

The Makings of Everyday Revolutions: Racial Intelligence, the Interaction Order, and the Nature
of 'Preparation' for College

By

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Abstract

Historically White institutions (HWIs) dominate the landscape of college choice and operate as White institutional spaces wherein norms and values based in Whiteness dominate the social structure, from institutional and organizational processes to everyday interactions. Navigating these racialized dynamics within HWIs is a critical and largely unnamed requirement for racially marginalized students to persist in and graduate from college.

This qualitative study examines the extent to which knowledge of the racial order is included in college preparatory programming as foundational to understanding how minoritized students learn about and apply knowledge of the racial order as they navigate HWIs. In-depth interviews with college access professionals — key actors who guide racially minoritized college-bound students throughout the college-going process — captured their approach to college guidance for students and the extent to which their conception and execution of “college ready” considers minoritized students’ racialized experiences as they transition into HWIs. I build the theoretical and empirical exploration around Emirbayer and Desmond’s (2015) concept of Racial Intelligence — a habit of “readiness” to thoughtfully navigate our racial terrain in its everyday manifestations — and considerations of how knowledge about racial domination can be transmitted for use to oppose racial domination in everyday settings.

Findings indicate that the imparting of racial understandings — framed within the Racial Intelligence concept — is tied to practitioners’ interpretation of the term “advocacy”, and desires for students to develop skills of “self-advocacy”. Practitioner interpretations of advocacy are implicitly tied to navigating the everyday manifestations of structural racism, but their understandings remain implicit, pointing to reluctance to name race explicitly and/or a stance that takes for granted student (and often practitioner) recognition of their position within racial hierarchies, thereby making any mention of race redundant or offensive.

Findings also probe how practitioners come to know about the racial order and demonstrate that they indeed possess a “knowing” that they come to in various, patterned ways. Each highlighted entryway to knowing about racism on college campuses, however, ultimately allows practitioners to avoid engagement with fundamental principles of the racial order that operate in the everyday manifestations of racism.

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“My power [within] humanity isn’t to be experienced through how I can control, but through how I love and to whom I am accountable.”

— My rough remembering of a quote from Merle McGee, Chief Equity and Engagement Officer at Planned Parenthood of Greater New York (3/29/2020)

So many people to thank and I can’t do it all here (and I can’t do it without *losing it*). I’ll be brief but I come with the fullness of my heart that I will also express outside of this document.

Much appreciation to the college access and success practitioners that I have had the honor to work with over the last decade in my direct service work and in my research and evaluation work. Big thanks to the CACNY organization for your support and encouragement in executing this project. To the Student Success Network, #DegreesNYC, Goddard Riverside, Critical Consciousness in Youth Development Cohort at the Perrin Family Foundation — the work we have been able to do together has been crucial to my thinking and long-term planning. I look forward to continuing our work together.

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So many folks overlap among these various groups and it’s a blessing to feel integrated in all parts of my life in this way.

Shout out to the coffee shops all over New York City that let me sit for six hours at a time and remember my coffee order ****smile****

I know I’ve missed folks, but please do the church thing and charge it to my head and not my heart. ☺

Chapter 1: Introduction

Upperclassmen would ask, was there anything that we felt like [they] could've prepared [us] for. I thought of something. I did random roommates, just 'cause I thought that would be pretty cool. I figured maybe there was a possibility that one of the people I room with [would] end up being a good, long-term friend of mine. But that wasn't really the case. I lived with two White girls who clearly had not really experienced – it's possible they didn't have a lot of Black friends. It wasn't the most comfortable situation, but I definitely tried to make the best out of it. I always try to bring that up if anyone asks because, honestly, living with white people was definitely different. That's just keeping it real. That was one of the things I probably was not prepared for.

*(Fiona, from Chapter 4 of *Campus Counterspaces: Black and Latinx Students' Search for Community at Historically White Universities* (2020))*

Fiona's college experiences, and those of over 300 other young adult college students, are central to the analysis in the book, *Campus Counterspaces: Black and Latinx Students' Search for Community at Historically White Universities* (Keels 2020). She features prominently in the chapter I wrote with Dr. Micere Keels where we focus on the particular experiences of Black women and how their persistence and well-being at historically White colleges and universities hinged on their connection to counterspaces, as opposed to more prominent and influential understandings of how young adults come to persist in college that center on institutional structures that facilitate student investments in the campus and its culture. We wrote with student service professionals and campus administrators in mind and Fiona's revelation of her roommate experiences was one of many retellings that aimed to spark reflection on necessary campus-based remedies for the types of affronts that Black and Latinx students encounter due to their race-ethnicity.

Fiona's retelling also points us to her pre-college experiences. As with many of her peers in the study sample, not only did Fiona express her hopes and expectations for her idealized college life, but she also opens up about what she "was not prepared for" — what she did and did

not receive by way of preparation before arriving on her historically White university campus. This dissertation follows that thread, taking what we know about racialized campus encounters — including microaggressions, racial violence, and conflicts with White racial norms — and the socially consequential act of persisting in college, to then look at the pre-college context for what preparation means for racially minoritized students transitioning into a historically White college context, and the practitioners tasked with equipping them to make this transition. In turning to this pre-college context, it is important to first understand how college access and success professionals conceptualize the meaning of “readiness” for their students. From this foundational understanding, it is important to determine the extent to which understandings of students’ racialized social interactions on historically White campuses enter into practitioner conceptions of “readiness” and their execution of their programs. Included in the conception of this study is an on-going exploration of the organizational context as well, specifically how community-based organizations housing college access programs influence the extent to which college access professionals incorporate understandings of racism into their college readiness programs.

As a core theoretical focus, this dissertation considers the means by which racially minoritized students become prepared to transition into the White space of college by focusing on the practitioners — college access professionals — that work year-round in order to support students and families throughout every stage of the college-going process. The full study situates this preparation within the concept of Racial Intelligence, which sociologists Mustafa Emirbayer and Matthew Desmond (2015) define as a habit of “readiness” to thoughtfully navigate our racial terrain in its everyday manifestations. In presenting the possibilities for a Racial Intelligence agenda, Emirbayer and Desmond open an inquiry as to *how* such knowledge of the racial order might be imparted. This dissertation project offers a response, proposing a

direct acquisition of Racial Intelligence that specifically attends to the practitioners who shape the content of college preparation activities. This is a necessary preliminary exploration of the extent to which direct acquisition of Racial Intelligence can be said to be a feature of college readiness practices. I explore how practitioners conceptualize what it means for their students to be "college ready", and the extent to which understandings of race-ethnicity, racism, and students' social interactions on campuses of historically White colleges and universities enter into their conception of "college ready" and their expressed execution of college access programming. The empirical work rests on an overall argument that practitioners' incorporation of racial understandings is an extension of the practitioner's identity, personally held inclinations, and features of community-based educational contexts, rather than elements understood to be fundamental to college readiness content and best practices.

There are many implications for this project, from further theoretical and practical applications to methodological considerations. For theory, subsequent explorations of the passive and direct means of acquiring Racial Intelligence in the context of college readiness can aptly focus on any impacts on students who have engaged in these theorized forms of acquisition of Racial Intelligence, particularly exploring the actions students take that stem from application of this knowledge and any benefits and consequences of this application. Passive and direct means of acquiring Racial Intelligence may also extend beyond the college going context.

Understanding how racially minoritized people navigate racialized work places, publicly accessed social spaces, and other contexts and how they acquired knowledge of the racial order in order to make their way in these spaces is key to a more robust theoretical understanding.

The most conspicuous policy and practice implication from this work centers on the structure and content of professional development for college access professionals and standardization of training requirements in this field more generally. The growing understanding in the education field of the need for educators to have a working knowledge of the history and current functioning of racial-hierarchy, racism, and the manifestation of these in their personal practice and their subfields generally must extend to college access professionals and their consequential roles in the post-secondary trajectory of minoritized students.

The methodological implications speak more to who employs the method and the underlying ethic, rather than anything particularly novel about how it is employed. My position as an educator, both in the classroom and in the Out of School Time (OST) and Afterschool spaces, gives me insight into how these spheres of education function. This insight does not necessarily translate to vast expertise, but has given me enough experience to be curious and ask questions in ways that other researchers may not. Educators currently performing direct service in multiple contexts also contain insights that are beneficial to the questions researchers ask and have connections to the social actors that hold information that might be overlooked in traditional avenues of research. Forging stronger associations between educators-as-researchers (as well as youth-as-researcher) is an intended development from this project and my work generally.

Beyond my own positionality, this project holds the perspective that evaluation and research can and do mutually constitute one another. My engagement in this work represents efforts to merge the ethics of a Culturally Responsive and Equitable Evaluation and the sanctioned social scientific research process in order to not only engage in systematic inquiry, but to position this work to respond to the needs of a community as they have expressed them —

not as a transactional exchange for my access, but as a fundamental purpose for the work that co-exists with its sociological aims. These methodological implications for this project are connected to how we do good, useful, public sociology alongside disciplinary interests, and the very real possibilities to do both and to do them well.

This introductory chapter maps the historical and empirical path that grounds this project's interest in various forms of acquiring knowledge about racial phenomena, and situates application for this knowledge within the context of college readiness. Chapter 2 lays out the theoretical frameworks that undergird the empirical work, an overview of important literature, and the importance of the context that this study prioritizes. In particular, this theoretical chapter delves into the concept of Racial Intelligence as introduced by Mustafa Emirbayer and Matthew Desmond in their 2015 book *The Racial Order* and outlines the expansion on this concept through consideration of *direct* and *passive* pathways for imparting Racial Intelligence. Chapters 4 and 5 present findings for the empirical studies. Finally, chapter 6 concludes this dissertation with discussion of the implications for this work for sociological theory and practice that extends from education into every social context due to our society's fundamental racialized organization.

Background to the Problem: College Benefits and Barriers to Completion

Among the myriad post-Reconstruction efforts toward large scale remedies for racial inequality in the United States, higher education access has been an important focal point. The particular importance of institutions like colleges and universities in perpetuating racial inequality was taken up in earnest in the mid-20th century. In their 1967 book, “Black Power: The Politics of Liberation”, civil rights leader Kwame Ture and political scientist Charles Hamilton distinguish institutional racism from the more readily recognizable forms of individual racism. They make clear that even though it is difficult to pinpoint individuals and their actions, institutionalized racism nevertheless “relies on the active and pervasive operation of anti-[B]lack attitudes and practices” to uphold racial inequality (Carmichael [Ture] & Hamilton 1967). The 1968 Kerner Commission Report, initiated by the Johnson administration, reinforced the institutional distinction made by Toure and Hamilton. The Commission examined the origins of the so-called “race riots” of 1967 that encapsulated the collective rage of Black Americans as they continued to live under “[b]ad policing practices, a flawed justice system, unscrupulous consumer credit practices, poor or inadequate housing, high unemployment, voter suppression, and other culturally embedded forms of racial discrimination” (George 2018). To the dismay of President Lyndon Johnson, the Kerner Commission did not echo the findings of the 1965 McCone Commission Report that blamed rudderless Black troublemakers for the Watts uprising (George 2018). Instead, the Kerner Commission pointed to White racism, and White racial discrimination within institutions in particular, as the root cause of the social unrest. The Commission’s expression of this verdict is striking and enduring: “What white Americans have never fully understood but what the Negro can never forget--is that white society is deeply

implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it” (Kerner Commission 1968).

This distinguishing of institutional manifestations of racism at this historical moment coincided with institutional efforts to address racism in higher education. Of particular focus were higher education initiatives that sought to address racial inequality in terms of resources and representation. The federal government’s focus on the capacity of colleges and universities to support a broader racial and socioeconomic pool of prospective students had been in the works prior to the Kerner Commission Report with the Johnson administration’s Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965. This legislation instituted multiple programs aimed at increasing access and success for low and middle income families through federal aid for individual students, for the education and professional development of teachers, and for strengthening higher education institutions, particularly those designated as “minority serving institutions” (Hegji 2016). The subsequent amendments, extensions, and reauthorizations of the HEA (currently running on temporary extensions since the last comprehensive reauthorization in 2008) launched the programs that are staples of the college access and financial aid world, including Work Study¹ (1965), TRIO Programs (1968), Pell Grants (1972), Parent PLUS Loans (1980), and Direct Student Loan Programs (1992).

While the HEA addressed the financial side of student access to higher education, it would not substantially address equal access and representation for racially minoritized students. Addressing this aspect of higher education equality stemmed from Black American and other civil rights activists’ sustained agitation for equal access to education from the Supreme Court’s

¹The Federal Work-Study Program was originally part of The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 housed in the Department of Labor, but was transferred to the HEA of 1965 and housed in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and specifically repurposed for low-income students already in college who needed to earn money part time ([Campus Compact](#))

1954 declaration of segregation as “inherently unequal” through to and beyond the late 1960s. Black college students hold a special place in the history of the fight for desegregation and racial equality, not only at off-campus lunch counters and Freedom Rides, but on their college campuses as well. This significant yet marginalized history of the Black Campus Movement (Rogers [Kendi] 2008) featured many of the same tactics that were applied within K-12 schooling efforts and in other social contexts, including strategic integration, litigation, protests, sit-in demonstrations, and boycotts. The efforts of the Black Campus Movement yielded “more than 300 departments, programs, institutes, and centers for Black Studies, [dozens] of Black cultural centers in addition to the multitude of Black students, coaches, faculty, and administrators at America's colleges and universities,” — significant shifts on historically White college campuses that are still present (and contested) today (Rogers [Kendi] 2008).

Student activism not only shaped college campuses from the ground, but it also influenced the adoption of affirmative action policies by higher education institutions by the late 1960s. These policies resulted in significant increases in the admission of Black students and other students of color. Though consistently challenged in courts of law and public opinion, college-going students increasingly express value for racial and other forms of diversity (Jaschik 2020) and colleges consistently profess support to the goals of affirmative action in admissions (Jaschik 2012) and commitment to creating diverse and inclusive campuses in their mission statements and outreach efforts to students and families.

These efforts for equality in higher education are not just symbolic, at least not for the racially minoritized students who stand to benefit. These policies around representation in college admissions have become increasingly consequential for life outcomes for racially

marginalized students and their families in a United States context where higher education is explicitly promoted as key to addressing racial inequality by way of social mobility and other indicators of overall well-being. Outside of owning a home, earning a post-secondary credential has been and continues to be the most efficient way for people in the United States to build wealth and eke out occupational security in a world full of uncertainty, especially for people who have historically experienced marginalization in the United States (Heckman, Lochner, & Todd 2008; Heckman et al. 2014; Hout 2012; McKernan & Ratcliffe 2013; Sawhill & Pulliam 2019,). Beyond social mobility and wealth outcomes, studies continually show that increased educational attainment has beneficial impacts on individual (Heckman et al. 2014, Hout 2012) and generational (Augustine, Cavanagh and Crosnoe 2009; Jaeger 2012) health and social well-being. Given the persistent systemic barriers to the traditional tools of wealth building and social well-being for racially minoritized populations in particular (McKernan & Ratcliffe 2013), attending and graduating from college has become a data-supported and culturally sanctioned pathway to greater life chances.

Even with higher education as an empirically established and widely promoted avenue for social well-being, racial inequality continues to shape college outcomes for racially minoritized students. Structurally unequal circumstances throughout educational processes in the United States have led to a situation where college persistence and completion rates for Black, Brown, and Indigenous students lags behind their Asian and White counterparts (Kao & Thompson 2003; de Brey et al 2019; National Student Clearinghouse 2020), which means that those returns to college completion in the social, financial, and mental health and well-being realms are disproportionately elusive for racially minoritized students when they do not complete college. Of course, education attainment is still not the protective barrier to the impact of racial

discrimination that pervades U.S. society. Given how race shapes outcomes in U.S. society broadly, it should not be surprising that, even after completing college, racial disparities exist in life outcomes. Public health scholar Shervin Assari conceptualizes the particular health outcome disparities in association with increased education attainment (which he situates as one of a number of indicators of one's socioeconomic status) in his theory of Minorities' Diminished Returns (MDR). He defines MDR as, "smaller health gains from socioeconomic status (SES) indicators, such as education attainment[,] among ethnic minorities compared to the majority group" (self reported health) (Assari 2018). While he is not concrete about the exact mechanism behind the diminished return to education in his focus on Black people as compared to White people, he is clear in his theory of the case about how racism and discrimination in the daily lives of Black people, as well as, "other structural and societal factors, such as residential segregation and discrimination by labor markets," contribute to diminished gains from education for Black people in part because education generates less economic benefits for Black people (Assari 2018). There can be no guarantees for raced people in a racialized society. Still, completing college remains the most sure pathway to have a chance to achieve a more stable, resourced life in the United States.

Alongside the inequality in persistence and completion for racially minoritized youth is the inequality experienced in the social environment of the college campus. It is true that historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs), and tribally-controlled colleges and universities (TCUs) are part of the college-going landscape and play critical roles for racially minoritized students, but it remains that historically White institutions (HWIs) dominate the landscape for college-going in the United States — not only in sheer numbers, but for the wealth they possess that allows them to court and substantially fund

lower income students, who are disproportionately Black, Latinx, and Indigenous. For Black students and other students of color on these historically White campuses, everyday interactions with classroom peers, professors, and roommates directly hinder the social connection, intellectual exploration, and mental well-being that is purportedly conferred within the most typical rendering of the “college experience”.

Knowledge of day to day instances of interpersonal racial violence hold more space in the public consciousness in the United States. In particular, the term “microaggression” has entered mainstream discourse, allowing for a more broad understanding of how racism manifests in everyday interactions beyond overt acts that rely on images of Klan rallies and the intentions of Bull Connor to qualify as racist. Microaggressions exemplify the type of injurious racialized interactions that continue to impact the college experiences of minoritized students on a consistent basis. Chester Pierce, who originally coined the term, defines microaggressions as “subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are ‘put downs’ of [Black people] by offenders” (Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzales, & Wills 1978:66). Scholars have increasingly examined racial microaggressions in the context of the college campus, finding that these experiences are frequent, on-going, and impactful for both academic and social well-being of racially minoritized students. Students themselves have taken to social media in order to corroborate these scholarly findings, using hashtags like #ITooAmHarvard and #BlackAtMizzou, and creating anonymous pages on social platforms like Instagram in order to detail their experiences of racism. These public disclosures of racial microaggressions and other interpersonal experiences of overt racism are not limited to elite colleges and flagship state universities, but demonstrate that these experiences are features of racially minoritized student

experiences at historically White universities at every level of prestige, size and geographic region. These experiences are pervasive and consequential.

The Problem: College Readiness and Addressing Racism as a Barrier to College Completion

The inequality in persistence and completion rates for racially minoritized college students and the inequality these students experience with racial microaggressions on historically White campuses are linked. Identifying and recommending ways to address barriers to persistence and completion for racially minoritized students are a prevalent focus among scholars and form the basis for much of the optimal practices that become implemented by college access professionals who counsel college-bound youth. Experiences of racism and microaggressions are part of this picture of persistence and completion, but addressing racism specifically gets shorter shrift among the academic, “habits of mind”, and value for culturally derived “funds of knowledge” that feature prominently in addressing persistence and completion for racially minoritized students. Ignoring or downplaying the role of racism in the everyday lives of Black people and other people of color is untenable in this historical moment in the United States — a moment where the specific roles of White Supremacy and anti-Blackness in the unequal social conditions in the U.S. resonate in the mainstream. As such, scholars of education must take racism out of the periphery of what minoritized students must navigate in order to persist in and complete college.

The tendencies toward downplaying the role of racism in college persistence and completion for racially minoritized students is part of a dominant racial ideology that misrepresents the daily reality and impact of racial inequality and elevates a “color-evasive” racial discourse in United States society (Bonilla-Silva 2003; Annamma, Jackson, and Morrison

2017). College access professionals operate under these paradoxical conditions and may accommodate the dominant racial discourse that universalizes campus social experiences even as understandings of higher education outcomes due to racism inform programmatic practice. The research and evaluation studies that have identified the racialized interpersonal challenges faced by racially minoritized students inside and outside of the classroom are helpful in elevating the reality of racism on college campuses, but these studies are incomplete as approaches to addressing racism in efforts to increase college persistence and completion for three reasons:

First, while many studies note racialized experiences and even offer recommendations that include efforts to foster more “welcoming” environments for minoritized students, these studies do not center racism and clear understandings of the multifaceted impacts of racism on student persistence and completion. Instead, the significance of racism becomes reduced from a foundational element of social organization to its more colloquial form that emphasizes individual feelings, attitudes, and exposure to different kinds of people. These notions then become diffused throughout institutional policy recommendations that direct efforts to racial diversity among students and faculty and educational efforts that seek to raise awareness about racism, often with an orientation toward the “progress paradigm” that relegates the speaking of major impacts of race to the past tense (Seamster & Ray 2018). These efforts lack specific grounding in understandings of the on-going manifestation of systemic racism and a vision for long-term implementation within these understandings. Racism, then, becomes a matter of one-off consciousness raising and not understood as core to the institutional structure and operation.

Central to the downplaying of racism is the lack of a fundamental framing of U.S. educational institutions, regardless of the racial demographic makeup, as operating under White

normative ways of being, knowing, and understanding the world. Wendy Leo Moore has articulated and refined a theory of *White institutional space* (Moore 2008, 2020), a framework that moves thinking about impacts of race and place from demographic changes (e.g. “diversity” numbers) to an accounting of the historical and sociopolitical construction of institutional spaces in the United States as based in the worldview of White supremacy. Moore’s theory connects three crucial components that help explain why a selective grappling with racial phenomena in college going (broadly) underestimates the problem of racism in the expressed goals of college persistence and completion for minoritized students, and leaves institutions and individuals ill equipped to respond to racial phenomena in ways that specifically address racism. The concept of White institutional space identifies individual organizations (any individual U.S. college or university) as produced by and functioning to reproduce racialized social institutions and organizations (the typified higher educational institution in the U.S.), and these institutions and organizations are produced in and function to reproduce the overarching racialized social structure of the United States, which is based in White Supremacy (Moore 2020). Moore goes on to say,

Within U.S. social organizations, there exist routine and systematic mechanisms, including racist historical and contemporary institutionalized hierarchies of power, institutionalized White logics, discourses, and ideologies which inform everyday racialized practices, that function synergistically to channel the resources of these institutions disproportionately to [White people] (Moore 2020).

These institutional resources flowing to White people are not limited to material or otherwise directly remunerable assets, but coincide with fundamental rights to “personal security and freedom” and the “psychological wage of whiteness” that bestow “the entitlement to enjoy and benefit from social spaces” and an overall driving belief in White superiority and “Whites’ total domination over the Earth and all who live on it” (Embrick & Moore 2020; Du Bois 1935).

Thus, the organization of social life in the U.S. generally, and particularly in U.S. institutions of higher education. Moore does not leave application of this framework at the institutional level, but implicates its relevance in studies and practice of college readiness concerned with micro-interactional racial phenomena, making clear that understanding these dynamics within White institutional space is key to understanding the “consequent racialized experiences of individuals who navigate these organizations and institutions” (Moore 2020). Within college readiness currently, the lack of specificity of racism and the function of White institutional space in the interpersonal challenges of racially minoritized students who must navigate college renders on-going efforts to increase college persistence and completion for these students incomplete.

Alongside the lack of focus on the specific impact of racism on college persistence and completion, another reason that research and evaluation studies that highlight the interpersonal racism experienced by racially minoritized students on college campuses and the consequences of these experiences (particularly on college persistence and completion) are incomplete is because of where scholars tend to focus solutions. Practical application for research and evaluation focus efforts squarely on the higher education institution and its social climate, often advocating institution-wide policy, diversity recruitment efforts, and campus-wide learning around diversity and bias.

Returning to the same studies I highlighted previously that do well in documenting the academic and social-psychological impacts of microaggressions and other experiences of racism on campuses, these works also reveal this dominant focus on what the college institution should be doing. In documenting the negative impacts of racial microaggressions on the campus racial climate and the subsequent academic achievement of especially Black college students,

Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) highlight counter-spaces as an “important strategy for minority students’ academic survival.” While counterspaces take on various forms and are greatly beneficial to racially marginalized students (Keels 2020), those highlighted as being attended by study participants are campus-based and established as part of the college institution. Similarly, Fischer’s (2010) longitudinal quantitative study of the impacts of stereotype threat on college outcomes confirm detrimental effects on academic performance, campus social life, and on-time graduation. The core solution is, of course, to reduce stereotype threat, which looks like campus-based curricular and symbolic (e.g. faculty of color recruitment) efforts that communicate social and academic belonging, encouraging early campus involvement for students, and instituting programs that acclimate racially minoritized students into campus social and academic life. Like Fischer and Solórzano and colleagues, Caplan and Ford (2015) and Harwood and colleagues (2015) report findings that are explicit about the social and academic damage that experiences of racism inflict upon minoritized students in college. These projects were fundamentally geared toward specific recommendations for participating colleges and universities in light of their findings and both reports hold campus administration as their audiences with recommendations focused on the actions of the participating higher education institutions.

In directing their analyses of and remedies to racism on college campuses to the institution and its representative actors, scholars elevate the higher education institution as the initiator and driver of efforts to address racism and interrupt inequality. Focus at the institutional level, while necessary, is only part of the picture and only one level at which structural racism reveals itself. What is missing is an analysis of student experiences and recommendations for action that address students’ individual, agentic responses to racism. Ultimately, these and other

scholars do not attend to everyday interactions and the specificity of how individuals can be equipped to respond to instances of racism in their everyday lives.

A third aspect of research and evaluation studies aiming to address minoritized students' experiences of racism on U.S. college campuses that make them incomplete is that they do not consider interventions that may be implemented before students arrive at college. Part of the problem here is that the absence of a fundamental understanding of racialized social experiences in college as hindrances to persistence and completion prevent scholars and practitioners from addressing racialized experiences in the ways that other recognized barriers to persistence and completion have been addressed — not just within the higher education institution, but in the pre-college context. College access programming in particular has become essential to the college-going aspirations of racially minoritized students. Efforts to support these students throughout the college preparation, application, and transition processes have grown in scope and visibility at national, state, and local levels. Within these college access efforts across the United States, the role of college access professionals is unique and consequential. Systematic inquiry exploring their work and its impact on student outcomes is growing, as is the understanding of the critical role that college access professionals play in the college aspirations and successful college transition for underrepresented minoritized students (NCES 2015; Robinson & Roksa 2016; Poynton & Lapan 2017; Corwin et al 2004; Gilfillan 2017). Because of the crucial role these practitioners play in the college going trajectories of marginalize students, research and practice would greatly benefit from a deeper understanding of how college access professionals construct meaning around their work and the type of knowledge and skills young people are likely entering college with based on the goals these practitioners hold for their work —

specifically, whether we can say that these skills include an understanding of race and racism in the everyday interactions of the college campus, particularly at HWIs.

This dissertation project picks up on these three omitted and downplayed elements — A Critical Race framing of college-going and HWIs, responses to racism at the level of interaction, and racial understandings in the pre-college context via the role of college access professionals. In considering the widespread efforts to improve college persistence and completion among racially minoritized students, I establish the role of racism as a critical factor in the college trajectory of minoritized students. In centering racism, this work prioritizes addressing racism in everyday interactions and the actions of racialized individuals as they navigate the White space of college. Finally, this work turns an eye toward the pre-college context and the professionals that structure college access programming, interrogating this preparatory space where students receive important messages about how to make their way to and through college. I conceive of the focus on college access professionals as a precursor to understanding whether and how students may apply messages they have absorbed about how to navigate the racial terrain of college before arriving on campus. This specific inquiry is important as a broad focus on the knowledge and skills that are prioritized in college prep activities, and the extent to which race and racism are part of this college-going knowledge and skills is the key focus of this inquiry.

The Empirical Study: Identifying a Direct Activation of Racial Intelligence within College Guidance

This dissertation builds its theoretical and empirical exploration around Emirbayer and Desmond's (2015) concept of Racial Intelligence — a habit of “readiness” to thoughtfully navigate our racial terrain in its everyday manifestations. Driving the concept of Racial Intelligence is the question of how knowledge about racial domination can be used toward efforts to oppose it in everyday settings marked by racial domination. I introduce an extension of this theoretical work as a response to “how” this knowledge can be transmitted for use to oppose racial domination in everyday settings. I establish the direct process by which Racial Intelligence becomes transmitted and center the empirical exploration of these processes in the critical realm of college preparation. Within a framing of HWIs as White institutional spaces marked by racial domination, I consider the preparatory activities that racially minoritized students engage in as they transition from high school to college and how understandings of race-ethnicity and racialized interactions factor into this preparation. This *direct* process, along with the previously explored *passive* process, encompasses the types of preparatory activities by which Racial Intelligence is theorized to become imparted to students as social actors.

As support for the *direct* aspect of the theoretical extension of Racial Intelligence, I present my analysis of data collected from college access professionals as they report on their role of imparting crucial knowledge and skills to students for their college transition. The focus in this study is a foundational understanding of the extent to which knowledge of the racial order is included in college access programming. Further, this study reconciles college readiness literature and prominent “best practices” that omit understandings of race with the actual work of college access professionals serving racially minoritized students as they prepare to transition to

HWIs. Future extension of this foundational understanding will include an examination of the impact of those preparatory activities that incorporate understandings of students' racialized experiences in the White space of college on student participants.

In focusing on college access professionals, I am particularly interested in the experiences and meaning-making of practitioners in Community-Based Educational Spaces (CBES), also known as Out of School Time (OST) and Afterschool educational settings. These organizations are crucial contexts for the academic and social development of minoritized youth, particularly in their more explicit aims to disrupt inequality (Baldrige et al 2017, Halpern 2002, Ginwright 2007, Woodland 2008). Practitioners in these contexts are unique for their flexibility in shaping programming, their less hierarchical relationships with youth (compared to school-based practitioners), and their holistic approach to youth development (Halpern 2002, Woodland 2008, Baldrige et al 2017, Baldrige 2018).

Importantly, college access and success programming exists within the larger umbrella of youth development programming and is not an exception to the aims to impact the sociopolitical development of young people. In this focus on the sociopolitical development of young people, programs engage with the concept of Critical Consciousness, as introduced by Brazilian educator, activist, and theorist, Paulo Freire (1970), and related frameworks. Key to Critical Consciousness is, "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (1970:35). The task-oriented/straightforward nature of college access and success work may obscure the importance of this concept's core elements of critical recognition of oppression and taking critical action to interrupt inequality, but this framework's importance is critical when reflecting on the role of systemic oppression on college-going. Racial inequality in particular permeates the process — from a host of preparation

activities that carry assumptions about what students need based in race-ethnicity and place; to the application process that is teeming with racial symbols and assumptions; and to the transition and persistence processes, which requires racially minoritized student to confront a college landscape that is dominated by historically White institutions as part of what it takes to earn a degree and the possibility of social mobility. The extent to which practitioners supporting college-bound students make these connections for themselves determines the extent to which they can make the racial order legible for young people and support them with the tools to navigate the racialized terrain of higher education and beyond.

What sets college access and success programming apart from other CBES programming is also what places college access and success practitioners in a position to impart understandings of the racial order in the context of higher education. While CBES programs centered on youth activism and other forms of sociopolitical awareness focus their attention on the collective and the efficacy of working together toward social action (Flanagan & Faison 2001), college access and success necessarily operates as an individualized process of guidance and action, such that a program's capacity to provide "one-on-one" support is highly valued. This project examines the work of youth workers who specifically engage with youth in the college-going process in CBES in light of the social and political development these spaces have traditionally supported among youth (Ginwright 2007, Baldrige 2014), and asks to what extent are youth workers engaging or evading youth's salient racial-ethnic and other social identities as they support youth and their families in the college access, financial aid, and college transition processes. I hone in on how they interpret for themselves and youth participants what it means to be "college ready", and how they enact that meaning as they structure and implement college access and success

programming. I explore three questions within this context, underscoring how practitioner understandings of race-ethnicity and organizational priorities shape this work:

1. *How do college access and success professionals conceptualize the meaning of “readiness” for their student populations?*
2. *To what extent do understandings of race, racism, and students’ racialized social interactions on the campus of HWIs enter into college access professionals’ conceptions and expressed executions of their college access programs? How much variability is there among practitioners in their reports of how race-ethnicity and racism are addressed in their college readiness programs?*
3. *According to practitioners, how do the community-based organizations housing the college access programs influence the extent to which college access professionals incorporate understandings of racism into their college readiness programs?*

This dissertation is a qualitative study that primarily uses in-depth interviews to understand how racism becomes addressed within college access programs through the intentions and actions of practitioners who -- in their particular OST and Afterschool contexts -- drive the inputs of their program. Further, this project places practitioner actions of constructing and implementing their programs in context of their individual identities, their relationship to college going (for themselves and their youth participants), and the college preparatory process in order to arrive at the meaning of these actions for the outcomes of their youth participants. Survey data supplements the in-depth interviews in order to capture the experiences of the range of college access professionals in settings beyond the OST and Afterschool contexts.

Significance: Navigating Racism in College and Beyond

Centering the ability to navigate the hostile racial terrain of college as part of what it takes to persist in and complete college is key for the well-being of racially minoritized students. Fostering such navigational skills among students as agentic racial actors — rather than expecting institutional actors to initiate action around the racism that minoritized students experience — is an approach that is not explicitly part of optimal practices for college access practitioners. This approach, however, can be valuable to both research and practice — for theoretical approaches that grapple with how racial understandings become transmitted and acted upon, and in practice as a transformative agenda for confronting everyday racism in the U.S., especially in the socially and material consequential context of higher education attainment. Addressing these navigational skills once students have matriculated to college is part of the on-going support required for these populations, but is not sufficient; just as with the academic and behavioral skills centrally recognized as key to college readiness, navigational skills for confronting the racism in college is better incorporated within the burgeoning field of college access and success that is tasked with specific, individualized preparation for college-going students, the majority of whom are racially minoritized students.

Despite the growing body of research identifying campus racial climate as a critical issue for student success, there appears to be little attention to the role of college readiness programs in developing students' ability to navigate racial phenomena in the White institutional space of college. There is very little research on OST and Afterschool college readiness programs, and virtually no research on the extent to which racial issues are discussed in these programs. These patterns of race-awareness or evasion are important to expanded understandings of race talk in educational contexts, establishing a race lens within college readiness literature, and for

professional development among college access practitioners toward more effective and holistic college preparation for minoritized youth. Exploring how college access practitioners do or do not incorporate understandings of racism in their programs is a critical first step in refining how research conceives “readiness” for college, and how practitioners prepare racially-minoritized students to persist in and complete college.

Chapter 2:

Setting the stage: Context, Foundational Literature, and Theoretical Explorations

I. Higher Education and an on-going “Racial Reckoning”

Who could have guessed that we would arrive at a moment where the term “structural racism” would escape academic and activist spheres and occupy “mainstream” attention as a legitimate (though heavily contested) framework for understanding how U.S. society operates? I certainly would have lost any pre-2020 bet that would have even hoped for the fertile ground for comprehensive understandings of racism that continue to develop. What (some) United Statesians — and people around the globe — are beginning to absorb is how racism permeates every inch of our society. Indeed, spheres large, small, and intertwined bear the markings of United States history built upon a racial hierarchy that, ultimately, made Whiteness distinct and set its understandings and ways of being as the paragon of humanity. Consequently, White domination manifests within institutional, cultural, and interpersonal practices.

Educational institutions have never been immune to this racialized atmosphere. This is especially true in the realm of higher education, where historically (and predominantly) White institutions (HWIs) dominate the landscape of college choice for all students. As products of racially circumscribed sociohistorical processes in higher education and the U.S. more broadly, HWIs operate as White institutional spaces wherein White racial frames dominate the social structure, from institutional organization to micro-interactions (Feagan 2013). This dissertation remains in the arena of micro-interactions and grapples with manifestations of racial inequality in the everyday experiences of racially minoritized students on historically White college campuses. These everyday experiences are very important: In a society where higher education is widely

accepted as the key to upward mobility, successful navigation of White spaces is a large, if unnamed, aspect of achievement for racially minoritized people. Within these White spaces, there are cultural norms for ordinary interactions that differ between groups, but consequences of misunderstandings or violations of these norms fall on Black people and other people of color (Rawles 2001). Essentially, White students are most able to move easily in White institutional spaces unaware of the interactional power dynamics they take for granted, while students of color need to learn to navigate these dynamics in order to achieve success. This study identifies this circumstance as an extension of structural racism that manifests in the implicit power dynamics of the everyday interactions between White dominants and non-dominant racial actors and explores possibilities for navigation and interruption of racial inequality at the level of interaction.

This chapter elaborates on this focus in order to set the scene for the empirical research that I present in this dissertation — the theoretical frameworks that undergird the empirical work, an overview of important literature, and the importance of the context that this study prioritizes — all of which to establish the foundation from which to build further knowledge around the particular impacts of and responses to racial inequality in education at the level of interaction.

Race-Ethnicity and College Preparation in a College For All World

Higher education remains a widely accepted and promoted pathway to upward mobility and general social well-being. Popular consumption of research-based understandings of the benefits of a college education contribute to the view of college as essential. The case for college completion has been made through its association with economic mobility and occupational security (Heckman, Lochner, & Todd 2008; Heckman et al. 2014; Hout 2012), benefits to

individual physical and mental health (Heckman et al. 2014, Hout 2012), and benefits accruing beyond individuals to their children and extended family members (Augustine, Cavanagh and Crosnoe 2009; Jaeger 2012). That these benefits accrue to students who complete college has steered research toward explorations of pre-college factors and preparatory activities most likely to ensure college persistence and completion. Research has focused particular attention on academic preparation and behavioral norms that contribute to college success for racially minoritized students. Although this focus is well reasoned given the disparities in college attendance and completion among Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students (Kao & Thompson 2003; NCES 2019; National Student Clearinghouse 2020), a more expansive view of what it means for minoritized students to be “ready” for the White space of college is vital in a moment of collective recognition of the impacts of structural racism at multiple levels of interaction.

The idea of “preparation” takes on special meaning in the realm of college-going for minoritized students. Specific efforts to ensure that the benefits of college attainment reach historically disadvantaged populations are common, including the entire industry of college access and success and its dedication to preparing students (and their families) to enter and graduate from one of a number of institutions that comprise the higher education landscape in the United States. Preparation ultimately signals the activities and knowledge building that students engage in before and during the college application process to varying degrees. This preparation and its specific components culminate in a picture of “readiness”-- a student is “college ready” when they have engaged in these preparation or “college readiness” activities and can apply this vital knowledge during the college application process and throughout the course of their college transition, adjustment, and persistence stages.

Current conceptions of college readiness rest on universally accepted notions of what it takes to get into and persist in college. Certainly, grasping the details of a cumbersome application process and contemplating all the personal and academic changes that the transition from high school to college portends has required streamlined guidance that attempts to make sense of the big picture of college-going. Thus, the core of college readiness literature, and its derivative optimal practices, promote a focus on academics, which include skills-based preparedness and behavioral regulations that are ultimately in service of academic outcomes, and, in the spirit of social and cultural capital accumulation, a focus on sociability and campus involvement. The on-the-ground work of college readiness follows suit, with the work of college access and success professionals focused on ensuring that students' college options include colleges and universities that best align with each student's demonstrable academic competencies, career goals, and temperament.

These common elements of college readiness take on particular weight when talking about college going for racially minoritized students. There is no question that on-going educational inequality in terms of things like resource access, learning opportunity, and school funding pervade K-12 education for racially minoritized students. Often when scholars and practitioners talk about college readiness for minoritized students, there is an assumption that academic and social compensatory elements — such as tutoring, additional course credit, or social emotional learning — will be included to offset unequal academic opportunities and to influence social behavior development for the college context. On the whole, the impacts of systemic racism on racially minoritized students implicitly govern the assumptions that shape college-going guidance for students and their families — valid assumptions that direct practitioners toward addressing what students and families know, what they can afford, and in

which higher education context students would succeed in hopes of reaping the benefits promised to those with a college degree.

Despite the well-reasoned focus on these academic and behavioral skills, their heavy prioritization fails to consider the specific experiences of minoritized students on historically White campuses, even as injurious racialized interactions and the accompanying psychosocial responses gain widespread attention in academic literature and the public domain (Caplan & Ford 2014; Harwood et al. 2015; Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzales, & Wills 1978; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso 2000; Fischer 2010) . Attention to racialized experiences in college that affect the persistence of racially minoritized students is critical as college completion continues to weigh on social well-being, and the fact that the most marginalized - Black, Latinx, and Native students - are least likely to attend college and graduate (Kao & Thompson 2003). Omission of these experiences within research plans and interventions ignores their significant impact on college persistence and completion rates for racially minoritized students at the same time policy and research entities show increasing investment in improving college outcomes for this population of students. This work takes as its foundation the racialized experiences of minoritized students in college (and other historically White spaces) and investigates pre-college preparation in light of these persistent and impactful racialized interactions on college campuses.

II. Tuning-In To the Structural in Everyday Interactions

Understandings of structural racism rightfully inform college preparation priorities geared toward college-bound racially minoritized youth. Within the goals of this work to attend to racial inequality at the level of interaction, it is necessary to make explicit how racist structures reveal themselves in daily social interactions and the need for different approaches to address them at this level. The Chinook Fund's "Four I's of Oppression" framework (Chinook Fund 2010) is helpful in making clear that racism and other forms of oppression are not one-note tormentors. The coherent, interconnected depiction of oppression within this framework shows a system operating at multiple levels simultaneously, with impacts that must be understood and addressed at multiple levels in order to truly interrupt inequality.

The Four I's of Oppression framework is a tool found predominantly in spaces of educational and social organizing practice, but it reflects distinctions that social scientists make among levels of analysis and interaction. The levels represented in this framework are: Ideological Oppression, Institutional Oppression, Interpersonal Oppression, and Internalized Oppression. This order is important in how it captures the interconnected nature of these levels. Beginning with the Ideological level, the, "idea that one group is somehow better than another, and in some measure has the right to control the other group," becomes propagated within society, with favorable attributes assigned to the dominant group and negative qualities assigned to the non-dominant group (emphasis in the original). These ideas that assign superiority, inferiority, and, thus, who has the right to control the other, then become structured into societal institutions — from legal and education systems, to popular media images and political power — and ultimately determine access to resources, whether intentional or not. Those oppressive ideas that are baked into institutions and their processes also function as permission "for individual

members of the dominant group to personally disrespect or mistreat individuals in the oppressed group.” This is the Interpersonal level of oppression — a critical part of the micro-interactional focus of this dissertation. As the framework authors emphasize, “Interpersonal racism is what White people do to people of color up close — the racist jokes, the stereotypes, the beatings and harassment, the threats,” all of which are supported by the other institutional and ideological arrangements that serve to specifically marginalize Black people and other people of color. Finally, the Internalized level of oppression focuses specifically on oppressed people and describes the impacts of an ideology of inferiority that is baked into institutional processes and acted out by dominant racial actors in everyday interactions. When oppressed people believe and act in accordance with those negative messages about themselves, they have internalized oppression.

Within the “Four I’s of Oppression” framework, it becomes clear that the same structural arrangements that allow for the mass incarceration of Black men and women, redline Black people into communities starved of investment from every level of government, and operate to ensure that race-ethnicity continues to be a key predictor of all sorts of life outcomes regardless of one’s individual striving and success filter down to everyday interactions that reinforce racial hierarchy in both discernable and plausibly deniable ways. The scholarship of sociologist Anne Rawls (2000) focuses on these daily, micro-level encounters and offers an understanding of the particular importance these micro-interactional power dynamics by examining, “actual conversations between persons who have identified with different races [as] itself constitutive of racial divisions” (2000:242; emphasis in the original). This specification is important in identifying micro-interactions as a critical domain. Her focus on racial inequality at the level of interaction draws on DuBois’s illumination of how Black and White Americans live in different

socially constructed worlds, and how differing expectations around how to interact in those worlds generate mutual misunderstandings between differently raced individuals (specifically identifying as Black or White).

The most critical element of Rawls's work for the purposes of the current study is in grasping that these mutual misunderstandings affect dominant/majority and subordinate/minoritized groups differently. The White dominant's way of being, understanding, and communicating -- what Rawls terms the White Interaction Order preferences -- enjoys cultural normalization, while non-dominants who are misunderstood are placed at a disadvantage that serves to reinforce racial stereotypes and further entrench racist notions of people of color (p 263). Two paradoxical truths emerge from this White Interaction Order preference: First, Black people and other people of color are generally aware of and must conform to this preference in their everyday lives. Second, this awareness is contextual; there are domains of the White Interaction Order that remain outside of the intimate understandings of Black people and other people of color. Within the first truth of an awareness among people of color of White Interaction Order preferences, Rawls establishes that minoritized people must do the work to achieve mutual intelligibility, and that this is not part of the social demands placed on White dominants. Thus, Black people and other people of color become intimately aware of White norms and are self-aware in their role as "other" in White dominated interactional spaces. DuBois contributes to this understanding in his essay, *The Souls of White Folks*:

...I know many souls that toss and whirl and pass, but none there are that intrigue me more than the Souls of White Folk. Of them I am singularly clairvoyant. I see in and through them. I view them from unusual points of vantage. Not as a foreigner do I come, for I am native, not foreign, bone of their thought and flesh of their language.... I see these souls undressed and from the back and side. I see the working of their entrails. I know their thoughts and they know that I know. This knowledge makes them now embarrassed, now furious. They deny my right to live and be and call me misbirth! ...And

yet as they preach and strut and shout and threaten, crouching as they clutch at rags of facts and fancies to hide their nakedness, they go twisting, flying by my tired eyes and I see them ever stripped,—ugly, human.

DuBois's reflections highlight the "knowing" that he and other Black people possess of White dominants from the standpoint of the dominated. It is not a view from the outside, nor is it one of ignorance of the power dynamic in which he finds himself. His view is in full recognition of the atmosphere he must navigate and the workings of those who seek to maintain the status quo. Yet even in intimate knowledge, both DuBois and Rawls indicate that there are limited contexts in which the dominated are allowed to enter in order to engage this knowing. For DuBois, the denial of the "right to live and be" and the "clutch[ing] at rags of facts and fancies" that directly, intentionally place restrictions upon the lives of Black people, in particular, temper the knowing. Rawls, synthesizing other DuBois writings, offers directly that,

While Black and White appear to occupy the same world geographically, they rarely occupy the same interactional space. Furthermore, even today when they do more often jointly occupy interactional space, because their communities have developed in separation and their Interaction Order practices conflict, the display of moral behavior by members of one group may well look like deviant behavior to members of the other (p 247).

Indeed, shared spaces between White dominants and non-dominant people of color have historically been limited to market places, supervised work capacities, domestic service -- arenas circumscribed by long cultivated power dynamics that make navigation for non-dominant racial groups one of cautious subservience. The advent of legal integration of public, occupational, and educational spheres in the mid-20th century also brought on the need for minoritized populations to navigate Whiteness in new ways. Corporate jobs, commercial businesses, and institutions of higher learning are relatively new arenas of interaction that speak to values of equality, inclusion, and merit, yet feature racially oppressive dynamics that manifest within daily interactions.

The nature of the conflict of the Interaction Order, layered with the expectations of conformity to the dominant preferences within these interactions, becomes a minefield with a steep curve of adjustment for upwardly mobile people of color. Education is an especially fraught arena as the primary vehicle for upward mobility in U.S. society; the convergence of these structural and Interaction Order realities of racial oppression is the backdrop against which non-dominant groups must chart this upwardly mobile path. Given this reality, the fact of college as both a historically White space and a widely promoted and accepted means of attaining higher social status in the U.S. warrants attention. This work seeks to bridge these concepts with the college preparatory activities that have more explicitly governed the mission of K-12 education over the past decade. No longer is college a question or an option. Whether in individual student aspirations (Rosenbaum 2011), school-wide curricular focus, or state and federal mandates (United States Department of Education 2010); in urban, suburban, and rural school settings alike, college is a declared and affirmed goal. Scholarship and practical efforts to prepare students to enter and complete college focus most explicitly on strengthening academic-related skills. This focus, however, undermines students' success in college by failing to prepare them for the often hostile campus culture many will confront on campus. The aim of this dissertation is to begin to examine the extent to which this type of race-conscious social preparation exists in college preparatory programs by focusing on practitioners who are tasked with structuring these preparatory activities.

Elevating Interaction Order Racial Inequality in College Access and Success

Within this multi-level understanding of structural racism, the extent to which college access and success research and practice grapples with racism at multiple levels of interaction is critical.

Research on racial inequality and the preparation for college achievement often ignores everyday, interpersonal dynamics. Instead, research and popular coverage of higher education typically captures patterns within the college preparation process for historically excluded groups that indicate inadequate academic preparation and fragmented knowledge around the mechanics of the college application and transition process, as well as challenges these students face upon matriculation such as cost of attendance and the lack of racial-ethnic diversity. The focus of interventions addressing these challenges feature pre-college skill boosts like dual enrollment and a gamut of informational, behavioral, and transitional programs that epitomize the conventional college readiness framework (Karp 2012; Leonard 2013; Conley 2007, 2007b, 2010). This focus, however, centers our understanding of what it takes for racially minoritized students to succeed in college on demonstrable academic and behavioral skills. While these interventions respond to relevant consequences of structural racial inequality (e.g. which students receive adequate school funding, experienced teachers, availability of high level academic classes), they do not consider the insidious ways in which racism disadvantages racially minoritized students in their everyday interactions.

The present work attends to omissions of analyses of and responses to racial inequality at the level of interaction in both the literature and in practice. At its core, this work grapples with preparation for a racialized society in a general sense, applying theories and leveraging studies that understand race-ethnicity as a primary organizing feature of U.S. society, from individual and interpersonal levels of interaction and analysis, to institutions and foundational structures of this society. This work is interested in whether and how one can be prepared to navigate such a society and assumes that racialized people are in fact doing this all the time, whether they are aware of it or not. The approach here, then, is to identify the extent to which practitioners engage

in explicit forms of preparation for racial phenomena, the assumptions and meaning-making they employ as they structure and carry out preparatory activities for young people, and to identify the interplay of subconscious forms of preparation that graft onto racialized individuals and groups. Making the subconscious legible, the conscious into concrete praxis, and locating both in theory are the full aims of this work.

III. Conceptual Approach: Racial Intelligence

In the final chapters of *The Racial Order* (2015), Emirbayer and Desmond outline the microprocesses of their framework for the racial social structure captured in the book's title. Within their overall aim to consider a Bourdieuan fields-based approach to the sociological study of race-ethnicity, the authors present a "social psychology of racial domination." They explicitly distinguish between analyses of this social psychological dimension and analyses of "agentic engagement" presented earlier in the book, where individuals are largely engaging with structures within the context of "collective life" (though they assert that the social psychological dimension is not a completely inward process, rather that engaging in collective life is relevant to social psychology).

Keeping with the core influences of the book's framework, Emirbayer and Desmond draw on the sociological work of Bourdieu, Durkheim, and pragmatists like Dewey to lay out the three constituent parts of a social psychology of racial domination. These parts are racial dispositions (*habitus*) generally, the different dispositions of racial dominants and non-dominants specifically, and racially intelligent engagement within the racial order (Emirbayer & Desmond 2015:235). Within racial dispositions, the authors highlight the general understanding of *habitus* as socially and historically circumscribed "second nature" ways of being in the world, and how race-ethnicity is an inextricable determinant of this embodiment. Their details of the different and oppositionally constructed dispositions of racial dominants and non-dominants considers how each collection of "racial tendencies" contributes to the perpetuation of racial dominance — White dominants are able to impose their way of being as the societal norm and simultaneously behave in ways that "[normalize] and [render] invisible the very fact of racial domination itself" (Emirbayer & Desmond 2015:251), while non-dominants, in having to navigate this reality, enact

a “symbolic violence” in which their domination becomes normalized, legitimized, and internalized, often persisting passively or without opportunities to document the impact of their realities in their systematic position of disadvantage (Emirbayer & Desmond 2015:255-256).

The third element of a social psychology of racial domination is racially intelligent engagement, a concept that builds on and responds to the first two in a way that is most directly relevant to this project. Though admittedly theoretically and empirically underdeveloped, the authors convey the distinctness of the concept of racial intelligence within the established understanding of intelligence and the nature of a racial disposition (*habitus*). Specifically, the authors situate the habit-forming possibilities for individuals operating within the racial order by integrating Dewey’s understanding of intelligence as a “capacity to estimate the possibilities of a situation and to act in accordance with [that] estimate” (Emirbayer & Desmond 2015:269) with the fundamental operation of *habitus* not as a fixed fate, but as being able to “respond flexibly and in an appropriate, constructive, and problem-solving spirit to the circumstances at hand” (Emirbayer & Desmond 2015:270). They arrive at an understanding of racial intelligence as a habit of “readiness” to thoughtfully navigate our racial terrain in its everyday manifestations. They further clarify:

In our racial order, this “readiness” means open and supple response to the racial Other, sound practical judgment in navigating the often perilous currents of racial condescension and prejudice, and self-affirmation or self-acceptance instead of internalized hatred and self-destructiveness” (Emirbayer & Desmond 2015:270)

Racially intelligent engagement within the racial order, then, centers the experiences of racially minoritized people and their need to navigate racial domination in their everyday lives, and explicitly operates counter to the maintenance of racial domination. Intelligent engagement, instead, is constituted by dispositions that serve to challenge and circumvent racial domination, even toward the dismantling of these systems.

The concept of Racial Intelligence shares important continuity with the concept of Critical Consciousness as introduced by Brazilian educator, activist, and theorist, Paulo Freire (1970). Overall, both concepts are explicitly concerned with dismantling systems of domination, and feature constitutive elements of their approaches to this dismantling that are also aligned. In his influential work, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire talks of *Conscientização*, Critical Consciousness, which he defines as, “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (1970:35). In the first chapter of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire outlines the core understanding of Critical Consciousness:

This pedagogy makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation (p 48).

The pedagogy of the oppressed...has two distinct stages. In the first, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the second stage...this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation. In both stages, it is always through action in depth that the culture of domination is culturally confronted (p 54).

It is by way of reflection by the oppressed and action to confront the culture of domination that we arrive at Critical Consciousness. Alongside Emirbayer and Desmond’s emphasis on the “capacity to estimate the possibilities of a situation” (critical reflection) and the ability to “respond flexibly...to the circumstances” (critical action) as integral to Racial Intelligence, these concepts are deeply resonant.

The distinctions between these concepts are also important and point to the usefulness of the Racial Intelligence concept in the context of this project. Based also on the emphases within their theoretical presentations, the differences between these concepts stems from the orientation of critical action. Both Racial Intelligence and Critical Consciousness insist on action, but

Critical Consciousness is geared more toward collective action — the oppressed, not as individuals, but as a movement of people who gain awareness and can join together in order to act toward the dismantling of oppression. As such, the dismantling of oppression takes place in a larger, structural sense, with actions aimed at meso- and macro- forces. Racial Intelligence, on the other hand, is very focused on the daily engagements of non-dominant racial actors. Like Critical Consciousness, Racial Intelligence leans heavily into action, but this action is geared explicitly toward the disruption of racism at the levels of interaction. Combating internalized oppression is also implicated within Racial Intelligence, as with Critical Consciousness — this is captured in the critical reflection that precedes action in both concepts. Racial Intelligence, though, is all about the daily navigation of racially hostile environments (and other hostilities that accompany other oppressions). The explicit focus of critical reflection and critical action at the level of interaction, and the accompanying assumptions and goals of action at this level, provides a more precise theoretical foundation to explore the nature of preparation for minoritized students navigating the White spaces of higher education.

The Racial Intelligence agenda that Emirbayer and Desmond outline is interested in how the social and historical principles of the racial order become part of the makeup of an individual's racialized self, and, "how individuals, in turn, might respond to the racial order according to principles they have internalized" (Emirbayer & Desmond 2015:235). With this, they consider, "how settings marked by racial domination intelligently can be reconfigured and how knowledge about racial domination can be used in efforts to oppose and end it" (Emirbayer & Desmond 2015:285)", and chart a path forward using levels of analyses, akin to the "Four I's of Oppression" framework, as a frame for the potential focus of empirical work that might foster transformation within the racial order. Considering this agenda in the context of higher education

attainment, this work begins with an understanding of HWIs as socially and materially consequential White institutional spaces (Moore 2008, 2020) that are undeniably marked by racial domination, and proceeds with an agenda to understand, at a fundamental level, whether efforts exist to foster capacities within individuals (specifically non-dominant racial actors) to respond to the racial order in ways that constitute a “sound practical judgment in navigating...perilous currents of racial condescension and prejudice”. Whether such efforts ultimately beget “self-affirmation or self-acceptance instead of internalized hatred and self-destructiveness” among non-dominant racial actors may not be fully determined in this project, but such change at the individual and interpersonal level is at the heart of this project and are potential outcomes that highlight the importance of contemplating the disruption of inequality at these micro-levels of interactions simultaneous to disruption of inequality at institutional, organizational, and structures levels. Overall, racially intelligent engagement at these micro-levels and the question of whether and how habits of racial intelligence may become fostered within and between individuals guide the theoretical and empirical aims of this dissertation project.

Building on the Racial Intelligence Concept

The core of the agenda Emirbayer and Desmond present around the social psychology of the racial order is the exploration of how the principles of the racial order become part of an individual’s racialized self, and how individuals may subsequently respond to racial milieu according to those internalized principles. This proposed project moves in the direction of this agenda and probes further. The broad view of my work considers whether understandings about racial domination are being activated within individuals (among both racial dominants and

non-dominants), and if such understandings are, in fact, being activated, how may this activation occur. Moreover, I am interested in what actions may stem from this deployment of information about racial dominance, but understandings of these actions are beyond the scope of this project.

I capture the broad view of my work within a theoretical framework that stems from the concept of Racial Intelligence and proposes distinct pathways for its activation. This dissertation, as a companion to prior work on a passive pathway to activating Racial Intelligence, advances direct activation of Racial Intelligence. Prior exploration of this framing leading up to this dissertation project considered the passive and direct inculcation of racial intelligence. My current formulation of this framing in terms of activation comes through an important clarification of Emirbayer and Desmond's work and an emphasis important to establish here: the operation of an intelligent racial habitus, like the operation of habitus in its more general conception, is necessarily already in operation within the microprocesses of our social structure and does not necessarily require direct conscious-raising activity or training. Further, any direct engagement concerning an individual's racial habitus could not be assumed to be a "clean slate" encounter. In other words, an intelligent racial habitus is also a "deeply ingrained mode of perception", part of complex social, historical, and psychological processes that are incorporated into one's disposition. An understanding of race-ethnicity as a social relation (O'Connor, Lewis, and Mueller 2007, Zuberi, Patterson, and Steward 2015, Diamond 2018) further establishes the ingrained nature of social action that is inherently shaped by our racialized social landscape. Whether passively or directly engaged, a racial habitus is already incorporated into the disposition of individuals socialized within a racialized society.

A critical element considered within this theoretical concept is the activation of Racial Intelligence that facilitates action. This formulation moves beyond “awareness” of racism as a goal. Instead, it is concerned with how an understanding of the racial order becomes activated among individuals, and how individuals may subsequently interrupt racial inequality in their everyday, interpersonal interactions. As outlined previously, these emphases on “awareness” and “action” directly align Racial Intelligence with the aims of Critical Consciousness. As a primary aspect of this broad frame, this project seeks to explore whether an understanding of the racial order is activated in a meaningful context and whether such activation occurs passively or directly. Further, this project seeks to analyze factors that hinder or aid in the activation of these racial understandings. Though the broader frame is concerned with whether an understanding of the racial order (activated directly or passively) does in fact facilitate interruptions of racial inequality and what such interruption looks like, this aspect of the research may not be undertaken directly within this project.

IV. Rationale for the Exploration of Racial Intelligence in College Access and Success

Exploration of whether and how understandings of the racial order become activated and the conditions governing such activation calls for a compellingly meaningful context. An increasingly consequential arena in which navigating racism plays a critical role is in education, particularly the transition from high school to college for racially minoritized students. For these students, the impact of racially hostile interactions on persistence and overall social and mental well-being has received attention in the academic literature as well as in popular media (Caplan & Ford 2014; Harwood et al. 2015; Fischer 2010). This project is concerned with these experiences among racially marginalized students and whether and how racial understandings are activated for them as they prepare to enter HWIs.

Emirbayer and Desmond's explanation of Racial Intelligence as a "habit of readiness" to thoughtfully navigate race in its daily manifestations makes sense in the college transition context, especially considering consistent reports of racism inflicted upon racially marginalized college students. Yet within the rhetoric of college readiness work that has become necessary for marginalized students to gain access to post-secondary education, recognition of the need for racially minoritized students to thoughtfully navigate racial inequality as it manifests on college campuses is largely absent. Ideally, all students would be able to demonstrate an "open and supple response to the racial Other," and racially minoritized students would especially be equipped to "[navigate] the often perilous currents of racial condescension and prejudice", while simultaneously engaging in, "self-affirmation or self-acceptance instead of internalized hatred and self-destructiveness" on these campuses (Emirbayer & Desmond 2015:270). Exploring whether activation of Racial Intelligence is an element within college readiness programs, as well as any accompanying factors that hinder or facilitate this activation, are beginnings to

understanding “habits of readiness” and possible actions and impacts that emanate from these habits.

Alongside a theoretical exploration of the activation of racial intelligence, this work has practical aims of exploring “readiness” for college, and whether the racialized experiences of racially marginalized students upon entering HWIs is considered in college readiness activities. Together, these aims find an empirical context to explore the theory of the activation of racial intelligence, and a practical context to investigate the role of race-ethnicity and experiences of racism in preparatory activities for the college transition. These agendas inform one another and lay the groundwork to explore the broader theoretical goals surrounding whether an understanding of the racial order promotes action toward the interruption of racial inequality and what such actions of interruption look like.

This dissertation is a continuation of research that provides preliminary results concerning the activation of racial intelligence and the actions resulting from such activation. My Master’s thesis, completed in Spring 2018, is an exploration of the passive activation of racial intelligence. Using a multi-method approach, the project explored whether pre-college interaction in White educational spaces (i.e. high school) impacted the college adjustment for minoritized students attending HWIs. While the quantitative analysis was inconclusive, the qualitative data preliminarily demonstrated that the Black and Latinx students in the sample were not only referencing their high school racial interactions to make sense of their social adjustments to college, but those who attended high schools with high populations of White peers actively distinguished among the White students they encountered in college — who was similar to the White students they were familiar with, who was safe to interact with, and other

protective analyses of their White college peers. This project provided an early indication of the passive activation of racial intelligence for non-dominant racial actors through experiences navigating White spaces and people, and “picking up” ways of being that facilitated successful navigation. Further, the results of this project indicated the types of beneficial action that such understandings can facilitate as non-dominant racial actors interact in and navigate hostile racial climates.

I structure this dissertation as a foundational exploration of the direct activation of racial intelligence, a necessary preliminary study to determine whether practitioners are imparting understandings about the racialized college context that will allow for further study of how counselors impart these understandings among college students. Findings first outline how college access professionals in community-based organizations in New York City construct meaning around "college-ready" and the extent to which their preparatory activities align with the aims of Racial Intelligence. Findings then focus on the elements of critical reflection and critical action — core components of Racial Intelligence in my framing of this concept as a micro-interactional application of Critical Consciousness — and highlight the ways practitioners convey how they come into knowing about student racialized experiences on historically White campuses, not only as an important window into practitioner meaning and action toward youth to navigate the racial terrain of higher education, but also as an indication of promising entryways to support deeper engagement with understanding of the racial order among practitioners.

Chapter 3: Research Design²

This dissertation is a qualitative study that sets out to examine the extent to which college access and success practitioners introduce understandings of how racial identity and racialized experiences in college factor into college access and success preparatory programming for minoritized youth. The focus on practitioner implementation of elements of racial understandings in these programs is in consideration of the well-documented and impactful experiences of interpersonal racial inequality on college campuses.

Based on existing scholarship on the nature of Community-Based Education Spaces (CBES), theories of race discourse in education, and my experiential insight into college access and success programming, I expect for college access and success professionals to incorporate knowledge of the racial order, particularly students' racial identity and understandings of racialized college experiences, into their conception and execution of "college-ready". I anticipate variation in the extent to which these understandings become featured within program activities based on characteristics and experiences of the practitioners themselves. When knowledge of the racial order are featured in the program, I expect for these discussions of race-ethnicity and racialized campus experiences to occur largely in one-on-one advising contexts, rather than in large group activities or as an explicit feature of the program.³

This exploration of race talk is important for a number of practical and theoretical reasons. First, it allows for further theoretical specification of how race talk occurs (or does not occur) in educational settings. Next, this work holds practical considerations for engaging

² Note on COVID-19 Impact: The original aims for a multi-sited case study method using ethnographic methods, including participant observation, were postponed due to the COVID-19 quarantine and restrictions on in-person data collection processes generally.

³ A hypothesis focused on impact of the organizational context of these college access and success programs was not explored due to COVID-19 impact of data collection. At this organizational level, I expected practitioners to exercise freedom in constructing college access and success programming, with organizational leaders showing interest primarily in traditional indicators of successful college-going (e.g. applications completed, college acceptances, scholarship award totals, college graduation) while remaining neutral or non-committal regarding explicit support of racial justice or racial consciousness efforts.

racially minoritized students to enter and succeed in historically White higher educational institutions. Finally, this work points to the concrete skills and knowledge that practitioners require in order to execute educational programming that recognizes and thoughtfully engages the racialized experiences of students.

Core Frameworks

Racial Intelligence

The concept of Racial Intelligence is the core frame in this study to explore the social preparatory work of college access and access professionals. Using this framework, this project traces the emergence of racial understandings in connection to the range of activities college access professionals implement in their programs. Further, I will locate patterns of color-consciousness and color-evasiveness in the context of a long-standing appreciation of Community-Based Educational Spaces (CBES) as sites that foster critical consciousness, youth activism, and a holistic and humanizing approach to youth development, but that are also impacted by education reforms based in neoliberal principles, grounded in deficit views of Black people and other people of color, that have a foothold in public education more broadly (Baldrige 2020).

The hypothesized variation in the incorporation of racial understandings of the college experience in these programs can be conceived of as an empirical model of the concept of Racial Intelligence as outlined by Mustafa Emirbayer and Matthew Desmond in their book *The Racial Order* (2015). College access is a useful context in which to explore central questions of how knowledge about racial domination can be used toward efforts to oppose it in everyday settings marked by racial domination (i.e. college campuses), particularly the theorized extension of this

concept that offers direct activation of Racial Intelligence as one way this knowledge becomes imparted with a reasonable expectation that it will be acted upon. This project focuses on practitioner accounts of the incorporation of understandings of racism into college access and success programming.

This exploration aims to lay the groundwork for further examination of the extent to which racial intelligence facilitates racially agentic action in the meaningful context of historically White higher educational institutions.

Color-Evasiveness

This project also establishes that engagement with higher education institutions as White institutional spaces (Moore 2008, 2020) and racialized experiences that minoritized students must navigate in college is absent from the college readiness literature, even as it defines for practitioners what it means to prepare students to enter, persist in, and graduate from college. The absence of a race lens within college readiness research and practice — conceptualized as color-evasiveness — is glaring and requires attention as part of on-going efforts to improve outcomes in the crucial areas of college persistence and completion for underrepresented racially minoritized students.

The concept of color-evasiveness is a direct critique of the concept of color-blindness. In this critique, authors elevate color-evasiveness as a concept that “resists positioning people with disabilities as problematic as it does not partake in dis/ability as a metaphor for undesired” (Annamma, Jackson, and Morrison 2017:153). Instead, color-evasiveness as a racial ideology does two important things: First, it provides an intersectional analysis for how perceptions of race and ability (blindness) are co-constructed, marking “unwanted bodies outside of the category of normal in order to justify their exclusion, segregation, and even termination”.

Second, the concept of “color-evasiveness” makes a more precise observation about how racial ideologies operate by highlighting an active avoidance of race, rather than a passive characteristic of involuntary participation in the racial order. While color-blindness, “ignores the power of white supremacy...to actively evade discussion on race,” a reconceptualizing around color-evasiveness more explicitly acknowledges the intentions identified in the findings of other scholars who have examined rhetorical efforts to avoid talking about race (Bonilla-Silva 2003; Frankenberg 1993), findings indicating that indeed,

[T]here are purposeful rhetorical moves employed to avoid the discourse of race, racism, and racial inequities and maintain white supremacy. One must, ‘repress, avoid, and conceal a great deal in order to maintain a stance of ‘not noticing’ color..The racial ideology of color-evasiveness allows for an understanding that this failure to address material conditions is not passive, but purposeful...we must link the race of an individual with the social conditions in which they must survive. (Annamma, Jackson, and Morrison 2017:153).

Recognition of race-ethnicity as a factor in U.S. educational processes is far-reaching (even if conclusions about the extent of its impact varies). Framing any absence of racial understandings in education as an active avoidance is appropriate, especially for college access and success programming — an education sector with explicit material and social consequences, particularly for racially marginalized students.

College Readiness

Prominent scholarship on college readiness plays a critical role in dictating which skills, knowledge, and educational culture are necessary to positively affect the post-secondary school options and potential for completion for students in the United States. This study centers and challenges college readiness scholarship, highlighting the omission of students’ race-ethnicity

and their racialized experiences on college campuses as key factors in their well-being generally and their potential for college persistence and completion.

The heterogeneity of home life makes spaces outside of the home (e.g. schools, non-profit organizations and CBES) critical sites to compensate for skills and knowledge that students do not gain at home, and inculcate skills and knowledge that are needed for success in higher education. Throughout the literature, the general consensus is that the college readiness function is performed when preparation emphasizes essential academic and college-going knowledge, and behavioral competencies that are important for resilience and social adjustment in the college context. These components of college readiness are most prominently codified within the scholarship of David T. Conley through his Four Dimensions of College Readiness (Conley 2007, 2007b, 2010) or Four Keys Model (Conley and French 2014). Conley defines college readiness as “the level of preparation a student needs in order to enroll and succeed - without remediation - in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program” (Conley 2007). Stemming from this definition, Conley’s comprehensive framework goes beyond the ways that schools are structured in order to make students eligible for college and includes cognitive and noncognitive skills (Conley 2010). As a widely referenced framework, Conley constructs these skills and attributes as accessible, ready to be taught and learned by anyone (Conley 2014), and as measurable goals for schools and non-school entities focused on college access (Conley 2007). College readiness scholarship and practice generally conform to the definition of college readiness within Conley’s model. The definition of college readiness that focuses on academic skills and behaviors is pervasive and leads to programs, standards, and studies structured to reproduce the priorities within this definition.

As college readiness programs continue to play a large role in helping minoritized students access and succeed in college, the content of college readiness activities deserves concerted attention. To relegate social preparation to college behavioral norms ignores racism as part of the social dynamics that marginalized students face. The current study will probe meanings of college readiness among practitioners who execute their conceptions of “college ready” on a daily basis, examining whether their construction conforms to or deviates from general notions found in the literature and practice. In placing the concept of color-evasiveness in conversation with the college-readiness literature, this exploration highlights the undercurrent of race discourse that reveals patterns in college readiness literature and in the larger society of signaling and obscuring the importance of everyday racialized experiences for marginalized students.

Critical Race Theory in Education

The overarching orientation of this research is found in the principles of Critical Race Theory in Education (CRTE). The central proposition of CRTE asserts that “racism is not a series of isolated acts, but is endemic in American life, deeply ingrained legally, culturally, and even psychologically” (Monaghan 1993:A7; Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995). The principles of CRTE situates students of color, the college institution, and the college matriculation process in a sociohistorical context that presupposes the impact of racism on students in their everyday lives. This social reality exists paradoxically to the dominant racial ideology that misrepresents the daily reality and impact of racial inequality and elevates a “color-evasive” racial discourse in U.S. society (Bonilla-Silva 2003; Annamma, Jackson, and Morrison 2017). College access professionals operate under these paradoxical conditions and it is plausible that pressures to accommodate dominant racial discourse that universalizes campus experiences exist alongside a

need to navigate the lived realities of racialization and experiences of racism among minoritized students when implementing college access programming. This study probes into these pressures and the circumstances under which college access professionals subvert, circumvent, or accommodate them. Any formal, informal, or missing activation of Racial Intelligence within the college readiness process would contribute to theoretical work that illuminates the conditions under which practitioners engage with students' salient racial identities. Further, such incorporation of "race talk" would challenge existing college readiness literature and practice toward a reimagining of the dominant framework that upholds academic preparation and self-regulatory skills as the primary determinants of college success.

In all, this project traces color-evasiveness and color-consciousness in the context of pre-college preparation for higher education attainment. The primary participants in this study are college access professionals and the conditions under which these practitioners engage with students' salient racial identities as part of an increasingly commonplace college preparatory process that typically results in student matriculation into historically White institutions (HWIs). Education practitioners in CBES generally, and college access practitioners specifically, are understudied yet critical to underrepresented populations accessing the socially and materially beneficial domain of higher education. They enjoy flexibility in determining the content of these programs, yet operate under larger conditions governing the social significance of and racialized barriers to accessing and persisting in college. These factors jointly present conditions for grappling with practitioner understandings of student racialized experiences in HWIs and how these understandings impact the execution of their college preparatory programs.

The remainder of this chapter outlines the components of this study's design.

Research Design Components

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are:

- ❑ *How do college access and success professionals conceptualize the meaning of “readiness” for their student populations?*
 - ❑ What are the sources of information and training used to plan and execute programming?
 - ❑ Do the sources of information and training used to plan and execute the program incorporate student racial identity?
 - ❑ How do college access professionals describe the student population they serve?
 - ❑ Do college access professionals make references to personal, student, or other experiences in conceptualizing “college ready”?
 - ❑ How does the racial identity of the college access professional factor into whether race-ethnicity becomes present or evaded in the college access program?
 - ❑ How do practitioners see their preparatory role connected to or disconnected from racialized college experiences?
- ❑ *To what extent do understandings of race, racism, and students’ racialized social interactions on the campus of HWIs enter into college access professionals’ conceptions and expressed executions of their college access programs? How much variability is there among practitioners in their reports of how race-ethnicity and racism are addressed in their college readiness programs?*
 - ❑ How do practitioners discuss the role of race-ethnicity in college?
 - ❑ Which program activities engage race-ethnicity?
 - ❑ Are there program activities that are circumscribed by racial understandings yet avoid race-ethnicity?
 - ❑ What are the patterns of incorporation of racial understandings into college access programming?
 - ❑ How does disseminated program-related material communicate the operational conception of “college ready”?
 - ❑ How does the discourse of college access programming and training reveal about what it means for marginalized youth to be “college-ready”? What skills and knowledge are practitioners required to possess ?

Research Context

The context for this inquiry is New York City and the vast network of college access and success programs that serve the New York City public school system. Importantly, New York City Public Schools serve a significant portion of the US public school population. In fact, 1 in 50⁴ public school students in the United States attend school in New York City Public Schools. Within this vast educational system operates a college access infrastructure in which community-based organizations (CBOs) play a significant role. In addition to the New York City Department of Education-led college access efforts, community-based college access and success programs serve public school students and regularly partner with public, private, and independent schools to serve as the core of their college guidance work. The landscape for college access and success is robust, with long-standing organizations and on-going initiatives that express goals of equity in college access, college completion (success), and career outcomes for district students.

The college access and success ecosystem in New York City features organizations that are core to the infrastructure and connectivity among practitioners. Two such organizations are the College Access Professional Network (CAPN) and the Waterways Community Center (WCC)⁵. Both are critical resources for college access professionals in New York City. CAPN is unique to the New York City college access and success landscape an organization geared toward the professional development, networking, and political organizing of college access and success professionals. CAPN has existed for over 30 years, making this organization and membership's approach to college access and success work a necessary area of study.

⁴ Based on [total United States public school enrollment](#) information from the National Center for Education Statistics and [total New York City public school enrollment](#) information from the New York City Department of Education

⁵ These are pseudonyms

WCC is a community-based center that implements college access and success programming, but plays a central role in the New York City college access and success ecosystem because of the foundational training sequence and special topic workshops offered to new and continuing practitioners through its fee-for-service training arm. These training courses focus on the core knowledge and optimal practices, thus, practitioners take-away nuanced knowledge that they can implement in real-time with students with a range of needs and individual factors within the college application and financial aid process.

CAPN is directly involved in this project as the professional development organization that convenes practitioners monthly. I worked with the organization's Board of Managers in order to recruit participants among the organization's members. The primary qualitative tools employed in this research are interviews (with college access practitioners) and a descriptive survey. I outline the focus of each method below.

Practitioner Interviews. I conducted interviews with college access and success professionals implementing programs in community-based settings. The specific selection criteria for practitioners were that they, first, work for a non-profit, community-based organization, and, second, are part of a college access and success team/organization that enjoys autonomy in choosing and structuring the content of college access and success programming.

Recruitment of participants took place mainly through the CAPN organizational listserv and included direct solicitation during the announcement portion of virtual General Body Meetings, individual email solicitations, and word of mouth among the membership. The goals of data collection communicated to CAPN members were to understand practitioners'

conception of “college-ready” for the young people they serve and how that meaning becomes incorporated into programming.

Interviews focused on understanding whether knowledge about race-ethnicity (and other salient social identities) and racism emerge in relation to the college application and transition processes. To these ends, interview questions probed practitioners’ college-going processes, their pathway to the college access and success field, the structure of their programming, the nature of their professional training, their organizational context, their understandings around their own racial-ethnic identities over time, and how race-ethnicity (and other salient social identities) and understandings of racism emerge throughout the college application, financial aid, and college transition processes . All interviews took place on the Zoom platform and lasted, on average, for 2.5 hours. I recorded each interview using the recording feature on the Zoom platform along with a digital recorder as backup. I used the online platform Otter in order to transcribe the interviews and made corrections manually by replaying the audio files⁶.

I interviewed a total of 22 practitioners, but included 17 interview transcripts for analysis; I omitted 5 interview transcripts due to their organizational context that did not align with the focus of this project (e.g. counselor was school-based). Practitioners included in the analysis are racially diverse with a range of experience in the college access and success sector. Their own experiences in college were also revelatory and generally tied to how they approach their work; greater exploration of these connections will be important for future studies.

⁶ See Appendix for the full interview protocol.

Included in the analysis of this study are two practitioners who identify as men and fifteen practitioners who identify as women (Table 1, Table 2). Broadly, the field of education is dominated by women educators. This is not the case among college access professionals. Women still comprise the majority of college access and success practitioners and membership in the CAPN organization, but the number of men who are college access practitioners generally and those who are active in general membership and in leadership within CAPN is notable. I made targeted efforts to recruit men for the in-depth interviews but was unable to garner more participation. I take into account that these interviews took place at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and shelter-in-place orders throughout New York City, and the strenuous work of shifting programming to virtual formats that all practitioners had to deal with at this time. Future explorations of college access professions and how they approach their work should over-sample men and specifically document the unique nature of the participation of men in the college access and success field.

Interview participants self-identified in a number of ways in terms of race-ethnicity. Four participants identified as Black (where two included specifications of West Indian and African-American); One participants identified as African-American; One participant identified as Afro-Latina; One participant identified as West Indian; One participant identified as Jamaican (with specification of Black Caribbean); Three participants identified as Latina or Latinx; One participant identified as bi-racial; One participant identified as Latinx and African-American; One participant identified as White Mexican; and three participants identified as White (Table 1, Table 2).

Finally, participants represented a range of experiences in the college access and success field. At the top of the range is a participant who has been in the field for just over 30 years, and

at the bottom of the range are two participants who have been in the field for 2 years (one entered into college access after 5 years in college admissions). The median number of years in college access and success was 6 years, with the majority of practitioners reporting between 6 and 11 years in the field (Table 1, Table 2).

Surveys. As a supplement to in-depth, semi-structured interviews, I conducted a survey of college access and success practitioners. As with the practitioner interviews, I recruited survey participants from CAPN membership, with a more open selection criteria; the participants targeted spanned all organizational contexts (i.e. school-based, community-based, traditional non-profit, foundation). Recruitment of participants occurred mainly through the CAPN organizational listserv and solicitation during General Body Meetings, but members were encouraged to pass along the survey information to practitioners in other educational/youth services networks.

I recruited survey participants simultaneously to the interview recruitment, using the CAPN organizational listserv and soliciting participation during the announcement portion of virtual General Body Meetings. Because the selection criteria for the survey was more broad than that of the in-depth interviews, practitioners were encouraged to share the survey access link with colleagues outside of the CAPN organization. The goals of data collection were to understand the range of experiences and perspectives of college access and success professionals, particularly the extent to which they consider the racialized experiences of the college-bound students in their work. To these ends, survey questions probe practitioners' college application and transition processes, their understandings around their own racial-ethnic identities, the college experiences of youth/students they serve, the nature of training for their

position, and how race-ethnicity (and other salient social identities) and understandings of racism emerge in various aspects of their work. Included in the survey are questions asking about the adjustments and concerns practitioners made in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly adjustments made during quarantine, particular concerns for students, and concerns for their own job security. Importantly, a section of the survey is devoted to collecting a range of background and demographic information about participants. This information includes race-ethnicity, gender, current income range, specific features of their undergraduate institution, and educational attainment and fields of study. Such information is not available in any uniform manner within the college access and success field in New York City and will be helpful in describing this field⁷.

I used the Qualtrics platform in order to create the practitioner survey. A total of 35 practitioners completed the survey, representing a lower percentage of total membership. There may also be overlap in the survey with interview participants as they also had access to the survey. Even with the relatively low response rate, given an active CAPN membership of at least 150⁸, the information in the survey is a useful entry to more broad understandings among the range of practitioners performing college access and success work in a number of settings. On-going work with the CAPN organization will revisit these and additional questions in order to establish an on-going process of capturing important information about members of the organization.

Survey Participants were able to choose one or more of the racial-ethnic categories in the survey. Eleven identified as being of Hispanic, Latin American, or Chicano origins; Nine identified as Black, African American, Afro-Caribbean, or Afro-Latinx; Nine identified as White

⁷ See Appendix for full the survey protocol.

⁸ Estimates based on membership organizations represented on the main CAPN website, as well as observations of the number of participants throughout virtual General Body Membership meetings and in-person meetings before the shelter-in-place orders in Spring 2020

(non-Hispanic); One person identified as American Indian, Alaska Native, or Other Indigenous People Group; One person identified as Asian; and One person selected “Other” and wrote indicated their racial-ethnic identity as Ashkenazi Jewish (Figure 1).

Participants identified their gender identities from a range of gender identities with an option to write in their chosen gender category. Among the survey participants, 21 were women, 6 were men, and the remaining 8 survey participants did not indicate a gender identity (Figure 2).

Survey participants indicated a similar range of time working within the college access and success field as seen among interview participants. At the top end of the range was one person who indicated 25+ years in the field, and at the lower end of the range was one person who indicated one year in the field. Survey participants represented a more even distribution of time in the college access field than interview participants, but the median number of years in college access and success was similar to that of the interview participants at 8 year, with the majority of practitioners reporting between 6 and 8 years in the field (Figure 3).

Finally, survey participants reported currently working in a number of organizational contexts. In addition to the 18 practitioners working in community-based, non-profit organizations⁹, nine were public school-based college counselors (traditional and charter), one was a private/parochial school-based counselor, two were independent college access consultants, two were college/university-based counselors (unaffiliated with undergraduate admissions), and one person each worked in college admissions, a foundation, and a for-profit college access and success organization (Figure 4).

⁹ These organizational settings in which these participants work disaggregate into three categories: single program sites, school partnerships, and multiple sites (regional, national programs).

Data Analysis

Analyses focused on practitioners in community-based settings. I coded interview transcripts using the MAXQDA 2020 qualitative and mixed method data analysis tool, focusing on themes related to practitioner's understanding of "college ready", practitioner's general understanding of social identities, the emergence of social identities in college access and success programming, practitioner implementation of their college access and success programming, the college transition experiences of practitioners, and practitioner reports of youth experiences in the college transition.

The first central finding centers on practitioner use of the term "advocacy" and the connections between the use of this term and the aims within the concept of Racial Intelligence. Because practitioners used this term in various portions of the interview, I autocoded all segments that contained the term "advoca" (to account for variations in word endings) and aggregated these segments. I read through each excerpt and removed usages of "advocacy" that were unattached to any specific meanings for practitioners and their work. For example, I excluded excerpts that mentioned the idea of advocacy in relation to relationships with parents or references to advocating in college access and success work that counselors made in passing and that remained vague. The 65 excerpts that remained were substantive reflections from practitioners that form the basis of this analysis. I then re-coded the segments in order to distinguish the patterns of usage. The codes that emerged were "defining advocacy", which captured specific usage of the term in relation to college access and success; "goals of advocacy", which captured the overarching desires for students to get what they need as they engaged on their campuses; and "race-ethnicity and advocacy", which captured the most explicit uses of the term advocacy in relation to navigating the racial terrain of college.

The second central finding centers on the various ways that practitioners come into knowing about student everyday experiences of racial inequality on college campuses. This analysis focused on practitioner responses to specific questions that elicited practitioner articulations of their “knowing”, specifically, “what stories do students tell about their college transition?”, “How important do you think the topic of race-ethnicity in college access and success programming?”, “Based on your experience with program alum, what are the biggest challenges you anticipate for these seniors as they transition to college?”, and “What must students know or be able to do, to be seen as “college ready?”. Additionally, I autocoded and extracted segments that mentioned the term “transition” — excluding those where references to “transitions” were everyday usage and unrelated to college-going. This search directed me to counselor reflections on questions asking about their students’ college transition and the college transition programming that counselors implement (Table 3).

Survey data provided helpful snapshots of the range of experiences and understandings among practitioners. For this project, I consulted survey data primarily as a supplement to the interview data. I specifically analyzed survey responses about college transition programming as part of the core findings for this dissertation.

Conclusion

Community-based college access and success programs, created and implemented by college access professionals, are an important part of the educational pipeline that seeks to increase the success of racially minoritized college students. Despite the growing body of research identifying campus racial climate as a critical issue for student success, there is little attention in these college access and success programs to developing students' ability to navigate the racial terrain of college. Indeed, such navigational skills are emerging as an important college readiness skill for racially minoritized students who will attend historically White institutions; experiences of culture shock, racial violence, microaggressions, and exclusionary practices enacted by fellow students are impactful and a factor in the social and academic well-being for students. It is important to note that efforts to address higher education institutional policies and practices to bring about broader racial equity are not dismissed within the interests of this project — disrupting and eradicating inequality at micro-levels of interaction are critical to address alongside institutional-level efforts. In fact, activation of a Racial Intelligence that fortifies the ability of racially marginalized people to recognize and properly assess racial risk in context, make navigational judgments in the moment and respond in ways that affirm the self occurs simultaneously to institutional and structural change because racial oppression takes place at all of these levels simultaneously.

There is very little research on college readiness programs and virtually no research on the extent to which racial issues are discussed in these programs. These patterns of color-consciousness and color-evasiveness are important toward an expansion of theories of how educators talk about race-ethnicity and racism in educational contexts, establishing a

color-conscious lens within college readiness literature, and for professional development among college access practitioners toward more effective and holistic college preparation for minoritized youth. Overall, learning how college access and success practitioners do or do not incorporate racial intelligence is critical both to better preparing racially-minoritized students to navigate the predominantly White space of college and beyond and may generate insights about how racial inequality becomes disrupted at the level of interaction.

I don't want to say college access is like The Savior or whatever, right. However, that is very prominent in the field. In my mind, that's what it's designed to do. Based on my experiences, that's what it's been designed to do. It's been designed to inform students. It's been designed to advocate for students. It's been designed to guide students into advocating for themselves. (Fatima, practitioner for 11 years, Jamaican/Black Caribbean woman)

Chapter 4: Racial Intelligence and Practitioner Understanding of “Advocacy”

As part of the dearth of understanding within education scholarship and practice of the contours of youth work generally, the particular understandings and approaches to working with young people held among these youth workers who directly shape their educational programming requires greater exploration. Baldrige (2018) states this plainly:

Because community-based spaces for youth vary in philosophy and approach, understanding how youth workers conceptualize and understand the world around them has deep implications for how they imagine and interact with youth within these settings.

The college access practitioner stands out among youth workers in CBES primarily for the specialized knowledge of the “college counselor”, wherein programmatic content is largely dictated by the idiosyncrasies of the U.S. college-going process. In addition to this specialized knowledge, these practitioners are still youth workers in the characteristic role within Afterschool or Out-of-School Time contexts — professionals who have traditionally served to support the academic, social, and political development of youth as part of their college guidance. This guidance is not neutral nor does supporting students through the college-going process boil down to executing routine procedures of the college-going process; college-going supports for first generation and racially minoritized youth must fully supplement insufficient school-based counseling with consideration for general college knowledge, family financial and cultural circumstances, academic enrichment, and strategic college choice that maximizes chances of persistence and completion (Kao & Thompson 2003; NCES 2019; National Student

Clearinghouse 2020). College access and success practitioners' meaning-making within their work, then, matters explicitly to the implementation of core college-going information as well as the framing of college-going for marginalized youth generally.

To be sure, the youth that participate in these college access programs are predominantly racially minoritized youth in a U.S. context where, regardless of age, minoritized people experience daily assaults on their identities in the form of racial microaggressions and other individual- and institutional-level exclusionary practices. Scholarship and student-led social movements demonstrate that these racialized experiences impact the persistence, completion, and overall well-being of minoritized students in US colleges and universities (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso 2000; Fischer 2009; Caplan & Ford 2014; Harwood et al. 2015; Keels, Durkee, and Hope 2017). Even more, the meaning-making reflected among practitioners exists within a network of shared practices and resources; as representatives of their "sites" through the autonomous creation and implementation of their programs, these practitioners create collective meaning that circulates among practitioners and solidifies into accepted common practice (Marcus 1995:96).

Throughout this chapter, CBES youth workers reveal how they conceive of their work within the distinct role of college access professionals. In order to convey the significance of the work they do with college-bound youth, these practitioners consistently employ the term "advocacy" in meaningful ways. Practitioners also reveal how aspects of their understanding of advocacy align with the concept of Racial Intelligence in its core rendering as "a habit of 'readiness' to thoughtfully navigate our racial terrain in its everyday manifestations" (Emirbayer & Desmond 2015). In the following sections of this chapter, I will show how practitioners define

and deploy “advocacy” as part of their work and the skills they hope to build within students. I will then show how practitioner conceptions of advocacy in college access are resonant with the concept of Racial Intelligence. Finally, I will specify the ways in which practitioner conceptions of advocacy ultimately diverge from the aims of Racial Intelligence and tend toward race (color) evasiveness. Overall, while counselors throughout these interviews are aware of the on-going issues of racism on college campuses, the extent to which counselors structure consistent programming to address this with students vary in their alignment with the core aims of Racial Intelligence.

Defining and Deploying “Advocacy”

The term ‘advocacy’ enjoys common usage in the college access and success world. My inclusion of this term in my interview protocol was intentional in my professional understanding of a specific reference to counselor communication with college admissions officers on behalf of student applicants. In the course of in-depth interviews, however, counselors consistently employed the term ‘advocacy’ in ways that approximate the aims of the Racial Intelligence concept. Fundamental to their definitions of advocacy are counselor specifications of the persons who are expected to enact this advocacy. Across the board, counselors situated acts of advocating as foundational to their counseling role and as an essential skill for students to acquire in order to navigate college. I couch these uses of ‘advocacy’ as Advocacy in Practice (the things counselors do) and Advocacy in Development (skills for students to acquire), distinctions that are useful to more precisely identify the extent to which the Racial Intelligence concept is in operation. Regardless of its range of operation, counselor reflections confirm that Racial Intelligence is part of their college access and success programming within the overlap of “Advocacy in Practice” and “Advocacy in Development”.

This analysis relies on the full context of counselor responses to interview questions, not simply the frequent use of one word. Indeed, within the context of questions related to their conception of “college ready”, the challenges they anticipate for students in their college transition, and the skills they deem critical for student success in college, counselors define and deploy ‘advocacy’ as part of a collective awareness of the impact of student social identities on their chances of gaining acceptance to, persisting in, and completing college. In the opening quote we get a glimpse of Fatima’s understanding of advocacy as a seasoned counselor in community-based college access programs. She concisely summarizes the aims of college access work in her eleven years as a college access professional: “to inform students...to advocate for students...to guide students into advocating for themselves.” She goes on to highlight the central supportive role that college access professionals in CBES contexts carry out when I ask her to consider what college access support for students would look like if her role did not exist. She says,

There’s no [community-based organizations]? Then they would get it from their school... or not. And it would just be a lot more onus on the students to advocate for themselves in the school, it would be a lot more onus on the caregiver to advocate for their student or with their student in the school. And it would be up to the schools to provide that transition thing. Even if it’s not like a full blown, “You’re gonna go here,” at least apply to [the local university system] and like, do [that] bit...I think that it would just be that they do [the local university system] bit. (Fatima, practitioner for 11 years, Jamaican/Black Caribbean woman)

In asking Fatima to take her role and capacities out of the equation for the college-going support for young people, she spotlights a few things. First, she distinguishes the supports of CBES from those offered within public schools, implying the precarity in relying on school-based college access supports. She then indicates that in a situation in which college access professionals were not available to students, there is an anticipated role of advocate that would necessarily shift to

the student and their caregivers, with their efforts directed not to actors and institutions within the college-going process generally, but particularly with school-based educators to stay on top of their obligations to college-bound students. Finally, Fatima asserts that college choice and transition supports would be left up to the schools — with the subtle indication that with school-based college access, transition supports are not prominent and college choice supports are not as robust. Overall, it's the role of advocate in multiple areas — college applications, college choice, the college transition — that she sees as intrinsic and fundamental to the work of college access professionals in CBES, a perspective that her colleagues corroborate throughout this study.

One way to think about counselors' Advocacy in Practice — “the thing counselors do” — overall is as an enterprise of getting students what they need from a range of needs that may or may not be directly connected to the core activities of their college access program. Practitioners identify themselves, first and foremost, as critical actors who advocate on behalf of their students within the college-going process so students' needs are met. Counselor characterizations of this Advocacy in Practice is consistent throughout these interviews, and take shape as counselors outline practices that address predominant needs of students, which counselors largely identify as helping students gain admission to college, contributing to social justice efforts, and guiding students in their transition to college.

Advocacy For College Admission

Counselors consistently conveyed their understanding of advocacy in the context of gaining student admission. In this aspect of their role, CBES counselors assist with

communication between students and higher education institutions in ways that public school-based college counselors are rarely able given their overwhelming student caseloads (Bryan et al. 2011; Woods & Domina 2014) but are prevalent within elite high schools as part of their pipeline to elite colleges (Percell & Cookson 1985; Khan 2010). During the application season, this type of advocacy is common and strategic. Counselors direct their communication in order to positively influence admission chances for students they see as good candidates. Sandy, a thirty-year veteran in the college access field, describes this element of strategic advocacy:

I will usually try to say why I think the kids should be accepted. But also admissions people know that I'm very honest. And I'm not going to advocate for a kid that I don't think will be successful there, if the kid really, really wants to go. But I think I have solid backing for that as well. And I won't leave them out of the picture, but I'll say, you know, here's why I don't think this kid is a good match for the school. (Sandy, practitioner for over 30 years, White woman)

Sandy has extensive experience with calls to admissions counselors and has built up trust such that her ability to vouch for a student's fit for a college holds weight within the admissions process. She must be strategic about who she advocates for in order to maintain this influence, but the critical element here is that Sandy conveys these efforts as a primary aspect of her work. Other counselors operate similarly and discuss their own strategic approach to this direct advocacy with admissions officers or other more formal appeals. Reggie, a counselor with ten years of experience in both college access and college admissions and student services, breaks down his approach to strategic advocacy:

We'll...get [students] game planning for appeals in February, March. There's a whole section [for students] on how to go about doing those appeals. And then when they start getting their award letters, we'll feel out what's doable, based on what we know about [colleges]. We know that if [a school's financial aid package does not cover] \$35,000, they're never going to meet your full need... if [a student is] really are gung ho, I'm not gonna tell you no, but where where can we put your energy because you're still in senior year and there's still a lot going on. So If you are appealing, you want to make

sure you put together a good case. But yeah, I mean, I think that's one of the areas that I thrive in the most — I'm just so well connected in the college admissions world. I have no problem picking up the phone to have a conversation. And also because of my background working in [the Higher Education Opportunity Program], I know the ins and outs of financial aid more so than a lot of people in the college access world; [other counselors] know you can appeal and this and that, but I also have financial aid directors and associate directors in my network, so if I ever feel like a school's kind of being shady or something, I can run it by them and be like, "is this real?". (Reggie, practitioner for 10 years, bi-racial (Black/White) man)

Reggie has a clear approach to this strategic advocacy — criteria for when and whether to employ strategic advocacy, coaching students to participate in appealing admissions and financial aid decisions, and using the professional network within admission for these efforts.

Both Sandy and Reggie indicate a range of strategic advocacy efforts that take place among practitioners. On one end, practitioners reveal a more supportive role that assesses student interest alongside the reasonable likelihood that a college will adjust to student needs (i.e. admission, increased financial aid) and then guides students through formal appeal processes stipulated by the university and available to all student applicants. On the other end is an informal process, available only to program participants, that relies on relationships of trust between counselors and admissions officers — a process akin to the negotiation processes that Persell and Cookson (1985) describe in the relationship between socially elite private schools and Ivy League universities. The extensive “bartering” relationship based in the special “charter” status of elite high schools that these authors describe is based in different socio-historical processes than the relationships between college admissions officers and CBES counselors. Still, the CBES counselor is positioned in an interesting parallel to the elite counselor in their ability to devote time to building professional networks in order to become a credible advocate for marginalized students. This stance is less about the elite social reproduction that Persell and Cookson talk about, and more of a strategic disruption of those elite channels in order to gain any

leverage in admissions for students whose social identities mark them for marginalization within the higher educational access pipeline. More exploration and comparison of the nature of these relationships is needed, but what remains is that the practitioners in this study elevate this work within their definition of advocacy as a critical aspect of what counselors do.

Advocacy for Social Justice

Counselors further give shape to understandings of advocacy in the vein of “things that counselors do” as part of organizational orientations toward issues of social justice. It is here where counselor understandings of advocacy turn more explicitly toward critical consciousness, though less aligned with Racial Intelligence that grounds this study in action at the level of interaction and not explicitly situated as part of college access programming in particular. Instead, the action implicated is directed outward — toward communities of color in particular and U.S. society more generally. Even so, this understanding of advocacy indicates an awareness among practitioners of the sociopolitical context in which they and their students live and work generally and the potential for appropriate connections to the sociopolitical context of various elements of the college-going process.

Counselors primarily evoked understandings of this outward-facing, political advocacy in response to my questions about stances on and approaches to social justice expressed by the organization in which their college access program is housed and future directions for the college access and success field. Counselors discussed social justice efforts with enthusiasm. Not only did they indicate their involvement as part of their role within the organization, but they also discussed their consideration of students as part of these efforts. As a program leader based in a

community center, Jessica expects this incorporation of social justice work from herself and her staff:

I don't like telling people, "This is what we're doing for the program." I'm not going to tell you, "Hey, I want you to do a financial aid workshop." You should know that that's your caseload. So my expectation of staff members is to know the trends that are happening [in their] caseload and what can we do to adjust this? What can we do?

There's an election coming up. Do I have to tell you to do a voter registration and mobilize our students? But I'm a person who loves events and loves cultural things, so that comes to me instinctually, but my staff needs to do that as well. I have a staff member who's really into advocacy and voting. And I'm like, "Okay, so you're gonna be the advocacy person. So when are we having a voter registration campaign? What are we teaching them when is the deadline for absentee ballots and what does that mean? And what does that look like? This is what is expected of you to do. (*Jessica, practitioner for 7 years, Afro-Latina*)

The overall expectation Jessica sets forth for herself and her staff is to pay attention to the needs of students in the college access and success program and respond to them. As part of this stance, she first points to students' need for financial aid support — a critical aspect of college access guidance for marginalized students. Right alongside this explicit college-going need, Jessica inserts a larger, social need for students to be active and informed citizens who are prepared and knowledgeable about voting. The advocacy in practice here is the counselor's facilitation of these larger social efforts in support of students, placed staunchly within the context of college access programming but not in reference to college-going content. Miriam, an early career counselor, also discussed political advocacy as part of her role within her program and goes further to explicitly situate the college access and success field as a political matter:

My role is also to continue the advocacy realm within the community and to kind of address some of what we experience — trying to do that now more than ever. [I'm also] thinking about ways that we can have our own advocacy group in [our organization] because we have a group of students to work on advocacy. We take part in Legislative Advocacy Day every year. So that also is a way that we try to say in the know.

Then, when asked to identify some of the major issues of focus for the advocacy efforts she leads, Miriam says:

A lot of our stuff is housing, especially with gentrification. So [our housing branch] — they do a lot of work in the community about information about rights and being informed. Domestic violence is also a big one. (*Miriam, practitioner for 3 years, West Indian woman*)

Miriam’s program and community role overlap in important ways. It is not immediately obvious, but her efforts to support students throughout the college-going process are directly linked to her definition of and actions around advocacy, with a subtle distinction between what is in her wheelhouse as a college access professional and which issues are the focus in other parts of the larger organization. Her participation in Legislative Advocacy Day reveals this link between her college access work and political advocacy writ large. This event, sponsored by the state-level college access professional organization, is an annual pilgrimage of practitioners and students to the state capital to engage with their representatives in order to, “advocate for student aid, resources for college counseling, and legislation that will lower barriers to college access and success for students across the state” (NYSACAC Legislative Advocacy Day). In this context, “advocacy” is common in its usage within the college access and success world and Miriam takes for granted my understanding of this context given our interview in relation to college access.

In expressing her aims to continue advocacy work within the community, “now more than ever,” Miriam evokes the sociopolitical moment of the summer of 2020 and further ties this use of advocacy to extra-programmatic political aims/aims outside of programmatic content. Her interview, like all the others, took place in the midst of a global pandemic and international focus on systemic racism in the United States following the murder of George Floyd at the hands and

sanctioning of Minneapolis police officers. So-called “reckonings” with racism and its operation and perpetuation as a systemic phenomenon surfaced among individuals, in communities, and across institutions in the United States and around the world — including in college access and success. Simultaneous to protests against racial injustice, Covid-19 continued to ravage communities of color — the same communities where students in these college access programs in CBES come from. These conditions were understandably salient for counselors. Jessica, who previously demonstrated that her understanding of advocacy is wrapped up in addressing the sociopolitical needs of students and families, is consistent in her concern for organizational responses to students and families in the context of a pandemic and racial justice protests:

We did speak over the summer about what [we can] do, but — not the whole Black Lives Matter movement, but all about, like, so many people are dying that look like our students, that are in neighborhoods that like our students live in and things like that. So what can we do about that? Or how do we facilitate a discussion? How do we make this happen virtually? Because if we do breakout rooms, who's going to be in the room to make sure that they [are able to] facilitate this conversation? (*Jessica, practitioner for 7 years, Afro-Latina*)

Jessica’s focus on voter registration among community members earlier aligns with her concern about facilitating a discussion about the U.S. social climate of 2020, all of which are undergirded by her inclination to center and respond to the needs of students and their families. Victoria similarly grapples with the organizational response to the prominent social and public health crises of the day:

When everything closed and COVID happened, because [the communities that we serve] were most affected, we immediately started writing grants to provide some sort of financial grants to the families affected by COVID. It also kind of accelerated some of the other initiatives that we had, which is providing financial support to our college-going students and our current college students as well. We also had a couple of town halls on social emotional wellness for our students but also for parents as well, to gauge, you know, how are they feeling? How is their family doing? We also [released] a couple of surveys just to see what students needed most and areas that we can support them more with. We released a wellness survey [to get a general sense of] their feelings in regards to

wellness, within themselves and their community. And then we had a couple of town halls when Black Lives Matter was happening. And we're hoping to do a couple more of those things, especially with the election happening soon. *(Victoria, practitioner for 6 years, White Mexican woman)*

Front of mind for Victoria and other organizational staff are the social emotional wellness of students and families. Their approach is to allow community members to identify their needs.

The same goes for students. Victoria continues with an emphasis on student program participant needs:

A lot of students vocalized that they want to learn more about politics because they feel like they can't engage. In the fall, we're going to have a politics class, but we're trying to reframe it so that it resonates more with the students and it's not super jargony. We also had a debate class where students learned how to not only debate in the sense of like [a formal debate], but become advocates and [have] those advocacy traits to come out. We do a variety of those little niche things that I think [when you] put them all together with programming and the type of organization that we are and with our values, it kind of all [has] like the social justice kind of lens to it. *(Victoria, practitioner for 6 years, White Mexican woman)*

Victoria's overview of the response to the global pandemic and racial justice protests of 2020 among students considers their expressed needs, such as wanting to know more about politics, and includes a value of instilling "advocacy traits" with students through these efforts. While valuable and absolutely in line with the work of youth development work, this view of advocacy is not incorporated into the college access program and is not attached to their conception of "college ready". Both Jessica and Victoria are aware of and eager to facilitate action around pressing social issues, but the advocacy they describe faces outward — they convey issues of racial justice as "out there", outside of program content and outside of college-going more specifically. Overall, counselors throughout these interviews conveyed this second understanding of advocacy within organizational orientations toward issues of social justice and consistently separated these orientations from program content and overall understandings of what it means for students to be prepared to navigate the racial terrain of college.

Advocacy for the College Transition

The final area of “need” in which counselors define and deploy their understanding of advocacy is in their guidance for students as they transition to college. It is here where the deployment of advocacy in the context of “the things counselors do” most explicitly turns toward understandings of critical consciousness and its specific interactional dimension of Racial Intelligence. Counselor definitions of their own advocacy role in terms of navigating the terrain of college overlaps with Advocacy in Development, or their goals for students to gain the skill of “self-advocacy”. I focus here on identifying counselor use of advocacy as implications for navigating college, and will more directly tie these references to the goals set forth within Racial Intelligence in the following section.

As students get ready to head off to college, the needs at hand are the things that will keep students enrolled in college. Many times counselors focus this area of advocacy on financial and other material needs, but counselors are also well aware of the intangible needs that amount to student belonging and adjustment to the college social and academic context. Vera, an early career counselor, exemplifies the types of support that are part of the everyday basics that students need as she responds to my question about whether she advocates on behalf of students with admissions:

There's one student — we feel so bad — but she also had a daughter. She didn't take any SATs. So her schools were limited and I was calling admissions officers trying to advocate for her to bring her kid with her. She's such a hard worker, even as a young mom. [So yes], I definitely do [advocate for students]. Or if a student needs more money for the financial aid package because... they need more money. Let's go — I know y'all got them pockets, an extra grand is not going to hurt! (*Vera, practitioner for 3 years, Black woman*)

Vera's advocacy here is for direct, concrete needs for students — elements that mean the difference between going to college or needing to find alternative postsecondary options. Often, the approach counselors take to supporting students in securing these needs shifts explicitly to an Advocacy in Development stance — where the counselor's task is to build up student capacity to advocate for themselves:

Well I want them to be able to be successful when another adult is not around. And you know, all the research shows that kids will graduate from college if they find one support system on campus. So I use this program about learning what every kind of office is on your campus. So it's like a scavenger hunt. So like, what does the Bursar's Office really do? So if they're going to Hunter College, you know, find the Bursar's Office and who's in charge of it. What's the phone number? What do they do? So that they can walk away with a directory of resources. *(Sandy, practitioner for 30 years, White woman)*

I want to know what you think it is — What's the problem? I need you to be able to identify when you're having an issue. And I need you to then access a resource to help you through it. Our motto... is that if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far you go together. It is so much easier to not do it alone. And that means you got to find your allies, you got to find your people, and you got to find your advocates, right? So being able to identify when you have the issue, but then also like, what can I put with this issue to resolve it? Do I have a tool to use or should someone else be helping me with this thing? So even just little things like, “Wow, I cannot write at the college level,” which is fairly common for every first year student. And then being like... “So I am going to go to the Writing Center.” But then I feel like we try and take it a level deeper where we're like, “and if the person you talked to at the Writing Center is not helpful, go to another person.” *(Rhoda, practitioner for 8 years, White woman)*

Both Sandy and Rhoda have specific intentions for what they want students to be able to do in order to get their needs met once they are in college. They both point to a general navigation of college where identifying specific offices and their purpose undergirds their ability to locate resources. Rhoda goes even further to illuminate the need for students to recognize the underlying challenge they are facing in order to even begin to seek resources to address that challenge. In this, she emphasizes the need for students to “find your advocates” — the people who can provide the type of support that they have come to rely on within the college access

program. Rhoda conveys a need for community — a sort of mirror of the student relationship within the CBES college access program — rather than a co-dependence that amounts to unhealthy reliance on others and stands counter to the intentions for the self-advocacy skills that counselors desire for students to develop.

Importantly, the aims of “community” Rhoda implicates are geared more toward academic needs of students, and the overall concerns that Rhoda and Sandy convey center on the academic and financial challenges that are common for first generation, low income, and racially minoritized students in college. It was my expectation that most counselors would express these concerns, but my specific interest was in identifying those aspects of the college readiness process that considered student racial identity in their transition to historically White institutions. It is within the programmatic element of the “College Transition Workshop” that counselors most thoroughly reveal their priorities for preparing students to navigate the racialized context of college.

Advocacy for the College Transition: The Transition Workshop

Counselor support for students’ navigation of the college terrain involves a range of considerations revolving around student individual and family situations as well as structural challenges facing students in the college-going process due to their common membership within marginalized social groups. It is common practice among counselors within this professional network to facilitate College Transition Workshops, a programmatic element, in which counselors distill their understandings of what students need to know for the college transition into formal sessions that typically occur in the Spring of students senior year. Though the survey that I administered to the broader College Access Professional Network (CAPN) represented a lower percentage of total membership, participants nevertheless provided a useful snapshot of

how College Transition Workshops figure into their college access programming and the topics they prioritize. As a wide view, twenty-two of the thirty-two specifically college access counselors who participated indicated that their programs feature a College Transition Workshop. Counselors then responded to questions about the broad topics their workshops covered and their ranking of these topics in order of importance for students in their college transition. The most commonly covered topics among counselors were Classes/Studying/Grades (n=20), Finances (n=20), and Health and Wellness (n=19). In their rankings of topics that they deem most important to cover in order to prepare students for the college transition, counselors consistently rank these three topics in the top three, along with Daily Routines/Adulting and Campus Social Life/Peer Relationships. The autonomy that counselors enjoy in creating and implementing their programs means that they have great control over what this preparatory activity looks like.

It is important to note that in the list of workshop topics from which counselors chose to both indicate what they cover in their programs and rank in order of importance, I did not include a topic in relation to navigating racism on campus. In hindsight, this option could have allowed counselors to more explicitly indicate their incorporation of understandings of racism in the college context within their programs. Two counselors, however, selected the “other” option within the survey in order to elaborate on their transition workshop offerings. These counselors wrote in that they covered “issues of diversity/Inclusion on campus” and “identity race/diversity on campus, microaggressions”. Greater details of workshop structure, topics, and goals are present throughout the in-depth interviews as well. In regards to these workshops overall, counselors paint a picture of their efforts to give students an honest introduction to multiple facets of college life. In their distillations of the skills students need to navigate college —

generally and in terms of the racialized context — counselors returned to their understanding of advocacy.

We have a transition series, where [we] cover a range of topics like time management, some of the social stuff, and just really prepping [students, saying] “Here are some scenarios that you might encounter. How do you mediate this? Who can you turn to? What are the resources?” And although they may not remember all of it, they’ll at least think about some of the things that they might have learned, [and to know] “oh, it’s okay to ask for help.” And we can change them as we see fit for every year. But some of the things that I anticipate happening this year for this transitioning group is really adjusting to campus life. It’s very different. Being able to advocate — I think that’s going to be some of the hardest things to do for our students is [to] advocate for their needs, advocate for their rights as a student. If students get sent back, they need to know how to advocate for their financial aid. They need to know how to advocate for their coursework. They need to know how to advocate for all these other things that, you know, older students might be able to know. (*Miriam, practitioner for 3 years, West Indian woman*)

Miriam responds here to the “global” question for this project: “What does your program do to make young people college ready?”. Her response points to the transition series specifically, and specifies “adjusting to campus life” as a key aspect of that readiness. As part of this adjustment, she touches on multiple areas of advocacy, both inside and outside of the classroom. Her reflection also reinforces the freedom she has in this OST context to shape the college readiness content, which means this understanding of advocacy is likely infused into what young people learn within the transition programming. Rhoda similarly implicates advocacy in the realm of college navigation. In walking me through the elements of her year-long program, she distinguishes the conversations she has with students who stay home and attend college in the city, and those who go away to college. This “navigating college” conversation is more geared toward the latter type of student:

I just feel like that’s one of the conversations that gets really kind of different for what they need. Definitely kind of, again, try and go back to the skills and be like, Okay, well how do you advocate for yourself and how might it apply in this situation? But then we also have them do as a class a resources and solutions Bingo. Right where, like, I’ll call out, you know, like your professor’s racist, what are you gonna do?” you know, and have them talk through that but then try and apply it to be like, “Hey, your professor can be

racist wherever they're from, and might also be your employer.” So trying to have them, again, through those skills, and that's kind of how it leads to just like prepare [them].
(*Rhoda, practitioner for 8 years, White woman*)

Perhaps it's not in workshop form, but the type of structured preparation that is common within transition workshops is applicable here within Rhoda's program. She anchors the problem solving via specific scenarios and the bingo game focused on resources and solutions for navigating college within her understanding of advocacy for self. Rhoda goes further to elevate these lessons beyond the college context, implicating not just the larger social structure but also more fundamentally that students may very well encounter the “racist professor” in their place of employment. These are skills that are transferable and the navigation of racism in college and in the world beyond college are part of her execution of college preparation.

It is at this overlap of “Advocacy in Practice” (or the things counselors do) and “Advocacy in Development” (or the skills for students to acquire) that Racial Intelligence shows up. These race-focused preparatory efforts, however, are in tension with tendencies among these practitioners to avoid speaking about race explicitly. In the following section, I will highlight the emergence of Racial Intelligence in practitioner use and understanding of “advocacy”, particularly in relation to the skills they deem necessary for students to acquire in order to navigate and succeed in college. Within these accounts, I will also indicate where this preparation for the racialized context of college slips into race (color) evasiveness and hinders what might be more deliberate efforts to gear preparatory efforts toward preparing racially marginalized youth to enter historically White colleges.

Advocacy as Racial Intelligence

As previous excerpts have demonstrated, consistent throughout the interviews is a use of “advocacy” to signal what counselors do on behalf of students. These definitions and deployments of advocacy align with tenets and goals of Critical Consciousness in terms of the social and political advocacy counselors do within the greater communities in which they work, but not as applied within program content. Counselors certainly demonstrate their ability to take action around goals within Critical Consciousness that address structural oppression (i.e. encouraging voting, teaching about politics, providing grants for families affected by COVID). These particular notions of Critical Consciousness, however, do not go far enough to be couched under the concept of Racial Intelligence, given its explicit focus on the micro-processes of the racialized social structure in which young people (and adults) live. Racial Intelligence — or rather the imparting of Racial Intelligence among young people — as actions toward the thoughtful navigation of manifestations of structural oppression that take place in everyday racialized interactions holds less of a consistent focus among practitioners. Still, there is some consonance between practitioner understandings of advocacy and the core aims of Racial Intelligence, particularly in the overlap where practitioner’s Advocacy in Practice to support student navigation of college meets “Advocacy in Development” or the things practitioners want for students to be able to do. Indeed, practitioners offer their view of desired student application of advocacy and self-advocacy that indicate concern and fortification for student racialized experiences and other experiences of their salient social identities. Wanda, a ten-year veteran in college access, evokes advocacy in relation to student adjustment to campus culture:

For some students, it's the culture shock — they didn't realize that a campus would look the way it does, or that faculty will look the way they do. We have a lot of our students who... self-advocacy — you know, you have to learn. I can't teach you how to advocate for yourself. I can give you the tools, but it has to be something that's innate. A lot of our

students don't properly advocate for themselves and so they struggle. And it's unfortunate that the students who are struggling look like you and I [referencing herself and Ja'Dell as Black people]. And so I think those are the stories that I'll hear. And so I try to take what struggles I'm seeing...and I try to try to bring that back to my students just to let them know, like, here's what you may encounter as you become a freshman, but here's how we can avoid that, like as you become a first year student, here's how we can avoid these pitfalls. (*Wanda, practitioner for 10 years, Black woman*)

Here, Wanda is responding to my question about the stories she hears from program alum about their college transition experiences and how their race-ethnicity shows up in these experiences. She directly names “culture shock” as part of these experiences, an implicit reference to the specific challenges that Black, Brown, and other racially minoritized students experience as they matriculate to historically White college campuses. In what seems to be an abrupt turn in her response, Wanda evokes “self-advocacy”. As she elaborates, her response unfolds almost as an exchange she is having with herself — an answer to an unasked question about what young people need in order to combat this culture shock she mentions. Self-advocacy — the “proper” execution of this skill — is a thing students must learn. Wanda connects the inability to advocate for oneself directly to the struggles that minoritized students experience in relation to their race-ethnicity on these White campuses.

Within an understanding of Racial Intelligence as a habit of “readiness” to thoughtfully navigate our racial terrain in its everyday manifestations (Emirbayer & Desmond 2015), Wanda’s understanding of self-advocacy is in alignment. Her understanding of the struggles students face in college is not race neutral. Her desire is for them to be able to act every day, in the micro-interactions they experiences on these White campuses, in ways that will allow them to thrive in college. She is not specific about the nature of these actions — whether they are geared toward interrupting inequality or if they have more of an assimilationist bend in her specification that these be “proper” actions. Racial Intelligence as a concept, though, is

undergirded by a value in actions that serve to interrupt inequality and that avoid internalization of oppression. Even so, Wanda, like many of her colleagues who I interviewed, understand the need to navigate White college campuses for their students and they couch this skill in the understanding of self-advocacy. Further, even though Wanda claims early on in her response that self-advocacy is not a thing she can teach students, she nevertheless indicates at the end of her response that she brings these understandings about navigating the White space of college back to her program and does her best to prepare young people for these types of experience. These actions suggest a response to Emirbayer and Desmond's interest around whether and how such "readiness" to navigate everyday racial terrain can be imparted: such preparation can happen and is happening *in part* among practitioners who embody this preparatory role, who usher racially minoritized youth into the critical educational space of college, a context characterized by White norms and structures.

Lory, a ten-year veteran in the college access field, similarly demonstrates alignment with the underlying aims of Racial Intelligence as she discusses her approach to her work. The question she responded to that drew out this connection asked about what she understood to be the biggest factors impacting her participants' persistence in college. In addition to factors related to different levels of support in the transition and financial aid issues, she went in-depth on the issues of inclusivity on campus:

I think sometimes it is fit on the campus — inclusivity and, like, what they're-- I don't wanna say tolerance for...like, what their limit is for what they will and will not be comfortable with or tolerate in their experience. So like, we had students at Syracuse, this fall, and there's a whole bunch of racial slurs painted on locker room doors and stuff like that. So one young person might take that to be like, "Fine, you hate me? I'm gonna stay here and you're gonna be the one to leave -- I'm not going anywhere. I'm going to advocate, I'm going to fight, this is my campus, it's my home, this is what I'm doing." And there are some kids who are gonna be like, "Eff this! Like, if this is how people are

going to view me here, I'm getting myself to safety. I do not want anything to do with this.” And I don't think either one of those is more or less valid. That's where the personal decision comes in. Like, what is going to set you best up for success? (*Lory, practitioner for 10 years, White woman*)

Lory not only makes it clear that racism on campus is an on-going issue among students that have transitioned to college from her program, but she indicates that there are multiple responses to these conditions that are equally valid depending on what the young person cares to deal with. She emphasizes the validity in whatever decision the student makes, which, within the conception of Racial Intelligence is in line with the core aims in which racial actors respond to the racial order in ways that constitute “sound practical judgment in navigating...perilous currents of racial condescension and prejudice” (Emirbayer & Desmond 2015:285). Lory’s insistence that students do what is best for them, rather than, for example, counseling students to remain in a racially hostile college climate no matter what, aligns with the critical aspect of Racial Intelligence that values “self-affirmation or self-acceptance instead of internalized hatred and self-destructiveness” (Emirbayer & Desmond 2015:285).

As with Wanda, Lory’s reflection on her work also provides a response to Emirbayer and Desmond’s interest in whether efforts exist to foster capacities within individuals to navigate racial terrain. She points to such efforts in response to my question about how her program helps students navigate the “campus inclusivity” factor in college persistence that she identified previously:

I think we could probably do a better job. What I was hoping to do was more of like a bridge program before they graduated, to, like, unpack scenarios and go through making sure you know this office is there to support you or, like, how would you handle this situation if it came up. We've done those kind of scenarios in past roles, where we'll roleplay [something like], “Your roommate came home and threw all their stuff on your bed and, like, woke you up” — you know, stuff like that, how to have some of these difficult conversations. And we didn't get to do as much of that this year, and part of that

is because we're trying to get kids to graduate and be mindful of their experience in a pandemic. So it's been really hard to find that line of how much do you push versus where do you need to give people space to fully be human. And then, with this whole last few weeks of [social uprisings in response to the murder of George Floyd] like, that's been super complicated for kids so we've kind of focused more on all that and it's pulled us away from aspects of programming. *(Lory, practitioner for 10 years, White woman)*

Lory indicates that there are efforts to impart skills for navigating racial terrain, but the extent to which they are structured and consistent conversations about navigating the racialized context of college falls short of the deliberate quality of the Racial Intelligence concept. Also within this reflection is an indication that even when counselors know the gravity of racialized campus experiences and their impact on student persistence in college, there may be reluctance to name race explicitly. After her extended reflection on the challenge of campus racism and her perspective on supporting students in deciding how much they are willing to endure, Lory's response to my follow-up question about helping students navigate these "campus inclusivity" factors slips out of a specificity of experiences of racism. The example she provides of college transition scenarios that spark "difficult conversation" among students centers on roommates as more lacking manners than enacting racism. She also brings to light her disconnection between her students' negative racialized experiences on campus and larger structural manifestations of racism as revealed through the COVID-19 pandemic and the uprisings for racial justice in summer of 2020. She acknowledges that the crucial conversations about racism on campus that she is hoping to get better at having with students transitioning into college were deprioritized because of the pandemic and her desire to make room to talk about the uprisings with students, without much recognition about the linkages among each of these experiences. Lory's experiences indicate that efforts to impart skills for navigating racial terrain in the particular context of college access counseling map onto Racial Intelligence but ultimately fall short due to not only lack of intentional structure and consistency within program, but also in the extent to

which counselors are equipped — personally and/or programmatically — to have these conversations in the first place.

Throughout the interviews, counselors reveal this tension between understanding the importance of negative racialized experiences on college campuses, indicating programmatic efforts to address these experiences with students, and ultimately backing away from explicit, robust engagement with racism in the college transition. Previous examples highlighting the point at which the counselor’s advocacy overlaps with the self-advocacy they desire for students to acquire also reveal this tension. Sandy and Miriam in particular spoke in general terms as they discussed the need for students to advocate for themselves as they transition to college. Their efforts also direct students to institutional supports and campus-based communities. Implied in their reflections is an understanding of needing to find resources and community as part of navigating college...

“...all the research shows that kids will graduate from college if they find one support system on campus...find the Bursar's Office and who's in charge of it. ...So that they can walk away with a directory of resources.” (*Sandy, practitioner for 30 years, White woman*)

“I need you to be able to identify when you're having an issue. And I need you to then access a resource to help you through it...you got to find your allies, you got to find your people, and you got to find your advocates... and if the person you talked to at the Writing Center is not helpful, go to another person.” (*Rhoda, practitioner for 8 years, White woman*)

...but the explicit naming of navigating the racial terrain of college is absent and instead general counsel to find “a support system” or “a resource to help you through” is left for interpretation. To restate, all counselors throughout these interviews are aware of the on-going issues of racism on college campuses and in some way address these conditions, but their efforts are typically not structured as a consistent aspect of program and/or are largely student led, where topics are

broached by the college-bound seniors or by program alum who participate in panels for current participants. A more explicit and intentional preparatory agenda for college-bound students in their navigation of the White space of college would begin to more closely align with the aims of Racial Intelligence. College access professionals in the CBES contexts in this study affirm that there exists a good foundation to build such an agenda.

Conclusion

The frequent use of the word “advocacy” and its variations among college access professionals throughout these interviews is noteworthy. In this chapter I highlighted the distinct meanings that counselors attached to “advocacy” in its common usage within this network of professionals. Their definitions of advocacy and the ways they deployed it within our conversations gave shape to understandings of advocacy largely as the thing that counselors do on behalf of students, or what I call Advocacy in Practice. Counselors across the board see themselves as advocates for their students and attach unambiguous meaning to this role of someone who is supporting racially minoritized youth access higher education toward their and their families upward mobility and social well-being. Counselors are also aware that their work as direct advocates for students in the college-going process ends once students matriculate. While counselors may remain as mentors and perhaps even eventual colleagues, their role as advocate for students must recede and students’ roles as self-advocates must be in the foreground. With this, counselors also shape an understanding of advocacy as the skill they desire for students to acquire, or what I call Advocacy in Development. Counselors see themselves as cultivating these “self-advocacy” skills as lessons imparted to students during their time in program and acted upon as they enter college and use these skills to build community, get what they need, and seek other potential advocates in the college context.

It is also within this use of advocacy that Racial Intelligence becomes implicated among counselors. In checking counselor understandings of advocacy against Emirbayer and Desmond's (2015) overview of their conception of Racial Intelligence, it is clear that, in broad terms, counselors' hope for students upon transitioning to college is that they are able to respond to challenges — generally and specifically in relation to students racial identities — in ways that keep them in college toward graduation. This is the essence of Emirbayer and Desmond's definition of Racial Intelligence that emphasizes this skill as, "a habit of 'readiness' to thoughtfully navigate our racial terrain in its everyday manifestations" (Emirbayer & Desmond 2015: 270). I draw conclusions about counselor implicit understanding of the racialized aspect of students' transitions to college from counselors' consistent return to a baseline understanding that their student populations are racially minoritized youth facing a number of challenges due their raced and classed positions in society, students who are explicitly seeking social mobility for themselves and their families, and students who are transitioning to historically White colleges. Counselors know what marginalized students are up against in this college-going process — the challenges are implied in the work they do because of the populations they serve. Given counselor understanding of the racial terrain of college and the freedom they have to shape their college guidance work, the circumstances are favorable for the college access and success field to implement programming that meets the particular needs of Black and Brown students as they navigate the White space of college.

If you're going to look for a house, you learn about the neighborhood, right? So if we're looking about it in that way, then it's gonna just come up...that's just the facts of it. Like, the college is 70% White students, 20% [Black students], you know, whatever. That's just what the neighborhood looks like. And it's gonna come up, so you gotta talk about it... you gotta let them be aware of it, because you don't want students...to go somewhere unarmed, uninformed. Your diligence is to inform that student and have them be prepared for it. And that's on a program and personal level. (Fatima, practitioner for 11 years, Jamaican/Black Caribbean woman)

Chapter 5: The Knowing: Racial Identity and Racialized Experiences in the College Transition

The counselors in this study demonstrate that their understandings of “advocacy” are rooted in the “knowing” and “doing” that are essential to the aims of Critical Consciousness and, what I argue, its micro-level variant, Racial Intelligence. Essentially, Critical Consciousness consists of *recognizing* the nature and impact of oppression, and then employing one’s agency in order to *take action* toward disrupting inequality and transforming oppressive society. Racial Intelligence corresponds to this agenda, focusing the elements of recognition and action (with agency) specifically at the level of interaction. At this micro-level, the interest is in how the social and historical principles of the racial order become part of the makeup of an individual’s racialized self, and “how individuals, in turn, might respond to the racial order according to principles they have internalized” (Emirbayer & Desmond 2015:235). While, in the context of college-going, the ultimate goal is to support students to “intelligently” navigate the White space of college, the focus of this work is on a preliminary step of examining the work of college access practitioners who are particularly positioned to impart those Racially Intelligent navigational tools and understandings among students as part of established college preparatory activities within their programs.

This chapter focuses on *recognition*, a key element of any Racially Intelligent agenda. Recognition should not be taken for granted because one cannot expect the type of intentional action required to interrupt racial inequality without a “knowing” grounded in the realities of racism and oppression within U.S. society. Fatima’s reflection in the opening quote makes a practical case for the importance of knowing about racial dynamics in the college environment and the responsibility of practitioners in preparing students to navigate those dynamics. An underlying element of counselors’ overarching beliefs about the importance of knowing about racial inequality on college campuses is a recognition of those racial dynamics that is grounded in personal experiences, observations, and other forms of “knowing”. This chapter captures the various ways that counselors convey the grounding of their understanding of the U.S. racial social structure as it pertains to their work in supporting students to navigate racialized interactions on college campuses. One entryway for counselor knowing is through students’ direct accounting of their racialized interactions on campus, which this chapter highlights. Counselors also exhibited different ways of coming into this “knowing” as they discussed the importance of students’ racialized experiences in college-going.

It is important to establish that, across the board, counselors affirmed the important impact of race-ethnicity in the college access and success process and in student college experiences. It is within this overall stance that counselors provided distinctive perspectives on how they come to know about the realities of racism in student college experiences. I highlight three of these perspectives in order to convey the important variability in the extent to which college access professionals absorb the gravity of these racialized experiences and to highlight those particular points at which they come to know the salience of racism in college.

I couch these perspectives generally as, first, a Structural Perspective, in which counselors convey an entryway to understanding of the importance of racism in college based primarily in established understandings of how race and racism function in U.S. society; next, a Self-Referential perspective, in which racially minoritized counselors rely on references to their own college experiences or those of close relations in order to anchor their understanding of the importance of race-ethnicity in the college-going process; and finally, a Mission-Based Perspective, in which counselors' entryway to the understanding of the importance of racism in college comes from counselors' assumption that issues of race-ethnicity are inherent to college access work given the racial-ethnic identities of students.

This analysis further connects these entryways to “knowing” about racism to frameworks that illuminate epistemologies of racism — how individuals come into knowing about racism in its multifaceted manifestations. These epistemologies, these “ways of knowing”, matter for how we conceptualize race and its meaning in our social world. Beyond this, and as a core argument of this chapter, the manner(s) in which we come into and anchor knowing about racial phenomena and their consequences drive our actions — our “doing” — in fundamental ways.

Sociologist Margaret Hunter is helpful in thinking about the perspectives outlined throughout this chapter. In her article, *Rethinking epistemology, methodology, and racism: or, is White sociology really dead?* (2002), she is interested in how various racial epistemologies (she provides a non-exhaustive outline of ones she considers prominent) impact social science research methods and knowledge production. She explains her particular use of the term “epistemology”, reminding us that “[e]pistemologies are theories of knowledge that make...claims about the nature of knowledge: who can know, how we know, and what counts as evidence for our claims” (Hunter 2002 [Harding 1987]). Whereas Hunter is focused on how

these “ways of knowing” drive what people do within the research process, this work centers the specific context of the college access and success field in order to identify various ways that practitioners come to know and think about racism, and, second, to understand how operating out of these “ways of knowing” impacts how counselors prepare youth for college (the “doing”).

The Structural Perspective as an entryway to knowing features a structural vantage point, captured in the work of Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (1999). The Self-Referential Perspective as an entryway to knowing elevates the valid experiences of racialized people and the incorporation of this knowledge into program construction and implementation, a dynamic that is explicit in the work of Patricia Hill Collins (2008). Finally, the Mission-Based perspective as an entryway to knowing elevates the community-based, non-profit context in which counselors work and grapples with its explicit racialized features. Aspects of this dynamic is captured in Melissa E. Wooten and Lucious Couloute’s work that outlines the importance of understanding of organizations as racialized and what that means for their subsequent actions and overall impact on individuals (2016). The variation among these entryways to knowing forecast meaningful variation in the actions counselors take in preparing young people to transition into the historically and predominantly White space of college, and thus the extent to which the “knowing” and “doing” among counselors amounts to a Racially Intelligent agenda that is explicit about interrupting racial inequality more broadly. The variation in these entryways also point to important starting points by which to deepen counselor understanding of the racial order toward more intentional action to interrupt racial inequality at multiple levels of interaction.

In order to establish what counselors know about student racialized experiences, I analyzed counselor responses to my questions that dug into the stories that they have heard from

program alumni about how racialized experiences have played into their college transitions, as well as a more global question around counselor views on the importance of race-ethnicity in college access and success. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that practitioners know the racial dynamics of the college transition for the Black and Brown youth they serve, that they come into this knowing in varied ways that are useful for further consciousness raising, and that this knowing prominently frames counselor understandings of the need for college access and success work overall.

The Stories They Tell: Student Accounts of Racism in the College Transition

The most straightforward way for practitioners to gain a “knowing” around the realities and impacts of racism in the college transition comes from the direct reports of students who have transitioned to college. Counselors did not have trouble recalling these experiences that students relayed to them. This signals that these stories were not only salient, but also speaks to the overall unsurprising, almost expected presence of racialized experiences as part of the college transition for Black and Brown students coming out of these college access and success programs. Some of the student experiences that contribute to practitioners’ knowing loom large in the public consciousness generally. Stories like the incident in 2018 in which a Black woman graduate student at Yale University took a nap in a dorm lounge and a White students called the cops on her, insisting that she was trespassing (because no way could she be a student at Yale)¹⁰. There was also the series of racist events at the University of Missouri following the public response to the murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri that garnered national attention

¹⁰ From the New York Times: “A black graduate student [Lolade Siyonbola] at Yale who fell asleep in her dorm’s common room said she had a disturbing awakening this week when a white student flipped on the lights, told her she had no right to sleep there and called the campus police.” (Christina Caron, May 9, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/09/nyregion/yale-black-student-nap.html>)

and led to the resignation of the University of Missouri System president¹¹. The incidents at Syracuse University, involving racist graffiti around campus and a racist manifesto sent directly to the student body, were most salient for these counselors, given their New York-based work and the students that had matriculated to Syracuse from their college access programs. Syracuse was a repeated reference for counselors as they demonstrated knowledge of racialized experiences of students in college:

We had students at Syracuse this fall, and there's a whole bunch of racial slurs painted on locker room doors and stuff like that, right? So one young person might take that to be like, "Fine, you hate me? I'm gonna stay here. You're gonna be the one to leave — I'm not going anywhere. I'm going to advocate. I'm going to fight. This is my campus. This is my home." And there are some kids who are gonna be like, "Eff this. If this is how people are going to view me here, I'm getting myself to safety. I do not want anything to do with this." And I don't think either one of those is more or less valid. That's where the personal decision comes in. What is going to set you best up for success? So I think that's an element of sometimes why kids leave. And I think it's just figuring out what's best holistically for the student and do they understand the consequences of each side of the decision, whether they choose to stay or choose to go, or take a break, or not take a break, you know? (*Lory, practitioner for 10 years, White woman*).

Lory reveals a knowing of student experiences with racism in college — with Syracuse as a short hand — such that she has taken notice of the diversity of student responses to racism on campus and allows for this in her counseling approach. She does not dwell on the fact of these racist incidents as though she is surprised they have taken place, but instead directs her concern to supporting students in making decisions about what they can “tolerate” (she uses this word in an earlier part of our discussion) out of a sense of expectation for the occurrence of these incidents. In her three years as a college access and success practitioner, Vera has also come to know the

¹¹ From the Washington Post: “Tim Wolfe’s resignation Monday as the University of Missouri System president came after months of escalating racial tension surrounding high-profile incidents on the flagship campus in Columbia, Mo., and student criticism about the administration’s response.” (Elahe Izadi, November 9, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2015/11/09/the-incidents-that-led-to-the-university-of-missouri-presidents-resignation/>)

social transition challenges young people face generally and especially in relation to their race-ethnicity on college campuses:

The students who are going away, for example, to maybe a Syracuse — I'm thinking of this one specific girl which is why I said Syracuse: it's a private, White university so I have to prepare those students for what they're about to face, which is [that] there *will* be microaggressions whether intentional or unintentional. How well is that student able to handle it? [At] a school like Syracuse, [it's] huge, but doesn't necessarily support their students in the best way. It's just a conversation to have. I've had those conversations around race more now — after George Floyd's murder and the shooting of Ahmaud Arbery and Briana Taylor's murder — with the new students who I work with in this new school. And I think this school in particular, they have a mission statement about how to be anti racist and I think it's amazing. But yes, [in] this new role, this is the most I've had a discussion about race with students. (*Vera, practitioner for 3 years; her emphasis, Black woman*)

Vera's main reference to exemplify her knowing of students' racialized experiences on campus is the racist incidents at Syracuse. Like Lory, she doesn't convey disbelief or even surprise about the racist occurrences — she asserts that students *will* experience microaggressions — but uses Syracuse as a short-hand to broadly characterize the racialized experiences of “students who go away” based on her first-hand experiences with counseling these students. On top of the salience of the Syracuse incidents, Vera incorporates the context of the summer of 2020, which saw massive protests against police brutality and anti-Black racism. This public reckoning with the history and consequences of anti-Black racism in the United States increased the frequency of conversations Vera had already been having with students about racism on college campuses. Lastly, Vera indicates institutional support for staff learning about racism. It is not clear from this interview whether the school in which her college access program is embedded adopted the anti-racist mission *before* the uprisings of the summer of 2020. Vera does, however, indicate a separation between the school's efforts in carrying out an anti-racist mission and the relevance of

understandings of race and racism in the specific context of college-going among racially minoritized students.

Direct reports of students' racialized campus experiences also come to practitioners through the formal discussions that have taken place within their program. Like the conversations Vera alludes to, other counselors indicate that they make efforts to keep in touch with program alumni and make space within their programs to hear about their college experiences. Alicia describes conversations about racialized experiences in college that take place among alumni from her program:

Some of [the program alumni] come back. And they facilitate leadership modules so they share those experiences [in this arena]. And then it comes back up again [for these alumni], because they go directly into the work field or into grad school spaces and it's still the same thing. So [racialized experiences] often manifest themselves in microaggressions. And people are really open about those, but oftentimes the conversation dies down because people are like, "We talk about this all the time and nothing changes." Or someone is willing to ruffle feathers and really take a stance and do something, and then they get penalized for it, they risk it all and lose it all. And that's a very big fear, especially in our community. So it's still a very real thing because while they're trying to help other students, they're trying to navigate a space where they're still a minority and still trying to get their voices heard. So those are ongoing conversations.
(Alicia, practitioner for 2 years, Latina)

In establishing her "knowing" about student racialized experiences in college through the stories told by program alumni, Alicia reveals meaningful aspects of the nature of these formal conversations. What stands out is the ebbs and flows of conversations about their experiences. On one hand, alumni come back and share with one another, with program staff, and with current program participants on their way to college. Alicia gives the impression that alumni are particularly willing to put forth effort to support the students coming up behind them, perhaps even out of a sense of obligation to give that support by making their racialized experiences

known. On the other hand, in making those racialized experiences known, these alumni are actively processing trauma, and the relief of sharing space in community and recognizing they are not alone in their experiences gives way to recognition that conditions on campus remain largely hostile to Black and Brown students and the efforts required to shift these racialized dynamics come with risks and consequences. So sometimes they stop talking about these experiences altogether. Alicia's knowing, then, is extensive and profound. She knows not only the occurrences and impact of the racist incidents themselves on students, but also the sense of both urgency (to inform other students) and futility (to really do anything about these racist incidents) that these students are wrestling with in the aftermath.

Maurice's program also provides spaces for alumni to not only share about their racialized experiences in college, but to receive support in the full spectrum of their college-going needs:

They're not just alum — they're meeting with us consistently. So we're supporting them when they're in that first year. But building up that support for students who realize, "Damn, that was a traumatic experience and I didn't talk about it beforehand." But in terms of our supports and the way we check-in, we do check in with them consistently. So I've had conversations where race and ethnicity has been a thing where they never even previously thought about it as a first year, *or as a second year*. When they tried to do the things that they felt they were supposed to do or should do, whether that's to join a fraternity, whether that's [to] go into a forced friendship with a scholarship organization that says "these other nine people are supposed to be your only route for success" — I'm not naming the organization. But, like, how to balance that in a space that they feel isn't necessarily conducive to who they are. So I think all of our work is very important, especially during junior year and senior year [of high school], but it is not ever going to necessarily prepare them for what it's really like...Listen, the idea of "fit" may change once you get on campus. So whether it's homesickness or whether it's, "If one more person asked me to touch my hair, I think I'm gonna lose it," or, "Wow, there's just a lot of white people", or also realizing, "Wow, not all white people are the same," — [in] having those realizations, I think having these honest conversations [is important].
(Maurice, practitioner for 9 years, Latinx and African American man; his emphasis)

Maurice is also coming away from these formal, program-based conversations with an expansive understanding of students' college social experiences and the processing that students need in order to persist on these hostile campuses. The noticeable difference between the formal conversations structured in Alicia's program and those in Maurice's is on whom the burden of facilitating these crucial conversations ultimately falls. Both programs feature spaces exclusive to alumni to share and process their experiences in college — Alicia mentioned these dedicated spaces and Maurice named one as "Alumni Leadership Council Summits", one where he "[wanted] to hop in, but I think that wasn't my space." But in terms of *facilitating* conversations geared toward imparting preparatory knowledge and strategies, especially for students preparing to matriculate to college, Alicia indicates that it is the alumni who primarily engage the high school students while Maurice emphasizes the role of the counselors in their program as the primary facilitators.

This subtle difference begins to exemplify how knowing about student experiences is one thing, but this knowing does not guarantee a productive, active response to the knowing, particularly a response that not only sees these conversations as worth having but that also conceptualizes support and preparation for the racialized aspects of students' college transition as fundamental to the role of college access and success practitioners. Even more, the distinctions in Alicia and Maurice's approach indicate that the counselor's knowing must be rooted in understandings that deconstruct oppression in order to avoid reproducing it. Alicia's program is not the only one that transfers this aspect of the preparatory role to alumni, and, to be sure, practitioners bring alumni into this task with a truly constructive spirit. Sandy, the veteran practitioner of over 30 years, enthusiastically supports this approach, asserting that she "always [uses] alumni to work with the younger peers" because, "it's important for them to share their

story.” It is reasonable to believe, though, that the same trauma that comes from living through and recounting racialized experiences that Alicia and Maurice reveal exists among Sandy’s students and the students of other counselors. To account for this is to do the type of holistic youth work that the CBES that house these college access and success programs are known for — youth work that has always engaged with structural oppression and sought to equip youth with critical knowledge, but work that has also, unfortunately, lacked an explicit requirement for practitioners to be equipped to impart such knowledge.

Nevertheless, the counselors in this study confirm that they share a consistent “knowing” of the racialized experiences of their students — a crucial element in the recognition of oppression that constitutes Critical Consciousness and, thus, Racial Intelligence. In addition to the more unambiguous entryway to this knowing through hearing directly from students about their racialized experiences, counselors also revealed multifaceted entryways to knowing that affirm frameworks within the sociology of race-ethnicity that illuminate epistemologies of racism — how individuals come into knowing about racism in its multifaceted manifestations. The entryways for knowing about race that counselors demonstrate provide insights into starting points for engaging practitioners in the complex and necessary work of deconstructing oppression, and signal counselors’ dedication to youth work in a way that attests to the possibilities for this consciousness-raising work among practitioners.

The Structural Perspective: The Big Picture of Racism in the United States

Beyond the “knowing” based in the direct reflection of students about their racialized experiences in college, practitioners in this study consistently demonstrated an unequivocal recognition of the reality and impact of racism in the college-going process generally and specifically within the college transition among their students. What differed among counselors

is what they pointed to in order to substantiate this recognition of racism in college. One way counselors established their knowledge of student racialized college experiences was through their understanding of how racism functions in the United States more broadly, and how racial social structures impact the students of color within the college-going process. Counselors Reggie and Alicia offer this type of comprehensive understanding of the importance of the role of race-ethnicity in college. In this, it is notable that these counselors have had experience as admissions officers in addition to their work in supporting high school students in the college-going process, experiences that may inform their understanding of the breadth of this process within a broader societal context.

It's very important because college access exists because there's been so many barriers for particular folks from marginalized backgrounds. So you can't really talk about college access without talking about race. You can talk about college access for rural students, but the barriers are different. The poverty levels could definitely be the same, sometimes worse, than in urban areas, but for students of color, whether they're in an urban area or rural area, there's just so many barriers in the college admissions process. And there's so many biases. *(Reggie, practitioner for 10 years, bi-racial (Black/White) man)*

I think it's absolutely critical...To be honest, in an industry where there aren't — [well], now there's definitely more [admissions] staff members and voices in the room that can add a perspective, but once upon a time, that wasn't the case. So there aren't programs or research being shared and publicized to help admissions people that are predominantly of a specific race [read: White people] understand what they're dealing with, and [without this], I don't think you're really giving students opportunity, you're not really doing diversity work. I think, once upon a time, I was like, “No, we're doing all the diversity work that we can,” and now it's like, “No, there's more that needs to be done. We need to understand these things.” So I think it's absolutely important. I mean, higher ed is predominantly White spaces, right? So for students of color, I think there's still a lot of room to grow and a lot of work left to be done in terms of making sure that they feel empowered and encouraged to pursue things that they absolutely deserve and have the academic backgrounds for. But a lot of that is, you know, the constructs or certain things that are challenges for them, and they just don't know how to articulate it. *(Alicia, practitioner for 2 years; admissions counselor for 5 years, Latina)*

Reggie and Alicia exemplify an anchoring of their “knowing” about racism in racial social structures, a perspective that has been explored by scholars across the social sciences and is especially prominent in the sociological study of racial phenomena. Within this framing, counselors recognize that their racialized social relations (with White college access and admissions colleagues, place-based barriers, historically White colleges) and practices are all part of the racial structure of society (Bonilla-Silva 1999). Reggie and Alicia each paint a picture of a college admissions process that is tied to a racial social structure, and agents operating within this process who must consider these macro dynamics in order to do the work of supporting college-bound, racially minoritized students. Reggie even evokes class-based barriers and begins to articulate how race shapes the experience of poverty and, thus, compounds the barriers for low-income, minoritized students — the very population that these college access and success programs serve. Alicia also draws on understandings of racial social structures. She not only explicitly identifies higher education institutions as White spaces, but also points to “constructs” (reasonably read as “structures”) that are challenges to minoritized students and asserts that the work of college access and admissions counselors is to better understand and address these structures impacting the outcomes for minoritized college students. It is this “big” understanding of race-ethnicity and the impact of racism that will fully actualize the “diversity work” that college access and admission counselors claim as a key aspect of their work overall.

The Self-Referential Perspective: The Value of Lived Experiences

Another way that practitioners established their knowledge of student racialized college experiences was by referring to their own racialized college experiences and those of people close to them. This perspective can be considered at the other end of the analytical spectrum

from counselor understanding of the macro-racialized structures in the previous Structural perspective. This Self-Referential Perspective is a source of knowing that emerges from counselor familiarity with the micro-level structures of racism that manifest in their everyday interactions that reproduce and reinforce racial hierarchy on a daily basis (Rawls 2000). Jessica and Miriam are women of color, racialized as Black, who make clear connections between the racialized experiences they anticipate for students and their own college social experiences. Jessica comes to the conclusion about this connection as part of her response to my question about the importance of race-ethnicity in college-going:

I think that it's super important. But I guess...I think of CUNY as having everyone so maybe I'm wrongfully assuming that [racism on campus] is not as bad at CUNY. And I guess I *am* wrongfully assuming because I had racist and awkward encounters in college when I was a college student, so I'm not going to assume that it's not happening now. But I guess I didn't look at it in that way. [I'm] realizing through this conversation, like, "Oh, our students go to CUNY. It's diverse," but that may not necessarily be true. (*Jessica, practitioner for 7 years, Afro-Latina; her emphasis*)

Jessica was processing this connection between her own experiences and students' racialized experiences on campus as we were speaking. The first experience she turned to in order to anchor her knowing about racism on college campuses was her own college experience, which she used in order to solidify her reasoning about the importance of race-ethnicity in college-going. Miriam's self-reference come about during her reflections about a racism-specific training that she participated in with the staff in her program and its relevance to her work in college access:

I think it's very relevant. Even being in the spaces with college admission reps, the bias is there. It's systematic, it's institutional, it's written within laws. It's written as bylaws. And it's recognizing that you're up against something that was not made for you. And even going back to my time [in undergrad], like [my school] didn't accept folks of color for a long time. And we're still struggling with that simple thing. So even recognizing [that] 2015 was the other day — we didn't even have a BSU when I went there [in 2015]. We didn't have enough students to create a BSU. So all of the students of color, we were part of every organization. I ran the pan Caribbean student organization. So these kinds of

things — going to [my undergrad institution] made me recognize how deeply rooted this issue is...People have to recognize that their space and their power...and sometimes what they perpetuate, is also part of the issue. Even not questioning or not even bringing up, like, “Can we think about this as times are changing? Why aren't we considering moving these things around?” And so when we talk about racism, when we talk about all these things, it's not just about the surface — it goes deeper into how the institution was made, and how it was created, and how we, ourselves also perpetuate that by not even talking about it, and I'm questioning it. (*Miriam, counselor for 3 years, West Indian woman*)

Miriam makes an initial connection between the training about addressing racism and her work as a counselor by drawing on structural understandings of racism and their function within higher education institutions. This makes sense, as the training itself emphasizes historical and systems thinking about racism and participants' work institutions. Miriam goes further, however, to also to tap into her own experiences at her historically White liberal arts undergraduate institution in order to highlight how recent and on-going these everyday manifestations of structural racism are and to then emphasize that there are consequences for college access work when practitioners do not talk about these racialized campus experiences. This knowing that overlaps with multiple levels of interaction and analysis is important to recognize and cultivate among practitioners. This range of perspectives is a beneficial foundation for any cultivation of Racial Intelligence in college access and success. Miriam was not the only counselor who demonstrated the ability to hold multiple perspectives, those of both the macro- and micro-structures of racism. Reggie, a counselor who previously exemplified the structural perspective as a source of his “knowing”, also referenced his own experiences in order to demonstrate his knowing about racism in college generally and how students' race-ethnicity impacts their experiences on campus. Reggie's reflection is specific to a question of hindsight, where I ask directly about which topics or skills would have been helpful to cover in high school in order to prepare him for college. He responds with a series of ideas:

Even a conversation [about] how diverse college is going to be. Even a [college campus] that is predominantly White is still going to be diverse. I guess some skills; self advocacy — I eventually learned it. Just being comfortable asking for help... being comfortable going for help, being able to identify when you need help. And some sort of resiliency work — academic resilience, because as soon as I started to struggle, I would get down on myself. And I thought I was the only one when in reality everyone's struggling, right? I also would have appreciated someone telling me about mental health. That wasn't even a word when I was in high school. I never once used the counseling center when I was in college. But now when I'm working with young people...I'm always pushing mental health, especially in the Black community where we know that nobody wants to talk about nothing. And yeah, my grandfather died the first Friday of college. I should have been talking to someone. I should have been talking to someone but I didn't know.
(Reggie, practitioner for 10 years, Bi-racial man)

This is not a spontaneous reference to himself as with other examples of this perspective, but it is important in its function in the opposite direction — painting a picture of knowing that begins from the counselor's college experiences and then makes reference to the nature of student preparation in the college access program. Reggie (spontaneously) draws connections between what he believes would have been helpful for him in his college transition and what he considers helpful for racially minoritized college-bound young people that he works with today. Yet, even in this question asking broadly about preparation for college that would have been helpful to him, he still hones in on elements that are inextricable from his racialized experiences and the unspoken racialized expectations of him that he sensed from the college environment. Each of the ideas for what he wished he had learned are not explicitly about microaggressions or other overtly racialized interactions — one can argue that they are rather general and applicable for students regardless of racial-ethnic identity. But we know from studies that explore the campus experiences of marginalized students that issues of racism on historically White campuses emerge in subtle but important ways (Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso 2000, Ford 2014, Harwood et al 2015). These studies confirm that racially minoritized students are well aware of the racial stereotypes they carry and that students often feel the need to prove that they belong at the school

— experiences that may discourage minoritized students from asking for help, or that may lead to depression due to isolation and feelings of inadequacy, just as Reggie outlines in his reflection.

In referencing their own experiences, counselors — particularly those who share a marginalized racial identity with the student populations in their programs — create critical space for the valid experiences of racialized people and the incorporation of their knowledge into program construction and implementation. Patricia Hill Collins, in her classic work, *Black Feminist Thought* (2008), is adamant about the necessity of Black American women’s experiences as a lens through which to examine multiple forms of oppression that work together to produce the prevailing U.S. matrix of domination, given their positioning within the various domains of domination in U.S. society. In this, Collins affirms how lived experiences become important to knowledge production about the nature of the world. I lightly extrapolate from Collin’s thorough theorization of how oppression is organized and accompanying strategies for resistance, and apply it to the racialized experiences of counselors and the importance of the particular “knowing” that they carry as racialized people who guide racialized youth through a racialized college-going process and onto racialized, historically White college campuses. Integral to doing the equity-oriented college access work that is foundational to the mission of these college access organizations is the activation of the particular epistemologies of Black and Brown counselors within the realm of college access that are based in their experiences operating in higher education institutions — their points of reference — and as practitioners guiding minoritized students into and through higher education institutions that continue to operate as oppressive structures.

The structural and self-referential perspectives are two important entryways to knowing

about racism on college campuses that counselors discuss. Also critical is the meso-level mechanisms that substantiate counselor knowing. This perspective illustrates why organizations are important in determining the extent to which these practitioners, in their institutional role, are able to cultivate a knowing about race and successfully circulate these understandings among their colleagues. Counselors implicated the overarching mission of college access and success programming, which is fundamentally tied to the race-ethnicity of the core constituents of these programs, as an important source of knowing and the particular context in which any subsequent “doing” takes place.

The Mission-Based Perspective: Delimiting A Lens on Racism

The final way practitioners established their knowledge of student racialized college experiences was by articulating what they understand to be the inherently racialized nature of the college access and success industry. The assumptions embedded within this perspective is that the work of college access and success — led by mostly Black and Brown practitioners serving mostly low-income Black and Brown youth — is inextricable from the racial dynamics that permeate society, and counselor efforts to support these youth “to and through” the supposed socially-mobilizing higher education system automatically does the work to counteract the negative impacts of those societal racial dynamics. Counselors made these connections explicitly in their discussion of the importance of race-ethnicity in the college access and success process. :

I do feel that it's important to programs and to structures because we do typically work in communities of color. And I guess the reason why we probably don't talk about racial identity on a programmatic scale is because it's already kind of inherent with the population that we work with. And even my team is a highly diverse team, so, like, do we constantly need to have these conversations about race when we're already kind of living it? That's the question. Even though I think it would be good to touch upon [race-related topics] once in a while. But I do feel that race identity and gender identity is important to education, because, you know, you want to create an inclusive educational environment.

And when you don't have the tough discussions about race identity and gender identity, then it creates a stagnant environment where you will be stuck with old views...So, I do feel that, in an academic sense, it's vital to have these conversations and have them [honestly]. Otherwise, you're going to stagnate your culture. And you're going to stagnate the value of your educational experience or your student's educational experience.
(*Donna, practitioner for 2 years, Latina*)

Donna is unequivocal in her understanding of the importance of race-ethnicity and understanding racism in college access and success, but she distinguishes race-ethnicity as a factor impacting education processes from the importance of making these understandings of how race-ethnicity and racism operate within the field more explicit for practitioners and students. Specifically, Donna questions whether it is worth speaking to a “diverse” team about race, assuming that their minoritized racial identities encompasses experiences that would automatically give counselors useful and concrete insights about how to approach issues of race-ethnicity and racism in college access and success. As she continues to process through this question, she admits that to “touch upon [race-related topics] once in a while” would be good and that not having these conversations among practitioners would devalue the educational experiences of both practitioners and students. The importance she places on these conversations, however, is “academic” — she prioritizes a “knowing” that is primarily for the sake of knowing, to add as one of many pieces of information about the college access and success industry, and less about a “knowing” toward deeper analysis of how race-ethnicity and racism impact all aspects of the college-going process in order to critically incorporate these understandings in preparatory activities for students.

This assumption that the work of college access and success in the community-based organizational sphere inherently tackles issues of race-ethnicity and racism is wide-spread. In expressing the importance of race-ethnicity in college access and success, Rachel corroborates

the circulation of this taken-for-granted stance throughout the field even as she counters its validity:

I think it's very important. I also think that there's a lot of work that needs to be done. When I first [got into this field], I thought, "Okay, if you hire all people of color, we're helping this problem by serving as role models" — which is true, in a sense. Yes, representation is important and I think the young people seeing us helps in working with them and maybe helps in building a connection, but I think there's a lot more training and a lot more continuous work that needs to get done. I think sometimes when you have so many people of color, you think, "Oh, we don't need this training because they know everything" — which is not always true! Everyone's lived experience is different. And also everyone has their own biases. And I think that's something that we — I guess, even myself — sometimes we're in denial of it because we're like, "No, we're doing this work. I'm with these students every day, I live them, I know their experiences," but we have our own biases. And I think there's a lot of work that needs to get done — understanding our biases and working towards actively going against them and growing, even if it's an organization filled with people who represent our students. (*Rachel, practitioner for 3 years, Latina*)

Rachel voices the tensions of working in an inherently racialized (and class-based) industry as a racialized person and what that does and does-not mean for one's comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of race-ethnicity and experiences of racism in U.S. society. Within youth development practice and literature, the important focus on how to incorporate political education, in the vein of critical consciousness, into youth development programs (Flanagan & Faison 2001, Ginwright 2007, Kwon 2008, Flanagan & Christens 2011, Baldrige et al 2017) lacks a parallel focus on how to cultivate this type of critical analysis among the practitioners who are expected to carry out this work with young people. In her three years as a practitioner, Rachel has absorbed the assumptions of the social and political consciousness of practitioners that circulates throughout the industry and she conveys a healthy skepticism of such claims.

Here, as with the previous Structural Perspective, the "knowing" impacts the "doing". Within this Mission-Based Perspective, the assumption that issues of race-ethnicity and racism are understood among college counselors — due to their own minoritized racial identity and by

nature of doing work that explicitly addresses race and class marginalization in higher ed — also impacts how counselors approach preparation for students. In the same way many counselors assume they don't need to discuss issues of race because they "live it", it is reasonable to consider that they might think they don't need to discuss race with students because they also "live it." Dina, a practitioner for five years, reflects this assumption and reveals its inaccuracy in response to a question asking about when the topic of race-ethnicity emerges within her program:

So by high school, a majority [of students], going by youth development, know that they have a race: they're black, they know they're Afro Latino, Latinx — they know what they are...that is something I've noticed — they get it. so that it's easy for them to check the box. Okay. I've had students who are [mixed-race] ask me, "What should I do?" and I kind of look at them, like, "What do you mean?" It's like, check the "other". We have had conversations with students who are [mixed-race], but for the most part, they know what to check [with] the box. What matters is when they do college visits — that's what comes up. So when we do college visits, they come to me quietly and go, "There's a lot of white people here...I don't feel comfortable," and you [counselors] have to pick it up. And that's why I do the staff training — you have to hear what they're saying. Because they're not going to come out to you and say, "I'm uncomfortable because I am Black or Spanish [read: Latinx]. They tell you after the fact when they get really comfortable with you but in the moment they will be like, "It's really quiet here." (*Dina, practitioner for 5 years, Black/West Indian woman*).

Dina draws her conclusions about students' understanding of their own racial identity from "youth development", implying research studies or training or other widely legitimized bases for practice, and from what she has noticed from her direct service experiences with high school students. She insists that these students "know what they are" racially, but what remains unaccounted for is how students are making meaning of race-ethnicity outside of themselves. How are they making connections between their own experiences and the historical and current functioning of society? *This* is the knowing that is core to Racial Intelligence and, relatedly, encompasses the aims within Critical Consciousness to "recognize" oppression. From conversations with mixed-race students trying to understand their racial categorization within a

college admissions process that draws strategic distinctions among imposed and contested social categories, to college visits that, without fail, snap Black and Brown students into a visceral reality of attending historically White universities, Dina indicates the necessity for a degree of knowing that is beyond the self, one that allows for an incorporation of shared experiences among marginalized people, not just for the sake of having company, but for the sake of critical perspective and informed action. This degree of knowing is necessary for students navigating college and the world in general, which means that it is imperative that practitioners are equipped to engage students in this knowing. From Dina's perspective, she and other counselors are doing this engagement with students, but her own account of how she engages with the topic of race-ethnicity within program demonstrates how slippery assumptions are:

I don't like talking — I talk about race, as in biases. I did it on purpose. I say people have biases, people will stereotype you. In a general group, I talk about biases because I do believe that you could still be prejudiced [and be] in an all black program. And that sometimes it's not even about race — race is just one of it. Gender matters. Sexual identity matters. You know, sometimes you act like the buffoon because it's easier to accept you as the comedic person who just happens to have a different identity or sexual orientation than to be the serious one. I tell people you don't have to act silly because it makes people feel better. Race is one of the factors, but it's more of that gender issue of building confidence in females. It's also the idea of skin color— you could be a Black young person [and] if you're light skinned Black person, you have a way different experiences different dark skinned black person in the Bronx. ...a lot of my students are first generation — a lot of them are afraid of just trying. So a lot of that comes into play. *(Dina, practitioner for 5 years, Black/West Indian woman).*

The danger of assuming that counselors, by virtue of working in an inherently racialized industry (often as a racialized person), possess a degree of knowing that is sufficient to support minoritized students in their particular needs around navigating the White space of college is the propensity for the type of conceptual slippage Dina displays. In her discussion of the emergence of race within her program, she broadens her reflection to discuss how she talks about race-ethnicity generally. In a way, the thought fragment that begins the excerpt above (“I don't

like talking —”) announces the deviation from the student experience-derived knowing that she lays out just prior to this reflection: she has already articulated the specifically race-based questions and concerns that students have about college-going, but she purposely re-frames these specific considerations away from the specifics of race-ethnicity to the power-bereft concept of “biases”. Undoubtedly, all of Dina’s observations are valid and touch on the multiple forms of oppression that young people face in their college-going process. Still, Dina separates these forms of oppression and does not indicate an awareness of how all of these factors that she presents as “more” than race-ethnicity are oppressions that are consistently refracted through race-ethnicity and thus magnify their experiences and impacts for racially minoritized students.

Even in the process of downplaying race, Dina conveys aspects of her guidance for students that align with Racial Intelligence by way of knowing. Her analysis of how minoritized students adjust their behaviors — to “act silly” or “the buffoon” — in order to be accepted or make others feel comfortable is a remarkable feature of her guidance. The potential move in a universal, race-evasive direction is present, but there’s also an on-its-face alignment with Racial Intelligence that demonstrates potential for this guidance to more fully encompass Racial Intelligence aims. In the context of her reflection about telling young people that they “don’t have to act silly because it makes people feel better”, Dina’s motivation is to universalize experiences of being stereotyped according to various social identities. Under the aims of Racial Intelligence, Dina would be able to go beyond this universal experience to support students in understanding the power of stereotypes and their impacts on different people, especially those who have been historically marginalized in the United States because of their racial categorization. She would particularly be able to convey how her observations of minoritized students acting in ways that make others comfortable is specifically rooted in values of

Whiteness, specifically White comfort. Perhaps she would be able to ask herself and students, “which people are being made to feel better and why is this performance deemed necessary?” When she deftly concludes that these students put on these performances “because it’s easier to accept you as the comedic person who just happens to have a different identity,” the question becomes, “Easier for whom to accept these students? Different identity from whom?” All of this connects to the manifestation of structural racism at the level of interaction, particularly how racialized people are expected to behave and how White comfort becomes centered in social interactions to the detriment of minoritized people — including all of the racial actors in the college setting.

With the Mission-Based Perspective, we begin to join an analysis of inequality at the micro level to analyses of racial inequality at the meso level. This perspective is in line with approaches within sociological scholarship that elevate the racialization of organizations in order to understand and explain the production and perpetuation of racial inequality at multiple levels of interaction and analysis (Wooten & Couloute 2016, Ray 2019). The work of Melissa Wooten and Lucious Couloute (2016) gives insight into this necessary approach in a granular way that helps situate college access and success organizations within a racialized organizational framework. The authors make the case for an analysis of race that, “imagine[s] organizations as having an identity tied to race, and as a result, [has] the capacity to be racialized much in the same way that people are” (Wooten & Couloute 2016). There is work beyond this study that is necessary to specify the ways in which racial inequality manifests among college access and success organizations, but this Mission-Based Perspective nonetheless implicates these organizations in racialized organizational processes in that the “mission” itself is racialized. Wooten and Couloute draw out aspects of racialized organizations that are helpful in order to

pin-point the position of college access and success organizations and their racialized features.

First, the authors frame organizational racialization as a feature that serves to, on one hand, marginalize racially minoritized people and, on the other, to support racially minoritized people in navigating White institutional space. I contend that college access and success organizations operate in the latter and, in the tradition of other efforts the authors point out such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities and The Black Panther Party, were created in order to mitigate the harms of exclusion of racially minoritized people in the United States and navigate the social institutions (specifically higher education) structured to service and benefit White people.

Wooten and Couloute assert that, beyond identifying racialized organizations as such, it is critical to consider how these organization's racialization drives their strategies for action. These are, "the beliefs, rituals, or language regarding race affect organizations and the organizing process" wherein "organizational actors specifically incorporate race into their mission to challenge racial inequality and the regimes¹² that support it" (Wooten & Couloute 2016). The authors focus their examples on Black social movement organizations, which, actually, find mission alignment with college access and success work in their aims "to redistribute society's rewards" within a reward structure that favors White Americans — organizations explicitly formed in order to "contest and alter this state of affairs" (Wooten & Couloute 2016). This framing offers a more robust view of college access and success programming and the practitioners that carry out this work, and provides a focused understanding of this work that moves beyond narrow student outcomes that define their success as admission to college, persistence through college, and college completion.

Wooten and Couloute's dissection of particular elements of racialized organizations

¹² The authors use the concept of "inequality regimes" from sociologist Joan Acker (2006). They summarize this concept as, "the 'loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings responsible for the systematic disparities between participants in power and those lacking power. [They are] politically, historically, and culturally specific. In the United States, these regimes have privileged Whiteness or White people.'" (Wooten & Couloute 2016:3)

highlights the disconnect between the core preparatory and support function of college access and success organizations and their implicit, widely accepted racialized missions. Preparation for students rightfully attends to making it through college by meeting academic expectations and the consequential element of financing the educational experience overall. It is often the racialized nature of navigating White higher educational institutions that gets neglected, and thus the fundamentally racialized experiences that racially minoritized students have on these campuses. Granted, many practitioners care deeply about this robust picture concerned with how students' racial identity and experiences impact those core goals of college access and completion, but these are not concerns that are well integrated nor articulated within the field. The danger, then, of the Mission-Based Perspective that assumes that the aims of disrupting inequality are built into college access work is that it neglects a deeper understanding about how racism operates and, instead, leans on the racialized features of the work for legitimacy. Overlooking this deeper understanding about racial phenomena means that practitioners and students are unprepared to respond to ever-shifting manifestations of racism, and, rather than carrying out a mission to disrupt racial inequality, practitioners perpetuate racial structures that maintain racial inequality.

College access and success organizations exist as social actors with particular strategies of action. Such racialized social actors that are not specific about their racial agenda and rely on the work itself to represent the mission of addressing racial inequality means that understandings of racial inequality are diffuse while all other preparatory functions are understood to work in concert. Further, the reliance on the mission to represent the work of interrupting inequality means that the work really boils down to ushering Black and Brown students into racially hostile environments, with a focus of their preparation focused largely on meeting the requirements of

the university in its existence as an inequality regime. Without an analysis, without a proper framing of the White institutional space of college, the work of college access ultimately legitimizes the institution and perpetuates harm for racially minoritized students. The racialized “state of affairs” within college-going — from preparation to college completion — requires direct confrontation in order to expose its full potential to disrupt inequality in higher education, both in the micro-structures of everyday racialized interactions and as part of a meso-level processes that impact these micro-structures.

Conclusion

These entryways to knowing about students’ racialized campus experiences are viable ways to understand racial phenomena. Each of these entryways, however, also situate knowing in ways that allow counselors to neglect an engagement with fundamental principles of the racial order that operate in the micro, everyday manifestations of racism. Direct reports from students about their campus experiences is a concrete entryway to knowing. The tendency for counselors to lean away from imposing their preferences and toward a type of support that leads students to make decisions based on their “tolerance” for the campus social climate makes guidance a case-by-case endeavor, rather than derived from a pattern of experiences that counselors can capture for students as part of guidance. Furthermore, counselors’ commonplace reliance on program alumni to broach the topic of racialized experiences on campus removes the onus for facilitation of these crucial topics from counselors altogether.

The three perspectives highlighted in this analysis as entryways to knowing about students’ racialized campus experiences beyond direct reports from the students themselves also allow for counselors to avoid engaging with the micro-level manifestations of racism in their

guidance for students. While the Structural Perspective is a necessary “big picture” view of how racial inequality impacts racially minoritized students in college, it cannot be assumed that counselors are able to translate how this big picture manifests for students at the micro-interactional level. This translation is necessary within an industry that carries out a preparatory function and features well-documented challenges for students at the level of interaction. The Self-Referential Perspective presents an opposite consideration from the Structural Perspective. Though the sociological imagination (Mills 1959) absolutely requires reflection on one’s personal problems, without extrapolating from the personal in order to understand how it fits into shared experiences at multiple levels of social interaction and analysis, counselors, in this case, would be limited by their own lens and would center their own experiences as the extent of possible knowings regarding race-ethnicity and the college experience. Finally, the Mission-Based Perspective presents a necessary recognition of racialized phenomena as part of the work of college access and success organizations. To leave the understanding of the impact of racial inequality in college access and success with the organization, however, means that critical social actors — particularly counselors and students — may neglect deeper understandings about race-ethnicity and rely on the assumption that by nature of doing the work, they’re “doing the work”...so what more is there?

Counselors in this study have provided great insight into how they establish their “knowing” about racial phenomena in the college experiences of the students they work with. These insights will be important to build upon or challenge with future work that seeks greater understanding of counselor engagement with racial inequality in their preparatory work with young people. These insights centered on “knowing” are also crucial in future explorations of the

“doing”. What counselors know and how they come to know it impacts the way they approach their work, particularly in supporting students in their navigation of racial inequality in their everyday interactions. Navigation of racial inequality is also implicated at the meso-level. Wooten and Couloute (2016) emphasize how organizations as racialized social actors feature particular “strategies of action” — the “appropriate tools...to achieve their goals, solve life’s problems, and navigate their daily environment.” These strategies develop out of the meaning of race-ethnicity espoused by the organization. At both these levels, there is a necessity for action that aims to respond to and interrupt racial inequality — strategies that allow students to navigate White college institutional space in self-preserving ways and ones that base organizational processes in a clear understanding of their racialization and potential to impact individual outcomes.

“Oppressed people, whatever their level of formal education, have the ability to understand and interpret the world around them, to see the world for what it is, and move to transform it.” - Ella Baker

Chapter 6: Discussion

I. Overview: An Interactional Approach to Race-Ethnicity and Preparation for College

Beginning around December of every school year, high school seniors in the United States begin to receive admissions decisions from the colleges to which they applied. Notifications often come by email these days, which means students have a down-to-the-minute expectation of a decision that has the potential to change their lives. Add social media to this mix and anyone beyond the student, their families, teachers, and mentors can be privy to these announcements and students’ real-time reactions.

I usually catch videos of these announcements on the local news, while scrolling my Twitter feed, or directly from college access and success counselors who are part of my communities of practice. The most prominent videos feature Black and Brown youth sitting in front of a computer screen surrounded by friends or family awaiting admissions decisions from elite, historically White colleges and universities. I must say: every time I see these videos, I am at once excited for the fulfillment of the hopes of these families, proud of the efforts students have put into the application process over the past year...and uneasy knowing that the likelihood that these students and families have engaged in intentional conversations about the racialized aspects of the social and academic transition to college is quite slim.

Fortunately, we, the college-sanctioning public, have moved beyond the need for proof that racially hostile college campuses are real and impactful (first-hand reports captured on social media helped with that too). Much of the conversation has shifted to institutional efforts to ensure that the “campus climate” aligns with the images of college life that have been peddled to students for decades — an academic environment where adolescents rehearse the responsibilities of adulthood in their “job” as student, where they build knowledge and skills for the vocation of their choice. The image of the social environment is one of a campus-based life of parties and extracurricular activities, where students make life-long friends along the way. A place akin to Elijah Anderson’s picture of a Cosmopolitan Canopy, where

“virtually all racial groups are well represented... but not in even proportions... People appear relaxed and are often observed interacting across the color line... This is a calm environment of equivalent, symmetrical relationships — a respite from the streets outside” (Anderson 2011).

Regardless of the shifting realities of college-going, in which the “typical” college students is more likely to be a 26 years old with a full-time off-campus and a child to care for, these quaint images and expectations for college life endure (Fishman, Ekowo, and Ezeugo 2017; Lumina Foundation 2019). Without a true framing of not only who is attending college but also the nature of their college experiences, we misplace productive energy in every effort to ensure that the socially and economically consequential process of earning a degree is attainable.

Those institutional efforts to create an inclusive campus climate concede the importance of the racialized experiences of marginalized people to their educational mission. This fact is not lost on students and their families, even if they come to this realization through trial, error, and the stories of classmates. I would even say that these campus-based efforts — from orientation sessions on racial “bias” and dedicated administrative offices to diversity, equity and inclusion — intended to signal the institution’s commitment to inclusivity also works to spotlight the types

of challenges that the campus environment presents for marginalized students and families in ways that they may not have explicitly anticipated. Regardless of how students and families perceive campus climate improvement efforts, they are still just one approach to a systemic issue that manifests within and between institutions, as well as in everyday interactions.

Sociological, educational, and evaluation studies have done well in corroborating the underlining experiences of racism and other forms of oppression that impact college students and have even contributed to the institutional approaches to address racism on campus. It is imperative, though, that our inquiries look beyond the campus for the mechanisms to address racism in this context; on one hand, this is not a problem that is exclusive to college campuses, and on the other hand, it is irresponsible to wait until students are immersed in the campus context to begin this work in earnest. Thus far, there is a dearth of scholarship or even optimal practices that specifically explore how to address students' experiences of racism on college campuses that look beyond campus-based solutions generally, and that specifically consider increasingly commonplace college preparatory activities as a fruitful starting place. By essentially asking, "what can happen before students get to college?" we open up possibilities for exploring theory and action around addressing student experiences of racism on college campuses

In centering college access professionals, this dissertation has elevated their role in the preparation of minoritized students to navigate the White space of college. It is vital for practitioners and scholars to grasp the extent to which practitioners incorporate understandings of the racial climate of college campuses into their programs and provide explicit support for navigating this climate daily. Findings indicate that the imparting of these racial understandings — framed within the concept of Racial Intelligence — is tied to practitioners' interpretation of

“advocacy”, and specific desires for students to develop skills of “self-advocacy”. Practitioner definitions of and stated goals for their own advocacy activities on behalf of students and the self-advocacy they desire to instill in young people are implicitly tied to understandings of navigating the everyday manifestations of structural racism. These implicit understandings, however, remain implicit, pointing to reluctance to name race explicitly and/or a stance that takes for granted student (and often practitioner) recognition of their position within racial hierarchies, thereby making any mention of race redundant or offensive.

Findings also probe how counselors come to know about the racial order in the first place. The importance of coming into “knowing” is tied to the component of both Critical Consciousness (Freire 1970) and Racial Intelligence (Emirbayer & Desmond 2015) that necessitate an understanding about the nature of oppression before one is able to act in accordance with efforts to interrupt and end oppression. Practitioners in this study absolutely possess a “knowing” about oppression as it manifests as racism on college campuses, and they come into knowing in various, patterned ways. Though counselor entryways to knowing about racial phenomena are viable, each highlighted entryway — based in understanding of racial oppression in a macro-structural sense, references to their own experiences, and as an offshoot of their college access organization’s mission — allows counselors to avoid engagement with fundamental principles of the racial order that operate in the micro, everyday manifestations of racism. Because “knowing” directly impacts any possible “doing”, it is critical to make the micro-interactional manifestations of racism a focal point as we look beyond institution-based solutions to campus racism and in our support for minoritized students in navigating the White space of college.

II. Theory of Change: Knowing Better to Do Better

The basis for this work rests within what we know to be the impactful racialized experiences of college students on historically White campuses, but the focus of inquiry rests with college access practitioners tasked with preparing students — the vast majority of whom are racially minoritized students — to enter, persist in, and complete college. The clear-cut assumption, given practitioners' preparatory role, is that the Racial Intelligence of young people (particularly in regards to college-going) necessitates the Racial Intelligence of education practitioners, generally and among college access specifically. Within this assumption, there are a few overarching concerns to grapple with: How does race get talked about in educative spaces generally? How do education practitioners understand racial phenomena in their work in the broader society? What are the avenues for practitioners to gain understandings of racial phenomena? Ultimately, what are the impacts on young people when practitioners have a grounded understanding of racial phenomena and incorporate those understandings into the learning taking place? These concerns enjoy increasing resonance within traditional school contexts as part of approaches, such as Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings 1992, 1995), that are explicit about the necessity of the aims of Critical Consciousness within the education process and among educators (Gay & Kirkland 2010). These concerns are less resonant within the community-based field of college access and success, even as the Community-Based Education Spaces that house this programming is known for engaging in knowledge building and collective action based in Critical Consciousness.

While it is appropriate to view all educative spaces as “preparatory”, the specificity of the preparatory context of college access and success matters to the dominant value of higher

education in the United States and on-going struggles to make it more accessible and equitable given its impact on social well-being. The work itself is transitional and dictated by the requirements for entry into higher education institutions in a way that K-12 education is not. In fact, attempts to actually reconcile curricular standards in K-12 education with curricular demands of higher education institutions are on-going (Perna & Armijo 2014, Adelman 2006, Perna & Jones 2013, Kirst & Usdan 2009). College access and success programming, however, responds directly to the requirements of higher education, and definitions of college readiness respond to what will make especially marginalized students eligible for admission (academic and otherwise) and what knowledge and skills will keep them there toward completion. Therefore, what the preparatory space of college access and success recognizes as essential to transition and completion mandates as students pass from K-12 education to higher education is vital, especially considering the various impacts of racism — not only in the ways that systemic racism dictates resources and opportunities for racially marginalized students in K-12 education, but also for the interactional manifestations of systemic racism that impacts the everyday experiences of racially minoritized students once they beat the odds to make that transition to college.

My understanding of the problem and approach to considerations of solutions is based in sociological scholarship on race-ethnicity that gets into the minutia of how race-ethnicity gets created and re-created everyday. The understanding that “race is a social construct” is ubiquitous even outside of the academy. What we often don’t deal with is that, as a social construction, race-ethnicity cannot be constructed by one person all by themselves; race-ethnicity is relational and becomes accomplished, reasserted, and socially solidified in everyday interactions (West and

Fenstermaker 1995, Emirbayer 1997, O'Connor, Lewis, and Mueller 2007, Zuberi, Patterson, and Steward 2015, Diamond 2018). With the understanding that the construction of race and the operation of racial inequality is happening in the unfolding of social interactions, the focus on college access work as a preparatory endeavor is fundamentally to, first, frame dehumanizing interactions in college in the proper context of structural racism, and to encourage a variety of responses to these racialized interaction that are based in an ethic that values the well-being of racially minoritized students and actively counters tendencies to internalize racism.

Proceeding from these critical understandings of the micro-structures of racism, the theory of change to address students' need to navigate racism in college includes the skills that have been embedded in CBES youth programming all along: helping students "read the world" (Baldrige 2018). This endeavor must accommodate the fact that minoritized youth have interacted their whole lives in a racialized society and, therefore, have an understanding of their racialization based on these experiences. The goal, then, is to validate student experiences, fortify these understandings with sound knowledge about the racial order, and provide avenues for daily decision-making and action based in an anti-oppressive ethic that eschews assimilation and internalized racism. This encompasses the *activation* of Racial Intelligence, a process that shapes human agency and values harm reduction in the midst of structural oppression.

The magnitude of change necessarily happens in ripples. Patrica Hill-Collins (2008 [1990]) describes this type of power shift and transformation in her discussion of the process of empowerment for Black women in the United States.

As each individual African-American woman changes her ideas and actions, so does the overall shape of power itself change. In the absence of Black feminist thought and other comparable oppositional knowledge, these micro-changes may remain invisible to individual women. Yet collectively, they can have a

profound impact...As people push against, step away from, and shift the terms of their participation in power relations, the shape of power relations changes for everyone.
(Collins 2008 [1990]:275; emphasis added)

Collins emphasizes the everyday micro-actions, acts that counter the natural flow of expectations of the power position of marginalized people. As individuals change ideas and actions, the shape of power shifts. These individual acts are ripples that combine into collective action toward disrupting inequality. Critical Consciousness and Racial Intelligence are types of oppositional knowledge that make those micro-acts of interrupting racism legible. For college-bound students preparing to navigate the White space of college, the intentional elements of Racial Intelligence — gaining knowledge about the racial order and using strategies for navigating racial terrain that are anti-oppressive and self-preserving — are critical to create those ripples that amount to collective action and shifts in racial power relations. Vital to this theory of change is the fact that this work within the college access and success field can only truly be accomplished with an assurance that youth workers are equipped to support students in this endeavor.

Bonilla-Silva (2017) reminds that, “race remains a central axis of social division, action, and feeling in our nation...”. Therefore, to overlook the everyday experiences of racism or attempt to proxy for these experiences with solutions geared toward “first-generation” or “low income” students is insufficient. In its most practical sense, this project identifies an omitted yet glaring consideration for persistence in college. In an industry where class-based understandings of challenges to college completion are most resonant, this project aims to elevate the impact of racial inequality in the everyday experiences of racially minoritized students on college campuses and move toward equipping practitioners to support student navigation of these experiences with the least harm.

III. The Stance: Specifying Anti-Oppressive Racially Intelligent Action

Important to the conception of this work is its explicit anti-oppressive stance. It is common for guidance on navigating oppressive spaces — whether marked by racism, patriarchy, classism, or other forms of oppression — to emphasize actions that amount to assimilation. This expectation that oppressed people will deny themselves and conform to dominant cultural norms is inextricably tied to internalized oppression, a feature of structural oppression that develops from the impacts of ideologies of inferiority that manifest in institutional processes and become acted out by dominant racial actors in everyday interactions (Chinook Fund 2010). Essentially, when oppressed people believe and act in accordance with negative messages about themselves — to the point of adjusting who they are to “fit in” and make dominant social actors comfortable — they have internalized oppression.

Beyond the empirical and practical meanings, this project contemplates the range of possible dispositions that racially oppressed people in particular might possess in a White supremacist society — dispositions that come by way of choice of the oppressed and outside of consideration of the expectations of White people and their comfort. Another way to frame the questions guiding this study is this: *What does it mean to center Black joy and Black agency, rather than the White gaze, in college access and success work (and beyond)?* This question ultimately governs the vision for what “preparation for navigation of White spaces” looks like, especially the skills and dispositions that I envision as “racially intelligent”. In all this, the nature of advocacy and guidance for Black and Brown youth centers on violating the rules of the social environment in its fundamentally racialized operation.

Emirbayer and Desmond (2015) are also clear about the type of agentic action embedded in the Racial Intelligence framework. Tied to this “readiness” to respond to everyday manifestations of structural racism is the ability to navigate these “perilous currents of racial condescension and prejudice,” with “self-affirmation or self-acceptance instead of internalized hatred and self-destructiveness” (p 270). It’s especially the “intelligence” part of Racial Intelligence that is intentional about this anti-oppressive stance. With the complexities of navigating the racial order, especially in everyday, random, deeply contextual interactions, what counts as “intelligent” differs from situation to situation. What Emirbayer and Desmond are adamant about, however, is that intelligent responses to racial hostilities must not be coldly rational nor foster internalized oppression. They make two key points connected to this stance. First, they make clear that lacking or diminished emotions are not to be lauded. They evoke a teaching of Aristotle that insists that the proof of excellent character should not be found in “moderately emotional responses, such as tepid irritation when a great injustice has been perpetuated” (p 270-271). They go on:

Cold rationality in the face of injustice often is an inappropriate moral and expressive response...Practical judgment determines just what emotion or action is best. (p 271)

Their second point asserts that “emotions themselves can be intelligent.” This assertion may seem basic at first glance, but emotions are important aspects of our social interactions. They are certainly racialized and afforded power and sanctioning depending on which racialized body is doing the emoting (Wingfield 2010, Bonilla-Silva 2019) and they can also be useful and informative for social actors. Within the racial intelligence framework, emotions can be important reactions to a proper reading of the world, especially the type of reading required to

act in ways that interrupt inequality and stave off internalized oppression and even despair.

Emirbayer and Desmond make this clear:

To respond to an unjust racial situation with resignation or self-doubt is...also a form of emotional engagement lacking in appropriate or sound judgment. (p 271)

The goals of interrupting inequality cannot be achieved if one's response to injustice is resignation. The vital aim of resisting internalized oppression cannot be achieved if one's response to injustice is self-doubt, which, in my estimation, amounts to distrusting one's emotions or calibrating one's emotions to the comfort of others (especially White people). In total, the authors advance a program that offers options for intelligent responses that makes it viable to, first, respond emotionally to injustice, and then, to respond in "intelligent" ways. In this, silence and indifference in the face of injustice relegates any subsequent action to the realm of ambivalence and uncertainty, which is unhelpful to the aims of interrupting inequality in their everyday manifestations. Ultimately, fostering intelligence increases opportunity for productive challenges to the racial order.

To be sure, this "open and supple response" to everyday racial phenomena by way of Racial Intelligence encompasses a range of actions and emotional responses. Key to enacting this range of options for action is an "already, not yet" perspective. This means that racialized people must hold the idea that they are free and capable of acting in self-preserving ways at the same time they are aware of the consequences of non-conformity in a society that is still operating according to the norms of White supremacy. Racially oppressed people engaging in racially intelligent agentic action, then, are able to assess everyday situations, the potential outcomes of a range of actions, and make intelligent choices about what actions are required of them in the moment for their social well-being, as well as the extent to which they have the space to, "push

against, step away from, and shift the terms of their participation in power relations” (Collins 2008 [1990]) in their everyday interactions. Sometimes this means taking action that may look like assimilation, but is plausibly strategic action. It is the hope, however, that more often than not, racially oppressed people are making decisions that violate racialized social rules that show up in everyday interactions. My contention, in line with the elements of “knowing” and “doing” that encompass Racial Intelligence, is that in order to get to a place where these social violations become more viable and appealing choices, there must be a greater, more widespread “knowing” of the racial order and options for navigating it among oppressed people in order to establish the “ripples” that lead to greater social change. There are contexts beyond college access and success that are ripe for infusing this type of knowing. Researchers and practitioners must be creative about identifying these opportunities and commit to this work.

IV. Pulling the Thread of Racially Intelligent Action in College-Going

Fostering Responses to the Unpredictable in Everyday Interactions

There is much that sociologists of education have yet to uncover about the nature of preparation for college among minoritized youth, including insight into students' understanding of their preparation and what preparatory needs remain, and, as this dissertation emphasizes, who are the practitioners imparting college-going knowledge and how are they equipped to support students in all of this. Because theory and scholarship drive practice, what we see in the world of college preparation is youth mostly being prepared for the predictable — the mechanics of the college process and the types of barriers to persistence and completion that get the most attention, from academic readiness to paying for college.

The *unpredictable* is more difficult, and, I'd argue, more impactful, especially because those unpredictable elements of college-going tend to be based in everyday interactions and are insidiously harmful. But how does one prepare for the unpredictable? The possibilities for what one may encounter in a White supremacist world are vast and layered — it is an on-its-face impossibility to prepare for it all. The solution, though, is not to focus on all the possibilities that hinder racialized people navigating a racist society generally and the White space of college specifically. Instead, the task is to build a skill set in order to properly read the world — and, thus, the higher education context — so that minoritized people can assess (social) risks toward reducing (social) harm.

I often hear scholars and practitioners affirm the value of social risk assessment and social harm reduction, but these concepts lack concrete framing as a basis for practice. For example, in an episode of the “On Being” podcast where host Krista Tippett is in conversation with Robin DiAngelo, a prominent anti-racist author and educator, and Resmaa Menakem

dynamic psychotherapist and educator focusing on embodied racial trauma, DiAngelo distinguishes between the need for policy change and the focus of her work around White people doing less harm to Black people in everyday encounters (Trippett 2020a). She names this as a worthwhile area of focus, saying that “less harm is not a small thing.” Sociologist Victor Ray made a similar distinction between “harm reduction” and “fundamental change” in a virtual panel about racism in organizations¹³. And then there’s Jason Reynolds, the National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature of the Library of Congress, who spoke in another episode of “On Being” about his role being to “fortify” Black youth, as opposed to speaking of “resilience” (Trippett 2020b). The reflections that these scholars and practitioners offer point to viable approaches to the unpredictable nature of the micro-interactional level of racial domination that is viable for translation to the context of college-going for racially marginalized students.

I draw on the concept of Racial Intelligence as one promising way to foster self-preserving and anti-oppressive reactions to the unpredictable in college access and success. Understanding the racial order and embodying racially intelligent agentic action as prescribed by the Racial Intelligence concept means, first, that the non-dominant racial actor spends less psychological and emotional energy “wondering” whether an instance of interpersonal racial violence “counts” as actual, real, and valid. Their knowledge of the racial order gives them space to affirm for themselves or seek out community support with such affirmation of these racially violent encounters. The understanding of the racial order that gives space to analyse and affirmatively reflect on a racially violent encounter subsequently provides access to a wider range of responses for the non-dominant racial actor; again, racially intelligent action

¹³ “Antiracism, Allyship, and Authenticity: Building Internal Capacity for Institutional Change”, Tuesday, August 4, 2020, 1:00-2:30 p.m. ET

encompasses a number of valid responses — just about anything *except* paralysis and internalized hatred — and is rooted in the ability to understand this range of responses within a commitment to the well-being of racially marginalized people and not to the approval or comfort of White dominant racial actors.

Unraveling the Meso

The use of multi-level analyses is another thread to pull in studies on racially intelligent action in college-going. There is currently important scholarship that frames macro-level influences on college-going generally and invites an understanding of the work of college access and success programs in community-based education spaces. The particulars of the socio-historical conditions of higher education and the modern political economy inform the scholarship in the book *LowerEd: The Troubling Rise of For-Profit Colleges in the New Economy* by sociologist Tressie McMillan Cottom (2017). McMillan Cottom lays out factors that she argues contribute to the prominence of harmful for-profit colleges and the credentials they offer, particularly the fact that, in the current operation of the U.S. economy, people need credentials in order to get good paying jobs. Within this framing, we can point to college access and success professionals as playing an important role in mitigating the specific harms of these features of the political economy of higher education for marginalized people. Essentially, these professionals are in the business of helping Black, Brown, low-income, and first generation college-going youth avoid LowerEd in order to achieve the internalized ideals and practical benefits of a college education.

Sociologist of education Bianca Baldrige also takes a macro-level view in her examination of influences on youth work in community-based educational spaces (CBES). She specifies the socio-political context of education captured in the political ideology of

neoliberalism and outlines the racialized harm that results from the manifestations of this ideology on CBES. The neoliberal ideology operating in traditional school contexts produces policies that explicitly “normalize privatization and standardization” (Baldrige et al 2017), but implicit in these policies and the assumptions from which they are developed is a deficit view of Black and Brown people. The rhetoric, reflecting a fundamental aspect neoliberal ideology, “suggests [that] Black youth and other students of color are broken and in need of saving” (Baldrige 2014). As these ideas run rampant in traditional U.S. educational processes broadly, they simultaneously trickle down to CBES, shaping the requirements of grant funding that they depend on (Baldrige et al 2017) and thus the content of their programming. College access and success programming is implicated in all this as essential programming offered in CBES. These ties to the overarching neoliberal educational ideology predict important impacts on the work of college access professionals, particularly the type of guidance practitioners are compelled to provide, the framing of success that programs attach to young people, and the constraints that practitioners encounter to do the type of holistic support that CBES have traditionally done. Further inquiry into CBES organizational contexts have great potential to more precisely suss out the particular ways these political and ideological forces permeate college access and success programs and their specific mandates within CBES to usher minoritized youth into college. The work of McMillan Cottom and Baldrige set us on important paths to understanding macro level influences on college-going — the social “gospels” that motivate and justify the feat of college-going for marginalized people and the particular impacts of these forces on the community-based educational contexts that perform the comprehensive college preparatory work for minoritized youth.

Alongside this path that helps connect U.S. cultural and political ideology to college preparation priorities for minoritized youth, there is also a meso-level thread to pull offering fruitful paths to examine CBES organizations themselves. The work of Wooten & Couloute (2016) proved useful in situating college access and success organization as racialized¹⁴. The influential work of sociologist Victor Ray (2019) will be useful for analyses of the specific ways that college access and success organizations operate day to day as racialized organizations. This involves understanding the reproduction and perpetuation of racial inequality by the organization through a view of racial inequality as a feature of the organization, not just individuals who comprise it (Wooten & Couloute 2016). Whether college access and success organizations are stand-alone or embedded in larger community-based organizations, racialized features of organizations can influence the extent to which the content of college access and success programming and the practitioners that implement this content challenge racial inequality. Surely, even a practitioner who is equipped with understandings of the racial order and prepared to emphasize Racial Intelligence within the college access programming they implement can encounter meso-level organizational factors that can disrupt these intentional efforts at the micro-level. Postponed work with practitioners in this study (see *COVID-19*) aimed at examining organizational impacts on the execution of college access and success programming will be part of future studies extending from this work.

Another important exploration in the interplay of mico- and meso-level manifestations of racial inequality is the racialized organizational contexts of colleges and universities that practitioners inherently interface with. This perspective would highlight the relationship between the work of college access and success practitioners — particularly aspects of their work that this

¹⁴ See chapter 5 of this dissertation

dissertation shows to be aligned with the aims of Racial Intelligence — and colleges operating as particular organizations to examine the extent to which racially intelligent approaches to navigating college respond to the problems that racialized organizations present in their perpetuation of racial inequality. A strict, structural determinative view of racialized organizations like colleges might frame them as impenetrable. This stance ignores the ways in which practitioners currently guide marginalized students and families through this process into schools that exist in college landscape that was never intended for them. In a larger sense, Black people and other people of color have been navigating racialized systems and structures for generations. The micro-process of Racial Intelligence presents as an intentional way to assess racialized organizational features and identify opportunities for safe navigation. Practitioners are doing heavy lifting in supporting marginalized students to navigate and penetrate these radicalized organizations in a savvy way already, but the work can be far more intentional and informed. This is possible with a focus beyond how institutions can change and on how minoritized students themselves can make decisions everyday to interrupt racial inequality.

Implementing a Racially Intelligent Agenda and Anticipated Critiques

The long-term aim of this work is to ensure that practitioners are equipped to impart sound knowledge about the racialized nature of college-going so that students can put this knowledge into practice as they strive to enter and complete college. How students put these racial understandings into practice would be as variable as daily interactions themselves, but existing accounts of student experiences as well as the “knowing” that practitioners displayed in this study are viable starting points for how to structure college preparatory activities. When it comes to the application process, where college access counselors are most involved, an

understanding of the racial order and aims to equip students to take intelligent action in light of this knowledge can look like practitioners incorporating planned and intentional conversations about how racism can play out on college campuses into college advising activities and centering the fact of racialized experiences in college and potential intelligent responses to those experiences throughout college transition workshops. When it comes to the process of persisting in and graduating from college, where college success counselors are most involved, there should be a continuation of the explicit understanding of college as a racialized context that featured in the college access programming. This can look like practitioners reinforcing for students that they can make — or seek support in making — intelligent choices about when to confront, report, or ignore interpersonal racism. It may also look like students intentionally seeking community for relief, encouragement, and shared experiences and being strategic about when and where to participate in campus activities.

To center the daily manifestations of racial inequality as part of college preparatory activities may certainly invite criticism. I have considered such criticism alongside critiques of scholarship on microaggressions, a social-psychological phenomenon at the very heart of my exploration of Racial Intelligence that was introduced by psychiatrist Chester M. Pierce and most prominently amplified by psychologist Derald Wing Sue. Tori DeAngelis's *Monitor on Psychology* article, "Unmasking 'racial microaggressions'" includes critiques of microaggressions that essentially assert that they are not, "as rampant or destructive as Sue says," and that Sue is, "blowing the phenomenon out of proportion and advancing an unnecessarily negative agenda" (DeAngelis 2009).

The specific critiques of psychologist Kenneth R. Thomas are in the vein of what I anticipate would be levied against a Racial Intelligence agenda in college access and success.

Regarding Sue's work on microaggressions, Thomas says, "implementing his theory would restrict rather than promote candid interaction between members of different racial groups...having to watch every word...potentially discourages... genuineness and spontaneity". This view of microaggressions, and approaches like Racial Intelligence to confront microaggressions, ignores that racially hierarchical power dynamics already exist in everyday human interactions. The nature of interaction between racially minoritized people and White people is already such that minoritized people cannot be their full, "candid" selves most of the time — it is unsafe and has material and social consequences. Thomas also characterizes the theory of microaggressions as troubling, saying that,

aspects of Sue's theory enforce a victim mentality by creating problems where none exist. The theory, in general, characterizes people of color as weak and vulnerable, and reinforces a culture of victimization instead of a culture of opportunity.

This perspective egregiously denies and misidentifies the nature of racism; Thomas is likely couching his definition of racism in overt, intentional acts. Where Racial Intelligence is concerned, minoritized people are not "weak and vulnerable" when they identify microaggressions. Instead, with skills to read the racialized world, they are beneficially able to recognize racism and assess their risks from moment to moment, context to context. Such skills make them more able to mitigate their risk based on their own assessment of "is this worth it?" — a powerfully agentic and flexible position in an overall and on-going racially oppressive interactional social dynamic. It is this type of awareness, knowledge, and flexibility that I argue is undervalued in efforts to ensure minoritized students are prepared to graduate from college. Agents within the college-going ecosystem do Black people and other racially marginalized people a disservice to diminish the nature and impact of the racism they navigate in college daily, and practitioners in particular short cut all laudable aims to see racially marginalized people

to-and-through college when college-going supports omit understandings of how the racial order manifest in the White space of college.

V. Closing: The Ripples of Everyday Revolutions

In the summer of 2020, I led my first workshop with college access practitioners to introduce this idea of critical consciousness in college access and success. In the pre-session prep meeting, a colleague-friend, upon hearing my spiel about the distinction I make with “activating” the racial consciousness and navigational skills of young people, indicated that he was receiving my specification in relation to “activism”. My meaning of “activate” up until this point had been in opposition to my previous framing of “inculcate”, which implied that these racial navigational skills are something to be imparted on Black and Brown young, and not as abilities youth have already cultivated as a result of living in and navigating a racially oppressive society. After our discussion, I can say that both meanings of “activate” are accurate: “activate”, as in to turn something on — something that is already present, but needs to be drawn out, triggered, or encouraged — and “activate”, as in *to politicize* — to make active around a cause and to take political action.

The meaning of activate in the politicizing vein has multiple levels of intervention. The interventions that people tend to focus on to define activism, however, are those that target government and laws, companies and institutions, and individuals as members of communities. Aspects of activism that are also important but that get short shrift are organizational factors and individual actions. With organizations, we can see activism in relation to activities such as recruitment, strategy, and retention efforts. Where individual actions are concerned, activism can be seen in small acts, things like career and lifestyle changes and insisting on exercising self-affirming and preserving choices. It is in the organizational and, especially, the individual acts that hold my meaning around “activating” racial intelligence among college-going youth — to give them the tools so they can be evaluators (a human life skill) and have their evaluation

guided by key knowledge of the racial order that maximizes their agency and efficacy in the context of college going, to make choices everyday that more-often-than-not run counter to responses conditioned by racial oppression. Every choice everyday matters. These are everyday revolutions.

Calls for Revolution in Scholarship

In their study examining the impact of racial microaggressions on Black college students and the overall campus racial climate, Daniel Solórzano, Miguel Ceja, and Tara Yosso (2000) present important scholarship that centers racism on college campuses as a critical barrier to college success for Black students. They affirm this as they conclude their article, saying that that not only does the college racism make for an uneven playing field for Black students making their way through college, but also that persisting in college in the face of campus racial discrimination should be considered as a factor in undergrad and graduate admissions (Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso 2000:72). In this conclusion, they evoke an unfulfilled hope of Chester M. Pierce, the psychiatrist who introduced the concept of microaggressions. Pierce said,

It is my fondest hope that the day is not far remote when every [B]lack child will recognize and defend promptly and adequately against every offensive microaggression (Pierce 1970)

This quote coincides with another quote that the authors highlight earlier in the paper, in which Pierce maintains that each Black person, “must be taught to recognize these microaggressions and construct [their] future by taking appropriate action at each instance of recognition” (Pierce 1974:520). There is more than a hint here from Pierce of the desire for a reality aligned with the aims of the Racial Intelligence concept as applied to college-going, a reality where Black students will be equipped to recognize and respond to microaggressions and other forms of

interpersonal racism. Solórzano and colleagues almost throw away the possibility of this recognition and response as they follow up Pierce's sentiment by talking about what little is known about occurrences of racial microaggressions and how to defend against them. Within an understanding of Racial Intelligence and the principles that inform this concept, however, the focus becomes less about pinpointing precisely when and how racial microaggressions occur, and more about navigating the existing racial terrain as a person in a racialized body; this person does not need to pinpoint racism in the form of microaggressions because they can't avoid it. The focus becomes fostering the ability for racially minoritized people to navigate the existing racial terrain in ways that are self-preserving. An earlier quote from this paper is relevant to the underlying perspective in this dissertation:

When the ideology of racism is examined and racist injuries are named, victims of racism can find their voice. Further, those injured by racism discover that they are not alone in their marginality." (Solorzano, Ceja, and Yasso 2000, p 62)

The naming of racism is connected to the ability to recognize it. With recognition comes an opportunity (maybe even an obligation) to respond. Responses to racism are necessarily up to the individual, but what *can* be delineated are responses that are self-sustaining and those that are oppressive.

The distinction between what is sustaining and what is oppressive can be tricky, though, without a proper view of the nature of racism at multiple levels, particularly its everyday manifestations. There's a segment in the article by Solorzano and colleagues that illustrates how easily it is for notions about which type of actions are sustaining reveal themselves to be counterproductive and detrimental to minoritized people. One Black male student, in recounting his positive experiences in creating necessary counterspaces amidst the racially hostile environment of his college campus, also expressed that trying to be involved in Black

organizations and participating in activities to have their voices heard on campus interferes with academic work (Solorzano, Ceja, and Yasso 2000, p 71). This situation that this Black student describes represents a misreading of the racial terrain of higher education, the inherent organizational power dynamics at his university, and the appropriate direction of focus for self-sustaining responses to racial inequality in college. I would argue that the point at which student activism on campus interferes with students' academic standing is the point at which action ceases to be intelligent. This is not to say that campus activism is not necessary or that it does not contribute to the well-being of marginalized students. It is to say, however, that there's more to this calculus and strategy for action, including centering the ultimate goal of college completion, a nuanced understanding of the precarity of "belonging" for minoritized students in White colleges, and the glacial pace of institutional change that becomes amplified by the fact that the average four-year turnover of the student body — and thus student-level memory and leadership — means that administration can often drag their feet and wait out student agitation. Understanding of these dynamics and options for responses to racial inequality that include everyday decisions based in self-preservation are essential to student decision making for their actions in college and can very well be part of any preparatory efforts.

Along with Pierce's hope for Black youth to be able to recognize and defend against every microaggression, everyday revolutions require a value for self-worth above White approval, a temporal common sense that focuses on one's goals in the short term as part of collective freedom in the long-term, and grace — for self and others in community — because being steeped in White supremacist norms means that our instincts have been conditioned by White supremacist norms and even with the best intentions we will falter. But we must know that

we can choose to respond differently — in ways that serve our individual and collective liberation — tomorrow.

The Refusals and the Ripples

It is not hyperbole to recognize agentic actions that oppose oppressive conditions of everyday interactions as revolutionary. Oppressed people typically only have the wherewithal to cope with, rather than respond to, manifestations of their oppression, and, when a response is taken up, many times it is the larger movements that become regarded as the optimal tool. Our daily actions in response to oppressive systems, however, contribute significantly to the efforts at multiple levels of human interaction to dismantle those systems. These daily actions operate simultaneously to those larger, more traditionally recognizable efforts in order to reshape the dynamics within the structure as it manifests in everyday life.

Just as important as the types of racially intelligent actions racially minoritized people choose to take are the types of actions they *do not* take. Refusal is an essential aspect of racially intelligent action, particularly in what marginalized people refuse in their interactions with White dominant social actors and in what marginalized people demand of themselves in full recognition of their power and agency to refuse the limited options presented to them within the prevailing racial order.

A particular appreciation for refusal emerged in the Spring and Summer of 2021. Public examples of Black people saying “no” were received with shock in public discourse and inspired other marginalized people to add refusal to their arsenal of responses as they navigate a racialized society. Prominent among these instances of refusal is award-winning investigative

journalist Nicole Hannah-Jones's rejection of a fraught and belated tenure offer from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) for a tenured position at the historic HBCU Howard University. The racialized assumptions of value when comparing UNC to Howard were front and center in discussions of Jones's act of refusal, which made her decision so disruptive; her refusal to accept a begrudging offer from UNC *and* her acceptance of a position at Howard each, in their own ways, run counter to prevailing notions of rational action, especially for the precarity that Black people in academia face. Her refusal, however, is explicitly racially intelligent, and she outlines this in her statement about her series of decisions. She says,

At some point when you have proven yourself and fought your way into institutions that were not built for you, when you've proven you can compete and excel at the highest level, you have to decide that you are done forcing yourself in.

[I] get to decide what battles I continue to fight. And I have decided that instead of fighting to prove I belong at an institution that until 1955 prohibited Black Americans from attending, I am instead going to work in the legacy of a university not built by the enslaved but for those who once were. For too long, Black Americans have been taught that success is defined by gaining entry to and succeeding in historically white institutions. I have done that, and now I am honored and grateful to join the long legacy of Black Americans who have defined success by working to build up their own.

For too long, powerful people have expected the people they have mistreated and marginalized to sacrifice themselves to make things whole. The burden of working for racial justice is laid on the very people bearing the brunt of the injustice, and not the powerful people who maintain it. I say to you: I refuse. (Hannah-Jones 2021)

Hannah-Jones asserts her right to decide which battles she fights and couches her decision in a spirit of refusal. She made a decision as an individual and fully expressed the importance of her understanding of institutional racism in this decision. The ripples revealed themselves immediately. The day after she authorized release of her statement, Dr. Jorge A. Caballero, a Mexican-American physician and data scientist (Deb 2021), who was at the time a clinical

professor at Stanford Medical School, tweeted his “personal news” under his twitter handle @DataDrivenMD, saying,

I've decided to leave Stanford Med. I've been mulling over the decision for several months, but yesterday's thoughtful letter by @nhannahjones resonated with me.

For now, I'll share that I could no longer see myself at an institution that ignored my decades of experience in multiple high-value, high-impact fields.

*I've spent the last 7 years trying to find a niche at a medical schools [sic] that prides itself on its multidisciplinary programs. I've watched as folks with less experience get recruited to fill *newly-created* tenure track positions in my area of expertise (Caballero 2021)*

Dr. Caballero admits later on in the Twitter thread that he had been “holding out hope” that he would be accepted by the institutions, but Hannah-Jones’s recognition of such sentiments as erroneous and her response to that recognition with refusal was critical to Caballero recognizing that his perpetual marginalization was a feature of the institution and not a bug.

Even in the more niche corners and conversations of public discourse there are examples of refusal that have had wide-spread effects. The summer of 2021 saw a strike from Black content creators on the video-based social media platform TikTok. Individual creators openly expressed frustration over, “not receiving credit for their creativity and original work — all while watching [W]hite influencers rewarded with millions of views performing dances they didn't create” (Pruitt-Young2021). The shared frustration of individual content creators turned into collective action based in understandings of racial inequality on the popular app. This collective of mostly young people responded to this experience of inequality with an act of refusal. While there is no telling if there will be permanent shifts in the operation of TikTok, this act of refusal represents racially intelligent action that not only crystallized the value of Black TikTok users,

but serves as an important demonstration of power that these young Black people can return to — on TikTok and beyond.

A final example of refusal took place on the world stage of sports. Naomi Osaka, the Haitian-Japanese tennis champion, chose refusal after asserting her need to skip post-match news conferences at the French Open for the sake of her mental health (Futterman 2021). Upon threat of expulsion from the tournament for not meeting her media obligations, Osaka pulled out of the Open altogether. She refused to sacrifice her well-being in order to satisfy the demands of the tennis institution.

The ripples.

During the Tokyo Olympics held in the Summer of 2021, Simone Biles, arguably the best gymnast in the history of the sport, pulled out of a series of gymnastic events and cited concerns for her mental health. Remarkably, she made no effusive apologies but firmly asserted herself amid vitriolic criticism:

For anyone saying I quit, I didn't quit. My mind and body are simply not in sync. I don't think you realize how dangerous this is on hard/competition surface, nor do I have to explain why I put health first. Physical health is mental health. (Roche 2021)

In earlier statements, Biles referenced Naomi Osaka's refusal to compete in the French Open for the sake of her mental health as an inspiration for her own decision to withdraw from competition (Dawson 2021).

Author Casey Gerald wrote of the "Great Refusal" in reference to Osaka, Biles, and other Black people in *The Guardian*. He likened their refusal to his previous writings on what he calls *The Black Art of Escape*. This is Gerald's survival tactic of choice for Black people navigating

the current iteration of the United States racial order, a choice that turns away from previous options that were most prominently at Black people's disposal — assimilate or agitate (Gerald 2019). As part of his praise for the refusal on display, Gerald also speaks of the ripples, both extant and potential:

That Biles, perhaps the greatest gymnast ever, on the biggest stage of all, chose herself over yet another accomplishment, gives hope to a generation of Black Americans, famous and not, that we too might refuse the terms of success our country has offered us... We are, I believe, witnessing the beginning of a great refusal, when a generation of Black Americans decide to, in the words of Maxine Waters, reclaim our time.

Gerald reinforces that these examples of refusal have been explicitly tied to raced and gendered expectations of these public and private figures, which has made their refusal that much more disruptive. It also matters that experiences like those of Dr. Caballero and the Black TikTok content creators are being picked up in online social spaces. The accessibility of these spaces helps to amplify these racially intelligent actions, sending ripples to places that have the potential to be major catalysts for multi-level changes in the racial order, but that we may not be able to fully account for. Really, it is refusal that underlies Racial Intelligence. Whether direct action or non-action, the refusal lies in the ceasing to go along with the racial status quo. Refusal directly challenges the expected responses from marginalized people to the entrenched racial dynamics in society. Refusal confronts and interrupts racial inequality. Building skills of strategic refusal is a necessary tool for marginalized people in the aims to dismantle oppressive systems.

Perhaps Racial Intelligence is the baseline — an understanding of the racial order that is necessarily facilitated by knowledgeable practitioners in critical contexts, such as college access and success programs and affinity spaces. People like Nikole Hannah Jones, Naomi Osaka, and Simone Biles point to something beyond racial intelligence, though. Something experientially

developed in ways that the White male scholars who developed the concept of Racial Intelligence might not have been able to explicitly put their finger on. Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins, in her work on Afrocentric Feminist Epistemology (2003), is helpful here:

Black women cannot afford to be fools of any type, for our objectification as the Other denies us the protection that white skin, maleness, and wealth confer. This distinction between knowledge and wisdom, and the use of experience as the cutting edge dividing them, has been key to Black women's survival. In the context of race, gender, and class oppression, the distinction is essential. Knowledge without wisdom is adequate for the powerful, but wisdom is essential to the survival of the subordinate. (Collins 2003)

While the concept of Racial Intelligence rests explicitly on a basis of knowledge transference, Collins elevates a type of “Racial Wisdom”, where a “knowing” drawn from experiences is key. She reminds us that we each come to our daily interactions with different sets of lenses and that those differences in the lenses among marginalized people are essential for their survival. The differences are essential to recognize especially for those holding power in their racial identities; false assumptions about the extent to which one “knows” based on learned knowledge absent of experiential knowledge can prove counterproductive to aims of disrupting inequality. Even amongst racially minoritized people, other embodied social identities that intersect with racial identity also impact experiential insight.

The college access and success enterprise is a good context in which to imagine the interplay of Racial Intelligence and Racial Wisdom, as well as the potential ripples that intelligent and wise action initiate. On one hand, counselors in this study who referenced themselves and their racialized college experiences to inform how they engage with college-bound minoritized students are in a great position to infuse that aspect of knowing as part of Racial Wisdom. Similarly, my specific framing of “activation” of Racial Intelligence already assumes experiential knowledge among college-bound minoritized youth for counselors to draw

upon. The findings of this study also indicate the need for crucial universal knowledge of the racial order, the type of knowledge transference that is implicated in the Racial Intelligence concept. The daily, agentic, disruptive choices that flow from this agenda are important among students in college. The impact of these everyday interruptions of inequality touch others, giving them permission to take actions that counter expectations of oppressed people in the racial order or to refuse altogether.

With considerations of both Racial Intelligence and Racial Wisdom in their fundamental structure around a refusal to comply with the racial status quo, we can arrive at a more precise understanding of the operation and impacts of these skills once we make them conscious. In college access and success, this agenda requires an explicit understanding of and engagement with the racial order and the manifestations of structural racism in everyday interactions. Greater intention in program structure, examination of racial oppression throughout the college-going process, and a commitment to action that preserves students' full selves and rejects assimilation and other forms of internalized oppression are required in order to fully actualize this agenda. This study ultimately confirms that there is firm ground to begin building out this agenda within this community of conscientious and dedicated practitioners.

Appendices

Full List of Materials

Interviews

- Table 1. Interview Participant Demographics — Full Participant Overview
- Table 2. Interview Participant Demographics — Summary Table
- Table 3. Interview Excerpts Included in Analysis

Surveys

- Figure 1. Survey Participants' Racial-Ethnic Identity (Self-Report)
- Figure 2. Survey Participants' Gender Identity (Self-Report)
- Figure 3. Survey Participants' Number of Years Working in College Access and Success
- Figure 4. Survey Participants' Primary Work Context in the College Access and Success Field

Protocols

- Interview Protocol
- Survey Protocol

Table 1. Interview Participant Demographics — Full Participant Overview					
ID	Pseud.	Race-ethnicity (self-report)	Gender (self-report)	# Years in College Access and Success	Employer Institutional Type
731	Reggie	Bi-racial (Black, White)	Man	10 years	Trad. Non-Profit
1344	Sandy	White	Woman	30+ years	Foundation
1449	Donna	Latina	Woman	2 years	CBO
1308	Erika	Black/African-American	Woman	6 years	Trad. Non-Profit
1329	Jessica	Afro-Latina	Woman	7 years	CBO
656	Maurice	Latinx and African-American	Man	9 years	CBO
700	Alicia	Latinx	Woman	2 years	Trad. Non-Profit
383	Victoria	White Mexican	Woman	6 years	CBO
1133	Lory	White	Woman	10 years	Trad. Non-Profit
526	Stephanie	African-American	Woman	3 years	School-Based Non-Profit
1113	Fatima	Jamaican/Black Caribbean	Woman	11 years	CBO
577	Rachel	Latinx	Woman	3 years	Trad. Non-Profit
815	Dina	Black, West Indian	Woman	5 years	CBO
644	Rhoda	White	Woman	8 years	School-Based Non-Profit
115	Miriam	West Indian	Woman	3 years	CBO
1408	Vera	Black	Woman	3 years	CBO; Trad. Non-Profit
1267	Wanda	Black	Woman	10 years	Trad. Non-Profit

Table 2. Interview Participant Demographics — Summary Table	
All practitioners included in the analysis (17)	
Race-Ethnicity (self-report)	Number of Participants
Black	4
African-American	1
Afro-Latina	1
West Indian	1
Jamican/Black Caribbean	1
Latina/Latinx	3
Bi-racial	1
Latinx and African American	1
White Mexican	1
White	3
Gender	
Woman	15
Man	2
Number of Years in College Access and Success	
1-5 years	7
6-10 years	8
11-15 years	1
16 - 20 years	0
21-25 years	0
25+ years	1

Table 3. Interview Excerpts Included in Analysis	
Topic/Question	Number of relevant excerpts
“Advocacy” (<i>autocoded and culled for relevancy and patterns</i>)	67
“Transition” (<i>autocoded and culled for relevancy and patterns</i>)	150
“What stories do students tell about their college transition?” ^(a)	35
“Based on your experience with program alumni, what are the biggest challenges you anticipate for these seniors as they transition to college?” ^(a)	35
“How important do you think the topic of race-ethnicity is in college access and success programming?” ^(b)	17
“What must students know or be able to do, to be seen as “college ready?”” ^(b) *	17
<p>a. The question about the experiences of alumni and the challenges that counselors anticipate were asked in succession, and thus typically emerged within the same conversation block.</p> <p>b. A very specific and isolated question that could be identified for each participant</p>	

Figure 1. Survey Participants' Racial-Ethnic Identity (Self-Report)

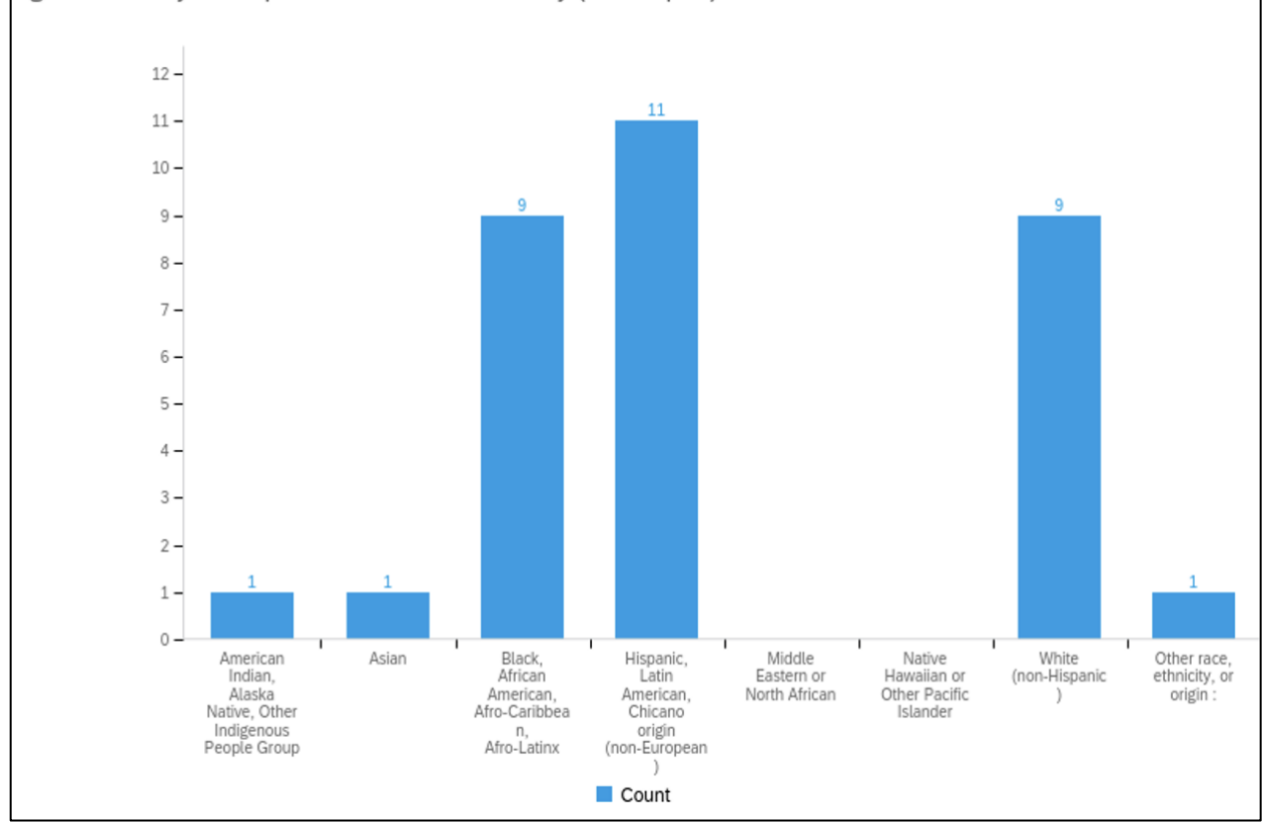


Figure 2. Survey Participants' Gender Identity (Self-Report)

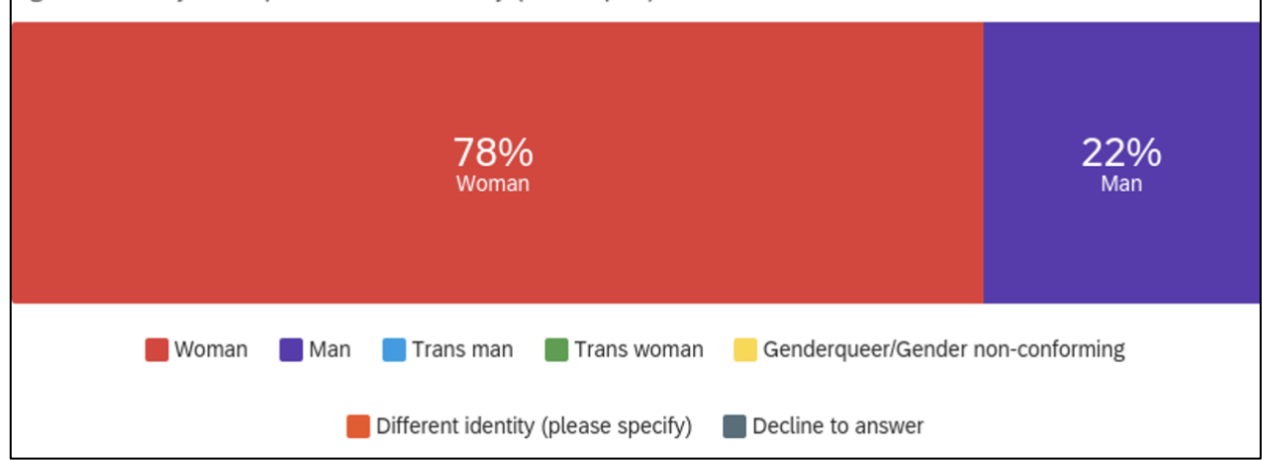


Figure 3. Survey Participants' Number of Years Working in College Access and Success

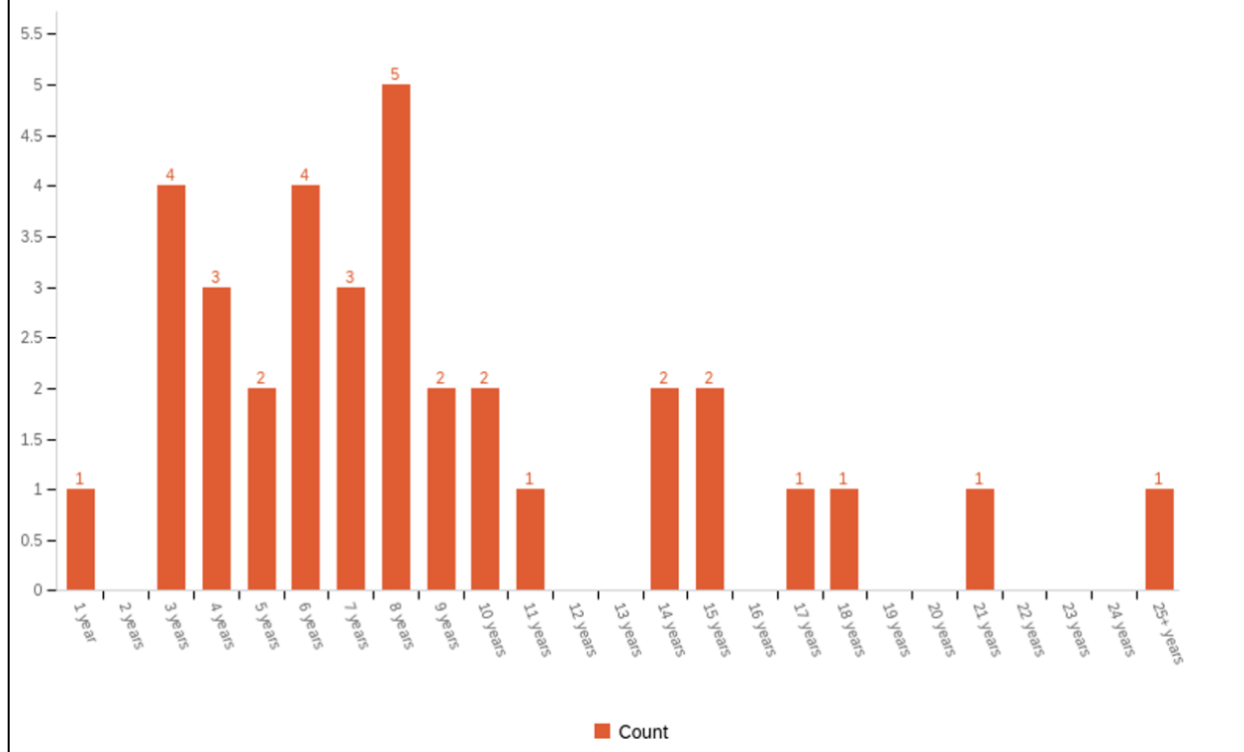
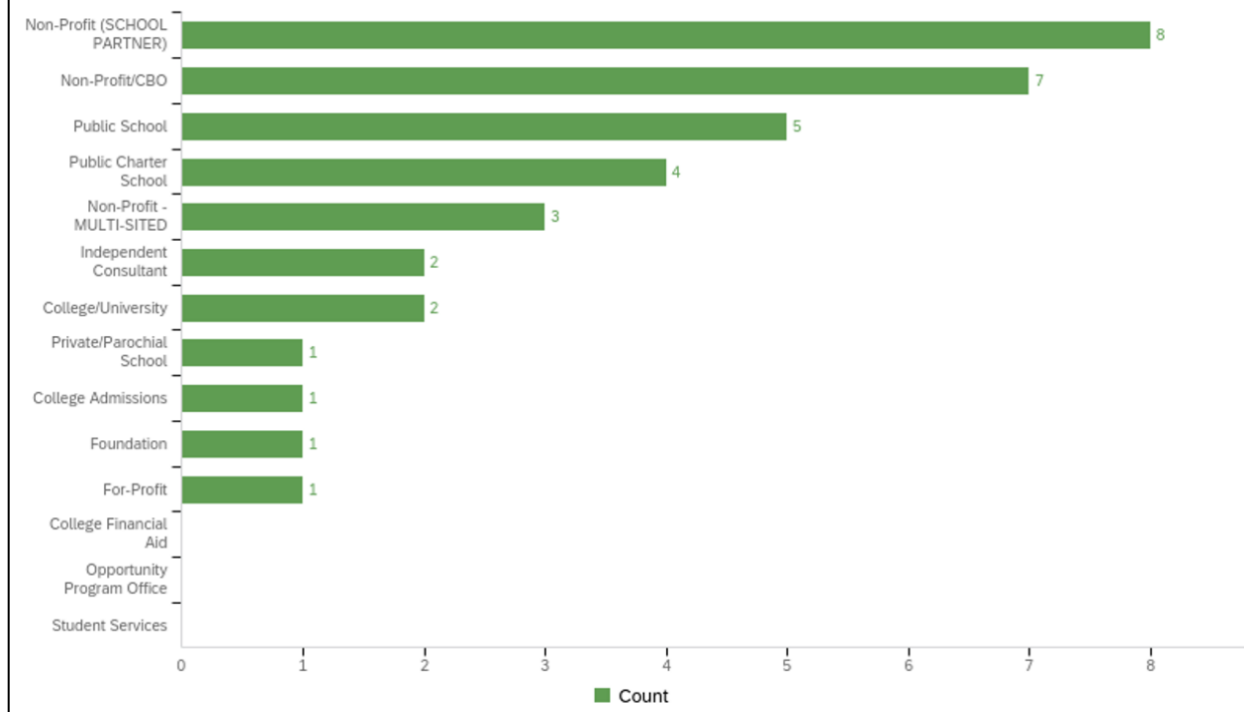


Figure 4. Survey Participants' Primary Work Context in the College Access and Success Field



Interview Protocol Outline

- A. [Introduction/Consent](#)
- B. [Counselor Background](#)
- C. [Race-Ethnicity: Societal-Level Understandings and Discourses](#)
- D. [Counselor College Experiences](#)
- E. [Counselor Entrance into the College Access Field](#)
 - a. Origins & Inspirations
 - b. Training
- F. [The College Access/Success Program](#)
 - a. On the Youth Served in Your Program
 - b. Program Components + Process within the Larger Organization
- G. [Race-Ethnicity in the College Access/Success Process: Counselor's Role](#)
 - a. COVID-19 Specific Inquiries
- H. [Youth Transition Experiences](#)
 - a. College Transition Workshop
- I. [Successes and Challenges](#)
- J. [Future of the College Access & Success Field](#)

A. INTRODUCTION

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. I am a researcher and CACNY member and **I'm interested in how [college counselors/college access professionals] think about what it means for young people to be "college ready" and how that meaning becomes incorporated into your programming.**

Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers; I just want to hear about your perspective. Please feel free to provide details about your responses — everything that we discuss today will be confidential and I will not share your comments with other individuals. My analysis will incorporate the experiences and viewpoints that you expressed, but comments will not be attributed to you by name, specific organization, or other identifying characteristics.

Do you have any questions for me before we get started?

I would like to record our conversation so I can give you my full attention and also remember what you've said. **Do I have your permission to record the interview?** Thanks. The audio recordings from all individual interviews will be used for internal analysis purposes only and will not be published or shared with anyone outside of myself and hired transcribers. Remember that if you're ever uncomfortable, you don't have to answer any questions you don't want to answer – we'll just skip them and keep going – and if you decide you don't want to participate in this project anymore, that's totally fine too – there are no hard feelings.

Date: _____

Participant Number: _____

Interview Start Time: _____

Interview End Time: _____

Setting the Tone: In thinking about what it means for young people to be “college ready” and how that meaning becomes incorporated into your programming, I am especially interested in how understandings of students social identities — so their race-ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality — how these identities show up as counselors are preparing youth to navigate the college environment.

B. COUNSELOR BACKGROUND

To get us started, I want to ask a few questions about your own background, your college experiences, and your own understandings around social identities generally.

1. **Please tell me your gender and the pronouns you use.**
2. Which college or university did you attend, and when did you graduate?
 - a. Do you have a graduate degree?
 - b. From where and in which field?
 - c. When did you complete graduate study?
3. Do you **consider yourself/identify as** a first-gen student?
 - a. What was college-going like in your family?

(If so,)

C. RACE-ETHNICITY : SOCIETAL-LEVEL UNDERSTANDINGS & DISCOURSES

Before we talk more about your college experiences, I want to get a sense of your understandings around your social identities — with a particular focus on your race-ethnicity.

1. How do you describe your racial and/or ethnic identity?
2. What role does your race or ethnicity play in how you define yourself?
3. How connected do you feel to other [*racial group*] people?
4. How has your understanding of your race-ethnicity shifted or evolved over time?
5. In your daily life, when does race-ethnicity emerge?
6. Do you participate in conversations in which race-ethnicity is a central topic?
7. How comfortable are you in general with talking about race-ethnicity?

Now I want to connect other social identities that are salient for you and that may intersect with your racial-ethnic identity.

8. How do **other social identities** that you hold — namely your gender, socioeconomic status, sexuality — play a role in how you define yourself? (*Prompts: What about your gender? What about your socioeconomic status? What about your sexuality?*)
9. How has your understanding of these other social identities that you hold (*So, your gender, socioeconomic status, sexuality*) shifted or evolved over time?
10. Do you participate in conversations where any of these other social identities (*So, your gender, socioeconomic status, sexuality*) are a central topic?
11. How comfortable are you in general with talking about these other social identities (*So, your gender, socioeconomic status, sexuality*)?

D. COUNSELOR COLLEGE EXPERIENCES

Now let's shift to talking about your college experiences — I want to get a sense of how your own experiences connect to how you approach your college access and success work.

1. What was the college application process like for you? Did you have the type of supports that you provide young people today?

(If YES to having support)

- a. What impact did these supports have on your college choice and transition experience?
 - i. Which specific supports mattered the most for you?

(If NO to having support)

- b. What difference would these supports have made in your college choice and transition experiences?
 - i. Looking back, which specific supports do think would have been helpful

Remember the college/university attended from Q2

2. Tell me about your transition into college — what was it like going to college that first year? *(Prompt: What stands out to you about your experiences?)*

Let's talk about how your social identities — like your race, gender, class, sexuality — come up in your own college transition experiences

4. Let's talk specifically about your racial identity. Tell me about how your racial identity played a role in your college transition experiences

Prompts:

- a. *In your classroom experiences*
- b. *In your campus social experiences*
- c. *In experiences with your roommate*

[mindful that this may be an intersectional analysis within this experiential understanding]

5. What about your other social identities — So, your gender, your class identity (including being low-income or first-gen), your sexuality. How did any of these or other social identities played a role in your college transition experiences

Prompts:

- a. *In your **classroom** experiences*
 - b. *In your **campus social** experiences*
 - c. *In experiences with your **roommate***
6. Looking back, what topics or skills would have been helpful to cover in high school in order to prepare you for college?
7. In what ways do you draw from your college experiences as your work with young people in your program?
(prompt(s): *Which experiences do you draw from often?*)

E. COUNSELOR ENTRANCE INTO THE COLLEGE ACCESS FIELD

Thank you so much for sharing - it's so nice to hear about your college experiences! Now I want to change gears to talk more about how you got into the college access field.

a. ORIGINS & INSPIRATIONS

1. Tell me about the path that led you to working in college access.
2. What type of settings have you worked in as a college access professional?
3. How long have you been participating in the CACNY organization? Have you participated in CACNY-sponsored activities outside of General Body Meetings? If so, which ones?

Forgive me if some of these questions sound redundant — I want to make sure I'm not leaving anything out or assuming any information.

4. Where do you work now?
5. How long have you worked at your current organization?
6. Which neighborhoods or communities does this organization serve?
7. Does your organization perform other social service functions, or is this a stand-alone college access organization?
8. Have you worked in any other college access programs or organizations prior to your current college access program? If so, where?
 - a. Where is this/are these organization(s) located (e.g. borough, neighborhood)
 - b. Do/Does this/these organization(s) perform other social service functions, or is/are this/these a stand-alone college access organization(s)?
9. Why are college access programs needed for the populations your program serves? (*Prompt: What is your understanding of the need?*)

b. TRAINING

Let's talk briefly about training within the college access and success field.

- 1. What types of professional training do you participate in?
- 2. In what ways are these trainings helpful for you in your college access work?

- 3. Have you participated in CACNY's Undoing Racism trainings
(Note: they began ~ 2015, with The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond)

(If YES to participating)

- a. Why did you participate in this training?
 - i. Did you go alone or with colleagues?
 - ii. How was your experience with this training?
 - iii. What lessons/understandings did you take away from this training
 - iv. In what ways did this training impact how you do your work? How you think about your work?

(If NO to participating)

- b. Why didn't you participate in this training?
 - i. In what ways do you think this training relates to your college access work?
 - ii. Would you consider participating in the future? Why or Why not?

F. THE COLLEGE ACCESS/SUCCESS PROGRAM

Thank you for talking about your entry into the college access and success field — so good to hear your experiences.

Let's talk now about your college access and success program. And, again, some questions might be redundant — I'm trying not to leave anything out.

a. ON THE YOUTH SERVED IN YOUR PROGRAM

1. Tell me about your program — **(prompt(s):** *How would you pitch your program to me if I were a young person you were trying to encourage to participate in your program?*)
2. Is your program open enrollment or is there an application/admissions process?
3. How many youth do you serve in your college access programming each year?
4. Which neighborhoods/boroughs/schools are the youth in your program coming from?
5. Give me an idea of the type of youth that participate in your program
(Prompts)
 - a. Academic ability
 - b. High schools attended
 - c. College-going goals
 - d. Other features of your youth participants?
6. Which racial-ethnic groups are represented among the young people you work with?
 - a. Check options:
 - i. American Indian, Alaska Native, Other Indigenous People Group;
 - ii. Asian
 - iii. Black
 - iv. Hispanic, Latin American
 - v. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - vi. White (non-Hispanic)
 - vii. Other race, ethnicity, or origin, please specify: _____
7. What is the gender make-up of your program?
8. Among the young people you work with, what proportion are first-gen college-going students?

9. What proportion of the young people are low-income?

Let's talk more directly about how your program operates.

10. Walk me through your year-long program — (**prompt(s)**: *How do you guide a young person through the process, from making lists to choosing and making sure they enroll and arrive on campus?*)¹

11. How would you describe your role in the process of preparing the youth in your program to transition into college?

12. When counseling a young person during college application season, how do you determine whether a college is a good fit?

a. Is there a standard understanding/process for determining “fit” within your program?

13. What would college access support for students look like if your role did not exist?²

a. How do you know?

¹ In service of a paper on this process in general, something that is not detailed in the literature, to also show how (like Bianca and others) these are practitioners critical to the college-going experiences

² Getting at: the essential nature of these practitioner roles, expanded understanding of who “educators” are in the lives of marginalized youth

Let's talk a bit about how you and colleagues structure your program and how the larger organization plays a role in this structure.

b. PROGRAM COMPONENTS + PROCESS WITHIN THE LARGER ORGANIZATION

2. Is your program embedded in a larger organization or social service agency?
3. How does your college access program fit into the mission of the larger organization?
4. How much flexibility do you and your colleagues have in constructing your program?
 - a. Are there program elements that are required? If so, who or what dictates these requirements?
5. Does the larger organization or senior leadership dictate any of your programmatic elements?

[CENTRAL QUESTION]

6. **How has your work within the college access/success program has been shaped by the organization's larger priorities or needs? (prompt(s): Things like funding, program promotion decisions, programmatic emphasis, programmatic deemphasis)**
 - a. Are there particular senior staff/leadership within the organization that exert this type of influence on program operation?
7. **Are there things about your work that you wish organizational leadership knew — things you assume they don't currently know/understand/fully appreciate?**
8. How does the organization talk about the college access program to people outside of the organization?

Prompt: What does the organization emphasize about the program when speaking to

 - b. *Funders?*
 - c. *Community members?*
9. Does the organization's promotion of the college access program differ from how you and your team would talk about your program?

Consider your organization’s overall approach to discussing social issues — including but not limited to race-ethnicity.

10. Does your organization discuss social issues in a direct/explicit way? (**Since COVID and before**)
(Prompt: What does the organization’s discussion of social issues look like?)
 - a. **How much of discussion of social issues was initiated by youth participants?**
11. How might your organization's approach to discussing (or not discussing) social issues impact how your college access programming incorporates understandings about various social issues?
12. Does your organization express a “racial justice” agenda as part of its mission?³

(If YES to social justice mission)

13. Tell me about how the organization demonstrates this racial justice agenda.
14. Can you describe the role that understandings of race play in the decision making of the organization?
15. Can you tell me about any actions taken within the larger organization to address race-related issues?
16. Can you tell me about a time when a conversation about race would have been appropriate within the organization, but the conversation was stalled or shut down?

³ Operating understanding of racial justice (From [National Education Association](#)): Racial justice is the systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all.

G. RACE-ETHNICITY IN THE COLLEGE ACCESS/SUCCESS PROCESS: COUNSELOR'S ROLE

Now, I want to dive a little deeper and ask some questions about how race-ethnicity shows up in your college access program and within your role as a college access professional.

1. Thinking about your program overall — from when young people begin the application process until they transition to their chosen college — **when does the topic of race-ethnicity come up?** (prompt: List as many instances as you can.) (**program component ex:** *Creating a College List, One-on-One Advising (Generally), College Application Completion, SAT/ACT Prep, Financial Aid Applications, Scholarship Applications, College Visits, Advocacy with College Admissions Counselors, College Recruiter Visits, Advising around Non-College Post-Secondary Options, College Transition Workshops/Advising, Parent Contact/Workshops*)
 - a. (Prompt: *Can you give me an example or anecdote from a time when race-ethnicity has come up?*)

[CENTRAL HYPOTHESIS QUESTION]

2. When race does come up, does it happen in one-on-one or small group instances, or is race explicitly part of programming curriculum? (prompt: *explicitly part of the aims of the program/organization, mission statement, program promotion materials*)
3. Does discussion around any other social identities — specifically gender, being low-income, first-gen — come up over the course of the year-long college access programming?
 - a. (Prompt: *Among these social identities, which emerges in discussion most frequently — race-ethnicity, class, gender, any other social identity?*)
4. **Do the young people** in your program ever initiate conversation having to do with race-ethnicity and the college access process? Do you have examples?
 - a. Do young people ever initiate conversations about any of their other salient identities — gender, low-income, first gen — during the college access process? Do you have any examples?
5. How do you think the racial makeup of your college access/success team inform how you approach program planning and execution?
 - i. What about the composition of your team in terms of other social identities — gender, low-income status, first-gen status — how do these IDs inform the team's approach to program planning and execution?
6. **Do you and colleagues** ever initiate conversations having to do with race-ethnicity and the college access process **with one another?** Any examples?

- a. **Do you and colleagues** initiate conversations **about other social identities** — gender, low-income, and first-generation (class) status — with one another? Examples?
7. Have there been differences of opinion within your college access team about how to approach a topic or situation due to different perspectives based on race-ethnicity. (**prompt(s):** *This could be about a young person's college list, an approach to advocacy, an essay topic, or any other situation connected to your college access and success programming*)
 - a. Has there been differences of opinion on how to approach a topic or situation due to different perspectives based on other social identities — gender, low-income, first gen status?
 8. **Do you engage with college admissions offices as an advocate for the young people in your program?**
 - a. How do the social identities of the young people in your program (race-ethnicity, gender, low-income status, first-gen status) emerge within your relationships with admissions counselors? Can you give me an example?⁴
 - b. How does race-ethnicity specifically emerge as you're advocating for young people with colleges and universities? Can you give me an example/anecdote?
 - c. How does the low-income or first-gen status of young people emerge as you advocate for your young people with colleges and universities? Can you give me an example/anecdote?
 9. Overall, how important is the topic of race-ethnicity in college access and success programming? Why do you think this?
 - a. How important is the topic of class (low-income, first-gen topics) in college access and success programming? Why do you think this?
 - b. How important is the topic of gender in college access and success programming? Why do you think this?

⁴ In service of a paper based on the work of Parcel and Cookson (1991), examining the process of “chartering and bartering” that college access professionals engage in as an avenue into (elite) educational opportunities for marginalized youth, taking advantage of diversity and inclusion discourse and needs of the institution (social pressure) to act on D&I initiatives, In service of the status attainment for monoritized youth...a kind of **interest convergence** (?) that parallels the elite chartering and bartering process that Parcel and Cookson describe

H. YOUTH TRANSITION EXPERIENCES

Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts about all of this — just one more section before we talk about how you see the future of the field and then we'll close out.

Let's talk now about the experiences young people have shared with you about their transition to college.

1. Does your program keep in contact with program alum?
 - a. Does your program have a dedicated staff member who works on college success/alumni tracking?
2. Can you give me an example of how young people's **race-ethnicity** has been a factor in the college transition experiences of program alum?
 - a. Can you give me an example of how **other social identities** of students have been a factor in their transition experiences? (*Prompts: gender [possibly alongside race], class, sexuality, first gen status, low-income status*)
3. Based on your experience with program alum, what are the biggest challenges you anticipate for these seniors as they transition to college?
4. Have you and colleagues made changes to program preparation activities based on what you've learned about the transition experiences of your alum? (*Prompt: particularly racialized experiences of alum*)
 - a. If so, which changes?
 - b. If not, why not?

[CENTRAL QUESTIONS]

5. What does your program do to make your participants “college ready”? (**prompt(s):** *What must students know or be able to do, to be seen as “college ready?” — what are the “components” of readiness?; Consider the youth in your program at the end of the school year - how do you gauge their college readiness?*)

6. What do you think are the biggest factors impacting your participants’ persistence in college?
 - a. Why are these factors an issue?

 - b. How do you prepare your participants to navigate these factors?

7. **Thinking about the activities within the CACNY organization — when does the topic of race-ethnicity come up? (Think about: General meetings, special events, CACNY-sponsored trainings and talks)**
 - a. Do other social identities come up as topics (*low-income status, socioeconomic status, first-gen status, gender, etc*)? If so, when?

 - b. Are there ways that you think race-ethnicity can or should be incorporated into CACNY activities?

I. SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

1. Thinking about your program overall, what do you count as your program successes?
2. What are challenges that remain for your work as a college access counselor?

J. FUTURE OF THE COLLEGE ACCESS & SUCCESS FIELD

Thank you so much. To close out, I would like to talk to you about what you see as the future direction of college access and success work

1. Tell me about any trends emerging in college access and success work that you consider positive or helpful.
2. Are there any trends emerging in college access and success work that you consider unhelpful?
3. Are there other directions for college access and success work that you would like to see?

Those are all the questions I have for you today. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your time. I appreciate you sharing your thoughts and experiences with me today! It has been a pleasure speaking with you.

Total Time: _____

Survey Outline

- A. [Instructions/Consent](#)
- B. [Race-Ethnicity: Societal-Level Understandings and Discourses](#)
- C. [Counselor Pre-college and College Experiences](#)
 - a. [High School Experiences](#)
 - b. [Application Process + Supports Received](#)
 - c. [Transition Experiences](#)
 - d. [Campus Participation](#)
 - e. [College Social and Academic Experiences](#)
 - f. [Counselor Experiences with Race in College](#)
- D. [The College Access Field - General \(all survey participants\)](#)
- E. [Training](#)
 - a. [College Access Professionals](#)
 - b. [College Success Professionals](#)
- F. [College Success Counselors: Students Served + Student College Transition Experiences](#)
- G. [Race-Ethnicity and College Success Programming](#)
- H. [College Access Program: Youth Served](#)
- I. [Program Components](#)
 - a. [Support for the College Transition](#)
 - b. [COVID-19 Experiences](#)
- J. [Race-Ethnicity and College Access Programming](#)
- K. [Future of College Access and Success Field](#)
- L. [Counselor Background and Demographic Information](#)

Notes:

- *This survey is intended for all members of the College Access Consortium of New York (CACNY) and non-members in the role of college access professional serving New York City public school students.*
 - *While interviews and observations focused on college access programming in community-based organizational settings, the survey is targeted to all college access professionals, regardless of setting and CACNY membership status.*
 - *The survey will distinguish between these various types of practitioners throughout*
- *Participants will take this survey electronically using the Qualtrics Survey Hosting Service.*

A. INSTRUCTIONS:

Thank you for participating!

This survey seeks to understand how college access and success professionals conceptualize what it means for youth participants to be "college-ready".

This survey is intended for professionals in a variety of settings — whether based in school buildings, non-profit organizations, higher education admission, student services, or other related settings. Your participation will be helpful to better understanding experiences, understandings, and relationships that are integral to the work of college access professionals in New York City.

Please answer all questions honestly. Your responses are anonymous and will in no way become attributed to you.

Please contact Ja'Dell Davis at jaydeestudy@gmail.com with any questions.

B. RACE-ETHNICITY: SOCIETAL-LEVEL UNDERSTANDINGS AND DISCOURSES

In thinking about what it means for young people to be “college-ready” and how that meaning becomes incorporated into your programming, I am especially interested in how understandings of students' social identities —race-ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality — emerge within the process as counselors are preparing youth to navigate the college environment.

The following questions ask about your understandings surrounding race-ethnicity generally.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement

(Likert Scale: *Strongly disagree, Mostly disagree, Slightly disagree, Slightly agree, Mostly agree, Strongly agree, **Refuse/Unsure*)**

- a. My race-ethnicity plays a role in how I define myself
- b. My race-ethnicity plays an important role in my daily life
- c. I feel connected to other people in my racial-ethnic group
- d. My college experience played a role in how I understand my race-ethnicity
- e. I have done things that will help me understand my racial-ethnic background better
- f. I have talked to other people in order to learn more about my racial-ethnic group
- g. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own racial-ethnic group
- h. I feel comfortable talking about race-ethnicity

C. COUNSELOR PRE-COLLEGE AND COLLEGE EXPERIENCES

Let's continue by getting an idea of your own college application and transition experiences. Please answer these questions honestly and to the best of your recollection.

A. High school experiences

- i. Discrete list w/ “other” option: From which type of HIGH SCHOOL did you GRADUATE
 - i. Traditional Public School
 - ii. Public Charter School
 - iii. Public Magnet School
 - iv. Traditional Private School
 - v. Religious Private School
 - vi. Independent School
 - vii. Boarding School
 - viii. International School
 - ix. Other (please specify)
- j. Discrete list w/ “other” option: Besides the high school you graduated from, DID YOU ATTEND ANOTHER TYPE OF HIGH SCHOOL? Please indicate below, selecting all that apply.

- i. Traditional Public School
- ii. Public Charter School
- iii. Public Magnet School
- iv. Traditional Private School
- v. Religious Private School
- vi. Independent School
- vii. Boarding School
- viii. International School
- ix. Other (please specify)

B. Application Process + Supports Received

Please indicate how true the following statements are about your high school teachers or counselors.

(Likert Responses: *Not True at All, A Little True, Somewhat True, Very True, **Refuse*)**

- a. Worked with me individually on my college essays
- b. Made sure I did not miss any college application deadlines
- c. Suggested which colleges I should apply to
- d. Completed financial aid applications with me
- e. Completed scholarship applications with me
- f. Helped me manage my workload and study habits
- g. Helped me to pick out a career path
- h. Made sure I did not miss any financial aid deadlines
- i. Worked with me to choose which college to attend
- j. Helped me think about what my college major should be
- k. Talked with my parent(s) about me going to college

C. Transition experiences

Think back to how you felt during your first year of college and indicate how true the following statements are about your college transition experiences.

(Likert Responses: *Not True at All, A Little True, Somewhat True, Very True, **Refuse/Not Applicable*)**

In my first year of college,

- a. I met people that would become my lifelong friends
- b. I felt prepared for the academic requirements of college
- c. I felt like I belonged on my campus
- d. I felt good about my interactions with professors
- e. I had positive interactions with my peers who shared my race-ethnicity
- f. I had positive interactions with people of color who were my peers
- g. I considered transferring to another college/university
- h. I transferred to another college/university
- i. I considered dropping out of college
- j. I felt proud of my academic performance

D. Campus Participation

The following questions reference your full time at college (not just your first year).

Which of the following activities did you participate in during your time in college (select all that apply)

- a. Political Action Group
- b. Intramural/Club Sports Team
- c. Member of a Board/Organizing Committee for a Campus Club
- d. Religious Club
- e. Greek Life (Sorority/Fraternity)
- f. The Arts (e.g. theater, band, dance)
- g. Student Government
- h. Ethnic/Cultural Affinity Group
- i. Volunteer for Political Campaign
- j. Other (please specify)

E. College Social and Academic Experiences

The following questions reference your full time at college. Please read below and indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement.

(Likert Responses: *Strongly disagree, Mostly disagree, Slightly disagree, Slightly agree, Mostly agree, Strongly agree, **Refuse/Not Applicable*)**

Overall,

- a. My high school prepared me academically for college
- b. My high school prepared me for my social experiences in college
- c. I had positive experiences in college that were connected to my race-ethnicity
- d. My college was a good fit for me
- e. My friend group in college was mostly peers who shared my race-ethnicity
- f. There were campus organizations that were helpful as I transitioned to college
- g. I had negative experiences in college that were connected to my GENDER
- h. I had negative experiences in college that were connected to my FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE-GOING STATUS
- i. I had negative experiences in college that were connected to my LOW-INCOME STATUS
- j. I had negative experiences in college that were connected to my SEXUALITY
- k. Open-ended: Looking back, which topics or skills would have been helpful to cover in high school in order to prepare you for college?

F. Counselor Experiences with Race in College

The following questions reference your full time at college (not just your first year).

Please read the statements below and indicate how often the situations described were the case for you.

(Likert: *Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always, **Refuse/Not Applicable*)

- a. People asked me where I am from, suggesting that I don't belong
- b. People assumed that I would behave aggressively because of my race-ethnicity
- c. I was singled out by police or security because of my race-ethnicity
- d. People held sexual stereotypes about me because of my racial-ethnic background
- e. People acted as if all of the people of my race-ethnicity are alike.
- f. I experienced feelings of isolation at school because of my race-ethnicity
- g. People made me feel intellectually inferior at school because of my race-ethnicity
- h. I felt excluded by others because of my race-ethnicity

END SECTION

The next series of questions explore your experiences as a College Access and Success Professional.

Please answer all questions fully and honestly.

D. THE COLLEGE ACCESS FIELD - GENERAL (ALL SURVEY PARTICIPANTS)

a. Discrete list w/ "other" option: Please select the option that best describes the PRIMARY SETTING IN WHICH YOU CURRENTLY WORK.

- a. Public School-based Counselor
 - b. Public Charter School-based Counselor
 - c. Private/Parochial School-based Counselor
 - d. Community-Based/Non-Profit College Access and Success Organization - SINGLE PROGRAM/SITE
 - e. Non-Profit College Access/Success Organization - SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP(S)
 - f. Non-Profit College Access/Success Organization - MULTIPLE SITES (e.g. regional, national)
 - g. Independent College Access/Success Consultant
 - h. College/University-based College Access/Success Counselor (Unaffiliated with Undergraduate Admissions)
 - i. College Admissions
 - j. College Financial Aid
 - k. Opportunity Program Office
 - l. Student Services
 - m. Foundation
 - n. Other (please specify)
- b. Discrete list w/ "other" option: Which best describes your position (check all that apply)
- i. Direct service (working with students)
 - ii. Administrative
 - iii. Professional Development/Trainer
 - iv. Other (please specify)
- c. Y/N: Do you work in other college access settings besides this primary setting?
- i. Display Logic: If yes:
 1. [Options from section D.a.]
- d. Drop-down number list: How many years have you worked IN THE COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS FIELD?
- e. Drop-down number list: How many years have you worked at the organization that is your PRIMARY WORK SETTING?
- f. Y/N: Have you worked in college access-related settings PRIOR TO your current work setting?
- i. Display Logic: If yes:

- ii. Discrete list w/ "other" option: In which other type(s) of college access-related settings¹⁸³ have you PREVIOUSLY WORKED? Please select all options that apply.
1. Public School-based Counselor
 2. Public Charter School-based Counselor
 3. Private/Parochial School-based Counselor
 4. Community-Based/Non-Profit College Access and Success Organization - SINGLE PROGRAM/SITE
 5. Non-Profit College Access/Success Organization - SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP(S)
 6. Non-Profit College Access/Success Organization - MULTIPLE SITES (e.g. regional, national)
 7. Independent College Access/Success Consultant
 8. College/University-based College Access/Success Counselor (Unaffiliated with Undergraduate Admissions)
 9. College Admissions
 10. College Financial Aid
 11. Opportunity Program Office
 12. Student Services
 13. Foundation
 14. Other (please specify)
- g. Drop-down number list: How many years have you participated in the College Access Consortium of New York (CACNY) (Current and any previous employment)
- h. Discrete list w/ "other" option: Which CACNY-sponsored activities have you participated in outside of the General Body Meetings? Select all that apply
- i. College Success Meetings
 - ii. Committees (i.e. Scholarship, Resource, College and Career Planning Activity, Advocacy)
 - iii. Board Member
 - iv. Advocacy Day in Albany
 - v. Social Events (e.g. Happy Hours)
 - vi. Annual Leadership Summit
 - vii. Anti-Racism Coalition Meetings
 - viii. Other (please specify)
 - ix. None

END SECTION

The next series of questions explore the training opportunities within the college access and success field

E. TRAINING

To get you to the appropriate questions, please indicate:

Which of the following best describes your work setting within the College Access and Success Field?

- a. I am a College Access Professional (e.g. College Counselors/Transition Specialists in community-based orgs., schools, non-profit orgs, and other relevant settings)
- b. I am a College Success Professional (e.g. College Admissions, College Financial Aid, Opportunity Program Officers, Students Services, and other associated roles)

College Access Professionals (Training)

- i. Y/N/Unsure: Is there on-going training required for your current college access role?
 - i. Display Logic: If yes:
 - ii. Open-Ended: Please DESCRIBE OR LIST the training(s) required for your current position.
- j. Y/N/Unsure: Have you participated in Goddard Options Institute Trainings?

 - i. Display Logic: If yes:
 - ii. Discrete list w/ "other" option: Have you participated in any of the following Goddard Options Institute Trainings? Please select all that apply.
 1. Foundation Course for College Access Counseling (multi-day certificate training)
 2. Beyond Basics (multi-day certificate training)
 3. One-Day Seminars (various topics)
 - a. What topic was covered in the seminar you attended
 4. Department of Education Series/Workshops
 5. Customized training for your organization
 6. Other (please specify)
- k. Yes/No: Have you attended college access and success-related professional development sessions led by the Partnership for Afterschool Education (PASE)?
- l. Open-Ended: Please describe OTHER PROFESSIONAL TRAININGS you have participated in that were geared toward improving/developing your work as a college access professional.

END SECTION

College Success Professionals (Training)

- a. Y/N/Unsure: **Is there on-going training required for your current college success role?**
- i. Display Logic: If yes:
 1. Open-Ended: Please DESCRIBE OR LIST the training(s) required for your current position.
 - ii. Open-Ended: Please describe OTHER PROFESSIONAL TRAININGS you have participated in that were geared toward improving/developing your work as a college success professional

Undoing Racism Training (College Success Block, same questions for College Access folks)

- m. Yes/No/Unsure: Have you participated in CACNY'S Undoing Racism training (Note: they began ~ 2015, with The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond)
- i. Display Logic: If yes:
 - ii. Display Logic: Duel Response: Did you attend the training alone or with colleagues
 1. I attended alone
 2. I attended with colleagues

Display Logic: **The following set of questions asks you to reflect on your participation in the Undoing Racism trainings.**

1. Display Logic: **Please read the statements below and indicate how true each statement is in regard to your experience with the Undoing Racism training.**
(Likert Responses: Not True at All, A Little True, Somewhat True, Very True, **Refuse/Not Applicable)**

- iii. I participated in the Undoing Racism Training because of my own interest in the training
- iv. I participated in the Undoing Racism Training because it was a job requirement
- v. I participated in the Undoing Racism Training at the suggestion of another colleague
- vi. The Undoing Racism training impacted how I THINK ABOUT MY WORK as a college access and success professional
- vii. The Undoing Racism training impacted how I DO MY WORK as a college access and success professional

- n. Yes/Somewhat/No: Would you say you had a POSITIVE EXPERIENCE in the Undoing Racism training?
- o. Yes/Somewhat/No: Would you say you had a NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE in the Undoing Racism training?
- p. Yes/Somewhat/No: Would you say you LEARNED A LOT in the Undoing Racism training?

QUALTRICS NOTE: Skip to transition experiences of college students (college success version)

END SECTION

F. COLLEGE SUCCESS COUNSELORS: STUDENTS SERVED + STUDENT COLLEGE TRANSITION EXPERIENCES

The following questions explore your college success work and the students you serve. Please answer all questions fully and honestly.

A NOTE ON THE FOLLOWING QUESTION: Of interest here is both self-identification of youth and a reflection of how youth are racially identified in their everyday lives. An attempt is made to allow for as much specificity as possible, with the understanding that these categories are imposed and may not fully capture the identities represented among youth and their families.

- q. Discrete list w/ “other” option: Approximately what PERCENT of students from each racial-ethnic group do you serve in your office/program (Total must add up to 100%)
- i. American Indian, Alaska Native, Other Indigenous People Group—*For example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec*
 - ii. Asian—*For example, Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, Indo-Caribbean*
 - iii. Black, African American, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latinx— *For example, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somalian*
 - iv. Hispanic, Latin American, Chicano origin (non-European) —*For example, Mexican or Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Salvadoran, Dominican, Columbian*
 - v. Middle Eastern or North African—*For example, Lebanese, Iranian, Egyptian, Syrian, Moroccan, Algerian*
 - vi. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander—*For example, Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese*
 - vii. White (non-Hispanic)—*For example, German, Irish, Spanish, Portuguese, English, Italian, Polish, French*
 - viii. Other race, ethnicity, or origin (please specify)
- r. Slide Scale: Among the students you work with, approximately what PERCENTAGE (%) are first-generation college students?
- s. Slide Scale: Among the students you work with, approximately what PERCENTAGE (%) can be categorized as low-income?

The following questions explore your perspectives on the transition experiences of students that you serve in your office/program. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement (Likert Scale: *Strongly disagree, Mostly disagree, Slightly disagree, Slightly agree, Mostly agree, Strongly agree, **refuse/unsure*)**

- i. Students I work with are open about their college experiences
- ii. I am generally aware of the college transition experiences of students I works with
- iii. Race-ethnicity has been a factor in the college transition experiences for students I works with
- iv. Gender has been a factor in the college transition experiences for students I works with
- v. Being a first-generation college student has been a factor in the college transition experiences for students I works with
- vi. Students' low-income status has been a factor in their college transition experiences
- vii. Negative interactions with PEERS based on RACE-ETHNICITY have impacted the college transition experiences for students I works with
- viii. Negative interactions with PROFESSORS based on RACE-ETHNICITY have impacted the college transition experiences for students I works with
- ix. Negative interactions with PEERS around GENDER AND SEXUALITY has impacted the college transition experiences for students I works with
- x. Negative interactions with PROFESSORS around GENDER AND SEXUALITY has impacted the college transition experiences for students I works with
- xi. Negative interactions with PEERS around students' FIRST-GEN OR LOW-INCOME STATUS have impacted their college transition experiences
- xii. Negative interactions with PROFESSORS around students' FIRST-GEN OR LOW-INCOME STATUS have impacted their college transition experiences
- xiii. I (or my team) modify program based on what I/we have learned from the experiences of students

G. RACE-ETHNICITY AND COLLEGE SUCCESS PROGRAMMING

Thank you for your responses so far!

Only a few more questions to go. Please continue to answer all questions fully and honestly.

G. Race and Ethnicity in College Access and Success

- a. How frequently does discussion about student social identities come up over the course of the school year as you work with students?

(Likert: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always, **Refuse/Unsure)**

Please indicate how frequently discussion of each of the following social identities comes up over the course of the school year among the students with whom you work.

(Likert: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always, **Refuse/Unsure)**

1. Race-Ethnicity
2. Gender, Gender Identity
3. First-Generation College-Going Status
4. Low-Income Status
5. Sexual Orientation
6. Nationality, Citizenship

b. Discrete list in response matrix, multiple responses: **(program components on y-axis, social identities on the x-axis)**

- i. For each of the COLLEGE SUCCESS ELEMENTS listed below, select the corresponding SOCIAL IDENTITIES that typically emerge throughout the course of your work with students.

You may select multiple social identities for each program component

1. Social IDs: **(x-axis)**
 - a. Race-Ethnicity
 - b. Gender, Gender Identity
 - c. First-Generation College-Going Status
 - d. Low-Income Status
 - e. Sexual Orientation
 - f. Nationality, Citizenship
 - g. ****Refuse/Not Applicable****

2. College Success Elements **(y-axis)**
 - a. Career Planning/Advising
 - b. One-on-One Advising (Generally)
 - c. College Transition Support
 - d. Course Selection Support
 - e. Financial Aid Counseling
 - f. Scholarship Application Support
 - g. Transfer Student Support
 - h. Mentoring Sessions
 - i. Academic Skills Workshops
 - j. Health and Wellness Support
 - k. Other (please specify)

- c. Discrete List w/ "other" option: Consider the contexts in which discussion/acknowledgment of student RACIAL-ETHNIC IDENTITY emerge.

Please indicate the format(s) in which discussion/acknowledgment of student RACIAL-ETHNIC IDENTITY takes place (Please select all that apply)

- i. One-on-one discussions
- ii. Small group discussions
- iii. Large group discussions
- iv. Incorporated into program plans
- v. As part of the aims of the program/organization/office (e.g mission statement, program promotion materials)
- vi. Other (please specify)

- d. Discrete list: Consider the contexts in which discussion of student RACIAL IDENTITY emerge.

On the whole, do these discussions typically occur SPONTANEOUSLY or are they PLANNED beforehand?

- i. Spontaneous
- ii. Planned

Please indicate the frequency with which the following happens within your college success work (Likert: *Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always, **Refuse/Not Applicable*)

e. Youth and Adult Discussion of Social Identities

- i. YOU initiate conversations about race-ethnicity and the college experience
- ii. STUDENTS initiate conversations about race-ethnicity and the college experience
- iii. YOU initiate conversations about gender and the college experience
- iv. STUDENTS initiate conversations about gender and the college experience
- v. YOU initiate conversations about student first-generation college-going status and the college experience
- vi. STUDENTS initiate conversations about student first-generation college-going status and the college experience
- vii. YOU initiate conversations about student low-income status and the college experience
- viii. STUDENTS initiate conversations about student low-income status and the college experience
- ix. Your own racial-ethnic identity informs how you approach your role as a college success professional
- x. RACE-ETHNICITY comes up as you advocate for students with college administrators
- xi. GENDER comes up as you advocate for students with college administrators
- xii. Students' FIRST-GEN COLLEGE-GOING STATUS comes up as you advocate for students with college administrators
- xiii. Student LOW-INCOME STATUS comes up as you advocate for students with college administrators

END SECTION

H. COLLEGE ACCESS PROGRAM: YOUTH SERVED

The following questions explore your college access programming and the youth population you serve. Please answer all questions fully and honestly.

- f. Drop-down number list: How many years has your program been operating?

A NOTE ON THE FOLLOWING QUESTION: Of interest here is both self-identification of youth and a reflection of how youth are racially identified in their everyday lives. An attempt is made to allow for as much specificity as possible, with the understanding that these categories are imposed and may not fully capture the identities represented among youth and their families.

- g. Discrete list w/ "other" option: Approximately what PERCENT of students from each racial-ethnic group do you serve in your program(s) (Total must add up to 100%)
- i. American Indian, Alaska Native, Other Indigenous People Group—*For example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec*
 - ii. Asian—*For example, Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, Indo-Caribbean*
 - iii. Black, African American, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latinx—*For example, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somalian*
 - iv. Hispanic, Latin American, Chicano origin (non-European) —*For example, Mexican or Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Salvadoran, Dominican, Columbian*
 - v. Middle Eastern or North African—*For example, Lebanese, Iranian, Egyptian, Syrian, Moroccan, Algerian*
 - vi. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander—*For example, Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese*
 - vii. White (non-Hispanic)—*For example, German, Irish, Spanish, Portuguese, English, Italian, Polish, French*
 - viii. Other race, ethnicity, or origin (please specify)
- h. Checklist: In which areas of the New York City region does your program operate?
Please check all that apply
- i. Manhattan
 - ii. Bronx
 - iii. Queens
 - iv. Brooklyn
 - v. Staten Island
 - vi. New Jersey
 - vii. Westchester County
 - viii. Long Island

- ix. Connecticut
 - x. Other (Please specify)
- i. Discrete list w/ "other" option: How are youth participants enrolled into your college access program?
 - i. Open enrollment
 - ii. Application/Admissions Process
 - iii. Other (please specify)
 - j. Drop-down number list: Approximately how many youth do you serve in your college access programming EACH SCHOOL YEAR / PROGRAM CYCLE
 - k. Slide Scale: Among the youth you work with, approximately what PERCENTAGE (%) are first-generation college students?
 - l. Slide Scale: Among the youth you work with, approximately what PERCENTAGE (%) can be categorized as low-income?

Please indicate how true the following statements are about your college access program (Likert Responses: *Not True at All, A Little True, Somewhat True, Very True, **Refuse*)**

I. PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- m. My team has flexibility in how we structure the college access program
 - n. Leaders at my organization have direct input in the planning process for the college access program
 - o. Funders have direct input in how my team structures the college access program
 - p. My team feels in control of our plans for the college access program
 - q. My team is able to add or remove elements of the college access program as we see fit
- r. Discrete list w/ "other" option: Which college preparation elements are included in your programming? (Please check all that apply)
 - i. Standardized Test Prep (e.g. SAT, ACT)
 - ii. Assistance with choosing colleges (e.g. college lists, research)
 - iii. Comprehensive college application assistance
 - iv. Understanding college majors
 - v. Understanding career pathways
 - vi. Completion and submission of financial aid applications (e.g. FAFSA, TAP, other state, federal, and school-based aid)
 - vii. Identify and apply for scholarships
 - viii. Writing and review of college essays/personal statements
 - ix. Community college transfer planning
 - x. Registration/Enrollment for college (e.g. accessing student portals)
 - xi. Submitting housing applications

- xii. College Transition Workshops
 - xiii. Graduation ceremony
 - xiv. Other (please specify)
- s. Y/N: Does your program keep in contact with program alum?
- i. If yes, [series of questions](#):
 - ii. [Display Logic](#): Discrete list w/ "other" option: Which strategies does your program use in order to keep in contact with alum? Please check all that apply.
 - 1. Alumni events
 - 2. Text messages
 - 3. Social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram)
 - 4. Emails
 - 5. Care packages
 - 6. School visits
 - 7. Phone calls
 - 8. Other method (please specify) _____
 - iii. Y/N: Does your program maintain contact with youth during the summer before they enter their freshman year of college?
 - iv. [Display Logic](#): Y/N: Does your program have a dedicated staff member who works on college success/ alumni tracking?

[Display Logic](#): **Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement**

(Likert Scale: Strongly disagree, Mostly disagree, Slightly disagree, Slightly agree, Mostly agree, Strongly agree)

- v. My program has been successful in keeping track of program alum
- vi. Program alumni are responsive when my team contacts them
- vii. Maintaining contact with program alum is connected in some part to funding requirements
- viii. Staff capacity has been a barrier to maintaining contact with program alum
- ix. Program alum's lack of resources has been a barrier to maintaining

The following questions explore your perspectives on the college transition experiences of program alum. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement

(Likert Scale: *Strongly disagree, Mostly disagree, Slightly disagree, Slightly agree, Mostly agree, Strongly agree, **refuse/unsure*)**

- x. Program alum are open about their college experiences
- xi. I am generally aware of the college transition experiences of our program alum
- xii. Race-ethnicity has been a factor in the college transition experiences of program alum
- xiii. Gender has been a factor in the college transition experiences of program alum
- xiv. Being a first-generation college student has been a factor in the college transition experiences of program alum
- xv. Alum's low-income status has been a factor in their college transition experiences
- xvi. Negative interactions with PEERS based on RACE-ETHNICITY have impacted the college transition experiences of program alum
- xvii. Negative interactions with PROFESSORS based on RACE-ETHNICITY have impacted the college transition experiences of program alum
- xviii. Negative interactions with PEERS around GENDER AND SEXUALITY has impacted the college transition experiences of program alum
- xix. Negative interactions with PROFESSORS around GENDER AND SEXUALITY has impacted the college transition experiences of program alum
- xx. Negative interactions with PEERS around alum's FIRST-GEN OR LOW-INCOME STATUS have impacted their college transition experiences
- xxi. Negative interactions with PROFESSORS around alum's FIRST-GEN OR LOW-INCOME STATUS have impacted their college transition experiences
- xxii. My team has modified program based on what we have learned from the experiences of program alum

END SECTION

A. Support for the College Transition

- t. Y/N: Does your college access program feature a College Transition Workshop? **(If no, skip to #b)**
- i. If yes:
 - ii. Display Logic: Discrete list w/ "other" option: Which broad topics do you cover during the workshop? Please select all that apply
 1. Classes/Studying/Grades
 2. Choosing a Major
 3. Dorm Life
 4. Commuting to School
 5. Finances
 6. Working while Attending to School
 7. Greek Life
 8. Campus Social Life/Peer Relationships
 9. Athletics
 10. Family Relationships while in College
 11. Health and Wellness in College
 12. Daily Routines/Adulting
 13. Relationships with Professors
 14. Clubs and Affinity Groups
 15. Graduating from College
 16. Other (please specify, list multiple if needed) _____
 - iii. Discrete list w/ "other" option (same as above, #b): Look over the college transition-related topics below. Please rank these topics in order of what you believe is MOST IMPORTANT by dragging and dropping the items in your desired order (The most important topic at the top of the list).
 1. Classes/Studying/Grades
 2. Choosing a Major
 3. Dorm Life
 4. Commuting to School
 5. Finances
 6. Working and Going to School
 7. Greek Life
 8. Campus Social Life/Peer Relationships
 9. Athletics
 10. Family Relationships while in College
 11. Health and Wellness in College
 12. Daily Routines/Adulting
 13. Relationships with Professors
 14. Clubs and Affinity Groups
 15. Graduating from College
 16. Other (please specify) _____

The following questions explore your perspectives on how well your program carries out its college preparatory function.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement

(Likert Scale: *Strongly disagree*, *Mostly disagree*, *Slightly disagree*, *Slightly agree*, *Mostly agree*, *Strongly agree*, **unsure****)**

- u. College-going options are significantly expanded for our youth population because of our college access programming
- v. Our college access programming successfully prepares youth to transition into FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES
- w. Our college access programming successfully prepares youth to transition into TWO-YEAR COLLEGES
- x. Our college access programming successfully supports youth for the ACADEMIC TRANSITION to college
- y. Our college access programming successfully supports youth in their SOCIAL TRANSITION to college
- z. If our college access programming were not available, the youth population we serve would still attend college
- aa. Our college access programming plays a significant role in college-going for the youth population we serve

- bb. Discrete list w/ "other" option: Consider these broad categories related to student persistence in college.

In your view, what are the TOP THREE FACTORS that hinder college persistence for marginalized youth?

::Rank your top 3::

1. Academic Preparation
2. Student and Family Finances
3. Commuting to School
4. Racist Interactions on Campus (e.g. with peers, professors)
5. Mental Health Challenges
6. Challenging Social Adjustments
7. Gender-based Violence on Campus
8. Anti-LGBTQIA+ Campus Dynamics

B. COVID-19 Experiences - The next few questions explore the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic on your work as a college access professional.

- cc. Scale “the extent to which” [Matrix; Net Promoter Score; single answer; statements and scale points with LABELS (indicating scale meaning)]: To what extent have the "shelter in place" measures for the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your work as a college access professional?
Scale from 1-10; Labels “low impact” “moderate impact” “high impact”
- dd. Discrete list w/ “other” option: Which strategies have you implemented in order to maintain contact with/support young people in your program(s)?
- i. Video conferencing for meetings (e.g. Zoom, Google Meet, FaceTime)
 - ii. Video conferencing for informal gatherings (e.g. HouseParty app, “Zoom Parties”)
 - iii. Text messages
 - iv. Social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram)
 - v. Emails
 - vi. Care packages
 - vii. Phone calls
 - viii. Other method (please specify)
- ix. Discrete list w/ “other” option; Scale “the extent to which” [Matrix; Likert scale; “scale points” = just numbers; single answer; statements and scale points with LABELS (indicating scale meaning)]: To what extent have the following been SOURCES OF CONCERN FOR YOUTH PARTICIPANTS in the midst of "shelter in place" measures for the COVID-19 pandemic?
Scale from 1-10; Labels “low concern” “moderate concern” “high concern” “not applicable” + “Unsure/Refuse”
- x. College access programming completion for the **2019-20 School Year**
 - xi. Financial aid stability (for youth participants transitioning to college in Fall 2020)
 - xii. Mental health
 - xiii. Physical health
 - xiv. Adjustment to online learning (youth already attending college)
 - xv. College affordability for family (youth transitioning to college **in Fall 2020**)
 - xvi. College application options (for youth participants **applying to college in Fall 2020**)
 - xvii. Academic records
 - xviii. College application navigation (for youth participants **applying to college in Fall 2020**)
 - xix. Summer employment opportunities
 - xx. Employment opportunities (generally)

- ee. Open-ended: Have other sources of concern emerged among YOUTH PARTICIPANTS in the midst of “shelter in place” measures for the COVID-19 pandemic? If so, please list below.
- ff. Discrete list w/ “other” option; Scale “the extent to which” [Matrix; Likert scale; “scale points” = just numbers; single answer; statements and scale points with LABELS (indicating scale meaning)]: To what extent have the following been SOURCES OF CONCERN FOR YOU in the midst of “shelter in place” measures for the COVID-19 pandemic?
Scale from 1-10; Labels “low concern” “moderate concern” “high concern” “not applicable”
- i. College access programming completion for the **2019-20 School Year**
 - ii. Financial aid stability for youth participants transitioning to college in Fall 2020
 - iii. Youth mental health
 - iv. Youth physical health
 - v. College options for youth participants **transiting to college in Fall 2020**
 - vi. Funding for your college access program
 - vii. Well-being of youth participant families
 - viii. Supporting youth already attending college
 - ix. College affordability for family (youth transitioning to college **in Fall 2020**)
 - x. College application options (for youth participants **applying to college in Fall 2020**)
 - xi. Academic records
 - xii. College access programming structure for the **2020-21 School Year** (next year)
 - xiii. Your own job security
- gg. Open-ended: Have other sources of concern emerged FOR YOU in the midst of “shelter in place” measures for the COVID-19 pandemic? If so, please list below.
- hh. Y/N: Has the topic of taking a “gap year”(taking a year off between high school and beginning college) come up AMONG YOUTH PARTICIPANTS?
- ii. Y/N: Has the topic of youth participants taking a “gap year” come up AMONG YOU AND YOUR COLLEAGUES?
- jj. Open-ended: Do you have any other thoughts you would like to share concerning your college access work during the Coronavirus pandemic?

END SECTION

J. RACE-ETHNICITY AND COLLEGE ACCESS PROGRAMMING

Thank you for your responses so far!

Only a few more questions to go. Please continue to answer all questions fully and honestly.

H. Race and Ethnicity in College Access and Success

- a. How frequently does discussion about student social identities come up over the course of your year-long college access programming?

(Likert: *Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always, **Refuse/Unsure*)**

Please indicate how frequently discussion of each of the following social identities comes up over the course of your college access programming cycle.

(Likert: *Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always, **Refuse/Unsure*)**

1. Race-Ethnicity
2. Gender, Gender Identity
3. First-Generation College-Going Status
4. Low-Income Status
5. Sexual Orientation
6. Nationality, Citizenship

b. Discrete list in response matrix, multiple responses: **(program components on y-axis, social identities on the x-axis)**

- i. For each of the PROGRAM COMPONENTS listed below, select the corresponding SOCIAL IDENTITIES that typically emerge throughout the course of the college access program cycle.

You may select multiple social identities for each program component

1. Social IDs: **(x-axis)**
 - a. Race-Ethnicity
 - b. Gender, Gender Identity
 - c. First-Generation College-Going Status
 - d. Low-Income Status
 - e. Sexual Orientation
 - f. Nationality, Citizenship
 - g. ****Refuse/Not Applicable****

2. Program Components **(y-axis)**
 - a. Creating a College List
 - b. One-on-One Advising (Generally)
 - c. College Application Completion
 - d. SAT/ACT Prep
 - e. Financial Aid Applications
 - f. Scholarship Applications
 - g. College Visits
 - h. Advocacy with College Admissions Counselors
 - i. College Recruiter Visits
 - j. Advising around Non-College Post-Secondary Options
 - k. College Transition Workshops/Advising
 - l. Parent Contact/Workshops

- c. Discrete List w/ "other" option: Consider the contexts in which discussion/acknowledgment of student RACIAL IDENTITY emerge.

Please indicate the format(s) in which discussion/acknowledgment takes place (Please select all that apply)

- i. One-on-one discussions
 - ii. Small group discussions
 - iii. Large group discussions
 - iv. Incorporated into program curricula
 - v. As part of the aims of the program/organization (e.g mission statement, program promotion materials)
 - vi. Other (please specify)
- d. Discrete list: Consider the contexts in which discussion of student RACIAL IDENTITY emerge.

On the whole, do these discussions typically occur SPONTANEOUSLY or are they PLANNED beforehand?

- i. Spontaneous
- ii. Planned

Please indicate the frequency with which the following happens within your college access programming

(Likert: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always, **Refuse/Not Applicable)

e. Youth and Adult Discussion of Social Identities

- i. YOU initiate conversations about race-ethnicity and the college-going process
- ii. YOUTH PARTICIPANTS initiate conversations about race-ethnicity and the college-going process
- iii. YOU initiate conversations about gender and the college-going process
- iv. YOUTH PARTICIPANTS initiate conversations about gender and the college-going process
- v. YOU initiate conversations about student first-generation college-going status and the college-going process
- vi. YOUTH PARTICIPANTS initiate conversations about student first-generation college-going status and the college-going process
- vii. YOU initiate conversations about student low-income status and the college-going process
- viii. YOUTH PARTICIPANTS initiate conversations about student low-income status and the college-going process
- ix. Your own racial-ethnic identity informs how you approach your role as a college counselor
- x. RACE-ETHNICITY comes up as you advocate for youth participants IN CONVERSATIONS WITH ADMISSIONS COUNSELORS
- xi. GENDER comes up as you advocate for youth participants IN CONVERSATIONS WITH ADMISSIONS COUNSELORS
- xii. Students' FIRST-GEN COLLEGE-GOING STATUS comes up as you advocate for youth participants IN CONVERSATIONS WITH ADMISSIONS COUNSELORS
- xiii. Student LOW-INCOME STATUS comes up as you advocate for youth participants IN CONVERSATIONS WITH ADMISSIONS COUNSELORS

END SECTION

K. FUTURE OF THE COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS FIELD

For this final question of the main survey, please consider your views of the FUTURE OF THE COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS FIELD.

Take a look at this list of TEN COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS TOPICS. Please rank each element according to what you believe should be prioritized in college access and success work for marginalized students.

Drag and drop the items in your desired order (where 1 = greatest priority)

The “other” category is optional - use only if a topic you consider important is omitted and include this topic in your overall rankings.

- f. Financial Aid & Literacy
- g. College Entrance Exam Preparation
- h. Student Academic Preparation
- i. Student Social Prep (generally)
- j. Student Match with College
- k. State and Federal Legislative Advocacy
- l. Parent & Family Engagement in the College Access Process
- m. Racism and Bigotry on Campus
- n. “Student-Ready” Institutions Advocacy
- o. Career Counseling/Transition Out of College
- p. Student Health & Wellness During College
- q. Other (Please specify)

END SECTION

L. COUNSELOR BACKGROUND AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

This final section asks for your background and demographic information.

Remember: Your information will be CONFIDENTIAL.

Because our field is unique and functions in a variety of settings, much of this information is not captured publicly in any uniform way. Please contribute to the documentation of the work of our field by answering fully and honestly

Thank you in advance!

- r. What is your gender?
 - i. Woman
 - ii. Man
 - iii. Trans man
 - iv. Trans woman
 - v. Genderqueer/Gender non-conforming
 - vi. Different identity (please specify)
 - vii. Decline to answer

A NOTE ON THE FOLLOWING QUESTION: Of interest here is both your self-identification a reflection of how you are racially identified in your everyday life. An attempt is made to allow for as much specificity as possible, with understanding that these categories are imposed and may not fully capture your self-identification.

- s. What is your race-ethnicity (check all that apply)?
 - i. American Indian, Alaska Native, Other Indiginous People Group—*For example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec*
 - ii. Asian—*For example, Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, Indo-Caribbean*
 - iii. Black, African American, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latinx— *For example, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somalian*
 - iv. Hispanic, Latin American, Chicano origin (non-European) —*For example, Mexican or Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Salvadoran, Dominican, Columbian*
 - v. Middle Eastern or North African—*For example, Lebanese, Iranian, Egyptian, Syrian, Moroccan, Algerian*
 - vi. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander—*For example, Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese*
 - vii. White (non-Hispanic)—*For example, German, Irish, Spanish, Portuguese, English, Italian, Polish, French*

viii. Other race, ethnicity, or origin (please specify)

- t. Discrete list w/ refuse option: This section asks for information about your income in relation to your college access and success work

Which option below approximates your ANNUAL INCOME from your college access and success work?

- i. Less than \$25,000
- ii. \$25,000 to \$34,999
- iii. \$35,000 to \$42,999
- iv. \$43,000 to \$49,999
- v. \$50,000 to \$62,999
- vi. \$63,000 to \$69,999
- vii. \$70,000 to \$79,999
- viii. \$80,000 to \$89,999
- ix. \$90,000 to \$99,999
- x. \$100,000 or more
- xi. Prefer not to answer

Display Logic: Initial “Prefer not to answer”

MESSAGE: Please consider providing your income information

Remember: Your information will be CONFIDENTIAL. Your input will greatly contribute to the documentation of the work of our field.

Please answer honestly to contribute to the documentation of the work in our field.

- a. Yes, I'll go back and provide my income information
- b. No, I still prefer not to say

Display Logic: **Income question reappears if “yes” is chosen**

- u. Y/N/Prefer not to say: Do you have other employment income from any sources other than your college access/success salary?

The following series of questions ask about the UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTION from which you GRADUATED (conferred Bachelor's degree).

Please read below and choose the options that best describe the undergraduate INSTITUTION FROM WHICH YOU GRADUATED

- v. Drop-down menu: In which YEAR did you graduate from COLLEGE?
- w. Discrete list w/ "other" option: Which of the following categories best describes the DEGREE GRANTING TYPE of the UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTION from which you GRADUATED?
- i. 2-year/community college
 - ii. 4-year college/university
 - iii. Other (Please specify)
- x. Discrete list: Which of the following categories best describes the FUNDING STRUCTURE of the UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTION from which you GRADUATED?
- i. Public
 - ii. Private
 - iii. For-Profit
- y. Discrete list: Which of the following categories best describes the GENDER COMPOSITION of the UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTION from which you GRADUATED?
- i. Co-ed
 - ii. All Women
 - iii. All Men
- z. Discrete list w/ "other" option: Did your undergraduate institution have any of the following SPECIALIZED (CULTURAL/HISTORICAL) MISSIONS? (select all that apply)
- i. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)
 - ii. Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI)
 - iii. Tribal Colleges and Universities
 - iv. Other (please specify)
 - v. No, my college did not have a specialized (cultural/historical) mission
- aa. Discrete list: Which of the following best describes the SIZE of the UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTION from which you GRADUATED?
- i. Small (fewer than 2,000 undergraduates)
 - ii. Medium (2,000 - 15,000 undergraduates)
 - iii. Large (greater than 15,000 undergraduates)
- bb. Discrete list: How SELECTIVE is the college/university from which you GRADUATED?
- i. Less selective (>75% admitted)
 - ii. Somewhat selective (50–75% admitted)
 - iii. Very selective (25–50% admitted)
 - iv. Most selective (<25% admitted)
- cc. Discrete list w/ "other" option: Which option best describes the CAMPUS TYPE of the UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTION from which you GRADUATED?
- i. Commuter

- ii. Residential
- iii. Online
- iv. Other (please specify)
 - 1. Display Logic: "Residential" chosen: Y/N: Did you live ON CAMPUS at any time at the UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTION from which you GRADUATED?
 - 2. Display Logic: "Residential" chosen: Y/N: Did you live OFF CAMPUS at any time at the UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTION from which you GRADUATED?
 - 3. Display Logic: "Commuter" chosen: Y/N: Was there an option to live ON CAMPUS at the COMMUTER CAMPUS from which you GRADUATED?
 - a. Display Logic: Commuter: Yes, option to live on campus: Y/N: Did you live ON CAMPUS at any time at the COMMUTER CAMPUS from which you GRADUATED?
- dd. Discrete list: Which of the following categories best describes the SETTING of the UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTION from which you GRADUATED?
 - i. Rural
 - ii. Suburban
 - iii. Urban
 - iv. Other (please specify)
- ee. Discrete list w/ "other" option: Which of the following categories best describes the REGION of the UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTION from which you GRADUATED?
 - i. Mid-Atlantic
 - ii. Midwest
 - iii. New England
 - iv. South
 - v. Southwest
 - vi. West
 - vii. U.S. Territories
 - viii. Other (please specify)
- ff. Discrete list w/ "other" option: Which of the following FIELDS OF STUDY is your UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR associated with?
 - i. Arts & Humanities
 - ii. Education
 - iii. Public and Social Services
 - iv. Business
 - v. Social Sciences
 - vi. Science, Math, and Technology (STEM)
 - vii. Health & Medicine
 - viii. Interdisciplinary Studies
 - ix. Other (please specify)

- gg. Y/N: Did you study abroad?
- hh. Y/N: Did you participate in any Honors or Accelerated Study Opportunities?
- ii. Y/N: Do you identify as a first-generation college student?
- jj. Discrete list w/ "other" option: Which category best describes your SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS when you were applying to college?
- i. Low-income
 - ii. Working Class
 - iii. Middle Class
 - iv. Upper-Middle Class
 - v. Upper Class/High Income
 - vi. Other (please specify)
- kk. Y/N/Unsure: Did you receive FEE WAIVERS for your college applications?
- ll. Discrete list w/ "other" option: Which of the following financial sources did you use to COVER THE COST of your UNDERGRADUATE education? (please check all that apply)
- i. Grants (e.g. state, federal)
 - ii. Institutional Scholarship (i.e. given by undergraduate institution)
 - iii. Athletic Scholarship
 - iv. Competitive Scholarship from Non-Profit/Private Organization
 - v. Work-Study
 - vi. Private Loan
 - vii. Government Loan
 - viii. Military Aid
 - ix. International Study Aid
 - x. Payment Plan
 - xi. Family Finances
 - xii. Other (please specify)
- mm. Y/N Do you have a GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL DEGREE?
- i. Display Logic: "Yes" chosen: Which graduate degree(s) have you COMPLETED? (please select all that apply)
 1. MA
 2. MS
 3. MEd
 4. MSW
 5. MBA
 6. MD
 7. JD
 8. PhD
 9. EdD
 10. Other (please specify)

- ii. Display Logic: "Yes" chosen: Which of the following FIELDS OF STUDY is²¹¹ most closely associated with your GRADUATE DEGREE?
1. Arts & Humanities
 2. Education
 3. Social Work
 4. Public and Social Services
 5. Business
 6. Social Sciences
 7. Science, Math, and Technology (STEM)
 8. Law
 9. Health & Medicine
 10. Interdisciplinary Studies
 11. Other (please specify)

Thank you for participating in this survey!

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