enroll their child from Metro Collegiate possibly reflects a rejection of the school for its increasing Black and Latino presence in the high school. Malik connected parental notions of the best schools with the assumption that Black kids do not attend the best schools. Malik's views were particularly insightful

given the class and income shifts in the school. As seen in Figure 1, not only does the student body become increasingly Black and Latino as the grade levels increase, but students come from increasingly poorer homes in the middle and high school than the elementary school.



Student diversity is key in considering the school culture, because of its centrality both to the school mission and the student experience. Central to understand from this section is how diversity shifts across grade levels are evident. As Black and Latino students rose higher through the grade levels at Metro Collegiate, they were seeing more and more of their White and Asian peers, and middle and upper income peers, transfer to other schools. They were simultaneously interpreting these departures as signals that their school was less desirable, as was the case for Malik. Before unpacking student

experiences along racial, gender, and class lines further, it is important to consider the faculty and staff racial compositions.

Faculty and Staff Diversity

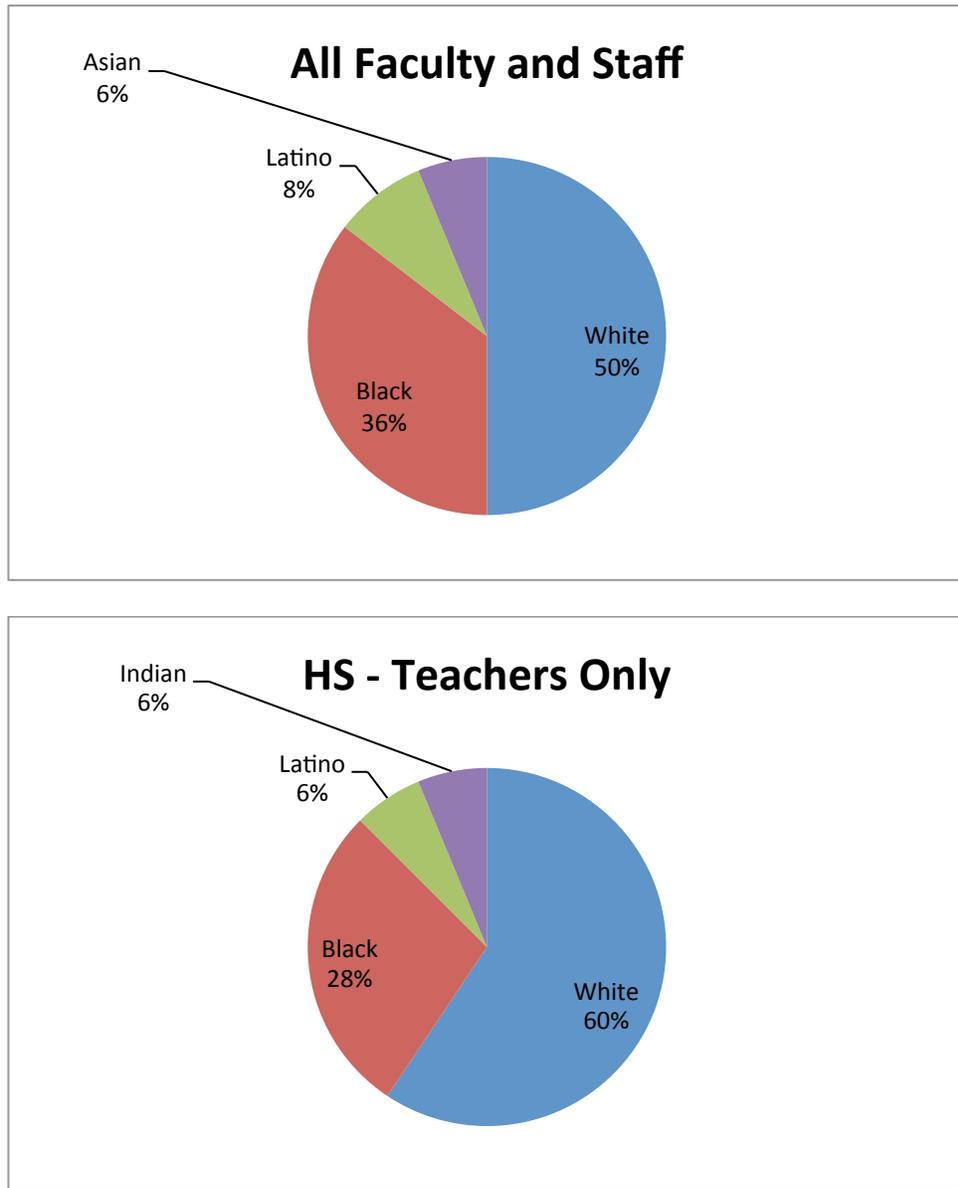
Faculty and staff diversity is also critical to consider, and this section will closely examine the demographics of the teachers, administrators, and staff that work with students at Metro Collegiate. Table 2 illustrates the racial diversity of Metro Collegiate high school faculty and staff. For instance 63% of the high school faculty and staff were women. Included in the Table 2 and Figure 2 reflect all working adults in the school including teachers, administrators, librarians, support staff, counselors, and administrative workers.

Table 2

Gender and Race/Ethnicity of High School Faculty and Staff (For 2012 -13 School Year)

Characteristics of Students	HS Faculty and Staff (n = 48)	HS Teachers Only (n = 32)
Gender (%)		
Female	62.5	62.5
Race-Ethnicity (%)		
White	50.0	59.4
Black/African American	35.4	28.1
Latino/(a)	8.3	6.3
Asian or Asian American	6.3	6.3

Figure 2. Pie Charts of Faculty and Staff Demographics in High School



While Whites are 50% of school staff and faculty combined, their representation among the faculty is even larger. Among the 32 teachers, 19 of them are White, or 59% of the overall teaching corps. This is gravely disproportionate to the predominantly Black and Latino high school student population (94.7% as presented in Table 1). Furthermore, two-thirds were women. There were few males of color in the teaching and support staff.

There was one Black male administrator, who served as the disciplinarian or Dean of School Culture, as he was called. There was one Latino male college counselor, and two Latina teachers. There were nine Black female teachers, and two Black male teachers. Only one Black male taught in a core academic subject, history, while the other was a fitness teacher.

While Metro Collegiate students were predominantly Black and Latino, their teachers were predominantly White. Given that nationally, 85% of teachers are White (see Aud et al., 2011), Metro teachers were actually more racially diverse than the national average.

Metro Collegiate students come from predominantly low-income Latino and Black families, whose home lives are vastly different from their predominantly White middle-class teachers and administrators. Given the cultural domain of power, teachers and administrators uphold middle-class norms and values within the school. Middle class norms of dress, speech, and behavior were expected of teachers and students alike. In order to understand the values, assumptions, and norms operating within Metro Collegiate, it is important to understand whose cultures are valued and supported and whose may be sanctioned or surveilled.

However, considering these demographic disparities among educators and students, the school remains one of the most sought after charter schools for all families in the city. As a result, the school must respond to a fiercely competitive charter school environment through marketing, community out-reach, and by keeping the Metro Collegiate brand desirable. High attendance records, top standardized test scores, minimized disciplinary issues, public imagery, constant outside visitors, and school tours

all influence the school culture by creating a place where students feel observed, and scrutinized for purposes that go beyond what is best solely for their own betterment. Students realize they are being watched not only for their sake, but also for the sake of the school's reputation.

Responding to a Competitive Charter School Climate

I think that's the image of Metro Collegiate 'cause they really don't show high school students a lot. Like here on the website you have like the mostly the lower school, or middle school.

- Malik, 17 year old Black male junior

Metro Collegiate has a reputation among the city's schools for maintaining a highly rigorous school for a diverse population. Given that so many families flock to Metro Collegiate, it is important to consider how it compared to other local charter and traditional public schools options in the city. This section will explore the school's diversity in relation to how Metro Collegiate positions itself among other schools vying for families.

Metro Collegiate exists within a fiercely competitive climate of public and public charter schools within the city. Rankings of these schools are based on numerous evaluative tools, and many of these are accessible within the public domain. This means that parents have access to numerous data points to evaluate and choose the right school for their family.

There are 62 other public charter schools in the city, and each is ranked based upon numerous factors. School rankings are created using a tool that measures various factors of school performance, including student attendance, and parental satisfaction on

a scale between 0.0% - 100%. Specifically, the scale measures the following: (1) student progress on reading and math assessments, (2) parent satisfaction based on re-enrollment, (3) student achievement based on percentages of students at the proficient and advanced levels in reading and mathematics state assessments, (3) attendance, (4) ninth grade credits that lead to on-time graduation levels, (5) 11th grade PSAT performance, (6) 12th grade SAT performance, (7) college acceptance, (8) high school graduation rates, and (9) performance on Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) tests.

After schools receive a score, they are then assigned to a tier ranking, with tier one being the most competitive at 65% - 100%, tier two at 35%-64.9%, and tier three with 0.0% - 34.9%. For the 2013-14 school year, Metro Collegiate ranked at tier one with a score of 69.9%. While this score ranked them in the bottom of their competitors in their section of the city (the highest ranking for a nearby charter school was 83.6%), it placed them 3rd out of six tier one charter high schools in the city. They are also 3rd out of the 16 public charter high schools.

Given these numbers, Metro Collegiate was faring well along multiple indicators of academic and social achievements. However, in order to maintain and possibly increase their positioning in the competitive charter school market, Metro Collegiate must continue to retain talented students and families, recruit others, and keep its stellar reputation. Students internalize these pressures to not only achieve for their own sake, or behave well for their own sake, but because surveillance is high. For instance, parents are watching and waiting to choose to enroll their children into the school, while charter board leaders watch and wait to either celebrate or close the school. Marketing materials are rampant. Large Metro Collegiate advertisements adorn the façades of city buses that

zigzag through neighborhoods and business centers. These advertisements usually contain vibrant images of racially diverse children eagerly playing, reading, or engrossed in art projects. Metro Collegiate's website is top notch, with scrolling images of proud graduates, energized teachers, engaged students participating in outdoor activities and touring sites on field trips, and public dignitaries reading to children. The students, in all of their various shades, also draw prospective families in and serve as crucial marketing tools themselves, and all of these factors contribute to the school culture. Students know that they are being watched, and that their behavior is a reflection not only of them, but also of how their school is perceived. Families spend years applying and re-applying to gain a coveted spot, and many children know that they cannot mess up the opportunity that comes with attending a school as lauded as Metro Collegiate.

Participants revealed their understandings of the school's need to uphold their reputation and maintain appearances to stay ahead of the competition in the cutthroat charter school climate. Participants offered insights into how maintaining this image of Metro Collegiate impacted their lived experiences within the school. Participants who have attended the school longer than the others, noted the school's dramatic change and shift since its founding. In particular, race is viewed as central to how the school is marketed and perceived by outsiders. It is also salient for the school culture, as for participants like Malik, race influences parental decisions to send their children to the school.

Malik: It's changed ever since they added in the high school...Like from pre-K to eighth grade it would be predominantly white throughout all grades. Before the high school, so from pre-K to eighth grade, my class was predominantly

white. There barely used to be any Spanish kids, and a handful of Black kids in each class. And I think like, that's the image of Metro Collegiate 'cause they really don't show high school students a lot. Like here on the website you have like mostly the lower school, or middle school.

Here Malik indicated his awareness that as the grade levels ascended into the middle school and into the high school, fewer Whites and Asians were present in their classes. He also noted that the school does not feature the high schoolers on the website, possibly because of the lack of White and Asian children and the predominance of students of color. This image of Metro Collegiate as racially and ethnically diverse, reflected primarily within the elementary school, is what the school works to highlight presumably because of the salience of diversity to their mission. However, this demographic shift in the high school, and the intentionality that underlines it compelled participants to believe that as they get older, parental interest in having their White and Asian children with Black and brown bodies became less and less desirable.

King, a Black 16-year-old junior, also provided some insights into the school's need for the school to keep up certain appearances to maintain a high regard from parents, particularly as it related to school discipline policies and practices. He said that prior to the new principal of the high school taking the helm, the previous principal was primarily interested in diminishing issues to not scare away parents seeking to enroll their kids in the high school. King believed that White and Asian parents would be frightened to continue to send their children to a school predominantly attended by Latino and Black students, particularly if they were aware of disciplinary problems.

King believed that Miss Thayer the current principal, and one of her assistant principals, was more intolerant of disciplinary issues than the previous principal Miss Simmons. King believed that one of the reasons this was the case was because of the perception the high school has as predominantly Latino and Black, rowdy, and out of control in comparison to the elementary and middle school.

King: But only reason she was trippin' because we got like underclassmen under us. We got like middle school and preschool, so she really didn't want nothing going on so the parents downstairs won't like think of the high school as different. So that's why she was trippin'. But other than that, I don't know. Miss Thayer, she don't know what she's doing. We have food fights. There's been so many fights this year. But if Miss Simmons was here, there wouldn't have been none of that. Wouldn't have been none of that.

King revealed his views on the rationale underlying the school's discipline policies and procedures. Particularly, King realized that school administrators were wary of elementary and middle school parents viewing the high school as "different." His descriptions implied that the high school's reputation was a critical aspect in the decision making of parents who would keep their children in the diverse and calm elementary and middle school, but unenroll their child from the high school.

The first floor was most diverse, and middle school and high school, became increasingly racially homogeneous. According to Malik and King's rationale, Black and Latino students possibly scared away families, because as the older Black and Latinos get, it seemed the more likely they were to harm or negatively influence White and Asian students. Culturally, the ways of Black and Latino urban culture became more entrenched

and implanted in the habits and interactional patterns of teenagers in the high school. Thus, for participants, the onus of the diversity of the school resided on the many Black and Latino students who populated the top floor of the school. If they “behaved”, then maybe more Whites and Asians would attend. However, this did not seem to be the case, as the school got darker and darker as one ascended the floors.

Cultural power infused within Metro Collegiate’s school culture through the belief system and practices that Black and Latino students needed to uphold and master White middle-class norms. Stakes were high for Black and Latino students mastering middle-class norms, as the school’s mission and the enrollment of White families, particularly, was in jeopardy. The school lost many White families as the grade levels ascended, and with the reputation and mission of the school centered on the belief that diverse students can meet high academic expectations, participant experiences reveal that Black and Latino teenagers were viewed as problematic given the purposes and goals for the school.

In addition to race and ethnic diversity influencing the outward facing perception of the school, race, ethnicity, and language intersections among the student body also served as a source of division between student peer groups. Self-segregation along various identity facets were the lived reality for many Metro Collegiate students, as is differential disciplinary sanctioning and experiences with stereotypes.

Living a Diversity Dilemma at Metro Collegiate

I've literally witnessed it during lunch - I can see like okay, here's Hispanic kids. Hispanic kids sit by Hispanic kids. Black table, Black table. It's just segregated. Yeah.

- Samuel, 17 year old Junior

This section will explore a second major theme in the study of Metro Collegiate's school culture. Though diversity is a major tenet of the school's mission, findings from participants' experiences note some disconnects between the school's mission and the experiences of students. For instance, student self-segregation and differential treatment by teachers and administrators along racial lines are issues facing students. In addition, the use of Spanish language among Latino students was seen as a sensitive issue for both Latino and Black participants. In addition, the lack of diversity among teachers, particularly Black and Latino male teachers, presented a particular missed opportunity for participants to find role models and mentoring. Lastly, when student success stories were reported, Black students were underrepresented revealing disproportional rates of student achievement and recognition along racial lines.

Student Self-Segregation

Participants who did not attend Metro Collegiate through the lower and middle schools, were accustomed to attending public and public charter schools predominantly populated by Blacks. Given Metro Collegiate high school's large 54% Latino student body, Black male participants report being unaccustomed to this new racial dynamic. For instance, Samuel, a 17 year old junior male had attended Metro Collegiate since the ninth grade. He came to Metro Collegiate after 8 years in other predominantly Black public and

charter schools. Samuel notes how both his peer group and school friends were mostly Black.

Samuel: Well, I guess like I've, most of my life, been accustomed to only hanging out with Black kids more often because of the schools I went to. But with this school I wouldn't – I mean that might just be my school talking. But it depends on the people. It's a very diverse school so it's – the people I hang out with are diverse.

Samuel's tentative assertions were based in his own schooling experiences, which he hints at perhaps not being true for everyone. While the school has a handful of Whites and Asians, it is predominantly Latino, with Blacks as the second largest group. Despite this imbalance, Samuel sees Metro Collegiate as diverse in comparison to the overwhelmingly Black schools he has attended in the past. Samuel's experiences in predominantly Black schools, also highlight a less obvious dividing issue among students at Metro Collegiate. Spanish language is spoken readily and fluently, leaving students familiar with all-Black environments to navigate not just new racial and cultural dynamics, but linguistic dynamics, as well.

While Samuel characterizes his friendship group as diverse, he notes that students self-segregate particularly within informal spaces like hallways and the cafeteria. Malik reports that students might intermingle throughout the day, but they are likely to associate more with students from their own racial/ethnic group during lunch.

Malik: All the people in the hallway, and those are two separate groups out there. There's some people that hang out with each other, some people that might be out there together now, but at lunchtime they sit at two different tables.

As I noted in my field observations, in the cafeteria, students clustered around mid-sized round tables that comfortably hold eight students. Four students occupied some tables, while other tables spilled over with ten. Students grabbed lunch in the line, then most typed in their numbers while some handed over cash, sat down and chatted among themselves. There were groups of all boys, all girls, and some were mixed gendered; most appeared to be a single race/ethnicity. Two White girls sat with the one Asian boy, and a few others who look bi-racial. They were some of the highest academically achieving students. Another table in the center was filled with Black boys, most of whom were on the basketball team. There were a few tables where only Latino males sat, and they spoke a mixture of Spanish and English. The disciplinarian Dean slowly meandered through the kids, who were seated and mostly eating calmly and talking. Few other teachers came down to monitor.

Perdido, a popular 17-year-old Salvadoran boy associated mostly with Latinos. I asked him if he sat mostly with Latinos or Blacks, or in mixed-group tables.

Perdido: I sit with Hispanics, man, yeah – not to be racist or anything – it just happened. I don't know how.

Perdido assured me that he was not racist, and that his decision to sit with other Latinos was not based on race, but rather it was a natural occurrence. Other participants state similarly that their decisions are not based on race, but rather with whom they feel comfortable. Perdido talked about linguistic and culture similarities as reasons why he sat with other Latinos.

Perdido: Well I can't really – speak in Spanish when people don't understand Spanish. If you understand Spanish then, you know, you understand

Spanish. But the main one is that it's not – it's not like a race thing but it's like since ninth grade I find myself like more connected to the people I could connect with. You know?

RC: Yeah, yeah certainly.

Perdido: So the way like we were growing up, the way that we like sometimes visited our own country like El Salvador, we could relate to each other. We ended up being friends. And that's why I just got close.

In this instance, shared experiences appeared more salient than racial affinity in how Perdido chose his friends. Travel to El Salvador and Spanish language aptitude were key attributes that signaled strong in-group affinity among the largely Salvadoran Latino population at MC.

In a focus group held with Malik and Samuel (both Black) and Lucas and Perdido (both Latino), I asked them to tell me more about how students self-segregate.

Perdido: You can go to the lunchroom and see how we split up. And that's not like a conscious thing, like “all right you know what – I'm Hispanic, I don't like Black people, I'm gonna sit with only Hispanics.” It's not like that.

Lucas: But, you could tell like the different groups.

Malik: It all depends on, if you get higher in the grade. So if you see the ninth – tenth graders, they'll all be hanging out together, all mixed races and stuff. If you look at the eleventh and twelfth graders there's Perdido's table and Lucas's table, those are both two full Latino tables.

RC: Oh, so you're saying that actually it doesn't become more integrated. It just becomes more segregated.

Malik: No, as it goes higher. You know it's true, right?

Perdido: Julian (a Black boy) sits there now, but I don't know –

[Laughter]

Perdido: It's not even about who you know, 'cause I'm basically cool with a lot of people, and like my whole table is Hispanic, son. It's just like that. It's not because I'm racist or anything and also in class, when I'm speaking Spanish to somebody, everybody's like, “What are you saying?” Everybody's afraid we're talking about 'em. “No, we're not talking about you.” And they're like, “What are you talking about?”

(yeah, yeah, yeahs, and cross talk laughter)

Perdido: So when you don't feel comfortable with a certain situation you tend to avoid it and when you feel like somebody's talking about you a lot, you tend to avoid that person so with me and my friends, we talk Spanish a lot. I guess people just don't feel comfortable with us because they probably think that we're talking about 'em so they just decide not to sit with us.

Malik: I learned Spanish from hanging out with him.

Samuel: Yeah, I agree with Malik [crosstalk]. It really does seem like that. My table is all African American except for one .

Participants felt that as students ascended grade levels, they became more segregated. This may speak to greater familiarity gained by students as they mature at the school about the school culture than what is normed as self-segregation. In addition, Perdido noted that while segregation was evident, his group of primarily Latinos did not

intentionally exclude students. Rather, non-Spanish speakers chose not to join with them because they may not have felt comfortable.

Student self-segregation reflected a key diversity dilemma embedded into the school culture. While diversity was valued, many students found themselves slipping into same-race groups, and possibly same-class groups, when given the opportunity within informal school spaces like the cafeteria and the hallways. While seeking in-group racial affinity is not problematic, student self-segregation fueled by possible misunderstandings about various racial and culture groups is. Black and Latino students spent considerable time with each other in classes, but seem to know very little of each others' cultures. Latino students, who spoke Spanish among each other, suffered the gazes of Black students who wondered if they were being talked about. These cultural differences fueled divisions that were exacerbated by what participants' revealed to be differential treatment along racial lines. Given the diversity rhetoric of the school, these divisions did not reflect the mission and goals of the school. Little evidence existed, for instance, for how the school facilitated bridge building across student differences. This was especially important for students learning English as a second language, for instance, because not interacting with native speaking peers is a detriment to acquiring language proficiency.

Differential Treatment Along Racial Lines

In addition to self-segregation, participants also reported that students received differential treatment from teachers and administrators along racial lines. For example, King, a 16 year old Black junior, felt that Blacks were treated more harshly than Latinos by teachers in classrooms and in informal settings. King was solid B-/C+ student, securing decent, but not always good grades. He was athletic, a natural leader, and

associated with many of the Black boys typically considered to be “trouble-makers.” I asked King to tell me why he thought Black boys, in particular, were treated more harshly than Latinos, and he provided numerous instances when he felt singled out because of his race. In one such instance, when a bag of marijuana was found in the hallway of the school, he, along with other Black students, nearly all boys, were called to the office and interrogated about dealing drugs. While this was a unique circumstance that happened once, there were more casual and frequent occurrences that appeared to bother King.

King also believed that the current administration was harsher on Blacks than the Latinos. In reference to the trouble students get into with a particular White male administrator, King noted some trends that foreground disparate racial treatment.

King: If you get in trouble with him and you Hispanic, it ain't gonna be as harsh as like me getting in trouble with him.

RC: Why?

King: I don't know. That's how it is. They be trippin'...I think it's 'cause –

RC: So he's softer on the Latino boys?

King: Yeah. I think it's 'cause – I don't know. When Miss Simmons was here –

RC: Who was that?

King: The principal before Miss Thayer. She was trippin' because –

RC: Is she white or black?

King: White. But she different. She was like – she made sure that the African Americans was good before the Hispanics 'cause there was a lot of them, and there was a little bit of us. So she would get our input on stuff before she got

theirs, so it'd be something like that.

In this instance, King revealed that the previous principal was more careful to disproportionately target Blacks more than Latinos in disciplinary concerns. King believed that because Latinos outnumbered the Black students, Ms. Simmons was more attentive to their experiences and needs in the school. King's assertions revealed disparities among the treatment of Blacks and Latinos. King, particularly felt that discipline was harsher on the Blacks than the Latinos. In his view, the previous principal, Miss Simmons, ensured that the Black students were not disproportionately penalized, given that there were more Latinos than Blacks. However, in his perception, the current administration did not seem to hold the same concern.

In another incident, King shared a reflection that foregrounded how cultural beliefs in society play out in interactions within the school. For example, King discussed being confronted by a White teacher about wearing his pants sagged below his waist, a popular style among both the Black and Latino boys.

King: They don't say nothing (to the Latino boys). But like I'm not gonna call a teacher out, but like when I did it one time, he was like, "Oh yeah. If you keep doing that, you're gonna be locked up. Watch. Just like the rest of 'em. You're gonna be behind a prison cell," and all this other stuff. And I mean I could have spazzed on him, but I wasn't about to do that 'cause it was gonna look worse 'cause for me. He obviously racist, and it would have looked real bad for a African American male to spazz on a White man. So that's why I ain't even say nothing.

This incident revealed King's sophisticated understanding of how an alternative response

to his teacher might have merited even graver consequences. The skill with which he navigated this encounter points to a greater burden that King and other boys like him have to endure in order to avoid being sanctioned. Given how Black males are perceived in society, this incident reflects King's frustration at the stereotyping of Black male attributes as criminal or deviant. This stereotyping was particularly troubling given that many of the Latino boys wore the same type of clothing styles as the Black boys. In labeling his teacher as racist, King revealed nuances of race and stereotyping evidenced in how boys may be considered by their teachers. Conversely, for King, this incident also gave insight into how the boys perceived teachers' reflections of the boys. For King, in this particular instance, not only was his preference for this clothing style problematic for school rules, but for broader societal imagery that criminalizes typical urban dress. King wanted to "spazz" or show anger over this verbal pestering. However, King also realizes that his response to the teacher would have made him look even worse in the teacher's viewpoint. For King, he had no other choice but to suffer the teacher's words quietly, as any sort of verbal resistance would have reified and confirmed the stereotypes already operating in the teachers mind. King's assertions reflect a key issue in how the school's rhetoric of diversity is felt by students. While the school's mission was to educate all racially and ethnically diverse students at high levels, student experiences like King's reflects that teachers recreate the same mistreatment many Black boys receive outside of school. In a school that espoused that all students were supported to achieve at higher levels, King's experiences reflected how some teachers held deficit views of students reflected in differential treatment along racial lines. King's assertions about differential treatment were mirrored in other participants' sentiments.

Like King, Perdido also believed Latinos were treated differently than non-Latinos. However, he did not see this treatment as favorable but, rather, as stigmatizing. While King discussed race/ethnicity, Perdido talked about Latinos being treated differently based on teachers' perceptions of these students' cultural experiences and fluency in English. Particularly, Perdido noticed how teachers, peers, and administrators would tread lightly around Latino students, unsure of their familiarity with United States culture or English language proficiency.

Perdido: It's like they'll be talking about something and then just be like "you know?" – or they'll hesitate on asking me if I know about something because they're not sure whether I was born here or not. "Get it?"

Perdido also believed that questioning, pauses, and changes in speech patterns, indicated that school staff members and other students doubted his language abilities.

Perdido: And also I've caught a lot of remarks. People, students, teachers, all the same about kids who, Hispanics – like sometimes Hispanics don't really talk much. They always like "they probably don't even speak English," so they talk a little bit slower. You don't really catch it 'cause you're not watching for it, but when you notice it, you notice it.

In this example, Perdido noted what he perceived to be assumptions both school staff members and other students made about Latina/o students. These assumptions included that if a Latina/o student was not verbose or loud that they could not speak English fluently. When others made remarks or talked slower to Latinos, they not only questioned their English fluency, but also Perdido felt, that the intelligence or aptitude of Latinos was called into question. Speaking, in and of itself, became an act that may have caused

insecurity, fear, or doubt in a Latino student. Inaccurately using a word might have called their language ability into question, while if a native-speaker stumbled on a word, they would not suffer the gazes from peers and teachers loaded with doubts of not only their intelligence, but their citizenship.

Participants reported varying ways race played into their perceptions of their treatment. While Black participants reported differential treatment along racial lines, Latino participants experienced perceived different treatment along cultural and linguistic lines. While different, these groups' experiences reflect problematic treatment that contradict the high expectations Metro Collegiate espouses for their entire racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse population.

Spanish Language and In-Group Affinity: “Our Language Type of Thing”

Like if your native language is – if you can speak Spanish, they'll treat you – they'll treat the Hispanics like they're family. They'll treat them better than the Blacks, I've noticed that.

- Samuel, 17 year old Black Junior

In addition to disciplinary interactions, participants reported differential treatment in Spanish language courses. Students who chose to take Spanish as their foreign language, were tracked into Spanish classes by both level and native/non-native speaking ability. For instance, low-level native Spanish speakers were grouped together, while beginning non-native speakers were tracked together. As a result of these arrangements, while supposedly students gained greater proficiency as they advanced through the Spanish courses with similarly skilled students, they also found themselves in increasingly homogenous classrooms according to race, ethnicity, and language ability.

Specifically, Latino students who spoke Spanish as a native language would spend sometimes four years in Spanish classes with their native language peers. This left the non-native classes to be populated with mostly Black students. Black participants felt that Latino Spanish language teachers treated Latino students, who were more likely to be enrolled in the native-speaker track, with more familiarity and kinship than they did with themselves. I asked participants if they felt the Spanish teachers offered preferential treatment to Latino students.

RC: So you think that the Spanish teachers treat the Latino students better?

Samuel: Way better. It's like they – yeah it's just like they're family. And then that they look at the black kids like, okay, just regular students. Like I'm here to babysit you guys.

RC: Tell me about what you mean by regular students?

Samuel: Regular students I mean it's like students that don't have any type of particular specialty to them. Like a student that doesn't really stand out much; oh you're just Black – you're just a black kid pretty much and that's what they see.

One reason why Spanish teachers may have felt closer to Latina/o students was a kinship based on the ability to speak Spanish. Although most Latina/o students at Metro Collegiate have familial ties to El Salvador, the students share commonality with two Latina teachers (Mexican American) particularly along cultural and language lines.

Malik: The Spanish teachers, they tend to be closer to the Spanish (Latino) kids than the black kids, cause I guess cause they're Hispanic too and they have a connection. They really can't connect to the black kids cause they don't know anything about them. I mean, they really don't have anything in common. They

...speak Spanish, so they can speak Spanish all they like to them, and like the Black kids, we don't really have anybody that we can connect with in schools.

Malik's interesting assertion indicated a peculiar dilemma. Whereas the Latino students shared cultural language kinship with other Latino teachers, Malik felt that the Black students had no one to share a connection with in the same way. There were more Black teachers than Latino. However, sharing language and race affinity with their Black teachers was not enough to perhaps shield Black males in particular from the assaults that came with stereotyping, disproportional discipline, and the lack of academic success so many Black boys found. There was only one Black male academic teacher. Perhaps, Malik's inability to find connection with Black teachers was due to the unique status that Black boys had in the school. With so many struggling to find success at Metro Collegiate, perhaps more Black male teachers could provide an interpersonal or relational safe-haven for them.

Perdido reported that one of the most salient benefits to having affinity with the Spanish teachers is that their classrooms became places where cultural familiarity could be made more visible. Perdido noted that "joking around" over the different uses certain Spanish words in their teacher's native Mexico and the students' native El Salvador was a source of bonding and connection.

In Samuel's experience, he believed that Latina/o students got special favors from their Latino teachers that Blacks did not. For example,

Samuel: There was this one time where this black kid wanted to go get some water, I mean, he wanted to get something from the snack vendors, and he saw that he can't get anything without a teacher, so this Hispanic teacher went to go

buy the Hispanic person something to drink, and then the black person asked, and she bought the Hispanic person stuff for free, and when the black person asked, she just declined him. He, the black person, gave her money, and she just didn't want to do it. She likes to talk in Spanish with the other Hispanics, and so they have that type of thing, you know, that “our language type of thing” to it, so she likes to get friends with them, and she likes to, yeah, just friends them like that, this other way. I see it all the time.

In this example, the Latina Spanish language teacher provided a special favor to a Latino student and not to a Black student. Samuel believed that this favor was provided due at least in some part to the shared ethnicity between the teacher and student. He noted how Latino students and teachers speak Spanish among each other. By doing so, they create almost an inner world that shut outs all non-Spanish speakers. The kinship, or friendship that Samuel noted, was shared by Latino students and teachers based on language and culture, a kinship to which Black students had no access.

Stereotypes Along Race and Ethnicity

In addition to the divisions among students and differential treatment by teachers, focus group participants Samuel and Perdido discussed how misunderstandings based on stereotypes flourished in interactions between teachers and students.

Samuel: I've seen teachers in the school that will look at a certain group a certain way as they're just – like they stereotype them. It's just like well, you can't break the student and teacher barrier if you can't get passed [sic] stereotypes. That's what some of the white woman teachers do here.

RC: You think that they play into your stereotypes? What does that look like

when a teacher plays into the stereotypes around Black and Latino males?

Perdido: They attempt to speak Spanish.

RC: But isn't that endearing? Isn't that nice like when they try to validate your culture and they try to speak Spanish?

Perdido: Yeah, but I feel like they've been forced to do it. Like, I wouldn't mind if they wanted to learn Spanish forever, I wouldn't mind. But it's just like – it's something that stands out to me.

In this instance, Perdido questioned the genuineness of native English-speaking teachers' attempts to engage him in Spanish. He viewed their use of Spanish language as a stereotyped response to a Latino, or rather a disingenuous way to engage with him. From Perdido's perspective, a teacher's interest in learning and speaking Spanish should be based on a genuine desire to understand the culture, not as a sole basis to engage with Latina/o students. In other words, a mechanical knowledge of Spanish language did not inherently reflect an understanding or valuing of Latino culture. Perdido believed there were other ways for teachers to engage with Latina/o students that did not reify a stereotype that all Latina/o students spoke, were interested in, or comfortable speaking Spanish. In this regard, teachers unknowingly used Spanish language as a possible tool that further otherized Spanish speaking students like Perdido.

Lack of Latino Male Teachers

As noted earlier, among the 32 academic teachers, 19 were White, 9 were Black, 2 were Latina, and 2 were Asian. Faculty diversity did not mirror the diversity of the student population. Only two Black males taught in the high school, and only one, Mr. Webber, taught a core academic subject. Although Mr. Valencia, who was from Spain,

shared language kinship with Latino students, Perdido did not consider him to be Hispanic. Perdido noted, “You're Hispanic, when you come from Central America. Central America was conquered by Spain. Spain is European so therefore you're White.” Perdido sheds light on sentiments shared by Lucas, as they both lament this lack of racial and ethnic diversity among the teachers, especially the lack of Latino male teachers.

Perdido: 'Cause back in ninth grade I had this Spanish teacher named Mr. Pérez. Sadly he's leaving this year – yeah, he moved down to middle school. Like we do with Ms. Reynoso, like we mess with her, we can mess a lot more with him 'cause he's like a brother type connection or like an uncle type connection that we can have with him. Because, we can make certain references and he'll understand what I'm saying – what we're saying – and he can probably like connect with it. So not having a Hispanic male teacher kinda like takes away more connection than we could possibly have with them.

Perdido's sentiments reflected a desire for the male and racial/ethnic bonding and mentoring that could occur with Latino male teachers. An intersection between race and gender is key in how Perdido sees his relationship with Ms. Reynoso, and the possibility of a relationship with a Latino male teacher. Certain modes of bonding that could be shared with a Latino male were not available. In addition, Lucas considered how other students missed out from the overall presence of a diverse teaching body, as well.

Lucas: I think we are missing out because like, I think – all teachers should be diverse. There shouldn't be one type of race. I think it should be diverse in order to prove to all the students that any - we all can accomplish the same thing, that we all can become the same type of – or have the same type of career. I think that

we all – it should more diverse, right? Like let's say we go to college, right? We don't want all the teachers to be one race or the same thing. That wouldn't be fair.

I think it should be more diverse.

Here, Lucas emphasized how a diverse teaching body that includes more Latina/os, allows students to see themselves reflected in a variety of careers. Their presence would prove that Latina/os for instance could be teachers, or possibly anything else. A lack of teacher diversity spoke to possible limits to what students could become.

Too Few Black Male Teachers

He real. Like if there's something wrong with you, he gonna tell you. Or like if you need to chill, he gonna tell you. He like a brother figure. Like he keep it 100. Yeah.

He let you know what's up.

- King, 17 year old Black Junior

Both Black and Latino participants described a special relationship with their history teacher, Mr. Webber, who outside of their fitness teacher, was their only Black male teacher. A seven year veteran of Metro Collegiate, Mr. Webber was one of the most popular and one of the longest-serving teachers. He taught in the middle school prior to moving to the high school division, and as a result, he knew students quite well after teaching many for multiple grades. Mr. Webber was in his mid-30s and a graduate of Morehouse College, an all-male historically Black college in Atlanta known for its reputation for training Black men to be poised, scholarly, dignified, and astute. Mr. Webber was all of these things, and he was simply a remarkable teacher. His classroom was warm and welcoming, and each wall was covered with student classwork assignments, posters of quotes from notable Black figures, and teaching awards.

Mr. Webber's lessons and assessments were project-based, and he offered his students many opportunities to travel to monuments, museums, and the stately government buildings that they passed on their way to school. National initiatives like Model UN and National History Day were brought to Metro Collegiate under his careful watch, and guest speakers like Tuskegee Airmen and a survivor of U.S. Japanese Internment have shared fascinating accounts with his students. Well travelled, Mr. Webber spent nine years teaching English in Japan, and ventured to Europe and Africa each year. He freely and openly shared knowledge gained in these experiences with students.

Mr. Webber had fun with his students. He respected them, and he pushed them intellectually. When students posed inquiries, he stood still and responded carefully and thoughtfully to their questions. He looked at them directly, when they spoke, yet did not take on an authoritative demeanor. He tilted his head from the side, and would furrow his brow in a listening stance. He usually affirmed what the kids said before offering feedback or suggestions. He smiled, made small jokes, or validated their ideas with the exclamation, "that was hot oil!" a term he employed to denote that something said by a student in his Public Speaking class burned in a good way.

Students "got him," and he got them too. He frequently asked about their parents, their home lives and siblings, and he engaged with them using an astounding sense of humor. Lucas was able to key in to both how engaging the class is, and how humorous Mr. Webber was in his interactions with students.

Lucas: It's engaging, man. The class is engaging. You learn. It's not boring, man. You learn. You're supposed to have you have group discussions with your

table. Mr. Webber, he adds humor to it. He's funny man. And it's fun, man. Mr. Webber kept the class fun, and would pick-up imaginary things to throw at students when they said silly things. He squinted his eyes and twisted his mouth when students remarked the class work was too hard, and handled disciplinary dilemmas with an ease of firmness that the students both respected and expected. Participants revealed their relationship with him as both brother and father figure.

Samuel: But most black males, don't have a father figure in their lives. Me being one of those children. I don't have a black father figure to go to in my life. And with a black male teacher, that makes that possibility come true. Then you could use that to push you farther. It's like different ways you can use that. It can really – just having that can boost your courage, just everything about you. It can mold you as a person.

Samuel also revealed Mr. Webber's critical stance as a social-justice oriented educator.

Samuel: He just talks about how if you don't read, then you're falling into – this is not his exact words, but you're falling into the system's design. They want you to not read.

Mr. Webber's racial identity informed his work with Black males, in particular. In informal dialogues with him he was keenly aware of his position as a Black man and how he held a special relational role for his male students of color, in particular. Mr. Webber's interpersonal relationships with students were powerful, and they worked hard to not disappoint him. Malik, who has known Mr. Webber for six years, noted an instance when Mr. Webber pulled him aside to talk to him about bringing his grades up.

Malik: A while ago, my grades were kind of low in his class, and I usually get

here in the morning early, I'm here before most of the other students. So one day, I got here, and he put me in the classroom, and he actually, he had a talk with me. He sat down to talk with me, and he said, and he was talking about how he really wanted me to be successful in his class, and pull up my grades, and ever since then I've been passing his class. He really has more connection than other teachers, because he's a black male, also we really don't have many of those in this school at all. He actually talked to me rather than just like giving me a detention or not telling me anything about my grade.

I asked Malik how Mr. Webber's identity as a Black man related to his importance in the lives of Black males in particular.

RC: But a lot of other teachers here talk to you, right? What's different about him? You're a black male, there're not a lot of black males here. You're a black male and he's a black male. How do you see race in that? That's a high-level question.

Malik: I mean, I don't know. But I can kind of relate myself to him, because seeing that he's a successful teacher and successful in life, that means like it's possible. It's not like all black people - it's not that everybody is gonna be a drug dealer on the street or in jail, you can do other stuff with your life, like be a teacher and be successful.

Earlier, Malik noted how the Latino students had their Latino teachers, with whom they found kinship. He also noted how Black students, who did not have the opportunity to bond with male teachers of color noted how they could relate to Mr. Webber, as he reflected the characteristics he saw or aspired to in himself. Mr. Webber was successful,

which to Malik, signaled that he too could be successful. Mr. Webber's mere presence disaffirmed the harmful stereotypes of Black men as drug dealers or prison inmates. Mr. Webber embodied so much of what the school wished for students; he was well-educated, respected by his colleagues, and was academically and socially successful. However, Mr. Webber was only one man, so students who aspired to live up to what the school valued had so few examples of Black males that mirrored and lived these ideals. In addition, participants reported that while only the Latino students and not the non-Latino students, felt a special language and cultural kinship with the Latino Spanish language teachers, all participants revealed a special kinship with Mr. Webber.

Recognizing Success

The school had an explicit goal of promoting success for all racially and ethnically diverse students. However, when the school recognized successful students, Black students were underrepresented. For example, in the school's most recently available annual report, only one of the seven students whose accomplishments were featured was Black despite the fact that Black students represented a little over 40% of the student population. One of these students acknowledged was the only White male graduating senior. Moreover, the recipients of both faculty-funded scholarship awards for the students who best reflected the school's values were Latino. This report was published on their website, distributed widely to funders and parents, and served as a key marketing tool to prospective families. Reports like these served as the symbols for the success of Metro Collegiate at educating students according their mission. However, this report reflected a contradiction between the stated mission of the school – to educate all

racially and ethnically diverse students at high levels – and the evidence of their ability to do so.

This section considered many complex ways students experienced the school culture at Metro Collegiate along racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic lines. Given the salience of a diverse student population meeting high academic expectations, how students experienced this diversity revealed many dilemmas. Even though Metro Collegiate is one of the most sought after charter schools in the city, findings suggest that it grappled with student self-segregation, differential disciplinary treatment, and stereotypes along racial and linguistic lines. In addition, other dilemmas like too few Black and Latino male teachers, and the racial disproportion of student success as captured on publications like the annual report, paint a picture of a school grappling with the same diversity issues that Metro espoused to be so salient to making the it one of the best in the city.

Success Means the Following: Get Good Grades, Show Effort, and do not get in Trouble

This section explores both the academic and behavioral expectations of Metro Collegiate. Success at Metro Collegiate is distilled into three key messages: get good grades, show effort, and avoid getting into trouble. Teachers and administrators measure student success and their potential for college by how well students measure up to these broad overarching ideals.

To understand these overarching ideals, this section will explore the curriculum and grading system by utilizing participant voices to illustrate how these policies are experienced from different vantages. A key event in the school was the Academic Honors Assembly, which was held to honor the academic achievements of students during the

second marking period. This assembly will be discussed given the perspective of the role of student effort in earning the most desirable honors.

Curriculum and Grading System

One thing I don't like about how they do their credits, because a lot of my friends leave because of the credits that they do here, because instead of having 24 credits, you need 26.5 – 2 and a half extra credits!

- Malik, 17 year old junior

Metro Collegiate students must meet the minimum requirements set forth by the public school district. These include a typical progression of core courses in English, history, math, science, and a foreign language. In addition to these minimum requisites, students must complete additional coursework to fulfill Metro Collegiate's requirements in electives like fitness, art, dance, and music as well as 100 community service hours and a culminating portfolio project each year. As a result of these additional requirements, Metro Collegiate students were required to have 26.5 course credits in comparison to students in traditional public schools who only needed 24 credits and 20-30 community service hours by the time they graduate. These added requirements gave students a rigorous academic schedule, and helped to create a more rigorous college-oriented culture. The rigorous student schedules possibly made students more appealing to college recruiters because of the exposure Metro Collegiate students have to a breadth of coursework. However, the additional requirements built up some resentment in certain students. For instance, participants revealed instances where friends who failed courses were able to graduate on time by transferring to another city school with lesser requirements.

Showing Effort

There were three facets to student grades at Metro Collegiate. There was an academic grade, based solely results on quizzes, tests, homework, and other projects. In addition to this more traditional measure of achievement, students were also assessed for their “Habits of Work” (HOW) and “Habits of Mind” (HOM). The HOW grade reflects a teacher’s assessment of a student’s organization skills, timeliness in coming to class and submitting assignments, quality of work, personal accountability for staying on task in class, contribution to group projects, and proficiency in asking for assistance and taking responsibility. These grades reflected not only the academic skills students possess, but also the effort with which they approached their work. The HOM grade reflected a student’s ability to reflect on and debrief lessons and set goals for future learning. It also assessed a student’s ability and willingness to produce multiple drafts of work and to demonstrate new skills in various formats including graphic organizers, lab reports, journals and summaries.

Grading for the HOW and HOM grades are as follows: (1) Rarely, (2) Sometimes, (3) Often, and (4) Consistently (Student demonstrates these habits consistently). Students must achieve a 2.0 in the HOW and HOM to pass the course. Academic grades, HOW, HOM are averaged and calculated together to give students anywhere between a 0.0 – 4.0 grade point average (GPA). Students were assigned grades in .25 differentials, meaning that if a student had a 2.9, this grade must be either rounded up to a 3.0 or rounded down to a 2.75. Teachers used the HOW and HOM grade to round up or round down these scores depending on their assessment of the student.

Participants found the grading system unfair. Both King and Perdido were

particularly frustrated by the HOW and HOM system, citing it as unfair and subjective.

Perdido: The grading system, like what the hell, man, they're rounding down now? Fuck is that? It's not right, like you --

RC: Tell me more about that.

Perdido: You're around, like apparently last year or whatever they would have your grade and they'd round either up or down, depending on the decimal of your grade but now it's just like they round down. So say you have a 2.9, so round it down to 2.75 or 2.5.

Perdido believed this grading policy to be illogical and unnecessarily harsh. King, who felt frustrated by what he believed to be subjective grading policies and practices, mirrored Perdido's assessment of the grading system. Explaining how the HOW and HOM grades are determined, he noted the following:

King: That's basically a teacher's opinion grade based on how teachers feel that you are doing in a certain learning topics. I mean, Habits of Mind and Habits of Work is basically what they grade you on. Like every teacher has some type of control over your grade so they can choose to put your grade up a little bit or put it down a little bit, but it has to be somewhere where your work is at, so I just feel like the Habits of Work and Habits of Mind is the teacher's opinion of you.

King cited instances in which he was both harmed and helped by HOW and HOM grades. He believed that teachers utilized their power to reward their favorite students by rounding their grades up, and to punish others by rounding down. In his AP English course during the second marking period, for example, King's score was 1.6, and the teacher with whom he was close rounded his grade up to 2.0. However, in another course,

he scored 2.9. This teacher rounded his grade down to 2.75, making him ineligible for academic honors. In addition, Perdido mentioned that his grades are so low primarily because of missed homework. Since completing homework on time reflects a behavioral expectation, it counts for HOW. In addition, missed homework counts for an academic grade, as well. This means that Perdido, and other student's grades suffer by being penalized doubly.

Participants had varying definitions and descriptions of what they believed the HOW and HOM evaluations actually assessed. Most felt frustrated by these assessments. They felt they had a lack of full control over their grades because a key part of their overall grade was based on the teachers' subjective views or opinions about them. These opinions were based on expectations that were difficult to ascertain. Because of these more subjective criteria of what HOW and HOM looked like, participants felt unsure as to where they stood with teachers' expectations.

Academic Honors Assembly

So I just felt like of what I saw, it looked like the older you get, the dumber your class is. Or you could say the younger you are, the easier your classes are. Either way.

King, 17 year old Black male junior

In late January, the high school students paraded from their classrooms and down stairs to the gym, which was on the middle school level. The students enter noisily, and as they entered the gym, the echo caused by the towering ceiling and hard wood gym floor amplified their voices. Blue plastic pullout bleachers, in four separate sections, flanked two walls in the gym. Seniors and freshmen sat on one side of the gym, while juniors and sophomores sat on the other. The mood reflected controlled chaos. The

students carried on with little regard for the teachers, who stood around loosely monitoring student excitement.

Various members of each class brandished homemade signs, so when each class was called, posters went up and shook, and an uproar of excitement overwhelmed the space. Students jumped up and danced, and one adorned a rubber horse head and occasionally neighed to the laughter of his 11th grade peers. Teachers stood around and seem unconcerned with re-directing student behavior or keeping students quiet. Students did eventually become quiet, but never silent, as various announcements begin to come from administrators.

The first announcement was to recognize Silvia, a popular Latina senior, who was awarded a full scholarship for soccer to a regional college. Silvia's was the first athletic scholarship ever won by a Metro Collegiate student. She beamed as she stomped down the bleachers half-hugging and grabbing friends, to receive applause and a certificate for this honor.

Mr. Madison, a giant but soft-spoken Black male took to the microphone. Mr. Madison was the Dean of School Culture, a title that could aptly be replaced with "Disciplinary Dean," given his daily responsibilities. His usual duties included monitoring the hallways during transition, supervising the cafeteria during lunch, holding in-school suspension and after school detention, following the pulse of student discourses to preempt fights, and meeting with students, families, and faculty over disciplinary-based concerns. Most students respected and appreciated his firm yet fair approach, his laid back demeanor, and his jovial interactions with students. Usually, he stood in front of students for the purpose of reprimand or re-direction, but today was different. He

explained the new honor roll system and that today students would be recognized for their academic achievements in the second marking period.

Students were awarded at three levels meant to mirror collegiate degree attainment. “Bachelor’s degrees” were awarded to students who achieved a 3.0 GPA, “Master’s degrees” for students with a 3.5 GPA, and “Doctorate degrees” for students with a 3.75 GPA. These honor roll categories were symbolic, especially given the underlying college-going school culture. Seemingly, the higher one’s GPA, the higher their symbolic degree status. The results were both revelatory and troubling.

Students seemed quite deflated through this award ceremony. While initially supportive of classmates who received an honor, by the end of the ceremony, the mood had shifted from excitement to a sullenness that was understandable. From my vantage, students slumped over in the bleachers, while some look at each other puzzled, and whispered about how close they were to meeting the grade requirement for an award.

In total, out of the 317 students in the high school population only 24 students were awarded an academic honor, and most of them were at the bachelor’s level. The school’s only White and Asian students achieved the only master’s and doctorate level recognition earned by any students. The only Black boy – a ninth grader – to secure an academic honor was at the lowest level – a bachelor’s degree. While no Latino male ninth graders received an award, four Latino males received bachelor’s, one in the tenth grade, two in the eleventh including Lucas, and one in the twelfth.

Habits of Successful Students: Academic Success and the Importance of Effort

Later that day, I asked the Dean of School Culture what he thought about both the small number of awardees and particularly the lack of Black male awardees. “Doing what

teachers say,” “getting extra help,” “they have to want it,” and “these teachers are not going to chase these kids down,” were refrains he echoed often in our interview. His sentiments provided key evidence for the importance of effort in securing success at Metro Collegiate. Successful students needed to show tremendous effort in order to secure the support from their teachers to achieve high academic results.

Malik: The teachers here, I think they care to an extent. But extent that if you’re like disrespectful or don’t really care about their work anymore. I think they tend more toward the kids that will actually do the work, than won’t do the work. And give them more help, like in class or outta class, than they will to a person that doesn’t do their homework every night, they do their homework like once a month, gets detention all the time. I think it just depends on like how you are academically in the school, how attentive they are towards you.

Malik’s sentiments reflected the salience of effort in securing the high regard of teachers. Effort, for Malik, showed that a student cared, a quality highly valued in his eyes by his teachers. According to participants’ perceptions, more help out of class was given to students who were diligent with their assignments, and those who avoided displaying behavior that merited detentions. How attentive teachers were toward students depended on how successful they were academically.

Not surprisingly then, Lucas, who showed tremendous effort as evidenced by his willingness to stay after school many days of the week to meet with teachers about projects, was one of the most successful students.

Participants had varying academic and behavioral records and were differently positioned within the culture of success at the school. Both his peers and his teachers

viewed Lucas, one of the highest achieving students in the 11th grade, as a success. Mr. Webber referred to Lucas as “the kid that I’d take into battle with me.” For Mr. Webber, Lucas was one of the most reliable, well-spoken, and thoughtful students. Other students called Lucas “El Presidente,” as even before he ran for class president, they admired his willingness to work hard and lead his class. Lucas's grades were among the highest in the junior class, and he was the only study participant to receive an award at the assembly for achieving a GPA of 3.0 or higher.

Lucas said he stayed on top of his work, checked his school email constantly for messages from teachers, stayed after school for extra help and tutoring, and engaged in after school activities both sponsored by the school and outside agencies. He was looked at as “smart and responsible,” and was afforded the opportunity to run for class president.

Habits of Successful Students: Shhhhhh be quiet!

As I spent considerable time shadowing Lucas, he became one of the key typical examples of success at Metro Collegiate. In addition to being hard working, friendly with peers, and cordial with the teachers, Lucas also had a key attribute shared by the most successful students at Metro Collegiate – he was quiet in class. Simply put, academically successful students like Lucas only spoke when called upon by teachers, and adopted a more demure and reserved demeanor. Participants often reflected on this particular attribute in interviews, and I observed this in classrooms, the hallway, and in the cafeteria. *Perdido*, a student known to be a bit more outspoken and talkative in class, keyed into this when I asked him about the habits of successful students.

RC: What are some of the things that successful students do here?

Perdido: They don't talk – It surprises the crap out of me man. Like how do you

stay so quiet? Sure they like talk amongst themselves sometimes but like they never get in trouble. They don't talk. I don't see how they do that.

Perdido noted how being quiet is valued by the school, and he connected it to these students' ability to avoid getting into trouble. Being loud in general seemed to land students in trouble often. Race played a key role in how this characteristic of successful student was considered within the Metro Collegiate community. Black students were more frequently disciplined for what participants referred to as "being loud." One of the ways that students were loud was during an activity mostly taken up by the Black male students. As a result, gender and race played a key role in how other students and teachers viewed this practice called "jonin'."

"Jonin'" is type of joking behavior that mirrors the traditionally Black teasing referenced in the "dozens," or "snappin'," or "ranking," where at least two or more people take turns making fun of the others dress, intelligence, family, skin color, income-level, or another personal attribute. The goal is to come up with the most creative and innovative way to make fun of the other and rile listeners to "oooooh" and "ahhhh" at the cleverness of content and delivery. One of the groups with which King was most closely associated was referred to as the "Jonin' group." This was a group of all Black boys, who sit together daily in the cafeteria and sometimes participate in "jonin'." While jonin' did not always occur in the cafeteria, it occurred in the hallway, before classes, or might erupt during classroom times.

Sometimes key to jonin' delivery is usually profanity and increasing loudness, behaviors that are both heavily disapproved of at the school. Jonin' sessions usually draw a crowd, are invariably loud and end with riotous laughter from bystanders, mostly with

friendships maintained. However, for outsiders, like teachers and administrators, these matches can seem violent, aggressive, and threatening, because of the explicit language, the bodily posturing, and the depth of the crowd these spectacles draw.

In addition to consisting of all Black males, the jonin' group was also hallmarked by a few other key attributes. All of its members were relatively popular among the student body, according to King, they were more frequently disciplined than others, and they were members of the basketball team. Race and gender intersect with regards to jonin', as girls of all backgrounds and most Latinos never engaged in this practice.

The jonin' group brought to the fore a key foil to the quiet attributes valued within the culture of Metro Collegiate. Being loud, showy, and drawing a crowd were all things that occurred when students started to jon', but these things also occurred when students started to fight. While jonin' was most often done for fun, and done without any sort of malice, usually the same loud, profane, and intense posturing accompanied both jonin' and fighting. Black males were seen as more likely to engage in jonin', and were also viewed as more likely to engage in fighting.

Race, Gender, and Discipline

Participants discussed issues pertaining to how race informed disciplinary concerns. This section looks closely at how race and discipline intersect at Metro Collegiate. First, the Dean of School Culture's office is described and participant voices are used to understand how student conflicts arise and how stereotypes of Black students play into punitive sanctions.

The Dean of School Culture's office sat in the corner of the high school wing near the stairs that come up from lunch. Outside of his door was posted a 2 or sometimes 3

page list of students by name, grade, and reason for punishment, expected for after school detention for various offenses. A ritual for students was to stop by and check the list to see if any teachers reported them to the Dean for skipping minor lunch detentions, missing homework, or general disrespect.

Mr. Madison's office was smaller than a classroom, but large enough for a circular table that can seat four, ten student desks with dividers that face the wall, and Mr. Madison's desk. A small window in the corner provided occasional light, but a view of nothing more than the cement roof. Mr. Madison kept the shade drawn, and said that the window was "only good for telling the weather." Students usually came throughout the day for in-school suspension, disciplinary hearings, conflict mediation, or just to settle down after a dispute. Students sat in the desks, usually with their heads down, frustrated, annoyed, or pensive. Mr. Madison, a tall Black man, had a calm demeanor and usually settled conflict among students and teachers. Invariably boys – Black boys – occupied this space in the greatest numbers.

One reason that students end up in Mr. Madison's office is for quarreling with their peers. Students quarrel for numerous reasons. King mentioned that many times conflicts in schools arise from "beef" or "disputes" that start outside of school on social media outlets like twitter. And while boys are usually the ones involved in physical confrontations, girls also fight for various reasons. King admitted that a fight between two girls, which occurred on the day of our first interview in January, was caused by their similar and simultaneous interest in him.

The school has a zero tolerance policy for initiating a fight and, regardless of the reason, whoever "threw the first punch" was punished swiftly with in-school or out-of-

school suspension and sometimes expulsion. However, while participants usually understood how their own poor choices led to conflicts, participants believed there to be a particular disproportional dislike or disregard of Black students rooted in stereotypes.

Participants discussed why they thought certain groups, particularly Black students, were disproportionality sanctioned for behavior issues. Malik believed it was connected to stereotypes.

Malik: Like I said before earlier, it's like they stereotype Black people. If you walk around the hallway, you'll most likely see more Black kids in the hallway than Hispanic getting in trouble or their name outside the Dean's office. They probably got kicked out of class for either cursing out the teacher or walking out the class, or being sent out the class for some odd reason that probably didn't even make any sense.

Malik's assertion pointed to what he felt to be disciplining based in stereotypical misunderstandings. Black students were kicked out of the room for cursing, or leaving without permission, but they were also punished for other interpersonal occurrences with teachers that may be based in misunderstandings. Similar to how Black males were punished for 'joking', which students may have perceived as a fun and a relatively harmless feat, other verbal encounters might have landed them in trouble with teachers. Stereotypical notions of Black males as threatening, aggressive or violent, might have informed teachers' decisions to immediately put students in the hallway or send them to the Dean's office to squelch these encounters.

Samuel believed that Blacks were disciplined harsher than Latinos, but he also believed that Latinos did not engage in behaviors that merit them being disciplined at

higher rates. After an early morning school fight, Samuel, in an interview was asked to reflect on what occurred. Samuel noted, “I don’t ever hear of Hispanic students getting expelled, because they don’t really do anything outrageous like the Black kids do.” In this response, Samuel saw a difference between the behavior of Blacks and Latinos. For him, Blacks deserved their punishments, because they caused more disruptions than Latinos and other racial groups.

Black students were more likely to be involved in fights, which resulted in suspension and sometimes expulsion from the school. Samuel saw not only race but also colorism as shaping the disciplining of students at MC.

Samuel: It doesn't seem like it's mostly a race thing, but it's more of how you're brought up. So do you remember the doll test and the doll that was blacker, um, see - so I think most people see darker skin complexions as bad, so what happens is they treat them like that.

Samuel thought that there might be something underlying teachers’ perceptions of Black students that might be rooted in the teachers’ own lived experiences and histories. Here, Samuel references Drs. Kenneth and Mamie Clark’s study of racial attitudes among schoolchildren in the late 1930s (see Clark & Clark, 1940). In this psychological study of race preference among children, participants in the Bancroft study were presented with two dolls, one Black and one White. Students were asked among other questions, which doll they wanted to play with more. Findings revealed that children, both Black and White, preferred the White doll to the Black doll in almost all instances. This study revealed how internalized racism not only impacted how participants viewed their own racial group membership generally, but also how they viewed themselves. Particularly,

lawyers in the *Brown vs. Board of Education* case used findings from this study to indicate that the label of separate meant self-loathing and inferiority on Black children (Kluger, 2011). Intriguingly, Samuel called upon the findings from this study to explain his perceptions of teachers' views of Black students. Samuel, who did not specify if he saw differential treatment by teachers of all races, noted that teachers' upbringings, and what they have been taught about racial difference, informed how they interact with students. While unwilling to name disproportional discipline practices among teachers and administrators as racist, Samuel clearly had a sense that implicit bias played a role in the disproportionate disciplining of Black students.

To better understand the disciplinary climate of Metro Collegiate, it is important to consider how others were involved and utilized within the disciplinary process. In addition to the Disciplinary Dean, Metro Collegiate was policed by three security guards who guarded doors, patrolled the hallways, and intervened in student conflicts at the request of administration. Other than Mr. Webber, the history teacher, and the Dean, the only other Black men who were consistently present in Metro Collegiate were these three security guards. I observed few cordial interactions between the security guards and students. They maneuvered between all areas of the three school divisions, and had little time to have banter or informal interaction with students. The security guards adorned bright yellow and orange vests and walky-talkies that constantly and disruptively chirped, and sometimes were called in for fights, to patrol the corners surrounding the school during dismissal, or when students need to be removed from classrooms.

I observed how the security guards enforced disciplinary power within the school. In one instance, a Black boy got involved into a verbal altercation with a teacher and

refused to leave the classroom when asked. After threatening the student with detention and suspension, the dean intervened and requested the student come with him. The boy refused and was threatened with forced removal by the security guard, who came and walked the boy out to go sit in the dean's office. Interactions like these paint a troubling picture of how students, especially Black students, experience the school. Although power was held by teachers to squelch conflict in the classrooms, students who refused to relent to a teacher's power were penalized with greater levels of control. If the teacher could not handle a situation, then the dean did. If the Dean could not control a student adequately, then a security guard does. The security guards acted as the police who then remove a child from a situation then paraded him down to the Dean's area for isolation.

Given instances like these, the school culture was highlighted by a greater sense of unease about the behavioral expectations of Black boys, in particular. King, in an earlier example, noted how when a bag of marijuana was discovered in the hallway, only Black boys were brought down and questioned regarding its ownership. This incident frustrated King, who believed racism to be at play in how only Black boys were considered culpable for this offense. With Samuel's mention of implicit bias possibly operating in the minds of teachers, darker hued students may be at a disadvantage in the face of teachers' deficit mindsets around students. Participants' sentiments about how students with disciplinary "records" are considered in the next section.

Inability to Shake Previous Disciplinary History to Gain Better Favor

Participants believed it difficult to shake previous disciplinary problems to regain the favor of teachers. This section will explore how students' reputations followed them throughout their high school tenure, making it impossible to gain the approval of teachers

for student representative and leadership positions.

On the first day of visiting the school, I sat at the circular table that sits in front of the principal's office waiting to meet with her. As I sat, an announcement was made for a group of students to report to the principal's office. A group of nine students, mostly Black and Latina females and two Latino males of various ages, came down nervously. They gathered in front of the school administrative assistant and questioned each other as to the purpose of this gathering. The principal came out of the office, yelled "Congrats!" and assured students they were not in trouble. Rather, this group was nominated by their teachers to serve as student ambassadors. They would be responsible for representing the school to visitors and provide tours. Not a single Black male student was included in this group of student representatives.

This occurrence shined light on how students who displayed favorable behavior were rewarded. The absence of Black boys from this group of well-regarded students gave a bit of insight into how they were positioned in the school. Staying in favor with the teachers afforded students greater access to increased leadership positioning that could be used on college application materials, for instance. Students like Perdido and King were unable to gain favorable positioning for roles like student ambassadorships in part due to their behavioral history with teachers and peers. Perdido said that while he was previously positioned as a student leader, after ninth grade when he started hanging around a more troublesome crowd, he was no longer sought after for high-profile positions such as representing the school to larger community audiences.

Perdido: Cause I've been on both ends – I've been on the smart end, which is like, the teachers like love to pull you out and stuff, the principal's always talking

to you and stuff. I've also been on the low – just like I've been one of the troublemakers. So right now, I'm more in between – more leaning on the troublemakers, but –

RC: Really?

Perdido: And what I've noticed is when you're at the top – like all the teachers know you. They just know you're smart, and they use that. Like I said, I've helped this school – I've benefited this school a lot. Like, we have the building because me and a couple other students went to the City Council to convince them that we should deserve this building.

To secure the new building and the funding the school needed for the capital improvements, various students were selected to testify about the benefits of a Metro Collegiate education. Perdido, who speaks persuasively, was chosen to do this on a few occasions. However, after a few disciplinary concerns, he was not invited to engage in these types of privileges.

Perdido: I represented the school and things like that, and the school would get more recognition, more grants, more support, more funding. And then once I felt like I dropped from the top, it seemed like I would get pulled out less and less, and then like “it's just another kid who comes to this school.”

In addition to these out-of-school endeavors, data from this study suggested that students with histories of disciplinary problems, suspensions, or those un-favored by the teachers had less of a chance to a secure school leadership position. In a focus group, Lucas discussed how he decided to run for class president. He explained that after the description of the position was read, he realized he fit the criteria while others realized

that they were ineligible.

Lucas: Ms. Jackson, she came to our room, right? English class one day – and she was like we should all like choose the person who's good at talking with the teachers or communicating. I was like okay, I'm gonna run for president.

RC: So why didn't any of you all run for any office?

Perdido: Cause she said she wanted somebody who does all their work, who turns stuff in on time, and doesn't procrastinate.

Lucas: That's what she said?

Perdido: Mm-hm. She's like –

Lucas: She's serious man. She's like –

Malik: She's the real thing. She ain't playing no games.

Perdido: Gotta be responsible.

Malik: And she said if you're suspended[crosstalk] –

Perdido: Yeah, if you got a bad attitude –

Lucas: Like, don't even run.

Malik: Yeah, if you have like a bad attitude and you don't communicate well with others, don't even try to run.

Prior to running, Lucas had to meet with others interested in campaigning. Lucas noted the need for the school to have more male leadership. He believed that males did not stand out enough at the school, and that while males are more prominent in leadership positions in society, few stand out in school.

Lucas: Like males, we usually don't like – it's not often that males that actually, like, or that become outstanding or they stand out. And I think that's a problem

because, like, you cannot just have like female leaders. You need some male leaders. It's interesting, because, like, you know, now you think about it now in the United States most of the leaders or heroes, we think about are male. We look up to them.

The relative lack of boys in leadership positions at the school puzzled Lucas, because to him many in society upheld men as leaders in their communities. For Lucas, there was a disconnect between what he saw with his male counterparts now, and what he expected of males in broader United States society. To expound on the lack of males in leadership, Lucas discussed how boys were noticeably absent during another school assembly that was focused on awarding scholarships. I attended this event and captured extensive field notes.

At the end of March, students gathered in the gym for announcements, acknowledgements and awards. However, this time, no honor roll certificates were awarded. Instead, a local civic organization presented certificates to a group of six Black and Latina girls for their meritorious academic and social achievements. Pictures were taken, and while students walked back to their seats, the college counselor, Ms. Diggs, took the microphone to enthusiastically announce that four students had recently been awarded prestigious college scholarships. She began to call the names of Michelle and Jessica, two Black female seniors who were awarded partial scholarships to college. After these two students came up, she announced that Marisol and Roxanna were both awarded full scholarships to prestigious, nationally ranked colleges. Combined, these four girls were awarded over \$250,000 in scholarships. Noticeably absent were males. Ms. Diggs, then exclaimed to the boys on the microphone, “C’mon young men, you have to step

your game up!” Lucas commented on this incidence, in reference to the lack of males receiving high academic merit.

Lucas: In school we see more females doing good on tests and everything. But then the males, “where are they at?” Like, where are they? There was one school meeting where they were giving out seniors the scholarships they earned, some scholarships and there were only three females from seniors. None of the males earned anything.

Lucas noticed this absence of other males in the pool of seniors awarded prestigious scholarships. Charter schools rarely receive the attention that traditional public schools garner for athletic scholarships, given the less competitive leagues many compete within. Thus, even athletic scholarships, which would broaden the likelihood that boys would earn financial awards for college, were difficult to secure. In its history, only one student from Metro Collegiate – a girl – received an athletic scholarship. Given that so few males achieve at high levels at Metro Collegiate, it is difficult for Lucas to see other males like himself achieving and being awarded for working hard in school.

In addition to gender disparities, Lucas and his discussions with the other participants revealed how school leadership opportunities seemed to be unavailable to students with previous disciplinary records or students who communicated ineffectively with teachers. The school culture was based on supporting students who showed continual effort, and there seemed to be an inability to redeem oneself from previous mistakes to gain the approval of teachers and administrators. Participants noted that students with stellar records were the ones afforded the opportunity to earn spots as leaders; however, this left no hope for upward progress for students who struggled to

meet the expectations of Metro Collegiate's rules.

College Over Everything

School really wants you to go to college, really badly. Like college to this school is like crack to the crack head.

- *Perdido, 17 year old Latino junior*

Metro Collegiate is a college preparatory high school. Preparing students for college and impressing upon them the value of attending college is central to its mission. This section explores how participants experienced various facets of this rigorous college-going climate and highlights the ways teachers upheld college as the most important post secondary outcome for students.

Students were engulfed in college imagery throughout their time at Metro Collegiate. While the elementary and middle school levels of the school had ample displays of student artwork and colorful signs to encourage reading, for instance, the high school division, presented college and university imagery in many ways. Posters, pennants, and advertisements for college and scholarships adorn certain parts of the walls. Reminders for SATs and the ACT are prominently displayed, particularly in the area near the college placement office.

The college-going culture was salient at Metro Collegiate. Classroom teachers reinforce the skills and dispositions needed in college in their lessons. For instance, Malik described how, in his English course, the teacher reinforced connections between students' current academic experiences and what will be expected in college.

Malik: Sometimes when you write an essay she says we're gonna need these skills

for college because they're not gonna be five paragraphs. They're gonna be like, five pages.

In addition to these connections in courses, students were offered ample opportunities to explore college options starting in the ninth grade. College tours occurred seasonally, visitors from diverse colleges occurred throughout the year, and visits to local and regional college fairs were mandatory for all 11th grade students. Ms. Diggs, the head college counselor, attended 11th grade level all-class meetings.

Ms. Diggs along with Mr. Rodríguez, who worked mostly with alums, comprised the main components of the college placement team. Sometimes Mr. James, a Black male who works for an outside social service entity that assists multiple schools, helped students with college applications, but he was available only twice per week. Their office space was small for the work they did. The college placement office was teeming with students particularly between December and March, as students frantically sought their guidance in completing their applications.

Perdido, who was already experiencing high levels of college messaging now, expects these college-going messages to intensify even more his senior year.

Perdido: In your 12th grade year they're gonna have you signing college applications and supposedly to apply for college and then you get accepted and then you go. All those grade level meetings, college is mentioned at least twice. College, college, college, college!

College was everywhere, and for Perdido, this was a bit frustrating. When he noted that in the 12th grade the school will “supposedly” have him apply for college, he connoted his unease and lack of interest in the process. As a student who struggled academically,

and as a student who did not intend on attending college, he was not enthusiastic about the intense college-going process that kicks into high gear his senior year.

High school students at Metro Collegiate were engulfed in college imagery. On Fridays, teachers frequently wore collegiate tee shirts, jerseys, and sweatshirts. Regardless of whether or not the teacher attended or graduated from the institution, teachers and administrators proudly donned gear representing schools like Howard University, Boston College, Florida State, Chapel Hill, and Morehouse College. Sometimes adults wore paraphernalia from their collegiate Black Greek letter organizations. Many teachers have displayed pennants from their college or graduate school near their desks, bright and visible for students to see, admire, and ask about.

Lucas and Samuel fully embraced the college-going culture of Metro, and believed it to be salient to their growth and development as they moved closer to their college goals. Samuel believed that high school should not only help you plan for college, but also mold you into the image of a college student in the process.

Samuel: High school should try to push you to do good. It's trying to push you to do better, so it's gonna try to push you to go into higher education 'cause they want you to do good, but with that – I mean you made up your decision and then they keep – they just try to make you into an image that they feel is good for you. For Samuel, it is not the job of the school to make a student believe college is the right option for them. Rather, Metro Collegiate's role is to affirm your college going decision and mold students intellectually and socially into the ideal college student. Samuel and students, like Lucas, in particular, accepted Metro Collegiate's aim to mold him into a college student without much critique.

Lucas was committed to attending a competitive college, and was actively working toward his eventual goal.

Lucas: Yeah, college is my main goal, man. Like here in like Metro Collegiate, they really try to help you. Like, if you put effort into it, like that's your goal, they trying to make you go to college.

Here Lucas pinpointed a critical facet of the college going process. While Metro Collegiate did require students to apply to at least three colleges, students needed to put in considerable effort to seek the help they need to gain admittance into more competitive colleges. Metro Collegiate required all seniors to apply to one of the local community colleges, and most were encouraged to apply to the large local, open enrollment public university. Although students applied to a wide variety of regional, state, private and specialty colleges, to gain admittance into top-tier colleges and universities took considerable support.

Participants agreed that the school emphasizes college going at high levels, however, they do not all experience these messages similarly. Other participants, like Malik, King, and Perdido, were critical of the college-going culture. While Malik was interested in college, he believed that the school encouraged college at the sake of other options for students after high school.

Malik: I know some people who don't wanna go to college that go here. They still like shove college tours down your throat. And some people I know don't wanna go to college and they said it and they still made 'em go on the trip. I think that it's all up to the decision you wanna make 'cause it's your life ahead of you, and

the school can't make you have to apply to college if you don't wanna apply to college.

Malik and King felt that college was the only outcome that the school valued for students. This emphasis on college going might make students who were uninterested in college or interested in other fields like the military, feel their dreams or ambitions were less desirable or valid. King was interested in going to college as a pathway into a career in NFL or as a physical therapist specializing in sports-related injuries. King shared a story of a classmate who, instead of attending college, is interested in becoming a tattoo artist. King believed that the school should provide more options for students like her and that in addition to a college counselor, a career counselor should also be available for students considering alternate life paths.

King: The school should have somebody focus on the people who want to go to college, have somebody who focus on people who want to do something after they get out of high school. Like, I can't stop using the tattoo thing, 'cause it's just, I don't know, but like her. If I want to go for physical therapy and she want to go do a tattoo thing they should help her, 'cause teachers, they talk about how we here for the students and students come first and students this, sort of, should help your student be a tattoo artist if that's what she want to be. You should help your other student be a physical therapist if that's what I want to be.

College acceptance, matriculation, and graduation were all goals that teachers and administrators had for students. Students uninterested in college still must apply to at least three colleges and be accepted to at least one school, even if it is an open enrollment community college. However, those that were uninterested in attending a more

competitive college, they get less attention from counselors who spend a majority of their time working to get students into colleges of their choice.

Seeing College Imagery Differently

In addition to experiencing college-oriented programs, policies, expectations and rhetoric differently, participants varied in their opinions about the prevalence of college imagery displayed by teachers and seen on the walls and classrooms. Lucas admired teachers college tee shirts because these shirts were symbolic of the effort that teachers put towards earning their degrees. For Lucas, those shirts were a mark of pride and accomplishment, which encouraged him to want to both attend and graduate from a good school. Samuel believed that the shirts encouraged students to research and ask questions about the various schools that the teachers represented.

Samuel: It does make you want to go to college. So I remember one time that tee shirt made this girl in one of my music classes ask the music teacher about how that college was. And he was just explaining his college life. And it just makes you think like if I want to go to college and stuff like that.

While Samuel and Lucas are drawn in by the college imagery, King was critical and said that it was all “fake.”

King: 'Cause that's colleges they went to, that ain't no college, no kids in here got into. Maybe if a kid in here got into their college then I understand, but why wear a college tee shirt of a college that you know a kid can't go to, but they might want to go to?

In this comment, King critiqued the school's ability to prepare students for admittance to some of the competitive schools seen on shirts. King was a popular athlete who was

mostly interested in playing football. His critique was informed by what he saw as disinterest by the school in preparing students for competitive placements in top division sports programs.

King: What shirts that I seen? I seen Florida State, I've seen Florida, what else have I seen? Michigan State. I'm not going to Michigan State! Those the two that kind of stood out to me 'cause those are like big sports schools and don't nobody go to there 'cause Metro Collegiate don't look out for people who play sports.

I pushed King to reflect a bit more on the imagery and how it might encourage others to consider colleges as a possibility.

RC: Do you think it might make a difference to someone else?

King: Maybe a little kid.

RC: But not a teenager?

King: No.

RC: Why do you think that is?

King: 'Cause teenagers are more up in the world, they know what's going on, kids don't, they just see Florida State and the colors and all that.

King's assertions reflected an honest portrayal of not only what these images may mean to him, but also how teenagers, who are more keenly aware of their own academic desires and the limits of what their school can provide them, also may receive college imagery. In addition, King reflected a reality that many students, particularly male students, felt by coming to Metro Collegiate. While the school was rigorous and academically competitive, it did not have all of the trappings of a traditional high school, like a competitive football team. Both Malik and King expressed serious laments about not

being able to play football for their school.

The messages of the college going culture at Metro Collegiate stood out greatly for participants. The importance of working hard in school was reified by a constant push for securing higher grades for the purposes of securing college admittance. The school prided itself on its ability to promise a 100% college acceptance, and most students were fully committed to achieving at least some levels of academic success to ensure a college placement. However, as reported, participants experienced these messages differently. While Samuel and Lucas, for instance, were accepting of these messages, Malik, King and Perdido experienced and expressed some underlying concerns about how they and their peers experienced these messages. Participants noted how all students may not want to go to college, and that the school did little to support students desiring pathways other than college. While these concerns will be explored in the next chapter, this chapter also discussed participants' varying sentiments about how teachers' college tee shirts made them feel about their present and future selves. For King, for instance, teachers' tee shirts, especially from popular Division I athletic schools that none of his peers attended reminded him of the missed football opportunity by attending Metro.

Conclusion

This chapter presented four salient themes operating within the school culture of Metro Collegiate. Norms and values were messaged to students through varying means that reflected the cultural domain of power outlined in my theoretical framing of school culture. Having a racially diverse group of students meeting high academic expectations is a salient part of the school mission. In addition, it is a salient part of what makes up the public image of Metro Collegiate. However, while diversity was emphasized and valued by administration and teachers, the participants revealed experiences with various

inequities across lines of race, gender, ethnicity, culture, and language. Metro Collegiate also valued and supported students who showed considerable academic effort, achieved good grades, and maintained a spotless behavioral or discipline record. A final key feature of Metro Collegiate's school culture was that college going was emphasized above all other post secondary choices or life-outcomes for students. However, participants reported that students experienced this college-going culture in vastly different ways.

In the next chapter, participants' future selves will be investigated along the lines of college going, in particular. Chapter five will highlight not only how participants conceived of their future selves with regards to college, but also how Metro Collegiate's school culture influenced and helped shaped their mindsets about college.

Chapter Five: College

Individuals conceive of their future selves as the images and ideals of self in the future, which influence their current motivation and behavior in various contexts. As conceptualized in this study, how adolescents conceived of or constructed future selves was influenced by their past experiences, family, neighborhood, school contexts, and media, which signal what is possible and expected for and of them in terms of their post secondary education, their vocation, their economic livelihoods, and their social status.

This study examined how five Black and Latino males conceived of and constructed their future selves in the context of either intersecting or incongruent notions of what they believed to be realistic, attainable, and likely for their futures within the domains of what I call *college*, *career*, and *condition*. This chapter specifically looks at how the participants conceived of their future selves in the college domain.

The prospect of attending a college or university captivated the attention and thinking of four of the five participants. The college-going culture of the school supported and inspired them to achieve and pursue their college goals, however, not all participants wished to attend college. While Samuel, Malik, King, and Lucas planned to attend college, Perdido did not, and the participants held varying rationales and perceptions about attending college.

Family was a key influence on the future selves of participants from early in their lives. Thus, this chapter begins with the various individuals, particularly within participants' families and immediate home environments, who influenced their thoughts and behaviors toward college going. Participants' families emphasized going to college, and key connections existed between familial values and expectations for college and the

school culture at Metro Collegiate. Particularly, findings suggested that messages from home and school about college going were mutually reinforcing.

Next, I investigated how participants similarly or differently experienced elements of the Metro Collegiate college-going school culture. While all students were encouraged to go to college, data suggested that students made meaning of encouragement in different ways and that they received different levels of support for attending college. In the third section, I investigated factors that participants considered when determining which specific college or which type of college they wanted to attend. College major interests, the quality and reputation of the college, and race were key factors in participants' college choice processes.

Finally, this chapter considered the dilemmas participants expected to face when they attended college. Perceptions of themselves as individuals and perceptions of finances and responsibilities to family were some of the dilemmas considered in this section.

Parental Values and Expectations: Early Influences and Messages about College

It is important to consider that participants' families encouraged and expected their children to attend college. Families served as early influences for all students' future selves, and while participants had family members with varying levels of collegiate experiences, all participants reported the influence of their families as salient to their understanding of the importance of college in their lives.

School provided the place where parental expectations intersected with scholastic realities. In this regard, Metro Collegiate's school culture affirmed parental beliefs and expectations about college going for participants. A salient theme from the school culture was that college was valued over any other post secondary life outcome. Despite the fact

some participants' parents had little college-going experience, they reinforced college-going expectations that were embedded in participants' school culture. And while participants' parents held various understandings about and experiences with college, participants' families supported the expectations that were enforced through their school culture.

All participants reported that college-going messages were present early in their lives, particularly within their families. For example, Samuel's grandparents and older siblings talked to him about the importance of college early in his life. According to Samuel's accounts, his family greatly valued college education. A 17-year-old Black boy, Samuel had a twin brother, an older brother, and a younger brother. His single mother raised him in a home adjacent to his grandparents' home. On the maternal side of the family, his grandparents and all of his aunts and uncles either attended or graduated from college. While Samuel's mother attended college, she did not graduate. His older sister attended a prestigious private university in Philadelphia, but dropped out because of conflicts with other students. Describing how the impact of his family members' college attendance influenced him, Samuel said,

Samuel: I've looked at my family, and it's like if you don't go to college, then, I don't wanna say you're not a part of this family, but you have less value in my family.

Samuel's assertions reflected both a familial value of college and an expectation that all family members attend, and these messages began quite early for Samuel. College messages were constantly reinforced by his older brother, six years his senior, his mother, and his grandparents whom he saw daily.

Samuel's reported that his twin brother was not doing well academically and had behavioral problems in school. Samuel described an incident that occurred in front of his family, and in which he speculated about the implications of his brother's future, in light of his poor school performance.

Samuel: ...I said that my brother was gonna be a bum when he grows up
[Laughter]. ...My twin brother because he's really lazy with doing stuff, so I was, well, he's just gonna be a bum when he grows up. He (Samuel's twin brother) then said, "Well, what do you wanna do?" I said, "I wanna go to college," and then they just started talking to me about college, so yeah.

These early messages permeated Samuel's notions of what it meant to behave well and perform well in school now and have a good life later. For Samuel, if one does not prepare to attend college by behaving well and doing well in school, then the financial security and respect that come with going to college will not be attained. By calling his brother a "bum," a term used to describe people who are impoverished or lacking motivation, he connected school performance and bad behavior to desirable future outcomes.

Other participants considered college education through the lens of a family member's experiences. For instance, Perdido's close familial networks influenced college going. A 17-year-old Salvadoran boy, Perdido said that family members encouraged him from a young age, but he did not intend to go to college. Perdido explained that his parents, who had little more than a middle school education, valued education and held high hopes that their children would advance further than they had, both academically and professionally. However, Perdido's low grades and his general dislike of school

made him wary of attending college for many reasons, including his fear of continued academic underperformance.

Three of Perdido's family members had college educations. Two graduated with bachelor's degrees, while one was still pursuing his associate's degree. His uncle attended a college in a neighboring state to become a music teacher, his brother attended a nearby community college, and his Godmother attended college and became a local teacher. Perdido said it was his Godmother who shared early expectations that he also attend college.

Perdido: She's really big on school and once I hit like middle school, you know the conversation of college got pulled up. Like "You gotta start to think about colleges or something. Keep that in mind that you're gonna go to college." Things like that.

Perdido's Godmother's assertions reinforced both the familial value and the expectation that he attend college. These messages came during middle school for Perdido, and his parents' dreams for him to do better than themselves were palpable and intentionally enforced through their own histories and lived experiences. For instance, Perdido's parents had little to no contact with college and little understanding of how to make college attendance a reality for Perdido, however, on separate and multiple occasions, each of them took him to work with them as a gardener and as a cleaner respectively to see the realities of their lives without a college education. These were profound learning experiences for Perdido, and he shared both the difficulties and the satisfaction of being a gardener, like his father. Working with his mother as a cleaner helped Perdido realize

why she, who had dreams of being a nurse, was so insistent on him attending college and becoming a physician.

Similar to Samuel, Perdido's siblings helped to shape some of his understandings about college. Furthermore, even though Perdido reported not planning to attend college like all other participants, he did see the value in going. This was evident when Perdido described the differences between his two brothers.

Perdido: It gets me thinking because the one that studied the most, that worked hardest in school, that stayed the most out of trouble went to college...Whereas the other one was a little bit of a slack, didn't do all his work all the time, didn't go to college – finished high school but didn't go away to college, and just works at airport security. And it's just like, he's not really going anywhere. That's where he's stuck now, I guess. So with my [other] brother, it's like, "College! He has a future. He's going somewhere. Wow!"

Perdido's analysis of his brothers' paths revealed his keen awareness of the connections between working hard in high school, eventual college attendance, job opportunities and upward mobility. Since Perdido was ambivalent about the relevance of school for his life, had low grades, and held significant doubts about his ability to be academically successful in college, this quote speaks to his understanding about how his life may evolve without a college education. Adding to his thoughts about the significance of going to college, Perdido said,

Perdido: If you don't go to college, you're not gonna study anything, you know, and what are you gonna do? You're gonna go around the rest of your life, wandering.

Perdido associated college with a future in which one has a clear direction and is upwardly mobile, as opposed to a directionless path without college. Interestingly, Perdido rejected college going initially because of the control he perceived it to have over his life choices, outcomes and for other reasons that will be explored in later sections.

While Perdido and Samuel had some contact with family members who attended and graduated from college, Malik, a 17-year-old Black boy, was the only participant who had a birth parent who graduated from college. Malik's mother received her bachelor's degree and was an administrator in a local public high school. She particularly emphasized the importance of education and expressed the expectation that Malik attend and graduate from college. As he described,

Malik: She wants me to go to college so that I'll have a better life for myself rather than not having to live paycheck to paycheck, or a job that I don't like. Or I can just go to a job that I do like and live easy, live under my means basically.

Despite his mediocre academic performance, Malik said he always knew that he would eventually attend college. Malik saw college as necessary for securing a well-paying and gratifying job that would offer him an economically stable life. For Malik, college implied choices and greater freedom from the economic and employment insecurity that would prove more stressful for those without a post secondary education. In Malik's understanding, sense of freedom from drudgery also comes with an education and implies the ability to make choices to work in a field of his choosing as opposed to what is simply offered to him.

King, a 16-year-old Black boy, also had family members with college experience. King's stepmother was a middle school principal who recently finished an executive

doctoral program at a prestigious university. King's older brother on his father's side graduated from Metro Collegiate and matriculated at a large public university in a neighboring state. On his mother's side, college attendance was less common: only one of his four sisters had attended.

Neither King's biological mother nor father graduated from college. King's father attended but dropped out of college to take care of King's oldest brother. While King's stepmother held advanced degrees and encouraged college education, King expressed that his father had the greatest influence on his thoughts regarding both career and college.

King: Well, I guess it's just that my father don't want me to struggle ... in the beginning of his parenthood, he was struggling a bit, but I mean, he got over it. He works hard, and he got his promotions and all that stuff, so now he's kind of making good money. But he always stressed to me that education is important because really, you can't get nowhere without education unless I wanna work in McDonald's or something. And I refuse to work at McDonald's. I mean, it's okay, but I don't see myself working at McDonald's, like, 10 years from now. That's now what I see. So, I mean, education is important.

King described how his father's struggle to secure economic stability influenced his perceptions of college and his future. While King surmised that his father's life would have been easier if he had completed college, King admired the sacrifice his father made to raise his son.

King said that his father offered constant guidance regarding King's goal to play football in the NFL, particularly the imperative to work hard. Given his admiration for his

father, who had bettered his life even without a college degree, King heeded and respected his father's advice. It was also clear that King sought to avoid low-wage, unfulfilling work, symbolized by a job at McDonald's. With his father's example and encouragement, King saw college as a means for achieving economic security and his NFL dream. His father and athletic coaches constantly validated King's hopes and expectations to attend college on a football scholarship. College matriculation, through football or through academic merit, was the goal for King, and his family and the importance of college for his future were central to his upbringing.

Lucas was a 17-year-old Salvadoran boy, and was consistently one of the top students in his class, achieving a nearly perfect GPA. Similar to King, Lucas' perceptions of college were influenced by the experiences of and encouragement from his family members. Lucas spent all of his life in Parkside Views, the predominantly Latino section of the city. There, his grandmother, mother and father, and little brother shared a modest rented home. Lucas' father worked as a painter and his mother cleaned office buildings at night.

Lucas said his parents had high hopes and expectations for him. While Lucas believed his dad to be a successful man, he knew that his father wanted better for his son. Describing Lucas's view of his father's success and hopes for his son, Lucas said,

Lucas: He has a family, he has a stable job, he's living in the same house for the past 16 years, but I mean he wants me just to do better than he did. He doesn't want me to go through what he went through because he had to work at a young age.

Lucas's father immigrated with his mother to the United States from El Salvador as a young teen, having barely completed an elementary school education. He arrived in this country with no English skills and worked menial jobs to help finance the immigration of his four brothers to the United States. Lucas saw his father as successful for having secured and maintained a stable career and home for his family despite tremendous obstacles including little formal education, growing up in poverty, and the inability to speak English. Lucas said his father constantly pushed him to take advantage of the educational opportunities available to him.

Lucas: So he told me that I have it easy because, like, actually I should take advantage of the education I'm receiving because he wasn't able to receive education. He told me that I should take advantage of learning, of being able to speak Spanish and English, because he wasn't – when he was my age he could only speak Spanish.

Lucas reported that his father did not allow him to work. Instead he encouraged Lucas to spend time studying or engaging in activities that supported his academic or spiritual growth, like his involvement in the local Catholic Church where he taught Sunday school classes. Speaking Spanish and English and navigating and excelling in both the academics at school and within the predominantly Latino community were important for Lucas. Outside of the church, he was involved with numerous local yearlong and summer enrichment programs, particularly in the sciences, which provided him stipends and financial aid for college.

Although Lucas's parents had limited understandings of college and the

application process, Lucas said he has been aware of the importance of college since his boyhood because of an elementary school teacher who told his class, “It’s important that education never stops, so never give up. It will be really good to go to college because you can have a real career.” This admonition from his teacher and messages from his parents were key in Lucas’s understanding of the importance of college in pursuing career and economic stability. Articulating this understanding, Lucas asserted,

Lucas: The way I look at it is, if you graduate from high school and you don’t go to college, I mean there’s still maybe some jobs out there but jobs that are guaranteed or jobs that you really like, I don’t think – ...If you don’t go to college, if you just stop, you’re probably going to work in places like McDonald’s or any fast food restaurant or jobs you don’t like. And that has to do more with low payment, yeah. That’s how I look at it.

Like King, who also used McDonald’s as a proxy for undesirable work, Lucas also saw a college education as the pathway to desirable, well-paying jobs.

Coming from a family where very few had attended or graduated from college, Lucas also saw going to college as a way to change the educational trajectory of his family history and to positively impact future generations.

Lucas: By going to college, you change the history of your family, because my parents, like ...the highest grade they went to was like fifth grade... I don’t think they went to middle school. So they didn’t have a very high education, they had low. So by going to college you can change that, you start changing, like the future generations of your family. Like, from like going to college, you know, from now on, your children are, like my children – I’ll make sure they get

educated and you know, so you change the careers they have, they're gonna be different from what my parents had.

Lucas's goal of changing his family's trajectory by being the first in his family to graduate from college was largely rooted in their struggles. Those struggles catalyzed his desire to become more educated and to secure better economic footing for him and his future generations.

Key connections existed between how participants' parental expectations for college going and Metro Collegiate's school culture. Messages about the importance of college going from parents and messages from school were mutually reinforcing. At home, participants' families drew from their personal lived experiences with struggle to emphasize college going as a way to secure better employment and economic stability. Participants viewed college going as salient because many were inspired by the hope imbued in their parents and other family members of the desire for a better life that college offered.

Considering this hope, the influence of family members, particularly parents, was salient to all participants' conceptualizations of their future selves as related to college. All but one participant had seen their parents struggle financially and embraced their desires and hopes of a better life for their children. Educational attainment was viewed as central to that goal for both the participants and their parents. Malik's mother, a college graduate, struggled to provide economically for the family because Malik's father had been hospitalized for five years. She encouraged Malik to get an education as a basis for a better life. Samuel, whose college educated grandparents lived next door, saw college as important to continuing a legacy, where college going was valued and expected for all

family members. Lucas's story reflected his desire to seize a familial determination that would result in a better life for both him and future generations.

Parental values, expectations, and experience also influenced participants to connect college attendance with well-paying, gratifying work and economic stability. Participants believed that if they did not attend college, they would not have a meaningful career and would be compelled instead to take less-desirable, less-fulfilling, and low-income work.

School culture reinforced messages from home about the salience of college-going. Participants saw important connections between their current school-based behaviors and future outcomes. Particularly, participants saw connections between current behavior like working hard on schoolwork and not getting into trouble with eventual college attendance. For instance, Samuel did well in school and never got into trouble with teachers, and he expected these attributes to contribute to his eventual college matriculation. Conversely, Perdido struggled academically and got into trouble. Perdido realized that his lack of focus and drive would catch up to him, as he saw how his studious brother eventually went on to college, while his other brother, who did not take high school seriously, worked in airport security.

While participants' notions of satisfying work and stable economic livelihoods are explored more in the next chapter, it is important to note that how the participants thought about their future working and living conditions was inseparable from their understanding of the importance of college attendance.

Selective Support

Given Metro Collegiate's emphasis on college going, tremendous support was given to students for college preparation and readiness. As described in the previous chapter, the college-going component of the school culture at Metro Collegiate was infused throughout students' experiences. Further, the school espoused the importance of all racially and ethnically diverse students meeting high academic expectations, while participants reported that support was delineated differently along racial lines. All students were exposed to college going messages from teachers; they saw college imagery on the walls and on the clothing teachers wore, and they attended college fairs and tours. However, as students conceived of their future selves, and were supported and encouraged to consider college, participants revealed elements of selective support. The data show that different students received different levels and forms of support, based on race and ethnicity, disciplinary and academic records, and their future goals.

Students were supported from early in their high school career to attend college and were afforded numerous opportunities to explore their college interests via college fairs, visits from college representatives, and college tours. Ms. Diggs, a college counselor, frequently visited weekly grade-level meetings to share pertinent information regarding PSAT and SAT preparation and local online programs that assisted in college preparation. Ms. Diggs shared information with everyone on college-going, but participants revealed that interpersonal dynamics between the college counselors and students played key roles in the level of individual support received from the college placement office.

Race played a key role in how King considered the level of college-going support given to the majority Black and Latino students at Metro Collegiate. King noted that he

saw race and interpersonal differences in how Ms. Diggs and Mr. Rodríguez, the college counselors, provided support.

King: If you cool with her, to me I think, if you cool with her. Ms. Diggs like a mother figure to some of us. Like, I don't mean to put it out there, but Blacks. You know what I'm saying? She'll look out for us and all that. She be more focused on like African Americans than Hispanics.

RC: Really?

King: So I think it's like switched up a little bit cause when I see Mr. Rodríguez he be with mostly Hispanic people. And then when I see Ms. Diggs, she be with mostly African Americans.

RC: Okay.

King: So she look out for us and she try to get us money cause I guess she know how it is for African Americans so she try to get us as much money as possible so our parents you know won't have to pay as much.

King's assertions indicated how he viewed race and culture operating politically with regards to student support for college going. Black students go to the Black college counselor, while the Latino students go to the Latino counselor. King saw this as a benefit to himself, but he indicated also a relational component evidenced in interactions with the college counselors. Specifically, King's assertions bring to the front interpersonal and political issues. For King, one needed to be friendly, in good graces, or "cool with" Ms. Diggs to garner the support needed to be successful in the college application process. His sentiments revealed the relationship of his future self to the school culture. As noted, the school valued showing effort, getting good grades, and

avoiding trouble. Specifically, King's sentiments supported claims about how students with poor grades, or a spotty behavioral past, had difficulty shaking their reputations to gain the support of teachers and peers for student leadership positions and extensive help with college admissions.

Race and ethnicity also played important roles in how participants were positioned among other students for the some of the highest level of support for college going. Malik discussed how students were pushed differently toward college at Metro Collegiate. He discussed that the students pushed more towards college were those who had the highest GPAs in the school.

Malik: Kids with a higher GPA. Like, around like maybe a 3.3 or higher GPA. I think that those kids are helped more...I think they're pushed more to go to college than some people.

RC: And who are the kids who are more likely to have the higher GPAs?

Malik: In this school, the small amount of White people and Asians. All the people who are Asian and White, they have the highest GPAs in the school.

While all students at Metro Collegiate were encouraged to go to college, the handful of White and Asian students typically held the highest GPAs, the highest class rankings, and subsequently reflected the most desirable school academic records for college admission and academic scholarships.

Academic and Behavioral Reputations: The Things They Carried

Perdido's experiences reflected another crucial dilemma for students as they prepared for or considered college. The school culture featured the systematic valuing of students with good grades, who showed effort, and avoided getting into trouble.

Generally, students were rewarded for good behavior, but penalized for bad behavior. Regarding to the college going process, students with good behavior were rewarded with the higher regards from their teachers and administrators, and subsequently higher levels of support for college going. This was a crucial connection to the college-going process. Students with poor behavioral or academic records were held in lower regard, and subsequently given less support for college going.

Reputations for students followed them throughout their years at Metro Collegiate, and Perdido's lack of academic and social merit within the school left him holding a rigid label of an "underachiever" and worthy of less college-going support than an academic high achiever like Lucas, for instance. Perdido shared an anecdote that described an incident where he was left out of an opportunity for college preparation. Ms. Diggs, the college placement director, entered into the 11th grade classroom where Perdido was seated with 15 or so other classmates. Perdido noted the following,

Perdido: She would have these fliers, college programs and like summer programs that help you for college and things. She pass 'em out to about five people and leave. That's it. Five people and that's it. And those five people are like class favorites and teacher favorites.

Perdido described that the students with the highest GPAs received the fliers and affirmed what he believed to be differential treatment. Perdido's experience reflected a salient attribute of the school culture at Metro Collegiate. While students were given chances to improve, students with the highest grades who were held in the highest regard among teachers, subsequently receive the most optimal support during the college application process. In Perdido's opinion, students should have had similar access to

college going support, regardless of their penchant toward college, their past behavioral issues, or their academic achievements. I asked him why he thought that underperforming students and students who showed little interest in going to college should be presented with college going materials and support. Perdido responded by noting,

Perdido: I mean I could see why, but it's like I'm not even – the chance isn't given you know? It's like, how do you expect me to like be more engaged in college things if you're not even like looking out for me? Like you're looking out for them. Yeah they work hard and stuff. I might be slacking off. But like where's my chance? Where's my chance to prove something? So whatever. I just lay back.

Perdido expressed his frustration at his inability to gain unsolicited support for college going. He fully acknowledged his weak engagement in the college-going process, but he also was open to help if provided. While he knew that he would receive guidance if he went to the college placement office, his interest waned even more knowing that others did not think he had what it takes for college. It seemed to him that the school reaffirmed his own doubts of his ability to succeed in college.

Unsupported Goals

The lack of a football team was another key element participants discussed in interviews. Perdido, Malik, and King showed interest in possibly pursuing football in the future, however, this dream was complicated by the lack of a team at Metro Collegiate. Football teams are expensive ventures for schools. The cost of the equipment, the need to hire multiple coaches, the cost of transportation to games, the difficulty in finding field space in an urban environment, and the cost of the insurance for a school to offer a “collision sport” (e.g. high school sports are classified as either non-contact, contact, or

collision) may have played in the school's decision not to have a team. While other participants mentioned their desires to play football in college, King was the most interested in pursuing an athletic scholarship and pursuing a professional football career.

King finished the eighth grade at Metro Collegiate and left to attend Lincoln High School [pseudonym] on the other side of the city. Although Lincoln is a college preparatory school, his initial decision to leave Metro Collegiate for Lincoln High School was in part because Lincoln had a successful football program, while Metro Collegiate did not have a team. However, Metro Collegiate does have a successful record of being one of the most sought after charter schools for families in the area.

King dreamed of attending college on a football scholarship. Playing for a charter school a few miles from Metro Collegiate meant that his coaches and other athletic support network were outside of his immediate school environment. Appeasing the wishes of college scouts was difficult for King because of the barriers of the policies and practices of Metro Collegiate. Students who played sports at Metro Collegiate had the opportunity to meet with coaches or recruiters, however, King and a few others who played football for another school were not permitted to meet with college recruiters on Metro's campus. King was devastated by when a college football recruiter wanted to meet with him at the school.

King: I think it was West Virginia. 'Cause they came to one of my games before, and I think they wanted to meet, but when they came here, the Athletic Director was like "Nah, you can't see him because this sport is not at this school. You gotta see him wherever he play the sport at." And I'm like "That's not – they want to see me in school, so how they gonna see me somewhere else when I don't go to

that school?” So I just thought it was dumb. It’s like you just stopping my dream. Okay, Metro Collegiate don’t have a football team, but why would you stop somebody from playing football ‘cause your school don’t have football? Like that’s not my fault.

King’s experience reflected a dilemma for him and for the school. Other, traditionally non-charter public schools in the city were known for producing high caliber athletes. Metro Collegiate had some sports programs, but much of the school’s energy was devoted to rigorous academics and college going. King, like other Black males, had difficulty securing support for his interest in football. King’s difficulty in earning athletic scholarships was exacerbated by the school’s non-support of his athletic pursuits. This obstacle made King question both the school’s commitment to him and the likelihood of him achieving his dream of playing Division 1 football and entering into the NFL.

Connection to School Culture

Participants reported that although all students were expected and encouraged to go to college, selective support was delineated along the lines of race, academic and behavioral reputations, and their future goals. These facets connected to key components of the school culture.

Race was an important facet in the college going culture. Metro Collegiate’s mission was to support a racially and ethnically diverse student population to achieve at high academic levels. In a school that prided itself on being one of the most racially diverse and one of the city’s top producers of students who attended college, the surest bet for Metro Collegiate was to maintain a competitive outward image to ensure that highly ranked students secured admission to top notch colleges, and did so with generous

financial aid packages. In addition, Metro Collegiate also prided itself on diversity, even though few White and Asian families enrolled their children in the high school. Thus, in the competitive charter and public charter school market, White and Asian elementary and middle school families needed to see that their children could earn admission into top schools with a Metro Collegiate education.

Race was also important in how support for college going was distributed. Participants' believed that not all students received the same levels of support, and that race and ethnicity played out in the differential treatment experienced by students. Ms. Diggs worked particularly close with the Black students, while Mr. Rodríguez worked more closely with the Latino students as they prepared for the college application process. While these support networks were key, and assuming Ms. Diggs understood the struggles of Black families while Mr. Rodríguez understood Latino cultural norms, perhaps, there was an added dimension; students reported that they had to be in good graces with these individuals to receive the optimal support.

Closely related to this key finding was how the school culture supported students who achieved academically and behaviorally. As noted before, salient to the school culture was the importance of securing good grades and avoiding trouble. Perdido's experience provided insight into how students with low grades and a spotty behavioral record experienced difficulty gaining unsolicited support from college counselors.

Lastly, King's aspirations to attend college on a football scholarship were compromised because of Metro Collegiate's lack of a team. His dilemma made him feel that the school culture did not value his goals, and since other boys wanted to play football too, the school could not meet the aspirations of Malik and Perdido either.

Accepting College, Rejecting College: Perspectives on College Choice and Major Selection

College attendance meant different things to different participants. This section investigates what factors participants considered when thinking about attending college. First, I explore how Perdido, who did not want to attend, came to reject college. Next, I explore Samuel's reasoning for college going. Then, this chapter considers what specific college or which type of college participants wanted to attend and the underlying rationale of their choices. College major interests, the quality and reputation of the college, and race were all key factors in participants' college discernment process.

Before discussing factors that compelled participants about going to college, I discuss Perdido's disinterest in college going and unpack why he did not want to attend. In his mind, college was a high-pressure, sophisticated, and fast-paced environment. He also thought these attributes of college ran contrary to or rather conflicted with his laid-back, easy-going demeanor. In addition to his disinterest in adopting a more business-like persona, Perdido questioned his ability to be successful in college, and also questioned the type of preparation it would offer him for his desired career. Subsequently, he held little interest in attending, however, he did see the possible benefit in college attendance.

Perdido: I don't want to work in offices and things like that, so I don't see how it'll benefit me. It'd benefit you because you know, in a resume, when you look at it, it's like "Oh, he majored in this, this, and this – he got a degree in this, this, or this. He works hard; he's a good person." You know? It's like a basic aspect of how people look at you, depending on what you do in college and how college went for you. So like, not going to college kind of like, "Oh, you gave up after

high school. You're lazy," I guess, "You probably just didn't want to go to college because you didn't feel like it."

Perdido viewed college as something only for people who wanted to work in offices, wear suits, and have high-pressure jobs. Since he did not want to work in an office, he struggled to see the relevance of college for his professional ambitions. However, he did see or understand how college education made one look in the eyes of others. Having a degree equated to being a hard worker, and a "good person" like his uncle and brother, while not having a degree would make others think he gave up after high school and consider him to be lazy, like his other brother.

While Perdido had little interest in attending college, especially right out of high school, he was not foreclosed on the idea of attending in the future. He expressed interest in majoring in philosophy or astronomy, given his deep analytical thinking and intrigue with the solar system. He did not know what kind of career he could achieve, especially with a degree in philosophy, but he had some awareness of advanced degrees available in the field to eventually "become a doctor with that." Perdido also expressed an interest in going to a school that has American football. While he had never played football on a team, he saw himself joining at the college level.

Similar to Perdido, Samuel had perceptions of what college attendance would not only allow him to do, but also to become. One of the key facets of college that compelled Samuel was that it was away from some of the strife (e.g. street fights, robbery) he encountered in the city. More specifically, Samuel was attracted to college because of his perceived future ability to live life on his own terms, seek freedom from the anxiety caused by living with the threat of neighborhood violence, and have his own space to

study without the distractions that came with living in a crowded home. Samuel perceived of college as not only a ticket to a future of greater economic stability, but also as a ticket out of the “ghetto”, as he called it.

College was where Samuel envisioned his re-birth. This re-birth was particularly marked by three main transformations. It served not only as a ticket out of the difficulties he found living in the city, but also, it was a place where he could meet and interact with like-minded people. In addition, because of his experience with living in close proximity to other family, he greatly aspired to having his own place and space to focus, and he believed college would provide that for him.

Samuel: I want – so people and things make me want to leave, and college is that.

College is that leap out of the city area, or out of the ghetto for me. College is where I start my life over again, actually...It's like a rebirth. That's where I'm going to be able to live the life that I want to live. The thing about livin' in the city is that when you go outside, you have to constantly look over your shoulder, which I think that you should always do. You know, be aware. Be attentive of your surroundings, but I think that this city really pushes that because of the environment and all that. But I think that having – yeah, not to do that.

Samuel viewed college going as a ticket out of the struggles he has encountered. Previously bullied and picked on for his quiet, “nerdy,” and aloof demeanor, Samuel was also the victim of numerous robberies that left him physically and emotionally scarred. Samuel’s future self was hallmarked by the ability and freedom to live life as he imagined it. College was a place where he could explore his life and future possibilities

without the restraints of the armor he needed to maneuver the difficulties of adolescent Black life in the city.

College was also a place where he could meet new people, who may share personality traits similar to his. I asked Samuel what he was most looking forward to about going to college.

Samuel: Just livin' on campus. Pretty much bein' around people who act like me and think like me, do the same things like me, have the same interests.

Admittedly shy, Samuel hoped to find a core group of friends who shared similar interests and traits. College represented a place where he could meet new people, but also a place where he could focus and delve into the campus life free of the distractions of both living in a challenging city environment and a home that provided endless distractions.

Factors that Influence College Choice

Participants were drawn to college for other reasons. In particular, participants noted the importance of quality teaching in their choice of major, small classes, athletic programs, availability of clubs, traveling opportunities, and the diversity of the campus.

Samuel was interested in majoring in computer science or computer engineering and hoped to become a computer software engineer. His interest in software engineering was inspired by both his penchant for math and science and also his love of video gaming. Samuel hoped to study computer science or engineering at a college with small classes. He was unsure of his exact choices for college application, but he was interested in applying to the University of Hartford, the University of Miami, and Drexel. When asked about what characteristics made for a good college, he responded,

Samuel: I don't know which college I want to go to, where it needs to be located, what attractions it has to be near, things like that, but I do—I want it in a location where it meets some of those standards. It doesn't have to meet all those standards. It has really good teaching in my major. It's known or it should be known for its teaching in the major. Like students would recommend the “living life” on that college. You know, like how – living in that college, and that – I guess that'd be it.

With his desire to escape his present day experiences with violence, Samuel was eager to find a college where students recommended “living life” there. In addition to a livable campus, he mentioned the importance of good teaching, particularly in his major courses.

Malik was unsettled on a major, but was possibly interested in majoring in mechanical engineering with the hopes of becoming an engineer. While Malik was still discerning colleges, he had considered a few presented to him by others. At a recruitment fair, his college counselor directed him to a few schools that were good for science and engineering. Colleges that caught Malik's interest at the college fair included Virginia Tech for its science programs and Division 1 athletic status and UNC Charlotte for programs of study that appealed to him. Even though Malik had never played football for high school, he intended to do so his senior year to possibly earn a football scholarship.

While these schools had his major interest, they were quite large. Malik really believed that he would do best at a smaller college with small class sizes.

Malik: I really wouldn't want to go to like a really large school that has hundreds of thousands of students there. I'd rather go to like a smaller community – based school, than like a large school... 'cause if it's a smaller school you have more

chances to interact with people because you'll see them more often. But if you go to like a bigger school you might see them, but like you won't see them as often as you would as a smaller school.

Malik's interest in a smaller school echoed in many ways his experience with small schools all of his life, including Metro Collegiate. With only a few dozen students in his grade level, Malik was used to being in a small, community-oriented school environment. Malik was accustomed to knowing everyone in his school, and he sought the same element when considering colleges.

King was motivated to attend college by the prospects of playing football, however, he had not settled on a specific college. Given his football playing interests, King believed that if he kept his interests wide open, the right college recruiter would find him, give him a scholarship to a college, and then he would play for their football team. King mentioned his interest in Rutgers University, but was open to the prospects for other schools.

King understood the low probability for him to play Division I college football and then to play professionally in the NFL. Since his school lacked a team, he knew that securing a scholarship at a college with a reputable team would be difficult. He hoped to "make it" into the NFL, but if he did not, he hoped to major in sports management or physical therapy and secure a job as a sports agent or sports rehabilitation therapist. I asked him about his major interest and college interests.

King: Like sports management. That's what I wanna do. But if I make it, I mean, I make it. Like, I mean, a lot of people, they could say, "Oh yeah, you got it, you could play." But I mean, it's been people who really told me that I can play. Like

some coach – some college – matter of fact, I was on the phone with the running back coach from Morgan State yesterday and he told me that *I'm nice* and if I send him some tape, then he can get me there for a scholarship. So I mean, I'm just, I don't know. It's just, like, football motivates me to do what I want.

King remained hopeful and optimistic that his prowess as an athlete would merit him a scholarship to a Division I football program. Even though Morgan State University, a historically Black university in Baltimore, Maryland, has a competitive football program, they play in a small conference. His dream was to attend a school like Rutgers University that has a larger name for producing football stars. However, he was also realistic about the difficulty in securing such a coveted scholarship, especially since it would be challenging for coaches to recruit him while he played for a charter school that he did not attend.

Lucas was interested in majoring in biology or something in the science field with the hopes of becoming a physician or a scientist. Lucas planned on applying to competitive colleges and universities and hoped to secure scholarships. Schools like the University of Rochester, the University of Maryland College Park, Duke University, the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, and the University of Pennsylvania were mentioned as some of his top choices. He had heard of many of these schools through local scholarship agencies, while others he visited on school sponsored college tours.

Lucas: I want to apply to the University of Pennsylvania. Because I went there, we went on a trip. All of us went to a trip there last year. I liked it man!

Everything, it was like, that's a real campus there man. And I want to go. Like, as soon as I got there I was like, "Oh, man, this is nice!" That would be probably like

the dream, a dream college. Because I know it's Ivy League, and hard to get to.
Yeah. Wow! Hard man.

Lucas was intrigued with the buildings and the diversity of the student population at the University of Pennsylvania. Despite how difficult it is to gain admittance, Lucas was compelled to apply. Lucas was also excited about colleges that offered him the opportunity for extra curricular involvement. Joining clubs and travelling were also key components of an attractive college for Lucas.

Lucas: Like travelling, maybe, because like, you know if students want to travel. Like, I want to travel. I don't want to be here the rest of my life. I want to go visit you know, maybe Europe or South America, Africa... A good college has everything you could think of. Like a club for everything you could think of. And everyone's welcome. That's a good college.

Lucas was excited about all of the possibilities that college would hold for him. He looked forward to traveling abroad and joining clubs and organizations that would expand his outlook on life. Lucas was extensively involved in after school clubs and organizations at Metro Collegiate and in his community. He played on the soccer team, was a student ambassador to various functions, was involved in local community internships during the summer, and maintained an active role as a Sunday school teacher at his church. He credited many of these extra curricular involvements and his travel experiences as keys to gaining exposure and broadening his networks.

Lucas's final point in the above statement reflected another important facet of how participants viewed college. "And everyone's welcome" implied a consideration of

the interpersonal relationships on college. In this regard, diversity played key role in participants' decisions on college.

Racial Diversity at College

Participants held differing beliefs about the importance race played at their college of interest. Some, like Samuel and Lucas, were interested in attending a racially diverse college, while Malik was interested in attending a historically Black college or university (HBCU). Interestingly, participants held vastly different reasons as to how race fit into their descriptions of an ideal college. This section explores how various participants thought of racial diversity.

Lucas was looking for a diverse college environment, where he could see “every type of person.” Lucas discussed how he conceptualizes the importance of diversity.

Lucas: What I think that colleges are trying to do now, being diverse, not only having, like mostly good colleges they have mostly, like White or mostly Asian. The more diverse you are I think the more you attract everyone else. If you're a good college or university and it's really diverse and you attract people from all the races to go there.

Racial and ethnic diversity were important for Lucas in his quest for a good college. His previous descriptions of highly competitive colleges like the University of Pennsylvania indicated that Lucas believed these competitive colleges, or good colleges as he referenced them, should do what they can to attract more diverse students. Whites and Asians mostly populated good colleges, according to Lucas, and they should do what they can to attract more students from other racial backgrounds. He saw himself in a place where he was surrounded by racial and cultural diversity, and perhaps because of

this reason, he expressed no interest in attending a historically Black college or university.

Malik, however, showed tremendous interest in attending an HBCU. Florida A&M University and Lincoln University in Pennsylvania were tops on Malik's list. Lincoln especially attracted Malik for reasons including its proximity to family, its location in a rural area secluded from the city, and the comfort he felt when he visited. At the core of his interests in an HBCU was the support and kinship he expected by attending a predominantly Black university.

Malik offered some compelling insights into how his experiences with racial prejudice propelled not only his interest in attending an HBCU, but his struggles to be in learning environments with White students, in particular.

Malik: I think HBCUs, I think they might be a good fit for me, because I really don't do well around other races.

RC: Really? You've been around a whole lot of different types of races here [at Metro Collegiate].

Malik: I mean Spanish [Latino] people, but like I really don't fit in with Caucasian people a lot.

RC: Really?

Malik: Yeah, yeah I mean that's basically what it is. I really don't – I mean some Caucasian people I can fit around. But like I can really blend in with Spanish people and Black people. Those are really the only two real races that I can really fit in with. Or I can adapt myself to.

Malik's concern reflected experiential understandings of how race influenced his schooling experiences. Even though he attended elementary, middle, and high school at comparatively more desirable public and public charter schools with White students his entire life, he felt uncomfortable fitting in among them. Malik explored this topic with me, and, according to him, if he attended a predominantly White institution (PWI), he would feel socially isolated and victimized through racial micro-aggressions in his major classes and within the social scene.

Malik: I mean even though I'll be studying with people who like the same topic I do, I think it's like – when I interact with White people I still think it's like borderline racism in it. And I feel like if I go to a predominantly White school, I'll get the same feeling. 'Cause I see it a lot now in high school, so I don't think college will be any different. So if I went to an HBCU, it really wouldn't be that way.

Malik realized that even in his courses with individuals who share the same academic and possible career interests, he would anticipate feeling racially marginalized by his classmates because of how White students interacted with him. An HBCU would shield him from the threat of racial micro-aggression, and it would shield him from feelings of racial inferiority.

Malik: It's just like – when I feel like there's racism, or like they look down on me 'cause I'm Black and I might have a lower education than them 'cause they went to a private school and I went to a public charter school. So I think that they might look down on me 'cause I might have a lower education than them. Then I

start thinking like – some White people look at Black people like they're uneducated, they just here 'cause they wanna make money for themselves.

Malik thought Whites, particularly Whites who attended private schools, might look down on him, assuming his inferior educational status. Malik also saw how Blacks might be perceived in a PWI. For Malik, Whites viewed Black students going to college only to get themselves and their families out of a perceived poverty. Evidence for this came from how Malik believed Whites perceived him now.

Conversely, as Samuel considered various colleges and universities, he showed no interest in attending an HBCU. Similar to Malik, Samuel was highly aware of how race and racial dynamics informed his previous school experiences. Samuel wanted to go to college to get away from what he viewed as the typical people he was surrounded by all of his life.

RC: You'd rather go to a very diverse school? Okay. Why don't you want to go to an HBCU?

Samuel: I'm just the type of person that really likes diversity, you know different things. 'Cuz when I'm just surrounded by all that, it doesn't feel like I moved away. It doesn't feel like I get to learn anything new or receive new people. It's like the same faces again. And when you are around an environment of diversity, I think you get to experience new things, new people, new situations.

Samuel reinforced his interest in attending a racially diverse college, one that did not necessarily mirror the racial make-up of his neighborhood environment with the “same faces again.” As noted previously, going away to college for him implied a rebirth, a chance to start his life over again. In his view, attending an HBCU would mean

recreating the troubling, yet familiar social context for himself. Samuel's disinterest in attending an HBCU was also influenced by his previous school experiences in predominantly Black schools, where he and his brother were often excluded, teased, and isolated.

RC: You said you guys were picked on. Why do you think you were picked on?

Samuel: 'Cause we were different. We were younger mostly. We didn't match the description of most of the kids that went there at that school. I mean we were an outcast to that school.

RC: When you say matched the description, I'm gonna push your thinking a little bit. Tell me a little bit more about that?

Samuel: Well, when you think about it, there's two types of students they used to go to that school. There is the loud, darker versions of - there's loud, dark and African Americans. Then, there is the Hispanics who just talk to the other Hispanics. I mean most of the Hispanics at school only talk to Hispanics, so there was just - it was a segregation. It was segregated.

RC: Mm-hmm. And you felt that since you weren't darker or more loud -

Samuel: Yeah, didn't fit in.

Samuel's troubling narrative around his racialized experiences in predominantly Black elementary and middle schools shone crucial light on his disinterest in attending an HBCU. He discussed how when he was younger, his age, demeanor, and even complexion separated him from other classmates. He and his brothers were younger than other students in his grade. Also, Samuel was very slender, wore glasses, was quiet and appeared aloof. These attributes, coupled with this age, made him feel he was an easier

target for being picked on for his appearance and for not adopting some of the loud, boisterous behavior of his classmates. This isolated him and his twin brother, and made them targets for ridicule and exclusion. While he and many of his classmates shared in-group racial affinity, Samuel did not adopt some of the attributes of the cool kids and did not fit in. His troubling experiences in schools, and his experiences with being robbed and jumped in his neighborhood by other Black boys, reinforced a problematic notion of his racial identity in relation to college choice. Samuel was fearful of situating himself in where these situations could possibly reoccur. Attending an HBCU meant repeating the same life he had, a notion that contrary to his desire to be reborn. Samuel equated a diverse college environment with providing him the new things, people, and situations he craved.

Connections to School Culture

Participants revealed insights into how their future selves connected to the culture of their high school. The school's "college over everything" emphasis supported students through the exposure to college fairs where many were introduced to colleges of interest. However, for Perdido, the "college over everything else" emphasis was not connected to an equal or partial emphasis on career matching. For instance, Perdido only saw college as a place to attend if you wanted a shirt and tie job. Given the lack of male mentoring and exposure to college educated Black and Latino males, Perdido's ideal of how to use a college degree in different fields was limited by the school's lack of diversity.

The manner in which participants understood college going and chose various programs of study was also based in some ways in their experiences in school. For instance, a key connection existed between how the lived experience of racial diversity

within their school or neighborhood environments influenced how participants viewed race in their ideal college. While not as important to King or Perdido, racial diversity was an important factor that influenced Lucas, Samuel, and Malik. Lucas and Samuel sought more racial diversity, while Malik looked to attend an HBCU because of experiences of racial micro-aggressions in school and society.

At Metro Collegiate, Whites and Asians typically occupied the top seats in the class, making students like Malik feel that he and other Blacks, for instance, were not as smart. Malik's decision to attend an HBCU was influenced, in part, by the hope to shield himself from the stereotypes of Blacks being less intelligent than Whites. In addition, Lucas noted that good colleges were those where White and Asian students attended.

Internal and External Dilemmas

"I'm a quick learner. I can be very social at times, when needed. Everything else is down the drain. I'm not a really focused person." – Malik, 17 year old Black boy

When conceptualizing their future selves, participants provided keen reflections of what they believed to be some of the anticipated obstacles or dilemmas they will face. While all but one participant hoped to attend college immediately following high school and maintained a high level of excitement about the possibility, they held anxieties about anticipated internal and external dilemmas that may make achieving their college dream difficult. These dilemmas were based in fears or apprehensions about attending, succeeding in, and graduating from college, based on both their understanding about their present and anticipated future. Participants' knowledge about their own academic and social strengths and weaknesses, combined with their anticipation of future challenges led to their understandings about different dilemmas with which they grappled when thinking about college.

Internal dilemmas were based on their understanding of their own shortcomings, personality traits, and personal challenges, while external dilemmas were those based more on individuals and situations around them that would cause certain problems. This section will explore these internal and external dilemmas from the vantage points of all participants.

Internal Dilemmas

Since Perdido did not want to attend college, we spent considerable time uncovering the many reasons why he believed college was not for him. Thus, while all participants had internal dilemmas, Perdido had the most, and many of these dilemmas were so entrenched into his thinking that they worked to prevent him from seeking college admission. One of the first internal dilemmas Perdido shared was his difficulty in focusing on academic tasks in school. Perdido shared an explanation with examples of how this looked and felt for him.

Perdido: I want to feel comfortable with what I do. I want to be doing something that I enjoy, and going to college kind of gives me the idea of only sophisticated classes, and I have a problem staying focused, so like I'm always wandering around, if not physically, then mentally, I'm like somewhere else. Always. And college is mostly teachers, like, emphasize that the professor will not repeat. Like, you have to take notes quickly; you have to keep up with everything. And I have a hard time focusing, so it's – it's – I wouldn't say like, it's terribly – a terrible problem focusing, but it's pretty bad. 'Cause I could be like, talking with somebody, having a conversation with them, and then my turn to speak is over, and they're talking. And I'm basically looking at them in the eye, and I'm just

wondering, “How many eyelashes are on their eye?” Or, “Are their eyebrows even?” Or, “How does their jaw move when they talk?” I just wonder random things, and that’s what throws me off, and it happens to me in every class, every day. So that following me into college is not gonna, you know, help.

In his mind, Perdido’s college peers would be attentive and focused. In high school he lacked focus, thus he did not believe that he embodied a key trait for success in college. Also, Perdido held a vivid depiction of what he expected college to be. He imagined college to be rigorous, with classes taught by professors who would not repeat key points, for instance. Because of his keen awareness of both his personality traits and his personality flaws, Perdido realized how much support he expected to need from college. However, he also realized that the level of support would be minimal. Perdido rejected college because it foregrounded many things with which he anticipate struggling and things he did poorly.

While Perdido was not opposed to earning money, settling into a home, raising a family, or any of the other trappings that highlight the typical “American Dream” narrative, he was also afraid that college would control him, alter his demeanor and distance him from his family. Perdido talked at length about how he felt his brother and uncle became more distanced from the family during and after college. He thought their connection to the family dwindled.

Perdido: When it was like his break, something about him (brother) wasn’t the same and I just felt like I couldn’t really connect 100 percent. I haven’t figured it out yet, but there’s like my uncle. He’s pretty funny too but it’s like he went to college too but he’s also not really connected to our family, like he doesn’t really

visit – I mean part of the reason is he’s in West Virginia but other than that it’s like an occasional call or text...I don’t really like losing people that are close to you. I mean I hate that shit because who I am is kinda defined by who I love. It’s the people around me that kind of like make me feel me.

Perdido’s experiences with his family gave him insight into the possible disconnection that happens when siblings or other family members move away to college. His family was very important to him, as was keeping things the way they were to maintain constant connection. Though his family encouraged him to go to college, he was worried about losing the familial connection and familiar discourses shared among family members.

Academic preparation was another key internal dilemma for certain participants. While Lucas, Samuel, and King believed they were academically prepared and ready for the college curriculum, Malik and Perdido believed they were not. Particularly, Malik and Perdido were concerned about the amount of reading and writing expected of them in college. Given their difficulty with those academic skills in high school, participants Perdido and Malik did not feel academically prepared for college. I asked Malik to discuss why he did not feel academically prepared.

Malik: I feel that I’m not academically prepared for college. In some – I wouldn’t say that for all my classes but some classes, I know I’m not prepared for college. Like English – I know that’s something that for the next year – for the rest of this year and next year – something I really have to work on because that’s something I really struggle with.

Malik’s assertions reflected his own concern about his academic skills. Reading and writing long passages were of particular concern as Malik considered college. Malik

performed better academically in math and science courses, while he struggled particularly in English. He anticipated majoring in engineering and expected to focus his energy on his scientific prowess, but he knew that his difficulties with reading and writing would plague his college experience.

In addition to prompting students to think about their readiness for the academic curriculum, participants were asked to reflect on their readiness for the social scene of college. Social preparation to participants meant the ability to interact with different people, socialize, and manage arrangements like dorm room living. Malik, King, Lucas, and even Perdido felt socially prepared for college, while Samuel did not. I asked Samuel to explain why.

Samuel: I don't feel I'm socially prepared. I mean because I'm not – I mean I'm a diverse person when it comes to socializing with people, but I'm really shy and I'd rather not make new friends. I kind of – if I don't know you I'd rather keep to myself. It's – I usually gain friends from friends...I'm getting better with that but I don't think I'm at the point where I can say that I'm ready for college for that.

Samuel's internal dilemma reflected a keen awareness of his own personal strengths and weaknesses. He had trouble making friends and because of his shyness, he anticipated making friends and developing a social network to be dilemmas for him at college. Samuel's victimization by bullies and robbers reinforced his need to establish a close network of trusted friends in his anticipated rebirth, as he called it, in college.

External Dilemmas

In addition to internal dilemmas, participants reported some external dilemmas that stimulated or provided anxiety for college going. External dilemmas are challenges

that participants face that go beyond their own individual notions of their strengths and weaknesses. Anticipating financial difficulties was a key external obstacle for participants gearing up for the college application and matriculation process. In addition, participants cited external distractions and family responsibilities as central external dilemmas.

For Perdido, laziness and lack of focus were internal dilemmas; externally, financing a college degree seemed like such an insurmountable obstacle that it played into his decision to not attend. I asked him if he thought he could pay for college.

Perdido: No man, that's bull man. I can barely pay for my own rent already. My parents can barely manage how we are right now. How am I gonna pay for college? It's like what, \$63,000 a year? Ain't it? Or \$16 – I don't know, but I know it's thousands in a year.

Perdido connected his present circumstances with anticipated future dilemmas, making it difficult to see college in his future life outcomes. He described a conversation he and his mother had regarding the importance of college. His mother urged him to go to college, but he did not see how he could afford it.

Perdido: Knowing myself, I'm probably not gonna be at a high-paying job, like a hundred thousand, like a week. So it's gonna put me into debt. She's like well you have to get into – you have to get a higher education and I'm just like, “Yeah, but I mean at what cost? Like, what am I gonna be losing while I'm in this? Because I might have to like come back and live with you guys. Because I'm living with you guys, that means more depends on you guys because now you're gonna have

to support me, and I don't wanna put that stuff on you because then I'll have to be paying rent and my student loans.”

While his parents expected him to attend college, Perdido was wary of the future expense. This expense further dissuaded him from seeing college worth the financial strain it would cause him and his family. The high cost of college amplified Perdido's belief that he probably would not enter into a high-paying career. While his mother wanted him to secure the career and life condition benefits that usually accompany a college degree, Perdido believed he in actuality protected himself and his family from possible financial ruin by not attending college.

While Samuel was hopeful for his future, he was also quite realistic about possible external dilemmas. The ability to finance his education was foremost in his mind.

Samuel: I think that there might be a slim chance or just really some possibility that I might have to stop going to college because I'm that much in debt or yeah, that I owe that much money. Something like that. That kinda might be a obstacle.

Samuel's concerns about his ability to stay in college were influenced in part by his sister's college experience. Samuel described his grandparents as upper-middle class, and his many cousins, his brothers and he believed their grandparents would provide the financial backing for them to attend and complete college. However, after his older sister went off to college, underperformed, and left school, it cost Samuel's grandparents even more money. Samuel's sister was compelled to take on more college loan debts, and after she made life choices that went against the wishes of her grandparents, she was left to

pay for her education completely on her own. This experience was particularly problematic for Samuel because she spent more than her share of the pot set aside for their education. Samuel feared having to stop his college education like his older sister because he anticipated expending all of his grandparents' college allotment and needing to accrue extensive amounts of college loan debt.

Samuel's concern over financial obstacles in college was magnified by his concern over his brother's ability to become self-sufficient. Samuel viewed himself as responsible for the well being of his twin brother, even during the college years.

Samuel: And then an obstacle might have to be watching over my family. So I kind of think that growing older, I might have to watch over my twin brother, because he has to deal with some things that might get him kicked out of the house and just other things. Having his life kind of – I think I might have to put my life on hold for him.

Samuel's sense of duty to his twin brother, who was less academically driven than he, manifested in the way Samuel thought of his future college goals. He believed that his brother would make a choice that would eventually get him removed from his mother's home, leaving him with no where to go. This instance shone light on the responsibilities that he and other participants believe they have for their family's well being, despite their supporting him to attend and graduate from college.

Another key external dilemma for participants was the likelihood of social distractions in college. Lucas anticipated difficulties when it comes to financing his college education, however, he made it clear that while he had certain dream schools in mind, he expected to attend a school that offered him a generous financial aid package.

Like Samuel, Lucas mentioned the daunting challenge of finding new friends while in college. He also was wary of being distracted by parties and involvement in too many activities.

Lucas: There's so many activities out there that you might get distracted, like parties for example. I heard, like my teacher talked about "don't be that type of student who when it comes to finals, start like partying and then, like forget about finals." But then he also told me that there are gonna be students out there who they can party, you know, like drink and everything and then the next day they could pass. But for me, yeah it will be like, make sure I don't get distracted. I don't want to change. You know, like, I want to still be the person with like, being focused.

Because Lucas had such little contact with college educated individuals, messages from Lucas's teachers about college proved salient to his understanding about his future self. Lucas anticipated delving into the social aspects of college, but he was wary of losing his identity as the focused, academic-centered student he is now; Lucas's identity was connected with how he viewed himself as a student. In addition, Lucas hoped to secure entrance into a graduate program for science or medical school after his graduation from college. As a result of his future plans, he realized as a junior in high school that each grade would count in his quest for further education.

Similar to Lucas, King believed he would receive a tuition scholarship. Specifically, King anticipated receiving substantial assistance to cover his college tuition and expenses from a Division I football scholarship. However, he reflected upon other internal and external obstacles that no other participant shared. Internally, like Perdido

and Malik, King struggled with focusing and was easily distracted by social situations. Surprisingly, given King's social nature, the social and party scene of college did not appeal to him.

King: I just want to go to college and be to myself, I mean, people like "oh yeah, have fun, go to parties" and all that, but I don't, I don't think I'm gonna do that.

RC: Why not?

King: 'Cause if I have a party, I'm gonna keep wanting to go to parties and then I'm gonna get off task. So I'd rather just stay in my dorm room studying or something instead of going to party.

King's awareness of his penchant for seeking out fun compelled his wariness of the possibility to over-indulge in the college party scene. In addition, King also reflected on another troubling external dilemma – the possibility of detrimental sexual encounters with women. King noted how he expected women to be a distraction and possibly get him "caught up" in something that could lead to derailing his future goals.

King: Like they be trying to get you caught up, I ain't got time for all that.

RC: What does that mean, caught up?

King: Like trying to get you like, they trying to get pregnant off you and all that.

When they see somebody who's smart then they try to get you like, "Oh come lay with me."

King's fear was in part informed by his own negative relationships with girls from his school, and by the experiences and decisions of his siblings. His sister's hopes for college were halted by an unexpected pregnancy and his brother had an experience with unprotected sex in college the previous year. King saw girls as the problem without

seeing his own role in possibly furthering a sexual encounter. Sexual encounters and partying were normal for him in high school, but he realized how easy it could be to lose sight of or lose his grasp on achieving his goal once in college.

Connection to School Culture

Metro Collegiate's rigorous academic culture encouraged students to show effort, get good grades, and avoid trouble. However, little space was given to students who struggled with focusing or needed more structures to meet the school's high expectations. Perdido and Malik's internal dilemmas about college could be lessened if Metro Collegiate created more opportunities for students to reflect on and work on their study skills.

In addition to his inability to focus, Perdido's assertions revealed his awareness and acceptance of the messages he received from teachers about the nature of college classes. Taking notes and paying attention were things expected in high school and college, but since he struggled with those things, Perdido doubted his ability to be successful with these same tasks, habits, and mindsets in college.

Perdido: But yeah like studying and paying attention in class and physical things you know like things that I'm used to in high school might not be the same for college...so I don't know how to like physically prepare myself. Like mentally, I know it's gonna be okay, nobody is gonna be on your ass about nothing. Nobody's really gonna be like "remember do to this!" Like it's already showing up now. Like nobody's really saying like "did you do your homework?" Like things are already starting to change....I was so used to like you know, like reminders.

Perdido expected that his college professors would not support him. He also saw how teachers groomed him for this process by gradually removing their support during high school. Teachers reminded him less about homework, and thus, teachers played a crucial role in how Perdido viewed both his present and future self in relation to college. Metro Collegiate's school culture reified elements of college going like academic preparation, which did little more than push him further away from college as an actuality. Because he struggled in high school, he saw no possibility of finding success in college. College for Perdido was a more intense version of high school. While his family encouraged him to go, and he realized others' expectations of him to go, in many ways he rejected or postponed college going.

Lucas mentioned another obstacle that others did not, which shone light on broader structural ramifications of charter schools in this competitive college admissions climate. Lucas was troubled that Metro Collegiate's rather new status might discredit his college application if colleges were unfamiliar with the school. Lucas noted this in a comparison between his school and a more-well established school.

Lucas: Like let's say if you compare Lincoln High School and Metro Collegiate, right? Most colleges will accept a student from Lincoln because, they have a reputation with the students. But Metro since, I don't know, it's three years old, the high school. So we don't really have a reputation of – they don't really, colleges know really know if we're good.

Lucas's anxiety over his school's reputation highlighted a broader dilemma for him and other students who seek admittance to the most competitive colleges and universities.

Lucas worked diligently in his coursework, but questioned whether Metro Collegiate was

known well enough by college admission directors to count Lucas and his peers well qualified to attend their universities. Lincoln High School was one of the most well established schools in the city and had produced college-ready students for nearly 80 years in comparison to Metro Collegiate, which only had one graduating class at the time of this study.

Summary

This chapter considered how Metro Collegiate's college going culture reinforced messages participants received at home about the value and importance of college. This chapter also investigated how participants similarly and differently experienced the various elements of the Metro Collegiate college-going school culture. Findings also described how college major interests, the quality and reputation of the college, and race were key factors in participants' college discernment process. Lastly, this chapter considered participants' various internal and external dilemmas about college going. The next chapter explores how participants considered their future selves along the lines of both college and career.

Chapter Six: Condition and Career

In addition to considering how the five Black and Latino adolescent boys in this study conceived of their future selves in terms of post secondary education, this study also examined what they believed to be realistic, attainable, and likely for their futures within the domains of what I call *condition* and *career*. Within the condition domain, participants considered their perceptions of their future economic life conditions. This chapter also examined participants' vocational hopes and aspirations, which were closely related to the future life conditions they hoped to attain.

Unlike the college domain, participants expressed less certainty about their future selves within the career domain, and they appeared even more uncertain about their future life conditions. For participants to articulate conceptualizations of their future selves pertaining to condition and career, I asked broad questions such as, “In your perspective, what is a good life?” and “How would you achieve your conception of a good life?” These prompts served as important mechanisms to get participants thinking beyond college.

This chapter begins by exploring participants' future selves in the condition domain by examining how participants perceived of a good life. Next, I explore their beliefs of what a good job or good career entails. The sections that follow consider how participants viewed the relationship between college attendance and their desired outcomes pertaining to career and condition, as well as how family members shaped their beliefs about these important life circumstances. The next section examines participants' current career aspirations and unpacks how these interests shifted from their early boyhood to the present. Lastly, this chapter looks at how other influences, including the

media and school practices, shaped how participants' viewed their future career and condition outcomes.

What is a Good Life?

All participants shared similar sentiments on what a good life entailed. They believed a good life entailed the ability to pay bills, take care of family responsibilities, and the freedom from excessive worry. Samuel described the lack of worry and the importance of family in his conception of a good life. I asked him to tell me more about the worry he described.

Samuel: I meant not being able to worry about a lot of things. Being able to help out other people. And yeah, being able to also help family when it comes up because I'm big with family. So it just – just not having a lot of worries. Being able to help people out. Do the things that you want to be able to do in life.

Having grown up in a low-income home where his mother struggled financially to provide for him and his brothers, Samuel wanted to live a life free of the worries that his mother experienced and that he observed.

Perdido also highlighted the importance of financial stability and family. When asked how he would describe a good life, he said,

Perdido: I would say stress-free, but you know, you can't ever be stress-free, 'cause you'll always have that one thing that's always bugging you. Something you've always got to look out for. But a good life – it's a steady life. So like, you're living good. You're not backed up on any payments, you're actually doing pretty good with your payments – you're actually advanced – your cable bill isn't really much to you. You have a good car – it could be newer, or it doesn't matter,

as long as it's in good shape, you know, and not always breaking down and stuff like that. You've got a – I guess you could say a family, 'cause you need somebody to support you, even when you doubt yourself. And good friends – people around you who when, when you feel like your family isn't enough, you've got more support from your friends and people you can support yourself. So a good life for me would be just like, you know, a pretty steady life.

While he admitted that a stress-free life was impossible, Perdido saw both financial security and social well-being, which included support from both family members and friends, in his conception of a good life.

Lucas believed that while many might think a good life entailed materialism, good life for him consisted of a stable career and the enjoyment of your work.

Lucas: Like, good life, could be, like, I mean nowadays all that people think about that having money and cars and everything. But I think it's like having a stable job. Like having a stable career and loving what you do. Let's say you buy a big house and then a lot of things and you keep on moving forward and let's say you earn more money and then you want a bigger house and you want a bigger house. I don't think, like you shouldn't, don't get too ambitious. Like, you know, like, be proud of what you have.

For Lucas, a good life meant not only a stable and personally rewarding career, but also the sense of satisfaction about what he earned. Lucas said that his father had influenced him in this particular concept of a good life.

Lucas: It's not good to be materialistic and my father has always told me that.

Like, never be materialistic. Because if you keep on wanting more, that's bad. So,

I'm saying a good life will be living your life. Liking what you do. So never ask for more than what you can't have. Having too much of a good thing is a bad thing. That's how I see it.

Lucas viewed excessive materialism negatively. For him, a good life entailed enjoying his career and earning enough to live comfortably within his means.

All participants visualized a good life for themselves, but they lacked specificity about their expected life conditions. To prompt participants into reflection on their future life conditions, I asked them to imagine their lives at the age of 25. Believing that most participants would have graduated college at the age of 23, I projected that by 25 they would have finished their undergraduate degree programs, if attending college.

King believed he would be playing in the NFL or working in some other sports related field and living modestly when he was 25. When asked about his life, he said,

King: It depends. I'm in NFL, I want like a little house, like a little apartment or something. I don't want no big ol' [house], 'cause that's how you waste all your money and you never know if you're gonna get replaced or even if you're gonna get drafted, so I just want something small that I could pay with no matter what job I got.

King's response was quite telling of how he imagined his career and condition. King did not desire to live the flashy or expensive lifestyle typical of many NFL players, but rather would live modestly in case the high paying NFL career he imagined ended.

Samuel's vision of his life after college reflected a judicious understanding of his hopes to live alone and with a small income.

Samuel: After college, I know it'll be difficult the first couple of years. After

college, I want to be able to have my own house, like just be isolated. Because the house I'm living in now, my house I'm living in, I like space so I know that I don't like the noise. There's always noise in [my] house and there's always people coming in the house, so I want to be by myself. I don't think I can deal with living with people for much longer so I want to be by myself in a big – not a big house, I guess, just enough to say it's a house. I guess I would live in a half-house if I have to right now because I know that I won't have a lot of money for that but just I want to start building up from that, you know.

Samuel intended on earning enough money to rent a small home, town home, or duplex and live by himself. He indicated the importance of securing the peace and quiet that evaded him during his adolescence.

Participants believed a good life was stress free. For participants, stress was caused in part by the worry of being able to adequately afford bills and take care of other family-based responsibilities. Thus, a good life entailed the ability to take care of their financial and familial responsibilities. A support system through a close network of friends was also a key component of a good life for participants. In addition, participants had relatively modest aspirations and judicious expectations for the types of homes and possessions they anticipated. Purchasing within their means was an essential component of a good life, so that money could be devoted to more important matters like caring for family members.

Good Job, Good Career

There's a difference between job and career. A job is temporary and a career is something that never ends so you continue on. So I think having a good career that I'm

interested in, 'cause if you're not interested in it then there's no point. But if you have a career that you like, like helping other people, I think that's what I wanna do. And then try to help the community out.

- Lucas

For the study participants, a key component of a good life was having a good job. With the exception of Lucas, participants did not distinguish between a job and a career and mostly utilized the terms interchangeably. They associated a good job with a fulfilling and enjoyable career, which provided financial stability. For example, as Samuel described,

Samuel: A good job, is a job that you, first off, like to do. A job that you won't mind waking up to do in the morning. My uncle works and he'll work on the weekends and the weekdays and I think the only day he doesn't work is on Sundays. ...He says it's like he's never not working, but I was like, "How can you do that?" And he's like, "I love my job. Man, I love to do it. I love wakin' up to do it. It's the job for me." Yeah, I want to have a job like that. And then also a job that I can financially be stable on. Yeah, so those are the things.

Samuel's uncle deeply loved his job, so much so that he did not mind working even on Sundays. Financial stability and enjoyment were keys in Samuel's notion of a good job. His uncle's description of his own ideal job ran counter to what might be considered a job one would take just for the money. Several of the participants discussed the difference between a good career and a job one might take just for the money.

Malik speculated about the drudgery that would follow if he took a job only for the money.

Malik: There's no point. I mean, I'd rather spend my time doing something I like, than spend my time doing something that I have to do. Cause it's just a waste of time, there's nothing else to do if you're just sitting there doing something you don't want to do. I'd rather sit in a place where I'll enjoy myself, then sit in a place where I'll be bored all day and have to do it, and somebody else tells me to do that, I didn't even want to do in the first place.

Malik's quote implied that feeling fulfilled and having autonomy in his work life were important aspects of a good job to him. Lucas described a teacher in his scenario of what he saw as the drawbacks of doing a job for the money.

Lucas: Okay let's say you're a teacher, right. And the only reason you're a teacher is to just to earn money. That's it, right? That's really – you don't really feel glad of your job. You don't feel proud of who you are. Let's say a teacher who loves working with students or loves teaching other students, and really has a – in order to be a good professional I think you need to have passion for what you do.

With this example, Lucas focused on two other key elements for a good job. Feeling pride in one's work and having passion for what one does were salient in how Lucas thought about being a good professional.

Financial stability, find enjoyment, fulfillment, and passion in a career that provided autonomy and pride were all elements participants believed essential in a good job. Absent from participants' descriptions of a good career were indicators of high salaries or high status. Participants believed instead in the importance of enjoyment over drudgery, financial stability over excess, altruism over self-gain solely, and fulfillment, pride, and passion over boredom, monotony, and subordination.

If You Go to College, Get a Good Career, Then You'll get a Good Life: The Message

To better understand how participants conceived of the relationship between high school, college, career and condition, I asked them if they believed in the following message: “If you go to school, get good grades, go to college, get a good career, then you'll get a good life.” Participants varied in their responses, however, all but Lucas believed this statement to be untrue in some ways. For instance, Lucas believed in the message for his life goals, but was skeptical in how it related more broadly. Of all participants, he embraced the message, but did note examples of other successful people who did not go to college.

Lucas: I think, yeah I do believe it. I do believe in it. But it depends on the person... There's like, successful people today, who didn't graduate from college or dropped out from college and they're successful people... Steve Jobs I think, he did not, okay he went to college right, for, like, a few months... and then he dropped out. Because he found something else interesting so he studied something else and then he became famous, you know? We wrote a prompt in the test one of these days. I think Malcolm X... I don't think he graduated from college. He, I think he was the type of person who learned by himself, like individually. He read the whole dictionary and memorized the dictionary, the words and what they meant and used it. Because he was a good speaker man, and he used it, all he learned, all the knowledge he learned from books.

Lucas believed in the message for himself, but he also believed that some individuals could find success without college by learning things “individually” and working hard. Lucas implied, however, that individuals like Steve Jobs and Malcolm X were

exceptional in this regard.

Lucas and Samuel held similar beliefs concerning the message. They saw the truthfulness of the message in their visions for their futures. While Samuel believed the message captured his ideals for his future, he gave examples in his own family that disproved the presumption that a good life and career came only through going to college.

Samuel: Yes it's the message that kids get but I don't believe in it. I guess it's just – like I look around and I notice my generation, and my cousins and all that, and I see them and I see what they're doing. Like I have a brother who's five years older than me and a cousin who's also five years older than me. ...And he got his own vendor...And he has his own stand and he's getting his own money and stuff like that. So he likes his job, man. He likes what he's doing now and everything. Like my twin brother, he wants to be a chef. And he wants to go to culinary school...My little brother wants to be a mechanic and then my cousin...wants to become an engineer. So basically, the two people right now who want to actually go to college are me and my cousin...So they like the jobs they're doing. And they want to do that type of stuff and they're going to be happy ...And they don't have to go to college. My brother, my twin brother and my little brother don't have to go to college. Only me and my cousin have to go to college. And that's *making our lives* – that's only because we have to go to school to learn that type of stuff. So I mean you can still have a good life and not go to college. It's just...your career and how you do things in life.

Samuel believed that the need to attend college really depended on what one

wanted to do in life. Samuel also believed that finding fulfillment and happiness in a career was not contingent on college attendance, rather college attendance was only necessary for positions in careers that required college education. Samuel and his cousin, had career aspirations that required college, so to achieve a good life and a good career, college was a necessary and logical step. However, his uncle and cousin worked in a field that did not need college, and they were happy with their life outcomes.

Like Samuel, King thought that college was important for his own career aspirations, but he questioned the message that college is a necessity for everyone.

King: College is important, I mean, like I said before in our previous interviews, ... but what I want to do involves college, that's probably why I'm doing what I'm doing, but for people who, I don't know, but you might have to go to school to be a tattoo artist, I don't know. Some people who want to be a tattoo artist they don't go to school sometimes, I don't think, so, that's not right and if you don't know, tattoo artists get paid a lot, for certain tattoos...

In addition to achieving happiness, King inferred that individuals could be financially secure without having to attend college.

Perdido was the most skeptical about the message, and he believed that media intentionally portrayed college as the only way to success to manipulate people's beliefs.

Perdido: I don't believe it's true but I believe in like that it's put out there. You know the way society and media makes us think just like “you need college. If you wanna survive in this nation you need college. College is a way of life. College, college, college, college, college, good grades, college, college, equals good life.” You can't really find any examples of somebody who didn't go to

college and then didn't become successful other than Steve Jobs. But I mean if there are people within the media it's probably hiding it. You know to manipulate it in a certain way 'cause media manipulates things so you can view it a certain way. But I don't believe in it.

Perdido maintained a critical stance toward college attendance, and he believed it was possible to be successful and to have a good life without college. While he could not name any examples other than Steve Jobs, he suspected that there were other examples that were being intentionally hidden by the media. He also expressed skepticism about formal education because he thought it required people to comply and be followers, which was contrary to his nature.

Perdido: You go to school, you're taught to follow.

RC: Why is that not appealing?

Perdido: Because what if I don't want to follow?

RC: Yeah, but tell me why. Why not?

Perdido: I mean following isn't something that's exactly good, like what if I want to lead? What if I believe something differently than what the leader believes in? I'm just like, "No, I don't really agree with this, so I'm looking this way instead of that way."

Perdido's skepticism may have been informed by his apprehension about the significance of college to his own life and its relation to his struggles in high school.

While none was as critical of formal education as Perdido, other participants, like Malik, believed that college attendance did not automatically guarantee a good life.

Malik: I mean, some people can get a high school diploma with average grades

and live a good life. You don't have to go to college to have the best life. You can stop out of high school and still get a job and be successful and have a good life.

When I asked Malik why he wanted to go to college if he did not believe it would necessarily lead to a good life, he responded,

Malik: I think because ... college helps you, gives you a little extra boost in the successful part of your life. ... 'cause [with] high school you can have a good life, going to high school, but college gives you an extra shove forward to get an even better life than what you can at a high school. Cause there are some people who have college degrees and don't have anything.

Malik believed that achieving a good life was possible without a college degree, but unlikely. Though some people with degrees have nothing, according to Malik, the likelihood of financial ruin and job dissatisfaction are higher for people without degrees. To him, college provided an added benefit, or a greater guarantee to attain a more financially secure and happy life.

Similar to Malik, King did not believe that earning a college degree would necessarily lead to happiness and a good life.

King: 'Cause college can't make you happy. College can prepare you to be happy, it can help you to be happy, but it can't make you happy. It can't, college can't necessarily give you a good life... You can join a police program and be a police officer and have a good life. You don't have to go to college. College is something that, to me, makes your pay more, will make you stand out, saying oh, you went to this school.

To make meaning of the relationship between college and happiness, King drew from the experience of his sister, who was satisfied with her decision to leave college before graduating and enroll in the police academy. King believed that while college could help one earn a higher salary and social status, it did not guaranteed a better life.

While most participants did not believe in the message – If you go to school, get good grades, go to college, get a good career, then you'll get a good life – they still wanted good grades and held hopes of attending college. They also believed that attending a good college would better position them for a desired career. For instance, King wanted to attend a university with a top Division I football program and hoped that it would secure him a spot in the NFL. Lucas hoped to attend an Ivy League institution to secure admission into medical school. From Lucas's vantage, a significant connection existed between the type of college one attends and the type of career or post college outcomes that are available. Samuel addressed the connection between attending a good college and securing a good career.

Samuel: Well, a good college also has the necessary resources to put you in a spot for that good job. Like, if you're doing an internship at that – the college could recommend you for an internship with that career choice and then you could learn and then probably as the internship ends, after you're done college, they may want you to work there. Or because of how good you did at the internship, people from that organization or company or whatever it is will recommend you to other companies, organizations, or whatever, to be an employee there. Stuff like that. It gives you the teachings to make it possible for you to get that good job that you want.

For Samuel, a good college has the resources to set him up with an internship that would lead to a better position in the future. Specifically, a good college has connections to internships that position individuals to secure more desirable jobs. Samuel's perceptions might have been influenced by his experiences watching his older sister navigate college internships. Samuel's notions reflected a keen understanding of not only the importance of a college education for his field, but also the importance of utilizing his college experience to position himself most optimally to get a job in his field.

While participants varied in their underlying rationale of why they did not believe the message "If you go to school, get good grades, go to college, get a good career, then you'll get a good life" should apply to all, all participants except Perdido accepted this message for their own career and condition paths. The main reason they accepted this belief was because their career aspirations were contingent upon earning a college degree. Perdido was skeptical about college going because he believed it compelled individuals to follow rules, something he was not interested in doing.

Career Aspirations

This section examines participants' career aspirations. Perdido wanted to be a gardener or a law enforcement officer. Malik and Samuel aspired to be engineers, King an NFL player, sports agent or sportscaster, and Lucas aspired to be a physician. Although they expressed interests in different career paths, there were similarities in how family, their own personal interests, media, and early school experiences influenced and helped shape how participants became interested in their anticipated careers.

When Perdido was a young boy, the science fiction books he read influenced most of his interests, which shifted from becoming a soldier to an archeologist to an astronomer. In his teen years, Perdido was undecided about a direct career path. At times,

he discussed being a gardener, and other times he talked about becoming a law enforcement officer. In terms of his desire to be a gardener, he explained,

Perdido: I don't expect being a gardener would be a long-term thing, just something that I could build up off of. There's an option to stay in the company, or not, you know? But, I mean, say that you have a company like – like a restaurant or something, and this – let's say, 23, 24 year-old comes in – he hands you his resume, you guys talk and everything, he seems cool – you look at his resume – he was a gardener. He worked in a lawn service thing, for – how many years – one, two years? But like, the manager's like, "Hey, this kid works really hard. I've never seen anybody work as hard with the machines or like with the plants or stuff like that – that's hard work."

Perdido believed that because gardening is technically and physically demanding, doing this for some time would position him well to secure other jobs (e.g. in a restaurant).

Perdido did not anticipate gardening for the long-term, but he did believe gardening would help him establish himself as a hard worker. Perdido described his conceptualization of hard work as,

Perdido: There are two types of hard work for me: there is the educational hard work, like papers, notes, books – and then there's hard work, which is like with your hands. Like, building stuff. And the thing with me is just like, hard work with your hands on – it shows I think more effort, to me. Because it's like, it takes a lot to keep working with your hands. Like with lawn service, it takes a lot of energy out of you. And to keep doing that – my daddy's been doing that for almost a decade. And doing that for that long, it's just like, that's serious work.

You know?

Perdido believed that the type of hard work involving hands-on labor showed especial effort. Being a hard worker entailed working with his hands, something that was more tangible than the type of work required in academic settings like high school and college. Perdido admired his father's career, and the hard work and persistence he utilized to sustain it. Perdido's father labored for ten years at the same job, and was able to work his way up to middle management in the company. Perdido's critique of both formalized schooling and the desk jobs he envisioned as tied to college education were in part a defense of and admiration for his father and his career.

In addition to landscaping, Perdido also was interested in seizing his boyhood aspirations of carrying a weapon and sought to perhaps join the military or go into law enforcement. When I asked him about these two career choices, his response revealed how he made meaning of his interests, his mother's desires for him, and his apprehensions.

Perdido: It's – I don't know, man. It's like having a box full of like different-flavored chips, like there's so many I can choose from but I just don't know which one.

RC: So why law enforcement?

Perdido: Because it's like my mom doesn't want me to go into the military because you could straight out die. I could go to the military. I've already got the card and everything. That's the Marine Corps but someone says you're not gonna survive, it's like, "Okay, I'm not gonna survive training."

In discussing his decision-making about his interest in the military, Perdido described his

fears of being exposed to the gas used by soldiers, the threat of being scolded by drill sergeants, and the intense physical regimen of military training. Since Perdido's mother was so vehemently opposed to him joining the military and his expectations of basic training were daunting, law enforcement became the compromise. Unlike Perdido, Malik was much clearer about his career aspirations.

When Malik was a little boy, he aspired to be an astronaut, but eventually decided that he would prefer to build space ships as a mechanical engineer than to ride in them. I asked Malik how he came to that particular career interest.

Malik: I came to that because I really like math and I like working with my hands and like building stuff and taking stuff apart...I like to break a lot of stuff. Or you could take it apart and not figure out how to put it back together but I just like the challenge of taking something apart and putting it back together, see if I got it that same way.

Malik was interested in working with his hands and also had a gift for math and science. When I asked him who or what influenced his interest in mechanical engineering, Malik discussed his uncle, who worked on the subway trains.

Malik: Now, I haven't talked to him in a while about what he actually does, but he used to work on the air conditioning and the electrical systems, on the trains... I used to go to his job with him every once and a while. They had like a bus rodeo one day. I got to go to the place where we worked and I saw [his] little shop and all his tools, so that's one thing that really inspired me. He's a big part of my inspiration, 'cause I work with him on his car. So that's one that influenced me toward mechanical engineering.

The possibility of working in a field that afforded him the ability to combine his interest in science and his love of building things intrigued Malik and inspired his career interests. I prompted Malik to think a bit more about what a mechanical engineer does, and he realized that his uncle worked more on the mechanic-side what he conceptualized as mechanical engineering. Malik realized he understood what a mechanic did, but did not know what an engineer did, thus his understanding of the actual work of a mechanical engineer was minimal. However, he perceived a crucial connection between the math and science he loved in school, and the hands-on application of knowledge that he desired in his future career. While he was unsure of his uncle's exact work, he was inspired by his ability to work hands-on in a highly technical field that required a mastery of science and mechanical and electrical systems.

Other influences convinced Malik that mechanical engineering was the best career choice for him. While his uncle inspired him through his career as a mechanic, science class and educational TV shows also served as a key influence for Malik's career aspirations.

Malik: I think that that's what the mechanic part came from, and the engineer part probably came from me like in Science classes and stuff, building like– I watched this show called “Housemade”, things that are actually built. They do things, behind the scenes, like how everything's made, like cars, a lot of different things. And that's like– I'm always watching the Discovery Channel, and that's where a lot of it comes from. Watching the Discovery Channel. And that's something I enjoy doing.

Educational television served as a key source of influence for Malik to see what

engineers do. In part this show inspired him to want to pursue engineering as a career.

Samuel also was interested in entering into a career in a STEM field. In particular, Samuel, who dreamed of being a professional video gamer as a little boy, aspired to be a computer scientist or computer hardware engineer. Samuel said he was exposed to computer engineering through a career exercise in seventh grade prior to coming to Metro Collegiate.

Samuel: Well, one day we were doing this little project in my computer class...It was in seventh grade, and then, [the teacher] was talking about, “Okay, so choose a job that you think you would wanna do when you get older”... Well, she gave us a list of category of things you would wanna do, and then ... I was reading through different jobs, and I was thinking about myself as a person what job I’d be best for. And I just I looked at [computer engineering], and I was hmm...this may be interesting, and then, as I am going throughout the project, I was just amazed by the job, so I just wanted to do that as a career.

Samuel’s early interest in engineering came from a classroom project where he had to choose a career that aligned with his interests. While Samuel had not previously heard of engineering as a field, this early exposure to computer hardware engineering gave Samuel language for a career that encompassed his interests in math, science, computers, and video gaming.

King had been interested in being an NFL player since he was a little boy. As he grew up, he realized that the odds of him eventually making it to the NFL were slim. Although he did believe he had the talent, drive, and ambition to eventually make it into “the league”, he considered other options.

King: Not only being in NFL, because I know, like, one in every thousand, one out of every thousand kids makes it to the NFL; so I mean, ... like, I wanna be surrounded by sports, so not only like me being a football player, but like being an agent, maybe for somebody. Or like, being a sportscaster or something like that... I like sports, so I would love to be a agent, like read somebody contract for them or something like that and get paid for that, or like make phone calls and make sure people go where they go. I mean I can make money and just sit on the sideline. Like, it's not only – I wanna be surrounded by sports. Like, I'm very energetic, so I think it would be good if I could be surrounded by sports.

King's interest in sports extended beyond the playing field, and he considered other career paths that suited his interest in athletics and his personality. King saw a sports career as an exciting career in which he could capitalize on his boundless energy to make a living doing something he enjoyed.

Similar to Malik, King noted the importance of television in influencing his career interests. I asked him where on television he found examples of his future career interests.

King: TV. NFL Network. I watch that all the time. And like I said, they talk about like people's agents how like, "Oh, we're on the phone with somebody's agent, and what's the update of," like, why do you gotta go through a agent to figure out what's going on with that person? Why you just can't talk to the person? And I don't want to feel like I gotta waste more money buying somebody just to read or just to figure out where I want to go when I could just do it myself and save money in my pocket.

In this example, King drew from his knowledge of athletes and sports agents and imagined himself in either role. In addition, King also was keenly aware of his intelligence, and always complimented his athletic prowess with his intellectual capabilities. As he explained,

King: I'm a student athlete, so I'm smart but at the same time I'm athletic. And I think they come together at one point. Nothing really catches my attention but sports. I mean math, money, but other stuff like psychology and all that, it just sound boring. Maybe law school, but all that other stuff sound boring... I mean or hopefully I'll go to the NFL, I'll get drafted. So I could do that, and then I can major in sports management so I could read my own contract and I don't have to pay nobody for that. Or I can major in sports therapy – I mean physical therapy so I can help out people like people who tear their ACL or something like that, like a rehab or something like that. That's what I want to do.

King's notions revealed an astute understanding of his intellect, interests, and talents. King knew what interested him but also what fields might bore him, like psychology. Combining both his intellectual and his athletic prowess was key for King's career. King referenced the importance of being able to "read contracts" and returned to this notion often when he emphasized the importance of being both athletic and astutely intellectual. Underlying his hopes and aspirations for his future was knowledge of particular college majors and multiple career pathways that meshed well for his interests.

When Lucas was young, he was interested in pursuing a career in architecture. However, as he matured and his interest in science blossomed, a major life occurrence provided the catalyst for his interest in medicine. During our interviews he shared his

interests in pursuing a career as a scientist or a physician. I asked him which of these he would rather pursue and why.

Lucas: Probably as a doctor because, like, what motivated me to become a doctor was when my grandmother died. She had, it was two years ago and she died of, I think she had sickle cell, and she never told none of the family... Not even my father. Because my father, like, out of the five sons that my grandmother had, my father was, like, the only – the one who always stuck up to her. Was always next to her. Who always lived next to her.

His grandmother's passing devastated Lucas, and her declining health provided a key source of inspiration for his career interest. For many months prior to her death, Lucas and his family visited the hospital daily. At the hospital, Lucas observed and posed questions to the attending physicians regarding the care and methods they utilized to comfort his ailing grandmother. He explained,

Lucas: When my grandmother died I was, like, I really wanted to help her but I didn't know how to. I always asked every time I visited her in the hospital I would always ask the doctors who were there, "What does she have?" or, "How is she doing? Is she getting tested? What is that test gonna be for?" Each day she got worse and so you worried and you try to help out but you don't know how to. But it made me sit down and think, I was, like, "Maybe I should be a doctor when I grow up," like help other people out. I feel when I help other people out I feel better. Like, you feel proud. Like, you feel better because you help other people. It's like, I think that's a job I would like, or a profession I would like. Because you feel good for yourself. And you could tell others that "I did this."

Lucas was frustrated by his inability to soothe his grandmother's pain during her final moments, but the physicians who used medicine and treatment to settle her pain inspired him. While he and his family rallied to provide tremendous love and support, ultimately it was the physicians who had the knowledge and tools to dull the physical pain. For Lucas, acquiring and using this medical knowledge served as a powerful example of how he might use his intellect to help others in the future.

Participants utilized their beliefs about the nature of the work of certain careers and their own understandings about their academic talents to conceptualize their desired career aspirations. The jobs they envisioned as little boys in some ways informed their current aspirations. For instance, Perdido envisioned becoming a soldier, Samuel wanted to become a video gamer, and Malik wanted to become an astronaut; all maintained current aspirations that were in some ways related to their young boyhood career dreams. Carrying a gun, working in science related industries, or even King's wishes to play in the NFL were facets that informed their present motivations and behaviors geared toward their future goals.

While participants reported being inspired and supported in their career interests by family members and school, Malik and King particularly noted that they also were supported and informed about various careers through the media. Television media, in particular, served as a key avenue for participants to learn about, consider, and imagine themselves working in various career options.

Participants also noted the importance of school-based academic subject matter in how they thought about their career aspirations. Malik's love of math and science informed his interest in science related fields. Similarly, King found a career that

connected with his interests in math, while he also worked to avoid going into careers in psychology or fields that he found boring.

While their interests in particular academic coursework were important to how participants conceived of their career interests, the broad school culture at Metro Collegiate also influenced both career and condition aspirations.

School Influence

As noted in the previous chapter, the school culture of Metro Collegiate was highly influential in how participants conceived of their future selves in the domain of college. While findings suggested that the school played a lesser role in how participants conceived of their future selves within the career and condition domain, the academic curriculum and school culture impacted participants' career and life condition aspirations in several notable ways.

Academic Curriculum

When I asked participants how the school prepared them for various careers, they discussed some of their academic coursework as particularly salient. For instance, Samuel, the future computer hardware engineer, noted his math and science courses as important. In conceptualizing how which courses were aligned with his career, Samuel noted, "Physics, Algebra II, Financial Literacy, all my math classes; all my math classes and science classes because I want to be an engineer so they just line up."

Malik, who wanted become a mechanical engineer, believed his science classes helped him with his career aspirations because, as he described, "We do a lot of hands-on experiments and [it] helps me figure out like how I wanna go in life, like what kinda career I wanna do in physics like kind of general subject of mechanical engineering."

Physics was Malik's favorite class and one of the reasons he was so interested in it was because it tied directly to what he wanted to become.

Perdido and King did not believe that the school was preparing them for their career goals. For example, when asked what the school was doing to help him meet his goal of working in the athletic arena, King said,

King: Nothing, nothing, ... this school don't have no classes for me to prepare for what I want to do when I get out, maybe fitness and just, still don't have nothing to do with football, maybe running ...but that's it. Maybe science, I don't know. I'm supposed to be learning about body movement next year, but that's gonna be a little bit too late.

Like King, Perdido thought that many of his courses at Metro Collegiate did not prepare him for and were irrelevant to his career interests.

Perdido: In algebra, it'll hit me the most, like, "When am I gonna use this?" 'Cause we're looking at quadratic formulas and square roots and equations, and everybody's like, 'Gardeners don't really use this.' I'm not gonna come upon a bed of flowers, be like, 'I have to solve something to uproot that flower,' or something. And in history class, it's like – this is like really good information to know, and like apply it somewhere. And then it's physics – physics is science, and I like science, but am I gonna be an astronomer? Am I gonna be a scientist? If I'm a scientist, what am I gonna be all "science-ing" about?

Neither King nor Perdido saw a connection between their academic coursework at Metro and their eventual career goals. For King, fitness and science somewhat aligned to his athletic aspirations, however, for Perdido, no course aligned with the practical, hands-on

nature of his future career paths of becoming a gardener or police officer. Perdido noted that while courses like history were interesting, other courses like physics would only aid individuals interested in going into a science-related field. The difficulty that King and Perdido had finding and seeing their career aspirations in the school curriculum pointed to how Metro Collegiate invalidated students whose career interests were divergent from more traditional paths.

When I asked Samuel about how Metro Collegiate prepared students for the future, he described a life skills class centered on financial literacy, and he description, he described a unique perspective and reflected on how he believed other courses were preparing him for the future.

Samuel: I'm in the financial literacy class with all seniors... I just think that it helps you become more aware and it changes your decision-making and it helps you to not slip up in any type of way.

RC: You're talking about the financial literacy class?

Samuel: Any class. It just reforms your thinking, I think. I mean, if it's not directly connected to a career that you want to do or anything that you want to do, it gives you more possibilities in wanting to do a career. It makes you – it also makes you find yourself, because in that sense of having knowledge, you get to explore things and you start to realize things and you start to connect pieces together. It just helps you mold as a person. That's what I think.

Samuel's reflection revealed his understanding of how all of his academic coursework deepened his thinking about careers. If the class was not directly related to his career interest, it still had benefits, presented him with more possibilities about various career

options, and molded him as a person. Through his varied coursework, Samuel conceptually connected ideas to make sense of his future career interests.

School Culture

Some of the values reflected in Metro Collegiate's school culture were the importance of getting good grades, showing effort, and avoiding trouble. Lucas provided some examples that emphasized these values in how he conceptualized his future self in multiple domains of college, career, and condition.

Lucas: Yeah, I'm not interested in everything I do, but I do it because I know I have to do it. I know that my grade, like that, if I do it, you know, that it depends on my grade you know. If I don't do it then my grade's gonna go down. But the reason I care so much about my work is because I know that the work I do now will pay off in the future.

Lucas was less concerned about how the school prepared him academically for his career interests and more concerned about mastering the reward systems; he believed in the delayed satisfaction that comes as a result of his hard work and effort.

Lucas: A lot of people think, "Oh...he went to Harvard" or, "Oh, he went to UPenn," but, yeah, you could go to any college man. You could go to any college and you could get the same job you want. As long as you, like, put effort and, like, if you put effort and work hard you could get there. You don't have to go to like – like, I'm pretty sure I might not – I might not, maybe I could try to go to like a top college. I'm not sure if I will make it but I could try. But I don't have to.

Lucas believed that where one attended college was less a key factor in eventual career and life success as the effort one exerts while in college. Lucas embodied the importance

of getting high grades and showing effort, as he believed his diligence would pay great dividends in high school, in college, and in his future career.

One key finding was that while individuals and circumstances influenced the participants, none of them had a role model who worked in any of their desired career fields. This was particularly problematic for King, who thought that few people believed in his talent and ability to secure an NFL career. In talking about one particular mentor or role model he had at Metro Collegiate, King said,

King: Mr. James. He the only person who like – I look up to him ‘cause he like the only person who really see or like really help me about going to the NFL. He really think I got a chance. And like I look up to people like that. Like if you believe that I can do something and then when I do do it, I will give you some type of like – I’m not gonna say payback, but – and I’m not gonna say reward ‘cause he didn’t – he just motivate me to keep going with my dream. He not like, “Oh, you can’t make it, so you might as well just stop now.” He not doing that. He just telling me what do so I can make it. ‘Cause he was a good football player, so yeah. And that’s it, just Mr. James.

Mr. James assisted Ms. Diggs in the college placement office and he played football during his college years. He was a significant source of inspiration and support for King, as few other adults in the school understood what it took to make it as an athlete at the college level. Outside of Mr. James, King believed teachers did little to help him with his career aspirations. Malik, however, did believe that teachers had a role in how he saw his future. Malik believed that Metro Collegiate teachers modeled for students at least one best practice for career success.

Malik: Hmm. The only thing that I can see is the time management ‘cause they get here early in the morning then – teachers are always here before everybody else. They're always setting up their class to have already their instruction ready for the whole day. And they have to do what they have to do to be ready for the next day.

While teachers did not provide specific career support for students, Malik believed they modeled time management, an essential skill for adults in any profession. To have enough time to prepare for their classes, teachers had to leave their homes on time, and plan their travel according to weather conditions. Teachers also had to have the necessary supplies prepared for students, their rooms set up properly, and engage in many other activities that involved foresight, planning, and other elements that Malik included in his notion of time management.

Metro Collegiate played a small, but important role in how students conceived of their future selves given their career aspirations and prospective life conditions. Malik and Samuel reported that being exposed to math and science coursework helped influence their interests in engineering. Lucas believed that elements of the school culture, especially the importance of securing good grades and showing effort, were good lessons for him to take into his future. Conversely, King and Perdido believed the school offered little to align with their career interests as a professional athlete and a gardener or law enforcement officer, respectively.

Adults at the school played an important role in how participants saw their futures. None of the participants had direct access to role models currently working in their specific careers of interest, however, Mr. James served as a mentor for King. Mr.

James and his knowledge and experience with Division I football proved salient for King's future self in the domain of college and possibly professional athletics. Lastly, while there were not professional mentors and role models for students, Malik reported the importance of time management as modeled by his teachers.

Conclusion

This chapter considered participants' future selves regarding their career aspirations and their expected life outcomes, or conditions. Taking care of financial and familial responsibilities and maintaining a close support network of other family and friends were key elements of how participants viewed a good life. Associated with participants' ideas of a good life was how they believed a good life was connected to college and career.

Participants did not fully believe in the thought experiment represented by the message, "If you go to high school, get good grades, go to college, get a good career, then you'll get a good life." Participants held various positions on this message, but all but Perdido chose college as an important part of their future selves because their career aspirations required a college degree. Family, media, and school practices all influenced and shaped participants' current career aspirations. The school was more influential in shaping participants' future selves in the domain of college than it was in shaping their career and condition aspirations. However, Metro Collegiate's curriculum specifically, and the school culture broadly, shaped how they envisioned their lives within the career domain.

The next chapter discusses important themes of the study's findings, while also noting key implications, and future directions for this research.

Chapter Seven: Discussion and Implications

This study sought to understand how Black and Latino male youth conceptualized their future selves within the frames of three particular facets of life: post secondary education, employment, and life conditions. These facets, conceptualized as *college*, *career*, and *condition*, respectively, were explored from the perspectives of three Black and two Latino (Salvadoran) boys attending one urban charter school. This study also examined how the culture of their school functioned to stimulate, reinforce, limit, and sometimes constrict their perceptions of their future selves. More specifically, this study was guided by the following research question and sub questions:

1. How, if at all, are Black and Latino adolescent boys' conceptions of their future selves shaped by school culture within an urban high school context?
 - a) What is the culture of the school, as evidenced by beliefs and perceptions, social interactions, symbols, and normative practices?
 - b) How do Black and Latino adolescent boys conceive of their future selves?
 - c) What relationships exist between facets of school culture and how Black and Latino adolescent boys conceive of their future selves?

To answer these questions, chapter four examined the school culture of Metro Collegiate, while chapters five and six discussed how individual participants conceptualized their future selves pertaining to college, career, and condition. This chapter summarizes some key findings from the study, discusses these findings in the context of the theoretical framework, and provides implications for policy and practice.

Summary of Key Findings

School Culture

Metro Collegiate's school culture reflected the dominant cultural power in what was valued, deemed appropriate, and normal in broader United States society. Reflecting Collins' (2009) "matrix of domination" theory, the actions of administrators, teachers, and others in power at Metro Collegiate upheld the values, beliefs, and commonsense norms traditionally reflected in middle-class White norms in broader U.S. society. This cultural power worked in and through school practices at all levels and was thus infused within school culture.

Four themes were salient to the school culture and how the participants experienced it. First, as outlined in the school mission, Metro Collegiate served a diverse group of students to meet high academic expectations. Parents flocked to Metro Collegiate, as it was one of the most popular, successful, and racially diverse schools in the city.

Metro Collegiate was housed in a state of the art facility. It looked and felt like a school intent on creating a culture that differed from urban public schools. The school looked nothing like the picture painted by Anderson, Su, and Theoharris (2009) of the urban school as overcrowded with an elaborate system of surveillance and policing, frigid classrooms in the winter and hot in the summer, and students and teachers working within a gray and dull prison-like building. Complete with new technology, open and airy classrooms, environmentally sound paint, energy efficient windows, and teeming with color and vigor, Metro Collegiate was a gorgeous building. In addition to attracting parents with the building, above average test scores, high graduation rates, 100% college

acceptance, and stellar parent recommendations positioned Metro Collegiate as one of the most desirable schools in the city.

Racial diversity was a key component of Metro Collegiate's advertising and website marketing to prospective families. The elementary school had the most racially diverse student body, but the proportion of White students dropped from nearly 23% in the elementary school to 2% in the high school. As grade levels ascended, the school student population became less diverse and less affluent as White middle-class families sent their children to other schools. In this regard, the school reflected segregation by race and income.

While Metro Collegiate promoted diversity as a central cultural component and feature of the school, it was unable to retain and recruit significant numbers of White students in the upper grades. Thus, Metro Collegiate represented a microcosm of the "White flight" that is typical of urban areas. Self-segregation among students was evidence of additional fractures in the self-purported image of diversity.

Participants reported student self-segregation along racial, cultural, and linguistic lines, particularly within informal school settings like the cafeteria. Student self-segregation was fueled by possible misunderstandings about various racial and culture groups. While Black and Latino students spent considerable time with each other in classes, they seemed to know very little of each others' home cultures.

Moreover, while school leaders and teachers touted their ability to help all diverse students meet high expectations, participants revealed experiences of inequity. Participants reported that teachers and administrators treated students differently on the basis of their racial, cultural, and linguistic attributes. Specifically, Black participants

reported differential treatment along racial/ethnic lines, while Latino participants reported differential treatment along cultural and linguistic lines. These experiences of differential treatment contradicted the high expectations Metro Collegiate espoused for all students in its entire racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse population.

Perdido, in particular, reported dilemmas around the Spanish language and others' cultural misunderstandings of its usage. For instance, he believed that the assumptions and misunderstandings that flourished around Latina/os were informed by language stereotypes. These included the problematic belief that if Latina/o students were not verbose or loud in informal or formal learning environments, that they could not speak English fluently. Perdido believed that doubts about English language proficiency informed how teachers interacted with Latina/o students. When teachers and other non-native Spanish speakers made remarks or talked slowly to Latinos, Perdido believed that they not only questioned a Latino's English fluency, but also their intelligence or aptitude. These language dilemmas suggested that at least some school personnel misunderstood and had difficulty authentically connecting with Latino students, based on assumptions about students' linguistic attributes.

Reinforcing the previous findings, the race/ethnicity and gender of teachers also mattered for participants. The lack of Black and Latino male teachers was problematic; as noted in previous literature (see Kunjufu, 2013; Landsman & Lewis, 2006), Black and Latino boys hardly ever see a male teacher of color. In particular, participants reported missed opportunities for role modeling and mentoring because of the school's few Black and Latino male teachers. Mr. Webber, the only Black male teacher in an academic core subject, disaffirmed the stereotypes of Black men as criminal or deviant. Black

participants thought that the few Latino Spanish language teachers treated Latino students with more familiarity and kinship than they did with them. Lucas noted how a more diverse teaching body could help Latina/o students, in particular, to see themselves in more diverse career settings. Lastly, when student success stories were publicly reported, Black students were underrepresented, revealing disproportional rates of student achievement and recognition along racial lines.

Metro Collegiate valued and supported students who achieved good grades, showed considerable academic effort, and maintained a spotless behavioral or discipline record. Data suggested that students with average or below average grades, who showed little effort, or had previous disciplinary offenses, found difficulty securing the favor of teachers for leadership positions and additional college going support. Participants noted that school leadership opportunities were unavailable to students with prior disciplinary records or students who communicated ineffectively with teachers. Support was provided to students who showed continual effort, and students like Perdido felt an inability to redeem themselves from previous mistakes to gain the approval of teachers and administrators to run for school office, for instance.

Metro Collegiate required more academic credits than other traditional public schools, which added to the rigor of the school culture. In addition, students were graded not only on exams, quizzes, and projects, but they were also evaluated on their effort through Habits of Work (HOW) and Habits of Mind (HOM) grades. HOW grades were based on timely submission of and quality of work, organizational skills, and willingness to contribute to group projects. HOM grades were based on students' abilities to reflect on and plan future learning goals, and their willingness to produce multiple drafts of work.

Some participants, like Lucas, saw these behavioral assessments as helpful while others, like King and Perdido, experienced them as subjective and unfair.

The honor roll assembly strongly suggested that Metro Collegiate did not adequately support Black male students in meeting its rigorous academic expectations. Out of a high school student population of 317 with a 40% Black population, only one Black male secured the minimum GPA (3.0 or above) needed to receive an award. The few White and Asian students secured the top awards, while Latinas and Black girls secured a majority of the mid-range awards. At another assembly prior to the student vs. teacher basketball game, students were acknowledged for displaying the character traits valued at the school including courage, integrity, and responsibility. At this smaller ceremony, only two Black boys were awarded certificates. Since only one Black boy was awarded an academic honor, presenting two Black boys awards for character might have served as a proxy for the school's inability to secure more optimal academic results for Black boys. It is important to note that most of the student starters for the students vs. teacher basketball game, including King and Samuel, were Black. They received their accolades for almost beating the teachers in the basketball game. Assemblies like these served as important rituals to reinforce both what the school valued and who among the student population merited awards for meeting the school's academic and social expectations. At these school events Black boys received little recognition for demonstrating the school's core values of academic and social success, but their athletic abilities were praised. These instances provided evidence of how broader and more widely accepted notions of Black males valued for their athletic or entertainment prowess

(see Brown, 2011; Howard, 2014) are prevalent in the minds and imaginations of those in schools.

Other behaviors of successful students included their willingness to be demure and accept school rules and their treatment without question. Similar to studies that consider the relationship between race and discipline practices at schools (see Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Skiba et al., 2002), participants reported the disproportional disciplining of Black boys. Malik and Samuel believed that teachers stereotyped Black boys as aggressive for being loud or for using profanity. Samuel believed that implicit bias held by teachers informed how they interacted with Black students and made it difficult for teachers to see offenses by these students beyond presumptions of Blacks as threatening or violent. Black boys were more likely than students of other races to be seen in the office of the disciplinary dean, Mr. Madison.

A final key feature of Metro Collegiate's school culture was the emphasis on college going above all other post secondary choices or life outcomes for students. The college-going culture was palpable at Metro Collegiate and students were mandated to apply to at least one 2 year or 4 year college. Scholars who investigated deliberate college-going cultures (see Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Knight-Diop, 2010) found that optimal college going schools have rigorous academics, clear mission statements, and college going services. While findings suggested that Metro Collegiate's mission to support all students to meet high expectations was not experienced by all participants, a clear and consistent college-going culture was evident. College posters and pennants covered the hallway walls and adorned classrooms, teachers wore college and university tee shirts each week, scholarship announcements were made easily accessible, and the

college placement office buzzed with tremendous energy, and while some participants like Lucas and Samuel embraced these messages, the others experienced this college-going culture as unsupportive of their post secondary aspirations. King, for instance, believed that the school had a poor track record of sending students to the competitive, Division I colleges and universities many of their teachers attended. Like Perdido and Malik, he believed that the school did little to support students desiring pathways other than college.

Metro Collegiate's school culture reflected broader socio-cultural norms upheld by the teachers and administrators. White, middle-class norms, in U.S. society were also valued at Metro Collegiate. As a result, Metro Collegiate sanctioned or stifled the behaviors and aspirations of students who devalued or acted counter to these norms. For instance, students who spoke, acted, or dressed in typically "urban" styles, or students who were loud, or students who resisted adhering to the cultural norms of the school, were disciplined at higher levels. Black boys adopted these dispositions more so than Latinos, and even when the Latino boys mirrored these behaviors, participants like King noted that they were not disciplined at the same rate. Mostly Black boys sat in the seats that faced the walls of the tiny room used by the disciplinary dean to detain students. This stark environment was jail-like in many ways, as students were left to sit silently and reflect upon their choices and the reasons why they were put there. However, that Black boys rarely served the school in leadership positions, or rarely were afforded the opportunity to shine publicly outside of athletics, evidenced how the school utilized other, more subtle ways of maintaining and reifying their cultural power.

In addition to investigating the school culture of Metro Collegiate, this study also examined how five Black and Latino males conceived of and constructed their future selves regarding what they believed to be realistic, attainable, and likely for their futures within the domains of what I call the “Three Cs”- *college*, *career*, and *condition*. Perdido was the only participant of the five who did not see college in his immediate post secondary future. All participants’ families emphasized college going; they all reported being encouraged early by family members to attend for the hope of finding better economic security and a rewarding career. Findings show that messages from home and school about college going were mutually reinforcing.

Another key finding was that participants experienced elements of the Metro Collegiate college-going school culture, differently. While all students were encouraged to go to college, data suggested that students made meaning of encouragement in different ways and that they received selective support from teachers and administrators based on their race and ethnicity, disciplinary records, and future life goals. Students latched on to the culture in different ways. For instance, Samuel and Lucas were accepting of the college going messages and had academic records and dispositions that mirrored the school culture, and thus they latched on more fully than King, Malik, and Perdido. King, Malik, and Perdido were more reluctant to latch on because of various experiences with selective support, and perceived racial micro-aggressions, and the inability to see the merit in attending college for life goals that Perdido experienced.

Participants reported that both students’ and the adults’ race played at least a partial role in how college guidance was distributed. Black students sought out the Black college counselor, Ms. Diggs, while Latinos sought out Mr. Rodríguez, the Latino college

counselor. Participants also reported the need to have a good rapport with Ms. Diggs, in particular, to gain her support and attention for the college application process. Students with low grades and a spotty behavioral record, like Perdido, found increased difficulty gaining unsolicited support from college counselors. In addition, King believed the school did not value his aspirations to play football at the college or professional level.

Participants' career interests, the quality and reputation of colleges, and race were key factors in participants' college choice and preparation processes. Participants were drawn to colleges that they believed were high in quality, particularly as related to their area of interest. While King wished to attend a university with a Division I football program, other participants were interested in colleges that offered the majors and competitive academic programs that would position them for career success. Perdido rejected college because of the high-paced, high-pressure environment he believed it to be and because he did not believe that college would prepare him for the career he imagined for himself.

Race was also a key factor in their discernment process. While Lucas and Samuel sought out racial diversity in a college, Malik was wary of attending a predominantly White institution. Samuel did not want to attend a school that mirrored the racial demographics of his all-Black community, which he associated with poverty and street violence. Malik, however, did not believe he would be successful in a predominantly White school, because he thought that Whites generally looked down on him and on Blacks. His interest in attending an HBCU was due in part to his desire to shield himself from racial micro-aggressions and from the images of Black racial inferiority that he believed permeated the minds of Whites at Metro Collegiate and in society broadly.

Lastly, participants expected to face dilemmas in college relative to their perceptions of themselves as individuals, finances, and their responsibilities to their families. Some dilemmas were based on what they saw as their own shortcomings, personality traits, and personal challenges, such as Perdido's inability to focus. Other participants like Malik grappled with their self-assessed level of academic preparation for college, and Samuel struggled with his difficulty to make new friends. Several participants also worried about social distractions in college, and all were worried about their family's ability to pay for their education.

The “Three Cs”: The Future Selves of Black and Latino Boys

In addition to the college domain, participants were asked about their future selves regarding both career and condition. Generally, participants had clear understandings about their future selves related to the college domain, however they expressed less certainty about their future selves within the domain of career, and they were even more uncertain about their future life conditions.

Participants believed that the ability to pay bills and take care of one's family responsibilities and the freedom from excessive worry were critical components of a good life. Participants also believed that enjoyment, fulfillment, and passion in a career that provided autonomy and pride were key elements of a good job. Given these conceptualizations, participants held relatively modest, realistic, and judicious aspirations and expectations for their future selves. All participants visualized a good life for themselves, but they lacked much specificity about their expected life conditions.

To see how participants considered the connection between a college, a good career, and eventual life conditions, I asked them to consider the message, “If you go to

school, get good grades, go to college, get a good career, then you'll get a good life.”

Participants varied in their responses, however, all but Lucas believed this statement to be untrue to some extent. While participants' underlying rationales for their belief varied, all but Perdido accepted this message for their own career and condition paths because their career aspirations were contingent upon earning a college degree.

Participants also held various career interests. Similarities existed in how family, their personal interests, and early school experiences influenced and helped mold how participants became interested in their anticipated careers. In addition, while findings suggested that the school played a smaller role in how participants conceived of their future selves within the career and condition domain than the college domain, the academic curriculum and school culture impacted participants' career and life condition aspirations in several notable ways.

The academic curriculum available at Metro Collegiate piqued the career interests of participants like Malik and Samuel, while King and Perdido believed the curriculum reflected nothing that prepared them for their prospective career interests. Lucas' reflections directly related to the school culture of Metro Collegiate. The importance of getting grades and showing effort were critical to how Lucas conceived of his future career interests and Metro Collegiate gave him a critical context to practice these essential life skills. The lack of extensive teacher diversity played into King's future self in another way. Other than occasional interactions with Mr. James, who worked part-time at Metro Collegiate, King believed that he had no other mentors at the school who were able to help him attain his career goals. He believed that the lack of teacher diversity, in particular, informed his inability to find Black male former college athletes. While there

were not professional mentors and role models for any participants, Malik reported that his teachers modeled the importance of time management, a salient life lesson regardless of what career students entered.

Discussion and Limitations

Judicious Beliefs

Overall, participants held hopeful and judicious beliefs about their future selves. They were keenly aware that both their academic and social high school records would position them for specific colleges and career outcomes. Noticeably absent from participants' conceptions of their future selves were unrealistic, unsubstantiated, or grandiose beliefs about what they could accomplish in their lives, given their academic preparation and their beliefs and expectations about their lives. For instance King, who wanted to play in the NFL as his dream job, had realistic understandings that if his NFL dreams were dashed, he would find fulfillment in other sports-related fields.

King was hopeful about achieving his NFL dreams, but also had other fall back options. In a study that looked at the goals of high achieving Black students, Hubbard (2005) found that Black girls were far more specific than Black boys about their career and college goals. While the Black girls opted for four-year college and university programs, most Black boys were less specific about their occupational goals, but specific about their professional athletic goals (Hubbard, 2005). "Going pro" after college was a primary impetus for Black boys to secure the type of success they hoped to achieve (Hubbard, 2005), as coaches pushed them to excel primarily in athletics. In many ways, King's desires for the NFL mirrored Hubbard's (2005) findings, however, King held realistic expectations about his likelihood of securing his NFL dreams and maintained fall back options not revealed by participants in Hubbard's study.

Teasing out Silences

Financial security, the support of family and peers, and a stable and rewarding career were markers of participants' conceptualizations of what a good life entailed. Participants revealed little about their expectations for possible spouses or romantic partners, or for raising children. None of the participants was in a stable romantic relationship at the time of our interviews. While Perdido, King, and Samuel had romantic companions or young women whom they "talked to," none acknowledged being in a committed relationship. Also, while Lucas and Perdido's parents were still married and in the home, Malik's parents were separated, Samuel's mother and father had tremendous strife, and King's dad remarried. These factors may have influenced why creating a family life with another was not more salient to their future selves.

Also noticeably absent from their conceptualizations of their future selves were the continuations of hobbies or organizational involvement. Lucas, for instance, was highly involved in the local church community, but did not mention church in his future conceptualizations. The rigorous pursuit of college and then medical school were the most foregrounded aspects of his future self. To Lucas, building his career was central to achieving his dream of providing the best financial footing for his current and future family.

Similar to organizational involvement, civic involvement was another factor absent from participants' notions of their future selves. Participants made no mention of their careers and life conditions mapping on to any local, municipal, or national political or civic endeavors. While they were excited about the opportunity to earn their own money and provide for them and their family, they made no mention of the importance of

giving back to their communities. They spoke of helping others on a broader scale through their careers; however, their altruistic motives were mostly related to their immediate home and family contexts.

Participants did not discuss the importance of physical activity or maintaining good health in their future lives. While Perdido, Malik, and Lucas were not physically active, King, who was an active athlete, and Samuel, who was a skateboarder, made no mention of pursuing athletics or maintaining a healthy lifestyle in the future. Perhaps their career and college plans overshadowed their interests or expectations for living a healthy lifestyle.

In their conceptualizations of a good life, participants did not mention factors like future relationship statuses, hobbies, organizational involvement, civic involvement, or health. Financial security and the support of family and friends were more salient to participants. Schools should explore these areas of silences in greater depth. Metro Collegiate thoroughly worked with students within the college domain, however, it could have done more to help students think critically, concretely, and strategically about aspects of their lives that were likely to be important in their futures.

Limitations

Size. As a small qualitative study of 5 Black and Latino boys attending one small urban charter school, the findings for this study may not be widely generalized. Although participants were in many ways typical of students within the school, they reflected various home backgrounds, held various dispositions toward their future selves, and did not reflect or even should reflect the entire consciousness of Black and Latino teen boys across the U.S. This study, however, offers vivid and accurate portrayals of the boys

making meaning of themselves, their futures, and their schools. It gives considerable credence to the nuances often missed in large-scale studies by employing the use of observations and the often-silenced voices of students.

Navigating the ebbs and flows. Early on in the study, I realized that while the principal gave me access to the school and students, it was up to me to do everything else. The school day was incredibly busy. Down time was non-existent for students. After school meetings for teachers occurred often, and classroom and meeting room space was difficult to come by. Navigating the ebbs and flows of the busy Metro Collegiate calendar made it difficult many times to find and get all of the data for which I hoped when I initially conceptualized this study.

Another occurrence was the intense winter weather during the late winter of 2014. Snow days caused me to miss crucial days and reschedule interviews with many students throughout the course of this study.

Securing participants. While I posed the opportunity to participate in this study to dozens of eligible Black and Latino boys, finding them and ensuring their follow-through with interviews was a challenge. Students verbally committed to participate, but did not turn in permission slips, making them ineligible. In addition, participants had their lives and family responsibilities that made it difficult to meet with me after school. I communicated with participants through texting on cell phones to schedule and confirm interviews, and sometimes participants changed numbers or had phones cut off for lack of payment. Sometimes interviews were cut short by their scheduling conflicts and sometimes participants did not show up to scheduled meetings. Navigating their needs

and dilemmas with grace, dignity, and patience was not easy, but was crucial to harnessing their lived experiences.

Harnessing and making sense of participant voices. Some participants were more verbally inclined than others. Sometimes participants responded with one-word answers that compelled me to work hard in interviews to dig into their ideas. Follow up questions and prompts like “Tell me more about that” and “When you said that, what did you mean?” were commonplace for me.

When reviewing transcripts, my own understanding of slang and popular teenage vernacular became a useful and essential tool to tease out deeper implied meanings. In addition, getting students to speak at all was sometimes a challenge. Participants admitted that they were nervous early in the interview sessions, and assuaging their concerns became a source of difficulty and joy. It was difficult to be patient with less verbally inclined participants and to build trusting relationships by assuring them that their stories were secure. The joy came when their anxiety shifted to interest, as participants became excited about speaking with me, with many contacting me to know “When we gonna talk next?”

Implications and Future Research for School Communities

This section explores theoretical and practical implications of this study. The findings from this study provide insights into the need for broader theoretical approaches to the study of adolescents’ futures. In prior studies, concepts like “possible selves,” and “future orientations,” have been understood using psychometrics, surveys, and interview data tied to quantitative measures. As a result of these methods, the nuanced voices and narratives of the youth themselves have been rarely heard in the literature. Findings from this study demonstrate how complex and deeply insightful these boys’ thoughts and

desires are regarding their futures. Employing the college, career, and condition framework for future selves, especially through a qualitative lens has the potential to add to broader theory by urging researchers to listen closely to often misheard and misunderstood adolescent populations.

Findings from this study in some ways confirm previous research of similar concepts like the work in aspirations and expectations and future time orientation. For instance, in Kao and Tienda's (1998) study of racially diverse adolescents in Chicago, they found that Black and Latino students had limited understandings of what white-collar work entailed. Similarly, in the present study, Samuel and Malik desired white-collar careers, but had quite limited understandings of what the jobs they wanted to pursue entailed. Given that Metro Collegiate, like many other highly rigorous collegiate centric charter schools, highly value preparing students for roles in white-collar industries, they should enact practices that position students better to secure these types of positions. For instance, schools should help students develop more concrete understandings of their career possibilities by placing students with mentors early in their schooling experiences. Since youth conceptualize career paths from a young age, mentoring can and should occur beginning in elementary school, continue through middle and high school and be structured given age-appropriate parameters.

In another study of 334 Black students between the ages of 13 and 18, Brown and Jones (2004) found that students with high levels of future orientation tended to have higher grades than students who were less future-oriented. In this study, Lucas, who maintained one of the highest GPAs in the school, had the clearest and most concrete

understanding about what he wanted to do in his future, his plans to achieve those goals, and he was working in a manner that would presumably help him secure those goals.

The concept of future selves posed in this study, which accounts for young people's own perceptions of their futures in the areas of college, career, and life condition, has great potential to be utilized as a theoretical construct. It supports previously understood psychological conceptions, but it is broad enough to be able to be used in qualitative and more sociological studies. The value of the future selves framework, given the domains of college, career, and condition is that it compels school workers to think differently about the future lives of students. It offers multiple entry points, beyond merely college, for school workers to help teens think about and act on their futures. Thinking about students' college, career, and condition, puts one in a position to see how students posit contradictory or conflicting notions of their futures. Understanding future selves through these domains aids in the ability to help students navigate and create more realistic outcomes for themselves. While future selves focuses on the understandings of youth, the school and other conditions and social contexts, which influence how they make their lives also, become key sites of investigation.

The intersectional power model for school culture posited here has great potential as a theoretical conception aimed at understanding how broad socio-cultural processes and discourses shape and influence the workings of schools. Middle-class ideologies permeate college-focused schools, especially highly rigorous charter schools. However, these schools may fall short of meeting their intended goals because of cultural mismatches (Irvine, 1990) between teachers and students. Understanding how cultural domains of power work in and through school policies and practices can shape theorists

approach to empirical and theoretical conceptions of schools by pointing them to invisible nuances, assumptions, and value systems that influence how students experience schools.

Understanding how adolescents conceive of their future selves, especially given the influence of their high school cultures, holds deep theoretical implications. Adolescents, especially Black and Latino boys, are particularly vulnerable to the implicit expectations of many in society for how they should act, dress, and behave in various ways. They also are subjected to the assumptions and presumptions about who they should become as men, given the prevalent societal imagery surrounding them. They may also be stigmatized by the expectations, assumptions, and policies and practices upheld by adults in schools. Schools' primary goal is to prepare students for their futures. If teachers and administrators cannot see beyond students' present-day actions, if they see students as violent thugs, question their citizenship status, or see them as only capable of being athletes, gardeners, or musicians, then how can they steer students to future life paths that fully harness their potential?

Broadening College-Going Cultures: Creating Equitable Opportunities

The “Three Cs” of college, career, and condition have great potential as the framework of students' future selves to broaden how schools like Metro Collegiate can and should mold and influence the lives of their students. Schools like Metro Collegiate place college going above any other life outcome for students, but findings from this study revealed that this may limit their impact on students. Schools work to reproduce middle-class norms and ideologies for Black and Latino kids without fully helping them grapple with what that may entail for themselves or their families, and without

acknowledging and reinforcing norms that are inconsistent with middle-class norms. As indicated by cultural power, middle-class ideologies work to reproduce themselves in schools and to convince young people of a middle-class American Dream that is becoming more and more difficult to grasp.

Metro Collegiate provided students with many tools, opportunities, and outlets to see college as viable and realistic for their futures. College preparation was provided early in students' high school careers. College tours and college fairs opened up opportunities for students to see themselves in various college and university learning contexts, and students were provided options to take high-level college preparation coursework to make them competitive in application pools. One college counselor, Mr. Rodríguez, was tasked with following students over their first few semesters of their college years and provide additional support if needed. Thus, considering all that Metro Collegiate did and does for students in the college domain, it makes sense that participants would be clearer about their college visions if they were also clear about their desires for certain careers requiring college degrees. Explicitly, Metro Collegiate validated college, but it was unable to provide the space for other options for students beyond high school.

Malik, Samuel, and Lucas felt validated in their career aspirations, while Perdido and King did not. Metro Collegiate supported students who ventured into college and career experiences that mirrored more traditional middle-class norms, like engineering and medicine. However, students who wished to become professional athletes like King, or work with their hands like Perdido, were provided little support. Perdido wanted to be a landscaper or a law enforcement officer; since college prepares students for

traditionally white-collar fields, Perdido's career aspirations were not regarded. Through the implicit devaluing of blue-collar work, Perdido and other students like him found their aspirations marginalized. Moreover, while Metro Collegiate students were encouraged to go to college above all other post-secondary options, presumably to pursue a career, students were not provided career counseling.

Perdido's dilemma, in particular, revealed possible blind spots in the college-going culture of Metro Collegiate. Perdido was an intellectually astute and critically minded young man, who impressed me with his astounding analytical skills. However, he was reluctant to attend college for many reasons, including his fear that this pathway would lead to a "shirt and tie" job, which he did not want. Also, Perdido was fearful that, given the lack of academic success he experienced at Metro Collegiate, would not be successful in college, which valued similar cultural norms and forms of achievement.

Metro Collegiate's college going school culture has potential to become more equitable for all students, however, it is important to consider some blind spots. First, the school did not support students who were uninterested in attending college. With such an unapologetically rigid focus on college going, students who desired alternative life paths received no support. Broadly, Metro Collegiate students and those in schools like it may suffer isolation, marginalization, and may disengage from their high school experience, if practitioners do not find more means by which to engage students with diverse interests and goals.

Second, given the lack of support provided to students uninterested in a two-year or four-year college, these students may internalize their marginalization and believe themselves to be inferior, unintelligent, or unlikely to find success in life through other

avenues. Students who do not buy into the rigid college-going component of the school culture might question the legitimacy of their aspirations. Subsequently, Metro Collegiate's college going culture, in some ways, works to stifle, suppress, or foreclose the future selves of students reluctant to attend college. Perdido held many of the same life condition aspirations as other participants; however, he differed from other participants in the career pathways that he intended to use to reach his goals. Instead of being supported by the school to go after his eventual goals, Perdido (and possibly students like him) used his psychic energy to ward off the psychological devaluing of his goals.

Third, participants' interest in college was accompanied by at least a relatively clear expectation to secure a specific career goal. This meant that as participants considered college, they also considered how college would prepare them for specific careers.

Fourth, Metro Collegiate is very successful at securing college admission for students. While Metro Collegiate and dozens of other charter schools locally, and thousands nationally, report 100% college acceptance, college *completion* rates are far lower. For instance, 45% of Black men 25 and older have attempted college, but only 16% have a four-year degree (see Toldson & Lewis, 2012). College completion should be a more salient consideration in the workings of schools like Metro Collegiate. However, given the rubrics and other measures used to assess the success of schools, and the pressures and importance parents place on college admission, Metro Collegiate and schools like it, must place greater emphasis upon and utilize human capital more on the policies and practices that serve students currently enrolled, not just alumni.

In addition, as revealed in this study, not all young people intend to blindly go to college merely because it is an expectation. Rather, attending college reflects their specific choices rooted in both an understanding of their career hopes and aspirations.

Implications from this study are framed, in part, by the proposition that the biggest hurdle for students may not be acceptance into college or going to college, but in *graduating* from college. The challenge then for college-focused schools is to broaden their efforts to include helping students understand how college maps on to their future selves in more concrete ways. College-going cultures should ensure that students make meaning of college going *prior* to applying and attending so that they latch onto college with an informed perspective about its usefulness in their conceptions of their future selves.

Equity-centered College-Going Cultures

Scholars (see Knight-Diop, 2010) have considered the importance and salience of creating intentional college-going cultures for schools serving Black and Latino students within urban communities. Knight and Marciano (2013) broadened earlier work on college-going cultures to include culturally relevant college-going cultures. Findings from this study suggested that schools should be more equity-minded in their approaches to building school college-going cultures.

Creating a more equity-centered college-going culture would begin with a realization and an understanding that students can experience these college-going spaces in radically different ways depending upon their race, family experiences with and expectations of college-going, previous behavioral and academic records, and their personal intellectual and social attributes. Participants who continually find difficulty

meeting the academic and social expectations may need supports that are different than those of a more self-motivated worker students.

Although Metro Collegiate appeared to be effective in stimulating the minds and ideas of students who wanted to go to college, its efforts to compel all students to buy into the culture of college going were less successful; those who were reluctant or resistant risked discipline or isolation. Differentiating college-going support is essential, as students may experience school cultures in ways that turn them off from college attendance, rather than urging them closer into college-going mindsets.

Diversity among teachers in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation, language, and class is essential for providing various individuals for students to support their college going goals and aspirations. Students should be presented with various role models, who reflect diverse cultures, ethnicities, and races, in addition to multiple interests, careers and success narratives. However, findings from this study suggested that teachers should also reflect diversity in their life interests and experiences. For instance, King had the dream of being in the NFL, but only college counselor Mr. James legitimized his dreams, because he was the only one who had any football experience. Also, most of the teachers at the school were White, middle class, and went to schools that looked nothing like the one in which they taught. The ability to relate was minimal, and while the teachers were committed, devoted to students, and engaged with them in caring ways, most had no experience with poverty or other facets of life that participants lived daily.

In an equity-centered school, college-going culture should also center on the belief that since young people's life goals and aspirations are constantly evolving,

students should be supported in endeavors that are healthy and productive even if they are not college-focused. Students who want to be rappers, for instance, should be given at least some platform to pursue this interest. Typical teenage aspirations that might be athletic (e.g. football, basketball, etc.), artistic (e.g. rapping, fashion design), or technical (e.g. video game design, etc.) reflect a step to somewhere, whether a step in the pathway to college-going or to some other form of "good life."

A Call for Parallel Discourses

In the early 1990s, there was a push for college-going for all students. By the early 2000s, with the No Child Left Behind (2002) legislation, high academic standards and higher levels of college attendance represented success for high schools. With the influx of charter schools, competition for the best and brightest students at many college preparatory charter schools became intense. Metro Collegiate had an intense college-going component in its school culture, but students who imagined other life outcomes were left without support.

Teachers and other staff members play a critical role in creating parallel discourses around both college and career. While teachers of academic coursework need to work diligently to help students make real-life connections to their studies, they also need to spend time and energy mapping curriculum onto students' future selves, especially along the domain of career. Highly rigorous academic coursework prepares students for college, but helping students explore and possibly practice embodying the knowledge and mindsets of individuals in industry, service, and the legal profession better positions students toward certain majors of interest, and eventual career fields.

Schools also need assure that they offer support, classes, and curriculum to prepare Black and Latino young men for their future careers. Participants discussed having few options for high-level science classes, for instance. While no school would be able to offer everything students need or desire in terms of coursework, they could work to create supplemental projects with local colleges, universities, and other organizations that are geared toward more career modeling.

More specifically, schools with successful college-going cultures like Metro Collegiate can also create parallel discourses centered on specific available careers for which college education prepares students. A condition, career, and college going culture would not only offer students access to college tours, visits from college representatives, college fairs, but also industry and business tours, visits from individuals representing various careers, and it would offer sustained mentors from companies, organizations and other industry professionals. In addition, academic and college preparation coursework would be ideally supplemented with life skills courses or projects on life conditions like interpersonal skill building, time management, and financial responsibility.

Conclusion: Concretizing “The Beyond”

Public schools must work with primarily first generation college-going Black and Latinos to stimulate their desire to create better outcomes for themselves and families. Securing a grander future is of importance not only for the students, but also the United States’ economic, political, and moral climate. For too long, Black and Latinos, in particular, have been subjected to school policies and practices that have done little to stimulate, build, and affirm in and to them that their future selves matter.

Schools have been and should always be safe, supportive, and stimulating environments for students to begin the process of “making their lives.” Hope is evident

and through the continual work of educators and greater attention to how we stimulate students' future selves in our schools, the futures of Black and Latino boys will shine brighter.

Metro Collegiate and schools like it work diligently to teach students the necessary academic and life skills needed for *college and beyond*. However, while schools like Metro Collegiate work hard to teach students academic skills and prepare them for college, they spend less time working with students on other key aspects of their future life outcomes. Seemingly ignored are the connections between college going, their careers, and their future life conditions, for which college and career provide the needed foundation.

Thus, schools must also work to stimulate students' desires and dispositions to seize and control their future selves. To more optimally achieve their mission, schools need to better concretize not only the "college" but also the "beyond" by better orientating students with their futures along the career and condition domain of their future selves.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Interview Protocol #1

1. How old are you?
2. Where do you live?
3. Is English your first language?
4. Who do you live with?
5. How many siblings do you have?
6. What do your parents/adults in your household do for work?
7. How far did your parents/siblings go in school?
8. How would you describe yourself as a person?
9. Are you involved in any activities outside of school? Church? Community activities?
10. What things do you enjoy doing?
11. Before you came to this school, what schools did you attend? Tell me about those schools.
12. Did you like school when you were younger? Do you like school now? Why?
13. When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up?
 - Do you still want to do that? Why or why not?
14. Is there something in particular that your parents want you to become? Why?
15. Has anyone ever talked to you about college? If so, who and what did they tell you?
16. What is your earliest memory of someone talking to you about college? Can you describe that?

Appendix B
Interview Protocol #2

1. Do you want to go to college? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. What do you plan on majoring in?
3. What type of life do you want to live after college?
 - What influences you to think of your life in this way?
 - What would your home look like?
 - How many people would live with you?
4. What type of career do you want to secure?
 - What role models do you have in that profession? How do you know that this is the right profession for you?
5. How long have you attended this school?
6. What are your feelings about this school?
 - Tell me about any positive experiences you've had here.
 - Tell me about any negative experiences.
7. What's your day-to-day routine at the school?
8. How many hours do you spend studying?
9. Who are your favorite teachers? Why? What makes them your favorite?
10. What's the best thing about going to this school?
11. Tell me about the classes you're currently taking.
 - Which classes are challenging?
 - Which classes do you enjoy?
 - What class most interests you?
 - What class most aligns with your career interest?
 - What are you learning in these classes?
12. Some people say that only good students attend this school? Is this true? What do good students typically "do" in this school? Would you say that you're a good student? Why?
13. How are the experiences you have in high school going to affect you in the future?
14. Do you feel academically prepared for post-secondary plans?

Appendix C
Interview Protocol #3

1. What do you see yourself doing the age of 21? Why do you see yourself doing that?
2. How do imagine your life when you're 25 (lifestyle, living situation, job, income, level education)? Why do you think your life will be like that?
3. How do you think what you do in school now is related to your life in the future?
4. Are their people in your life—at home or school—who talk with you about your future? (family members, friends, teachers, counselors, coaches, administrators)
 If yes, who are they and what do they talk to you about?
5. What would be your ideal career/job? Why?
6. Are you doing anything now to prepare yourself for that job/career?
7. What type of education is needed for your ideal job?
8. What type of education is needed for the job you expect to have at age 25?
9. Do you plan to go to college? Why or why not?
 - Why type of college? Do you have a particular college in mind?
 - What would you like to study in college?
 - What do you imagine you can do with that type of degree?
 - Do you have any idea how much the type of college want to attend will cost?
 - How do you think you might pay for college?
10. What personal strengths, relationships, and resources do you have that will help you to achieve your college and career goals?
11. What obstacles might you face in trying to achieving your college and career goals?

Appendix D
Interview Protocol for School Personnel

1. (Say – As you may know, I am in the process of talking to 5 Black and Latino male students about how they see their future lives occurring given their interest in college, their career aspirations and their condition, or the type of life they want to live when they are adults.)
2. What are the strengths of this school? What are some of the things that this school is working on improving?
3. What would you say is the most important day of the school year? Why?
4. How are the interactions between students and teachers/ administrators?
5. Tell me a bit about how this school prepares students for their futures.
6. How important is college preparation here? How often are discussions had with students around college?
7. How often are discussions had with students around career placements?

Appendix E

Interview Protocol for Focus Group

1. There are many stereotypes surrounding Black and Latino males... What are some that you know of?
2. Are these true?
3. What types of fields do Black and Latino males traditionally enter?
4. How can schools better serve the needs of Black and Latino male students?