

MAINTAINING THE SEGREGATED CITY?: EXPLORING THE COLLEGE PLANNING  
EXPERIENCES OF KANSAS CITY'S URBAN STUDENTS OF COLOR AND THE  
IMPLICATIONS ON THEIR ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

A DISSERTATION IN  
Education Leadership, Policy and Foundations  
and  
Public Affairs and Administration

Presented to the Faculty of the University  
of Missouri-Kansas City in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by  
DEANA LACHELLE ERVIN

B.B.A., Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical University, 1991  
M.B.A., University of Missouri-Kansas City, 1994  
M.P.A., University of Missouri-Kansas City, 1999

Kansas City, Missouri  
2014

© 2014

DEANA LACHELLE HOLCOMB ERVIN

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

MAINTAINING THE SEGREGATED CITY?: EXPLORING THE COLLEGE PLANNING  
EXPERIENCES OF KANSAS CITY'S URBAN STUDENTS OF COLOR AND THE  
IMPLICATIONS ON THEIR ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Deana Lachelle Holcomb Ervin, Candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree

University of Missouri - Kansas City, 2014

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examined the role of school-based college planning guidance services in the college trajectories of central city students of color. It is projected that by 2018, most jobs will require some postsecondary training beyond high school, placing almost 60 million Americans at risk of being locked out of the middle class because of limited educational attainments. Thus, college guidance services become critical for disenfranchised students who may require greater technical assistance and support to access college. To explore the role of school-based college planning guidance services, this dissertation examined the college planning experiences of students of color enrolled at two distinct urban public high schools in a Midwestern community plagued with longstanding traditions of disenfranchisement resulting from decades of segregated schools and communities.

This case study utilized a critical approach through the lens of critical race theory, heuristic inquiry, and narratology to capture the essence of the college planning experiences as expressed by African American high school seniors, parents, and recent graduates

affiliated with two central city public schools, each notorious for the highest and lowest rates of college placement amongst its graduates. The case studies of 8 high school seniors within two distinct school cultures within the same neighborhood, served as illustrations of the inequitable provision of college planning guidance in place to equip urban students of color to compete with their suburban peers without equal college planning exposure or supports.

Underperforming school systems must examine their role and assume full accountability for ineffective services that contribute to the economic and academic disenfranchisement of students of color. The perpetuation of limited access to higher education is critically detrimental for urban students relegated to neighborhood schools without the means for economic mobility. Without navigational support and technical assistance the cycle of disenfranchisement is likely to continue, preserving traditions of segregation, while further handicapping urban residents into adulthood.

## APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies have examined a dissertation titled, “Maintaining the Segregated City?: Exploring the College Planning Experiences of Kansas City’s Urban Students of Color and the Implications on Their Access to Higher Education,” presented by Deana Lachelle Holcomb Ervin, candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

### Supervisory Committee

Loyce Caruthers, Ph.D., Committee Chair  
Department of Educational Leadership, Policy, and Foundations

Donna Davis, Ph.D.  
Department of Educational Leadership, Policy, and Foundations

Jennifer Friend, Ph.D.  
Department of Educational Leadership, Policy, and Foundations

Nicholas Peroff, Ph.D.  
Department of Public Affairs

Clovis Semmes, Ph.D.  
Department of Sociology and Black Studies

## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iii
LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS .....	x
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	xi
PREFACE .....	xiv
Chapter	
1 - INTRODUCTION .....	1
Problem Statement .....	5
Purpose Statement .....	16
Theoretical Framework .....	17
Significance of the Study .....	28
Assumptions .....	31
Overview of Literature Review .....	33
Overview of Methodology .....	33
Organization of the Study .....	34
2 – REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	36
Constructing the Segregated City .....	40
Maintaining the Segregated City .....	55
Resegregating the Segregated City .....	69
Moving Students of the Segregated City Forward .....	82
3 – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY .....	105
Rationale for Qualitative Analysis .....	107
Theoretical Traditions .....	110
Design of the Study .....	120
Description of Setting .....	120
Participant and Sampling Methods .....	126
Phase I and II: Data Collection Methods .....	134
Phase III: Data Analysis .....	147

Case Study Analysis .....	148
Critical Race Theory Analysis.....	151
Heuristic Analysis.....	156
Narrative Analysis .....	162
Limitations .....	164
4 – PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA .....	171
Reflections on the Design Process.....	173
Data Collection Methods .....	174
Process of Data Analyses.....	176
Document Analysis Findings.....	178
Student Questionnaire Findings.....	186
Parent Questionnaire Findings.....	199
The Faces Behind The Findings .....	207
School A.....	208
Student 1: Blossom .....	209
Student 2: Shadow .....	217
Student 3: Houston.....	224
Student 4: Whisper.....	227
Lessons Learned From School A.....	234
School B.....	238
Student 5: Brian .....	239
Student 6: DJ.....	242
Student 7: Diamond .....	245
Student 8: Malik.....	248
Lessons Learned From School B.....	251
Cross Case Analysis.....	253
5 – THE SEGREGATED CITY: IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE.....	256
Conclusion .....	258
Research Question 1 .....	258
Research Question 2 .....	260
Research Question 3 .....	264
Research Question 4 .....	268
Recommendations for School and Community Stakeholders Within the Segregated City.....	270

Implications for Future Research.....	276
Closing Thoughts.....	279
Black and College Bound Standing In the Gap .....	282

APPENDIX

A: Informed Consent Forms ..... 285  
B: Ervin College Awareness Questionnaires ..... 290  
C: Interview Protocol..... 313  
D: Data Codebooks ..... 315

REFERENCES CITED..... 320

VITA ..... 333

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Kansas City Missouri School District Enrollment.....	70
2. Kansas City Metropolitan Graduation Rates.....	78
3. Kindergarten Graduation Rates.....	98
4. Graduate Analysis 2006-2010.....	122
5. Comparison of End of Course Exam Scores.....	125
6. Document Analysis of Themes.....	179
7. Cross Case Analysis Themes.....	254

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure	Page
1. Conley's College Readiness Conceptual Framework .....	100
2. Illustration of Participant Selection Methodology .....	131
3. Student Case Profiles .....	207

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was dedicated to all those who work diligently to secure a brighter future for students of color everywhere. It was important to ask the right questions to see where the gaps in college knowledge, access, and readiness lie. Many educational systems remain fragmented, staffed with well-intentioned people who work tirelessly to bring about change. Unfortunately, these systems are also plagued by a host of ineffective “gatekeepers” who have given up on our children, and work just as hard to maintain widening gaps between those who will gain access to mainstream success and those who will not.

This work was dedicated to the college bound students who will come behind me and wonder to themselves what is missing from urban educational systems that could yield drastic changes in the trajectories of the students served. This work is also dedicated to those who will never dream big, or reach high because someone, somewhere has snuffed your confidence and ambition. It is important that you know that there is a higher power in control who has created each and every one of us to be successful in our own right. Never allow the naysayers to gain prominence or adversely affect your belief in self. As we speak I deal with my own gatekeepers who still work hard to suppress the advancement and success of African American collegians. It just makes the battle that much greater because I know that this work is not just about me. It is important to persevere no matter what and no matter who tries to oppress you.

This lifelong dream and significant accomplishment in my life could not have been completed without the love and support of so many who comprise “my village”. It truly takes a village to raise a child, and even throughout adulthood I have learned to embrace the

love and support of thousands in order to rise above challenges imposed by a few. It is my hope that every student of color facing academic, social, financial, or environmental challenges learn that same lesson. Many thanks to all of my family members, the Holcombs, who instilled in me a sense of self-worth, importance, and family honor. I am so proud to be a member of this family celebrating six living generations who come together often to reflect on our rich ancestry and the responsibility we have to future generations.

My village has also been blessed by the amazing friends and colleagues who have inspired this journey through their work toward giving our children roots and wings. Special thanks to all members of the Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools Movement where I was blessed to serve as a CEO of 19 sites serving thousands of youth each year. It is there where I was able to lead, love, and learn from some of the nation's most passionate, energetic, and inspirations Servant Leaders. Many have graduated college and now serve as educators in numerous national school systems so I know that "a change is gonna come!" Special thanks to those who worked as a part of my staff at the 40 Acres Campus and throughout the Kansas City Freedom Schools Initiative where I was proud to serve with some of the best and the brightest.

My work has also introduced me to some of the most amazing teens seeking answers along their adolescent journeys. These young people taught me so much and led me to question why parents and community leaders allow the status quo of ineffective schooling to persist. Our weekly one on one college bound coaching sessions revealed lessons that every educator should have access to so that we can dismantle ineffective school practices. These lessons were intensified by the disclosures revealed throughout this study as seniors and recent graduates revealed their college knowledge gaps and lack of preparation. I thank each

of them and their parents for sharing their stories to help me learn more and share with others.

My village also consisted of church members, community members, lifelong friends, and random strangers who encouraged me and continually praised my efforts. It might not have meant much to them, but to me it was a constant reminder of the struggle to dismantle the ivory towers often found in higher education. It has been a long road, and the journey was successful due to the help of committee members like Dr. Donna Davis, Dr. Clovis Semmes, and Dr. Jennifer Friend. Special thanks goes to my committee chair, Dr. Loyce Caruthers who is a beacon of light and encouragement in every sense of the word. Her support, guidance, assistance, and tough love is what really pulled me through. This academic bond grew beyond the dissertation inspiring me to never forget the support students need to persevere and succeed at every level of the educational pipeline, from preschool through their PhD. It is my goal to serve as that same beacon of support for students coming behind me, because I know that to whom much is given, much is required.

Acknowledgements would be incomplete without special attention and expressions of gratitude to my immediate family members who supported me through all the sleepless nights, long weeks at library, and constant attention paid on completing this research and dissertation project. Thank you for your constant love, encouragement, assistance, and support. To my husband Mike, my kids – Michael, Christopher, and Brianna – I love you and appreciate you more than words can express. To my parents, Sister Angela, Cousin Tanya, Sorors of Delta Sigma Theta, and all others I say - we did it - because it truly takes a village and I am so glad that you are a part of mine. You are all appreciated.

## PREFACE

Education can serve as an equalizer or pivotal force that empowers students to transcend their socioeconomic status through access, employment, social mobility, and other opportunities for advancement (Harper, 2008). Given the prevalence and ripple effects of poverty, schools are the primary pipeline most adolescents have to access upward mobility and transcend their inherited socioeconomic status. However, research has shown there can be different kinds of school systems. Some schools prepare students for leadership by equipping them with higher-level thinking and depth of knowledge. Other schools merely perpetuate stratified roles, preparing students to fulfill the tasks prescribed by the first group.

I have experienced firsthand the disparities of educational systems provided to Kansas City's urban students. As a mother of three teenagers, I have been a consumer of different school systems in the Greater Kansas City community. My children have attended public, charter, quasi (contract), and Jesuit schools—each with differing educational cultures and accountability systems. Throughout their schooling, I have been amazed and often saddened by the variances in academic priorities, processes, and performance results demonstrated by these different school systems. More specifically, I remain intrigued by each systems' actualization of college readiness and access provided to its students as the culminating student outcome.

As my oldest child prepared for his transition from high school to college, I was constantly reminded of the need for extensive academic and technical guidance during this particularly critical transition. I was also a witness to the lack of college planning support systems that were in place to serve his peers enrolled in different school systems. As they faced their impending transition from high school, they struggled with academic and

economic challenges, with little support or guidance counseling. This became exacerbated when they lacked attractive academic transcripts or college counseling to navigate the application and financial aid processes. For some of my son's peers, their senior year was an enjoyable countdown to college because they used their junior year to successfully plan and complete their admission applications, campus visits, financial aid negotiations, and scholarship processes. For others, it was a period of unsupported despair, as the absence of a transitional plan loomed evident, causing panic and disappointment as students rushed to catch up with the essential planning completed by the first cohort.

My oldest son was enrolled at a private school serving elite students within a privileged school environment. In this setting, relationships between high school counselors, college recruiters, teachers, and parents were nurtured to maintain the school's strong college placement record and reputation for success. Students in this school were made aware of requirements, timelines, and processes involved in the transition from high school to college. They had been provided extensive college planning services that included standardized exam preparation and writing courses. Financial aid and parent workshops educated and assisted families in gathering the extensive information needed for knowledge-based planning and decision making.

Although this particular school setting offered a dynamic support system for its students, I am still reminded of service gaps that exist within the college planning process for many other Black students, despite their school environment. My son, being an African American male, was interested in attending a historically Black college or university (HBCU). Despite the extensive educational and support systems used by his college planning office and staff, he had difficulty getting fundamental data on these particular types

of schools. College counselors had less access and fewer relationships with any of these schools, although a few graduates have attended some of these HBCUs. The college planning staff was also less knowledgeable about minority scholarships or diverse religion-based scholarships that might be helpful to students. My son was instructed to conduct his own research on these matters, placing additional college planning responsibilities and burdens on our family and community networks despite the prestigious high school with its capable college placement staff. The responsibility for technical guidance shifts to the student and family, who may not possess the same knowledge as certified college counseling professionals, and upon whom now college admission success or failure squarely rests (Hale, 2001).

This reminded me of personal awareness gaps in my own high school college planning process. Throughout my high school years, I was in the top of my class academically, senior class vice president, cheerleading captain, and student leader. I planned the prom, organized the school's first integrated student dance, and won various awards and accolades. Academically ranked in the top percentiles of my graduating class of 447 seniors, I received no guidance or college counseling and was not given information on college entrance exams, application processes, or deadlines. To this day, I couldn't tell you who the high school's guidance counselors were, where their offices were located, or college planning services they purported to provide. In spite of this, my GPA earned a four-year waiver of out-of-state tuition, valued at \$60,000, even though I never formally applied for such. I have continued to navigate my own academic path to accomplish successful completion of one bachelor's degree and two masters' degrees.

What opportunities did I miss without any caring guidance professionals to help steer my path or direct me to the more prominent academic opportunities, scholarships, or internships? How many other students share my experience and were unable to tap into their own potential for greatness? What about other students without strong academic backgrounds or leadership skills? How does the lack of college planning ultimately impact their options or their lives? Do college planning guidance services depend on neighborhood and school affluence, or do all students receive similar resources and college planning assistance? Are there college counseling gaps in schools where students need the most assistance? The aim of this study is to determine what guidance and supports are in place for urban core students to receive, regardless of their academic standing, school environment, or family support networks.

In my efforts to make sense of why Black students continuously occupy the lower rungs of the achievement gaps and college entrance rates, I returned to the lack of guidance counseling I received in high school. My experiences as a student and as a mother assisting my son helped me to make decisions for others (Moustakas, 1990). My own life and my commitment to strengthening urban education and the lives of countless others like, led me to this work. I explored the college planning experiences of local urban teens who attend urban core schools to assess what college planning services are currently offered and if there is a need to supplement such to ensure that more Black students exit high school with a predefined plan of transition into higher education programs. This study focused on the college planning experiences and needs of Black high school students but its findings have broader implications for other adolescent student groups as well. The intent was that this

research would be generally applicable to a broad student population regardless of the localized setting of the study.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

There appears to be a destructive correlation between neighborhood quality and the educational achievement and attainment of the urban students its schools serves. Educational attainment describes the highest school grade or educational level completed. According to the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (2001), thirty percent of White kindergartners will graduate from college, in comparison to their Black counterparts who earn bachelor's degrees at nearly half that rate. Why is it almost customary that students from the most economically depressed neighborhoods are usually characterized by the worst academic performance, especially when curriculum is standardized statewide for all of its residents? Compulsory education laws require that all school-aged children attend state-regulated educational institutions from kindergarten through high school. One would hope for school consistency and that public schools would positively impact every American child's preparation for adulthood in a consistent manner. If regulated public schools serve as the socialization institutions for all of society's children, why have underperforming schools become the norm within urban neighborhoods? And why are they consistently producing ill-prepared adolescents that are not equipped to transition to higher education?

The problem of poor and inconsistent college access becomes exacerbated when public schools are situated within central city neighborhoods that typically serve predominantly low-income students of color (Anyon, 2005), who do not always receive the same level of guidance from their families or school systems as their White, middle-class counterparts (Tough, 2007). Kozol (1991) discusses the two very different kinds of school systems that perpetuate socially discriminatory roles and intentions. Kozol writes:

But children in one set of schools are educated to be governors; children in the other set of schools are trained for being governed. The former are given the imaginative range to mobilize ideas for economic growth; the latter are provided with the discipline to do the narrow tasks the first group will prescribe (Kozol, 1991, p. 176)

While Kozol wrote about this reality three decades ago, not much has changed for children of color and the poor. Inferior schools systems and reigning urban pedagogies work together to disseminate self-fulfilling prophecies of inferiority and subordination. This places urban students at an even greater educational disadvantage as they experience further academic retardation resulting from rigid bureaucracies, high staff turnover, low student expectations, poor attendance, achievement gaps, and overwhelming poverty that research has found as common characteristics of such settings (Kozol, 1991).

First, urban pedagogies work through adolescents of color, making them less competitive economically by subjecting them to an education that emphasizes discipline and control and that minimizes intellectual rigor and the development of meaningful skills (Duncan, 2000, p. 29). In fact, some might argue that ineffective schools and institutionalized racism are to blame for the learning shrinkages experienced throughout the K-12 years of schooling that incessantly set poor students of color up to fail. Theorists Fryer & Levitt (2002) suggest that African American children enter kindergarten less prepared than their White counterparts. They also indicate that initial gaps identified are more attributable to class than race, and as students move through school a learning gap occurs and widens by the third grade. The authors conclude that children of color fall even further behind the longer they stay in school, with this pattern persisting throughout college as well. Gregory, Skiba & Noguera (2010) argue that the discipline issues in schools that impact the achievement of poor students of color are ignored in the research; Black, Latino, and

American Indian students are more likely to be suspended and expelled from schools than other students.

Coining the phrase, “learning while Black,” Hale (2001) describes the plight of Black students as a crippling fate that demands the urgent advocacy of parents and educational leaders, stating, “Given the racialized treatment of African Americans in the United States, learning while Black can be as dangerous to one’s mental and physical health as driving while Black (Hale, 2001, xi). Hale (2001) faults high school systems that fail to equip students of color with marketable skills by only offering basic courses that provide little or no preparation for the world of work or competitive positions within fast paced industries. Consequently, the author argues, “Our children are being educated in schools that deliver the girls to public assistance and the boys to unemployment and incarceration” (Hale, 2001, p. 111).

Likewise, Noguera (2007b) asserts that No Child Left Behind legislation was introduced to address the historical failures of public school systems that produce high incident rates of poorly educated urban graduates who leave high school with meaningless diplomas that fail to equip them with preparation required for twenty-first-century labor projections (Noguera, 2007b). By the time they make it to college, nearly 25% of African Americans need remedial reading help, compared to 7% of White students (Fryer & Levitt, 2002). Anyon (2005) supports these findings, adding that Black students are also much more likely not to graduate.

Noguera (2007a) reminds us of the dangers associated with a pathological culture that views urban youth as menaces to society associated with problematic behaviors such as violence and criminal activity prevalent in urban cultures of poverty. The cumulative effects

of social, political, and economic barriers experienced in urban communities further affect the social stratification and poor educational performance of these students and continually serve to restrict their access to opportunities for social mobility (Hale, 2001; McWhorter, 2000; Williams, 2003). For many students of these under-performing schools, their status as poorly-prepared, low-performing adolescents continues to handicap them as they transition beyond high school. Academic achievement and high school graduation rates decrease while dropout and unemployment rates increase (Anyon, 2005). Many of the challenges associated with recruitment and retention of students of color by post-secondary institutions are also well documented in hopes of understanding the societal and institutional barriers in place within this crippling cycle (Blanding, 2010). Unfortunately, higher education issues like these only affect a small percentage of Black adolescents since most never even get the chance to access higher education because of barriers posed by academic preparation, financial hardships, or social challenges.

Theorists who study the larger sociopolitical connections between urban schools and communities argue that youth of color are often intentionally prepared for menial roles and positions and overtly funneled through the “cradle to prison pipeline” to support the business of prison-industrial profits (Duncan, 2000; Kunjufu, 1990). The profits of this industry are built on underachievement in urban communities and its correlation to greater risk for imprisonment later in life (Duncan, 2000; Noguera, 2007). Theorists describe the social conspiracy to decimate minority youth, especially Black males, adding that many bank on the cause-and-effect relationship of underachievement, so much that prison construction projections are based on the third-grade reading levels of African American males (Duncan,

2000; Kunjufu, 1990). Thus, the cards remain stacked against students of color all too often, sometimes to the benefit of others (Price, 2002).

Consequently, the plight of economically disadvantaged Black students living in urban communities and served by such public schools has been explored extensively while confirmed as an undeniable injustice that warrants urgent intervention (Duncan, 2000; Hale, 2001; Noguera & Wing, 2006; Ogbu, 1986; McWhorter, 2000; Williams, 2003). Thus, there is a resounding call for immediate educational reform to reverse these drastic trends of ill preparation commonly experienced by urban students of color. It resonates from many different levels, among many different groups, both within and outside of formal educational institutions. This widely-accepted cycle of disparate academic outcomes and opportunities experienced by these students must be interrupted. Herein lies the problem.

### **The Problem**

Structural forces that work against student success for children of color have been well documented while institutionalized remedies to ameliorate the problems remain elusive. Now more than ever, our national and global economies require preparation and educational attainments beyond a weak high school diploma. National projections of jobs and educational credentials required for 2018, as reported by The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (2010), confirm that:

Nine out ten workers with a high school education or less are limited to three occupational clusters that either pay low wages or are in decline. As the economy gets back on track over the next five years, 60 million Americans are at risk of being locked out of the middle class, toiling in predominantly low-wage jobs that require high school diplomas or less. (p.2)

More specifically, it is projected that by 2018, 59% of all jobs in Missouri (1.8 million jobs) and 64% of all jobs in Kansas (1 million jobs) will require some postsecondary

training beyond high school (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl; 2010). According to the state level analysis, of these positions, “523,000 of these job vacancies will be for those with postsecondary credentials, 287,000 for high school graduates and 88,000 for high school dropouts” (p. 61). In the meantime, the Georgetown report goes on to say that “Between 2008 and 2018, new jobs in Missouri requiring postsecondary education and training will grow by 86,000 while jobs for high school graduates and dropouts will grow by 34,000”. This places the completion of post-secondary education as yet another gatekeeper to upward mobility and social advancement for disadvantaged students of color who remain disconnected from full economic participation.

The perpetuation of limited access to higher education is critically detrimental for urban students without the means for economic mobility. Underperforming school systems must examine their role and assume full accountability for ineffective services that contribute to the economic and academic disenfranchisement of students of color. Theorists have extensively studied the pervasive gaps in educational achievement and attainment that have persisted for decades (Ciotti, 2006; Green & Baker, 2006; Jaynes & Williams, 1989; Kozol, 2005; Moran, 2004).

Williams (1996) uses the medical analogy of an emergency room to advocate for urgent interventions on behalf of those students with the greatest needs. She illustrates how triage is used to treat the most critical patients, as compared to an outpatient clinic used to merely service patients with less critical needs. In an academic realm, Kansas City’s urban students could be considered the most vulnerable student population, in need of the most critical academic support services to urgently intervene on their behalf. Yet, they may not

receive effective services that remedy the problem, therefore likened to applying a Band-Aid to a critical wound. Without proper interventions, they are relegated to even more challenges during adulthood as they enter the competitive environments of the workforce or higher education. Now, as our nation experiences another economic recession, it is imperative that disenfranchised students receive the academic interventions and resources required to level the playing field so that all high school graduates have fair access to essentials for productivity, economic participation, and upward mobility. In summation, underperforming school systems and limited access to higher education perpetuate the economic and academic disenfranchisement of the nation's most vulnerable students, who tend to be low-income students of color.

The United States has been conditioned to expect consistently poor performance from its Black students as a result of traditional academic patterns that have manifested to produce continually low college placement and graduation rates. Our country's racist past has conjured such deeply entrenched low expectations of its Black students that such achievement gaps appear ordinary and almost natural, and thus are rarely disputed (Delgado & Stefancic, 1999). Our desensitization to these long-standing traditions is evidenced by our tolerance of such appalling disparities. Scholars have used critical race theory (CRT) to challenge such notions, inviting us to question such inequities and seek remedies that refute historical accounts while fighting systematic disparities that contribute to more covert forms of oppression. "Critical race theory is based on the notion that racism, because it is so deeply embedded in U.S. society, appears both normal and natural to all of us who live here" (Schram, 2006, p.46). Since historical accounts of the role and purpose of education in America are inevitably interpretive, research has only recently begun to fully disclose the

institutional inequalities that have contributed to the systematic maltreatment of students of color and the pervasive achievement gaps that have been produced (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1999; Schirmer, 2002; Schram, 2006).

The education of African Americans in particular has been based on long-standing traditions of inequitable systems and institutions that inhumanely viewed them as “other,” promoting a hierarchical structure of power and privilege for Whites while ignoring the academic needs of Black students (Aaron, 1999). Some theorists contend that educational institutions support a larger societal caste system designed to ensure that one group would remain forever marginalized, thereby supporting capitalistic intentions (Covello, 1967; Dyson, 2005; Kunjufu, 1990). As a microcosm of society, schools perpetuate past and present inequities reflected in the larger society. McIntyre (1997) reports that this cultural hegemony, like the phenomenon of White privilege, goes unrecognized, allowing systems of power and privilege to continue without being challenged. Hence the critical stance is necessary to dismantle trends associated with institutionalized racism.

The nature of such social relations is not always self-evident. The schooling process itself is a web of complex politically negotiated stratifications. Caruthers (2000) reminds us that these social institutions ultimately legitimate and reproduce these power relations, noting that “schools, as the great equalizer and as agents of socialization, reflect the beliefs, norms, and ideologies of the larger society” (p. 35). Once layered with neighborhood and community dynamics, it becomes apparent that various groups must continually fight social inequities as they negotiate shared spaces, roles, and resources. In the context of neighborhood K-12 schooling, families go to great lengths to access “quality” services, defined as those that connect people to effective schools, living-wage jobs, social networks,

and other essentials for health, productivity, and upward mobility (Anyon, 1997; Massey, 2005). In the context of post-secondary opportunities, theorists assert that access to colleges and universities is another mechanism used by institutions to preserve power and status hierarchies governed by the dominant culture while enforcing inadequate scholarship of the masses (Dyson, 2005). In the context of urban central cities, residents with economic means may even consider relocating to secure access to “better” schools for their children, assuming that students may gain access to colleges and universities of a higher caliber.

But what happens to those vulnerable students who remain in underperforming central city school systems? Do they in fact, receive fair and reasonable services regardless of their residential or school affiliations? What happens when these students do not experience effective parental advocacy? Theorists Williams (2003) and Hale (2001) assert that low income families remain in constant battle with school districts and staff as they must continuously demand and negotiate terms of effective service delivery. What happens when underrepresented high school students do not receive effective college planning guidance services from their school or home settings? If they are potential first generation college attendees, where do they go to obtain technical assistance in this area? Who advocates for them? Most likely, they become further disenfranchised from limited access to higher education programs that could greatly increase their earning potential and quality of life. For these students, the consequences of limited college access and awareness may contribute to greater incidents of unemployment and cyclical poverty.

Individuals in our society who do not possess the levels of skill, literacy, and training essential to this new era [the information age] will be effectively disadvantaged, not simply from the material rewards that accompany competent performance, but also from the chance to participate fully in our national life. (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 7)

Unfortunately, America has maintained a dual class educational system where the quality of education accessible to students is dependent on the resources, environment, and quality of living that one's family can bring to bear (Jaynes & Williams, 1989). Thus, the quality of life an individual is able to access for upward mobility is definitely a function of his or her area of residence (Massey & Denton, 1989). Urban school systems in poor neighborhoods often pale in comparison to the competitive educational environments offered by suburban public schools in more affluent neighborhoods (Rodriguez & Bellanca, 1996). Suburban school operational budgets provide higher per pupil expenditures to enhance academic performance and support holistic student development activities. Rodriguez & Bellanca, 1996 contend that as a result, suburban students often receive an "achievement advantage" exemplified by superior academic performance and significantly higher college attendance rates .. They found that "Teachers in the affluent suburban schools have well-equipped classrooms and laboratories, extensive counseling, and tutorial services in place, up-to-date textbooks, community support programs, extensive extracurricular programs, and cutting-edge technology at their disposal", (p. 1).

On the contrary, urban schools, predominantly populated by students of color, suffer from inequitable environments where their students are not offered the same levels of encouragement or support for educational achievement and attainments (Jaynes & Williams, 1989; Kao & Thompson, 2003). Consequently, African American students within urban schools have been traditionally subjected to long-standing stereotypes of inferiority, believed to be less able to succeed academically "for either innate or cultural reasons" (College Board, 1999). The College Board task force to increase African American representation in higher

education addressed the harboring effects when “a sufficient number of Whites still harbor doubts about the educational potential of some minority groups for these views to continue to take a toll on the academic performance of many minority students.” It reports, “Such expectations can lead some teachers and counselors to ask less of underrepresented minority students, including discouraging them from taking demanding college preparatory courses in high school. Adams and Farmer-Hinton (2006) confirmed that “Black students receive disparate amounts of counselors' resources and time, particularly resources and attention devoted to college planning.” Over time, traditions of prejudice and disparate treatment can erode the self-esteem, motivation, and achievement orientation of students conditioned to believe these customary racial stereotypes.

Given the inequitable provisions in schools that serve lower income or Black students, urban schools may need to rethink the caliber of college planning guidance services currently provided, especially since these students ultimately compete with their suburban peers without equal exposure, access, or supports. Here it is important to define college planning guidance services (CPGS) and to characterize language that will be used interchangeably when referring to related services. CPGS can be defined as college preparation and student transitional support services and activities that provide students with exposure, familiarity, and access to higher education requirements and processes. According to Pitre & Pitre (2009):

These might include college field trips, college student shadowing experiences, school-university partnership activities devoted to "early and often" college encounters such as information sessions on the college campus, college student panels, and activities that partner students with university students and staff in various community outreach projects. (p. 108)

Here, colleges are key stakeholders who can partner with high schools to host campus tours, and summer residential experiences that provide students with frames of reference, acquaintances, and introductions to campus life and opportunities. In addition, college transitional programs provide schools with free resources and services that support student college planning and readiness. Pitre & Pitre (2009) define college transitional programs as “Educational programs designed to bridge the gap between high school and college and increase higher education enrollment and completion among students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds” (p.9).

For the purposes of this study, both CPGS and the term life coaching will be used to describe strategic interactions where students are mentored; providing them insight, access, technical assistance, and navigational guidance in the areas of educational advancement, career planning, and the acquisition of mainstream life and leadership skills required in adulthood. Life coaching, in this sense, can provide supplemental educational experiences, contributing to students’ sense of self-worth and determination, while possibly reconstructing their social trajectories. Similar to mentors, life coaches can shape students’ bounded rationality by helping them better understand what it really means to be “college ready” (Griffin, Allen, Kimura-Walsh, & Yamamura (2007). Such knowledge can shape their decision making and influence choices regarding post-high-school pursuits. Life coaching can also support students by building them up, focusing on their strengths, and inspiring them to stay the course when challenges arise. Caring role models and mentors are the critical intervention that today’s disadvantaged adolescents need (Butler, 2003; Constantine, Arorash, Barakett, Blackmom, Donnelly, & Edles, 2001).

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that 69% of White students entered and graduated college in comparison with 9% of their Black and 6% of Hispanic counterparts. African American and Latino graduates are unable to secure jobs after the age of 18, even when educational attainment is held constant with their White counterparts (Fuligni & Hardway, 2004). Over time, guidance counseling and college planning services become even more critical for Black adolescents as they prepare to leave high school without having received the same exposure to higher education opportunities or school to work career planning (Hale, 2001).

In fact, the role of a school counselor is pivotal and can jumpstart unforeseen student success (Butler, 2003). “School counselors are institutional change agents who can share norms and resources about college access” (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006). Along with parents, guidance counselors play a tremendous role by influencing student aptitudes and access to future vocations from the courses they prescribe to the directional paths outlined for each student. However, this is often not the case for low-income students because of the limitations of counselors in low-income schools and because of uneducated parents at home. So, college access programs often become important to provide the social capital important for college success (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006).

Jordan and Plank (1998) equate some guidance counselors to gatekeepers who do not provide the necessary resource information to students in need. Empirical studies by Farmer-Hinton & Adams (2006) confirm that Black students receive disparate attention from school guidance counselors. Their empirical data demonstrates the challenges associated with urban counselors charged with providing college prep services to underrepresented students within an urban charter school. The counselors’ guidance can clearly influence or diminish

the pursuit of vocational choices and collegiate program offerings. Researchers Farmer-Hinton & Adams (2006) note that the literature is quite clear that this holds true particularly in the case of attention devoted to college planning for Black students. As a result, many urban students continue to exist in communities and schools overwhelmed by cyclical poverty with little insight as to how to move forward into adulthood with enhanced social mobility (Massey, Condran, & Denton, 1987; Noguera, 2007; Wilson, 1998). Without navigational support and technical assistance, the cycle of disenfranchisement is likely to continue, maintaining the status quo, while further handicapping urban residents well into adulthood.

Therefore, college planning assistance becomes critical for urban students who may not receive such support from members of the family or community networks (Pitre & Pitre, 2009). It is important to note that many urban families exude resilience and resourcefulness that contributes to survival and success despite historical injustices and disparate treatment throughout society. However, generational exclusion from access to higher education renders too many Black students as potential first generational college attendees. As such they may not have immediate family members or professional mentors who can help them plan and prepare for their future, leaving them vulnerable to cyclical poverty behaviors prevalent within their environments. Although adolescents can access their collective networks of support, members of these networks may provide fragmented knowledge and technical assistance required to adequately prepare urban youth for successful transitions from high school. This forces adolescents to get advice from anywhere they can. Acknowledgement of such fragmentation may be the first step toward the creation of a seamless school-based network or process that empowers every adolescent to make informed

decisions when planning for life beyond high school. In the meantime, rare occurrences of success will be loosely attributed to individualistic supportive and protective factors in the absence of systematic strategies uniformly applied to empower all urban high school students in these settings.

In summary, effective educational reform must include strategies that enhance the likelihood of socioeconomic success for inner-city residents (Anyon, 2005). Therefore, it is critical that educators, parents, and community members examine the status quo of indiscriminate college access. They must hold urban school systems and its personnel accountable for fully equipping all of its lower socioeconomic students for social mobility in spite of historical behaviors, practices, or stereotypes that have become embedded in our psyche and tolerated for far too long. An abundance of literature exists on the need for intervention strategies designed to promote college readiness and access amongst underrepresented groups (Conley, 2007; Dweck, 2010; Lederman, 2009). However, there is not as much documented on standardized services that have been proven to be most effective in preparing urban students to manage their own transitional process within school settings. The identification of such might promote a systematic strategy at the school district level to ensure that all urban students receive transitional planning assistance that positions them to graduate from high school with an exit strategy that stimulates professional development and paths out of poverty.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this case study is to explore how local Black high school students experience school-based college planning guidance services (CPGS). This case study approach depicted the essence of the college planning process as experienced by African

American high school seniors and recent graduates enrolled in two urban core high schools diametrically opposed in their longstanding traditions of having high and low college admission rates. This study seeks to better understand how Black students interact with school-based navigational supports that shape this pivotal transition from high school to adulthood, using student encounters with college planning guidance services (CPGS) as my unit of analysis. Preliminary research questions guiding this study addressed:

1. What efforts exist in two urban high schools to secure equitable access to higher education for students of color within the segregated city?
2. What college planning guidance services are systematically delivered to remedy traditions of limited college access for these students?
3. How do these students interact with the CPGS offered by their high schools?
4. What do they do to plan for life beyond high school graduation inside and outside of their schools?

This research used case study as the major research technique explored using the theoretical traditions of critical race theory and narratology. Theoretical traditions are the assumptions and ideological perspectives that inform and guide the study's research design (Creswell, 1994; p. 78). Denzin & Lincoln (2003) describe them as the manner in which a researcher "approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that he or she then examines in special ways (methodology, analysis)" (p.30).

Case studies explored how students formulate pertinent problems, address challenges, and then explain the patterns of obtained results (Shadish, Cook, and Campbell, 2002). Stake (1995) defines case-study knowledge as concrete, contextual, and interpreted through the reader's experience. Here, it is important to note that participants selected possessed low, average, and high ranking grade point averages within each school setting. Capturing the

stories of students deemed academically strong, weak, and marginal may contribute to a greater understanding of how students across the academic continuum may experience the same counseling model in different ways. These units of study were selected in an effort to better understand the range of technical support needed by adolescents on the verge of high school completion; planning to move beyond this crossroad, either with or without a plan to move beyond this crossroad.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of any study consists of a set of interrelated concepts that are collectively used to describe exactly what will be studied and why (Maxwell, 2005). Maxwell (2005) defines these conceptual strands as “the ideas and beliefs the researcher holds about the phenomenon of interest” (p.33). Taken together, the conceptual strands provide additional ways to understand the phenomenon as it “explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied—the key factors, concepts, or variables—and the presumed relationships among them” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 18).

Patton (2002) states “how you study the world determines what you learn about the world” (p.67). An interdisciplinary approach used to place educational issues in contextual association with urban issues, especially as it relates to the interconnectedness of urban schools and urban core neighborhood dynamics that both shape urban students. Krathwohl (1997) promotes the use of an interdisciplinary theoretical framework when the phenomenon lends itself to the following: “(a) the phenomenon is complex; (b) generates interest from at least two disciplines; (c) no single discipline is able to comprehensively resolve the issue; (d) the issue is broad and ill-defined; (e) it addresses a practical problem or social need” (p.90).

Kansas City sets the stage for this study because of its notorious legally mandated battle with school desegregation that resulted in its reputation as one of the most hypersegregated American cities and school districts. An analysis of Kansas City's racial and spatial climates over the past century provides the contextual framework for understanding how deeply rooted these underlying tensions are and how they led to such pervasively segregated academic and residential communities. These segregated climates worsened the plight of Black students served by the local urban school district, then and now, constraining their access to critical higher educational opportunities required for socioeconomic advancement.

My approach is grounded in Kansas City's characterization as a declining central city, suffering from the historical, devastational effects of racial segregation and racially motivated disinvestments within its urban core. Long-standing traditions that restricted Blacks through limited access to opportunities for upward mobility, especially through higher education, set the context for understanding why this has been allowed to continue for far too long. This conceptual framework directed the research methodology (Holliday, 2002) to understand the effects of such on the city's most vulnerable citizens – poor, urban adolescents of color being educated by failing central city schools.

When school systems in urban core neighborhoods are characterized by poor performance and low educational achievement patterns, residents move to “better neighborhoods” that offer students higher performing schools and an enhanced quality of life (Denton, et. al 1987). Unfortunately, examination of the contemporary status of these students finds that many of the adolescents who remain in urban core neighborhoods are still systematically deprived of access to academic opportunities that can prepare them to become

industrious citizens or leaders prepared to compete within a global market. Anyon (2005) describes this as the hidden curriculum used by ghetto schools to perpetuate the oppression of nonprivileged students by shaping their educational experiences to intentionally maintain hegemony. The consequential handicap of these students must be viewed within the context of the declining city to help us better understand the significance of environmental influences on individual and institutional behaviors within that particular setting.

Critical race theory (CRT) served as a predominant theoretical paradigm and lens, challenging me to find new solutions for racial injustices while refuting circumstantial inequities that most people have been conditioned to accept as normal (Dixson & Rosseau, 2006). CRT emerged in response to the slow pace of racial reform and is often used to challenge the more covert, status quo forms of oppression (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993; p. xvi). The historical review of racial discrimination and restricted access to higher education throughout the Reconstruction Era, Jim Crow Era, and Civil Rights Era were used to demonstrate the longevity of racially divisive practices and policies that cannot easily be dismantled. This theoretical paradigm also enhanced the discussion of where the Kansas City community has been, and must go, in order to genuinely address tense race relations and disparate college access rates that still contribute to the widening achievement gaps between its White and Black students.

To contextually frame this discussion, this study first explains how Kansas City came to be so racially segregated; how that segregation impacted its local school district; and the consequential handicap of its Black students as they prepare for life beyond high school. These conceptual strands used a chronological timeline to support the general themes of *Constructing the Segregated City; Maintaining the Segregated City; Re-segregating the*

*Segregated City*, then *Moving Students of the Segregated City Forward* to experience greater rates of college completion.

The first conceptual strand, *Constructing the Segregated City*, provides an examination of the city's urbanization during the Reconstruction Era, focusing on the origins of intentional racial and spatial segregation policies and practices that would later become traditions of segregation and discrimination throughout the city's early history. The second conceptual strand, *Maintaining the Segregated City*, addressed the introduction of Jim Crow Era laws that judicially sanctioned customary systems of apartheid, particularly within the local school system. The third conceptual strand, *Resegregating the Segregated City*, addressed de facto segregation patterns of the Civil Rights Era that ultimately required one of the most ambitious and most expensive school desegregation cases in American history to rectify traditional injustices against Kansas City's Black students (Ciotti, 1998; Green & Baker, 2006; Moran, 2004). The fourth and final conceptual strand, *Moving Students of the Segregated City Forward*, explored the need for systematic remedies to offset the historical traditions of limited college access and social exclusion of African American students. This section uses the construct of college access to represent a critical intervention that could interrupt traditions of academic inequities and social stratification that resulted from decades of disinvestment in central city schools and neighborhoods. Using this chronological timeline, these conceptual strands serve as the basis of the literature review and are further explored in Chapter 2.

### **Constructing the Segregated City**

An examination of Kansas City's urbanization during the Reconstruction Era is critical to the depiction of this urban city as a racially divisive community with a legacy of

racially motivated disinvestments within its urban core neighborhoods. This contextual significance demonstrates the prevalence of racially divisive housing and community development practices that concentrated poverty and people of color within the central city then restricted their access to the qualities of life and education afforded to White residents. The research suggests that insidious policies and practices driven by racism heavily influenced the creation of Kansas City's dual housing market, one for Whites, and another for Blacks (Gotham, 2002; Schirmer, 2002; Worley, 1990). Corrupt housing policies and real estate activities were used to intentionally drive a gulf between Whites and Blacks using multiple economic tactics that drained Kansas City's urban core of its White, elite, and professional residents, leaving behind those who lacked resources required for entry to more affluent areas or housing markets (Shirmer, 2002). Thus, a chronological depiction of Kansas City's physical development and residential patterns clearly illustrates the deliberate manifestation of two distinct communities based on race.

This conceptual strand examined the institutionalized barriers that contributed to racial tensions as disparate housing and educational services were made available to the inhabitants of these very distinct communities – the haves and the have nots (Coulter, 2006; Worley, 1990). This characterization involves a critical review of the institutions, actors, decisions, and social processes that contributed to patterns of concentrated poverty and racial segregation in Kansas City. This depiction highlights gatekeepers involved in the manifestation of discriminatory housing practices, which included builders, developers, real estate brokers, mortgage lenders, street-level bureaucrats, and business leaders with substantial financial and political influence (Worley, 1990). In addition, the work of leading theorists was used for investigations of the racial, political, and economic factors that served

to construct a historically segregated city, layered with the role that discriminatory community investments played on reinforcing and perpetuating this duality (Aaron, 1997; Coulter, 2006; Gotham, 2002; Schirmer, 2002).

In summary, this conceptual strand sets the stage for the social and academic consequences of social stratifications intentionally constructed decades ago. Overt tactics and long-standing traditions imposed deliberate racial segregation and unequal community investments. The intentional construction of a divided city is reinforced through social stratification patterns that harbor both past and present inequalities (Schirmer, 2002). In particular, this legacy of disinvestment within the city's urban core is used to demonstrate the traditional hegemony that allows systems of power and privilege to continue still today without being challenged (McIntyre, 1997). Explicit regulatory restrictions soon replaced implicit reliance on segregative practices fueled by racism, enabling communities to legally uphold these long-standing discriminatory traditions while maintaining a segregated city.

### **Maintaining the Segregated City**

The second conceptual strand of this study explored the long-term segregative effects of dual housing and educational systems created as a result of de jure segregation introduced by the Jim Crow Era. Jim Crow laws were part of a racial caste system of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that judicially sanctioned discrimination and the physical separation of Blacks and Whites in areas such as housing, education, transportation, and other public accommodation systems. Decades of racial separation, prejudices, attitudes, and beliefs also fed into the continued preferences for racial insulation, evidenced by patterns of White flight and the concentration of poor people of color within central city neighborhoods (Anyon, 2005; Krysan, 2002). As a result of Jim Crow laws, these personal preferences later became legal

mandates, enforced by authorities and reinforced by public institutions (Wilson, 1996). Now, legal enforcements would maintain a segregated community while ensuring that certain neighborhoods, institutions, and educational systems would remain inaccessible to people of color (Krysan, 2002; Schirmer, 2002). An analysis of legally mandated educational disparities provides critical context for examining the premise that educational services and supports continue to differ within urban communities and school settings, despite civil rights legislation.

While the Black community's racial insulation served to affirm positive development of its youth, it also contributed to some adverse consequences in regards to long-term racial and spatial isolation (Clark-Hine, 2003; Noddings, 1992; Siddle-Walker & Snarey, 2004). Ironically, that insulation may have also handicapped African Americans by perpetuating the residential, educational, and social distance that still exists between Black residents and mainstream society (Coulter, 2006). Earlier studies and even more recent studies confirm that racial and spatial division in Kansas City contributed to systemic patterns of poverty and social exclusion for African Americans within the city's urban core (Anyon, 2005; Coulter, 2006; Urban League Report, 2007). Social exclusion can be defined by the social, academic, and economic distance that results from a multifaceted process of social dynamics where specific social groups or individuals find themselves detached from social processes, relations, and institutions that prevent them from fully participating in conventional activities deemed normative within their society (Coulter, 2006; Wilson, 1996).

This conceptual strand of the study used the socio-historical context of social injustices during the Jim Crow Era to examine impacts on stigmatized groups who have been set apart from others through a combination of forces such as urban blight, extreme poverty,

racism, concentration of low-income residents, heavily concentrated public housing for low income residents, and other inherent devastation resulting from the economic and political isolation of Blacks in America. The consequential impacts on stigmatized groups shifts the discussion to potential remedies for righting past wrongs in the pursuit of social justice. As this study examines the legacy of racial disparities and potential remedies, it also addressed the interruption of traditions of institutional racism and interventions at the student level. Special attention was be paid to corrective measures and legal attempts designed to rectify the inequalities but ultimately served to re-segregate an already divided community.

### **Re-segregating the Segregated City**

The third conceptual strand of this study examines student effects from the city's contemporary de facto segregation patterns resulting from residential housing preferences, drastic patterns of White flight, and decades of racial insulation and concentrated poverty. De facto segregation can be defined as segregation resulting from circumstances or preferences, as opposed to that imposed by legal mandates. Not only is Kansas City a segregated city with deliberate racial divides, it has also gained status as a hypersegregated American city (Massey & Denton, 1989). Earlier studies have shown that White flight and urban sprawl contributed heavily to the geographical spread across Kansas City's uniquely wide 317 mile span (Gotham, 1997; Krysan, 2002). More recent studies reveal that many of these housing patterns still exist as the city's urban core remains largely comprised of lower income families of color while the metropolitan suburban communities continue to consist of predominantly White residents generally of more affluence (Schirmer, 2002). Former Mayor Emmanuel Cleaver refers to one of its major streets, Troost Avenue, as the "Mason-Dixon line" of the city because of its historical role in physically dividing the Black and White

communities (Davis, 2004; Gotham 2002, p. 91). This Troost corridor has traditionally bounded Black residential areas, restricting Black access to quality housing, businesses, and amenities plentifully available to White residents (Owens, 2007).

Several researchers address the discordant relationship between Kansas City's patterns of racial and spatial segregation and the resulting climate within its public schools (Ciotti, 1998; Davis, 2004, Moran, 2004). This segregated climate worsened the plight of African American students served by the local school district, then and now. For the purposes of this study, a review of re-segregated schooling systems is critical to contextually frame an analysis of how deeply entrenched educational disparities and restrictive access to educational opportunities have become for African American students. Here, the legacy of disparate educational expectations and provisions for Kansas City's White and Black students is of particular significance because this permanence of racism has yet to be dismantled.

More than 100 years of racial migration, segregation, and discriminatory practices contributed to the need for corrective practices in the fight for social justice during the post Civil Rights Era. Legislation introduced to integrate Kansas City's large urban school district ultimately became one of the most ambitious and most expensive school desegregation cases in American history (Ciotti, 1998; Green & Baker, 2006; Moran, 2004). Despite a \$2 billion dollar desegregation effort mandated by the courts, student academic performance in the predominantly Black Kansas City school district continued to decline rapidly. "The results were dismal. Test scores did not rise; the Black-White gap did not diminish; and there was less, not greater, integration" (Ciotti, 1998). This notorious legal battle did little to interrupt racially segregated housing and educational patterns. It did

however reinforce legacies of disparate educational attainment and cultural inferiority—dangerous memories that still influence the development of these students (Caruthers, 2005; 2006). Mirroring sentiments of the surrounding community, the students have come to see themselves through a lens of hopelessness and inferiority, which presents academic and social failure as almost natural and inevitable. This study examined the consequential handicap of Black students that resulted from decades of segregated schooling in the Kansas City community and what school-based guidance services are needed to systematically move Kansas City students forward, ensuring that all have equitable access to opportunities for higher educational attainments.

### **Moving Students of the Segregated City Forward**

The absence of equitable college access opportunities for students of color remains elusive, resembling historical patterns of limited access and exclusion. Minor (2008) found that “enrollment, completion, and graduation data, when controlled by race, clearly point to a lack of equity and the need for programs to level the so-called playing field of access” (p. 862). Coining the phrase, “segregation residual,” he explains that “the current day distribution of individuals, services, or educational opportunities by race resembles trends found during the civil rights era” (Minor, 2008; p. 862). Kozol (2005) echoes such, claiming that many of today’s schools are “bastions of contemporary segregation” (p.22). Both assert that it is not the composition of highly segregated schools that matter, but the blaring inequities that have yet to be dismantled, even 60 years after *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* legislation designed specifically to promote upward mobility and social advancement through education (Harper, 2008).

The fourth and final part of this study further explores this phenomenon within a more contemporary context using a case study analysis to investigate the experiences of Black students preparing to transition from high school. This part of the study also explored their perspectives regarding the types of technical support needed to successfully manage the transition from high school while overcoming some of the historic academic and social barriers outlined in the first three parts of this study. Structural forces that work against the success for students of color are undeniable, evidenced by substantial research on the institutional and societal barriers faced by underrepresented groups in relation to college preparation and access (Adams-Farmer, 2006; Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009; Minor, 2008). Nevertheless, institutionalized remedies to ameliorate the problem remain elusive. Regardless, public school administrators and other educational gatekeepers should still be held accountable for designing safety nets and experiences to equip and expose the most vulnerable students to higher educational opportunities. Such interventions could significantly interrupt high incident rates of poorly educated graduates with meaningless diplomas and “educations” (Noguera, 2007). Thus, it is imperative that this conceptual strand demonstrate the urgency of academic remedies that can systematically disrupt the disparities that have been in place for far too long.

Further exploration determined if any systematic college planning guidance services are available in urban settings to uniformly equip student bodies of color with effective access to higher education if so interested. Few predominantly Black urban schools tout high rates of success across the board with college access and placements for the majority of their students. Typically, successful matriculations to higher education are attributed to random individual protective factors instead of systematic protocols designed to ensure inclusive

access for urban student bodies of color. For those who do not matriculate, theorists put forth a host of probable causes ranging from institutional barriers to inadequate academic preparation (Allen, Griffin, & Walsh, 2009; Fuligni & Hardway, 2004). Either way, measures taken over the past few decades have yet to achieve educational parity, especially as it relates to higher educational access for students of color (Minor, 2008).

I recognize that not all urban students face social challenges. Many students from urban communities are quite resilient, with access to nurturing school and family relationships that can augment their successful matriculation (Anderson, 1988; Blackwell-Tucker, 2006; Davis, 2007; Siddle-Walker, 2001, 2003). It is not the intention of this study to generalize the plight of urban teens, but to explore the need for supportive interventions and supplemental nurturing relationships for students in need. Collectively, these conceptual strands are an attempt to reframe our approach to what should be considered as equitable college planning supports in efforts to genuinely infuse social justice within urban educational reform discourse.

### **Significance of the Study**

The economic implications of this work stem from national workforce projections and the educational credentials required to participate in the workforce as wage earners. Likewise the lifetime earning differences based on educational attainment and race would support the significance of the study. Recent economic studies found that by 2018, 1.8 million jobs projected for Missouri will require postsecondary credentials (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010). This places completion of post-secondary education as yet another gatekeeper to upward mobility and social advancement for underrepresented students of color who customarily remain disconnected from full economic participation.

This study also bears implications for educational policy development and practice. Milton Friedman (1955) argued that public schools have no accountability to the market, parents, or students it serves, and ultimately results in an inefficient use of resources and taxpayer dollars. He was a staunch advocate of interjecting competition into education to yield better results for all children. Friedman (1955) shared that this lack of accountability results in both a poor education system that does not fulfill the needs of students or their families. Recognizing that all urban students do not need extra supports and skill building, the lack of access is detrimental for those who do. Schools can no longer afford to deny students a learning environment that effectively prepares them to compete in the twenty-first century, depriving them of the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills that will be required throughout their adult lives (Levine, 2002). Beneficial skills might include how to navigate higher education systems, the job search process, entrepreneurial business development, public governance, and the political processes used at local, national, or worldwide levels.

Many urban students already possess the skills, familial supports, and abilities to thrive. However, there are many who do not receive essential technical guidance from their school, home, or community environments. For these students, it is critical that schools provide them with access to role models, information, and opportunities to develop the professional and social skills to cultivate their trajectories toward success. Countless waves of educational reforms have been introduced to offset poor student outcomes caused by a multitude of societal ills, such as systemic ineffectiveness or the inequities stemming from issues of poverty, race, class, or gender. Educational reforms will remain ineffective until we address root causes of economic and social inequities (Anyon, 2005; Harvard Civil Rights

Project, 2002). To meet the challenge of social change, system administrators must have the courage to incorporate effective college and career planning within present models of school reform. Effective college planning assistance can serve as a great intervention on the matriculation process of urban students who may need additional navigational guidance for successful transitions from school to the workforce. It is important to help them bridge their two worlds, providing access to marketable skills and experiences while helping them determine their fit within society. Therefore, we must move beyond being politically correct to the business of addressing the blaring inequities that perpetuate America's dual class educational system. The use of research-based arguments can serve as the impetus for effectively redesigning educational practice, policies, and outcomes for urban students, ultimately revolutionizing society overall.

Through student experiences, this study informs how the Kansas City community can move forward – calling for a systematic interruption of school and community environments that perpetuate inequities in relation to preparation for, and access to, higher education. I lend my voice to other educational reformers seeking to institute societal changes by sufficiently equipping the most vulnerable populations, preparing them with the skills needed to pursue higher educational paths that lead to superior wages and enhanced qualities of life. Standardized college planning assistance might be the intervention needed to ensure that all students are equipped with the roadmap and technical assistance to effectively prepare them for successful transitions from high school to adulthood.

### **Assumptions**

My beliefs and assumptions informed the contextual frameworks of analysis that I used. I acknowledge my passion for illuminating social inequities and seeking to change

them (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1999). For me, school-based services became the primary focus as a common point of intervention, recognizing that familial and community supports would vary for all students based on their residence, family educational attainments, organizational affiliations, and natural mentors, all of which influence and shape adolescent decisions in immeasurable ways. I also recognize that emphasis is being placed on school-based CPGS as the universal intervention opportunity that is readily accessible to all urban high school students who are currently experiencing this phenomenon.

I utilized two public high schools within the same school district to investigate levels of technical support and guidance counseling experienced by its high school students. However, I brought an assumption that services provided within each setting might differ substantially since one site is a national Blue Ribbon school that ranks 75th in the nation with high college placement rates, whereas the other site ranks as one of the most academically challenged schools within the same school district with significantly lower college placement rates. Although these two schools are less than two miles apart within the same urban core neighborhood, I suspected that there might be significant opportunities for differentiated college planning assistance provided between the two school groups, and within student cohorts, based on historic school reputations of academic legacies.

First, the reputations and historical significance of each of these two diametrically opposed urban schools served as a major social construct of interest within this study. It also allowed for cross-case analysis of findings at School A versus those of School B. Second, I believed that there was also an opportunity for differential treatment of students within each setting based on students' academic rank. Capturing the stories of students deemed academically strong, weak, and marginal contributed to a greater understanding of how

students across the academic continuum might experience the same counseling model in different ways.

Ultimately, I believe that college planning assistance can help high school students to identify their interests, then pursue strategic action plans to explore them. CPGS can offset inequities in planning guidance that may occur among each student's unique familial and community networks. Recognizing that many urban students face a host of social challenges, I also believe there is an abundance of brilliance and resilience prevalent among urban youth that is not acknowledged by mainstream society (Caruthers, 2007; Davis, 2007; Dyson, 2005; Kunjufu, 1987). This study explored if any college planning guidance services were standardized for all urban high school students, or if there were in fact discrepancies in the technical assistance provided for students in some school settings.

Having identified beliefs and assumptions, based on my own experiences as a college access coach and the parent of two graduating high school seniors, informed the theoretical framework of this study. Next I offer an overview of the literature used to frame this study. Also, I provide a more extended discussion of the literature reviewed as the basis of this study in Chapter 2.

### **Overview of the Literature Review**

The permanence of racism is both a conscious and unconscious occurrence of White privilege that others outside of the White race do not have access to. The literature reviewed the prevalence of gatekeepers and governance structures that support such dominance through policies and procedures that maintained restrictive access to economic advancement for Blacks. Chapter 2 entails a synthesis of literature examining these constructs used to

create and maintain two distinct communities with differing levels of economic mobility for Kansas City's Black and White residents. An examination of the literature offered insight to the origins and consequences of the city's racial and spatial segregation and the impacts on the educational attainment of its urban students of color. Another factor of consideration in the literature review entails the consequential academic challenges resulting from decades of disparate treatment and constrained access for these students. Next, I provide an overview of the design of the study to introduce the theoretical traditions and sampling techniques that guided data collection and analysis. A more descriptive discussion of this approach is discussed further in Chapter 3.

### **Overview of the Methodology**

I have chosen to qualitatively explore the phenomenon of increased college access as a remedy to offset historical patterns of low college access and social exclusion prevalent among African American students. This study explores the case for such while illuminating the technical assistance needs expressed by those currently experiencing this phenomenon. I review the college planning experiences of seniors and recent graduates to assess the levels of support and direction available to, and accessed by, disenfranchised high school students within Kansas City's central city schools. I also explore the premise that the levels of support and encouragement received in urban environments may differ greatly, affecting educational achievement and attainment of minority students (Jaynes & Williams, 1989).

In order to gain a clearer understanding of the level of supports needed to ensure successful transitions into college, this qualitative study was designed to examine the rationale, supports, and decision-making processes used by adolescents of color as they prepare for life after graduation. This qualitative study used a case study approach to depict

the essence of the high school transitional planning experience as captured by the individuals involved. Other theoretical traditions of inquiry used in this exploration include critical race theory, narratology, and heuristic inquiry. Criterion sampling was used to identify participants who can provide rich, thick depictions of experiences with this phenomenon that can illustrate particular viewpoints while providing others with a strong sense of understanding as if they had been there themselves (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002). This research investigation collected data through student and parent questionnaires, personal narratives, student interviews, and document analysis to learn more about the types of advice and guidance participants received in their homes, schools, and community environments. A more detailed description of the methodological approach is provided in Chapter 3.

### **Organization of This Study**

In Chapter 1 of this study, I have provided a discussion of the problem, purpose, and rationale for how Kansas City came to be so racially segregated and the consequential handicap of its Black students as a result of two very different kinds of school systems that perpetuate discriminatory roles and intentions for urban students of color. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on Kansas City's urban community development with a detailed analysis of its racially motivated dual housing and educational systems over the past century. Special attention is paid to the actors and institutions that created and maintained these dual systems for the city's Black and White residents, which ultimately created the disparities still in place today. The disparate educational supports in place for Black and White students in Kansas City high schools set the stage for discussions on what supports are missing if we are to adequately prepare all Kansas City students for the significant, life-

altering transition from high school to college. Chapter 3 details the research methodology used to capture and assess student experiences and perceptions of their preparation to manage the transition from high school. In Chapter 4 I will report findings and in Chapter 5 I will conclude with a discussion of findings, recommendations for further study, and implications of what the Kansas City community must provide to ensure that college access is attainable for all of its high school students, regardless of race, class, or school affiliation.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

For far too long the lack of equitable school systems and access to higher education have consistently positioned urban students of color at an alarming disadvantage that has somehow become the norm (Ciotti, 2006; Jaynes & Williams, 1989; Kozol, 2005). For students of these underperforming schools, their status as poorly prepared, low performing students continues to handicap them as they transition beyond high school. Likewise, the cumulative effects of social, political, and economic barriers experienced in urban communities further affect the poor educational performance and low attainment rates of these students (Hale, 2001; McWhorter, 2000; Williams, 1996). Now more than ever, our economy requires some post-secondary training to fulfill workforce projections (Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2010). In this information age, individuals without an “achievement advantage” of knowledge and competitive skill sets will remain disenfranchised from economic participation (Rodriguez & Bellanca, 1996). Thus, the perpetuation of restricted college access is critically detrimental for urban students without the means for economic mobility.

The purpose of this case study is to explore how local Black high school students currently experience college planning guidance services (CPGS) that prepare them to secure higher educational opportunities. A deeper understanding of this phenomenon may inform discussions of whether current CGPS are sufficient to achieve equitable college access rates for students who attend central city schools. The overarching question is what are the social and economic implications experienced when underrepresented urban students are not effectively prepared with transition plans into college? More specifically, what do these

students do to obtain college planning assistance when it may not be readily available within their school or home environments? If they are potential first generational college attendees, the transitional planning process from high school to higher education can be quite daunting, yet essential if planning to earn college degrees that yield higher wage earning potential (Fulgini and Hardaway, 2004). The lack of access and technical guidance can be detrimental to their chances for adulthood success (Hale, 2001). Thus, all students should at least be provided with guidance services that help them explore their options while charting their own roadmap on the path from high school to adulthood. Preliminary research questions addressed:

1. What efforts exist in two urban high schools to secure equitable access to higher education for students of color within the segregated city?
2. What college planning guidance services are systematically delivered to remedy traditions of limited college access for these students?
3. How do these students interact with the CPGS offered by their high schools?
4. What do they do to plan for life beyond high school graduation inside and outside of their schools?

Kansas City serves as the backdrop for this study because of its notorious legally mandated battle with school desegregation which backfired, resulting in its status as one of America's most hypersegregated cities and school districts. Here, an understanding of Kansas City's racial and spatial climates is critical to provide the background and context within which to address how entrenched institutional inequities have become within the city's dual housing and educational systems. Therefore a review of the literature consists of historical accounts of the community's development, illuminating the role of divisive policies

and practices that intentionally constructed a racially segregated community and school system.

The literature on urban education and concentrated poverty is saturated with accounts of the structural tendencies that reproduce social inequities instead of dismantling them. Studies on a host of academic and social disparities resound throughout much of the literature on urban education, sociology, and urban development. There is also an abundance of research on the pervasive achievement gaps between White and Black students (Anyon, 2005; Hale, 2001; Kozol, 1991, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994b; Price, 2008; Williams, 2003). In the case of older students, there are significant research findings on disparities in college enrollment and access for students of underrepresented groups (Adams & Farmer-Hinton, 2006; Jordan and Plank, 1998; Noguera, 2007). Collectively, these topics and others have been studied at nauseum. While the literature suggests numerous strategies to address these ills, there is a noticeable gap in existing literature that promotes the use of standardized college access tools to level the playing field for all public school students, particularly those who are disadvantaged or potentially at-risk. Researchers tend to focus on reiterations of the problem, flooding the field with refinements of repetitive discourse. However, there is little research on system-wide remedies that can effectively interrupt these patterns of academic neglect by systematically preparing urban students to manage their own college planning transitions. This study is an attempt to fill that void with compelling recommendations for educational reform and accountability at the school district level.

Literature centered on historical accounts of Kansas City's never-ending battle with race relations and school desegregation are critical to build the case for how deeply entrenched these systemic and institutional academic barriers are for today's minority

students who must overcome them in order to compete (Caruthers, 2006; Davis, 2004; Moran, 2005; Schirmer, 2002). Further investigation of the consequential handicap of African American students relied on literature that specifically addresses academic and social barriers experienced, and the effects of schooling received within the context of hypersegregated urban schools and communities as described below.

In summary, a review of the literature illuminated four predominant themes which situates the impacts of Kansas City's discriminatory practices and educational consequences within a socio-historic context. These conceptual strands are addressed in following sections entitled, "*Constructing the Segregated City*," "*Maintaining the Segregated City*," "*Re-segregating the Segregated City*," then "*Moving Students Of The Segregated City Forward*." Using this multi-pronged approach, a review of the literature addressed the perpetuation of pervasive segregation and discrimination throughout the urbanization of Kansas City. The following sections of this literature review specifically address discriminatory educational practices that restricted access to educational opportunities for Blacks throughout the Reconstruction Era, Jim Crow Era, Civil Rights Era, and still today. In particular, literature on the long-term discriminatory effects and quality of educational systems that resulted within Kansas City's urban core neighborhoods support an overarching premise that these traditions still impede educational access for Kansas City's students of color. Here, literature on the most effective college planning services inform the discussion of what is currently in place, or needed, to offset traditions of academic neglect by accelerating college access for the city's most vulnerable students.

## **Constructing the Segregated City**

The literature on Kansas City's urban development during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century highlights housing and community development practices that concentrated poverty and people of color within the city's urban core neighborhoods. These practices support both de jure segregation, and de facto segregation patterns as laws mandated such isolation while personal preferences reinforced White flight to communities that were deemed off limits for Blacks. Gotham (1997) looks at the actors, decisions, and social processes that contributed to patterns of concentrated poverty and racial segregation in Kansas City. More specifically, he explores the origins and long-term segregative effects of housing policies at the local and federal levels and their disparate impacts throughout the White and Black communities as it relates to education, housing, blight, and concentrated poverty. The consequential effects of systemic racism and social inequality are still prevalent today within the city's urban core neighborhoods and schools. Gotham's (1997) investigation of the racial, political, and economic factors that served to construct a historically segregated city are layered with the role that housing and discriminatory community investments played on reinforcing and perpetuating this duality.

The research illustrated themes of racial segregation to the point that some cities with extreme patterns of such were classified as hypersegregated cities. Kansas City serves as the backdrop of this study because of its national notoriety as a segregated urban community, plagued by extreme patterns of poverty and racial segregation. Former Mayor Emmanuel Cleaver refers to one of its major streets, Troost Avenue, as the "Mason-Dixon line" of the city because of its historical role in physically dividing the Black and White communities (Davis, 2004; Gotham 2002, p. 91; Owens, 2007). This Troost corridor has traditionally

bounded Black residential areas, restricting Black access to quality housing, businesses, and amenities plentifully available to White residents. Not only is Kansas City a segregated city with deliberate racial divides, it has also gained status as one of the most hypersegregated American cities.

### **Hypersegregation**

The concept of hypersegregation emerged in urban literature during the 1990's and is used to classify communities experiencing disproportionate levels of racial isolation and concentrated Black poverty within its urban core neighborhoods. Massey and Denton (1989) extend a model that measures hypersegregation by five core dimensions of racial and residential segregation that include:

1. Uneven distribution of African Americans within a metropolitan area
2. Geographic isolation of African Americans
3. Concentration of African Americans within spatially dense areas
4. Clustering of African American neighborhoods into one large ghetto
5. Centralization of African Americans near the Central Business District

The concept of hypersegregation is far more than an academic classification. It positions a community within an extreme realm of social dysfunction, plagued by the systemic deprivation of the supports, opportunities, and access to resources that enable its most vulnerable or most disadvantaged residents to experience upward mobility. Thus, those who live in such communities may be destined to remain locked within the vicious cycles of poverty and the consequential disparities in access to quality education, health, and welfare traditionally experienced by individuals within the lowest socioeconomic stratum.

## **Racial Hypersegregation**

Although many other cultural groups have also experienced the systemic effects of residential segregation, isolation, and extreme poverty, African Americans continue to be the most segregated racial group still today (Wilson, 1996). A racial group is labeled hypersegregated if they meet at least four of the five above indices (Massey & Denton, 1989). Gotham (1997) describes the impact of hypersegregation as a substantial multiplier effect that exacerbates the destitution experienced by poor people of color as a result of the multiple layers of discriminatory treatment they continually experience. Hence, African Americans largely remain within the lowest socio-economic stratum, with the greatest quality of life barriers to overcome (National Urban League, 2007). Such concentrated hardship relegates African American residents of these particular neighborhoods to status as second-class citizens deprived of the resources and opportunities necessary for socioeconomic betterment. “Not only does living in hypersegregated neighborhoods restrict opportunities for upward mobility through access to jobs and income, quality schools, and housing equity, but it is also closely associated with higher crime and poor living conditions” (Massey, Condran, and Denton 1987, p.33). White flight, corporate relocations, and residential segregation shifted the economic mainstreams into suburban communities, resulting in the racial, political, and economic isolation of American cities and their Black populations (Anyon, 1997; Krysan, 2002). As jobs moved away from central cities, African Americans were limited in their ability to access suburban job markets due to limited education, transportation, and housing affordability. Environmental conditions such as these have ultimately contributed to the creation of a permanent Black underclass whose behaviors

undeniably “contrast sharply with that of mainstream America” (Massey, Condran, and Denton, 1987; Wilson, 1987; p. 7).

Environmental conditions and spatial mismatches are critical as inhabitants who live in hypersegregated communities are not likely to interact regularly with mainstream individuals in their particular neighborhoods, or sometimes even neighboring communities (Massey 2005; Wilson, 1996). This isolation caused by racial and spatial distance limits their exposure to mainstream behaviors and norms prevalent among the rest of society. This phenomenon becomes exacerbated by limited interactions with other racial groups as well. Although many other cultural groups have also experienced the systemic effects of residential segregation, isolation, and extreme poverty, African Americans continue to be the most adversely affected racial group still today (Wilson, 1996). Early 20th century ethnic groups with the highest immigration rates such as the Jews, Italians, Asians, Hispanics, and the Polish, also experienced poverty and residential segregation; yet have been able to accomplish higher rates of integration within mainstream society more successfully than African Americans (Massey, Gross, & Shibuya, 1994).

Using an Equality Index TM to measure five indicators in economics, health, education, social justice, and civic engagement, the National Urban League reports, “glaring gaps continue to exist between Black and White Americans – with a disproportionate impact on Black males” (National Urban League, 2007; cover). These extreme patterns of racial and class segregation reinforce the status of African Americans as the most disadvantaged ethnic group in America, blocked from assimilating into residential, professional, and societal arenas where they might enhance their quality of life, thus breaking the cyclical tragedy of poverty and disenfranchisement. They also experience limited access to housing markets

which in turn affects numerous quality of life indicators such as their safety, health, peer networks, employment, wealth, and perhaps most critically, public education (Massey, 2005). Without notional admittance to quality housing markets, African Americans are continually deprived access to critical social and economic resources that are fundamentally determined by one's place of residence. While America has progressed to encompass diverse, highly mobile communities, African Americans living in urban core neighborhoods still remain the most isolated subgroup (Massey, 2005). Residential segregation and socioeconomic isolation perpetuates the disadvantaged disposition of African Americans who are deprived of competitive educations and employable skill sets resulting from the lack of work and crippling school systems in their environments (Wilson, 1996).

Although this phenomenon occurs in numerous urban communities throughout the nation, this study addressed the historical constructs that created and still perpetuate Kansas City's status as not only a segregated city, but also one of the most hypersegregated cities in the country. Scholars remind us that a segregated society is stratified and unequal by its very nature, and must therefore remain conscious of its racial climate (Anyon, 1997; Coulter, 2006; Massey & Denton, 1989). Kansas City's extreme patterns of residential, racial, economic, political, and social isolation collectively worked to intentionally concentrate the city's most vulnerable populations within urban ghettos leaving certain residents without access to a lifeline that can transform their dispositions (Schirmer, 2002). Many American cities have long-standing legacies of segregating its residents on the basis of race and class, yet Kansas City's legacy of stratification is still prevalent (Schirmer, 2002). Kansas City's extreme patterns of hypersegregation are so entrenched that still today there are consequential effects of such experienced by its Black, urban core residents. Its historical

practices continue to have long-lasting impacts, evidenced by its current racial and academic climates and the consequential handicap of its Black student population. This study focused on one subgroup affected the most adversely- urban, Black students who have yet to find their way into today's global marketplace. These students have an opportunity to create a new chapter in our history. Thus, it is critical that educators, parents, and community members provide them with the insight, tools, and planning assistance that can empower them in this process. Only then can they serve as empowered leaders in our united quest for conscious social change.

### **Kansas City's Urban Decline**

The literature suggests that Kansas City's unique spatial proportions take center stage in an analysis of the population shifts and segregative climate resulting from annexation and suburban development patterns in the early 1900's through its contemporary development and disinvestment trends. The city's geography spans more than 317 square miles and stretches across 20 miles. Historically, its housing policies and practices reflect waves of development, investment, then decline as newly emerging residential communities were continually constructed further away from its central city neighborhoods (Gotham, 1997). These newer areas attract residents away from the oldest urban core neighborhoods in their search for more desirable living communities that provide novel housing stock and amenities suited for contemporary lifestyles. These "better" neighborhoods are usually on the fringe of the urban core, and are characterized by safer surroundings, enhanced property values, and greater access to emergency, fire, and police services (Massey & Denton, 1989). More often than not, newer residential areas also offer newly constructed schools that serve as the heart of its neighborhood. Thus, the correlation between newer housing markets and new schools

is a compelling highlight that cannot be ignored in comparison to the marketability of older central city neighborhoods with predominantly dilapidated older housing stock, schools, and infrastructures.

Realistically, a neighborhood's marketability is based heavily on the quality of its housing stock, schools, and the proximity of its shopping centers and recreational facilities. The quality of lifestyle that Kansas City's neighborhoods can offer depends greatly upon its residential areas and local schools. "Housing markets affect safety, security, health, wealth, jobs, peer groups, and perhaps most critically, public education" (Massey, 2005). Based on this research it can be concluded that contemporary communities are designed with this in mind. Many studies demonstrate ways in which older neighborhoods usually located within a city's urban core are not always able to offer a comparable environment as it relates to amenities and an overall quality of life. Furthermore, the literature strongly demonstrates the correlation between White flight, urban disinvestment, and the consequential stratified and unequal communities that are created as a result (Coulter, 2006). As consumers move further out, seeking residence in more contemporary suburban communities, central city neighborhoods experience intense levels of physical and economic abandonment (Krysan, 2002). Flight from central cities cripples a community as a result of the mass exodus of its residential base and the loss of property tax revenues required to fund its operational budget and public school systems (Moran, 2004). This urban sprawl significantly diminishes the resources available for reinvestment in a central city's deteriorating housing stock and community development efforts (Anyon, 1997). These trends continue to play a major role in shaping Kansas City's racial and spatial climate because poor families who cannot afford more upscale housing stock remain relegated to deteriorating central city neighborhoods and

schools (Anyon, 1997; Worley, 1990). Thus, the central city's competitive advantage remains compromised as its ability to attract and retain residents at varying income levels disintegrates while concentrating poor people within the urban core without access to quality resources and business opportunities (Schirmer, 2002).

Studies on urban housing and community development trends report that challenges such as these have traditionally been more prevalent among predominantly low-income neighborhoods typically located within the city's urban core. Furthermore, studies have shown that these neighborhoods suffer from adverse demographic trends such as declining infrastructures, decreased residential populations, and concentrated poverty. Comprised of the oldest housing stock, urban core neighborhoods are adversely affected by devastating waves of blight, abandonment, crime, and chronic disinvestment (Anyon, 1997).

Collectively, this creates a poor living environment concentrated with low-income families who cannot afford to live elsewhere (Wilson, 1996). More of these studies demonstrate how these urban ghettos were intentionally constructed through racist, divisive housing policies designed to concentrate people of color in certain pockets of the urban core, where they were denied economic and educational investments comparable to neighboring communities (Coulter, 2006; Schirmer, 2002).

The available literature presented on urban ghettos focuses heavily on the multiplier effects of concentrated poverty, racism, discrimination, and neighborhood disinvestment, and economic deprivations. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a ghetto as "a quarter of a city in which members of a minority group live especially because of social, legal, or economic pressure, an isolated group," and also mentions situations that "confer inferior status or limiting opportunity" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Some researchers focus on particular

attributes or shaping forces that produced ghettos, yet collectively they depict an array of external forces that created, shaped, and maintain the severe ghettoization of urban core communities across America. In support of Webster's definition, many scholars primarily attribute this classification to economic conditions, racism, housing discrimination, restrictive covenants, poverty, economic decline, and lifestyles of those who live in these communities. Of particular interest to this study, is Anyon's (1997) study framing of the "ghettoization" of urban communities as the result of concentrated effects of racial, economic, and political devastation experienced by many aging urban central cities that lost their industrial base. Wilson (1996) examines ghettos in terms of the sobering realities faced by the residents of these communities who must deal with the devastational complexities of socially constructed isolation created by the dangerous intersections of race, class, and economic conditions.

This study focused on the sociohistorical context of ghettoization using the general theme of stigmatized groups who have been set apart from others through a combination of forces such as urban blight, extreme poverty, racism, concentration of low-income residents, heavily concentrated public housing for low income residents, and other inherent devastation resulting from the economic and political isolation of Blacks in America. More importantly, this study focused on the customs that contributed to such a pervasive social distance that continues to isolate today's Black youth in Kansas City from mainstream opportunities despite racial progress and civil rights legislation.

### **Intentional Racial and Spatial Segregation**

The research suggests that insidious policies and practices driven by racism heavily influenced the creation of Kansas City's dual housing market, one for Whites, and another for Blacks (Gotham, 1997; Schirmer, 2002; Worley, 1990). Corrupt housing policies and

real estate activities were used to intentionally drive a gulf between Whites and Blacks using multiple economic tactics that drained Kansas City's urban core of its White, elite, and professional residents, leaving behind those who lacked resources required for entry to more affluent areas or housing markets (Schirmer, 2002). A chronological depiction of Kansas City's physical development and residential patterns clearly illustrate the deliberate manifestation of two separate communities based on race. It also supports the development of racial tensions in the housing and educational services that were made available to the inhabitants of these very distinct communities – the haves and the have nots (Coulter, 2006). Earlier studies have shown that White flight and urban sprawl contributed heavily to the geographical spread across Kansas City's uniquely wide 317 mile span (Gotham, 1997). More recent studies reveal that many of these housing patterns still exist as the city's urban core is largely comprised of families of color while the metropolitan suburban communities continue to consist of predominantly White residents (Schirmer, 2002).

A literary analysis of Kansas City's racial and spatial climates would be incomplete without references to J.C. Nichols, its premier developer who developed more than 1,000 acres of land into an elite retail shopping pavilion set in the midst of the city's urban core, just a few miles away from the poor Black neighborhoods. Nichols designed the Country Club Plaza retail area and surrounding high-cost subdivisions with golf and high-end retail amenities for those who could afford such. This prototype development gained notoriety as the first of its kind nationally to offer regional shopping in the midst of residential dwellings (Schirmer, 2002; Worley, 1990). To protect his investment from racial integration, Nichols controlled the land usage, implemented restrictive deed covenants, and forced rents far above what Blacks could afford to ensure that they would not gain access (Gotham, 1997). He

legally required that all homes constructed in the area cost at least \$2,500 at a time when the average annual income of African American males and females was \$483 and \$200 respectively; and only 800 of 23,566 African Americans even owned property in Kansas City (Worley, 1990; p. 127).

The available literature on the city's physical development supports two opposing themes for the contributions of Kansas City's most prominent land developer, J. C. Nichols. While some refer to J.C. Nichols as a nationally acclaimed premier developer, others truthfully acknowledge the detriment he personally imposed on Kansas City's racial and spatial climates. For example, Worley (1990) hails Nichols as an innovative, nationally acclaimed urban pioneer who designed the prototypes of shopping plazas and middle-income suburban developments that were replicated nationwide in America's most exclusive neighborhoods. Pearson & Pearson (2007) credit him as a shaping force locally for the development of Kansas City's most prominent institutions which include the University of Missouri, Liberty Memorial, Nelson-Atkins Museum, and the Midwest Research Institute. On the other hand, Schirmer (2002) refers to his deeds as the dividing force that racially stratified Kansas City.

Residential deed restrictions with 25-year warranties mandated that property in this area could not be sold, rented, or even occupied by Blacks. Restrictive covenants received legal protection under the guise of contractual clauses. Gotham (2002) reminds us that during this era it was unethical not to implement these tactics of zoning and restrictive covenants established "to control spatial movement of racial groups and create racially homogenous neighborhoods" (p. 38). Nichols used high-end country-club type spaces as protective barriers that offered purified living communities that suppressed diversity while buffering his

clientele from gradual encroachment or undesirables (Schirmer, 2002). His advertisements offered exclusivity and blatantly marketed such in no uncertain terms, using slogans such as “one thousand acres of space restricted for those who desired protection” (Worley, 1990; p. 124). Worley (1990) states, “This is the position that J.C. Nichols took in all deed restrictions written by his company from 1908 forward: no sales to Blacks were allowed or even considered” (p. 145).

Since J.C. Nichols was such a principal actor in the archetype of combined residential and retail spaces, his discriminatory approach and impacts are often overshadowed by acclaim received for his synthesis of national best practices in urban designs. Critics “claimed that Nichols’ project skewed the development of the city in such a way as to make later race conflicts and class differentiation inevitable, creating “a social disaster” for the city” (Worley, 1990; p. 292).

The Missouri Supreme Court upheld these divisive practices until 1917 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled them unconstitutional, in violation of the 14th Amendment that prohibited state interference in cases of property rights (Worley, 1990; p. 146). Despite legislative rulings, unwritten traditions prevailed as people of color were discriminated against even though it was a clear violation of the 5th, 13th, and 14th Amendments which protected the right to hold property and act as a free person respectively. Unfortunately this type of discrimination was upheld by the highest courts in the country, as the U.S. Supreme Court endorsed such, effectively barring Blacks from fair housing opportunities. This continued until the pivotal case of *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948) 334 U.S. 1, where the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that racially restrictive covenants were unconstitutional and therefore unenforceable in a court of law.

Other actors also involved in the manifestation of discriminatory housing practices included builders, developers, real estate brokers, mortgage lenders, street-level bureaucrats, and business leaders with substantial financial and political influence (Gotham, 2007). Collectively these industry players reinforced the creation of two distinct Kansas City communities based on race. Some of the corrupt housing policies they used to promote White flight into suburban Kansas City neighborhoods while confining Blacks to urban ghettos included redlining, restrictive covenants, racial steering, blockbusting, panic selling, and discriminatory lending practices. Redlining occurred as actors within the housing industry made calculated efforts to disinvest within specific geographic boundaries (Anyon, 1997; p.62; Worley, 1990). Restrictive deed covenants prohibited White homeowners from selling their homes to minorities (Worley, 1990). Racial steering involved persuasive, and sometimes coercive, tactics to dissuade or deter minorities from considering alternative tenancy in White communities (Coulter, 2006; Schirmer, 2002). Blockbusting was used to dispel White families from an area in reaction to the entry of a non-White family (Krysan, 2002; Massey & Denton, 1993). This exploitation of White fears prompted panic selling; where families would sell property quickly to recoup any price they could before the neighborhood became inhabited by too many Black residents (Gotham, 1997; Schirmer, 2002; Worley, 1990).

In summary, the literature highlights how each of these overt tactics reinforced racial segregation that was a prominent factor in Kansas City's early development. As upper income residential communities developed they protected themselves from integration by pricing their neighborhood beyond the economic reach of Black families (Worley, 1990; p.147). Explicit regulatory restrictions soon replaced implicit reliance on segregative

practices, enabling communities to legally uphold these long-standing discriminatory traditions. Collectively these tactics accelerated White flight, racial turnover, and rapid property devaluation within central city neighborhoods (Anyon, 1997; Green & Baker, 2006; Krysan, 2002). Perhaps the most blatant result of this institutional racism was the concentration of poor residents of color in central city neighborhoods that would fail to receive comparable investments and resources over the next few decades (Schirmer, 2002). Thus, dual housing and educational systems were created that would service its residents unequally based on race over the next few decades.

### **Impacts of Divisive Housing Practices**

Research has shown how the impacts of these divisive practices were exacerbated as White mortgage lenders and insurance providers employed discriminatory lending practices to maximize their economic interests while isolating people of color geographically (Worley, 1990). These Black neighborhoods were regarded as areas plagued by crime, blight, and poverty, and therefore, deemed not worthy of investments (Schirmer, 2002; Worley, 1990). Many studies demonstrate that as more homes in urban areas were collectively considered worthless, the potential for any future investment was also annulled, further crippling Kansas City's urban core from current or future investment. Industry agents restricted loans and mortgage insurance in the central city neighborhoods predominantly occupied by Blacks. Gotham (1997; p. 268) cites a 1966 study by the Kansas City Commission on Human Relations and a 1968 study by the Institute for Community Studies of Real Estate Activities and Mortgage Insurance Practices in the southeast area, which found that panic selling and blockbusting were the chief reasons for increased foreclosures, housing devaluation, and increasing blight and poverty in the urban core (Kansas City Commission on Human

Relations 1966; Institute for Community Studies 1968). Unscrupulous financial arrangements like these ensured that people of color were confined to particular urban pockets while investors reaped profits from sudden shifts in the housing markets caused by White flight and property devaluation within urban core neighborhoods (Worley, 1990; p. 147).

The research overwhelmingly suggests that the city's dual housing market was also reinforced by several institutions and social processes designed to sustain the concentration of people of color within spatially isolated communities. Although federal housing urban renewal funding was received to address the eradication of blight, the implementation of such programs fell under local control. Here developers like J.C. Nichols and T.B. Potter imposed great detriment, using these Federal Housing Administration funds targeted for blight to develop 1,000 and 640 acres respectively of upscale urban pockets for Kansas City's most elite families (Worley, 1990). Then, urban planners believed that homogenous areas were the products of individual choice, and opted to preserve this status quo to maintain neighborhood stability. Social status was inextricably linked to residential boundaries, prompting many affluent families to distance themselves from the urban core and its "undesirable" inhabitants (Schirmer, 2002). This intensified the concentrated poverty and slum like conditions resulting from the continued negligence and deterioration of the central city neighborhoods. The manifestation of intense racial and spatial distance between Blacks and Whites was the impetus for increasing economic and social inequity, evidenced by segregated housing, schools, hospitals, and public accommodations that collectively reinforced segregative living conditions in Kansas City. Racial barriers and segregated living conditions were also reinforced through curfew laws, race-based school attendance zoning

laws, lynchings, bombings, vandalism, intimidation, threatening signs, and the overall harassment of minorities to keep them “in their place” (Gotham, 1997). Living under these conditions rendered minorities somewhat powerless in Kansas City’s urban core neighborhood and schools, intentionally designed to maintain the physical and social isolation of minorities. Yet, African Americans fought back using Civil Rights legislation, isolated educational systems, and activism to ameliorate the effects of practices designed to construct and maintain a segregated city (Schirmer, 2002).

### **Maintaining the Segregated City**

Several leading theorists address the relationship between Kansas City’s patterns of residential segregation, concentrated poverty, the resulting racial climate, and the consequential affects imposed upon its Black residents – in particular its student population. Gotham (1997) looks at the actors, decisions, and social processes that contributed to systemic patterns of poverty and racial segregation in Kansas City. Gotham (1997) provides a detailed analysis of the long-term segregative effects shaped by the racial, political, and economic forces that intentionally segregated the Kansas City community by race and class. Racially, his study spans more than 100 years of racial migration, segregation, and discriminatory practices that have contributed to the need for corrective practices in the fight for social justice and equality for African American residents. Economically, he demonstrates the connection between industrialization, an expanded workforce, and the financial self-interests of misguided policymakers within a capitalist society. Politically, his work follows the population shifts as more affluent families moved to the suburbs with their resources and political clout in tow. His structural account depicts how these calculated practices created intentional pockets of wealth and equity where many were focused on

maintaining their property values by reinforcing racial housing segregation. Collectively, the interconnectedness of these actors and institutions constructed a social pattern of preferential treatment of, and investments in White neighborhoods and residents above Black ones. Thus, racism was a major influence on the actions and decisions of various housing industry actors who intentionally constructed a segregated city fueled by premeditated racial division in Kansas City.

In addition, Schirmer (2002) pays particular attention to the superior attitudes of Whites who created, perpetuated, and benefitted from such racially divisive practices and politics. Schirmer's work is situated in the racial tensions and conflicts that resulted from developmental patterns of land use in the metropolitan area. She highlights the historical origins of the divisive culture that continues to permeate Kansas City's residential and educational attendance patterns. In such a segregated climate, the social exclusion resulting from the racial and spatial isolation of African American residents was justified in the areas of housing, community health, politics, and community development. Both the works of Gotham (1997) and Schirmer (2002) address the intentional strategies used by various community players to create a racially and spatially segregated climate in Kansas City.

Moreover, Anyon (1997) addresses the systemic roots of poverty and economic devastation that ultimately widened gaps between Blacks and Whites, thereby maintaining segregated cities. Her work concentrates on the common devastation many American industrial cities experienced from the lack of corporate responsibility, capital investments, and jobs; each critical to address the issues of poverty, slums, and the ultimate "ghettoization" associated with urban decline. The concept of "ghettoization" can be described as the economic and social isolation resulting from deterioration of urban

communities (Anyon, 2005; Massey & Denton, 1989; Schirmer 2002; Wilson, 1996). Anyon (2005) argues that the downward spiral of municipalities was more attributable to economics and politics, than racism. Here, eradication of the underlying causes of poverty, economic devastation, and racial isolation take central stage in her call to dismantle the “ghetto school systems” which result to educate America’s most vulnerable students. Whether it was merely a sign of the times or intentional racism, such tensions would continue to have far reaching impacts in the areas of education and workforce development, also functions of segregated residential patterns and discriminatory community investments (Wilson, 1996).

Earlier studies and even more recent studies confirm that racial and spatial division in Kansas City contributed to systemic patterns of poverty and social exclusion for African Americans in the city’s urban core. Social exclusion can be defined by the social, academic, and economic distance that results from a multifaceted process of social dynamics where specific social groups or individuals find themselves detached from social processes, relations, and institutions that prevent them from fully participating in conventional activities deemed normative within their society (Wikipedia, 2009). Social exclusion discourse has been shaped by several theorists who study the root causes and contributions to forces such as these that render some social groups incessantly disconnected and disengaged from social and economic mainstreams. Social exclusion theories have been framed by structural barriers and dynamics that disenfranchise some groups from equally participating in political, economic, and social processes that support academic and economic opportunities (Wilson, 1996). It is most clearly apparent in instances where individuals remain marginalized, suffering from the multiplier effects experienced in communities with high concentrations of

poverty, crime, unemployment, poor housing, significant health disparities, and educational disadvantages (Massey, 2005).

In summary, the literature supports that residents today are still dealing with the long-term segregative effects shaped by the racial, political, and economic forces that intentionally segregated the Kansas City community by race and class (Urban League, 2007). Urban core neighborhoods have been economically devastated and politically disenfranchised as a result of divisive practices (Schirmer, 2002). Furthermore, the city's vitality has been crippled by the depletion of its White and professional families, eradicating a diversified constituency normally associated with a strong financial tax base (Anyon, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994b; Wilson, 1996). Calculated practices created intentional pockets of wealth and equity in surrounding suburban annexations, where many were focused on maintaining their property values by reinforcing racial housing segregation (Worley, 1990). Collectively, the interconnectedness of these actors and institutions constructed a social pattern of preferential treatment of White neighborhoods and residents above Black ones (Schirmer, 2002). Thus, racism was a major influence on the actions and decisions of various housing industry actors who intentionally constructed and continue to maintain a segregated city fueled by premeditated racial division in Kansas City (Gotham, 1997; Schirmer, 2002; Worley 1990). This segregated climate worsened the plight of African American students served by the local school district, then and now (Aaron, 1999; Owens, 2007). More importantly, the critical race theory lens reminds us that the community has been desensitized as these injustices have been in place so long that they go unnoticed by some, and have become widely accepted by others. Next, this study examined the consequential handicap of its

Black students that resulted from decades of segregated schooling in the Kansas City community.

### **Segregated Schooling Then and Now**

For the purposes of this study, literature on the history of segregated schooling in Kansas City, Missouri is of particular significance because its divisive local school district dynamics mirrored those of the surrounding community. To this day, the city's contemporary status as one of the most racially hypersegregated cities in America, ultimately required one of the most ambitious and most expensive school desegregation cases in American history (Ciotti, 1998; Green & Baker, 2006; Moran, 2004). Several researchers address the relationship between Kansas City's racial climate and resulting patterns of racial and spatial segregation in its city and public schools (Ciotti, 1998; Davis, 2004, Moran, 2004).

In his depiction of the events surrounding the establishment of Lincoln Junior College, the sole college for Blacks, Aaron (1999) examines the origins and development of the public educational system servicing Kansas City, for both the Black and White communities, using racial and social structures as a backdrop for this evolution. In particular, Aaron (1999) focuses solely on the impacts of segregated school systems in Kansas City dating back to the early twentieth century. Even then, particular emphasis was placed on the role of the Kansas City School District as a gatekeeper in the African American community's struggle to gain access to equitable educational opportunities provided for White residents. Aaron's (1999) work provides a deeper understanding of Kansas City's racial and social climates using archival data, census demographic data, and oral histories to address the social relations between community members, racial groups, and institutions

charged with educational service delivery for its Black students. Aaron's (1999) analyses of the racial, economic, and political climates confirm the perpetuation of dually constructed social realities for Kansas City's White and Black residents using statistical figures that dramatically depict the extent of White flight and population shifts that crippled the city's urban core.

Kansas City schools for White children began as early as 1867, while those for Black students began almost 20 years later in 1887 (Aaron, 1999). As education became more prevalent for all White children, regardless of class, African Americans continued to fight for the right to have public schools educate all of their children as well. Knowledge of early century native or Sabbath schools that were educating Kansas City's Black children might have prompted Whites to exert more pressure to ensure that all of their own children were educated (Anderson, 1988). In some cases, Whites destroyed many Black Sabbath schools as a way to maintain their dominance, thereby reinforcing the social hegemonic structures that prevailed during the late twentieth century (Aaron, 1999).

Meanwhile, the ever-growing African American population grew to comprise approximately ten percent of the city's population at that time but only one building, the Lincoln school, was opened to serve all the Black children from throughout the community at large (Aaron, 1999). This growth also put later strains on the Lincoln School, which had to serve the Black children from all areas of Kansas City because they were not allowed to attend the neighborhood schools, which were designated for White children only. This caused the one Black school to become extremely overcrowded, while many White schools experienced excess capacity resulting from the mass exodus of White families who fled in droves toward the suburbs. Challenges faced to secure an elementary school for Black

children made it even harder to establish high schools and institutions of higher education for them once they aged out of this elementary educational environment. Eventually, the White community had grown to six high schools while the Black community had none. To address the needs of its growing population, the Black community pressured the school board to open a high school that would educate their children beyond the seven grades offered at the Lincoln School. The local school board did not respond in any way, using their silence to ignore the requests of the Black community (Aaron, 1999).

Beginning in 1915, Kansas City opened several junior colleges and higher education institutions for Whites, but it took another 21 years before reciprocating for Blacks (Schirmer, 2002). Black adolescents could only access higher education by returning to their former high school to take courses alongside younger students even though they had already graduated. Many would relocate to other cities just to attend college (Aaron, 1999). The African American community continued to petition the local school board to open a junior college to provide minorities with local courses that would prepare them to enter four-year universities or obtain decent jobs. The Board of Education finally opened Lincoln Junior College, only to close it the following year without giving the public a reason for their actions. This became an insulting pattern as the board continually closed the college after a series of one-year re-openings (Aaron, 1999).

Little changed until the late 1930's when the *Gaines v. Canada*, 305 U.S. 337 (1938) case brought attention to the 14th Amendment's call for equal protection under the law, regardless of race. Lloyd Gaines was an African American valedictorian from Jefferson City, Missouri who held multiple honors and met all admission criteria but was denied admission into the University of Missouri's law school because of his race. At that time, it

was customary for the state to incur the cost of enrollment for Blacks at colleges out of state that offered comparable programs. Seeing none that offered comparable law courses for Blacks, the local, state, and U.S. Supreme Courts all ruled that the State of Missouri either had to admit Gaines; provide comparable schools for Blacks within its state boundaries; or allow them to attend White schools. This case prompted the Superintendent of the Kansas City School Board to personally intervene for the creation of a local junior college for its African American students, obstructing the customary practice of segregation by exclusion.

Still, racially divisive traditions prevailed as White school board administrators continued to make African Americans wait for lengthy periods of time to receive full educational rights and privileges experienced by other citizens. Although there were laws requiring the establishment of schools in areas with fifteen or more Black school age children, Whites continued to defy them, often falsifying enumeration reports as justification for their inaction (Aaron, 1999, p. 72). The Kansas City School Board continually prolonged its responses to the urges and requests of the African American community and its organizations. Whites maintained their vested interest in protecting and replicating ideologies that equated education with White social mobility, with little regard for people of color or their limited access to such opportunities (Anyon, 1997). Those with privilege and power had no intention, or desire, to create one educational system for all that might equalize or unify the stratified Black and White communities (Anderson, 1998). At times, the responses were delayed even further, or sometimes cancelled, after promises had been made to make changes in the delivery of educational services to the city's African American students. "The lack of services during the forty-one years between the promise and delivery spoke loudly to the African community that their expressed educational needs were

unimportant to the Board of Education and administrators of the district” (Aaron, 1999, p. 309).

By 1889, Missouri law required communities to establish separated schools to educate its Black children wherever the community included a Black student population of at least 15 school aged children (Coulter, 2006, p. 188). Many locales could not afford to create and maintain two separate school systems, especially in smaller communities with fewer resources. As a result, the African American community looked beyond its oppressive forces and boldly took responsibility for educating its own children using dedicated leaders who genuinely instilled excellence in their children by caring enough to set high expectations (Anderson, 1988). Education for older students, particularly at the high school level became the responsibility of a select few institutions, with Lincoln High School being one of those earning status as a key institution within the Kansas City community and surrounding areas (Coulter, 2006).

### **Racial Insulation During the Jim Crow Era**

The period from 1876 to 1965, commonly referred to as the Jim Crow Era, was characterized by a host of federal, state, and local laws that mandated racial segregation by laws designed to provide inferior resources and advantages to Blacks historically considered less important than Whites (Wikipedia, 11/10/10). During the Jim Crow Era de jure segregation was a dominant force used by Whites in their efforts to keep Blacks “in their place” – socially and economically. It was important to make sure they did not rise above their socially constructed status. A wide array of legally imposed restrictions fueled long-standing racial tensions within both communities as Blacks fought to actualize their own standards of living beyond confines set forth by Whites (Schirmer, 2002). Much of the

literature entails hegemonic depictions that focus on the disparate treatment and resource allocations that subjugated Blacks to the realm of second-class citizens, yet there is another distinct story to tell. A review of literature that depicts the positive side of racially segregated communities was intentionally included to counter typical messages of inferior substandard qualities of life that resulted from the ugliness typically associated with the Jim Crow Era.

The literature on segregated communities boasts of the interconnectedness and common interests of its Black residents, regardless of their profession or social status. According to Coulter (2006), “Even by 1920, Kansas City did not have a well-defined “Black aristocracy.” It had a privileged class, but with just a few exceptions, members of that class did not maintain lives separate from those of the city’s Black working class”. (p.245) Thus, members of the Black community constantly mingled in common neighborhoods, churches, social organizations, and community functions. There were several notable institutions and organizations that stood out as iconic beacons within Kansas City’s Black community, working collectively toward freedom, justice, and equality for its residents. Several organizations and institutions worked collectively to make a difference in the quality of life available within their segregated communities. Of notable mention were the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Urban League, the YWCA, Black PTA groups, Baptist Young Peoples Union, and the Ivanhoe Club to name a few. Some garnered significant prominence beyond the neighborhood level. Specifically, the Kansas City Urban League serviced more than 14,000 people in one month. The community center hosted area sports teams, drill teams, cleanup campaigns, summer camps, charitable organizations and other civic group meetings (Coulter, 2006, p.127). The Old City Hospital

was the only city-owned medical facility with a Black administrative team and staff of Black doctors and nurses in the entire United States (Coulter, 2006). It provided healthcare and hosted its own bacteriology and pathology programs free of charge to any Black doctors across the nation (Coulter, 2006). While living in these same residential spaces, Black community members also sent their children to the same area schools, binding them further through common vested academic interests.

The literature on segregated schools is largely overshadowed by characterizations as “separate and unequal” institutions, yet some historians challenge us to remember the benefits derived from segregated schools within the context of nurturing communities (Clark-Hine, 2003; Coulter, 2006; Noddings, 1992; Siddle-Walker, 1996). Contrary to the literature presented above, evidence suggests the historical development of such parallel communities, one White and one Black, actually served to create a safe haven for African Americans. Research supports that Blacks could insulate themselves from the very forces that imposed the segregated culture in the first place (Clark – Hine, 2003). In spite of insurmountable inequities, the African American community maintained a strong tradition of creating successful educational institutions that were extensions of these safe havens within racially segregated communities (Irvine & Irvine, 1983; Siddle-Walker, 2005). Schools in the African American community were built on the bedrock of caring as a cornerstone for the type of education that Black students received in all of its educational institutions, from its elementary schools to its Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (Noddings, 1992; Siddle-Walker & Snarey, 2004).

Foundational tenets of interpersonal and institutional caring buffered Black students from the harsh realities of Jim Crow communities (Siddle-Walker & Snarey, 2004; p.79). As

a matter of fact, those students thrived. In these racially segregated schools, students were taught by the best-educated members of their communities (Coulter, 2006). They themselves were high achievers even though access was limited to the professions of education or agricultural and mechanical industries. They worked as dedicated principals and teachers who were largely responsible for acting as caregivers who understood the needs of their students, held high expectations of them, and supported them in their efforts to attain such (Noddings, 1992; Siddle-Walker, 2000). According to Coulter (2006), Roy Wilkins, (editor for the Black community's newspaper, the KC Call; and a prominent Kansas City and national civil rights leader who would later lead the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), observed:

The Black schools [in Kansas City] were much better than they had any right to be, particularly because they were full of talented teachers who would have been teaching in colleges had they been White, and particularly because Negro parents and children simply refused to be licked by segregation. (p. 189)

Together, their leadership and nurturing within a caring environment prompted all students to work harder to reach or exceed the high expectations put forth by educators who genuinely cared about their overall success (Noddings, 1992). In 1921, the Negro School Improvement Association was formed to ensure oversight on the community's best interests as it "maintained some pressure on school board officials and acted as a monitor for the conditions of Black education in the city" (Coulter, 2006, p. 188). This historical approach used by racially segregated schools then did not fragment the academic and social developmental needs of children like today's schools do (Siddle-Walker, 2000).

Studies on historical African American communities tell how they came together to maximize opportunities to prepare its students for adulthood and the citizenship roles they

would assume in the community. School chapel meetings were teaching opportunities where outside speakers and traveling groups from HBCUs were invited to develop students' self-esteem and leadership (Siddle-Walker, 1996; p. 108). Presentations included assemblies, dances, debates, musicals, operettas, and theatrical programs. Educators, parents, and community members jointly used these school-sponsored events to cultivate and support the students' interests, talents, imaginations, and speaking abilities (Noddings, 1992; p. 123). These were also used as opportunities to build character and plant seeds of leadership, civic responsibility, social mobility, and racial progress. They instilled beliefs in African American students that they could achieve whatever they set their minds to; their hard work would ultimately pay off; and they had an obligation to build upon the sacrifices of their ancestors (Siddle-Walker, 1996; p. 110).

Furthermore, the research suggests that community support of the school's efforts was widespread and served to further enrich the educational experiences of all Black students in the community. Black students were supported by strong bonds of kinship that were cultivated beyond the school and throughout the community (Ladson-Billings, 1994a; Noddings, 1992; Siddle-Walker & Snarey, 2004). Adults in the community wholeheartedly rallied around its students, supporting their efforts by directing programs, sewing costumes, donating refreshments, and packing the auditoriums to capacity. The local Black press would invite the community to attend school activities such as town hall meetings, sporting events, jubilees, and celebrations to honor academic achievements and perfect attendance records (Noddings, 1992). The community also used its collective advocacy to lobby school boards and court systems to achieve educational parity within their own community, while protecting their children from the ugliness of legalized segregation (Aaron, 1999).

In summary, research has shown that the lifelong success of all students carried a connotation of hope and pride for the African American race, signifying racial progress as others in the community shared in the praise and pride associated with student accomplishments. Interestingly, the research shows that both of these interpersonal and institutional caring models made students feel confident and supported (Ladson-Billings, 1994). It also empowered African American students, inspiring them to reach their highest potential despite the ugly discriminatory environments imposed by the Jim Crow Era (Noddings, 1992; Siddle-Walker, 1996, p. 110). Although these studies highlight the benefits of a tightly insulated African American community, there is not a large amount of information readily available on the range of academic performance of students during this time. There does not appear to be extensive literature on poor student performance during this era. Thus, there appear to be gaps in the available literature on declining student performance that led to significant trends of poor student performance.

W.E.B. DuBois (1903) reminds us that there are politically sophisticated elements that arise in oppressed communities which ultimately give way to progress. African Americans created and supported their own organizations and institutions where they could insulate themselves from the very forces that imposed the oppressive segregated culture in the first place. They thrived through the creation of their own churches, businesses, schools, and organizations for civic, political, and social progress (Coulter, 2006; p. 10). While the Black community's racial insulation served to affirm positive development of its youth, it also contributed to some adverse consequences in regards to long-term racial and spatial isolation. Ironically, that insulation may have also handicapped African Americans by

perpetuating the residential, educational, and social distance that still exists between Black residents and mainstream society.

### **Resegregating the Segregated City**

Contemporary studies remind us that still today patterns of segregated schools and White flight continue to adversely impact Kansas City's local school district. Although many studies highlight the opportunities afforded as some Blacks migrated to suburban communities, the plight and inherent challenges of others relegated to urban core impoverished communities still requires immediate attention. In fact, the city's de facto segregation patterns may be even greater now than before its landmark desegregation efforts (Davis, 2004; Thompson & Davis, 2004).

### **Still Separate and Still Unequal: The Resegregation of Kansas City's Schools**

Whether substantiated or imaginary, there is indeed a correlation between economic mobility, racial preferences, and White migration patterns (Krysan, 2002). In his 2006 commentary entitled, "More White students are leaving KC schools", Yael T. Abouhalkah, a Kansas City Star columnist, documented the constant rate of decline in White student enrollment within Kansas City's urban areas. He points out that White families can choose from many other neighborhoods and alternative school districts that are within the city limits, yet outside the urban core. Statistics reported in the article demonstrate rapidly changing demographics:

Table 1.

*Percentages of White Student Enrollment in Kansas City Neighboring School Districts*

	2001	2005
Kansas City (Urban Core)	16.3	13.4
Hickman Mills	28.6	18.3
Center	39.3	29.6
Raytown	67.6	56.4
North Kansas City	87.2	78.4
Park Hill	88.9	83.0

Source: KC Star

Furthermore, research has shown that since 2005, the Kansas City Missouri School District (KCMSD) has experienced continual declines in its enrollment base. In November, 2007 a local annexation vote resulted in the transfer of ownership of seven KCMSD schools to its neighboring community of Independence, Missouri. Voters of both jurisdictions supported such with approval rates of 84% Independence voters and 66% Kansas City voters who approved this transfer (Wikipedia, 11/10/10). The seven schools located closest to the city of Independence, Missouri boundaries historically serviced a significant portion of the KCMSD’s White student population. Thus, the net effect of this annexation vote resulted in a loss of even more White students, ultimately diminishing the district’s diversity even more. Some community leaders voiced concerns that while KCMSD lost a significant asset base of buildings and contents valued at \$12.8 million, it was far more important to spare as many students as possible from the ineffective, unaccredited learning environments epitomized by a host of ineffective KCMSD practices over the last few decades.

To address the continual decline in student enrollment and the resulting underutilization of district facilities, the newly appointed Superintendent of the Kansas City

Missouri School District (KCMSD), Dr. John Covington, boldly closed 26 of the community's 61 neighborhood schools in 2010. This "right sizing" plan successfully addressed the district's inefficient resource allocation resulting from a host of school buildings that were utilized at half capacity. However, this elimination of pupil services by the 26 closed neighborhood schools also resulted in blighted urban core neighborhoods being struck another blow as boarded up schools now remain as neighborhood anchors. Thus the housing markets that were already challenged by the cheapest housing stock, lack of amenities, and disproportionate rates of crime became exacerbated by the elimination of its neighborhood schools which typically serve as a primary draw for new residents.

Studies reveal that the economic, political, and academic devastation of Kansas City's urban core can be directly linked to racial politics and social exclusion that occurred as a result of decades of White flight (Gotham, 1997; Krysan, 2002; Schirmer, 2002). White flight of the city's elite and professional residential base was exacerbated by the flight of its industrial base and economic anchors which caused many families to flee urban core communities in search of work (Anyon, 1997; p. 77). While this urban exodus of White families is typical in any metropolis, it prompted the Kansas City School District to spend more than \$1.8 billion dollars on efforts to desegregate its schools by attracting White students (Green & Baker, 2006). However, extensive litigation, attendance laws, and waves of reform were not enough to reverse the city's losing disposition. In sum, the research presented supports that even today, Kansas City suffers from de facto segregation patterns that contribute to its hypersegregation despite its notoriety as a central city school district involved in the most ambitious desegregation case, where billions of dollars were spent to achieve educational equity for Black students (Green & Baker, 2006).

Furthermore, the research suggests that the historical relationships between White flight, poor performing schools, urban core neighborhood disinvestment, and student performance become even more apparent upon review of recent housing demographics and school attendance patterns in Kansas City (Schirmer, 2002). More than 100 years of racial migration, segregation, and discriminatory practices contributed to the need for corrective practices in the fight for social justice and equality for African American residents, particularly within the city's urban schools (Anyon, 1997, Krysan, 2002). Its large, urban school district experienced the crippling effects of segregation, leading to one of the most notorious desegregation lawsuits in history (Green & Baker, 2006). Residential patterns perpetuated by racial politics left school attendance patterns hostage to de jure segregation patterns which violated the 14th Amendment. The Courts ordered the school district to create a desegregation plan that would remedy the racial segregation of its school system and improve the quality of education for its Black students (Moran, 2004). To correct this, the district focused its efforts to achieve equity in educational service delivery for all of its students. Court mandated tax increases, expensive litigation, and community-based approaches were implemented to eradicate the segregation of Kansas City public schools (Ciotti, 1998). A \$1 billion dollar tax increase was introduced to increase spending per pupil for enhanced educational programming and interventions that might level the playing field. As a result, the Kansas City Missouri School District (KCMSD) desegregation case became known as one of the most ambitious and expensive desegregation cases in history (Ciotti, 1998; Green & Baker, 2006; Moran, 2004).

## **Delusional Dreams of Desegregation**

The literature on school desegregation outlines how this notorious school desegregation lawsuit sought to advance the plight of urban Black students in the tradition of other pivotal desegregation cases such as *Plessy v. Ferguson*, *Gaines v. Canada*, *Brown v. Board of Education*, and *Missouri v. Jenkins*, 1990. First, *Plessy v. Ferguson* legitimized segregated facilities and the separate but equal clause. Next, *Gaines v. Canada* addressed exclusionary segregation in education. Then, *Brown v. Board of Education* outlawed segregation in public schools. This ultimately led to the *Jenkins v. Missouri* and *Missouri v. Jenkins*, cases that sought to remedy de facto segregation specifically within the Kansas City Missouri School District (KCMSD).

Green & Baker's (2006) research depicts the significance of this controversial landmark school desegregation case, while explicating legal precedents and the legislative rulings that it prompted afterward. Initially, KCMSD sought the state of Missouri's assistance in remedying the racial imbalance of the student population in both the urban and suburban neighborhoods within the metropolitan Kansas City community. The district's rationale attributed the roles of the state and others in the creation and perpetuation of dual school systems that were once mandated by law. The District Court ordered a host of remedies to interrupt this extreme desegregation patterns. Unfortunately, outside of increasing per pupil expenditures to astronomical heights, they did little to improve academic performance outcomes for Black students (Ciotti, 1998).

Operationally, several tactics were employed as potential remedies to improve the educational quality for Black students while attracting White students back to the district. The goal was to invest in interventions to address court-ordered "desegregative

attractiveness," designed to lure 5,000 to 10,000 White suburban students back to the district (Green & Baker, 2006). Primary strategies involved enhancements through higher teacher salaries, capital improvements, full day kindergarten, more enticing programs, and magnet themes at each school to compete with neighboring suburban school offerings (Thompson & Davis, 2004). District enrollment was already more than 70% African American (Ciotti, 1998). The KCMSD also tried busing, admission quotas, zoning attendance requirements, and wait lists based on White enrollment quotas to manage the racial imbalance of its student enrollment (Thompson & Davis, 2004).

Fiscally, court ordered spending allocations of nearly \$2 billion dollars spiraled out of control in efforts to promote a superior quality of education and facilities in hopes of transforming the district's image as a system serving predominantly poor and Black students (Ciotti, 1998). "Kansas City spent as much as \$11,700 per pupil--more money per pupil, on a cost of living adjusted basis, than any other of the 280 largest districts in the country" (Ciotti, 1998). The magnet schools offered themes such as planetariums, zoology, performing arts, television studios, and aquatics in Olympic sized pools especially designed with special technical features (Green & Baker, 2006). Nonetheless, the White student population did not take the bait and chose to remain enrolled in neighboring suburban school districts. Black enrollment figures rose even higher prompting racial admission quotas to manage the issue. This further alienated Black families who saw wait lists for their neighborhood schools as a slap in the face (Aaron, 1999). Judge Clark, the presiding authority, ordered the district to do whatever it had to do and spend whatever it had to spend to remedy these trends (Moran, 2004). Unfortunately, the school finance base depleted

resources at the city, state, and federal levels, while also siphoning funds away from other municipalities and school districts (Green & Baker, 2006).

For more than 40 years, the district primarily focused on achieving integration rates of sixty percent Black and forty percent White students as imposed by the courts. The goal continued to be unattainable. To manage enrollment ratios the district allowed Black students to dropout which appeared to be easier than increasing White student enrollment figures (Ciotti, 1998).

As a result, nothing was done in the early days of the desegregation plan about the district's appalling high school dropout rate, which averaged about 56 percent in the early 1990s (when desegregation pressures were most intense) and went as high as 71 percent at some schools (for Black males it was higher still).

In the meantime, student academic performance in the Kansas City school district continued to decline rapidly. Test scores plummeted, dropout rates increased, and poor performance on statewide-standardized tests prevailed. According to state education officials, it did not meet any of the 11 performance standards used to assess effectiveness, causing the district to ultimately lose its accreditation in 1999 (Green & Baker, 2006). Ciotti (1998) points out “The results were dismal. Test scores did not rise; the Black-White gap did not diminish; and there was less, not greater, integration”(p. 27). Stakeholders at all levels were disappointed as the Kansas City school district became the poster child for inefficient school spending at astronomical rates, while ultimately failing to enhance student achievement. To make matters worse, the district was branded with an irreversible reputation as an extremely dismal academic entity plagued by dysfunction. Ciotti (1998) describes:

When plaintiffs' attorney Arthur Benson took mature men, presidents of corporations, into those schools in the 1980s, they came out with tears in their eyes. Years later Judge Clark, an unpretentious man who wore cowboy boots on the bench, would remark that in all his years as a judge he had never seen a prison in as bad shape as the Kansas City schools. (p. 4)

This relentless pursuit of reversing the extreme racial segregation of its schools practically blinded them to the underlying causes that should have been addressed, namely poor academic performance and a devastating racial climate (Moran, 2004). Although the original intent of this landmark desegregation case was to improve the educational quality offered to its Black students, it ultimately served to cripple them even more as their needs were tragically forsaken as the lure of White students became the priority.

The Kansas City experiment suggests that, indeed, educational problems can't be solved by throwing money at them, that the structural problems of our current educational system are far more important than a lack of material resources, and that the focus on desegregation diverted attention from the real problem, low achievement (Ciotti, 1998). Some thought that dismantling racial segregation in the public schools would ameliorate the imagery of substandard academic performance and offerings associated with predominantly Black local schools. Attention paid to the district's ability to draw White students detracted from attention that should have been focused on underlying causes of achievement gaps experienced by Black students. Ironically, the relentless pursuit of White students superseded efforts to address the core issues affecting the Black students who were the majority of district enrollees to begin with, and still remain as the predominant customer base of the Kansas City Missouri School District.

### **The Consequential Handicap of Kansas City's Urban Students**

Educational reform in Kansas City is still in need of a drastic overhaul evidenced by the current state of affairs and persistently low academic performance of its students. Today, the district remains in disarray, suffering from constant administrative turnover and the recent annexation of seven schools that served most of its White student population, further reducing White student enrollment rates. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education statistics confirm that schools serving Kansas City's core neighborhoods experienced multiple adverse demographic and economic trends, which collectively contribute to its alarming reputation for ineffectively educating a concentration of low income Black students (Green & Baker, 2006). White flight has drastically reduced the student enrollment by almost 50,000 students over the past few decades. Today the Kansas City Missouri School District's enrollment figures epitomize the concentration of Black and low-income students, and the consequent socio-economic challenges attached to these groups. Over the years, there has been a dramatic escalation in the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch. Student academic performance and standardized exam scores have plummeted, causing the district to be stripped of its state accreditation. Administrative challenges have positioned the school district as an ineffective organization, plagued by constant turnover, evidenced by a host of revolving superintendents. Hence, turmoil and turnover have taken center stage as the district struggles to redeem itself.

In 2001, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) implemented a process for identifying "concerned schools" for academic and administrative variables that might warrant them as "academically deficient" school buildings in any given district (DESE, 2001). KCMSD was flagged with five "concerned schools" which was above the maximum criteria set forth by administrative rule (5 CSR 30-340.010), rendering

their students at an even greater disadvantage than peers throughout the state. Achievement gaps persist as preschool disadvantages noted continue throughout K-12 years. Students continue to lag behind their peers based on patterns of lower Missouri Assessment (MAP) scores. By the time they reach high school, the gaps now extend to include lower scores on End of Course exams, ACT scores, enrollment in advanced placement courses, graduation and college enrollment rates (DESE, 2000). Students served by these “concerned schools” or academically deficient districts are not prepared to take advantage of available higher education opportunities and may continue to face barriers to a quality education.

Furthermore, high school dropout rates have soared, placing Kansas City’s school district as the 6th highest ranked “dropout factory” in the nation (FOX TV 10/31/08). Schools were categorized as “dropout factories” by a John Hopkins University study that examined its graduation rates as a function of entering freshman who fail to graduate yielding less than 60 percent. Schools within the Greater Kansas City community with the most dismal graduation rates include:

Table 2.

*Graduation Rates of Metropolitan Area Schools.*

School	Location	Graduation Rate
J.C Harmon High	Kansas City, Kansas	60%
Wyandotte High	Kansas City, Kansas	44%
Central High	Kansas City, Missouri	42%
Northeast Law/Public Service	Kansas City, Missouri	36%
Southeast High	Kansas City, Missouri	39%
Southwest Charter	Kansas City, Missouri	45%
Van Horn High	Kansas City, Missouri	34%

Source: John Hopkins University

Not only does the Kansas City Missouri School District maintain a poor reputation locally, national media attention has also illuminated some of its operational challenges and tactics used to overcome them. The latest round of community frustration led to a 2007 election where voters approved legislation to transfer ownership and control of seven Kansas City schools to its neighboring municipality, the City of Independence. The value of the seven buildings and equipment was approximately \$39 million. Municipal votes supported the transfer in efforts to free some of the students served from long-term patterns of academic failure and administrative ineffectiveness. Collectively, these incidents support the stigma attached to the local school district and its normalization of failure over the past few decades.

High school graduates associated with this particular school district bear the burden of affiliation as area employers question their employability in relation to the district's reputation for inadequate academic or technical preparation. The competitive eligibility and qualifications of KCMSD students are more likely to be scrutinized as they compete for jobs or access to institutions of higher education. This is especially the case for local employers who have been privy to an abundance of local news stories about Kansas City's inept school district operations. The geographic landscape of the city also includes dozens of neighboring school districts within and surrounding its central city school district. Furthermore, the close proximity of the state border also makes it easier for employers to preferentially seek graduates of the neighboring school districts in Kansas, home to many renowned schools districts.

Moreover, the students themselves have also been overwhelmed with extremely detrimental characterizations of their own academic performance and abilities. "The lack of

confidence of the Negro in himself and in his possibilities is what has kept him down. His mis-education has been a perfect success in this respect (Woodson, 1933,p. 190). Although this theory was proposed more than seven decades ago, its implications still ring true in many aspects that perpetuate inequitable academic and social outcomes for the miseducated typically found in urban core communities and public school systems.

Recently, the KCMSD has been working diligently to turn things around and to tell the good news and accomplishments of its students, these stories get lost in the myriad of negative sound bites. Legacies of poor academic performance and cultural inferiority have supported many dangerous memories that guide the development of urban adolescents (Caruthers, 2005, 2006). In addition, residents and employers of the greater metropolitan community have practically come to expect substandard performance and dysfunction from this district and the graduates it produces. Even the students have come to see themselves through this lens of hopelessness and abnormality, which presents academic and social failure as almost natural and inevitable. Thus, Kansas City's urban Black students face even greater challenges in their quest to overcome these handicaps as they seek entry into the worlds of work of higher education.

Moreover, challenges posed by the privatization of education have also adversely affected Kansas City public schools. As America struggles with the debate over school vouchers, private education firms have established a presence in Kansas City's educational market, offering families alternative education sources at no cost. Privatization occurs as the market gravitates to those entities that serve the public, while providing the service in demand more efficiently and economically (Moe, 1987). Proponents of voucher systems tout the fundamental objective of family choice as a social mobility tool for low-income families

that have been historically relegated to underperforming neighborhood schools. Moreover, state legislation enacted in 1998 promoted the establishment of charter schools in Kansas City. These charter schools are new forms of public schools that are self-governed and free of the bureaucracy plagued by Kansas City's inept administrative practices and high turnover rates. Unlike traditional public schools, charter schools undergo recurring governance reviews where they must demonstrate academic effectiveness, fiscal accountability, and sound governance in order to remain in business. Charter schools offer an educational climate and approach that differs from traditional public school systems managed by the local school district. Furthermore, each charter school prides itself on customized curricular emphasis areas designed to meet the needs of the community it serves. Some themes offered by Kansas City charter schools include entrepreneurship, urban leadership, technology, foreign language academies, and college preparation.

Many parents have withdrawn their children from the Kansas City Missouri School District's area schools at record rates, choosing to enroll them in these new alternative school systems instead. This further cripples the district, as operational funding levels are a function of student enrollment and daily attendance. The district that served more than 70,000 students in the 1970s, now serves approximately 17,400 students as a result of shifting residential patterns and consumer preferences. As a result of declining enrollment, many central city school buildings now stand boarded up, adding to the physical blight and abandonment synonymous with the city's urban core neighborhoods. Competition posed by the dynamic charter school movement posits the public school district in survival mode, competing for its student base as parents of all races and income levels pursue more effective school systems that are also located within the heart of the city.

It seems to me that every person, always, is in a kind of informal partnership with his community. His own success is dependent to a large degree on that community, and the community, after all, is the sum total of the individuals who make it up. The institutions of a community, in turn, are the means by which those individuals express their faith, their ideals and their concern for fellow men." -- Charles Stewart Mott, 1875-1973

Consequently, the surrounding community is significantly impacted and so are the lives and dreams of the urban youth who reside within its borders. The remaining opportunities for their socioeconomic advancement through upward mobility become restricted by poor living conditions prevalent in these hypersegregated neighborhoods as a result of limited access to employment opportunities, quality schools, and affordable housing (Anyon, 1997; Massey, Condran, and Denton 1987; Wilson, 1996). Gotham (2002) sums it up best, reminding us that "The corrosive combination of separate and unequal in education will likely translate into low levels of academic success, high dropout rates, restricted avenues for upward mobility, deteriorating schools and neighborhoods, and urban disadvantages, among other intense problems" (p. 32). Dismantling real achievement gaps is imperative in order to position Missouri students to fully participate and contribute to the state's economic growth and prosperity while moving forward to adulthood success.

### **Moving Students of the Segregated City Forward**

While it is politically correct to tout that "all children can learn," it is socially and economically necessary to determine what they learn and how soon. Our failure to provide today's students with the skills they need to be successful will deeply impact our responsibility to take care of them in the near future (Levin, 1986). Our fundamental reliance on standardized test preparation will continue to perpetuate a cycle where all but the top 20 to 30 percent of students nationally are written off, regardless of their ethnicity or family

background (Education Trust, 2006). Some might argue that any failure to produce well-rounded adolescents with adequate skills is a direct reflection on inadequate parenting and dysfunctional family structures, distinct areas for which the schools are not directly responsible. While this may be true, the testament of a nation's morality can be summed up by the care it provides for its most vulnerable citizens – the children and the poor. While no one individual or organization should bear the burden or the blame, people are individually and collectively responsible for helping others. Our country has an obligation to adequately meet the basic needs of housing, healthcare, and educational conditions that impair our children (Education Trust, 2006).

If all American children were born to a leveled playing field perhaps then they could be held accountable for individual choices and consequences realized within a capitalistic society. Former Secretary of State, Colin Powell reminded the nation: “We are obliged to make sure that every child gets a healthy start in life. With all of our wealth and capacity, we just can't stand by idly.” (2000 Republican National Convention).

Some of the research would lead us to believe that Black students will never fare well academically for a host of reasons. We have become accustomed to hearing the ill plight of uneducated poor or children of color. However, the issue of inadequate preparation is not restricted to them alone (Dyson, 2005, Noguera, 2007). Dyson (2005) reminds us that inadequate scholarship is not an African American problem; it is in fact, an American problem. The nation is experiencing high school dropout rates in endemic proportions. Many high schools across the nation have recently been labeled “dropout factories,” with only 7 of every 10 high school students actually graduating (America's Promise Alliance National Report, 2008). “By their senior year, American high school students score lower on

math and science tests than most of their foreign peers” (Obama, 2006, p. 160). This leaves our future American workforce in jeopardy within the capitalist context of a competitive global economy. More specifically, the challenges of impending global competition are even greater for poor or Black students, already deemed “at risk” by overexposure to insidious socioeconomic challenges prevalent in their communities.

### **The At-Risk Paradigm**

Franklin (2000) explains that researchers label African American students as being “at risk” because of the overrepresentation and overexposure to environmental stressors stemming from poverty (Butler, 2003). Throughout America’s urban communities poor and culturally diverse families have been devastated by the effects of poverty, declining cities, economic and physical distress (Anyon, 1997, 2005). Children within these urban communities suffer from the economically distressing forces that have now become pervasive forces throughout the public school systems that service these communities. High percentages of inner city students tend to require supplemental services to address a host of academic and social needs (Anyon, 1997; p. 160). In describing the disproportionate representation, Butler (2003) reports:

Over one-half of all African Americans in the U.S. live in large urban areas, and more than 35% of African Americans under age 18 live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 1999). These figures suggest that African Americans are overrepresented among the poor urban school-aged population. (p. 51)

The “at-risk” classification paints a dismal portrait of both the student and the educational climate in which the student functions. This particular label is applied quite liberally to urban Black students, assuming a greater likelihood of failure, without particular reference to their individual aptitudes for success (Butler, 2003; Constantine, Erickson,

Banks, & Timberlake, 1988; Franklin, 2000). Statistics reported by the Education Trust (2001) indicate that for every 100 kindergartners the academic success of Black and Latina/o students pale in comparison to their peers of other races.

Furthermore, researchers predict that by the age of 17, more than 95% of these White students will read at 12th grade level, compared to only 25% of their Black counterparts who will read at an 8<sup>th</sup> grade level if they have not dropped out of school (D'Amico, 2001). These achievement gaps have taken center stage as educational researchers seek to demystify ecological circumstances that have culminated over decades, which is especially problematic as a continual factor in the social and economic disparities prevalent in our country (Manning & Kovach, 2003; National Urban League, 2007). These disparities serve as strong predictors of not only the educational outlook for the nation's culturally diverse populations but their economic prospects as well (Williams, 2003). For some, they even serve as projections of inputs to our nation's Cradle to Prison Pipeline which uses deficient 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading scores to project incoming prison populations—usually of males of color (Children's Defense Fund, 2009).

Coining the phrase, “learning while Black” Hale (2001) illustrates the additional layers of complexity African American children endure while subjected to institutionalized educational systems with low expectations and high levels of administrative apathy. This terminology bears an implicit acknowledgement of collective struggles that these students face in such disparaging educational climates where academic failure is expected. As a nation, we have become complacent, passively accepting systemic inferiority that continues to cripple millions of poor and culturally diverse citizens as the nation becomes increasingly segregated by class (hooks, 2000). Policymakers demonstrate a persistent disregard for the

creation of equitable educational and economic systems by inadequately investing in our nation's most vulnerable student populations (Duncan, 2000; Hale, 2001). Urban Black students are the products of historical patterns and extenuating societal forces that have contributed to the low rates of academic success for urban Black students. Yet, transformative interventions remain sporadic in urban school systems. Instead, mediocrity has become so salient it is almost expected in urban schools that educate predominantly minority students. Hence, characterization as an urban Black student has practically become synonymous with the "at-risk" label with little regard for individual resilience, protective factors, or abilities.

### **Changing the Paradigm to "At-Promise"**

Some theorists challenge this presumption, countering the deficit-based "at-risk" paradigm by using the term "at-promise" which demands a strengths-based lens to view minority students, thereby acknowledging each student's propensity for the strength and resilience that resounds within historically oppressed communities (Davis, 2007; Noguera, 2001). At-risk discourse "detracts attention away from injustices perpetuated and institutionalized by the dominant society and again frames oppressed communities and homes as lacking in the cultural and moral resources for advancement" (Swadener & Lubeck, 1995, p.10). The "at-promise" paradigm refutes deficit model ideologies, and does more to convey the pivotal opportunity to reframe imagery of risk and disadvantage with that of hope and possibility (Fine, 1995; Swadener, 1995; Lumbert, 1998). Similarly, expanded counseling services that incorporate life coaching can also inject hope and possibility by providing access to practical information and opportunities that could transform their existence. For the purposes of this study, the term life coaching will also be used to describe

strategic interactions where students are mentored, providing them insight, access, technical assistance, and navigational guidance in the areas of educational advancement, career planning, and the acquisition of mainstream life and leadership skills required in adulthood. In addition, life coaching acknowledges that students who need to catch up require services that are not just equitable, but better, or more comprehensive than those offered to their more advantaged peers (Tough, 2007). Price (2008) calls for more attention to the “preparation gaps” which can be described as disparities between what poor and minority children know versus what they need to know in order to successfully navigate systems and transitional processes that can jumpstart their adulthood success. Hence, the coaching concept can be used to instruct and guide them while acknowledging the specific need to address such social and cognitive gaps.

While this study seeks to address that pivotal role of traditional school guidance counseling essential for increased college acceptance rates, it must first acknowledge the dire state of local education that will remain if our schools and communities fail its youth. The struggle for equitable schools and resources has been a long-standing battle (Anyon, 1997, 2005; Griffin, Allen, Kimura-Walsh, 2007; Kozol, 1991; Noguera & Wing, 2006). Deemed by Kozol (1991, 2005) as “savage inequalities” typical within “educational apartheid” systems, the magnitude of inequity historically embedded throughout a larger societal context becomes its own character in the story of urban youth and the never-ending challenges they face while seeking equal access and opportunities for social justice.

It is from this contextual base that this discussion takes shape. First, acknowledging the current state of affairs for seniors of color high school students enrolled in Kansas City schools; then addressing the historical construction of a racially segregated city and school

system they must operate within. I make the argument for enhanced college access as an intervention designed to interrupt historical patterns of academic, social, and economic disenfranchisement. Failure to do so will only serve to maintain a segregated city that continues to handicap its most vulnerable students.

### **The Realistic Roles of Today's Urban Schools**

The effects of poverty have forced schools to address not only the academic development, but also the social, emotional, and behavioral development of students who are sometimes described as a 'lost generation.' For children served by the most challenged public school districts, a deprivation of learning can have lifelong impacts, not only for them, but also for their future generations. Those who find themselves shut out of economic systems and opportunities are quite likely to become future recipients of shrinking government subsidies designed to help the most vulnerable citizens – while supplies last. Society will be forced to bear the social and economic costs of disenfranchisement as a result of our failure to adequately equip today's adolescents (Levin, 1986).

There are magnitudes of intergenerational effects that stem from an inadequate education. The non-market effects alone include correlations between one's own schooling and the schooling received by their children, the health status of individuals and their family members, consumer choices, and fertility choices (in particular, decisions of one's female teenage children regarding nonmarital childbearing (Wolfe and Haveman, 2001). Most importantly, there is a correlation between the schooling or social capital of one's neighborhood, and decisions by young people regarding their level of schooling, nonmarital childbearing, and participation in criminal activities (Ladson-Billings, 2006; p. 2-3). For this reason, it is critical that urban schools embrace their calling to serve both the learning and

developmental needs of all students, providing them with a vision that change is possible. To do so effectively, they must first admit that learning, true learning, is not always limited to textbook knowledge and classroom activities. Students can perform successfully on academic exercises and standardized tests, but not be adequately prepared to fully participate in all that citizenship has to offer. Likewise, students who do not fare well academically are not automatically destined to a life of failure because they do not live up to academic testing standards. Humans have many “intelligences” - ways of learning about and interacting with the world, but most schools emphasize only two of these – linguistic and logical-quantitative (Gardner, 1999). Levine (2002) reminds us that in real life there are no textbook questions with neatly packaged answers that must correlate with a teacher’s summation of a right or wrong answer.

In contrast, solutions to the significant problems of real life are unknown at the outset and often require collaboration with others. They usually involve searching for information, devising, and modifying strategies, and persevering until the problem has been solved or abandoned (Levine, 2002, p.). Gardner (1999) adds that this limited focus harms students whose strengths lie elsewhere while also enabling those strong in these areas to mask other deficiencies. Structural critiques are echoed by Cremin (1976) and Kozol (1991) who contend that schools isolate adolescents from the rest of society, and serve as sorting machines, grouping them by age or ability. Cremin (1976) supported educational reforms “all designed to increase opportunities for children to associate with adults in realistic social situations where they could undertake genuine responsibility for worthwhile tasks” (p. 65). Schooling must address the holistic development of each student beyond basic academic measurement. Life coaching can also address the need for holistic development by

supplementing academics with the exposure and professional guidance needed by today's youth. Its practical applications in the areas of job shadowing, technical planning, and mentoring components can formally equip adolescents with early exposure, educational growth, career planning, and the acquisition of life skills required in adulthood.

### **The Role of the Family**

Critics might argue that schools exist to provide a formal education and it is the responsibility of the family to serve as a child's primary educator. Theorists assert that it is already a daunting task to teach poor children who come to school with a host of social and educational challenges (Payne, 2005; Noguera, 2006; Anyon, 1997, 2005). Critics could rightfully charge that it is in fact, the nuclear family that has failed today's youth, not public schools. In a perfect world, parents would be the first and most important teachers in a child's life. It is their responsibility to instill values, build character, and teach work ethics to their children, not the school's responsibility. Since we do not live in a perfect world, and these duties are inextricably linked these days, life coaching might help to level the playing field by providing the guidance and insight that exposes youth of color to unforeseen possibilities beyond high school.

Parents are responsible for preparing their children to achieve beyond their own generational accomplishments, yet they rightfully expect educational systems to effectively partner in this traditional responsibility of providing children with employable skill sets as done for past generations. Realistically, what should be expected of a underrepresented parent population with limited skill sets, in the midst of struggling for their own economic survival? Decades of racism and discrimination have traditionally locked their ancestors out of the process forcing today's students to navigate uncharted areas on their own, relying on

their own skeletal frameworks for guidance (Griffin, et. al. 2007). Many do not have the benefit of natural mentors who have embarked on collegiate and lucrative career paths ahead of them (Johnson & Rochkind, 2010).

Inadequate support networks can sometimes hinder individuals who are not up to the challenge of negotiating their unique space in uncharted territories alone. There was a time when the motivation to prepare African American youth for success was widely embraced and shared equitably among parents, exemplary teachers, administrators, and members of the African American community (Siddle-Walker, 1996). Decades of racism and classism have since eroded the spirit of the civil rights era where individuals held a deep rooted sense of pride and accomplishment for being the first member of their race, family, or community to accomplish a particular feat has diminished significantly. Today's minority youth have heard messages that every American citizen is equal and free to participate in all that the world has to offer. Yet they have been painstakingly made aware of the reality that America operates under dual systems of access and justice – both a function of one's race, class, or social status (hooks, 2000). Once they become aware of the ills of racism and classism, many choose to opt out of competitive environments where few role models or peers exist. Instead they may subconsciously relegate themselves to industries, positions, or living spaces that offer some level of familiarity. Unfortunately, these are usually not the industries or positions that require professional cultivation or intense academic preparation, thus they traditionally lack the benefits of financial reward or power that enables individuals to transcend beyond the socioeconomic status they were born into. Indeed, families should adequately educate their children, but today's schools must bear a large part of this

responsibility by default. That is the reality of public education today, but that has not always been the case.

### **The Role of the Community**

Historically, segregated schools serving African American children used to be caring institutions characterized by strong community networks of parents, educators, and community members that readily sacrificed to support student achievement as an integral foundation of individual and collective progress (Anderson, 1998; Noddings, 1992; Siddler-Walker, 1996). Despite grave disparities in funding and resources, human capital in the African American community was a great asset that was harnessed to support the hopes and dreams of their children, recognizing that their individual strides toward success also represented collective racial progress toward economic and social prosperity. Student success was not only encouraged, but highly expected. On the contrary, today's schools and communities do not instill or promote that same sense of hope and expectation that students of color will succeed beyond average expectations. Instead, contemporary culture promotes a bombardment of messages that depict African Americans in an inferior light.

One's cultural dispositions provide the lens they use to view the world. Through this lens disenfranchised students analyze self-connections between school and the world of work, between leaders and followers, between equality and inequality. Teens of color develop a keen social and academic awareness from a variety of influences in their community. They are told that each individual has the power to access any preferred quality of life. At the same time, their families, the media, and their overall community deeply influence their perceptions, leading them to reproduce futile behaviors that aid in the deculturalization of African American youths (Duncan, 2000). Unfortunately, they learn

more from what they see and experience firsthand that can often thwart growth. Their reality entails the bombardment of images of inferiority reinforcing low self-esteem and relegation to life as a second class American citizen (hooks, 2000). Media imagery incites racial panic, aiding in their disenfranchisement by feeding mainstream society a steady diet of pathological imagery and messages depicting urban youth as illiterate, violent, and basically expendable (Giroux, 1999). Duncan (2000) connects the imagery to employment effects, noting that the criminalization of urban youth shape employer's perceptions and reluctance to hire those who are viewed as liabilities, lacking both technical skills and the cultural capital required in the workplace. Such realities of poverty and dual citizenship shape our children's hopes and dreams while teaching them that they are almost destined to repeat the social exclusion experienced by past generations. So, they are socialized to either repeat or reinvent their circumstances to affect their social status.

Tatum (2003) addresses the alienation experienced by Black children during adolescence as being Black becomes a salient part of their identity. A growing anger and resentment brews as they become aware of the systematic exclusion of Blacks in society throughout many facets of everyday life (Dyson, 2005; McCall, 1994). This adversely affects their academic motivation and ultimate disengagement from values promoted within the school systems that incite feelings of inadequacy (Blackwell-Tucker, 2006). To protect their self-efficacy they rebel and reject school as a way of keeping the dominant group and its values at a distance (Duncan, 2000). Instead many choose to embrace cultural stereotypes of inferiority imposed both internally and externally. Unfortunately for these teens, mainstream cultural stereotypes do not usually include academic achievement, causing them to gravitate towards alternative images of anti-intellectualism and inferiority (McWhorter, 2000). Anti-

intellectualism is defined as a sentiment of hostility towards, or mistrust of, intellectual pursuits (McWhorter, 2000; Price, 2008). It is also embraced by some African American youth who may perceive academic achievement as “acting White”, choosing instead to place minimal emphasis on academic and intellectual accomplishments (Butler, 2003; Dyson, 2004; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; McWhorter, 2000).

To offset these negative stereotypes and the deculturalization of African American youth, urban students must be connected to culturally relevant images and real-world role models of success and productivity throughout their communities (Duncan, 2000). Community based youth development programs can provide urban youth with superior mental models and supplemental educational experiences. These constructs can enhance a personal sense of self-worth and determination that can reconstruct their perceptions and paths toward social mobility. Out of school programming can support students by building them up, focusing on their strengths and inspiring them to stay the course when challenges arise (Noguera, 2007). Creating first-hand connections to the worlds of work and higher education may be the critical intervention today’s adolescents need as they make sense of an ever-changing world and their place within it (Hale, 2001). Students lacking extensive support networks for procedural or specialized advice can greatly benefit from opportunities to develop their professional and social skills in preparation for life beyond the twelfth grade. This can be done with more success through community partnerships with program models that specifically address the need for this skill set knowing the distinct tendencies and cyclical plight of poor students of color.

Ultimately, the role of community supports is to provide supplemental programs and resources for students, especially those who do not thrive within school settings and may not

be able to attend college as a result. Out of school programs supplement academic instruction to prepare them for alternate routes to success. Without models or life coaches to guide their matriculation, students remain ill prepared for experiences in civic engagement, entrepreneurship, or community leadership. While this may not be viewed as traditionally educating students, professional socialization opportunities can indeed prepare them to successfully matriculate beyond K-12, whether they pursue higher education, vocational training, or entrepreneurial endeavors. In middle class settings, these skills and “achievement advantages” are usually imparted by both upwardly mobile family members and high-performing school structures (Rodriguez & Bellanca, 1996). For those who require additional support, college planning guidance counseling services should be readily available along with community resource connections.

### **Schools Are the Common Denominators**

The reality is all students will have different matriculation experiences based on an array of individualistic factors. Family composition, values, expectations, and support provided to students are just one part of that story. Social capital and awareness are yet another. Likewise community resources that supplement a student’s matriculation and college access experience may vary greatly as well. Regardless of family and community variables, K-12 school pipelines are the common denominators and should therefore be held most accountable for student outcomes and indicators of college readiness.

Statewide efforts to ensure that a quality education is received by all students led to adoption of the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP). Standards and indicators used to assess district accreditation included areas such as:

Resource (program of studies, class size, professional staff ratios, teacher certification and plan time),

Process (curriculum, instruction/assessment, differentiated instruction, instructional climate, libraries, guidance and counseling, supplemental programs, governance and administration, facilities, safety and support services), citation needed

Performance. Now, student performance weighs more heavily in determining a school district's accreditation. District performance is evaluated based on statewide assessment scores and student outcomes in graduation rates, college placement, dropout rates, attendance, and ACT participation and performance (Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2013) The state intends to earn designation as one of the top 10 districts in the nation' student achievement ranks by 2020, and have launched the Top 10 by 2020 initiative to preparing students for college and careers. Currently in its fifth stage of the school improvement program cycle, MSIP 5 policies dictate that all of its schools and districts across the state are "driving actions for improving student achievement with the ultimate goal of all students graduating ready for success in college and careers" (MO Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2013). The accreditation process awards points based on performance in attendance, graduation, academic achievement, and college and career readiness (Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2013).

For the purposes of this study, graduation rates, ACT scores, college, and career readiness take central stage as primary indicators of how students are being prepared for next steps immediately after high school graduation, when a diploma is not enough. The ACT is an assessment tool required for college admissions as an indicator of students' academic readiness for college coursework. According to the ACT, 40 years of research confirm a strong correlation between the grade point averages of college freshmen and their high

school ACT scores. Thus, the ACT is the most used college entrance exam across the country. Its purpose is twofold. It can be used for comparisons of student performances nationwide who are competing for selective admissions opportunities, or it can serve as a gatekeeper prohibiting access for those who have not scored within minimum university requirements.

But this notion of a collegiate gatekeeping function becomes exacerbated as urban students of color are not always fully included within the preliminary test taking equation.

The performance gap between White and minority students on the ACT college entrance exam isn't the only concern mounting among Kansas and Missouri school districts. Too many minority students are not even getting the chance to test their college readiness (Robertson, KC Star, 8/21/2013).

Statistics reveal that students of color are not fully represented in the ACT exam taking population to even be considered afterward for college admissions selections.

In Kansas, though Hispanic students now comprise 18 percent of the state's overall public school enrollment, Hispanic students represented only 11 percent of the 2013 graduates who took the ACT. And in Missouri, where Black students are 17 percent of the overall enrollment, they made up only 12 percent of the graduates taking the ACT (Robertson, KC Star, 8/21/2013).

A narrow pipeline of exam candidates of color yield even fewer students who maximize this opportunity to earn outstanding scores that warrant scholarship assistance and preferential admission status. Academic readiness is measured in four academic areas - Reading, Math, Science, and English.

“In Missouri, 50 percent of White test-takers met three benchmarks, compared with 30 percent of Hispanic students and 10 percent of Black students” (Robertson, KC Star, 8/21/2013).

Table 3.

*Average Composite ACT Score Out of Possible 36*

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	Percent Free and Reduced Lunch
U.S.	21.1	21.1	20.9	47.5
Kansas	22.0	21.9	21.8	47.6
Missouri	21.6	21.6	21.6	47.8
Kansas City School District				
ACC Prep	14.9	16.5	14.2	80.6
Central	14.1	14.4	14.2	85.0
East	14.3	14.4	15.5	89.6

KC Star 8/22/2013

Although the ACT offers a universal quantitative indicator of college readiness, “college knowledge” served as the premiere construct in this study as it relates to the overall awareness and social capital required to navigate the college admissions process. College knowledge was used interchangeably to denote such allowing us to place more emphasis on the commonalities within students’ college and career planning needs instead of the range of academic competencies and individual factors that bring forth unique student differences. Here basic navigational guidance required by any high school student was the focus of analysis more so than the traditional measures of “college readiness” typically discussed in the literature.

A review of the literature on college readiness discourse reveals a host of actors, each with their own definition and interpretation of college readiness. Academic enhancement programs define this construct in terms of quantitative measures of preparation evidenced by performance indicators earned on tests, grades, End Of Course Exam Scores and other numerical rankings of academic understanding versus mastery (ACT, 2005; Adelman, 2006;

Wagner, 2006). Conley (2011) defines it as “equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed to enroll and succeed – without remediation – in a postsecondary program that leads to a degree” (Conley 2007, 2011; Gates Foundation 2009). Literature put forth by school reformers and policy makers defer to measures of proximity, where readiness is a measure in relation to how well various groups of students are performing at periodic intervals prior to the point of college entrance. Community based supplemental education programs address the phenomenon in terms of life skills, social capital, and overall awareness used during the college planning and negotiation stages of the admissions process. Within school systems, educators address readiness in terms of academic course content or the completion of rigorous advanced placement or college level coursework (Johnson & Rochkind, 2010; Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009). Likewise, school counselors who serve as the unit of analysis for measures of college planning activities report progress in terms of school contacts or visits made, campus visits, financial aid offers, and college acceptances received by student cohorts collectively.

While all of these are important factors of the college readiness phenomenon, a scan of the literature in the field illuminates consistent emphasis on those skills students need that prepare them to understand, access, and navigate the college planning process up to and through college graduation (Avery & Kane, 2004; Chapman, et al. 1991; Holcomb-McCoy, 2010; Johnson & Rochkind, 2010; McDonough, 1997; 2005). Reviews of educational research and publications conducted by stakeholders such as school districts, college admissions organizations, governmental institutions, and other local, state, and federal entities interchangeably address in and out of school factors that contribute to one’s “readiness” although this knowledge base is undeniably cultivated across a continuum that

spans K-12 pipelines and experiences. The intersections of research, policy, and practice converge during the identification of gaps experienced by individual students within district and school settings. The result is an ongoing debate on what it really means to be college ready, and if in fact, that readiness is a true predictor of college success.

Conley (2007b) puts forth the most comprehensive definitions using the following conceptual framework to depict key facets of college readiness:

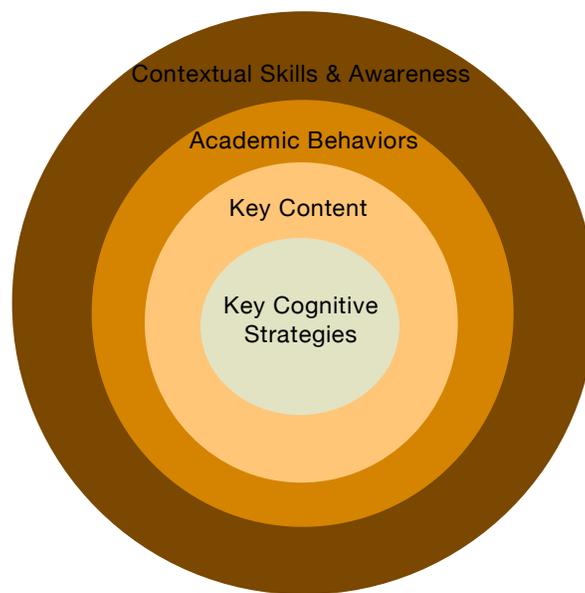


Figure 1.

He asserts that the phenomenon itself is multifaceted with four interconnected factors that are most directly influenced by schools, but must each be identified and measured if students are to truly be made college ready (Conley, 2007a). The literature overwhelmingly lends itself to universally adopted themes which promote college readiness needs and preparational services around three levels of readiness:

1. Academic Preparedness: using data-driven, research based interventions, standards, and curriculum to drive college ready policies throughout the student culture

2. Academic Tenacity: the provision of accelerated learning opportunities that foster personalized learning and tenacity building
3. College Readiness: creating a college bound culture and supporting students and families throughout the college planning process

Conley's model proposes that student must be competent in (1) research inquiry and problem solving strategies; (2) core subject knowledge; (3) key learning skills and self-management; and (4) transitional knowledge, awareness, and navigation skills required to gain entry and adapt to postsecondary environments.

Since the intention of this study is to concentrate more on CPGS commonalities actualized during the college planning process, I focused on the fourth tenet in the assessment of how students are equipped with transition knowledge and skills that shape their post-secondary aspirations, awareness, knowledge and fulfillment of admissions criteria, career awareness, and self-advocacy. Counseling activities that eliminate gaps in student's "college knowledge" or knowing what they need and how to fulfill action steps to attain such is of particular importance because of the school's role as the primary common denominator throughout the K-12 or K-16 experience.

For example, some surrounding area school districts have incorporated ACT college test prep measures into their districtwide plans for improvement to increase college knowledge:

Liberty, for instance, is testing all of its juniors and has embedded ACT prep language throughout subject areas. Counselors in Raymore-Peculiar are guiding more students into four-year plans with higher level courses. Grandview teamed up with Center on an "ACT Boot camp" last spring (KC Star, 8/22/2013).

There are also federal programs available to help students cultivate their college knowledge in community based settings such as TRIO, Upward Bound, and Gear Up.

### **TRIO Programs**

Programs providing college planning guidance services have been in existence for years. According to the literature, one of the most inclusive models of college planning guidance programs can be illustrated by the U.S. Department of Education's TRIO program. Introduced as a remedy during President Johnson's War on Poverty, TRIO programs are targeted to address gaps in college awareness and exposure for underrepresented groups of students. Underrepresented groups are classified as students from economically disadvantaged and racial and ethnic backgrounds, but may also include low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to post baccalaureate programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Three core TRIO programs consist of the Educational Talent Search, Upward Bound, and overall Student Support Services as described above. The Educational Talent Search (ETS) programs emphasize the promotion of students who demonstrate superior academic promise but are traditionally overlooked.

Through academic, career, and financial aid counseling services, participants are made aware of options available to them after earning their high school diploma. Students are assisted in identifying postsecondary programs, college entrance exam preparation, funding sources, and college admission and financial aid applications (Pitre & Pitre, 2009, 102).

ETS also addresses both the soft skills and technical assistance through activities that enhance math and science performance and also cultivate students by building self-esteem, goal setting, and collegiate and career planning.

The Upward Bound program is targeted toward first generational college students. First generation college students are defined as students whose parents have not completed a baccalaureate degree program (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Here the intent is to jumpstart college awareness for adolescents whose families are at an even greater disadvantage due to extremely limited technical knowledge or experience with the college planning and enrollment processes. Upward Bound aims to improve academic performance in core subject areas through tutoring and counseling. Mentoring, career planning, and work-study initiatives are also incorporated to improve the likelihood for success through the enhanced financial and economic literacy of underrepresented students (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Pitre & Pitre (2009) found that “Research has shown the success of TRIO Programs in widening higher education participation. Therefore, increased participation, program expansion, and program replication is encouraged” (p. 107). While these long-standing federal programs have demonstrated success, they remain stand-alone community based programs. Again, limited awareness and access of urban students will yield random utilization of this resource within any community. Public schools could benefit from incorporating such models within the school-based guidance offerings. This would ensure that all students have access to standardized models with demonstrated effectiveness in promoting awareness of effective college planning guidance services.

In summary, the relationship between neighborhood quality and area schools will always remain inextricably linked to the resulting quality of life and access to social mobility

that is available for urban adolescents. The research suggests that as urban school districts vie to retain their student base, central city neighborhoods must vie to retain their residential base, each grossly impacted by urban core school performance and developmental advancements, or lack thereof (Anyon, 1997; Gotham, 1997; Wilson, 1996; Massey, 2005). Collectively, these findings weigh heavily as Kansas City residential areas continue the historical fight to retain White and middle-income families. Explication of the dysfunction inherent in urban school systems introduces a discussion of what should be done to transform the neighborhood schools that are inextricably linked to the empowerment of Kansas City's urban core neighborhoods and its citizenry. More specifically, what student interventions can remedy this tradition for urban graduates? The literature presented suggested that future research is still necessary to remedy the problem of restricted access to higher education for urban students of color concentrated within central city schools. This study contributed to that discussion in efforts to prescribe specific interventions to address the need for enhanced college planning. Next, the methodological approach used to investigate this phenomenon is described in detail in Chapter 3.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

National workforce projections report that most jobs of the future will require some postsecondary training beyond high school (Carnevele et al, 2010). By 2018, more than 1.8 million jobs projected for Missouri and 1 million for Kansas will require educational attainments of more than a high school diploma (Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2010). The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (2010), also predicts that:

Nine out ten workers with a high school education or less are limited to three occupational clusters that either pay low wages or are in decline. As the economy gets back on track over the next five years, 60 million Americans are at risk of being locked out of the middle class, toiling in predominantly low-wage jobs that require high school diplomas or less. (p.2)

Individuals who do not possess postsecondary training or skills will remain disenfranchised and unable to participate fully in our national and global economies.

Legacies of educational neglect and restricted access to higher education pipelines for students of color render them most vulnerable for further disenfranchisement through adulthood. “Black students receive disparate amounts of counselor’s resources and time, particularly resources and attention devoted to college planning” (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006). This continues their struggle to compete with White peers who received an “achievement advantage” through superior schools and college access programs (Hale, 2006; Rodriguez & Bellanca, 1996). To remedy this, historically marginalized student populations must be provided with college planning assistance that connects students with counselors and “institutional change agents who can share norms and resources about college access” (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006). Pitre and Pitre (2009) advocate for college transitional

programs, which are “educational programs designed to bridge the gap between high school and college and increase higher education enrollment and completion among students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.” School-based college planning guidance services (CPGS) are critical forces that shape this pivotal transition, providing students with information and assistance to navigate all tenets of the college admissions process and pursuits of financial aid. Without such, students must rely on their limited awareness of opportunities and requirements for entry to higher education. Thus, CPGS for marginalized students of color served as the basis for an examination of this critical intervention opportunity.

The purpose of this study was to explore how these students experience school-based CPGS to plan and prepare for the transition from high school. Overarching questions addressed what type of CPGS are currently provided and what, if anything, is being done to remedy traditions of limited college access for underrepresented students. This study surveyed Black high school seniors and recent graduates of Kansas City’s best and worst performing public high schools to explore what types of college planning assistance they received. It also determined if there were in fact any disparities in the support provided that might further constrain this vital opportunity for upward mobility through participation in higher education. Guiding research questions addressed:

1. What efforts exist in two urban high schools to secure equitable access to higher education for students of color within the segregated city?
2. What college planning guidance services are systematically delivered to remedy traditions of limited college access for these students?
3. How do these students interact with the CPGS offered by their high schools?

4. What do they do to plan for life beyond high school graduation inside and outside of their schools?

As described in the literature review, themes that undergirded this exploration included the hypersegregation of the Greater Kansas City community and the consequential implications for disenfranchised students who tended to require greater supports to gain access to mainstream opportunities. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the college planning experiences of urban students, this qualitative study was designed to examine the rationale, supports, and school-based, college-planning services used by urban students of color as they prepare for life immediately after graduation. This qualitative study used a case study approach to capture the essence of that high school transitional planning experience as expressed by the individuals involved. Critical race theory (CRT) served as a primary data analysis technique because of its emphasis on the salient effects of racism and segregation on educational opportunities and restrictions experienced by students of color. Other theoretical traditions of inquiry used in this exploration include narratology and heuristic inquiry. This research investigation collected data using student and parent questionnaires, personal narrative statements, student interviews, and document analysis to learn more about the college planning activities and self-identified needs of the student participants.

### **Rationale for Qualitative Research Design**

This study relied heavily on qualitative methods for data collection but also collected preliminary demographic data with the use of a questionnaire to confirm age, grade point average, academic percentile rank, and family income. The questionnaire, discussed later in this section, also used a liker scale with statements designed to assess their experiences with the college planning process. Qualitative data collection involved words, imagery, document

analysis, interviews, observations, and audio-visual data that best describe phenomenon (Clark, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Gobo, Gubrium, & Seale, 2007). According to Patton (2002), “qualitative evaluation data begin as raw, descriptive information about programs and people in program” (p. 7). Qualitative research is an inductive process where the researcher is the primary tool for gathering data (Grbich, 2013; Patton, 2002). This is done through extensive time in the field gaining a deeper understanding of the subject to ultimately capture and describe phenomena so that others get the sense of being there (Grbich, 2013). This process positioned the researcher as an insider capturing the essence of the phenomenon through intense interaction (Creswell, 2003; Grbich, 2007). Data collection and analysis culminated into thick, rich descriptions that provided others with a strong sense of understanding as if they had been there themselves (Patton, 2002).

Qualitative methodology was chosen as the primary mode of analysis because of its emphasis on descriptive data using people’s own words and behaviors to understand phenomena through description and interpretation (Clark, 2008; Taylor & Bogdan 1998). This contrasted deeply with quantitative research’s heavy reliance on objectivity in search of trends and frequencies of occurrence amongst populations of interest. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research is used to gain a more in-depth understanding using a few exemplars (Clark, 2008; Patton, 1987). Thus, a careful description through a more in-depth analysis of only a few select units of inquiry was most fitting for this investigation of how African American high school seniors experienced CPGS within different school settings (Patton, 2003). Qualitative research design strongly informed how students came to understand the essence of transitioning from high school while making meaning of what they

know and still want to learn in preparation for such, especially while still under the tutelage of school administrators who can assist with their planning.

Furthermore, qualitative research methods were fundamentally interpretive, placing more importance on the processes and meanings of interactions that are not always measurable or quantifiable (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 13; Schram, 2006). Emphasis was placed on how socially constructed states of being or institutionalized phenomenon emerged or took shape (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). In this vein, qualitative approaches relied on my inimitable dispositions as the researcher to conduct an epistemological study based on my unique interpretations. Schram (2006) suggests that the nature of such a distinctive predisposition prompts the researcher to use a critical lens, raising questions previously ignored by others who may not share the researcher's disposition, outlook, or experience. Thus, each researcher contributes a distinctive conceptualization based on a unique predisposition, individualistic paradigmatic analysis, and distinct perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 30; Schram, 2006). Detailing its utility in such situations, Patton (1987, p. 28) states that "qualitative methods are ideally suited to the task," rationalizing that "because program implementation is characterized by a process of adaptation to local conditions, needs, and interests, the methods used to study implementation must be open-ended, discovery-oriented, and capable of describing developmental processes and program change" (p.28).

For reasons such as this, qualitative research posed several distinct advantages over quantitative analysis in the exploration of this phenomenon. First, it used a more descriptive approach to convey comprehensive depictions of the students' disposition, as well as influences, and experiences within their contextual school environments. Second, it was a

more powerful tool to evaluate the nature of any unique experiences or differential factors associated with the CPGS phenomenon, individualized outcomes, or the prevalence of customized services based on the unique academic needs of each student (Patton, 1987). Third, qualitative design lent itself to an in-depth determination of how seemingly similar students with varying individual or school factors might experience the presumably standardized college-planning guidance model that existed to support their matriculation. Thus qualitative measures of interactions with school-based CPGS were critical to frame my understanding of this phenomenon as experienced by representatives of the constructed student and school typologies explored.

### **Theoretical Traditions**

This study used several theoretical traditions designed to make meaning while gaining a better understanding of the phenomenon of college planning as experienced by the participants. Creswell (2007) defines these traditions of inquiry as “an approach to qualitative research that has a distinguished history in one of the disciplines that has spawned books, journals, and distinct methodology that characterizes its approach” (p.2). Traditions determined the research design and approach used based on perspectives that were central to particular disciplines and their widely accepted doctrines (Patton, 2002). I explored a strategy that investigated the self-described college planning strategies and needs of students in the process of solidifying their post high school plans with regard to individualized achievement orientations and school settings. This was done using several qualitative analysis methods of inquiry designed to make meaning of the experiences of the participants. The major design approach used for data analysis consisted of case studies utilizing multiple

forms of data to understand the phenomenon. Other theoretical traditions used to inform this study included critical race theory, narratology, and heuristic inquiry.

### **Case Studies**

Case study methods served as the major research technique used to capture first-hand experiences of each participant as I explored the thought processes and choices made during their final phase of high school while facing imminent, life-altering transitions (Yin, 1994). Case studies captured people's own expressions and behaviors for use as descriptive data elements that helped us to understand them within the context of their personal reality (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). Stake (1995) defined this tradition as a study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, which involved coming to understand its activity within important circumstances. Case-study knowledge is concrete, contextual, and interpreted through the reader's experience (Stake, 1995). It was used to describe how students formulated pertinent problems, addressed challenges, and then explained the patterns of obtained results (Shadish, Cook, and Campbell, 2002). Case study is useful to evaluate policy, pedagogy, or learning challenges (Merriam, 1998). But Gotham (1997) says it best, "The advantage of case study research is that it can capture people as they experience their everyday circumstances, thereby allowing the analyst to uncover and understand the motives and decisions of key actors and networks of actors" (p.22)

The case study approach served as both a theoretical tradition and a lens of interpretation during analysis of the data. Aside from its functional use as a method by which to interpret the unique dispositions of each participant, the case-study method offered great promise as a means of capturing substantial ecological differences and contextual variations within the same sample population, quite fitting for this study. Hence, I collected

multiple case studies from two divergent school settings. First, capturing the stories of students deemed academically strong, weak, and marginal contributed to a greater understanding of how students across the academic continuum may experience the same counseling model, within the same school setting, in different ways. The study of several cases also helped me to better understand the emic natures of differing participants, particularly those key informants with distinct experiences with this phenomenon (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1999; Patton, 1990). Strategies explored the opportunity for differential treatment of students based on their academic rank or school setting.

I wondered if counselors treated students differently based on their own perceptions or familiarity with those who personify “leaders in the making” versus other students deemed “at-risk as potential dropouts” or “average students.” Individual traits or aptitudes may warrant different responses or levels of support received from school guidance counselors. Demanding student to counselor ratios may also contribute to a counselors’ inability to invest substantial time and effort with all students (Adams and Farmer-Hinton, 2006). Overwhelming caseloads and demand for successful outcomes may lead counselors to work more closely with the most promising students, possibly forsaking others who may traditionally get written off by school administrators with low expectations of their students (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006; Jordan & Plank, 1998).

Furthermore, the use of two diametrically opposed urban schools allowed for individual case comparisons between findings at School A versus those of School B. The reputations and historical significance of each of these schools also served as a major social construct of interest within this study. School A has garnered a reputation as the epitome of a low-performing urban school within Kansas City’s notoriously dysfunctional, unaccredited

school district. On the other hand, School B's reputation as a college prep academy bears an implicit expectation that students enrolled there are apt to receive not only superior academic instruction, but also the resources necessary to maintain a legacy of superior college placement rates among its graduates. Hence, there was an implicit expectation that the level of guidance and college planning assistance available in this setting may differ greatly from what is offered at School A.

Here, multiple case studies informed the study, as I conducted cross-case analyses looking at themes or patterns that emerged within the two schools (Merriam, 2001). Although a primary strength of the case study method was the degree of particularity entailed within the study of each individual subject, the use of multiple cases lent itself toward generalizability that can be used to support broader theories (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003). This study indirectly explored the actualization of "standard" college planning services made available to all district students while investigating caveats that appeared to make a significant difference in the post high school pursuits of the participants.

This study also used CRT and narratology to capture the essence of each student through words, imagery, and their own voices as they expressed their views and interpretations of their high school preparation processes and guidance needs. Much of the literature supported a view of urban students through a lens of disadvantage, using deficit-based theories to portray urban students mired in dysfunctional school systems. Undeniably, the systemic turmoil of the Kansas City school district is a significant contributor to the present state of local education. However, this study investigated CPGS as a prevention or intervention strategy to ensure that urban students were effectively equipped with a plan to successfully transition from high school to college.

## **Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory (CRT) served as a predominant lens for this study since Kansas City's notorious battle with desegregation is an overshadowing character in the chronological evolution of the city's legacy of racial disparities within its educational systems. This divided system has a legacy of restricted college access for its students of color. CRT was used to show how race relations shaped this phenomenon and how racism manifested in the trends associated with limited access (Malagon et. al., 2009). "Critical race theory is based on the notion that racism, because it is so deeply embedded in U.S. society, appears both normal and natural to all of us who live here" (Schram, 2006, p. 46). This theoretical paradigm emerged in the mid-1970s in response to the slow pace of racial reform in legislative arenas where proponents that initially fought for equal opportunity for all began to fight the more covert politics of oppression. While the extreme disparities are more visible, CRT is used to construct different paradigms to challenge the more covert status quo forms of injustice (Delgado & Stefancic, 1999). It aims to address the deeply entrenched values and assumptions that have become so institutionalized that they are often taken for granted, rendered invisible, or rarely challenged. Delgado & Stefancic (1999) explain:

CRT began with a number of basic insights. One is that racism is normal, not aberrant, in American society. Because racism is an ingrained feature of our landscape, it looks ordinary and natural to persons in the culture (p. xvi).

CRT scholars seek to dismantle educational apartheid by exposing historical and social conditions that contribute to such. The strategies of inquiry used were designed to deconstruct prevailing paradigms to transform such construed power relations and patterns.

CRT challenges racial orthodoxy by questioning institutionalized imagery to find new ways of thinking about issues of race (Delgado & Stefancic, 1999; Dixson & Rousseau,

2006). Since history is inevitably interpretive, historical accounts are only recently beginning to fully disclose the inequalities sustained (Schram, 2006) resulting from systemic maltreatment of particular groups and the resulting educational effects still prevalent today (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1999; Schirmer, 2002). Here, the legitimacy of the research relied heavily on a diversely informed portrayal of the historical context (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In fact, CRT encourages researchers to create a space to specifically learn from the silenced perspectives of those outside of predominant Eurocentric ideologies that have dominantly shaped all discourse to date (Malagon et. al., 2009). Emphasis on the way a problem is historically situated also lends voice to marginalized groups whose voices have been traditionally silenced (Caruthers, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schram, 2006).

“Counterstorytelling,” a key element of CRT, takes advantage of the opportunity to “name one’s own reality” or describe a phenomenon from many different points of view (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006, p. 41). In particular, use of the critical emphasis in research reveals the meaning of the phenomenon for the participants themselves (Newman and Benz, 1998). Thus, the critical stance was essential to illuminate the social urgency of intercession needed to support adolescents of color who have traditionally become systematically disenfranchised as a result of ineffective schooling and hegemonic sorting procedures (Hale, 2001; Kozol, 1991, Kunjufu, 1988).

### **Narratology**

Qualitative research places emphasis on how people make meaning of their realities. Narratology is defined as a theoretical tradition that “absorbs the meaning of human realities and the beliefs and assumptions of the experience” (Patton, 2002). The aim of the researcher was to explore this dynamic through interactions designed to hear the stories of the

participants as they described firsthand experiences, feelings, and perspectives of interest.

As these firsthand interpretations were shared, I gained more insight through narrative inquiries as participants provided detailed accounts using their own thoughts and words while telling their stories.

Storytelling has been touted as a healing art or as a means for transforming oppressive conditions by creating opportunity for suppressed voices to be heard or for creating opportunities to listen to those voices (Shuman, 2005; p. 5).

Narratology was used to capture stories highlighting the personal thoughts and desires of each participant, as told in first person, using their own voice to portray the essence of their cogitations, and the meanings the participants themselves attached to their experiences (Grbich, 2007; Shuman, 2005). Schram (2006) asserts that people come to understand through their personal firsthand experiences. The aim of this approach was to extract the participants' beliefs and assumptions about the phenomenon and their related experiences (Patton, 2002). Krathwohl (1997) highlighted the importance of this approach in studying the students' perceived reality in terms of how the world looked to these seniors, and how they acted on available information to interpret their reality. Thus, narratology served as a primary tradition in the exploration of how the students came to understand and deliberate during this monumental trajectory.

Personal narrative statements were selected as the best way to capture each participant's own descriptions of how they experienced and drew meaning from their transitional state, future goals, and essential next steps (Shuman, 2005). As in the case of weddings versus marriages, the ritual of the high school graduation process has become so institutionalized that we have embedded a collective meaning of this process without careful consideration of what it means to be adequately prepared for such a pivotal crossroad. We

take for granted that completion of 12th grade renders someone academically, socially, and cognitively competent to transition into adult situations and competitive interchanges. It indeed requires much more than academic coursework offered throughout the K-12 matriculation process. This approach was used to understand what this experience was like for these students as they defined what CPGS should entail for others while making meaning of this life altering experience (Van Mannen, 1990, p. 10).

A range of interpretations were anticipated as students approached the life-altering reality of graduation and what it meant to transition from high school students to adults in uncharted terrain. How did they view the adequacy of their preparation process to date? Who did they see as the most influential determinants of their next steps--themselves, the school, or their familial support networks? Did sound preparation for such a transition entail more preparation in the academic arena or did life skills play a significant role in an adolescent's "effective preparation?" According to Creswell (2007), this theoretical tradition is used to search for all possible meanings that can be drawn from statements or themes. The ideal meaning of these phenomena for each participant was captured to gain a better understanding of how students at varying academic ranks perceived their differentiated dispositions and how they interpreted their college planning preparation process during the end of high school and the beginning of adulthood (Yin, 1989).

### **Heuristic Inquiry**

Heuristics promoted the use of the researcher as a key instrument of inquiry, making meaning of events through my shared experiences with the phenomenon. This theoretical tradition placed more emphasis on "meanings, not measurements; with essence, not appearance; with quality, not quantity; with experience, not behavior" (Patton, 2002; p. 107).

I relied on heuristic inquiry to make meaning of my own collective experiences while seeking a deeper understanding of the essential experiences of the participants involved in this study. Patton (2002) described heuristics as “a form of phenomenological inquiry that brings to the fore the personal experience and insights of the researcher” (p. 107). Moustakas (1990) prescribed the following definition, “Heuristics is a way of engaging in scientific search through methods and processes aimed at discovery; a way of self-inquiry and dialogue with others aimed at finding the underlying meanings of important human experiences” (p. 15). According to Patton (2002), there are two elements involved with this approach. First, the researcher must have personal experience with, and an intense interest in the phenomenon under study. Second, others who are part of the study must also share an intensity of experience with the phenomenon.

Here, my direct and personal experiences with the phenomena were of significant value, enhancing the research process while making meaning for others (Moustakas, 1990). In my efforts to make sense of my world and lifelong experiences, the lack of guidance counseling I received in high school stands out with particular concern. Throughout my high school years I was a top scholar and school leader, yet I did not receive any college planning assistance. Although I was academically ranked within the top percentiles of my graduating class of 447 seniors, I was never given any information on required college entrance exams, application processes, or deadlines. Outside of the parental expectation that I would attend college, there was no formal guidance involved to help me navigate the path to get there, at school or at home. Even the selection of my college major and career concentration were minimized to a random decision-making impulse after standing in some long, campus registration line in the blistering Texas heat. What happens when other students do not have

access to guidance services that could ultimately have lifelong impacts? The aim of this study was to determine what college planning guidance and supports were in place for all students to receive, regardless of their academic standing or familial support networks.

Most importantly, my experiences as a life coach for 75 teens in a Kansas City college access program blatantly revealed the vast cognitive mismatch between urban student mindsets and the institutional values embraced by corporate America, professional organizations, and institutions of higher education. Many urban students have not yet had the opportunity to cultivate the leadership skills and abilities required for professional advancement in the real world (Kao & Thompson, 2003). As a result they are not well positioned on the path toward the higher paying jobs or prominent economic opportunities. This lack of full preparation renders urban students at a competitive disadvantage in relation to their counterparts who hail from private or suburban high schools that effectively addressed these matters (Rodriguez & Bellanca, 1996). Although they have not experienced after-school jobs, internships, or job-shadowing opportunities typically not as prevalent in urban communities, urban students still harness untapped strengths that require cultivation during early adolescence. This study brought different perspectives to bear, recognizing that students' potential, once matched with navigational assistance and opportunity, might yield even greater results. While this is not to dismiss or reduce the significant contributions of natural role models, it is an attempt to demonstrate the need for bridge-building opportunities to help underprivileged students establish their trajectories into adulthood. Providing these students with a "roadmap" can ensure that they have at least deliberated on a professional goal, timeline, and the necessary action steps to achieve that goal.

## **Design of the Study**

As I explored how Black high school students plan and prepare for their transition from high school, it was even more important to first assess what school-based CPGS are offered, then to determine if these services are systematically provided to all urban seniors irrespective of school affiliation or academic rank. Special attention was paid to differentiated assistance provided to students with marginal or low performing academic standing because all students deserve a transition plan to help them bridge the two worlds-- not just the smarter ones who are already prime candidates for higher education. This study explored this phenomenon utilizing a purposive sampling design consisting of multiple strategies to identify a “student cohort” consisting of Black high school seniors and recent grads affiliated with two schools that differed greatly in their academic ranks.

## **Description of Setting**

The backdrop for this study was the Kansas City Missouri School District (KCMSD), a Midwestern urban school district originally established in 1867. During the 1950s KCMSD serviced approximately 69,000 students, of which 77% were White. It later grew to a population slightly larger than 70,000 students. However, as a result of declining academic performance and extensive White flight, the district currently serves approximately 16,690 students within its operational boundary. Its facilities consist of 25 elementary schools, 8 high schools, and a technical career center. 83.1% of its population are students of color with a racial makeup of 61.1% African American, 26.3% Hispanic, 3.0% Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.2% American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 9.3% White students. Its student demographics also document steady increases in the percent of students eligible for free or reduced lunch,

with local statistics reporting 87.7% compared to the state of Missouri average of only 49.5% (DESE Website 2/14/13).

This Kansas City School District was of particular interest because it continually fails to meet its annual accreditation requirements, falling short in the areas of poor academic performance and administrative turmoil. Its central administration suffered from continual executive turnover, as evidenced by appointments of more than 22 chief administrators in the last 36 years (Davis, 2007). Moreover, its continually low student performance scores have caused it to remain unaccredited for the past eleven years. Its performance patterns recently resulted in the State of Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education assuming full operational control as of January 2012, which may prompt further student transfers to neighboring districts with stronger academic reputations.

In addition to being stripped of its academic accreditation, the district has been involved in the most comprehensive desegregation plan ever. Described by some as “the most expensive” and “the most extensive” school desegregation suit, it failed miserably at diversifying the racial makeup of its schools and elevating the academic achievement of its students (Green & Baker, 2006; Moran, 2005). Despite court-ordered spending of more than \$1.8 billion dollars to desegregate its schools, the district continued to suffer from de facto segregation patterns that contributed to its predominantly students of color enrollment status.

The school district was more segregated at the end of the implementation period than it was before the court order. In twenty years, the number of students in the KCMSD had dropped from 70,000 to 29,500. By 2000, the KCMSD was, according to the new superintendent, “a train wreck.” (Beckett & O’Koenig, 2005, p.229)

Davis (2007) observed, “There is no better example of how dollars alone cannot solve the problems inherent in a racist educational school system than in the case of Kansas City” (p. 5). To date it remains a model failure where billions of dollars were spent to achieve educational equity for students of color yet few educational gains were actually realized (Green & Baker, 2006).

**Site Descriptions** Each of Kansas City’s six high schools is located within the urban core and serves similar demographic student populations that consist predominantly of students of color. Although the school district is named, the names of the two schools where this study was conducted will remain confidential relying on descriptive demographic profiles as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4.

Graduate Analysis 2006-2010

GRADUATE ANALYSIS, 2006-2010										
Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Previous Years Graduates	132	227	185	258	213	112	146	138	135	157
Percent of Previous Year Graduates										
Entering a 4 Year College/University	17.4	16.3	21.6	29.5	25.4	75.9	60.3	53.6	71.1	80.3
Entering a 2 Year College/University	8.3	19.4	21.1	17.4	26.3	10.7	21.9	11.6	12.6	15.9
Entering a Post-Secondary (Non-college) Institution	3.8	2.2	3.8	0.8	0.9	0.9	1.4	1.4	0.7	0.0
Entering the Work Force	13.6	13.7	22.2	26.7	9.9	2.7	14.4	7.2	6.7	0.6
Entering the Military	0.0	0.0	0.5	1.9	2.3	5.4	2.1	0.0	3.7	1.3
Entering Some Other Field	6.8	0.0	0.0	3.1	3.8	2.7	0.0	0.0	3.0	0.0
Status Unknown	50.0	48.5	30.8	20.9	32.4	1.8	0.0	26.1	2.2	1.9

Source: Missouri Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education Core Data As Submitted by Missouri Public Schools (November 5, 2010)

School A has earned a reputation as the epitome of urban school failure both locally and nationally, attracting negative media attention from several national press sources. Over the past half-century the school has become a nationally recognized symbol for the despair in

urban education. It was the flash point of Kansas City's riots in the late 1960s. In the early 1970s the school's security guards carried handguns as they roamed the halls. Through the 1980s and '90s, ABC, 60 Minutes, scores of newspapers, and even Jesse Jackson paid visits to (School A)--all to tell virtually the same stories of failure or slim hope. And then, in 2001, as if for final emphasis, Missouri education officials put the school on alert, declaring it "academically deficient" (Miller, 2006) low percentages of students enrolling in 4-year colleges or universities. Only 65.1 % of this school's graduates actually took the 2012-2013 ACT, with only 5% scoring above the state average composite score of 21.6. This average ACT score is well below the 24 or 25 typically required for admission to state university systems. State of Missouri averages 60.5% of graduates taking the exam, earning an average score of 20.6 from a composite of 499 schools.

It is important to note that in the midst of such a dismal school climate and academic despair, School A celebrated its current ranking as one of the top urban debate teams and was honored by the Kansas City Council for advancing to the Debate Kansas City semifinals and for its success in the Urban Debate National Championship. This team was also the subject of a 2006 book, *Cross-X*, whose tagline reads: "The amazing true story of how the most unlikely team from the most unlikely of places overcame staggering obstacles at home and school to challenge the debate community on race, power, and education" (Miller, 2006, Cover). Although this is an overshadowing bright spot, the school's reputation hinges on its 100% Black population since 1960, and its legacy as one of the first schools in the state declared "academically deficient" by the state's education commissioner (Miller, 2006; p. 15).

In contrast, less than two miles away, neighboring School B holds notoriety from its ranking as one of the top 75 public high schools in the nation, a feat only realized by six percent of all public schools in the U.S. (*Newsweek*, 6/13/2010). It is also the school district's one and only premiere "Signature School," confirmed by its recent designation as one of Missouri's 15 Gold Star Schools. This accolade is for schools that serve 40% or more disadvantaged students yet perform in the top 10 of all schools on statewide assessments or exhibit dramatic improvement to high performance levels on the state assessments (KCMSD Website 4/18/08). The school district's website also boasted that more than 90% of its graduates enrolled in college each year while earning collective scholarships and financial aid in excess of \$5 million. Although its administrative school district remained unaccredited, the school itself was classified as AAA by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and has also been accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools since 1971 (School B Website 4/18/08). Incoming students must rank in the top 60<sup>th</sup> percentile on standardized exams and maintain a 2.5 grade point average or be demitted for one year.

Recent 2012-2013 ACT scores reported an average ACT score of 22.6, higher than the Missouri state average of 21.6 and national average of 21.0. School B reported that 100% of its graduates took the ACT, with 73.9% scoring above the state average composite score of 21.6. A recent article in the city paper recently touted that with the exception of this selective admission school, "all KC district and charter high schools have lower ACT scores than the state average (KC Star, 8/25/13). More than 90% of graduates of this award-winning school enrolled in college annually and typically earned scholarships and financial aid in excess of \$3 million each year. Likewise, its student body traditionally covets

prestigious awards such as the Duke University Talent Identification program, National Merit Scholars, Science Olympiad competitions, Bright Flight Scholar Awards, and many International Baccalaureate diploma candidates to name a few.

A report published by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education compared the 2009 performance for both schools on the End of Course Statewide Standardized Assessment, which measures the mastery of specific skills taught in basic high school courses and progress towards postsecondary readiness. Table 5 illustrates the disparate levels of mastery in core subjects as reported by each school.

Table 5.

*Comparison of End of Course Exam Scores*

Course	School A	School B	State of Missouri
English 2	30%	99%	73%
Biology	2%	70%	55%
Algebra	7%	63%	53%

Missouri DESE Report 2008-2009

These two central city public schools were selected because of their diametrically opposed historical reputations for producing the best and the worst academic performance and college enrollment rates throughout the district. In light of the aforementioned contrasting profiles, it should be duly noted that these two schools coexist in the same urban core neighborhood boundary within two miles of each other. For the purpose of this study, it was important to utilize two schools that might appear to have similar locations, service demographics, administrative governance structures, and community dynamics. However,

the prevalence of such disparate success rates indicates that there is more to the story of what measures should be in place to guarantee the success of all students served district-wide.

These two schools were selected as critical sites that may lend themselves to a broader illustration of potential disparities in preparation and college planning assistance received by Kansas City's urban students within a more intricate context. The notoriety of these particular schools makes any plausible findings potentially political given the extreme status of each school within the community. Thus, critical case sampling was essential because it involved those sites that can make a point quite dramatically, perhaps yielding the most information or having the greatest impact on the development of knowledge (Patton, 2002).

### **Participant and Sampling Methods**

This study utilized a purposive sampling design consisting of multiple strategies to identify two "student cohorts" of African American high school seniors or recent graduates who fit the targeted academic profiles. Purposive sampling entailed intentionally seeking units of analysis that were most likely to yield a greater understanding of the phenomenon or novel interpretations of it (Krathwohl, 1997; Patton 2002). Gubo, Gubnum, and Silverman (2007) described it best, suggesting that "purposive sampling consists of detecting cases within extreme situations as for certain characteristics or cases within a wide range of situations in order to maximize variation, that is, to have all the possible situations" (p. 418). Purposive sampling strategies allowed me to maximize my understanding of these students and the wider social forces that shaped their particular experience with this phenomenon.

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) urged the researcher to choose the sampled cases well because careful selection was critical to include those cases from which we could learn the

most. Counselor referrals may be skewed as a result of referring those students with whom they have worked more closely and withholding referrals from students with whom they have not worked as closely. To overcome such, a variety of sampling methods were used to identify willing and accessible seniors and recent graduates. This combination of techniques was also helpful in identifying marginalized populations that might not have been recommended by school personnel.

Criterion sampling was used to extract a subgroup of 10 student representatives from the larger senior and graduate populations of each school. Criterion sampling uses predetermined requirements that each case must meet in order to be included in the study (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Patton, 2002). LeCompte and Preissle (1993, p. 69) prefer the term criterion-based selection to purposive selection because it capitalizes on the use of select attributes in finding participants who match the desired criteria for inclusion as the units of analysis. For this study the selection criteria used targeted 18-to-20-year-old African Americans who were enrolled in each school for at least two consecutive years and met preset grade-point-average (GPA) requirements. It was also important to ensure that the participants were not affiliated with any long-term, community-based, college-access programs that regularly provided CPGS to area youth and families. The use of 18 to 20 year olds eliminated the need for parental consent although letters were provided as points of information. Enrollment of two consecutive years ensured that all substantial CPGS received, or the lack thereof, were fully attributable to a particular school and its staff, whereas this would not have been the case for transfer students who attended different schools. Self-reported academic rankings of this group were used to categorize academic status as high or low performance ranks as indicated by arbitrarily selected cumulative GPAs

of 3.0 or more or 0-2.99 respectively. This initial criterion-based grouping created a seemingly homogeneous group with some levels of commonality or possible variations, which served as the basis for later discussion (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996).

Recruiting area teens from nearby school and community hangouts served as an advantage in the identification of candidates who were easily identifiable and available to participate in the initial questionnaire portion of the data-collection process. This expedited the identification of an initial sampling population. It is important to note that while high and low performers were of particular interest, any willing participants would have informed this study because all students should have received the school-based CPGS and technical assistance they deserved, regardless of class rank.

Once willing participants were identified, they were asked to recruit additional peers who were willing and eligible for participation in this study. This process, defined as snowball sampling or the nomination of peers by study participants, was helpful in identifying others who met the criteria, using student social networks to generate cooperation from other students more quickly (Saumure & Given, 2008). A major benefit of snowball sampling was that it revealed obscure populations as students recommended classmates who were similar or even extreme opposites of themselves (Chromy, 2008). This was particularly useful to avoid cases that were common or typical within school settings that appeared to serve homogenous student typologies (Chromy, 2008).

Collectively, these sampling methods allowed for the identification of adolescents that fit each group of interest within two extreme school cultures—high-performing students who demonstrated great promise as candidates for college and low-performing students who may not have been perceived as likely candidates for higher education or professional tracks,

but for whom intervention might be critical. These student typologies informed school-wide cultures found within the context of public high schools with the highest and lowest college-placement rates. These purposeful sampling strategies also enabled basic comparisons between the schools and student typologies, and then deliberate examination of critical cases that emerged within group from the homogenous sample as described by Maxwell (1996). Rather than assuming too much homogeneity on the basis of the selection criteria, responses received were used to characterize participants whose stories provided a range of individual competencies, challenges, and support needs.

### **Participant Selection**

Participants were selected based on their experience with the phenomenon using questionnaires with open-ended questions administered to sample groups of 10 students affiliated with each of the two school sites. There was no particular significance in the preliminary selection of 10 cases for the student cohort groups. Gall, Gall, & Borg (2007) remind us that there are no set rules directing the optimal size of any sample (p.185). Again, the focus of this study was to reveal how students experience CPGS, with emphasis on the identification of any services received system wide by all students, so even a few cases would either support or refute consistent patterns of such. Questionnaires captured quantitative student demographic profiles with indicators of academic status while directing students to submit personal narrative responses that described their experience with the phenomenon. I also examined both commonalities and unique differences using each school's larger sampling group cohort.

Here, maximum variation sampling based on GPAs and the presence or absence of a transitional plan were used to bring forth two school cohorts, each consisting of 4 diverse

cases that distinctively manifested the phenomenon of interest within each school setting. This technique involved the intentional identification of a sample subgroup with members that are as different as possible from one another to capture and describe any patterns that may emerge from its great variation of a particular criterion (Patton, 2002, p. 243). Gall, Gall, & Borg (1997) remind us of the informative benefits of “cases that illustrate the range of variation in the phenomena to be studied” (p. 182). Thus, maximum variation sampling based on academic rank was used to select 4 students from each of the two schools, 2 who appeared to be “on the college track” and 2 others who may be statistically perceived as marginally average or chronically low-performing students. An initial cohort size of 10 students per school insured against fallout from the sample in the event unforeseen circumstances prevented a student’s full participation through completion of this study. Thus, each school cohort began with 2 students from each of the high and low academic performance categories for a school sample of 4 participants within each setting to facilitate comparisons as suggested by Patton (2002). Ultimately, this study focused on gaining in-depth depictions of 4 diverse cases from each site as depicted by Figure 2.

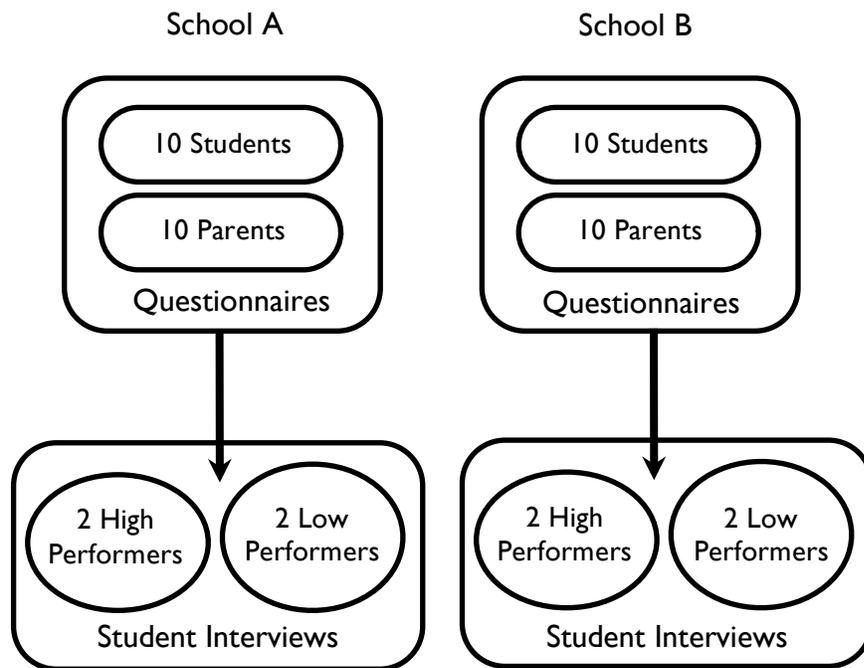


Figure 2.

The cohort members of each school group were invited to participate in a 45 minute in-depth interview to discuss their interpretations of the preparation and planning required for life immediately after high school (Clark, 2008). Based on the nature and quality of their disclosures, the final 4 participants from each school group were selected as individuals whose stories appeared to best provide rich, thick examples of this phenomenon based on the aims of this study (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). Special consideration was given to those individuals who appeared to contribute the most to our understanding of how urban adolescents interacted with the college-planning guidance services offered by schools or the types of assistance needed to help them navigate unfamiliar terrain in preparation for the transition from high school. Of particular interest were those who may not have had natural mentors, such as family members with relevant experience to help direct their planning and technical decision-making during such a critical transition (Johnson & Rochkind, 2010). It

was also important to identify some individuals whose parents may not have attended college themselves, positioning their child as a potential first-generational college student within the family unit.

The final 8 cases selected for interviews served as the units of analyses in my efforts to ascertain how each type of student navigated and made decisions in preparation for their transition from high school. I explored how each student interacted with the formal CPGS offered by their school and the benefits and gaps resulting from such. Then I set out to gain an understanding of other influences used to shape their transitions as they plotted their courses of action. As suggested by Patton (2002), I reserved the right to use opportunistic or emergent sampling, which meant adding to the sample throughout the data collection to adjust to unforeseen changes during the exploration of these preliminary research questions. Furthermore, between group differences were investigated to determine if school climates played a role in the level of support and guidance offered within each of these diametrically opposed school settings, even though they operated under the same governance system.

Research permission was obtained from the University of Missouri's Social Science Institutional Review Board (SSIRB), which provides oversight of research utilizing human participants. Once research clearances were granted, I contacted neighborhood liaisons and community-based organizations that could direct my access to students who met the preliminary criteria as outlined in later sections. I visited neighboring after-school hangouts and events to identify eligible students and recent graduates affiliated with the two schools of interest. I also utilized peer referrals, using students to help with the identification of additional peers interested in participating in this study.

Individuals were approached and invited to participate at public places in the neighborhood such as recreational events, shopping centers, and the library. Once interested participants were identified, they were provided a consent form (Appendix A) outlining the scope, intention, and methodology of this study. The consent forms also explained my role as the researcher, and their role, rights and compensation as potential participants.

Participant consent forms were reviewed jointly as a way to inform individuals of the study's procedures, foreseen risks, compensation, and confidentiality (Courser, 2008; Saumure & Given, 2008). Comprehension of consent was documented using these forms while reminding participants of their rights, the nature of their involvement, and their choice to participate or withdraw from the process at any time (Courser, 2008). This form also communicated that it was not the intention of this study or this process to exploit individuals or organizations, but merely to assess the experiences of the selected participants in efforts to understand the phenomenon of interest (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

Students were asked for their interest and consent regarding participation in individual interviews, as described later, if they were selected as final round subjects (Courser, 2008). Students were also asked if they thought their parents would be willing to complete a questionnaire for this study. If so, their parent was provided with a parent-questionnaire electronic link. Next, student questionnaires with personal narrative sections were utilized within the initial group of interested student participants. All student participants who completed these questionnaires were provided with five dollars cash paid by the researcher from her personal savings. Where parents and students completed questionnaires, each student received eight dollars cash for his/her family's participation. I provided letters of thanks, utilizing that interaction to share a few of my educational and

career goals. Parent and student responses were coded to identify student versus parent participants who best fit the sample group for each school and targeted student typology.

Candidates of interest for student interviews were selected based on responses indicating their self-reported academic performance and whether or not they had a plan of action for their transition from high school to college. Priority selections included candidates with extremely high or low class ranks, who were potential first-generational college students, or who indicated that their parents might also be willing to participate in the study. Final student participants selected were notified via phone or email to confirm their willingness to share their experiences more intensely as prescribed below.

Consequently, future meeting sessions with those selected participants were scheduled to conduct the next phases of data collection, which utilized in-depth student interviews to obtain deeper insight into the participants' college planning experiences. Interview transcriptions were coded to identify those individual cases that best represented rich, thick depictions of interest for this study (Clark, 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). If at any time participants wished to opt out, their consent forms and personal information records would have been shredded immediately and replaced with an alternate case within the same school group that met the same student typology requirements, but that did not occur (Courser, 2008). The final eight participants selected also received movie passes valued at eight dollars or less, as a token of appreciation for their time and contributions.

### **Phase I and II: Data Collection Methods**

Data were collected in three distinct phases using documents, parent and student questionnaires with personal narrative statements, and student interviews. Phase I involved the collection of unobtrusive documents which help to inform the development of the

questionnaire. Phase II, the dissemination of the questionnaire and the conduct of interviews, followed by Phase III which entailed data Analysis. Document analysis was conducted to assess school standards, expectations, norms, and college planning norms that shaped the experiences of students within each cohort. Primary emphasis was placed on the identification of gaps in school-based services and the use of any supplemental resources that best provided the technical assistance needed. Initial questionnaires were used to filter applicants who met the selection criteria, with some open-ended questions requiring personal narratives to collect each student's personal experience with the phenomenon described using their own words and points of view. Those students whose narratives and questionnaire responses best represented thick, rich cases were selected to participate in interviews as units of analysis for further exploration. Interviews of selected respondents used general open-ended questions developed to assess respondent's perceptions of an adequate preparation required for this pivotal crossroad and their unique decision-making process during their own transition.

Subsequently, the interview process was used to explicate participant responses concerning specific experiences and perspectives on their high school guidance counseling services and the impacts of, or need for, any supplemental mentoring or technical assistance. Collective responses provided data on college planning awareness, educational orientations, family educational attainments, and remaining needs for CPGS assistance during this monumental transition phase. The role and influence of family and community networks also highlighted what students did to plan and who influenced their decisions, with consideration of processes used in the absence of navigational supports or natural mentors.

## **Document Analysis**

One of the most important functions of document analysis was to corroborate or confirm data collected through other mediums within this study. Documents, text, and speech used to communicate school-based guidance services and technical assistance resources offered were collected as sources of data that provide descriptive information while supporting or refuting data from other sources (Maxwell, 2005; Saumure & Given, 2008; Yin, 1994). Likewise, documents that served as examples of school-wide college planning events, activities, and requirements were also examined to challenge or confirm data collected through questionnaire responses and interviews. This also included correspondence, emails, meeting agendas, parent notices, progress reports, and student transcripts. Of particular interest was school notices used to assist students, parents, or school staff with requirements for graduation and college admissions. Most importantly, school district-wide memorandums that outlined processes and timelines were reviewed with consideration of state and district college and career planning resources promoted to enhance the transitional planning of students statewide.

Document analysis was also used to triangulate other sources of data collected via questionnaires and interviews. Documents of interest included any examples of school-wide, senior year events and activities, along with correspondence, emails, meeting agendas, parent notices, progress reports, and school information used to assist students, parents, or school staff with requirements for graduation and college admissions. Documents obtained from the governing school district and state educational department served as evidence of data used to inform students of the process, expectations, timelines and points of communication regarding expectations associated with fulfillment of graduation requirements. This included

recommended interactions with graduation processing officials and resources available to support each student throughout this annual process.

Here, intent and expectations were critical because they had significant bearing on what was communicated to students, when critical information was shared, and how often. Particular attention was also directed to which personnel were ultimately responsible for what was or was not shared, processed, or received by students. This information informed the protocols and systems of accountability in place if stakeholders are to uphold any sense of effectiveness and accountability measures. In that same manner, our educational system should have some controls, indicators, processes, and activities in place to monitor outcomes in the areas of college access information provided and results achieved with regard to successful transitions into college for district graduates.

### **Questionnaires**

Questionnaires were used to rapidly identify profiles of students who have engaged more deeply with the phenomenon and best represent student typologies of interest (Saumure & Given, 2008). “Questionnaires are a method of data collection using questions or interviews to collect data from a sample that has been selected to represent a population to which the findings of the data analysis can be generalized” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; p. 230). The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine how thorough each participant’s college planning preparation was using a continuum of action steps inherent within the college admissions process. As participants identified which college planning requirements they were made aware of or used, their responses also characterized the degree of awareness entailed while helping me gain a sense of areas of technical assistance participants wanted or needed.

Online questionnaires were administered to seniors, recent graduates, and parents affiliated with two local area public high schools. Responses from 10 students and 10 parent participants per school served as the initial sample groups bringing forth cases that best represented the overall student profiles of each school. The instrument used ascertained participants' views about the adequacy of their transitional planning experiences and the factors and persons involved in their decision making process regarding preparation for the transition from high school with the intention of college enrollment. The student version of this questionnaire probed areas used to draw comparisons between students with similar academic ranks or within similar contextual settings for comparisons that could be generalized to the broader population (Patton, 2002, p. 14). The parent version of this questionnaire essentially correlated with the student version, with slight modifications used to draw parental experiences with this phenomenon. Named the "Ervin College Awareness Quotient," this questionnaire model delineated categories of resources, processes, and strategic approaches entailed during the process through an assessment of each student's distinctive level of awareness, understanding, articulation and application of tenets generally associated with traditional college planning activities.

**Ervin College Awareness Questionnaire (ECAQ) Design.** This data collection tool sought basic demographic data, confirmed eligibility based on pre-set criteria, and assessed student-planning activities completed as part of each participant's post high school planning process. The ECAQ was especially designed to serve the eligibility purposes of this study. However, my design process reflected common awareness gaps that students and parents have based on my years of work in the field of college access programs and youth leadership development. It was important to make sure that this design approach created an assessment

tool that could be used by college coaches in any program to assess a student's overall awareness, cognitive processing, and degree of knowing and understanding the college planning process and their particular planning needs. This 111-item instrument was used to assess interactions with school-based CPGS and perceptions of the outcomes of such (Appendix B). Participants were asked to rate their awareness of various components of the college planning-admissions process using a liker scale. They were also asked to rate the effectiveness of college planning guidance services received to depict whether or not they felt equipped to navigate their individual application process. Participants were asked which college planning guidance services should be in place to ensure that all high school students are effectively equipped with an action plan during this transitional planning process.

The ECAQ was used to screen initial candidates based on qualifying characteristics such as each participant's race, age, gender, high school graduation dates, cumulative GPA, class rank, etcetera. Additional questions probed applicant views of what it meant to be "college bound," the importance of earning a college degree, and their own college preparation process. This instrument predominantly inquired about school-based planning assistance during the management of their college searches and any preparation gaps noted in areas such as admissions requirements, financial aid, organizing planning tasks, and knowledge of the American College Testing (ACT) exam. I chose to ask about the ACT exam only because it has recently surpassed the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) in popularity and is predominantly required by Midwestern colleges and universities (College Board 2012). Questionnaires probed indicators of which students needed to rely more heavily on school guidance services because of their status as potential first generation college students

or unique family dispositions. They also assessed how students processed and navigated support networks that may or may not have been able to assist with such.

A key feature of the ECAQ design used open-ended questions to extract more descriptive details about each respondent's particular experiences and points of view regarding preparation, access, and reflective gaps noted in regards to technical assistance desired, provided, or still needed. Collectively, the ECAQ tool design captured descriptive statistics and responses to open ended narrative prompts that were used to inform the context for this study while shaping the development of individual cases for student participants.

### **Narrative Statements**

As part of the questionnaire, student and parent participants were asked to elaborate on particular questions by providing narrative responses that described their college planning experiences to date. Using narratives as a method of inquiry, I explored each participant's story to gain a better understanding of their dispositions as depicted using their own words. Probing questions explored views held regarding their college planning experiences, future aspirations, outlook, and current challenges or needs for assistance. Narratives:

honor people's stories as data that can stand on their own as pure description of experience, worthy as narrative documentary of experience (the core of phenomenology) or analyzed connections between the psychological, sociological, cultural, political, and dramatic dimensions of human experience (Bochner, 1990; Patton, 2002, p. 115-116).

Parent questionnaires ascertained the levels of technical assistance communicated versus needed by families with varying levels of familiarity with the college admissions process. Open ended questions on the parent ECAQ allowed parents to share feedback on their overall awareness and preparation to jointly manage this process by asking:

1. As a parent do you feel prepared to help manage your student's college planning on your own?
2. What was the most helpful planning assistance you received from school to help you plan your students transition from high school?
3. How did you seek college planning information needed to help guide your student as he/she planned their future after high school?
4. What do you still need more assistance with to finalize your student's plans after high school?

Similarly, open-ended questions incorporated in the questionnaire probed student perspectives using their own words and points of view and included:

1. Do you consider yourself "college bound"?
2. Why or why not?
3. What was the most helpful planning assistance you received from school to help you plan your transition from high school?
4. What do you still need more assistance with for a successful transition from high school?
5. What would you suggest to improve the college planning experiences of other high school students?
6. Do you feel prepared to manage your college search on your own?
7. Is there anything you would like us to know about any positive or negative experiences you had with school based guidance while planning for life after high school?

These questions were designed to ascertain students' views about the importance of attending college and whether or not they viewed themselves as college bound or college ready. I believed that their perspectives might inform the degree of persistence executed in relation to the provision of school-based CPGS. Students who felt they were college bound might be more proactive in their pursuit of technical assistance and engagements with their college counselors and other supportive resources. Those who did not view themselves as college bound might be more apprehensive about proactively soliciting college planning assistance or engaging available services. They, however, could still serve as case studies of particular interest because in these instances the onus for compliance with minimal service

provision of college prep assistance now shifts to the counselors when dealing with less motivated students.

Urban students of color are not a homogenous group although they are often referred to as such. Practitioners must acknowledge that they are quite diverse with differing needs. Not all urban students of color are disadvantaged, nor are they all academically deficient. In fact, quite the opposite holds true. To change the commonly believed stories, it was important to recognize and elucidate their unique brilliance and resilience that often goes untapped or unrecognized (Dyson, 2005). “It is an equally serious mistake to assume too much cultural homogeneity among urban learners; one should not, for example, assume that all Hispanic learners are alike simply because they all speak Spanish” (Manning & Baruth, 2000; p. 48). Thus, personal narratives were used to illuminate personal differences and unique experiences with the phenomena related to school-based CPGS that was explored further during face-to-face interviews.

### **Student Interviews**

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to further explore how each student interacted with the formal CPGS offered by their school, the benefits and gaps resulting from such, then to gain an understanding of other influences used to shape each case study (Clark, 2008). Interviews allowed participants to convey narrative depictions that illustrated their thought processes and the perceived quality of preparation they received or failed to receive, both formally and informally (Clark, 2008). They also revealed the situational contexts and dynamics that contributed to the identification of any systematic services that all students receive and any individual guidance services used to manage their individual planning and choices. Ultimately, the interview questions investigated their collective experiences with

CPGS both inside and outside of their school settings. Each student's interview responses were transcribed to develop each case, which also consisted of school documents, parent questionnaire responses in some cases, student questionnaire responses, district documents, and Missouri State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education documents.

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with four students from each school identified as representatives of each student typology. Interviews are heavily used to collect information in case studies (Clark, 2008; Yin, 1989). The purpose of these individual, face-to-face, in-depth conversations was to meet the participants while gaining a deeper understanding of the meanings and essence of this phenomenon as expressed directly by each participant as they were encouraged to elaborate on particular concepts of interest (Maxwell, 1995). Interviews allowed me to clarify and probe the participants' responses more deeply, which helped me cultivate more informative descriptions to make meaning of the phenomena through the eyes of the selected participants (Clark, 2008; Saumure & Given, 2008). Interviews for this study were designed to ascertain the future goals of each individual, including action steps to achieve such, educational levels sought, and some assemblance of their bounded rationality as it related to decision-making in the strategic management of their transitional planning. These partially structured interviews were used to follow up with participants who seemed to have interesting experiences that fit well with the needs of this study. Partially structured interviews were pre-formulated with open-ended questions that were modified when the need to probe was deemed appropriate (Conrad and Serlin, 2006). Interviews were held in familiar environments where students felt comfortable in hopes that they would share more openly.

Interviews were essential to hear the voices of marginalized students in order to effectively reproduce their thoughts and needs as expressed to the researcher (Saumure & Given, 2008). During initial interviews, open-ended questions were used to allow participants to respond using their own terms without being influenced by the researcher or any pre-selected answers that might manipulate their responses (Clark, 2008). Probing questions were used that allowed participants to expand their responses. . This gave participants the freedom to convey narrative depictions that illustrated their thought processes while revealing the situational contexts and family dynamics that contributed to their decision-making processes (Clark, 2008). Open-ended questions contributed to a focus on the participants' understanding and ability to reason, process, and apply knowledge within this given situational context (Badger and Thomas, 1992). These open-ended questions explored participant attitudes and concerns regarding the quality of preparation they received or failed to receive, both formally and informally. Considerable emphasis was placed on the identification of any systematic services that all students received, and the individual guidance services used to manage their individual planning and choices. Ultimately, these interview questions investigated their collective CPGS both inside and outside of the school.

To address the preliminary research questions, an interview guide design investigated the students' college and career goals, action plans, timelines, and support networks in place to achieve such. Preliminary interview questions explored:

1. How did you learn about college or community options available for high school graduates?
2. How often should high school juniors and seniors meet with their guidance counselors?
3. What types of assistance did you receive while planning for your transition from high school?

4. What types of assistance do you wish you had access to?
5. What other sources of assistance with such have you tried to access?
6. What do you think all high school students should know when faced with the challenge of planning and preparing for life after high school?
7. Do you think there is a difference in the quality of college planning information or assistance received by different types of students?
8. What is missing that would ensure that all students successfully have a plan or a roadmap to direct their transition from high school into college?
9. What types of guidance counseling services should be provided to high school juniors and seniors to assist in their transition from high school into college?
10. Do you think students in other schools receive the same or different CPGS?

Additional questions were designed to examine the intersection of each student's aspirations, expectations, and realizations as they evaluate their transitional planning and progress. As needed, sample questions were also used to supplement basic responses and probe participants' views of their future, goals, and remaining technical assistance needs. Interviews were conducted during afterschool and weekend hours throughout an eight-week period, which involved the winter break from school routines. It was important to conduct these sessions during this time of year when students were heavily involved in the transitional planning process or returning home during college breaks. This time of year appeared to contribute to a heightened sense of urgency around this topic, which was important as seniors were typically busy with the impending deadlines surrounding final college entrance exams, scholarship searches, and application deadlines.

Eight interviews were hosted in community-based locations selected by respondents to insure comfort ability within the setting in hopes of inspiring a more relaxed, free-flowing, sharing or depiction of their experiences (Clark, 2008; Conrad and Serlin, 2006). Transcriptions of the conversations intentionally incorporated pauses and gestures, where applicable, to prompt an interpretive analysis of familiarity with each construct. Instances of

adverse positive and negative reactions to prompts, and indicators of emotions expressed about the construct or topics of discussion were duly noted. These cues were used to further apprehend interpretive codes used during analysis while making meaning of responses expounded upon later.

My focus also included particular attention to verbiage used and references to not only feelings expressed about the constructs of interest, but also opinions shared of gatekeepers primarily responsible for the delivery of school-based CPGS. These were considered critical because student relationships with counselors, or the absence thereof, could and should be an essential construct that is implicit by its very nature (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Relationships with counselors can “make or break” the ultimate degree of college access extended to students. It can be the difference that prompts staff to share additional resources with those who frequently visit the counseling offices by proactively going above and beyond to call students out of class to share new scholarship information versus merely posting them on the bulletin board for whoever may see them. Thus, particular attention was paid to verbal and nonverbal cues indicating students’ dispositions in regards to relationships with counselors and other potential CPGS gatekeepers.

Summarily, these combined data collection methods were used to enhance my understanding of how inner-city students perceived their CPGS and preparation for the transition from high school. I also hoped to learn what informational or navigational supports were actively engaged to prepare them for such a transition. My intent was to collect, interpret, and present descriptive details within each case that would inform each participant’s academic potential, perspectives, and planning needs as they construct their

individualized transition plans. I viewed my research role as an inherent opportunity to provide an understanding of the culture and perceptions of urban adolescents in this stage and the urban educational institutions that share responsibility for their preparation. Attention was also paid to community resources that might enhance our collective efforts to better equip these students for successful transitions from high school.

### **Phase III: Data Analysis**

As mentioned earlier, data for this study were collected through questionnaires, personal narrative statements, interviews, and documents designed to delve into the participant experiences leading up to graduation and the action plans immediately afterward. The data explored the different perspectives, experiences, decisions, and critical incidents that occurred leading up to their high school graduation process and impending transitions post-graduation. For some students, this entailed processing the reality that their senior year would shortly come to an end provoking the immediate execution of a transition plan. For others, this involved life-altering decision-making processes related to the identification of possible career tracks, employment venues, or military enlistment options. Recent graduates were in a better position to reflect on the benefits or shortcomings of their planning efforts now that they have been out of school for a short while. Parental perspectives also corroborated strengths and weaknesses of CPGS models currently used in relation to gaps in familial awareness of the college planning process. Questions guiding analysis included occurrences and impacts of school-based CPGS interactions, family guidance, personal planning, academic aptitude, and support networks.

## **Case Study Analysis**

Descriptions of each singular case were provided to illustrate the unique stories and experiences with the phenomenon. School settings were the environmental variations of interest. Multiple data sources were used to collect raw data, using a combination of data collection methods for triangulation. Quantitative and qualitative data were supplemented by a review of the literature and additional evidence obtained through document analysis. Collectively, analysis was conducted from different angles to support or refute the theories as generated.

Case study analysis utilized these individual portrayals to present information from differing viewpoints collected within two settings. This study has addressed the city as a backdrop, two distinctive school settings, and how each setting contributes to our understanding of the system, the school, and the student's role in planning for life after high school. To better understand the range of experiences, atypical cases were included to elucidate outliers of these experiences in cases where students were low academic performers or the highest ranked graduates. This variation within school cohorts and environmental settings was incorporated to increase the external validity and generalizability of the findings (Maxwell, 1996).

**Within Case Analysis.** Detailed transcriptions of all fieldwork were transcribed in full descriptive detail, which included notes of gestures, emotions, and nonverbal cues. Both transcriptions and audio files were reviewed consistently to become extremely familiar with the dynamics of each case as presented by the participant. It was important to hear their voices as they described their individual accounts of their college planning process and the role that other stakeholders should or could have played in such. Immersion was a critical

part of understanding each case as a stand-alone entity first, independent of the student's peers or school setting. Once familiarity with the dynamics of each case was obtained, this knowledge informed analysis of each case through explorations of theory building to support, refute, or extend commonly held beliefs while making meaning of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Miles and Huberman (1994) define data analysis, "as consisting of three concurrent flows of activity: (1) Data reduction, (2) Data display, and (3) Conclusion drawing/verification" (p. 10). Fieldnotes were coded in an ongoing manner to avoid an overload of potential variables of interest. As each case was considered separately, data reduction was used to translate raw data as constructs were blended to identify salient points or themes that were captured (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1999; Saumure & Given, 2008). Data clusters were grouped using graphic organizers and matrices to categorize high incidents of particular occurrences that provided a better understanding of the phenomenon. Any themes that emerged were used to identify primary features that help make meaning of the participant's experiences as captured through the data (Yin, 1993). Conclusions were drawn as meanings were assigned to these themes paying particular attention to any causal patterns, explanations, commonalities, and distinctions noted (Yin, 1994).

**Cross Case Analysis.** Yin (1994) also suggests conducting cross-case analysis to enhance the thick, rich descriptions captured by any single case. This explanation building lends itself to a thematic analysis across multiple cases as outlined by Creswell (2007). It can also lead to cases that prompt further testing to strengthen conclusions and verifications. Cross-case analysis was used to provoke examination beyond a single case to better understand relationships presented from commonalities and combinations across the student

cohorts and school settings. This process of learning from the comparison of cases was used to generate new knowledge while making meaning of lessons learned from comparing one case to another. Cross case analysis is about seeking patterns while looking at the data from several angles. Data were reviewed while seeking patterns from high and low academic performance within each setting, and environmental differentiations. Patterns were also sought amongst high school seniors, recent graduates, and parents of both within each school setting. Across these variations, the questionnaire tool and interview questions were the same.

Cross-case strategies used compared the responses received across each interview question to identify patterns from similar events within different contexts. All participants were selected using purposive methods, but maximum variation of GPA, class rank, ACT scores, and student types ensured that the sample included a range of academic performance and class rank within each school cohort of Kansas City public high school students. Case studies presented demonstrated similar outcomes and identified both the similarities and differences amongst the students. “The degree of congruity or disparity speaks to the uniformity of the quintain and the power of cross-case analysis” (Stake, 2006; 18). Khan and VanWynsberghe (2008) suggest that the benefits of cross case analysis guide the researcher to identify themes across cases by 1) preserving the essence of each case, 2) reducing or stripping the cases of their context, and 3) selecting appropriate cases to compare when presenting the data.

The “pile-sort method” was also used to check for themes across cases by comparing participant responses to each of the structured interview questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Each respondent’s transcript was printed on a different colored paper. Responses to

each question were cut and grouped. This method served three purposes. First to make sure all informant responses and viewpoints were considered instead of relying heavily on single cases that resounded more strongly with the researcher. Second, to screen for patterns noted from the full group of participants (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Third, this visual illustration on a bulletin board served as the basis for more thorough descriptions and strands of connectivity used to more accurately depict each student's story of who they are and their related experiences. This process revealed several significant thematic relationships between assigned codes. It also illuminated instances where particular responses best captured the essence of thematic coding as described later in this chapter.

### **Critical Race Theory Analysis**

The salience of racism that allows community and educational stakeholders to tolerate systemic disparities and long-standing traditions of low college access rates for central city students of color prompted the use of CRT as a lens of analysis while investigating this phenomenon. Stemming from the perspective that racism is so ingrained that we fail to challenge traditional disparities that appear ordinary, CRT seeks to dismantle educational apartheid by exposing the historical and social conditions that contribute to such. CRT encourages researchers to create a space to learn from the marginalized whose voices have been traditionally silenced (Caruthers, 2006; Schram, 2006).

Decuir and Dixson (2004) put forth a framework for using CRT as a qualitative tool of analysis for educational research. Data analysis used this framework, which consists of the following five tenets: (a) "Counterstorytelling" (b) the permanence of racism, (c) Whiteness as property, (d) Interest convergence, and (e) Critique of liberalism.

“Counterstorytelling is a means of exposing and critiquing normalized dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes” to challenge widely accepted notions held by the majority (Decuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 27). This methodology explicated participants’ feelings about this phenomenon using personal narratives that depict such in their own words.

The permanence of racism is both a conscious and unconscious occurrence of White privilege to which others outside of this race do not have access. Governance structures serve to support such dominance through policies and procedures that maintain restricted access. Investigation of the CPGS process and outreach efforts were used to examine disparities in college access for students of color.

Whiteness of property rights of possession involved use, enjoyment, and exclusive access to privileges that are usually afforded to Whites. Examples related to this phenomenon included access to rigorous curriculum, premiere universities, gifted programs that provide entre’ to higher education for some and further restrict access for others (Ladson Billings-Tate, 1995).

Interest convergence explains that “civil rights gains were in effect superficial “opportunities” because they were basic tenets of U.S. democracy” and only granted because they were not a “major disruption” to a “normal” way of life for the majority of Whites (Decuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 28). Decuir and Dixson (2004) describe this as a reliance on slow incremental change that does not quickly interrupt the status quo (p. 28). This CRT analysis investigated the prevalence of access to hi-quality classes and preparation requirements required for access to higher education.

Critiques of liberalism refer to instances where there is a history of rights and opportunities withheld that are later ignored as colorblind or race-neutral approaches are

embraced, which ultimately dismantle affirmative action remedies. For example, an organization that purports a commitment to diversity may use politically correct, race-neutral policies that fail to directly address blaring racial disparities already in place. Colorblind approaches may not directly remediate inequity for underrepresented groups who might benefit from culturally relevant strategies designed to solve their particular issues. Colorblind approaches employ neutrality that may perpetuate inequitable patterns of limited access for students of color.

This CRT analysis explored if the school district has any policies or protocols designed to level the playing field for students of color to offset the circumstances that have disenfranchised them for far too long. It also entailed the determination of any practices that extended community partnership resources to assist student populations with more extensive needs during college planning and admissions explorations. The critical stance emphasized the meaning of the phenomenon for the participants themselves as expressed through interpretive codes such as reflective gaps noted and awareness as students shared their needs and addressed technical assistance they would have liked to have better prepared them for the college admissions and post-graduation processes. Addressing such illuminated the areas where students felt they were inadequately prepared academically or through limited access to information or resources that might have helped them make more informed decisions. For those who graduated and can now reflect on the process from a distance, there is another reality of expectations and abilities required versus possessed within the realm of this next level.

Application of the Decuir and Dixson (2004) model, “counterstorytelling,” took advantage of the 40 participants who provided narrative responses and the 8 who provided

in-depth accounts of their own reality, describing their interactions with the phenomenon from many different perspectives. Analysis of the school settings and expectations put forth within each contributed to an understanding of exclusive access that would be fully addressed within Chapter 5. Interest convergence supports the continual reliance of such slow incremental change that does not shock the system quickly enough or disrupt the status quo. In the case of dismal graduation and college enrollment rates from School A compared to School B, the prevalence of access to high-quality classes and preparation requirements needed for access to higher education is a blatant disparity that has yet to be addressed even though both schools are governed by the same department.

For this reason it was imperative to ask student and parent participants about school norms, expectations, practices, and standards set forth to ensure that every student receives some level of information required for college planning and access. Student CPGS should not be a function of a student's personal relationship with counselors, social capital, parent advocacy, or academic performance. Application of this CRT model challenged me to find new ways of thinking about the issues of race and new solutions to instead focus on the inequalities commonly experienced and sustained between the two school systems (Dixson & Rosseau, 2006). This framed the exploration of what systematic services, handouts, or resources are shared if the common goal for all students is to successfully transition from high school into college.

School A had nothing in place where students could describe common experiences or standard practices where even the majority of its students could describe a shared experience common during college planning. School B, on the other hand, now requires all of its students to graduate with the A+ Scholarship Designation, which is earned by students who

graduate with an overall grade point average of 2.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale, have at least 95% attendance record, maintain good citizenship, and complete at least 50 hours of tutoring, mentoring, and job shadowing. In return, A+ students receive a two-year scholarship to attend any community college or vocational/technical school free of charge. To ensure that students meet the A+ Scholarship requirements, School B has doubled the service hours required for graduation to 100 hours, leaving little room for its students to graduate without the resources required to finance a college degree program.

Decuir & Dixson (2004) describe a necessary critique of liberalism as those instances where colorblind, race-neutral approaches are used although there is a history of rights and opportunities being withheld. Data collection and analysis identified several areas where CPGS was provided with such neutrality that it could appear ineffective. In some cases, students were afforded campus visits to large prestigious area universities where their academic performance was not aligned with the entrance requirements. If the student achieved the required entrance exam scores, their academic foundations and preparation might not be well suited for college success. Likewise, counselors who coordinated field trips or recruiter visits tended to include “reach” schools that were out of reach for the majority of its student body.

Furthermore, the ritualistic college and career planning appeared to be quite haphazard. There were no systematic checklists used to ensure that each student has been seen by a counselor to discuss college options, needs, or progress. Instead a haphazard process ensued where some students proactively apply forethought and insight to their college planning process while others may get called down to the CPGS office once each semester to remotely submit one application just to say that they did. These colorblind

approaches employed such neutrality that the traditional college enrollment disparities may never be dismantled at the current rate. The needs of students of color are different.

Likewise, resources to address their needs are different. Practitioners in this field should be required to engage in the conscious acknowledgement of institutional resources, partnerships, and campus recruitment strategies available to support this population's college success.

Systematic measures of effectiveness should demand this as a minimum.

### **Heuristic Analysis**

Heuristic analysis served as a predominant lens of analysis as I brought my own autobiographical experiences to the forefront during data analysis. While analysis primarily explored the participants' first-hand perspectives, my relation to the data also came into play.

According to Moustakas (1990):

Heuristic inquiry is a process that begins with a question or problem which the researcher seeks to illuminate or answer. The question is one that has been a personal challenge and puzzlement in the search to understand one's self and the world in which one lives. The heuristic process is autobiographic, yet with virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social--and perhaps universal--significance" (p. 15).

Moustakas (1990) outlines the following phases of heuristic inquiry that were applied during heuristic analysis within this study (p. 27-37):

1. Initial engagement where the researcher identifies "an intense interest" or a "passionate concern" that compels the pursuit of underlying meanings associated with such.
2. Immersion where the researcher becomes enthralled with a particular construct of interest that compels him or her to continuously seek answers to research question.
3. Incubation, allows for a retreat from such an intense exploration while allowing opportunities for clarity and understanding to manifest.
4. Illumination occurs as the researcher enters into a new state of awareness or new discoveries emerge.
5. Explication involves a thorough examination of core themes using a comprehensive approach.

6. Creative synthesis takes place as the researcher inundates him or herself with the data to obtain full understanding after periods of reflection. Here, the data is fused and “expressed as a narrative account, a report, a thesis, a poem, story, drawing, painting, etc.”
7. Validation of the heuristic inquiry occurs as data is constantly rechecked to ensure that accurate meanings have been associated with essential data that effectively portrays the experience.

Heuristic analysis provided opportunities to bring my own experiences to bear while making meanings of the data presented. The last four years of my life were spent managing the college selection processes for my two sons. These parental experiences led to my *initial engagement* with this phenomenon, which began the first phase of the data analysis process. I happened to be working in the field of college preparation for urban youth at the time. Here, my work in the field of urban youth leadership development and college access provided first-hand knowledge of the college planning needs of Kansas City’s urban families. However, there were still so many unanswered questions that sparked my passionate concern and inquiry for both personal and professional reasons.

For five years, my job as the Missouri Coordinator for the Kauffman Scholars \$2B College Access Program, was to personally mentor and design programming and intervention supports for college-bound students from the city’s urban core. This entailed working with school administrators, staff, and parents to support and building a close rapport with cohorts of 300 additional students each year. Those relationships were leveraged through many of the roles I have throughout the Greater Kansas City community. The college access program was fairly new so preliminary lessons learned were unable to address my own personal gaps in awareness. I also had a burning desire to understand why the offer of a full ride four year college scholarship was not enough to achieve college success with urban students. Our program model was an enhancement of an earlier program, Project Choice, which offered the

same opportunities to 800 local students. Of the 800, less than 400 actually graduated from college with a degree. From this we learned that college success for urban students required more than a financial underwriter. This characterized my *immersion phase* as I became enthralled with the need to identify universal solutions that would lead to college success for underrepresented students of color.

Eventually I launched my own nonprofit organization, Black and College Bound, to address the specific needs of this population. In the first year of operation alone my experiences propelled me through the *incubation phase* as client needs contributed to my understanding of the phenomenon. My work as the founder of a community based college planning organization was very different from the work at Kauffman Scholars, a multimillion dollar foundation with prestigious connections. In this setting, students and parents alike made our acquaintance through an expressed yearning for information and college coaching assistance. In many cases, they were not receiving basic guidance within their school settings causing them to seek out community organizations for support.

Daily manifestations of college planning disparities were identified as students demonstrated minor and major awareness gaps based on their school affiliations. Significant gaps were noted between urban and suburban students. It was apparent which schools provided ACT or college planning courses as a part of the daily curriculum. Most importantly, I developed a keen interest in the nature of my clients' "college knowledge" and disparities between students within the same school district system. Our client base predominantly consisted of KCMSD students from all of the area high schools which allowed me an opportunity to further explore these new revelations. My *illumination phase* of data analysis took place over two years as I led Black and College Bound's programming

through partnerships with schools, the Urban League, the YMCA, churches, and other youth serving organizations. Our work addresses these new discoveries through the design of a curriculum that would serve as an effective intervention to address the awareness gaps commonly presented by this diverse audience.

Part of this work included school based programs where I have hosted a mentoring program in School A for the past 16 months. Students in my mentoring group were purposely excluded as participants. This allowed me to hear the voices of new students with whom I was unfamiliar and who did not have access to the college and career planning activities covered during my sessions. Once the semester shifted, a new student to the group was invited to participate in the study only after I overheard that she was ranked as the class valedictorian. For this reason, I exercised the right to use opportunistic or emergent sampling, adding her voice and experience with the phenomenon as a unique, thick, rich depiction of interest (Patton, 2002).

I have also been quite familiar with School B's culture over the past few years as a parent of two students enrolled in the high school. My familiarity with the school's personnel, routine emails, call blasts to parents, and participation in the parent network afforded me insight as to the expectations and standards imparted throughout its student community. Collectively these interactions, observations, and shared experiences led to the design of this study to explore how and why these grave disparities in these two school cultures persist, even though they were managed by the same school district department. More importantly, access and barriers to college planning guidance informed my interpretations while exploring the consequential effects of such on underrepresented

students who deserved equitable college excess preparation and guidance services. Each of these experiences contributed to my enlightenment during the illumination phase of analysis.

It was first necessary to ascertain the nature of these gaps before prescribing standardized courses of action, using this period to evaluate and interpret data through reflections on my own experiences and commonalities between those shared by others (Merriam, 2009). This occurred throughout the next phase of data analysis which was the *explication phase*. This purpose of this phase was to undergo a thorough examination using a comprehensive approach. This work was accomplished through my interactions with the study participants who shared their diverse experiences with me through various data collection tools. I evaluated the data and interpreted the data using a coding process which incorporated my knowledge, experiences, and views of college planning. The coding process was used to deconstruct instances noted within each data source. Unique interpretations and outliers caused me to clarify my ideas, sometimes having to recode data based on new manifestations that surfaced. Keeping my experiences in mind, my overall awareness and interpretations of this phenomenon led to codes and operational definitions that were assigned to begin the process of making meaning during this stage of the analysis process.

Likewise my thinking processes and reflections were used to connect the data, forming linkages between concepts brought forth through these participant experiences (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The *creative synthesis* of data analysis took place throughout the implementation of fieldwork and the remainder of the dissertation compilation process. This data analysis process allowed me to draw upon the study design, data collection process, and my own points of reflection to make meaning of these shared experiences. This phase was where I brought all relationships together as identified through the coding and thematic

interpretations apprehended throughout the analysis of questionnaires, narrative responses, interviews, document sources. Comparisons, unique outliers, and patterns lifted from each case were used for “within case analysis” which identified themes most apparent in each case. Likewise, comparisons of themes noted across cases, school cohorts, or stakeholder groups were used to construct a “cross case analysis” depicting interpretations of the phenomena identified across each of the cases.

The final phase of data analysis was validation which occurred as data was rechecked from different vantage points to ensure that accurate depictions and associations of meaning prevailed. Validation occurred throughout this study as student and parent responses, narrative statements, interview responses, and document content collectively conveyed the essence of diverse college planning experiences. As I rechecked my interpretations of the data, I kept in mind Kleining and Witt’s, (2000) “Four Basic Rules to Optimize the Chance for Discovery:”

1. The research person should be open to new concepts and change his/her preconceptions if the data are not in agreement with them.
2. The topic of research is preliminary and may change during the research process.
3. Data should be collected under the paradigm of maximum structural variation of perspectives.
4. The analysis is directed toward discovery of similarities (p. 1).

All phases of the heuristic analysis process advanced my exploration and discovery, scaffolding my autobiographical understanding of the phenomenon while integrating the significance of other’s experiences as well. To be sure I remained open to the discovery of new meanings or variations affiliated with the phenomenon, extensive attention was paid to the design of the data collection sources used to capture the experience of others in an

authentic manner. It was important to bracket my experiences and biases by designing a questionnaire tool that would clearly delineate areas of knowledge that students possessed, coupled with interview questions to further probe key areas of inquiry. My experiences with awareness and information gaps commonly demonstrated by my clients were used to deconstruct the most critical tenets of college planning within the ECAQ. This allowed each participant to delineate their specific degree of awareness and preparation with each component. It was also important to remain open to what might emerge as the predominant topics where students may lack awareness of processes or resources critical in the college admission process.

Likewise, the selection of diverse students who varied in academic status and school setting contributed to the desired structural variation, which yielded diversity in the perspectives collected during fieldwork (Kleining & Witt, 2000). For the most part, precautions were taken to insure that I had no previous interactions of significance with the participants, because it was important to maintain my neutrality in the interpretations used as I made meaning of their input as collected through questionnaires and interviews. Once data were cleaned and analyzed, themes were apprehended as evident illustrations of salient constructs of interest.

### **Narrative Analysis**

Narrative analysis captured participants' voices to learn more about how they make meaning of their experiences as shared through their first-person accounts (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000). Connelly & Clandinin (2000) described narrative analysis as a means to capturing each participant's voice to learn more about "how humans make meaning of experience by endlessly telling and retelling stories about themselves" (p.14). To effectively

interpret the data, all sources of data provided by participants to describe themselves and their experiences was used to portray the essence of each participant. Descriptive responses provided as personal narratives were of primary importance.

Descriptive responses were a pivotal part of the data collected through both the questionnaire and interview processes. Open-ended questions incorporated in the questionnaire probed student perspectives using their own words and points of view, asking if they considered themselves college bound and why or why not. Interview questions also explored students' views of the best college planning advice received, reflections on their CPGS regrets, most helpful advice received, and other reflective gaps noted.

Data collected through open ended questionnaire responses, interviews, and document analysis were transcribed immediately, using the same coding schematic to analyze the explicit language as experienced during fieldwork using each student as the unit of analysis. The oral and written words as directly expressed by each participant were used to construct each student case identity for the purposes of interpreting their role and representation within the context of the study. Thus it was imperative to incorporate their own voices using direct quotes to illustrate what and how they shared their experiences through these narratives. As the researcher, I also reserved the right to select cases for further analysis based on nonverbal cues and communications noted, such as a student's tone, voice, quotes of interest, or overall approachability regarding the nature of this phenomenon. These rough transcriptions were used during preliminary interpretations of responses generated during initial stages of fieldwork.

Document analysis of field notes, content, school forms, along with parent and student handbooks was also used as a part of the narrative interpretation of each school's

character as expressed through communications that depicted the essence of expectations and interactions within each setting. At this stage, no predetermined categories were used to classify the data. However, clusters of meaning were used to form general descriptions of participant experiences, focusing on textural descriptions--what was experienced--and structural descriptions--how it was experienced, as described by Patton (2002). As major themes were identified, re-transcription was used to further deconstruct patterns and examples into clusters for additional analysis.

Each of these analysis techniques contributed to the identification of themes apprehended through descriptive and interpretive codes evidenced throughout the data sources. Each theoretical tradition served as a lens used to make meaning of the data, while grounding it in the literature and theoretical frameworks used to extend qualitative inquiry through the use of diverse methods of analysis and approaches to interpretation.

### **Limitations**

Preliminary investigation into this phenomenon conducted during prior coursework revealed potential impediments experienced when respondents were not cognitively aware of the range or depth of possible responses of interest to the researcher. An adolescent's inability to frame an analysis of the continuum of academic and social preparation involved in such transitions is only further limited by their inability to articulate their understanding of personal experiences along this continuum. Having only raised this issue with a few adolescents, it is indeterminable whether adolescents at this stage even have a solid understanding of the level of preparation and guidance necessary for individuals to successfully transition from high school to the real world of college or work. Thus, there may be some deviations between their aspirations, expectations, and realizations as they

experience the intersection of competitive admissions processes, college entrance exam scores, and the reality of any academic shortcomings on their part (Gobo, Gubnum, & Silverman, 2007).

Furthermore, this study relied on self-reported academic statistics such as GPA and class rank. The nature of any qualitative study is to gain a more in-depth understanding using a few exemplars to depict how this socially constructed phenomenon takes shape (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). In doing so, more emphasis was placed on the processes and meanings of interactions that are not always measurable or quantifiable (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 13; Schram, 2006). Data collected heavily relied on student perceptions of their preparation instead of formal academic records, even if it contributed to a slight margin of error, because it is my belief that all students deserve an exit strategy regardless of their academic standing.

An academic limitation of this study was the primary emphasis placed on the American College Testing (ACT) exam over the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) as the standardized test required as part of the college admissions process. Both the ACT and the SAT share similar status as the pinnacle college entrance exam indicators of a student's "college readiness" or capability to complete college-level coursework. Student familiarity with SAT exam formats and scoring would represent a heightened awareness of universal college requirements and tools for access used nationwide--especially by highly selected Ivy League schools. However, the ACT is more widely preferred by colleges and universities in the Midwest, and has recently surpassed the SAT in popularity among colleges nationwide (College Board, 2012). Thus, students were asked about their preparation for the ACT exam given the setting of this study and the likelihood of enrollment in Midwestern institutions of

higher education.

Another limitation of this study was my personal bias, which stems from my collective experiences with both urban adolescents and Kansas City local school systems. Employed as a life coach for annual cohorts of 300 adolescents from all of Kansas City's middle and high schools, I have witnessed countless inequities that characterize ineffective schooling and guidance services. More specifically, as a personal mentor interacting with 75 teens per week within 10 different school environments, I witnessed daily the lack of expectation from those who are charged with inspiring our adolescents through their matriculation, yet ultimately serve as unintentional gatekeepers who could have made an impactful difference in an urban student's life. Furthermore, as a doctoral candidate, I continue to experience my own academic challenges of limited guidance and skeletal mentoring that persist at all levels of matriculation for students of color.

On the other hand, as a parent of three school-aged children, I have had numerous interactions with the schools my children attend regarding the absence of challenging curriculum and academic supports typically offered to suburban students. Furthermore, preliminary exploration led me to closely observe the differences in college guidance services offered to my own children who attend schools in both the urban core public school system and a local private school with a stellar reputation for college placements. This collectively sparked a deeper interest in exploration of the professional duties and responsibilities associated with high school counseling employees. At this point it appears that there are few controls in place to hold school officials accountable for service delivery or professional initiative as it relates to assisting high school juniors and seniors with their transitional process. These op were also addressed through an analysis of literature on

college access for urban students and the case for CPGS for all high school students. Critical assessments such as these were used to identify contradictory examples to counteract any observational patterns that emerge from the data.

### **Validity and Reliability**

Validity is defined as a measure of the extent to which any research findings or recommendations are credible and can be used by others (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasize the trustworthiness of data, proposing “since there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former [validity] is sufficient to establish the latter [reliability;]” (p.316). Here, it was important to ensure that conclusions reached had not been drawn as a result of isolated or random incidents. To confirm such, they upheld four measures of validity which include credibility, dependability, transferability, and the confirmability of data collected.

Creswell (2007) puts forth eight strategies to ensure the validity of findings in qualitative research: external auditor checks, peer debriefings, prolonged engagement with participants, the presentation of discrepant information, clarification of any researcher biases, member checking, the use of rich, thick, descriptions, and triangulation. In this study, the consistencies of data were achieved when the steps of research were verified through examination of such items as raw data, data reduction products, and process notes (Campbell, 1996). Polkinghorne (1991) defines validity as the correspondence between findings and reality. Harry Wolcott (2008), who chronicled the evolution of validity in qualitative research, asserts that in narrative studies emphasis should be placed on understanding the phenomenon instead.

Maxwell (1996) attributes validity threats to two distinct types, researcher bias and

reactivity. Researcher bias entails the selection of data that best fits the researcher's existing theory or that stands out amongst emerging data. Reactivity involves the influence of the researcher on the setting or individual being studied. Reactivity cannot be eliminated in this study but was productively used throughout this process of inquiry. Investigator effects were critical to the exploration of these phenomena through personal narratives that describe the participants' experiences in their own words. To increase validity and enhance the quality of analysis, negative comparisons were used to support or refute emergent research conclusions. Triangulation was used to establish validity as discussed in the following section.

### **Triangulation**

Triangulation was used to explore the data using multiple theories for interpretation. This process is defined as clarifying meanings through multiple perceptions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002), using alternative ways of viewing the data to enhance the trustworthiness of any findings (Gall, Gall, & Borg; 1999). Triangulation helped me to draw connections between the different data sources (Holliday, 2002; p. 75) while contributing to the overall transferability of the results (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). It also reduced researcher biases and limitations as stated (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Triangulation was also used to address the intersections of rival explanations (Patton, 2001, p. 55). According to Patton (2001, p. 247), Denzin (1987b) puts forth four types of triangulation that strengthen the study by validating research findings:

1. Data Triangulation: the use of a variety of data sources in a study
2. Investigation Triangulation: the use of several different researchers or evaluators;
3. Theory Triangulation: the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data, and
4. Methodological Triangulation: the use of multiple methods to study a single

problem or program

This study utilized both data and methodological triangulation methods. As I set out to cross check my findings, I used various sources of student, parent, and staff communications to verify the existence of CPGS models and expectations put forth by the school district or state of Missouri. Counseling directives issued by the college and career counseling departments of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Kansas City Missouri School District were used to confirm compliance with directives and resources promoted to equip students in basic tenets of college admissions planning. Additional documents used to corroborate student data included student-issued documents that entailed academic overviews for each student's freshman through senior years or even graduation programs outlining superior academic performance by particular graduates. Parent notices and meeting agendas were used to assess information and services made available to the entire parent population within each school.

Methodological triangulation incorporated the use of various data collection and analysis methods as described above. Questionnaire responses were verified through student interviews. Personal narrative statements were used to confirm collective characterizations of each participant from their own perspectives. Lastly, parent and student narrative statements were used as needed to gain a deeper understanding of family expectations, planning assistance provided, and collective needs for assistance with the navigational guidance process available to their student. Using various methods and data sources was a strategy used to support, reveal, or refute patterns or themes within the data initially deemed noteworthy. Furthermore, the use of data triangulation strategies for coding schematics and data analysis served to augment and strengthen the overall analysis and interpretation of the

data.

In summary, using this CRT framework as a primary data analysis tool investigated the salient effects of the segregated city and school systems on urban students of color. Moreover, it illuminated the existence of any inequitable policies and practices that perpetuate the phenomenon of limited access to higher education for Black students within central city schools.

Chapter 3 described the methodology and research design of this study, including targeted research questions, and the plans for data collection and analysis. Descriptions of the population, participants, settings, and selection criteria were also provided to depict the contextual significance of this study. Chapter 4 will describe how the study was conducted and the results generated from such analysis. Chapter 5 will present conclusions drawn while highlighting any implications for further research, practice, and social change to advance the state of college access for Kansas City's underrepresented students of color.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Labor industry reports project that by 2018 1.8 million jobs in Missouri and 1 million Kansas jobs will require postsecondary training beyond high school (Carnevale, 2010). Lack of such will bar participation in all but three menial career fields. Thus, college access is critical for mainstream economic participation. The prevalence of gaps in college access and readiness for students of color are well documented (Holcomb-McCoy, 2010; Pitre, 2009). These gaps to college access, typically weakened by school systems trajectories, bear strong correlations to the community and economic infrastructures of urban communities. Systemic roots of economic devastation experienced by central city communities are impacted by the caliber of the workforce and its educational attainments.

College planning guidance services are a critical component of college-access trajectories afforded each student. Gaps in college access or readiness contribute to gaps in mainstream economic participation. The purpose of this case study was to explore how local Black high school students experience school-based college planning guidance services (CPGS) within two central-city, urban high schools. This case study approach sought to identify high school seniors, recent graduates, and parents affiliated with two diametrically opposed high schools within the same urban core school district, each with traditions of the highest and lowest college admission rates.

As the researcher, I incorporated the theoretical traditions of heuristics, narratology, and critical race theory to better understand how Black students interact with school-based navigational supports that shape the pivotal transition from high school to college or the real world, using their experiences with school-based college planning guidance services (CPGS)

as the unit of analysis. Heuristics allowed me to use my experiences with college planning needs of Black urban students to make meaning of their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Narratology was used to give voice to the experiences of students (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000) who are often ignored in the college planning process with critical race theory providing a way to challenge the salience of racial inequities and status quo conditions that are widely accepted as normal to transform such construed patterns (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). To further frame an understanding of the contextual supports students engage during this process, preliminary research questions guiding this study addressed:

1. What efforts exist in two urban high schools to secure equitable access to higher education for students of color within the segregated city?
2. What college planning guidance services are systematically delivered to remedy traditions of limited college access for these students?
3. How do these students interact with the CPGS offered by their high schools?
4. What do they do to plan for life beyond high school graduation inside and outside of their schools?

This chapter will present the results of data collection and analysis as described within the Methodology detailed in Chapter 3. I will first present my reflections related to the design of the study with emphasis on the theoretical traditions and process used to collect, enter, and code raw data obtained from various sources. I briefly recapture the data collection and analysis process bringing my interpretations together through theme development for the purpose of telling the story of the how students of color experienced the college planning process within their school settings. Next I present findings from the

documents and questionnaires followed by single cases that integrate multiple data sources to depict faces behind the findings. These eight cases, aligned with the two school sites, are presented with descriptive statistics from the questionnaires, data from the in-depth interviews and narrative questionnaire prompts, and documents from the two sites. I conclude with a cross-case analysis of the themes and interpretive codes that formed the eight cases. The research questions that guided my inquiry are answered in Chapter 5: Discussion of Implications of Findings with Recommendations For Future Research.

### **Reflections on the Design Process**

I elected to design a study that would promote an awareness of the how Black urban youth perceive the college planning process, drawing on their technical depth of knowledge and interactions with CPGS to ascertain the effectiveness of current practices. Participants consisted of African American high school seniors and recent graduates affiliated with two central city public high schools, each notorious for the highest and lowest rates of college placement amongst its graduates. The sample population included 22 African American adolescents and 20 parents, 10 from each school as critical partners in the adolescent's formal matriculation process. Students were selected for the sample based on their appropriateness or fit with criteria and potential contributions to this exploration; using criterion-based, critical-case, and snowball sampling. Demographically, of the 22 student participants, 9 were male and 13 were female; 7 were currently enrolled as high school seniors while 15 were recent graduates. Of this student population, 70% reported that they were first-generational college students whose parents did not graduate from college.

The design of this process afforded me an opportunity to not only explore student needs but to also learn more about how parents are prepared to support their child's college

planning. The structure of the ECAQ allowed me to compartmentalize the awareness students had of each particular component of college planning, a distinction extended beyond traditional college ready models that assess transitional planning and college readiness in terms of academic preparedness and decision making skills (Conley, 2007a; Pitre & Pitre, 2009). I did not know the participants before this study, but was able to develop a rapport with several of them as a result of our interactions. Once they completed the questionnaire, they were able to confirm its anonymity and general knowledge building objectives. Several participants offered to refer peers and parents as a result of their experiences with the questionnaire. Those selected for interviews opened up and shared their stories in a heartfelt manner and a few even took an interest in my research aims. At the beginning of this process I was primarily concerned with gaps that might exist within school-based college planning models for urban students. Findings from student and parent questionnaires along with discussions experienced through interviews revealed significant gaps in parental awareness as well. As a result of this process my frame of mind has shifted to focus more on the college planning needs of the whole family. It was important to extend my focus beyond the individual student participant because some families may have additional children who must also be prepared for college success if the community is going to significantly rectify its college access rates. Since the beginning of this data collection process my organization, Black and College Bound, has provided more parent seminars to address these gaps while using data collected as part of my own heuristic inquiry.

### **Data Collection Methods**

While unobtrusive data such as school memos, web site content, state and district publications regarding college planning resources were collected from September 2012 to

October 2013, data collection activities that required SSIRB approval took place from November 2013 through April 2014. Data were collected and analyzed in three distinct phases. Phase I involved the collection of unobtrusive data that did not require SSIRB approval which supported an early analysis of documents related to student expectations and school culture. These data helped to inform the design of the ECAQ tool for parents and students as well as the indepth-semistructured interview questions that were the core of the individual cases (Appendix B). Using multiple data sources contributed to thick description and the validity of findings (Moustakas, 1990). Document analysis served to corroborate and expand an understanding of the procedural norms and expectations formally communicated to students within each setting.

Phase II of the research entailed the dissemination of the College Awareness Questionnaire (ECAQ) to students and parents, then conducting interviews with eight participants (Appendix B). Pseudonyms were assigned to maintain anonymity of participants and are used consistently throughout the findings. The ECAQ which consisted of closed statements and open-ended questions probed each participant's level of understanding, preparation, and cognitive awareness of primary tenets associated with traditional college planning processes. This ECAQ tool also served as sampling strategy for individual cases as specific participants that appeared to contribute more frequently to the collective responses of interest were purposively selected for interviews. In other words, these students provided detail and descriptive responses related to the exposure or non-exposure to the college planning process. While some students were selected for their rich and robust experiences in this area, others were selected based on descriptive narratives that indicated tensions related to being overlooked by the guidance department. Cases of interest for student interviews

were also selected based on responses indicating their extreme high or low self-reported GPAs, and whether or not they appeared to have a plan of action for their transition from high school into college. Priority selections included cases with extremely high or low class ranks, potential first-generational college students, and any other responses deemed extremely positive or negative in nature.

### **Process of Data Analyses**

Phase III of the study constituted the analysis of the three data sources which was guided by the research questions and the theoretical design elements of case study, critical race theory, heuristic analysis, and narratology. The literature review outlined in Chapter 2 also informed the analysis of the data. For the purposes of this study documents from both schools and the district were analyzed for indicators of instructional content that might address gaps in awareness of college planning protocols. During the analysis of student and parent questionnaires participant identifiers were excluded to eliminate potential bias and to concentrate only on the responses provided. Responses that were narrative statements were excluded from this process during the initial round of the analysis of questionnaire responses which were coded with emphasis on dominant responses that could more strongly inform the research questions. To focus the analysis on these points of interest, any responses that contributed to a more substantial understanding of college planning experiences and challenges were flagged, with extra attention paid to those that displayed extreme positive or negative experiences with the phenomena of interest. Those responses were flagged, and coded at each occurrence. Frequency of responses of interest were tabulated and charted.

Clusters of questions related to each component of the admissions process were reviewed seeking targeted responses of interest identified as indicators warranting further

investigation. Response codes of interest were identified for each question. Frequency tables automatically generated by Google Docs calculated the number of times each coded response was provided from the available options, and representation of the total responses received. Extreme responses were also highlighted for further explication to investigate why respondents answered so strongly or with such absolute responses, such as “I am not prepared at all” to “Extremely prepared,” or perhaps they rated school based CPGS as “extremely helpful” or “no guidance received in this area” while reflecting on particular components of the general college planning awareness or admissions process.

Interviews were analyzed with attention to responses and patterns in the data; looking for commonalities and outliers in responses received for each interview questions. I carefully read transcriptions and listened intently to audio recordings for the purpose of describing each participant’s unique experiences with CPGS. The interviews in combination with the open-ended responses from the questionnaire allowed me to authentically capture and depict the voices of students. At the same time I was cognizant of my professional and personal experiences with CPGS and promoted reflexivity through journaling my thoughts and reflections during field work.

### **Theme Development**

All three data sources, documents, questionnaires, and interviews, were used to make meaning of the phenomenon of college planning for Black students within the segregated city. Data were coded using enumerative and thematic coding (Grbich, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994;) resulting in a codebook (Appendix D) that consisted of descriptive coding, interpretive codes, and pattern codes or themes. I kept the predominant frameworks of critical race theory, narrative analysis, and heuristic analysis in mind during this coding

process. Critical race theory was a lens used as I questioned each school's rituals, protocols, and results that have been widely accepted as tradition, whether or not they were effective in helping prepare these students for life after high school. Using narrative analysis I sought to suppress my personal biases and expectations to honor the voices of the participants as they shared their stories. At the same time, heuristic inquiry supported the integration of knowledge of the college planning process, adolescent development, and community dynamics for making meaning of their experiences through incorporating my voice within the text.

### **Document Analysis Findings**

Document analysis and transcription of field notes were also included as multiple sources of data where participants described their experiences with the phenomenon. Here, it was important to capture documents communicated from the state, school, district, and building levels to address college planning issues for students or parents within the segregated city. These were included for analysis of content and student expectations put forth in each school setting. Collectively, these narratives were used to develop a set of codes and then grouped into clusters of meaning to construct the salient themes from this data.

### **Document Analysis of Themes**

As I reviewed themes that emerged from the open-ended questionnaire narratives and interviews of participants, I also integrated the findings from the document analysis process. Findings from questionnaires and interviews revealed the distinctions in school cultures where School B mandates that students complete a College Applications Course to graduate, whereas School A promotes graduation as the fundamental goal. School documents collected included various student and parent memos disseminated throughout the school

year. In some cases, bulletin board postings outside of the counseling offices were included as depictions of information communicated to students about various deadlines and requirements during senior year. Information shared from the college planning counseling program was also reviewed as document narratives for each cohort of student cases. Different school memos for parents and students support these distinctions, although both schools communicate graduation compliance consistently. Meetings with the school district’s Graduation Specialist confirmed that there are no standard memorandums, forms, or checklist processes used consistently across all school buildings to communicate standard messages of resources, deadlines, or required courses of action. Noted commonalities of themes across cases are illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6.

*Document Analysis of Themes*

Theme	School A Documents				School B Documents			
	Senior Night Agenda	Fall Semester Senior Memo	Spring Semester Memo	Grad Party Flyer/Event Handouts	Senior Night Agenda	Parent Emails	Student Memos	PTA Memos
Awareness	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	X	X	X	X
Support Systems	X			(X)				
CPGS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Reflections				(X)				
Process	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Outcomes					X	X	X	X

(X) = Absence or Essential Gap Noted

The findings from analysis of documents used to communicate student expectations, deadlines, and responsibilities revealed consistent occurrence of those themes related to process and procedural requirements such as *Awareness*, *CPGS*, *Support Systems*, and *Process*.

## **Awareness**

The theme, *Awareness*, captured participants' knowledge or understanding of factors, choices, or consequences that could differentiate their access to superior positioning during the competitive college recruitment process. It was important to capture documented messages that informed how students were prepared to comprehend those actions that are required to gain entry into college and to successfully adapt. Messages conveyed to strengthen *College Minded Mentalities*, *College Planning Knowledge*, and students' overall *Degrees of Knowing* were the interpretive codes encapsulated within this theme.

The interpretive code *Degrees of Knowing* consisted of overall sense of awareness or understanding of the basic tenets of the college planning process and expectations associated with successful adaptation to higher educational environments. I defined degrees of knowing as such because it was important to ascertain which students first had knowledge of the factors and planning choices that can differentiate their access to superior positioning within a collegiate learning environment. Herein lies the distinction of students with intentional strategic pursuits versus students who are aimlessly going through the motions of college planning.

The interpretive code *College Minded Mentalities* also distinguishes college bound students who are cognitively equipped with an understanding of their aspirations, identified career interests, college targets, college bound mindsets, and some degree of proactivity in the pursuit of such. Secondly, this construct included acknowledgement that a college education is critical for career opportunities, signified by attitudes that support the importance of higher education attainments overall. These aspirations and college-bound mindsets, expressed as the desire to attend college or self-depicted as a college-bound student

or current college enrollee. Awareness was defined as having knowledge or understanding of factors, choices, or consequences that can differentiate one's access to superior positioning within an academic setting or sorting process.

The construct *College Planning Knowledge* entailed a basic understanding of the overall college admissions process obtained as the result of early exposure programs and other interactions designed to foster access to college bound cultures, activities, and behaviors before the end of high school. This included exploration of college options inherent in the college planning process.

Document analysis revealed a prominent absence of documents that illustrated resources, processes, and informational connections that parents and students alike might use to inform their planning or enhance their technical understanding of the college planning process. Most documents reviewed focused on deadline submissions or reminders pertaining to graduation compliance. For the purposes of this study documents from both schools and the district were reviewed for indicators of instructional content that might address gaps in awareness as indicated by findings reported within both the student and parent questionnaires. School district websites and school building websites were also reviewed in hopes that the information might be accessible even if not transmitted via hard copy notices. Review of these document sources revealed that there was no consistent use or promotion of student and parent portals to disseminate this type of information to all students or parents districtwide. Although helpful information is included within the district handbook, this resource is no longer printed and distributed to students or parents. This posits the realities of digital divides as a significant barrier to college access and preparation for low-income students and households with no technology. This also supports the case for strengthened

school based CPGS which serve as the common denominator for all public high school students exploring their college options.

## **CPGS**

The theme, CPGS, reflected the provision of school-based college planning guidance services, using the constructs, *Formal Service Provisions*, *Individual Interactions*, and *Systemwide Interactions* to assess the nature of technical assistance sought, desired, or needed within the students' engagement with formal counseling departmental services. Most students relied more heavily on school-based support whether or not they proactively engaged with the formal CPGS model and personnel that provide these services. Based on results of this study, most participants would be first-generational college students whose parents did not attend college and might not possess the benefit firsthand experiences often required to guide teens through such a rigorous college admissions process. Schools are the common denominator. For this reason, school-based CPGS becomes even more critical to students who may not receive such support from family and community networks as they enter a new realm beyond their family's expertise, ill-equipped with little insight to move forward into adulthood with enhanced social mobility (Noguera, 2007; Pitre & Pitre, 2009).

Document sources for School A primarily consisted of communications shared on behalf of the counselors, school district, or MCAC initiative focused on preparing students for activities that render them eligible for graduation more than those promoting college planning knowledge or college minded behaviors and resources, or action steps. Bulletin boards outside counseling offices have a few postings, mostly job opportunities with very few college announcements. Senior handouts distributed at the end of the fall semester and beginning of the spring semester were merely checklists of graduation compliance

requirements or dates to purchase graduation ceremonial tickets such as prom tickets, yearbook, class rings, etc. Likewise handouts distributed during the Grad Party event held in January did little to address college planning knowledge or to promote awareness of how students can work toward distinguishing themselves as attractive college applicants. The focus of most handouts in this setting reflected minimal *Process* related themes associated with college readiness beyond high school graduation requirements.

School B counseling staff utilized a host of mass communications to share announcements of upcoming college recruiter visits, scholarship opportunities, college posters, and helpful resources. Parent documents consisted of weekly parent emails, PTA announcements, and reminders of meetings designed especially to equip junior and senior parents with college planning information and resources.

### **Support Systems**

The theme, *Support Systems*, included any supportive relationships that students accessed or needed to advance their college planning beyond the scope of technical assistance and guidance often provided by counseling department personnel. Interpretive codes, *Within School Supports*, *Out of School Supports* and *Personal/Emotional Supports*, were used to capture sources of support that included extended school staff, family members, community help, peers, and other relationships students perceived as caring or supportive during this process. Supportive relationships beyond the counseling staff were of particular interest in the case of the this study's research questions pertaining to how students plan and which resources they use outside of the traditional CPGS offered.

Parents in both cohorts reported limited awareness of basic school or community based resources that are typically promoted throughout college bound populations. "School

counselors are institutional change agents who can share norms and resources about college access” (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006). Along with parents, guidance counselors play a tremendous role by influencing student aptitudes and access to future vocations from the courses they prescribe to the directional paths outlined for each student. However, this is often not the case for low-income students because of the limitations of counselors in low-income schools and because of uneducated parents at home. So, college access programs often become important to provide the social capital important for college success (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006).

There were no documents disseminated district wide to connect students or parents to community resources that provide low cost or even free college planning services such as free ACT preparation programs, free test taking events, or community organizations that provide assistance with college transitions. More disturbingly, there were no standard notices that informed students or parents about fee waivers that lower income families could use to cover the costs of college applications or entrance exams.

Document sources identified as part of the School B culture used consistent parent email blasts on a weekly basis to inform parents of scholarship announcements, community resources, upcoming senior meetings, PTA meetings, and other pertinent information to keep stakeholders engaged in school processes and requirements. Parent responses indicated that School B’s heavy usage of email messages and parent meetings were of great value as parents attributed their preparation and awareness to ongoing communications received by the school’s college counselors. There were a host of documents for each of these areas that were reviewed as part of the document analysis to see which themes were more prevalent. For the most part, each of the college minded, preparation, and process related themes

apprehended throughout this study were consistent across all cases in this School B cohort, whereas the absence of such was significantly noticeable throughout the School A cohort cases.

### **Process**

The theme, *Process*, informed explanations about the school's culture in regards to its countdown to graduation, and the expectations communicated to stakeholders. This theme was predominant across most school documents which primarily communicated informational updates related to what seniors should do each month to prepare for graduation. In most instances, the emphasis was on graduation requirements, not college planning deadlines. Students and parents in School B report that a required course curriculum outlined college planning requirements and timelines. A review of some of the documents disseminated as part of that course were reviewed for the nature and content priorities. These documents were analyzed for prevalence of themes that were apprehended from other data sources within this study.

There was a distinctive culture in School A where email and electronic media such as Facebook or social media sites are not used to share information. Although students hail from lower socioeconomic communities does not mean they do not have access to, or the use of technology or social media resources. In fact, most of the students in my School A mentoring groups own smartphones and use them for a variety of nonacademic purposes. Conversations with district personnel in other settings revealed that counselors were not tech savvy and therefore did not utilize social media as a means of communication. Meetings with the school district's Graduation Specialist charged with increasing graduation rates revealed several district level resource pages already in place to heighten awareness of

scholarship resources, career inventory sites, and helpful college planning tools prescribed by the State of Missouri's Office of Higher Education. Internet based college and career planning tools are available at the state and district levels, but are not consistently shared with students or parents in both high schools as supported by findings through document analysis, interviews, and questionnaires. One participant, who happens to be the valedictorian, shared:

I didn't know the district had a scholarship page until I was in (Coach's) office. I saw scholarships at the bottom of his computer screen.

When asked if she used technology to access scholarship finder websites commonly used by most high school students, she replied:

I made my Fast Web account but I didn't know what to do. I have vo-tech so I don't get to stay and learn more about stuff like that.

She assumed that her classmates were also receiving information about these resources. During her interview I asked her about any classes or personnel in the school who might provide information on resources and community programs that could assist her college planning process. Similar to findings supported by the narrative analysis and document analysis process, most of the communication to seniors heavily promotes reviewing transcripts and checking in with the general high school counselor to ensure graduation requirements have been met.

### **Student Questionnaire Findings**

The nature of the 111-item ECAQ lent itself to statistical interpretations of student awareness and overall college planning knowledge, which were essentially the basis for this tool's design. Participant responses were grouped according to school sites to allow further explication of patterns noted based on individual responses. Using scaled ratings, students

were asked to classify their depth of knowledge of formal admission requirements, procedures, financial aid options, and supplemental planning resources. Aside from the statistical data, questionnaires also included several open ended questions that required students to describe perceptions of their awareness, preparation, and school based support received in their own words. These narratives were coded separately as they became part of the data subjected to qualitative analysis once extracted from the questionnaires and analyzed for themes. Findings from student questionnaires were used to extrapolate themes from the descriptive and interpretive codes identified in the data. Discussions of the questionnaire findings are reported below using a holistic approach to integrate qualitative and quantitative findings from both the open ended prompts and closed questionnaire items.

The discussion of questionnaire findings is organized by asking the following questions which are key to the CPGS process:

- A. Did students even view themselves as college bound? If so, I wondered if that changed the nature of their engagement with school based CPGS?
- B. What school based CPGS was offered to ensure that students were familiar with the college admissions process?
- C. Once exposed, what took place to monitor student progress? Did students feel their college planning guidance prepared them to successfully execute their college exploration and application processes?
- D. If participants were provided with technical “college knowledge” how did students use those skills to achieve their college enrollment objectives?

**Question A: Did students even view themselves as college bound?**

Of primary importance for this study were the student’s views of themselves, and their opinions regarding the purpose and importance of earning a college degree. There were 11 questions and 2 open ended items that addressed self-concepts in terms of students viewing themselves as college bound, why that was important, the purpose of higher

education, and being viewed as college bound. It is important to note that 100% of all student responses indicated that they viewed themselves as “college bound” students. There were no tentative responses where participants indicated hesitancy about their desires to attend college. In fact, 100% of responses conveyed strong sentiments of positive self-concept, promoting college bound convictions and college access goals as students from both school cohorts expressed. School A students expressed:

I am a student who rises above the statistics of inner city life. I consider myself college bound because of my mindset, my former achievements, and goals I set for myself.

Yes, I am a college bound student. When I was in high school I took advantage of all the tutoring services provided and all the opportunities my school district provided so that I could advance my education. I participated in the college preparatory program and the A+ program so I would be more prepared for college. I am also a college bound student because I was determined to go.

I truly feel that I’m college bound because I didn’t let anything hinder me. I may not be the best student but I’m trying to better myself in each and every way I can. Actions speak louder than words!

I consider myself to be college bound because I want to make a difference in my community and the world. I want my family to be proud of me. I want to live life not regretting anything I have done.

Because I have goals I went to achieve. (Houston)

I consider myself being a college-bound student because I am good I getting my work done and paying attention. I am (in the top ranks) of my class to graduate and believe if I can get that far then I consider myself college-bound. (Whisper)

Yes, I consider myself college-bound student because I think education is very important to me. It will make you more determined to be something in life.

School B Students reported:

I have been preparing for college since middle school and I have always known that I am going to go to college no matter what I have. I have always had that mindset and

ever since I have worked as hard as I can to try to get there. I know that nowadays it is very hard to prosper in life without a college degree.

I attend a college preparatory school and that enables me to have all the resources I need to prepare for college. It is an expectation in my family and at my school that I attend college, and I am willing to take on that responsibility. I have all the tools so I will use them and be a college bound student.

I have always been college bound ever since middle school. Being college bound was always a part of my family and friends.

I consider myself to be college-bound because in my eyes, there is no other choice than to go to college and become a college graduate. I worked hard to graduate high school and it will help me reach my goals and enhance my skills for things I will accomplish in my future. (*Diamond*)

College is needed to be successful.

Yes, I consider myself to be a college bound student because I would like to further my education and have a job of my dreams.

Just the way I was raised. I was raised and expected to go to college and graduate.

The educational aspirations of urban students was of particular importance because researchers suggest that significant percentages of urban students fail to see themselves as “college material” and do not aim for higher educational options as a result (Conley, 2007a; Dyson, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). The nature of social relations perpetuates restricted access to opportunities for urban residents within the segregated city, especially those that connect urban adolescents to equitable preparation and supports that can help them access effective schools, living wage jobs, and upwardly mobile social networks (Anyon, 1997). Conley (2007a) highlights the importance of providing high school students with college planning knowledge while cultivating their knowledge and awareness of the skills required to navigate the transition from school to college. His work reminds us that schools are

primarily responsible for influencing these factors, but each must be identified and measured if students are going to truly be made college ready (Conley, 2007b).

To further explicate these measures of self-concept, participants were then asked to expound by indicating their personal views about education. Several questions asked participants to delineate what it means to be college bound by selecting from statements used to illustrate their perceptions of the importance of earning a college degree in today's society. Findings report that 92% students agreed that college completion provided a significant advantage when applying for jobs. Additional questions asked students to indicate their personal educational values by rating how important it was that classmates, teachers, and family members viewed them as college bound. Responses indicated that 92% students felt it was important to know that they were college bound just for themselves, while 80% felt it was important that their teachers viewed them as college bound. Of this population, 76% viewed family acknowledgement of such as very or extremely important, with 76% reporting the importance of classmates viewing them as college bound.

Collectively, questionnaire findings support that students unanimously had positive self-concepts, labeling themselves as college material. This allowed me to focus on what specific provisions schools offer to provide the college planning knowledge required for these college bound students to actualize their desired collegiate connections.

**Question B: What school based CPGS was offered to ensure that students were familiar with the college admissions process?**

Acknowledgement of these self-described college bound views coupled with the frameworks of each school's CPGS provisions caused me to focus on what schools did to ensure that students were made aware of admission requirements and protocols that would

help them actualize their goals of college attainment. The ECAQ included 20 questions that assessed participant's degrees of familiarity with college admissions processes (4), campus programs and resources (4), ACT structure (4), and financial aid alternatives (8). There were no open ended questions used to assess awareness in these areas. Participants rated their familiarity using the response alternatives: (a) I am not familiar with this at all, (b) somewhat familiar, (c) very familiar, and (d) extremely familiar. Findings were apprehended from instances where school counselors provided guidance or technical assistance services to students consistent with traditional CPGS models provided within urban schools. Collective guidance services embodied the nature of this assessment tool. Apprehensions of findings apprehended from different sections of the ECAQ are delineated throughout the discussions in different sections below.

Disparate attention is devoted to college planning for Black students (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006). As a result, many students within urban schools continue to operate with limited knowledge of how to successfully access college opportunities (Noguera, 2007; Wilson, 1998). Collegiate gatekeeping and limited awareness are pervasive and continues to exclude significant percentages of students of color from mainstream economic opportunities as early as high school (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006; Dyson, 2005). Over time, guidance counseling in college planning services becomes even more critical for Black adolescents as they prepare to leave high school without having received the same exposure to higher education opportunities for school-to-work career planning (Hale, 2001). The CRT lens reminds us to question institutional structures in place that perpetuate inequitable access to those opportunities previously withheld from students of color. This posits CPGS as an equally important construct evident throughout the student questionnaire findings which were

in fact designed to measure the nature of student engagement with school based college planning services.

Students reported fragmented awareness of these technical assistance resources in the areas of: the admissions process, senior year planning checklists, how to choose a college, and researching admission requirements for schools of interest. Students at School B had the benefit of completing a course where these topics were associated with the curriculum and assignments. The School B cohort reported a greater degree of assistance received with some of these constructs such as: four year planning checklists (42%), how to choose a college (50%), and researching admission requirements for schools of interest (58%). Whereas School A cohort reported receiving lots of assistance with: four year planning checklists (58%), how to choose a college (67%), and researching admission requirements for schools of interest (58%).

Questionnaire findings exposed the nature of familiarity students had with fundamental college planning concepts. The question now became what did the schools do to monitor student progress with submissions of college applications and financial aid requests? I wondered if students felt that their college planning guidance prepared them to successfully execute their college exploration and application processes?

**Question C: Once exposed, what took place to monitor student progress? Did students feel their college planning guidance prepared them to successfully execute their college exploration and application processes?**

The ECAQ included 24 questions that assessed participant's degrees of preparation based on the college planning expectations that were communicated within their school

setting. Questionnaire items asked students how well they perceived their school guidance had prepared them in areas such as: maximizing college fair participation, conducting effective college visits, scholarship searches, Internet college planning resources, and academic expectations of college students. Open ended questions asked students if they felt prepared to manage the college search on their own. While 28% participants reported that they felt extremely prepared to select future school programs that met their needs, an additional 32% suggested they felt very prepared. Narrative responses expressed by School A students reported:

I feel well-prepared to do college search on my own.

When I graduated I felt it, but when I attended my first year there were things that I didn't know about nor did I expect. I wish I could have had a lot more training and guidance. I'm in my sophomore year in college and still stuck on some things, so it's definitely not too late to learn.

I'm able to find information on colleges that are right for me as well as my career. Want to scale of 1 to 10 I ran at 10 as to how to. I feel about managing the college search on my own because I've learned what to research when looking for a college.

Similarly, School B students shared:

Very prepared.

I am somewhat. But I feel as though I am also very dependent on others' help.

I feel that I am very prepared to manage college search on my own.

On a scale of 10, 8/10.

When I was in college, I did not feel as prepared as I thought I should have been. I personally was very confused on where to even begin my search on what school to apply to.

I'm not very prepared for college.

Findings were varied. To probe further, students were asked about the most helpful resources used during their preparation process. Responses from School A students included:

I didn't have any.

The most helpful planning I got from my school was going on college trips to see what different colleges had to offer.

The most helpful wasn't even from my counselor it was from my athletic coaches. They guided me through a lot because my counselors were always busy.

The most helpful planning assistance was my college guidance counselor. He introduced me to meet ways to find scholarships, how to apply to colleges, and to have an organized resume.

The most helpful planning assistance I received from school was a college preparatory program I attended my sophomore through junior year.

Three School B students appreciated the mandatory College Admissions Class that they must take in order to graduate. Others appreciated:

I can't pick just one. I had a very good college counselor! One of the schools he had to visit (our) school is the school I currently attend. He had financial planning seminars and provided buses to college fairs and had a lot of colleges come to the school. He was always sending us scholarships so that was very helpful.

College admissions class. (3)

My teachers and counselor were very helpful in planning the transition from high school.

My counselors really helped me through a lot of college choices.

Interpretations of the process theme were identified in the qualitative data extracted from the student ECAQ which informed explanations of the school culture, countdown to graduation protocols, and post high school planning expectations communicated to all students within each setting. "School counselors are institutional change agents who can share norms and resources about college access" (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006). Along with parents, guidance counselors play a tremendous role by influencing student aptitudes and access to future vocations from the courses they prescribe to the directional paths outlined for each student. The role of a school counselor is pivotal and can jumpstart unforeseen student success (Butler, 2003). College counselors communicate expectations and direct the students to explore life altering options during their transitional planning.

However, this is often not the case for low-income students because of the limitations of counselors in low-income schools and because of uneducated parents at home. So, college access guidance services often become important to provide the social capital important for college success (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006). Urban students in low-performing schools do not always receive the college planning services they deserve for a variety of reasons:

Despite the fact that developing ‘college knowledge’ is an essential ingredient for promoting college access and success for underserved students, only 25 percent of secondary schools require professional development for those professionals responsible for college counseling (Savitz-Romer, 2012).

Jordan and Plank (1998) equate some guidance counselors to gatekeepers who do not always provide the necessary resource information to students in need. Empirical studies by Farmer-Hinton & Adams (2006) confirmed that Black students receive disparate attention from school guidance counselors. Participants expressed their opinions about school expectations and protocols communicated formally and informally through various counselors and school based college guidance services.

## **Reflections**

School A reflections included several recommendations of mandatory college planning courses and exposure through field trips. In School B 40% of students also listed scholarships as an area where they still desired more help. School B students who have the advantage of the college access course completion provided more strategic recommendations. This could be attributed to a greater sense of understanding of what is required for superior positioning during such a competitive process. School B students recommended more comprehensive workshops in the areas of financial planning, stress management, and college selection strategies. Several students reiterated the need for planning workshops to begin earlier as early as 9th or 10th grade to maximize effectiveness.

My own experiences with urban students who commonly enter my college planning program with such skeletal college knowledge served as a constant reminder of what areas of awareness to probe. My work with juniors and seniors from some central city schools served as a constant reminder of the types of technical assistance needed most often and gaps commonly experienced by my client families.

Hale (2001) faults high school systems that fail to equip students of color with marketable skills by only offering basic courses that provide little or no preparation for the world of work or competitive positions within fast paced industries. Consequently, the author argues, “Our children are being educated in schools that deliver the girls to public assistance and the boys to unemployment and incarceration” (Hale, 2001, p. 111). This study set out to determine, what, if anything was being done to remedy traditions of inequitable college access within hypersegregated schools and communities.

The statistical measures captured from the selected student cohorts quantitatively framed an understanding of technical assistance provided and student perceptions of the effectiveness based on their college planning needs. Findings suggest that urban students are not consistently aware of basic college planning tenets that might strengthen their college trajectories. These measures only illustrated part of the story, and are later supplemented by interview responses and document analysis tools which also informed my understanding of common college planning experiences as shared by student cohorts within the same setting. The plight of economically disadvantaged Black students living in urban communities and served by such public schools has been explored extensively while confirmed as an undeniable injustice that warrants urgent intervention (Noguera & Wing, 2006; Ogbu, 1986;

McWhorter, 2000; Williams, 2003). Thus, the application of CRT supports a resounding call for immediate educational reform to reverse these drastic trends of ill preparation commonly experienced by urban students of color.

**Question D: If participants were provided with technical “college knowledge” how did students apply those skills to achieve their college enrollment objectives?**

Using the lens of critical race theory and this study’s approach to social justice through equitable college access prompted analysis of 14 questionnaire items which asked participants to evaluate their awareness of resources in place to specifically address the college access needs of students of color. In these areas, students had to delineate their awareness and engagement with preferential recruitment strategies designed to assist students of color through diversity admission recruitment efforts, multicultural student resources, and campus supports. Findings report that students were not consistently made aware or given access to information about these helpful resources. In fact, 26% of students reported that they were not familiar at all, with 13% reporting that they were somewhat familiar with these admissions resources. Likewise, 43% reported limited familiarity with the existence of campus multicultural affairs departments, with 39% reporting limited familiarity with campus visit days designed especially to recruit students of color. Comparisons of School A versus School B findings revealed that students in School A were more familiar with diversity resources. Responses indicated that students were “not familiar at all” with: campus diversity officers, School A (25%) and School B(50%); multicultural affairs awareness, School A (58%) and School B(25%); and campus visit days designed for students of color, School A (58%), School B (25%).

Knowledge of campus diversity initiatives and resources are a critical part of helping underrepresented students bridge the two worlds of neighborhood and higher education.

These special initiatives are designed to attract, recruit, and then retain students of color by highlighting all resources that can support their college success. These special events are staffed by full time diversity officials who are responsible for establishing and maintaining a university climate that promotes diversity and inclusion. Occasions to engage with these officials serve as opportunities to gain firsthand exposure to programs such as the Educational Talent Search, Upward Bound, and overall Student Support which emphasize the promotion of students who demonstrate superior academic promise but are traditionally overlooked. Through academic, career, and financial aid counseling services, participants are made aware of options available to them after earning their high school diploma. Campus officials address college knowledge gaps by sharing crucial resources and introduced to staff to assist them with information on available postsecondary programs, college admission questions, and financial aid applications (Conley, 2007a; Pitre & Pitre, 2009).

These campus initiatives also promote the availability of campus resources in place to address both the soft skills and technical assistance through activities that enhance math and science performance and also cultivate students by building self-esteem, goal setting, and collegiate and career planning. Conley (2007a) proposes that student must be competent in (1) research inquiry and problem solving strategies; (2) core subject knowledge; (3) key learning skills and self-management; and (4) transitional knowledge, awareness, and navigation skills required to gain entry and adapt to postsecondary environments.

In summary the nature of CPGS provided, embraced, and applied was informed by measurement of these constructs. If participants were provided with technical “college knowledge” I wanted to know how they used those skills to achieve their college enrollment

objectives. The ECAQ included 15 items where participants were asked to quantify how many times they prepared recommendation letters, admission essays, and applications to two- and four-year colleges. They were also asked how many times they used various social media sources to follow postings from schools of interest. Tables illustrating findings are included in Attachment E. Illustrations of findings as reported by the student population surveyed during this inquiry are located in Appendix E. Next a discussion of parent questionnaire findings was used to demonstrate how families experienced school based CPGS.

### **Parent Questionnaire Findings**

Findings from parent questionnaires were used to extrapolate themes from other forms of analysis conducted. Here it was important to note instances where parents felt their child's school provided information required to make informed decisions during this overwhelming process. It is important to note that the student is the primary customer of the school and the school district in terms of school based CPGS. Therefore, all questionnaire results were not lifted to illustrate collective results as reported. However, the parent plays an instrumental role in the college search process. More importantly, parents are essential for any student to process financial aid requests typically required to obtain loans or any form of financial aid that makes it possible for students to attend college.

Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development Theory is used in youth leadership development circles to ground activities in a balance between youth engagement and empowerment. From this we learn the importance of scaffolding adolescent learning by helping them build on what they already know while layering additional explorations and decision making responsibilities that provide a sense of empowerment during this critical

developmental stage where they yearn for independence but still require sufficient adult guidance. For this reason, it was important to include parents as an additional data collection source that could inform my understanding of the types of information formally extended to help families support their students' decision making.

Additionally, my work over the years with urban parents throughout metropolitan Kansas City has revealed many patterns of limited awareness and preparation regardless of school affiliation. My work with the Kauffman Scholars \$2 billion college access program required me to design parent education seminars each month for parents of middle and high school cohorts. Each annual cohort of 300 students typically demonstrated similarities in their need for parental guidance and information to assist their student's decision making. These interactions served as the impetus for my design of the parental version of the ECAQ tool.

Parental participants included 20 parents, 10 from each school who were also sampled as critical partners in any adolescent's formal matriculation process. Demographics report that of the 20 parent participants, 5 were male, and 15 were female. Participants were not necessarily parents of student participants. In some cases both student and parent participated in this study. In other cases, parents of high school seniors and recent graduates were included to shape lessons learned from these stakeholders. Of the 20 parents, 13 were parents of current seniors, and 7 were parents of recent graduates. Only 38% report that they are college graduates, although 19% report that they had completed some college coursework. Low percentages of college attainment amongst parent populations strengthen the case for comprehensive college planning and guidance provided by schools for students who cannot access such at home.

The parent questionnaires (PECAQ) were almost an exact replica of the student ECAQ version, changing the language to reflect parent perceptions of their own awareness, preparation, and overall levels of parental support received from the school during their child's transitional planning. Parents were asked how prepared they felt to manage their child's college planning process. They were also asked to evaluate their awareness of relevant resources in the areas of admission requirements, college entrance exams, multicultural student resources, and financial aid options. Illustrations of findings in the more critical areas as reported by the parent population surveyed during this inquiry are reported throughout this chapter.

Parents are critical stakeholders in this process. While the student is the primary individual who should be equipped with overview information and relevant resources, parents cannot be left out of the equation. Students are minors and are typically dependent on adults so there is not much they can do without parental permission, financial sponsorship, and overall approval. Findings from parent questionnaires were somewhat similar to student questionnaire response, supporting the need for information and more communication from the school to educate families on the road to college and all that is entailed.

School A parents accessed planning help from various sources, and assigned ratings of "very helpful" or "extremely helpful" to help received from family (72%), community organizations (18%) and the internet (72%). Only 36% of School A parents rated school based CPGS as "very helpful" or "extremely helpful." Findings from open ended PECAQ narrative prompts reported that the most helpful planning assistance parents received from School A included:

Senior parent meeting.

I did not receive any help from School A.

None.

Helping my student join the National Guard.

Counselor talks she provided information about to me.

Internet searches.

Of this parent cohort, 3 parents reported that they did not receive any helpful planning assistance from School A. Parents reported that there was “no parental assistance received at all” from the school in the helping their student to:

Set goals and action steps to check regularly (45%)

Time was set aside to monitor my student’s progress with counselors (55%)

How to choose a college (36%)

Planning checklist for 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grades (45%)

Researching admission requirements for schools of interest (36%)

Significant percentages of parent respondents were not provided with information or technical assistance to help direct their child’s college exploration and selection processes.

In fact 64% recommended that college planning workshops be offered to students every year of high school. Qualitative questionnaire findings from the cohort reported that parents varied greatly in their comfort with managing their student’s college planning:

I feel somewhat comfortable given that I would never rely on anyone to do everything for us.

I feel somewhat prepared with all that’s available on line.

I don’t handle his planning, I assist when needed.

I would actually put the responsibility in my student’s hands. I see it as a part of growing up. I don’t think was prepared because I didn’t see it as my job at this point.

I am more the exception to the rule, because most inner city parents of high school students lack personal higher education unlike myself so they need more help than I would.

Similarly, 45% of School B parents rated school based CPGS as “very helpful” or “extremely helpful.” Members of this parent cohort reported planning help from family (64%), community organizations (72%) and the internet (82%) as “very helpful” or “extremely helpful” resources. Findings from open ended PECAQ narrative prompts report that the most helpful planning assistance parents received from School B included:

College admission reps who visited the school and all the documented checklists, websites, etc. they and the school counselors provided.

Her school stayed in constant contact with me about my daughter’s progress.

They make sure the students are prepared for their ACT test with dates and prep classes.

The school help the students with their college admission letters and during their junior and senior year of school they schedule at least 30 to 40 college visits at the school.

Of this parent cohort, 3 parents reported that they did not receive any helpful planning assistance from School A. Parents reported that there was “no parental assistance received at all” from the school in the helping their student to:

Set goals and action steps to check regularly (36%)

Time was set aside to monitor my student’s progress with counselors (45%)

How to choose a college (27%)

Planning checklist for 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grades (27%)

Researching admission requirements for schools of interest (36%)

These statistical findings are similar to those of School A’s parent cohort. However, the mandatory College Applications Course required is a source of technical assistance designed to equip all graduates with college planning knowledge. This might affect the level of technical assistance parents need as student preparation was significantly greater in School B.

In this setting parents emphasized parental involvement in their recommendations to improve the college planning experiences of other students and parents:

More parental involvement.

Beginning of 10<sup>th</sup> grade there needs to be a check on their academic skills; academic approach; nurture.

It really comes down to parent involvement and guidance and LOTS of question asking at (School B), it's a matter of just showing up when information is being given and then utilizing the information given. It's all there and we all need to realize our kids DO NEED guidance and shouldn't be left to handle it all on their own.

Require ACT prep semester classes as a part of the curriculum like (School B) did in 2008-2009. Also require College Admissions as a semester class.

### **Awareness**

Findings reported extremely low parental awareness in many critical areas that can make or break a student's bridge from high school to college enrollment. Findings reported low parental awareness of financial aid resources especially available for low-income students with financial need. There was also low parental awareness in campus resources designed especially to promote awareness of diversity resources available to support students of color in their application and collegiate processes. Furthermore, parents overwhelmingly reported low awareness of scholarship resources which are the most critical component of college affordability, even beyond financial aid which is limited in its usage to tuition expenses only; whereas scholarships can be applied to more informal expenses associated with the true cost of college attendance.

### **Reflections**

When asked if they felt prepared to manage their student's college planning on their own, parents reported:

I don't think I'm prepared because I didn't see it as my job at this point.

I don't handle his planning well. I assist when needed.

It is her responsibility. That's a part of growing up.

These responses indicated that parents believe that students are handling college exploration and decision making activities. Parents rely on schools to prepare their students. Schools rely on students to take the initiative to manage their own process. Students rely on adults at school and home to guide them. Yet, gaps in communication and awareness make it easy for the proverbial ball to get dropped.

### **CPGS**

In the case of school based guidance sought or received, parents suggested the following improvements to support college bound students:

A class should be provided to those who are serious about attending college after graduation.

Counselors and staff actually qualified and motivated to provide information.

More meetings with parents and counselors.

Nothing. My student was prepared.

Talks with students, more college visits with no fees.

### **Support Systems**

Parents reported that they received help from a variety of sources, listing internet research and community based organizations as significant contributors. Parents at both schools expressed some level of shared responsibility for college planning with their student and school staff, even in cases where parents indicated more reliance on the student to

navigate their own transitional process. This shared responsibility posits parental guidance as an essential component in the empowerment of disenfranchised students who may require greater technical assistance and support to access college. As parents may have additional children, fragmented knowledge of the competitive process and required resources may affect other family members beyond the enrolled high school student. Gaps in awareness and social capital of urban families must be addressed to effectively remedy traditions of limited college access for urban students.

Collectively, parents report that no assistance was received in the areas of setting goals (43%), counselor monitoring (52%), researching admissions requirements (38%), and planning checklist to keep students on track (38%). These figures represent significant percentages of urban parents who still remain unaware even as late as the final semester of their student's senior year. Furthermore, almost one-third of all parents surveyed reported that they were not familiar at all with campus diversity resources such as Campus Diversity Officers, Multicultural Affairs departments, and admissions personnel. These relationships play a significant role in student selection during collegiate recruitment efforts. In the areas of financial aid, parents reported more promising degrees of awareness with almost half of the parent participants describing themselves as very familiar or extremely familiar with a range of financial aid options.

### **The Faces Behind The Findings**

Maximum variation sampling based on academic status, class rank, grade point averages, and the presence or absence of a transitional plan were used to bring forth 2 school cohorts; each consisting of 4 diverse cases that distinctively manifested the phenomenon of interest within each school setting (Patton, 2002, p. 243). The intentional identification of a

sample subgroup with members that were as different as possible from one another was used to capture and describe any patterns that might emerge from the 4 selected students representing each school cohort; 2 who appeared to be “on the college track,” and 2 others deemed marginally average or low-performing students. Figure 3 illustrates the final 8 cases selected for interviews served as the units of analysis in efforts to ascertain how each type of student navigates and makes decisions regarding their transition from high school into college or not.

Figure 3.

*Academic Profiles of Interview Participants.*

School A	GPA	ACT	Class Rank Percentile	Current Status
Blossom	4.20	20 of 36	100%	Enrolled at 4 Year
Shadow	1.98	13 of 36	28%	High School Senior
Houston	2.60	17 of 36	58%	Enrolled at 2 Year
Whisper	3.10	14 of 36	99%	High School Senior
School B				
Brian	3.20	23 of 36	78%	High School Senior
Diamond	3.00	23 of 36	76%	Enrolled at 4 Year
DJ	2.98	29 of 36	25%	Enrolled at 4 Year
Malik	2.67	20 of 36	5%	Graduate Not Enrolled

**School A**

School A has a reputation tarnished with attention received as an example of despair in urban education. Declared by Missouri education officials as “academically deficient” due to the low percentages of students enrolling in 4-year colleges or universities, with only 65.1% of this school’s graduates actually taking the 2012-2103 ACT, and only 5% scoring

above the state average composite score of 21.6. School A's cohort of students was comprised of four distinct individuals whose experiences with school-based, college-planning services manifested in unique ways:

1. Blossom - Former Valedictorian, Freshman at Out of State 4-Year University
2. Shadow - Chronically low performing senior
3. Houston - Recent graduate and community college freshman
4. Whisper - Salutatorian Senior

Their stories, as told using narrative statements, and these data sources offer a rich depiction and first person accounts of their perceptions of engagement with college planning services and the need for technical assistance received or desired. Data collected using the questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis processes were used to construct each case. Analysis of documents distributed to students and parents within the same school were also used to frame an understanding of the type of information provided to each student and the overall school expectation in terms of communicating what students should be doing during the last few months of their senior year to prepare for post high school transitions. Since the document analysis consisted of the same documents for each of the four cases within each cohort, the general analysis and findings are discussed in their entirety without revisiting findings from such repetitively for each student within the same school setting. Findings from each case are reported using arbitrary pseudonyms to protect the identity of the individual and the schools.

#### **Student 1: Blossom - College Freshman and Former Valedictorian**

Blossom (pseudonym) currently attends college out of state at a southern historically Black university (HBCU), utilizing her full-ride scholarship and enjoying her freshman year on her own terms. She was a former valedictorian and graduated with a few college credits

through a dual credit enrollment program at the local community college. Blossom's descriptive statistics from questionnaire findings reported that she is an A student, with a 4.20 GPA, who viewed herself as college bound. Findings also reported that she is a first generational college student whose mother and father both did not complete high school. She consistently ranked her awareness and preparation in all aspects of the college planning process as extremely favorable in every category. Her open ended narrative responses described the benefits she derived from an online program through the school district:

The most helpful planning assistance I received from school was a college preparatory program I attended in sophomore and junior year. The program helped me decide what type of career I wanted. I also received college credit and attended college classes. As a result I was able to get an idea of what general college classes are like.

It is important to note that most students do not participate in this extra layer of college access reserved for a small percentage of high ranking students in each school. During her interview she spoke highly of not only the MCAC college advisor, but also the KCMSD central office personnel who made it possible for her to participate in the weeklong, spring-break college tour where she received several free ride scholarship offers on the spot.

This unique opportunity emerged through a partnership with my organization, Black and College Bound, and another community-based nonprofit, which took 50 high school teens to visit 10 schools in 4 states during a weeklong trip. At the time I didn't interact much with Blossom, who was merely one of the youth added by a partnership with KCMSD, which sponsored 10 students from various public high schools. While we became vaguely acquainted with one another during the tour. This interview was my first genuine conversation and interaction with Blossom. However, through narrative prompt responses and information gleaned from her questionnaire I have become familiar with her situation

and CPGS experiences. She has since reached out to me for mentoring and college planning assistance during her visit home throughout the collegiate Winter Break.

### **Reflections**

The most dominant theme identified in the development of Blossom's case was *Reflections*, which was informed by expressions of what students felt could or should have been done in hindsight. The constructs of *Personal Gaps Noted* and *Process Improvement Recommendations* were heavily identified throughout several instances where the student made meaning of her college planning process and transition into college. The first interpretive code for this theme was *Reflective Gaps Noted*, involving her expressions of insufficient academic preparation, rigor, and knowledge required for college success. Her revelations as to the life changing opportunities presented as a result of the tour and questionnaire responses revealed a host of reflective gaps noted in the areas of academic preparation, social capital, and awareness of resources in place specifically for students of color. When asked what types of assistance she would have liked to receive before graduation, Blossom became adamant about the gaps noted in her own preparation once she enrolled in college. She boldly described how the lack of preparation hinders college success, then continued with academic preparation she felt all students should be provided:

I do wish they had an ACT class in high school. I have heard that most high schools have ACT classes. We should have a class that basically talks about college--a college preparation class. They should have that in high school. We should write more papers. At (School A), I went there four years and I probably wrote less than 20 papers. So that does prohibit you from you know once you go to college. I have trouble writing papers. Once you go to college you may have trouble writing papers.

I must admit the pseudonym assigned this student resulted from the "before and after" personalities presented during the spring break tour then almost one year later after

experiencing some college. She has truly blossomed and no longer fades to the background as the shy young lady she used to be. The more we interacted, I gained a sense that Blossom felt almost a hostage to a chaotic school environment where it is not always cool to be smart. Her shrinking violet tendencies had been replaced as she embarked upon a new academic environment that requires some sense of staying power to make it to and through degree attainment.

The second and final interpretive code used to inform the *Reflections* theme was *Process Improvement Recommendations*, apprehended through instances where participants addressed perceptions of the quality of CPGS received, with insights and one differentiated treatment were missing components that could enhance the model for all students. Blossom has since taken the charge of using her winter recess to help others get prepared. She was asked to be a guest speaker for several senior classes and two community groups to share insights on things they should consider during their senior year planning. Our interview took place after she spoke with a few senior classes at her alma mater. Not only was she directive in her comments to students, she boldly kept reminding me to take note of her particular points of emphasis as if she believed that my study could be a vehicle to tell her story while helping others make different choices. She urged:

Most students should network. They should be able to speak to someone that has been to college. They should know about finances, scholarships, coursework in college. They should know about transportation back and forth to college, how much they have to pay for it, campus life and a lot of stuff like that.

Overall, Blossom described her school-based CPGS in a positive light noting that the counselor operated in a very proactive manner by continuously making scholarships, resources, and college planning opportunities readily available.

## **Support Systems**

Blossom's depictions of support received make constant references to school administrators who she described as being significant contributors to her process and outcomes. The constructs of *Within School Supports* and *Personal/Emotional Supports* constitute the theme of *Support Systems*; a predominant theme in this particular case. For Blossom, the school vice principal and other administrators typically offered up resources to assist her, such as copies, faxes, etc. While Blossom's relationships with various administrators and school personnel seemed positive, depictions and personality do not appear to describe anything more than a reciprocated technical interaction, whereas other students tended to describe a more interpersonal relationship with school staff. Blossom's accounts seemed to lend themselves to basic transactional exchanges where staff would assist her with copies or faxes but not the interpersonal relationships where some school staff typically extend "freedoms" or "favors" to those select few students who hang out in their offices or assist them with basic errands from time to time.

Findings from Blossom's questionnaire and interview responses demonstrated that she received college planning help from a range of sources including the internet, community organizations, family, and friends who already graduated. She also accessed extended school support, from both school personnel and even central office administrators who sponsored her college tour participation. This in turn connected her to organizations like mine that work in the community to support college bound students and families. In this particular case, there are even future benefits to such connectivity for this particular student.

This study however examined the common experiences of all students within particular school settings. Therefore, it was important to determine which, if any, protocols

were in place to assist all students with their transitional planning needs. The lens of critical race theory challenges us to question the inequities that exist which render disparate outcomes for students of color, especially when these outcomes are socially accepted as normal because society has become so used to them. Blossom's experiences suggest that students have school personnel beyond the counselor who take an active interest in monitoring their college planning progress. Other cases in this study affirm such, but the results were not always favorable. While many students report positive interactions with caring adults, several findings disclose gaps in accountability for specific advancements toward college enrollment for the full student body.

### **Process**

Blossom reflected heavily on disparities they perceived in how inner city students are prepared for higher education. Blossom shared discrepancies she sees in how students are prepared for college based on her interactions with freshman peers in her classes. She recognizes the advantages she received by being ranked as the top student in her high school. Her empathetic disposition led her to wonder why others did not receive similar preparation and exposure when it appeared that some high school courses moved at a much slower pace, allowing teachers ample time to cover more information on college academic expectations.

Our discussions heavily supported previous characterizations of attributes unique within School A's culture that contribute to a culture of disparate college placement rates. She also shared that her high school's particular school culture entertained a lot of nonsense, where students and teachers alike indulged in wasting time as a result of poor student behavior. She felt strongly about the school's reputation for hindered productivity and

academic results. During her interview, she criticized her fellow students for not taking their education seriously, stating:

Those type of students—some of them, are...most of them are disruptive. The teachers do not try to help them get on the right path. A lot of teachers talk about the choices they make. A lot of them just graduated. Some of them didn't graduate but didn't receive the same type of preparedness unless they actually seek it out because students with a 3.0 and under, you look at them as mainly a troublemaker. They didn't journey so you have a certain stereotype about them that maybe they're troublemakers not as motivated.

Her comments reflected such a strong sense of disdain for the individuals as her characterization of environmental factors that were described as less than optimal. As I asked her more about her perceptions of low performing students, she shared several personal reflections that characterized her school and the lack of academic rigor based on her own experiences:

Well I would say there's really no reason to struggle academically or complain about class. Math class is really not that hard. I know a lot of students who complained about the teachers. They say the teachers don't know what they're doing. Students just don't want to take advantage of tutors inside the school. They have tutors five days out of the week after school. If they wanted to pass they would just go to tutoring. So there's no reason to really fail a class at (School A). It's not advanced at all.

Throughout our interactions over the next few months Blossom has repeatedly indicated her contempt for the disparate academic environment at School A. She enjoyed her high school experiences but has come into a keen sense of awareness regarding her own gaps in terms of being prepared for life after high school. When asked what is missing that would ensure that all students successfully have a plan or roadmap to direct their transition from high school, she recommended:

At (School A) they had a checklist students should abide by. They should have a program with a college student in the office at least twice a week. Well the checklist was blank. It was not very specific to tell you what to do as far as applying for

scholarships and applying for colleges. I noticed that some schools do have a checklist and it tells them how many to apply for and they actually stay on the students.

This made me inquire about her school's culture and whether or not someone was responsible for "staying on the students" to hold them accountable for their own progress.

Yeah, we do. Our vice principals will stay on you but a lot of students...well, it's basically your job to take it in but a lot of students won't do it. A lot of teachers will stay on you but a lot of students still won't.

My personal knowledge of high school operational structures and the roles of administrators and counselors prompted me to consider her response as evidence of a potentially unique case where she may have received differential treatment. Since Blossom was a high performing, valedictorian with a pleasant personality there might have been instances where extended school personnel took an active interest in her transitional planning over and above the boundaries of their official duties.

### **Outcomes**

Like so many other urban students, Blossom viewed college as a means to escape a life of limited resources. After she completed her questionnaire and interview process, she continued to reach out to me for guidance and support every now and then. We have had several conversations and meetings where she has shared more details about her family and school situations. Questionnaire findings revealed that both her mother and father did not complete high school. Through these interactions I have developed a closer rapport with her and a better understanding of her family and home life, and how they affect her decision making. On one particular evening we went to dinner after a random meeting at her alma mater. She graciously sent several text messages, emails, and even a formal thank you card to express her appreciation for our dinner discussion. She informed me that her family

cannot always afford to dine out. Blossom shared her love of her new university and campus experiences throughout the course of our dinner conversation.

Over time, Blossom has come to view me as another caring adult in her support network who can assist her with her journey through higher education and life. Our relationship has changed significantly from our initial interactions where I initially invited her to participate in this study. She has made it a practice to reach out with periodic updates via text and email messages. A few months after our most intense periods of interactions, Blossom sent me an update to let me know that she was doing well her freshman year. She had recently met my former staff member who serves as a campus leader for several campus organizations at her university:

Hello Ms. Ervin, how are you? I hope you are doing well. I met (Carlos) in February and we had lunch on a Saturday at the school cafe. It went well and he's very nice. Thanks for connecting us. I've been very busy with school and. I can't wait for the semester to end. I just finished midterms with straight As and I'm currently in 5 different organizations. My phone has been messing up since February but it's working now. I'd like to call you and catch up.

Her heartfelt appreciation as expressed in the thank you card she mailed and her diligent email updates every month remind me that many of us who work with adolescents remain unaware of how influential we can be on the lives of teens seeking to find their way. It is easy to interact in such a routine manner, that we often remain unaware of the personal stories and challenges that our students have. We focus so heavily on the academic outcomes that receive the spotlight, and do not always make the time to build a more genuine rapport with the whole person striving to reach his or her next level. While school personnel do not always have the luxury of doing so, there are opportunities for counselors and educators to design interactions or assignments that can help students reveal more about their innermost

values, dreams, and personal objectives. It is important that we make the time to gain accurate depictions of their college and career goals if we are going to provide genuine guidance and post high school planning support to help them reach their next level. Without such, students may receive generic, if any, guidance that does not truly empower them to build the interpersonal and academic networks required for adulthood success.

### **Student 2: Shadow - High School Senior**

Shadow (pseudonym) is a senior this year at School A and is the younger sister of Blossom. Descriptive statistical findings from her questionnaire report that she is a C student whose class rank is in the bottom percentile classifying her as a low performing student within a low performing school. She is a self-described convert who used to “fight and get in trouble all the time” but now wants desperately to be able to go away to college and enjoy campus life like her older sister. Her challenge is a low GPA of 1.90, which continues to serve as a deterrent during her personal college planning and the identification of scholarship resources to help low-performing students. When asked about her GPA, she proudly boasts a 3.10, with a class rank above 28% of her peers, then adds clarifications that distinguish her senior year 3.10 GPA from her cumulative high school GPA of 1.90. Despite her low GPA, findings from her narrative questionnaire prompts reported that she views herself as college bound:

I consider myself as a college bound student because I prepare myself with the skills and courses I learned in high school. What makes someone college bound is wanting success in life and knowing what he or she has to do to achieve their goals.

She takes great pride in her recent accomplishment while expressing discontent with her lack of concern or academic focus during previous years. She does, however, remain upbeat,

motivated and excited about experiencing campus life after high school, heavily attributed to her sister's help and constant motivation to pursue college options:

The best advice I received was from my sister who always gets on me and she tells me college is great for her. And I want to live the life that she is living, instead of living the life that I am back home.

## **CPGS**

The theme *CPGS* was quite prevalent in this case as the constructs *Formal Service Provision*, *Individual Interactions*, and *Systemwide Interactions* were apprehended through Shadow's characterization of assistance received within the school setting. Although Shadow's school has a Missouri College Advisement Counselor and a high school counselor (who was a 7th grade counselor for many years up until mid-semester this school year), Shadow regularly visits the high school counselor all the time as her primary source of help with her planning needs. The general counselor's focus is more on student fulfillment of graduation requirements than college planning, but when faced with the reality of needing technical college planning assistance, Shadow is adamant about the lack of technical assistance received by her MCAC college counselor, declaring:

The current college advisor--she doesn't give scholarships (information) out. She wants us to research them, which we supposed to do anyway but she doesn't really help us or help us pick the college that we want to go to, and she loses information.

Shadow added a bit more to describe her displeasure with the school's advisement approach, "my college advisor she really doesn't help but she's there. I think it's not effective because everyone says the same thing about her. When asked what types of things she thinks a college advisor in a high school should be doing, Shadow is quick to suggest "pulling kids out of class, giving them help selecting colleges that she thinks they would be good at giving the GPA."

This causes a dilemma for Shadow because her older sister consistently encourages her to seek school guidance to help her stay on track of her college planning needs. The older sibling often relays such productive and admirable accounts of her own experiences with the CPGS provided by the school's previous Missouri College Advisor Corps college advisor who was diligent in providing resources for all students, both high and low performers.

There were sections for 1.0s and up, 2.0s and up, 3.0s and up; so everyone had a chance. There are tons of organizations that provided lots of scholarships. I know a lot of friends that had 2.0's and under and they received a lot of scholarships.

### **Outcomes**

Another prominent theme apprehended during the analysis of Shadow's case development was the theme *Outcomes*, derived from sources of tangible and intangible evidence of action steps taken to advance post high school objectives. Constructs used to assess instances of this theme were captured as students described the presence or absence of transition plans, accountability of school personnel to monitor student progress, expressions of remorse or discontent with college planning decision, and differentiations between services provided to high versus low performers. Blossom expressed her disappointment that Shadow does not appear to have access to the same supportive CPGS that she received under the previous MCAC advisor. The two-year term limit has resulted in a new MCAC advisor whose approach is different. Blossom offered her younger sister points of encouragement and ongoing hope that college is possible for everyone, reminding her that personal diligence is the differentiating factor, adding that she does keep in contact with many of her fellow graduates who are experiencing mixed results in the areas of college success:

I did keep in contact with a lot of students that had a 3.0 and under. A lot of them are at Penn Valley. Some of them with higher GPAs did go to major colleges like Mizzou, UMKC, and KU but drop out. A lot of them do have a full ride to a community college so a lot of them are in college and some of them aren't. We had about 80 students graduate and I'd say maybe 50 of them are in college.

My time with Shadow was a heartfelt emotional rollercoaster. At first I was excited for her as a senior counting down the last few months of her senior year with hope of a brighter future that will begin in just a few short months. Toward the end of our discussion I felt angered as we both wrestled with the reality that she might not be afforded the opportunities she desperately desired. Shadow is quite excited to attend college and experience the campus life she yearned for. Once we parted ways I began to feel a sense of anger toward the system that failed to equip her academically and provide her with realistic college actions that were within her reach.

Shadow was so bubbly in the beginning of our interview discussion, beaming with pride as she informed me of her "senior year GPA" of 3.10, which was definitely a personal accomplishment. The more we discussed the particular aspects of her engagement with school personnel who assist students with this overwhelming process, the more she appeared to lose her spark. She described the process itself as "unfair," adding that she didn't receive a lot of CPGS help because of her low GPA, which also prevented her from being allowed to participate in field trip visits to college campuses. Typically, schools will extend such opportunities to the students who already meet the admission requirements. However, this could systematically lead to many students being repeatedly excluded thereby further restricting their awareness of and access to higher education program options.

This revelation of patterns of exclusion evoked a sense of limited exposure and access to college exploration opportunities available even within the school setting. Analysis of

document sources from School A corroborated limited notifications where college planning information was conveyed to students. Documents heavily focused on graduation requirements instead of reminders of college planning deadlines or resources for School A students. One particular document source was the Senior Year Checklist which was distributed to seniors at the beginning of the school year as a reminder of all items they should track over the next nine months of school. Of the 24 items on this checklist, addressed deadlines for senior dues, senior pictures, graduation pictures, diploma pick up date, graduation rehearsal, and other senior year countdown activities. Less than 6 activity reminders could be attributed to non-graduation compliance. These six items were still not college planning or post high school planning reminders. Language explicitly reflected within this document source addressed:

- Senior class meeting– Information shared regarding senior dues, graduation, senior class trip, credits, etc. (4 instances)
- Food drive for community service hours
- Senior parent night/parent teacher conference – administrators, counselors and senior sponsors will meet with parents/guardians.

Incorporation of heuristic lens of analysis allowed me to rely on my own professional knowledge of key deadlines that all seniors should be mindful of during their senior year. The document made no mention of ACT exam dates offered only six times per year. There were no dates or activities that lent themselves to registration with community based resources that provide ACT test prep or college planning assistance. Most importantly, there was no reminder of the FAFSA deadlines where students must file their federal application for financial aid before colleges will process applications for university-based financial aid. That means if families are late in filing their taxes any time after January 1<sup>st</sup>, financial aid resources are only available on a first come-first served basis. Those who file federal taxes

in April greatly reduce the likelihood of campus financial aid resources still being available. Financial assistance is a great need for lower income students whose families do not have the resources to pay for college. However, there was no mention of any of these pertinent dates within the documents disseminated to the senior class student body.

Findings like these extracted across all data sources rendered The notions of limited access and differentiated levels of support took central stage as I began to make meaning of her experience and the technical assistance that was or was not extended to her because of her status as a lower performing student. To explore this further, I asked Shadow if she felt that this could be an isolated experience.

Everybody gets the same type of help except when it comes to field trips to colleges. You have to have a certain GPA to go on field trips, which I think that is just not fair. Everybody should get to go on the field trip because everybody deserves a chance.

Her one recommendation for the school to improve its CPGS model was to make sure that they are “giving all students equal amount of help that they deserve.” When asked more about what she thought all high school students should know when faced with the challenge of planning for life at the high school, Shadow responded, “Being prepared in school and having a plan about what you want to do when you get out of school like getting a job. How you’re going to obtain that job, how you’re going to stick to what you want to do in college, picking a major and what major you’re interested in--instead of switching before you get there.

### **Support Systems**

Descriptive statistics extracted from the questionnaire reported that both of Shadow’s parents did not complete high school. She also relayed that her parents also suffer extreme financial hardships and have not been able to provide financial, academic, or any other type

of support. Shadow's father served as a parent participant in this study. His questionnaire responses described his unfamiliarity with technical assistance in most areas.

Shadow lives with an elderly grandmother in a senior citizen housing complex where she has limited access to people outside of retirement age. She does however have an aunt who provides financial support, school participation fees, and even incentives for strong academic performance. Her aunt is not able to provide technical college planning assistance for either sister, making reliance on school-based services even more critical. Shadow's enthusiasm and excitement about college and campus possibilities stood out because most high school students in School A share in an extreme school culture where graduation is often perceived as a lofty goal.

Many of my programmatic interactions with them reveal how challenging it is for them to even envision future aspirations and possibilities beyond twelfth grade. Repeatedly I am devastated to watch their struggle as they are challenged to vision beyond graduation and vision their lives in the fall of next year. By the spring semester of senior year, it should not be such a daunting task to articulate some semblance of a transition after graduation.

Typically, that very vision should have been the seed of opportunity and desire that was planted during the earlier years of high school and used to drive the planning steps required to access the college and majors which operationalize the goal. It is an extreme school culture where graduation is the goal because so many peers must repeat senior year or fulfill extensive credit recovery options. Many will opt out and choose to attend alternative vocational programs instead of repeating even one semester enrolled as a high school senior again. In this setting, graduation is the goal.

My interactions with Shadow brought forth a greater desire to investigate instances where schools provide guidance services, but there may not be equitable access for all. Shadow's eagerness to get to the next level and her degree of clarity regarding what school-based CPGS should transpire made it clear that she possessed the will and desire to do what was required, even if she got off track earlier in her high school career. As a result, the concept of reliance emerged to explore cases where students had no one else but the school's CPGS to rely on for the technical college planning help desired.

### **Student 3: Houston - Recent Graduate Attending Community College**

Houston (pseudonym), a recent graduate of School A provided a riveting account of what happens when students have no transition plan and do not even know where to begin figuring out the complex decision-making lists entailed in post high school planning. Descriptive statistic findings reported that Houston's GPA was 2.60 with a class rank in the lower percentile, classifying him as a low performing student within a low performing school.

#### **Awareness**

The most prominent theme that emerged during the analysis of Houston's case development was that of *Awareness* as he described how overwhelming it was to decide a future course of direction to pursue after graduation. Throughout his account of his senior year, Houston described several decision-making explorations with the counselor that were helpful:

I was kind of confused on what to do. Should I go or should I not go?  
Should I attend a two year or four year school?  
What college should I go to because I wasn't sure at all what to do after high school.  
Should I sit around and play video games or find a job?

Questionnaire findings reported that when asked about other sources he used for assistance, his responses rated family as a key source of help accessed. It was apparent that friends and family only provided general fodder for thought, but not technical assistance or even specific areas of guidance to help him explore possible options or make life-altering decisions. Parents also completed a parent ECAQ submission. Descriptive statistics included in his parent's questionnaire findings reported awareness gaps in the areas of admissions process and financial aid. His parent also described school based CPGS received as "somewhat effective" overall. Within been in the narrative two responses shared. This parental data source confirmed trends noted amongst other parent participants who also reflected a desire for more information from the school and more interactions with counselors.

Houston informed me that "only school" provided help. "Well I had people telling me or asking me if I was going to college. I was like yeah. They said you should move somewhere far away from Kansas City." Peers were also a source of influence, "I had friends to persuade me to go so I was like I might as well." Time became a major point of consideration, prompting daily interactions with the CPGS department:

I wasn't sure. It was getting closer to the end of the school and I was rushing, trying to figure out what did I want to do. Did I want to go to college? I mean I had friends to persuade me to go, so I was like I might as well.

Houston's reflective frustration resulted in several recommendations brought forth when asked what other students should be made aware of or what schools should provide to help students prepare transitional plans:

They should know what to do because I didn't have no clue. Well, first they need to consult with the college advisor I mean just to get time to think about what they want.

## **Process**

*Process* was another predominant theme that emerged as Houston shared his ownership of responsibility for setting a course of action and personal oversight of his planning progress. Houston is a strong advocate of personal initiative and responsibility. Although he was overwhelmed during this process he did not attribute that to a lack of school-based guidance. In fact, his perception of his school's CPGS model was quite positive, sharing "my college advisor and my counselor--that was a great help to me." He added, "Well I believe you should have your own plan. It's basically a dream or something you want to do." His career goals included becoming a "technician, game designer or something." When asked to reflect on his own experiences and what might have made him better prepared for life after high school he responded, "if only I had known what I wanted to do."

In this particular case, counseling knowledge of career interests might have been a great requisite for helping him explore college and career options, which are ultimately interconnected. Houston is currently enrolled in a local community college. He expressed regret with enrollment in a two-year college instead of a four-year university. So he is looking forward to completing his associate's degree and transferring to a four-year university.

## **Outcomes**

Houston admitted that he should have planned a little harder. His self-described procrastination contributed to his delayed decision making, forcing him to scramble at the last minute to secure college enrollment at the local community college. His current school is located within the same two mile radius from his home and previous high school. His

school selection definitely did not correspond with his dreams of leaving Kansas City and going “far away” for college. He expressed *Decision Remorse* as he reflected on what he would have done differently stating “maybe instead of a two year, transfer into a four year school.” In cases like this, college counselors could offer discussion lists of topics that families can jointly address when identifying key considerations for college selection. Thought provoking topics of consideration can be especially helpful for students whose parents have not attended college and may be unfamiliar of relevant factors that must be considered (Savitz-Romer & Broussard, 2012).

#### **Student 4: Whisper - High School Senior and Salutatorian**

Whisper’s (pseudonym) case, in my opinion, epitomized the need for this study. Descriptive statistics extracted from her questionnaire findings reported that she is an A student who is ranked within the top percentile of her school’s graduating cohort. She is currently a senior graduating this May and is currently seeking to pursue any kind of college experience as long as it is within 15 miles of a targeted east coast city where her enlisted boyfriend is stationed. I came to know Whisper during one of my weekly Black & College Bound programming sessions teaching students college and career readiness skills. As the group worked on designing resumes for summer employment opportunities, I instructed students to list their GPA or class ranks if they were admirable measures, and disclosure of such might garner positive attention. Whisper was overheard saying, “My class rank is number 1, what does that mean though?” Her question rang with great alarm as I was intrigued by her plight as a high performing student in a low performing school. Her unique disposition was of great interest given the nature of this study and the fundamental research

questions addressing whether or not all students receive similar CPGS regardless of class rank or school affiliation.

### **Awareness**

Shocked at her lack of awareness, I asked Whisper, “What do you mean - “what does that mean?” She informed me that she was unfamiliar with the significance of being ranked as one of the top students in one’s graduating class. Whisper’s class rank changed to salutatorian, becoming ranked in second place once grades were processed for another quarter. Again, unfamiliarity and perhaps a passive or subdued personality appeared to contribute to a degree of aloofness or lack of concern regarding distinction as valedictorian or salutatorian. She appeared unfazed as to her status as either the first or second highest ranked graduate in the graduating class. While this response can be attributed to personal attributes, it also can be viewed as an indicator of school culture relative to the traditional hype inherent in high schools surrounding graduation countdowns and student performance. (This was an extreme contrast to the anxiety I witnessed in School B where four students were making a very emotional appeal to the counselor as to why the currently ranked valedictorian should not hold that honor after transferring into the school during junior year.) Nonetheless, Whisper’s demeanor could be characterized as uncaring, nonchalant, or grossly unaware of the hoopla associated with the rank of valedictorian versus salutatorian--if in fact it genuinely does make a difference.

Her class rank is no indicator of the constructs that comprise the theme Awareness, College Minded Mentalities, College Planning Knowledge, or Degrees of Knowing. In fact the blaring absence of such was so prominent that this case was coded as the antithesis of this theme, more than just weak evidence of these interpretive codes. Self-concept and self-

efficacy are used to distinguish student beliefs that they can go to college from personal beliefs that they have control over their decisions and outcomes (Savitz-Rome & Bouffard 2012). How students come to view themselves significantly impacts their predisposition to actually attend college (Hossler, 1999). Extending Hossler's model, (Freeman, 2005) put forth three classifications of Black students in the predisposition stage of developing college-going goals:

*Knowers* whose plans to go to college are within reach and considered a part of their academic identity;

*Seekers* who recently came into believing that college is within reach and have just begun to exert effort in operationalizing a college bound identity; and

*Dreamers* who do not believe that college is attainable but may fantasize about it without putting forth action to even try to achieve it.

Although she is ranked well academically, Whisper's overall lack of awareness fits within the Seekers predisposition category. Her lack of progress at such a late date could be attributed to a recent acceptance that college might be attainable. Students in these three groups have differentiated college planning needs and motivations, and should be matched with intervention services based on their predisposition group (Freeman, 2005). Connecting Whisper with my nonprofit, Black and College Bound Scholars has allowed her opportunities to embrace and solidify a college-going identity through coaching that helped her create a plan with concrete action steps and contacts that are tangible measures of progress.

## **CPGS**

The theme, *CPGS*, was yet another area where Whisper's case could be characterized by the blatant absence of construct such as *Formal Service Provisions* and *Individual Interactions* where students were provided with traditional CPGS and technical assistance

during their communications with colleges. Subsequent conversations with Whisper revealed that she has had little if any guidance. In fact she reached out to me four months before graduation seeking help with tasks usually conducted at the very beginning of the college planning process. Consequential interactions with Whisper later revealed an ACT score of 14 and even more basic gaps in awareness of basic college planning components. For reasons such as this, the ACT score serves as a statistical measure of standardized college readiness assessment scores use by college admissions officials to supplement school records and categorized student coursework, gray, and class rank amongst national percentile for the purposes of making enrollment decisions. The score can range from 11 to 36, so Whisper's 14 is undeniably on the low end of this college readiness indicator. Regardless, her academic performance within this school setting should still warrant some level of extra attention as high school staff in any setting typically pay some level of attention to their top-ranked students. They are the ones who will deliver commencement speeches and possibly be featured for public relations opportunities that promote the school's outputs in terms of its graduates and what is in store for them post-graduation. Taken together, Whisper's college awareness was still quite fragmented as of two months before graduation. She did not appear to receive technical assistance from school-based CPGS officers or others--salutatorian or not.

Per her own admission, Whisper engaged with her college planning office "probably about three times a week." Yet when asked her opinion of the office's effectiveness or the help it provided students in creating their plans to enter college, she shook her head no and shared "I don't think they get enough help because every senior doesn't have what they need to have in order to graduate." Her questionnaire findings reported that she did not receive

much help with her college planning. As a result she utilized internet searches to identify schools of interest and their admission requirements. When additional interview questions probed what technical guidance should be offered or even what might be missing from that particular school's CPGS counseling model, Whisper's responses continuously referenced "graduation" as the goal instead of "college admission," very telling two months before senior graduation. Throughout her ECAQ responses, she rated her awareness and preparation fairly high, yet her conversation also revealed glaring gaps in a basic understanding of planning activities typically associated with college bound seniors. This was of interest and explored throughout her interview, as she describe her view of what was missing from her school's CPGS model that might empower others:

Ervin: What do they need more of--more staff, more resources, more information? What is missing that would help make sure that everybody in your graduating class leaves high school with a plan for next year?

Whisper: Definitely information. More information about what they need to do to graduate.

Ervin: What types of guidance counseling services should be provided to high school juniors and seniors to help them with their transition from high school into college?

Whisper: people who were in the wrong at once, and then stepped up and went to colleges and that they like together" later adding that they come back "and talk to the people that's doing bad right now."

In this particular theme of *CPGS*, the construct of *Engagement* does not appear to have any bearing on the student's awareness of the process and heightened sense of urgency typically affiliated with the senior, graduation, college-planning countdown evident in other high schools. Although Whisper's interview was one of the last few conducted, patterns emerged from the data in a manifestation quite different from the previous cases. These instances were coded with the descriptive codes:

BARGPWR - Bargaining Power, or in Whisper's case, the absence of student's awareness of opportunities associated with race, class, gender, or academic standing as it relates to the admissions recruitment, scholarship opportunities, diversity initiatives, or other selection processes.

AWARE - knowledgeable understanding of factors, choices, or consequences that can differentiate one access to superior positioning with him in academic setting or sorting process.

This led to the creation of an additional code "unaware" to characterize the blatant patterns of disconnect with a common sense of awareness supported by the questionnaire responses and other interview transcripts:

UNAWARE - notable lack of awareness or understanding of basic tenets of college planning processes, resources, or protocols typically familiar to high school peers engaged and post high school planning activities or processes.

The coding process entailed grouping identified descriptive codes into interpretive codes. As I heard more about her personal situation and challenges, and coded the data sources, several descriptive codes were seen repeatedly in the data. These interpretive codes contributed to formulated themes to characterize the lack of family support, a transitional living situation, barriers, and the need to focus on survival as a priority instead of college access.

## **Outcomes**

The theme, *Outcomes*, captures the consequences or results of the school based CPGS model in place and measures of accountability, remorse, and evidence of a transition plan. Here, the absence of college counseling strategies for one of the highest academic performers within a low performing school informed several research questions within this study. I have recently been working a bit more closely with Whisper, at her request, to periodically

help her advance her own college planning process. She has asked for help in several areas. I have been helping Whisper to identify out-of-state colleges in her desired city, teaching her how to begin a scholarship search, since she was unfamiliar with this process as late as the end of February, and providing general resources, website information and step-by-step instructions on how to find resource information.

None of this had been previously shared by her school's high school advisor, serving grades 10-12 or the additional layer of college planning support that should be offered through MCAC, the Missouri College Advisor Corps program, recent University of Missouri graduates who serve as college advisors for two-year terms in return for reduction of financial aid balances. These MCAC counselors are placed in schools with the lowest college enrollment in the state to cultivate 'college knowledge' for underserved students, yet they are not seasoned college counselors. In fact, they are recent graduates new to the workplace, supporting Savitz-Romer's (2012) theory that underrepresented students with the greatest counseling needs receive inferior college counseling quality services.

One particular evening I accompanied Whisper to her school's "Grad Party" which was advertised using a document source flyer included in Appendix G. This particular document was festive with celebrational graphics promoting a celebration of some kind. Wording included "FAFSA" and other terms that were somewhat misleading. Once we arrived, we had to sign in at a welcome table hosted by MCAC staff from another school. We were given pamphlets from the Missouri Office of Higher Education which included FAFSA information and a college planning checklist for grades 9 through 12. There was no direction given, so when I inquired about the evening's agenda, I was informed that it was a free flowing opportunity for students and parents to check in based on their personal needs.

They could meet with the school counselor, get FAFSA help from the MCAC counselor, or visit with representatives from two area schools, University of Missouri – Kansas City and neighboring urban core institution, Penn Valley Community College.

I mingled with other parents who were just sitting at cafeteria tables unsure of what they should do. The document verbage did not inform parents to bring FAFSA tax documents required to complete the extensive financial report submission. School administrators or MCAC representatives did not make any announcements or provide direction to guests on how to maximize the interaction. Students took the opportunity to mingle with friends on a school night. Some guests entered the MCAC room to get FAFSA help, while others met with the graduation counselor to confirm up their status based on compliance with required submissions. Overall the document was coded for the absence of information conveyed as a result of my personal experience with the event and its representation of a missed opportunity where CPGS should have been provided to parents and guests.

### **Lessons Learned From School A**

These four cases within the School A cohort were extracted from a school environment plagued with dysfunction and low or no expectations of student success. Racial and spatial insulation within the segregated city also contribute to the perpetuation of disparate institutional resources that serve Black students (Anyon, 2005, Coulter, 2006). Critical race theory asserts that historically oppressed communities must combat systemic injustices like this maintained by the dominant culture as a way to suppress cultural and moral advancements (Swadener & Lubeck, 1995). In many urban schools the stories related

to college planning reflect differential treatment for students of color, especially those in lower tracked courses (Johnson & Rochkind, 2010; Pitre & Pitre, 2009).

It appears that the culture of school A reflects a recognition that top students are not necessarily prepared for college any more than students at lower academic ranks. The current school culture finds handful of teens dropping out or transferring to the Missouri Options programs the closer they get to May graduation dates. Each week as I arrive to conduct my weekly mentoring sessions, my group of students dwindles further and further away from the almost 30 students with which we began the school year. My group is now barely in the teens because of several withdrawals, which hopefully are transfers and not dropout situations. Unfortunately, this is a cultural norm within this school setting that appears to be widely accepted by students, staff, and administrators affiliated with this school. Themes of *Awareness* were apprehended from the data in each case; however, the theme was an extreme lack of awareness was demonstrated most effectively in the case of a valedictorian student.

Here I found Bloom's taxonomy useful. This taxonomy classifies cognition with respect to degrees of how someone comes to know or understand something using the progressive stages of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Bloom, 1994). These stages depict one's depth of knowledge with distinctions made for the abilities to exhibit, understand, use, examine, compile, present, and apply knowledge of any given subject. A review of the literature on college readiness discourse reveals a wide range of working definitions and interpretations of college readiness. Academic enhancement programs define this construct in terms of quantitative measures of preparation evidenced by performance indicators earned on tests, grades, End Of Course

Exam Scores and other numerical rankings of academic understanding versus mastery (ACT, 2005; Adelman, 2006; Wagner, 2006). Conley (2007a) defines it as “equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed to enroll and succeed – without remediation – in a postsecondary program that leads to a degree” (Conley 2007b, 2011; Gates Foundation 2009).

This framework served as the impetus for my questionnaire tool, which I designed to specifically ascertain degrees of awareness, preparation, usage, and familiarity with each tenet of the college planning process. Some students understand that college is important and may go through the motions of college exploration, whether they believe it is attainable or not. Others competitively work to position themselves in a category above all other peers inside and outside of their school. They understand what colleges are seeking and have a strong desire to be recruited by colleges of interest. This keen sense of awareness manifested itself as different students described their engagement, mindsets, and degree of proactivity put forth to achieve college enrollment goals.

To gain an better understanding of common gaps or common student expectations put forth, it was important to ascertain the level of awareness for each distinct tenet of college planning, such as standardized admissions tests, diversity resources, common application options, college admissions processes, campus resources, and financial aid alternatives. Here the use of subgroup indicators were used to prompt disclosures of degrees of preparation and awareness around each of these pertinent constructs associated with the traditional college planning process.

The Ervin College Awareness Quotient questionnaire identified gaps in general college readiness areas that significantly impacted college access trajectories for students of

color. For example, ACT awareness consisted of knowing the general format of the exam, dates the exam is offered, cost, and location information. Most importantly for economically disadvantaged students, the option to obtain fee waivers from school counselors can be critical information since costs can be a deterrent to testing participation required for admission. Similarly, students of color should also have some familiarity with campus diversity initiatives or multicultural programs designed to achieve and maintain diversity. These programs typically offer scholarships and resources designed specifically for students of color to help them get to and through college successfully. Limited awareness of these constructs served as blaring gaps where students might have missed basic opportunities because they remain unaware even as late as the end of their senior year or beyond graduation.

For some students, frequent visits to the counseling office are transactional where they are going through the motions of applying to schools or requesting information because that is the expectation put forth by other stakeholders or even gatekeepers. Here, each student's personal beliefs of self-efficacy are critical in shaping his or her belief in the true possibility of achieving college completion. When students do not believe college success is an option for them, they will maintain some distance from the counseling officials or will not fully immerse themselves in the process. As challenges present themselves, the defense mechanism responds with a justification for seeking employment opportunities instead of college. Likewise in cases where adults expressed low expectations of students proactively pursuing college admissions, students were relegated to routine senior activities where they engaged in planning activities without rhyme or reason as they related to securing admissions at a college that best suited the student's needs. Evidence of such also includes counselors

who bypass attainable schools and only coordinate field trips to universities like Kansas University or Missouri University, which require ACT scores of 25, yet all students taken on the trip may have ACT scores in the low teens. It definitely exposes college opportunities, but not realistic options for those who must rely on school-based CPGS to make life-altering decisions around selecting which colleges to attend.

### **School B**

School B on the other hand has a rich legacy of serving as a flagship, blue ribbon school, only one of a few throughout the entire state of Missouri. The school district's website also boasts that more than 90% of its graduates enroll in college each year while earning collective scholarships and financial aid in excess of \$5 million. Thus, the senior graduation process and expectations vary significantly from those of School A. Here, students collectively earn a few million dollars in scholarships annually, and seniors are usually known to experience high rates of college placement at four-year universities with almost no individual students falling through the cracks in terms of not having a transition plan from high school into college. In this setting, Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses are widely available and usually all students in this school are required to at least take one or two of these advanced placement honors courses. Students are also required to take a College Admissions Course which equips them with an understanding of the college admissions process and basic college planning knowledge.

School B's cohort of students was comprised of Brian, Diamond, DJ, and Malik.

1. Brian - a high performing senior and athlete with a 3.2 GPA seeking collegiate athletic opportunities
2. Diamond - a recent graduate who bypassed the counseling department, receiving all college planning help from her coach

3. DJ - the self-proclaimed “well rounded package” with extensive community leadership experiences and networks; and an ACT score of 29 out of 36, well above area and state averages
4. Malik - a recent graduate who played three sports; engaged as needed with the counseling office but is currently not enrolled in college and is seeking to get enrolled for next year

### **Student 5: Brian - Triple Athlete and High School Senior**

Although he was interviewed last, Brian’s (pseudonym) responses best characterized the college access and preparation synonymous with his particular school setting. He is the epitome of a college-minded, college-bound senior who had worked hard, earning a cumulative GPA of 3.20, and an ACT score comparable with both the school and state average, 23; ranking just shy of the school’s 80th percentile. His family has helped with some preliminary navigational guidance by connecting him to individuals, resources, or programs where he could learn more about what he needed to do to position himself for college selection and scholarships. Yet, he admitted, “as far as hands-on help...no one really but my mom” had provided college-planning assistance outside of school-based services. For this reason, school-based guidance serves as a critical factor in his preparational process.

### **CPGS**

The most prominent theme that emerged during the analysis of Brian’s case was *CPGS*, as Brian attributed knowledge, exposure, and application of various post-high-school-planning procedures to the school-based *CPGS* model in his school. His depictions strongly correlated with the interpretive codes *Formal Service Provisions*, *Individual Interactions*, and *Systemwide Interactions* as he described schoolwide norms and common protocols where all students must complete standardized college planning activities. His responses collectively painted a picture where students and staff alike had shared responsibility for actively

engaging in a range of services designed to help students become aware of options, explore options, then act on that information, with a shared sense of accountability. For students, Brian described a mandatory “college admissions” course that all students must take at the end of the junior year or during their senior year of high school. This particular course is “required for graduation” and entails activities such as completing college exploration activities and submitting college applications to earn a passing grade:

Well they make us apply for different colleges. That’s a requirement and actually it’s a grade at the time.

His depiction of this course entailed activities designed to insure that all juniors and seniors in his school are making personal progress with their college exploration and application submission activities.

It’s an assignment to apply for three colleges within a set period of time and show either the counselor or teacher your letter of acceptance or the email saying that you applied. And I think you get probably 500 points for that.

### **Awareness**

School norms within School B promote a culture where all students are required to acquire a deeper understanding of actions required to gain entry into college and successfully adapt. Here, the constructs *Degrees of Knowing*, *College Minded Mentalities*, and *College Planning Knowledge* were all prominent and supported by evidence triangulated through each of the data sources. Brian added, “My school really focuses on getting into college so they kind of prepare us for that” adding:

They give us scholarship opportunities and they have little workshops and classes you can attend that kind of help you with the process like getting into college and the end of the junior year or beginning of your senior year they really focus on college applications and well they tell you to get your financial aid but they don’t really help you and just different things like that.

Brian also informed me that many students in his school often take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, commonly referred to as the ASVAB exam, which is used to aid students in predicting occupational interests through a series of tests in 10 areas. The ASVAB Career Exploration Program and exam are both available in high schools at no cost. Scores are used to (a) help students explore military or civilian career interests, (b) determine enlistment eligibility, and to (c) assign jobs once accepted into the military. He described special opportunities extended to students whose occupational interests have been communicated to the counseling team:

Based on your career path they will give you for example we had Fox four news come to our school and we had assembly. After our assembly all of the broadcasting in journalism majors got to go out and talk with the newscast go out in the truck. Just different things like that.

Brian's characterization of his school's counseling team evoked a sense of familiarity with one another as the students and staff work toward common goals, each with some individual sense of responsibility for the end result. Brian's sibling attends a neighboring public high school in the same district. He shared that the guidance department's help with students to create their post-graduation plans is "really good actually compared to some of my family that went to separate schools, I feel like I'm a little bit more prepared than they are." He summed up his perspective about the effectiveness of his school's CPGS model:

Well see that's where (School B) does a great job. Counselors they come to our classes and will call you down one by one." Brian felt that his school-based preparation "really helped me basically to get all the colleges that I want to get into.

#### **Student 6: DJ - College Freshman Attending Out of State University**

DJ (pseudonym) is male African American university freshman whose questionnaire responses were considerably favorable in their depiction of School B's CPGS. When asked

about his academic status, which classified him as a lower performing student within a higher performing school, DJ explained:

My class rank was pretty low because my GPA was 2.98. Everyone at (School B) a 2.98-- that was pretty low. I was like at the bottom 25th percent, something like that. My ACT score was 29 though.

### **Awareness**

It is clear within my first few minutes of meeting him that these statistical measures only tell a small part of his story, a disservice to his comprehensive accomplishments and contributions thus far. DJ has been the all-around leader in school and throughout the community, referring to himself as a “well-rounded package.” DJ’s case clearly exemplifies the theme *Awareness* as he personifies *College Minded Mentalities coupled with Degrees of Knowing* and *College Planning Knowledge* evidenced by a keen sense of what he must do for competitive positioning. He described extensive engagements as a teen thespian involved in a host of theatre productions, several years as a leader on the local teen radio show, an internship as part of the Mayor’s Youth Commission, and a host of other leadership positions. His saving grace was an ACT score of 29, well above the School B average of 22, or even the national average score of 21.

### **Reflections**

DJ’s self-motivation and awareness of his status as not only “a well-rounded package” but one with a highly desirable ACT score evoked an expression of remorse concerning his final status, evoking the theme *Reflections* and the constructs *Decision Remorse* and *Reflective Gaps Noted*. He explained that as a result of an average GPA and financial need,

he settled for a university that offered him a full ride scholarship although he really wanted to attend a larger east coast university which specializes in his major of choice.

If only I would have known not to put all my eggs in one college basket, I would have been better prepared for life after high school.

I was going to go to Howard University and I was probably going to have to come up with maybe \$20,000 or \$25,000 for the school year. Then I think by then I would have established a GPA since its an HBCU it kind of has partnerships with a lot of different organizations that have those kinds of funds. (current university) does not have those kinds of partnerships with other organizations so I think I would've struggled for maybe the first year or two, but I think I would have gotten on my feet. But I saved myself that trouble.

It's really it's just not a good fit for me. It's really in the middle of nowhere. It's isolated. It's great for people who want to do cultural work. What I envision for myself being in entertainment and radio, there is not an industry for that at all and as far as I envision my career going graduating from (current university) will not put me in touch with places or people that I need to be in touch with.

When asked what he would have done differently, DJ informed me that his school "didn't cost me is dime. I really wouldn't be going there. If I had to pay my own money for my education I would not spend it at (current university). His expression of the construct *Decision Remorse* was followed by his affirmation that he is seeking to transfer soon. His response also evoked a sense of *Bargaining Power*, which prompted me to consider such a reply as a possible construct to look for within other participant responses.

I would have applied to way more schools. I would've applied for way more scholarships. I don't think I took it as seriously as I should. I really waited until the last minute just because my ACT score was high and go to a good school and I'm a Black man. Like I should get scholarships and somebody should be happy to have me. I was involved in tons of things.

As the conversation shifted to what type of assistance he felt was missingn to prepare students for life after high school, DJ informed me:

I wish I had access to probably a big scholarship book that has scholarships that are easy to search by requirements for inserts by majors or even search by the state you're going to live in. When I was a senior that would have helped me the most.

They cut out all the real stuff like how you're struggling; how you're going to be poor; how you really can't just go to the movies. I don't even get to go to the mall. I don't want to see anything that I will want to buy. They cut out all that stuff and so it's really helping you probably manage a budget and make sure that you're knowing how much money you have coming in, how much maybe your bill is at the end of the semester, how much you allow yourself to spend, and stuff like that.

DJ conveyed a strong college bound mindset, which could be attributed to his mom, who instilled the importance of college completion early on:

Coming up I always knew that college was just about the only option for me, and no matter what you do you're going to college. College, college, college. I mean in middle school and at the elementary that was ingrained in me.

Although the family expectation was clear, "she didn't really help me get there but she just instilled that I needed to go to college no matter how you getting there needed to go." This case also supported a strong theme of limited family help, positioning DJ as yet another student where reliance on school-based CPGS was critical due to the absence of family provided technical assistance.

## **CPGS**

DJ's self-described engagement consisted of frequent visits with his college counselor resulting in a positive rapport where the counselor worked diligently on his behalf:

I would go see him all the time and I was telling him about what I want to sell and what I want to study and he would give me all the contact information, or maybe contact people for me, I just taking care of those things so I can focus on graduating.

He later used the word "favor" which sparked additional probing questions where I asked DJ if he felt that counseling staff went above and beyond or did something for him outside of their normal service provisions for all students.

I think every student who pursued that kind of relationship was provided that. I wasn't the only one. I would say that. But any student who took that effort to be in his office once maybe twice a week was offered all of that.

I think it's about building a personal relationship with your guidance counselor to get them to do those kind of favors because that's their job that was his job he was the senior got her counselor and he had to make sure that my house stuff was taking care of.

Both DJ's questionnaire and interview responses illuminated a sense of personal responsibility holding students accountable for driving their own college planning process:

Your education is something that you should take very seriously and no one is going to try to put in college, if you don't want to be in college. Nobody is going to help you strive to go to college for post-secondary education if you don't want to go there. So you'll find all the resources --at (School B) at least -- you will find all the resources that you were looking for as long as you, yourself are doing everything that you can to get there.

### **Student 7: Diamond - College Freshman**

Diamond (pseudonym) is another former graduate of School B whose ACT score of 23 was higher than the school's and the state's average ACT scores. Deemed a higher performing student with a 3.0 GPA, athletic accolades, school involvement, and her above average ACT scores, her engagement with school-based CPGS was extremely limited.

### **Support Systems**

The most prominent theme that emerged during the analysis of Diamond's case was *Support Systems*. Of all student's interviewed, Diamond stood out because she operated around the school's guidance department during her college planning process, choosing instead to rely solely on extended school supports such as coaches for her college planning needs. This case served as the antithesis of the theme *CPGS* exemplified the significant avoidance of school counseling. Instead the theme *Support Systems* was exemplified due to her reliance on support received from personal networks and interpersonal relationships

beyond the school counseling department. The constructs codes *Within School Supports*, *Out of School Supports*, and *Personal/Emotional Supports* were interpretations of the *Support Systems* theme prevalent in Diamond's case. Relationships, and additional Support Received From Personal Networks Questionnaire responses indicated a strong sense of disregard for her school's CPGS department, as she admitted, "I really didn't sit down and talk with them about college":

Everything that I learned about college pretty much was just from my track coach to be honest.

I really didn't receive that guidance as much as I would have liked to. But it was just like if I went in there and asked for an ACT packet or something like that, or if I needed them to do this fee waiver for an application or something.

And I took a class. I forgot the name of the class but it helped us with things that we need to learn like with applications and stuff like that--ACT prep, those kinds of classes so that helped.

Another interpretation of the theme *Support Systems* was the construct *Out of School Supports* which was apprehended from Diamond's reliance on family help which consisted mostly of motivation and encouragement. When asked about specifics regarding help from home, Diamond reported:

Not too much actually. There was a time when I didn't know what school that [I] wanted to attend so I was asking about what they think about me taking out a loan or something. But I really didn't get any help from them.

Limitations of her parents' college planning knowledge supported the need for this student to rely more heavily on qualified school counselors to provide the social capital important for college success (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006; Savitz-Romer & Bouffard, 2012).

Diamond's case resonated with memories of my own high school years and the absence of school-based counseling assistance during my senior year. Although I was a top

ranked honor student with extensive school leadership roles there was no one that provided any college planning assistance at all. Although I know my school employed several high school counselors for our graduating class of 450 students, I cannot even recall the one counselor that I would have been assigned to. I do not believe we were even required to have a minimum of one or two check in meetings to discuss any semblance of a transition plan or any subsequent planning progress. It begs the question what professional performance deliverables are expected of high school guidance counselors? What is the standard of measure and is it the same in urban and suburban school systems? This blatant lack of guidance within my own public school experience has obviously left a lifelong impact, shaping my life's work and research in the areas of college planning for all students.

### **Reflections**

As Diamond shared her reflections of her own process, she expressed a few examples where she had taken on the role of checking on younger friends to make sure that they were staying on top of ACT opportunities to “boost their scores because that is what colleges look for besides your grades.” She recommended that others engage more frequently with the counselors:

I just say some stuff should be required. I feel like it should be a requirement to talk to your counselor or at least somebody that will help you set out a plan or something for what you want to do in your life.

Fortunately Diamond found the college planning guidance she needed from her track coach, who was an effective extension of school personnel. As a result she is enrolled at a local four-year university participating in athletics for scholarship purposes, while working toward her clearly outlined undergraduate and graduate aspirations.

### **Student 8: Malik - Recent Graduate, Currently Not Enrolled In College**

The final student interviewed as a representative of School B's cohort was Malik (pseudonym), a recent graduate of School A, was an active athlete in three sports. His academic status can be characterized by his GPA of 2.67, ACT score of 20 out of 36, and class rank in the lowest 25th percentile. Statistically, Malik's GPA and class rank classifies him as a low performing student within a high performing school for the purposes of this study. These measures however are not intended to detract from his upbeat personality and accomplishments as a leader and athlete through his hard work and dedication.

### **Support Systems**

Malik shared a bit about his experiences with the school's CPGS officials and services, which appeared to have been utilized on an as needed basis. Like Diamond, his primary sources of help also emanated from his athletic affiliations:

I got help because I am an athlete. I got help from my coaches. My basketball, football, and track coaches. Let's see as far as letters to other college coaches saying, "Recruit him because he's smart. He's athletic. He's a leader." That really helped me a lot.

Although Malik attributed help with his process to three different coaches, further exploration revealed that more help is still actually needed. Although he already graduated from School B, he is not currently enrolled in any higher education programs and is now trying to submit paperwork and speak with college reps to complete his transition process.

### **Reflections**

Malik's unique predicament evoked a discussion of what went wrong. I assumed that this student would have an advantage over his peers who could only rely on school guidance counselors. An athlete who was well regarded and active in three different arenas should have an advantage through these networks. However, Malik was not able to access college directly after graduation. The theme *Reflections* was apprehended by Malik's expressions of

*Personal Gaps Noted* due to insufficient preparation and lack of knowledge required for a smooth transition. When asked what assistance he wished he would have had, Malik stated:

Like more the NCAA eligibility because like if you wanted to play NCAA ball in college, or any sport, you have to be eligible. You have to sign this clearinghouse when you sign up to tell you about your past, tell you about all the teams you played for, what sports you plan to play in college if you go, and things like that. I didn't know about it until two months ago, and I'm behind.

### **Outcomes**

He provided a status update to let me know that since graduating nine months ago he had been working to get his clearinghouse forms submitted on his own to fulfill eligibility requirements:

Like I completed it but I have to send my official high school transcript and my official ACT score and stuff. I just have to hurry up and get it done before it's too late.

Although his personal transition suffered a delay after graduation, Malik was quite complementary of his school's general high school academic (graduation) counselor, his college counselor, and even several teachers and administrators. Malik genuinely appeared to have had an admirable rapport with several school personnel, so much so that he consulted with them during his self-inquiry and career explorations and when faced with the task of pursuing a major or field of study. His athletic relationships also prompted instances where his coaches, instead of the school counseling staff, may have also provided differentiated CPGS requirements or access.. When trying to decide what fields to pursue, he shared:

I tried to take that ASVAB or whatever it's called, but the day they took the test I wasn't there so I was stuck. But then I tried to take like these little quizzes on Google and stuff to help me figure out what career choices I would like. And I asked people that know me like teachers that witnessed what kind of person I am, like what areas did they think I should do because I honestly do not know but I'll probably go into education.

### **Awareness**

Malik's case brought forth the theme Awareness, signified by adequate evidence of *College Planning Knowledge, College Minded Mentalities, and Degrees of Knowing*.

Overall, Malik did not appear to be a student with limited awareness of what action steps to take during the college planning process. In fact, he knew all too well what needed to be done. He described several community based FAFSA and ACT courses offered in the community. He recommended that all students should "like know what money you have to pay, like FAFSA and scholarships--apply every day. Like each weekend you should devote five hours to just scholarships whether it's \$10 to \$1000. Just apply because it all matters when it adds up in the end." He also recognized the value of college and the options provided by his school:

Hmm, its required now that every student has A+ on their diplomas so if you don't like say you thought about going to college but you don't have the funds or whatever you will now have two free years of community college. So you can go test the waters out there and then they'll talk to you.

Malik was also quite aware of the need to stand out amongst the competition, describing the disparities he perceived:

I think students in like wealthier suburban districts get a little bit better help and more exposure because they go from "this school" and this school has a good background and stuff. If you're like in the inner-city core, you already have a bad reputation so you have to stick out more just to get the same opportunities as suburban kids.

Malik stood out as a unique case because he knew what to do, but something apparently didn't get done. He described several personal inquiries that were proactively conducted to explore college and career interests and options. Malik appeared to be doing the right things, such proactively using career exploration tools provided by the school and the Internet. He also engaged family support to stay on top of the process and even consulted with adults at school who helped him identify secondary education as his career goal. Malik was also

aware of community groups hosting help sessions and college tour events that his friends participated in during their planning. He was proud of his school staff relationships where adult teachers and three coaches took interest in his planning process. Malik had relationships, awareness, and technical assistance, but there was no plan or accountability for such acknowledged during our time together. So what went wrong?

It was somewhat ironic that Malik was a triple athlete who spoke positively about his extended coaching support times three yet had not been made aware of basic athletic compliance requirements by any coaches or counselors. It appears as if awareness was not really the issue in Malik's case. Somewhere, somehow, the proverbial ball got dropped. But who was to blame? Where does the accountability lie--with the student, the school, or the system itself?

### **Lessons Learned From School B**

These four cases within the School B cohort presented a different school culture, where college enrollment is put forth as an expectation of all students. To operationalize this expectation several resources are offered; some are mandated for students to use in advancing their college planning needs leading up to graduation. Data collected corroborated the accounts expressed by each student. Each case provided some indication of shared accountability between students and staff within the school's CPGS model and graduation requirements within this particular setting. Students referred to a mandatory course, "College Applications" where they are required to show proof of their college exploration and application submission activities. The fact that it is also a graduation requirement supports the ongoing monitoring, communication, and oversight implicit in this reporting process by school personnel.

Furthermore, School B students acknowledged another school expectation that guarantees college access and financing for many of its students, if not all. Missouri operates an A+ Program which provides tuition for two-year college programs anywhere in the state if a high school student has (a) attended a public Missouri high school for three years, (b) maintained a 2.5 GPA, and (c) provided at least 50 hours of community service in the form of tutoring or mentoring. School B requires their students to exceed this requirement. All students must complete 100 hours of community service to graduate. Thus, all School B students easily satisfy the A+ Program requirement, qualifying for full tuition during the first two years of college if they maintain a basic GPA. The school also requires students to maintain satisfactory GPAs or be demitted. Hence, all School B seniors graduate earning the A+ designation, implicit in the school's graduation compliance model. So, the current school culture not only supports but also promotes and practically guarantees college access and readiness as corroborated by the triangulated data sets and analyses conducted.

The findings presented strong correlations between student experiences and the predominant themes noted. Participants shared a common experience, which entailed common procedural tasks and cognitive processing. However, their distinctive degrees of awareness before, during, and after that process contributed to the themes of *Awareness*, *Process*, and *College Planning Knowledge*. These themes were consistent across all cases. Here, it was important to assess their ability to fully understand the causes and effects of those actions that distinguish a student from their peers for the purposes of being selected by college admissions professionals. Likewise, *Awareness* and *College Planning Knowledge* emerged as predominant themes related to the research questions. Support systems were a common denominator that illuminated the need for students to rely more heavily on school-

based CPGS. Extreme cases where students described skeletal support systems due to personal challenges or unstable home lives informed the findings while strengthening the case for improved school guidance supports.

### **Cross Case Analysis of Themes**

School cultures also impacted the prevalence of themes such as college planning knowledge, college minded, CPGS, support systems, process, and outcomes. School B promotes a student and school-wide culture that ensures all students are fully aware and engaged in the college planning process. Graduation requirements that heavily exceed school district imposed requirements further support a culture where students are not only equipped with information, but also are fully qualified to receive financial support that pays for two years of college in full. Thus, these themes were consistently found in each case within the School B student cohort. Findings within the following cross-case analysis listed in Table 8 were used to address the research findings as discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 5.

Table 7.

#### *Cross Case Analysis of Themes*

Student	Awareness	Support Systems	CPGS	Gaps	Process	Outcomes	College Minded	College Planning Knowledge
Blossom	X	(X)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Shadow	X	X	(X)	X	X		X	(X)
Houston			X	X	X	X		X
Whisper	(X)	(X)	(X)	X	(X)		(X)	(X)
Brian	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
DJ	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Malik	X	X	X		X	(X)	X	X

Diamond	(X)	X	(X)	X	X	X	X
---------	-----	---	-----	---	---	---	---

---

(X) Denotes extreme absence of theme.

A primary aim of this study was to hear the voices of the participants as they shared and made meanings of their interactions and relationships with their school-based CPGS function and staff. To honor the storytelling aspects of CRT, many of the findings are reported as lifted from narrative responses obtained through both questionnaires and interviews. Using student's own words as expressed strengthened both the data analysis process and the validity of the findings attributed to the undeniability inherent in this approach (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Likewise commonalities identified in responses to the same interview questions were also used to formulate themes and to illuminate the prevalence of common participant experiences within the same setting or across the whole group.

Chapter 4 described reflections on the study design, data collection methods, data synthesis and analysis of data sources that contributed to this study. In addition, detailed accounts of qualitative frameworks used for analysis were also discussed and the themes that were apprehended from each of the data sources as a result. CRT served as the predominant lens for analysis, capitalizing on "counterstorytelling" a key component of this qualitative approach, which relied on participants' voices to present the data as collected. Chapter 5 will present summary responses to the research questions and a discussion of the implications of these findings with recommendations for future research to further address these phenomena.



## CHAPTER 5

### THE SEGREGATED CITY: IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The processes used to gain a better understanding of student experiences with this inquiry revealed implications of the interrelatedness of college access and innercity community dynamics for urban students of color. Although this case study used a small representative sample, cases were intentionally selected using maximum variation to create two distinct cohorts of high and low academic performers within each high and low performing urban school. This was done to better illustrate the range of possibilities in the experiences of diverse participants, who each shared variations of their own involvement with and understanding of the same college planning phenomenon. To frame the findings and implications of this study, I first answered each research question and provided a brief discussion guided by the summary findings for each question. Then I provided discussions of the relationship between college access opportunities afforded or denied by the local public schools that students are forced to attend based on their residential zip codes under the school district's mandatory neighborhood enrollment guidelines. Finally a discussion of the implications for research and current practices of schools, families, and community organizations frames my recommendations for moving students within the hypersegregated community forward, equipped with the college knowledge and preparation required to successfully access higher education opportunities.

Post-secondary completion will soon be an essential requirement for most occupations across all industries. Gaps in college access may pose significant restrictions on access to 2.8 million regional jobs that pay livable wages and contribute to social mobility.

The empirical goal of this study was to learn more about what processes and measures of effectiveness were in place system wide to ensure that public school students of color receive the guidance and support required to successfully access higher education. The backdrop for this study was an unaccredited Midwest public school system that included a blue ribbon school despite its accreditation status. Students and parents from two distinct high school settings were engaged to better understand their experiences with school-based college planning guidance services and how those experiences contributed to long-standing reputations of the best and worst college placement rates within the same urban school district.

This case study utilized a critical race theory framework to view student experiences through a lens of discernment for social justice and educational parity. Qualitative methodology embodies a holistic understanding achieved using a grounded theory approach to collect data, take it apart, then put it back together to make meaning of it all while working inductively. Case studies were presented using first-person narratives to allow readers to experience the voices of the participants to gain a better understanding of the faces behind the figures as they constructed their own realities and made meaning of their college planning experiences and trajectories into adulthood. Each participant described the CPGS they received, needed, or are still lacking. To help them further process the outcomes of their engagement with school-based guidance services, each participant was asked to provide recommendations for others students embarking on the process by reflecting on their own decisions, whether remorseful or appreciative for the lessons learned through their experiences. They shared from their hearts, some reflecting from the other side of graduation, while others were still in the midst of their own college-planning process. If we

listen, maybe we will really hear their stories. Then we must challenge ourselves to reject the prevalence of longstanding traditions of disparate college access and other academic inequities tolerated as norms for far too long.

### **Conclusion**

This study explored equitable access to higher education and school-based supports provided to students of color within a hypersegregated city. Research questions explored

1. What efforts exist in two urban high schools to secure equitable access to higher education for students of color within the segregated city?
2. What college planning guidance services are systematically delivered to remedy traditions of limited college access for these students?
3. How do these students interact with the CPGS offered by their high schools?
4. What do they do to plan for life beyond high school graduation inside and outside of their schools?

#### **Research Question 1: What efforts exist in two urban high schools to secure equitable access to higher education for students of color within the segregated city?**

Legacies of educational neglect and restricted access to higher education pipelines for students of color render these students most vulnerable for further disenfranchisement through adulthood. This midwestern city has experienced decades of racial and spatial isolation as a result (Clark-Hine, 2003). Lifetime earning differences based on educational attainment and race would support the significance of college access as a tool for socioeconomic mobility. Yet, collegiate gatekeeping is pervasive and continues to exclude significant percentages of students of color from mainstream economic opportunities as early as high school (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006; Dyson, 2005). Over time, guidance

counseling in college planning services becomes even more critical for Black adolescents as they prepare to leave high school without having received the same exposure to higher education opportunities for school-to-work career planning (Hale, 2001). In Missouri where African American students comprise 17% of the population, they only made up 12% of the graduates who took the ACT (Robertson, KC Star, 8/21/2013). Such a narrow pipeline yields even fewer students who perform well on this exam used to acquire admission approvals and scholarships. To combat these dismal percentages, college readiness should begin long before high school. The literature supports the need to emphasize skills that prepare students to understand, access, and navigate the college planning process as early as middle school (Avery & Kane 2004; Holcomb-McCoy, 2010).

This study revealed the need to instill a college-bound and college-minded school culture that systematically promotes postsecondary options for all urban students. That work must take place early and often. The literature supports that college-bound school cultures should promote an awareness of college and career options throughout the four-year learning process. For urban students it may be even more critical that formal and informal lessons learned are framed within a bigger picture with connectivity to real-world life skills and adulthood options. This may be the missing component. Teenage brain development has not fully developed the frontal lobe until late adolescence, thus contextual framing can help teens process and scaffold their learning to make schoolwork more meaningful where possible. Context may impact the way in which students see the world, make meaning of their experiences, and vision themselves within the world based on such. Schools should have ongoing activities that incorporate college awareness, campus visits, a broad range of occupational guest speakers, and representatives from related community based programs.

This study has revealed the need to ensure that all students have access to such, not only the high performing students or a select few.

A review of the literature on college readiness discourse suggests that the closer students get to graduation, the more they should be offered rigorous college planning activities that include admissions planning, campus visits, financial aid options, and support in the management of their planning process (Conley, 2007b; Johnson & Rockhind, 2010; Roderick, Nagoaka & Coca, 2009). Familiarity with the process of how to get into college is important. A scan of literature specific to college readiness places consistent emphasis on the particular skills students need to equip them for the process of exploring college options and developing their ability to understand, access, and navigate that process (Avery & Kane, 2004; Conley, 2007b; Holcomb-McCoy, 2010; McDonough, 2005). Towards the end of their high school careers, students should be equipped with “transitional knowledge, awareness, and navigation skills required to gain entry and adapt to postsecondary environments” as put forth by Conley (2007a). Major findings from this study found that this was not the consistent experience of all seniors in either school setting.

**Research Question 2: What college planning guidance services are systematically delivered to remedy traditions of limited college access for these students?**

This study revealed that district wide there are no standardized practices, memos, handouts, or resource tools used to prepare all students or parents for the overwhelming college exploration and admission processes. Document analysis was used to triangulate other sources of data collected via questionnaires and interviews. Documents of interest included any examples of school-wide college planning events, activities, correspondence, emails, meeting agendas, parent notices, progress reports, and school information used to

assist students, parents, or school staff with requirements for graduation and college admissions. Documents obtained from the governing school district and state educational department served as evidence of data used to inform students of the process, expectations, timelines, and points of communication regarding expectations associated with fulfillment of graduation requirements. This included required interactions with graduation processing officials and resources available to support each student throughout this annual process.

Furthermore, there did not appear to be any standard guidelines or operational protocols used by related personnel which included graduation or academic compliance school counselors, college advisement counselors, and the additional layer of MCAC college advisement staff. Significant emphasis is placed on graduation audits to ensure that students are on track to complete credits required for graduation. Cases where students may fall short are addressed through resource programs and credit recovery alternative programs such as the Missouri Options Program. Beyond traditional graduation requirements, there was little evidence of similar CPGS services provided routinely or even periodically to any of the participants or parents whether current high school seniors or recent graduates.

Here, intent and expectations were critical because they had significant bearing on what was communicated to students, when shared, and how often. Particular attention was also directed to who bears ultimate responsibility for what is or is not shared, processed, or received by students if we are to uphold any sense of effectiveness and accountability measures. Our educational system emphasis should have controls, indicators, processes, and activities in place to monitor outcomes in the areas of college access information provided and results achieved with regard to successful transition into college for his high school graduates. This puts students at a disadvantage because of reliance on protocols where

human error, personnel shifts, or gaps in staffing can adversely affect their college explorations and trajectories.

In summary, there did not appear to be any effective systems in place to secure equitable access to higher education for all Kansas City, Missouri, school district students of color within a hypersegregated city. While some schools may employ their own standards to achieve college access and readiness, there is no uniformity extended from school to school. Although some schools may have tried and proven methods to prepare their students for college success, their CPGS models remain their own and are not being shared with counterparts in other local district schools. Given the inequitable provisions inherent in urban core public schools, the district should rethink the caliber of college planning guidance services provided to its most vulnerable students (Pitre & Pitre, 2009):

These might include college field trips, college student shadowing experiences, school university partnership activities devoted to “early and often “college encounters such as information sessions on the college campus, college student panels, and activities that partner students with university students and staff in various community outreach projects. (p.108)

Even the added layer of college counseling provided by the Missouri Counseling Advisory Corp (MCAC) fails to utilize standardized checklists or measures of accountability to insure that its staff representatives have interfaced with each and every high school junior or senior class member. Missouri College Advisement Corp members are only placed within schools that have the greatest CPGS needs throughout the state of Missouri. Although this \$1M plus MCAC system is designed to be a “college advisement corp” where handbooks chronicle best practices and tools for implementation, there does not appear to be a system in place where results are tracked and monitored with real time process improvements that could change the lives of many students. Furthermore, these college-advisement staff

members are recent graduates themselves who are not even required to have certifications or technical expertise in high school guidance or college and career technical assistance. These positions are also rotational, where individuals work for two years and are later replaced with a new cohort of individuals seeking to work in return for their own college loan forgiveness. The inherent factor of this short-term commitment does not allow for specialization, the cultivation of expertise, or even learning curves that each could adversely affect the college trajectories of Kansas City's most vulnerable student population. The model itself is the epitome of the medical analogy where emergency-room patients with the greatest need are assigned a Band-Aid lady who is ill equipped to meet their service needs. School A students need post-high-school planning triage in the worst way, yet the school district has dispatched a temporary Band-Aid serviceman.

The extra layer of college counseling provided by the MCAC staff within School B does not appear to enhance outcomes or results experienced above the work of the general high school counselors, nor does it appear to impart more widespread knowledge of what it means to be "college ready" (Griffin, Allen, Kimura-Walsh, Yakamura; 2007). Such knowledge can share their decision making and influence choices regarding post high school options and resources available. (Griffin, et. al, 2007). There was little evidence of a "college bound culture" where students and their families were supported throughout the college planning process (Conley, 2007). Lines of responsibility remain blurred without clear delineation of accountability for results. General high school counselors focused on students' compliance with graduation requirements and MCAC counselors provide general guidance with some technical assistance related to college planning needs. Yet, there still appears to be a wide range in the various ways in which students interact with school-based

CPGS as a whole, depending on students' proactivity and college bound mindsets. There was no framework of accountability where the onus was placed on the school protocol or personnel to monitor every student's CP GS engagement, progress, and, most importantly, results. Hence, the pervasive college access gaps between Black and White students persist (Anyon, 2005; Hale, 2001; Kozol, 2005).

**Research Question 3: How do these students interact with the CP GS offered by their high schools?**

While School B demonstrated a consistent college-bound culture, there were some individual gaps in awareness and process completion that resulted in students graduating with no plan for action steps immediately after high school. That is not to suggest that there is no vision or dream in place for that student's life, but this study addressed the existence of immediate plans to guide each graduate's post high school activities immediately upon graduating. School A, on the other hand, embodies a school culture where students do not typically transition into postsecondary programs. These students also deserve some type of transitional planning and guidance that ensures they have explored the possibility of postsecondary education programs within their reach. This could also include structured vocational avenues as alternatives, if so desired.

In School B, which reports continual success with college access, students and parents appreciated the mandatory requirements that ensured all students were equipped with "college knowledge" and navigational support. Students were required to enroll in one semester of "College Applications," where they were responsible for learning about the college-planning process while completing admission and scholarship applications to support their needs. Progress of such is monitored by both the teacher for the course and the school's

two guidance counselors--one for graduation compliance and the other solely for monitoring the advancement of college planning for all students. Moreover, students in this school are required to complete 100 community service hours, although the district only requires 50 hours for graduation. Completion of twice the requirement positions all school B students to graduate with the A+ designation on their diploma, which provides two years of college tuition free for Missouri residents who have met general eligibility requirements. This promotes a school culture where the majority of School B's students are equipped with the transitional knowledge to successfully gain entry to postsecondary environments. Most importantly, students in School B graduate with the designation of a 2-year tuition scholarship to address any financial needs that might otherwise prohibit college enrollment.

School A, on the other hand, offers a different school culture for its students. The absence of systematic college planning guidance services provided to all students, regardless of class rank, was evident. Continued use of an indiscriminate system only serves to perpetuate college access gaps routinely experienced within this environment. Students did engage with their college and general guidance counselors as needed, but there was no consistent evidence of uniform interactions where counselors ensured that students and families were equipped with the awareness and navigation skills required to secure college enrollment. Even though the school was staffed with a Missouri College Advisor Corp staff member, the students did not appear any more equipped with technical college knowledge or access. In fact, there appeared to be a severely fragmented system where both counselors haphazardly met with some students while others fell off and withdrew themselves from the graduation pipeline in steadfast numbers. While some technical assistance services are customized to meet the needs of each individual, there are some authentic "rites of passage"

required to access the next level. This could include college entrance and placement exams required universally as part of the admission and course scheduling procedures for most institutions of higher education. For these reasons, all students should be equipped to proactively address these requirements regardless of post high school plans which might always change.

The school culture did not appear to use systematic protocols and processes that might have ensured that all students were at least equipped with the information, even if individual factors prevented full actualization of such. I personally had the chance to observe and participate in a few of the school's college planning events and processes:

Senior night where seniors and their families receive instruction on the process, pertinent dates, and protocols for senior year was attended by a significant percentage of the population, but not the full majority of senior families that should be represented for such.

MCAC's October deadline for submitting at least one college application--I happened to be in the building facilitating a group session on life skills when seniors were being pulled from various classes to submit online applications under the guidance of the MCAC counselor. There was a list of area universities with high admission requirements on the board with a few community colleges included. It was blatantly apparent that this was a random exercise that students had not planned for, and were ill equipped to complete. Many students did not even know their school passwords for computer access, nor were they familiar with schools beyond mere name recognition. These observations affirmed the school culture as experienced consistently where students are not being directed to explore admission requirements, establish rapport with college admissions staff, or even use computer access to explore college planning options. They were informed to "just pick a school code" to enter a school of interest because the MCAC objective and standard of measure was to insure that each student at least applied for one college. The entire process lacked authenticity as if it were designed for the fulfillment of a MCAC compliance activity rather than an opportunity to ensure that students were pursuing a realistic connection to at least one school, their top school of choice.

January "Grad Party Night"--This event was promoted with an informal theme to allow students and their families the opportunity to attend a fun event where they could process their FAFSA, and speak with their guidance and MCAC counselors, and meet with college representatives. My expectation from the flyer was quite different from the actual agenda. I presumed that this would entail some type of

parent announcements, structured points of information, and the dissemination of information that would advance seniors in their college planning efforts more systematically. The event was actually a small fair with five stations where students could address credit completion, two college options, FAFSA completion, and secure refreshments. Although principal, counselors, and all 9 MCAC counselors were on site, there were no formal announcements or even greetings shared with the parents as they sat idle for an hour. The only college representatives present were Penn Valley Community College and University of Missouri-Kansas City. While the 9 MCAC staff from other schools were on hand to support their colleague and the students, they limited their roles to hosting the refreshment table. This missed opportunity could have provided intense intimate college counseling for individual families to explore their unique needs and challenges.

Again, this school does not embody the “typical” high school culture where students and parents approach these milestone activities with great anticipation. Instead, the culture in this environment inadvertently promotes completion of high school as the primary goal for most with post high school engagements as a less significant focal point. Although somewhat dismal, it begs the question as to why college planning guidance services provided are not established more predominantly within the school culture, or even administered more effectively for the student subgroups that are actually college bound and college minded.

Both school A and school B are equipped with at least two counselors who can provide differentiated aspects of post high school planning guidance often required by seniors. Jordan and Plank (1998) equate some guidance counselors to gatekeepers who do not provide the necessary resource information to students in need. Counselor guidance can clearly influence or diminish the pursuit of vocational choices and collegiate program offerings (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006; Hale, 2001). Two constructs of interest were relationship and engagement with CPGS services and personnel. Each case presented differing relationships with these counselors and evidence of assistance or CPGS provided by school staff and administrators outside of counselors officially responsible for such. Some

students routinely engaged with this department, recognizing the need for ongoing support and administrative assistance with the processing of admission application requirements. Others relied more heavily on genuine relationships with coaches or favorite teachers who informally served in this capacity of providing CPGS guidance as an extension of the basic school CPGS model in place.

**Research Question 4: What do they do to plan for life beyond high school graduation inside and outside of the school?**

When planning for life after graduation students reported an overwhelming reliance on school and family help to make decisions for their future. Although they acknowledged family assistance as a helpful component of their support networks, many qualified their experience by sharing that their families could only offer emotional support but not always provide the financial or technical guidance needed. Most participants are first-generational, college-bound students who often must rely on their own skeletal frameworks to navigate the uncharted terrain of college access (Griffin, et. al. 2007). Nonetheless, each student disclosed the nature of their help from family, revealing trends of motivation and encouragement, which were essential parts of their self-efficacy, fostering belief in their own ability to actualize college options. In the few cases where family members provided advice or monitoring oversight of the student's process, there was no form of technical assistance where students were provided with insight, information, or resources more than suggested contacts for help with such.

Help from community-based organizations was not as prevalent as expected. Only 17% of participants reported seeking help from the Educational Opportunity Program, which provides free college-planning assistance with financial aid applications, admissions

applications, FAFSA submissions, and any college-admission needs. Although most students mentioned a desire to receive ACT test prep assistance, only 13% of respondents participated in any free ACT test prep program sessions offered year-round before each exam. For the past few years I have served as the ACT Test Prep Specialist for the Urban League's Project Ready Program offered within less than two miles from each of these schools. This national program was launched as social justice remedy to specifically address disparities in the ACT scores of students of color. The opportunity to enroll in a new test prep cohort prior to each ACT exam offering is continuously advertised through area schools. The majority of our students come from suburban school districts up to twenty miles outside of the urban core. Of the central city students that participate, most come from School B, which celebrates a more academically competitive school culture. School A has had less than five total students throughout the last eighteen months. Whether or not the school promotes such opportunities, I offer constant reminders during my mentoring sessions in hopes to connect students to available resources. School culture does not emphasize the importance of such which might contribute to the value students place on the overall college planning process itself.

Most students relied more heavily on school-based support whether or not they proactively engaged with the formal CPGS model and personnel that provides such. Based on results of this study, most participants will be first-generational college students whose parents did not attend college and therefore do not always have the firsthand experiences often required to guide a teen through such a rigorous college admissions process. Schools are the common denominator. For this reason, school-based CPGS become even more critical to students who may not receive such support from family and community networks

as they enter a new realm beyond their family's expertise, ill-equipped with little insight to move forward into adulthood with enhanced social mobility (Massey, et al., 1997; Noguera, 2007; Pitre & Pitre, 2009).

### **Recommendations for School and Community Stakeholders Within the Segregated City**

Based on the findings of this study, there are numerous recommendations that can be made to improve the college readiness and access of urban students. Given resource constraints typical within central city schools, recommendations are limited to school-based courses and protocols deemed feasible building upon structures already in place. School culture and school-based, college-planning guidance services clearly influenced or diminished the pursuit of vocational choices and college options (Griffin, et. al 2007). School environments promote the expectations that shape college aspirations, college planning, and college enrollment patterns (Savitz-Romer & Bouffard, 2012). Major findings that emerged from this study revealed that urban students of color continue to operate with limited exposure to college-bound cultures and expectations of attainment based on the school setting they are enrolled in (Dyson, 2005; Noguera, 2007). It is also important to note that all students were not systematically provided college-planning services that ensured that each student explored attainable college-access options. As a result, many urban students continue to exist in communities and schools overwhelmed by cyclical poverty with little insight as to how to move forward into adulthood with enhanced social mobility options (Anyon, 2005). Without navigational support and technical assistance the cycle of disenfranchisement is likely to continue, maintaining the status quo while further handicapping urban residents well into adulthood (Wilson, 1996; Pitre & Pitre, 2009).

Participants perceived timely planning, adult oversight, and structured action plans as factors contributing to successful transitional planning efforts. Students were asked to reflect on what would have improved their own college planning process and to make recommendations for what others. Should know when embarking upon this process. Many expressed the desire to have begun planning well before their busy senior year. Participants consistently reported the need for more periodic interactions with counselors to help them stay on top of deadlines and planning responsibilities. Response patterns also demonstrated that many students were not fully aware of fee waivers that could have assisted them when applying to take the ACT or even to cover application fees, two areas perhaps of the most importance to low-income students. Likewise, there seemed to be a consistent desire to better understand the full process used to gain entry, secure financial resources, and adapt to postsecondary environments.

Recommendations of this study focus on the need for systematically closing college-access gaps and the role that school-based CPGS should play in equipping all students with the information and planning assistance necessary for such. College knowledge, planning support, and school cultures are key in establishing student cultures of expectations that twelfth grade is not the ultimate goal, but a significant benchmark in the educational journey required by today's ever-changing labor market. Educational attainment is a critical determinant in the quality of life realized by all residents of the segregated city. Students must be taught the importance of such early on to fully prepare them to make informed decisions about their post high school options.

Findings from this study revealed a great need to more accurately measure the effectiveness of school-based CPGS programs and resource allocations. Standardization is

recommended as a measure of accountability. At the site level, school guidance counselors and graduation advisement staff should be required to measure the progress of college planning activities in terms of school contacts made, campus visits, financial aid offers secured, and college acceptances. These measures of CPGS effectiveness should be a mandatory component within the school district's accreditation process as when points are awarded for (1) academic achievement, (2) subgroup achievement of special groups, (3) college and career readiness, (4) attendance rates, and (5) graduation rates. Without accountability and constant measurement, haphazard protocols around college access for urban students will continue to prevail. Most importantly, at the district level, school systems must be held accountable for providing each and every student with information on the process, planning considerations, and checkpoint deliverables along the way. This would ensure that all students are equipped, regardless of school affiliation, which changes often because of high incidents of transiency amongst urban students (Anyon, 2005).

School systems should insure that each student has been duly made aware of the most essential components of college planning, which include ACT test prep, FAFSA, college admissions requirements, planning deadlines, and diversity resources. It is not enough to continually share fragmented bits of information with only those students who proactively pursue such or have more interpersonal relationships with the gatekeepers who possess that critical information. All high school juniors and seniors should be required to enroll in a semester-long, school-based college preparation class. Urban school districts that do not offer such should require students and parents to attend a weekend seminar hosted by the school district and its college and community partners. Seminars should be offered at least

once each semester and during summer breaks. At best, this would ensure that every student has at least received the information on how to access and finance available college options.

Moreover, ACT test prep, the ultimate admissions requirement, should be incorporated within district offerings. Many suburban schools offer such as mandatory courses that all students must take during the normal school day.

Liberty, for instance, is testing all of you to juniors and has embedded ACT prep language throughout subject areas. Counselors in Raymore-Peculiar are guiding my students into for your plan with higher-level courses. Grandview team up with Center on ACT Boot Camp last spring (KC Star, 8/22/2013).

The absence of such in urban schools contributes to the disparities in ACT scores of White and Black students. School districts that cannot offer such as semester-long courses should at least provide seminars during weekends or school breaks. They should also secure stronger partnerships with community-based providers that offer these seminars already.

Furthermore, each student should be required to attend check-in appointments with their counselors at least twice each semester during their junior and senior years. These appointments can assure that students and staff are working together toward the completion of necessary deliverables such as ACT exam completion, campus visits, application submissions, financial aid filings, and etcetera. Students and parents alike incorrectly presume that the bulk of college planning and decision making occurs throughout the full ten months of the senior year. In fact, most college application deadlines occur early in the fall semester, which technically advances many competitive deadlines. This requires exploration of college options and initial decisions to be made during each student's junior year. Misconceptions like this are widespread and perpetuate the exclusion of urban students from more competitive processes embraced by the more selective universities. Therefore it is

critical that students be equipped early with more comprehensive information about how to identify post-secondary programs of interest, the college admissions process, and financial aid options (Pitre & Pitre, 2009).

Colleges also base their recruitment and outreach efforts on patterns of the number of applications received from each high school across the nation (Hoxby & Avery, 2013).

Nonexistent application rates from any community can further constrain future recruitment efforts within that particular community. As a result, low application patterns adversely impact current and future cohorts of graduates from these particular urban communities.

Finally, urban school systems that serve predominantly African American constituencies should be more intentional about exposing these students to the offerings of HBCUs, designed especially for educating college students of color. These institutions offer a wide range of higher education options since they include public, private, 2-year, and 4-year universities, medical schools, and community colleges. Many offer competitive tuition rates that can be more affordable than some of the Midwestern state universities. Whereas predominantly White institutions (PWIs) have more stringent admission requirements, HBCUs do not, and many intentionally disregard minimum criteria to attract students of color who might not access higher education otherwise. For example, the average admissions requirements for 55 flagship or most competitive state institutions across 50 states reflect the following characteristics: 2.4 GPA, 21 ACT, and 1032 SAT; 43% of these institutions have a minimum standardized test score requirement. In comparison, the average admissions requirements for 105 HBCUs, including public, private, and 2-year colleges reflect the following: 2.5 GPA, 18 ACT, and 905 SAT; 75% of these institutions have a minimum standardized test score requirement (Toldson, 2013).

Furthermore, students of color should be made fully aware of all campus resources that exist to support equitable access. This includes campus diversity departments and programs that strive to recruit support and retain students of color, along with multicultural initiatives, pipeline programs, and diversity-based scholarships. There are also a host of resources offered by professionals of color who support the financial needs of urban students as a community-building investment required to strengthen urban communities. These include faith-based initiatives, and scholarships offered by fraternities, sororities, and professional organizations seeking to attract more diversity into specific vocations. This study suggests that urban students are not even vaguely aware of such resources that exist to meet their very needs. Information such as this should be prevalent in schools that serve predominantly Black populations.

There will always be individual factors that account for differentiated outcomes. It is critical that school systems at least be able to systematically ensure that all students are provided with the information, access, and oversight essential to effective college planning. The ultimate goal should be to equip each student to understand, access, and navigate their own college-planning process up to and through college graduation (Avery & Kane, 2004; Holcomb-McCoy, 2010). If graduates choose not to enter college immediately after graduation, they will at least be prepared to navigate that process later on in life.

Recommendations for future research include replicating this study in more urban school settings to validate the findings of the student ECAQ. Correlations drawn from a broader population of urban students within the same Midwestern community could inform the experiences of students throughout the greater Kansas City community. Similarly, this community is serviced by 14 public school districts. Extending the study across these 14

districts could determine what, if any, differences exist. Findings from this proposed research would significantly enhance the validity and reliability of this study's findings.

Moreover, this study could be replicated in different types of settings to ascertain if there are any individual or systematic differences that manifest in urban, suburban, and rural school districts. Extending the study to these populations might demonstrate how college planning guiding services are utilized in each setting and the implications on college enrollment rates.

This study incorporated parents as key stakeholders who also need to be educated on technical college planning processes. Findings from the study revealed that urban parents generally operate with limited awareness of college planning resources available to support this student. Future studies could explore the college planning needs of parent populations and the existence of services to address such within urban school and community settings. Studies of parents supports that are specifically provided throughout low-income communities might be used to address pervasive college access gaps based on income and parent educational attainment. Similar to previous recommendations, findings from the PECAQ could be validated by implementing this study in urban suburban and rural school districts with a focus on the needs of parents as joint managers of this transitional process.

### **Implications For Future Research**

Theoretical implications of this study can be used to better understand alternative causes of low college enrollment amongst urban students of color. Too often, emphasis is placed on student factors and assumptions without explication of school-based gatekeeping protocols that contribute to such. The Ervin College Assessment Questionnaire (ECAQ) extends previous research to qualify degrees of overall awareness or college knowledge.

Future research can be used to strengthen the explanatory power of the constructs “college readiness” and “college awareness” using tools like the ECAQ.

This study utilized the ECAQ as a data collection tool to explore student and parent familiarity and gaps associated with particular college planning constructs. The results of this case study are limited because of a small sample and therefore, cannot be generalized without additional considerations. Nonetheless, findings were strengthened by in-depth interviews that expanded understanding of college knowledge gaps and the college planning expectations put forth within each school settings. Although findings generated were limited to two unique settings, additional research should be conducted to extend the generalizability of the ECAQ’s predictive value.

The ECAQ can be used as a predictive tool to assess degrees of awareness amongst larger populations to further strengthen the validity of these findings and support the development of more effective school-based CPGS models that quickly assess baseline familiarity, then design customized interventions to advance college knowledge of the entire student population. For example, as demonstrated by this study, online surveys such as the ECAQ can be used to capture feedback from all types of students. The inclusion of urban and suburban high school students can be used to assess general incidents of awareness or gaps that are widespread amongst adolescents. The ECAQ’s use of open-ended questions can also provide useful information to identify predominant themes in college prep needs as expressed from all types of students--White, Black, urban, suburban, poor, and wealthy. The predictive value of such can dramatically increase the utility of this research. Future research should explore the development of an effective model that instantly measures each student’s particular college planning needs, which then can be used to prescribe CPGS interventions

that meet these needs. Schools can even group students accordingly creating cohorts that support site-level staffing resources and limitations.

Practical implications of this study include the manifestation of the above recommendations for school-based dissemination of college-planning information through formal courses, weekend family seminars, and summer sessions. Another way to advance the effectiveness of college-planning models is to educate parents about the process and what student should be doing along the way. The more equipped they are, the more likely parents will provide the essential supports necessary during this process. Failure to equip parents along with students renders adolescents to rely on their skeletal frameworks and individual degrees of maturity, which will most likely produce haphazard results.

The results of the study also indicate that all students should be equipped with a plan that outlines an exit strategy and consequential action steps post-graduation. These action plans should be used to delineate the most essential areas of college planning required for each student and then monitor and track student progress. This should be done regardless of whether students plan to enroll in college or not. Each student deserves an exit strategy, and schools should bear responsibility for helping them create one. Ultimately all students should be prepared to become contributing members of society.

Additional recommendations for future research would include extending this study beyond this urban midwestern setting to examine the college planning experiences prevalent amongst student populations across urban, rural, and metropolitan school systems. Findings would validate lessons learned once implemented in more school districts, using larger samples. This would help to determine what, if any differences exist within different school settings and school district systems.

Likewise extending the study to parent populations across the same geographical areas would contribute to lessons learned about the needs of parents preparing students for this process. Extending the study to suburban and rural populations as well as other Evan schools would help us to learn more about how the college planning guidance services measure up and what gaps need to be addressed. Future studies in communities would help us to delineate the services that must be provided in a coordinated fashion to improve the guidance process and increase college placement rates. Studies of what parents supports are specifically provided in communities especially the low income communities can serve as a beneficial intervention strategy to break the cycle of limited access.

A unique recommendation for future studies would include more studies about students who enter college with low AC T scores and how they are feeling. Longitudinal studies like this will help us to learn more about what the students do to persist through college especially in schools that are HBCUs or predominantly white institutions of higher education. We can use what we learn about them and help PK through 12 educators design strategies and support programs designed as effective interventions for low-scoring students. These findings can also be used to trace back effective college bound instructional practices that should begin as early as preschool.

### **Closing Thoughts**

Society pretends to be colorblind, and continues to tolerate dual educational systems for its Black and White students. Patterns prevail where one group thrives with effective trajectories into industries adulthood, while the other struggles requiring reliance on governmental subsidies to make a living. Education discourse has clearly outlined the dropout rate conditions and resulting outcomes of these disparate educational systems.

Ethnic studies discourse has identified a host of issues that particularly, and adversely, affect adolescent students of color. The multidisciplinary approach used for this study bares implications in the fields of community development, economic development, educational systems, higher education, adolescent development, and cognitive studies. This particular issue of college readiness represents the beginning of adolescent students making life altering decisions while relying on individual factors such as academic preparation, career goals, affordability, and the educational attainment of those in their personal network.

The aim of critical race theory is to defeat racism first by identifying and calling it out, to advance the dialogue for change. It is my intent that this dialogue will get others in the field to recognize, admit, and incite the change necessary to bring about social justice in their respective fields. For these reasons, this study focused on the college planning experiences of urban core African-American students. Asking the question if their experience is any different from others' --in particular suburban African-American students or urban White students? My overall goal and an empirical aim was to challenge school systems to self-assess whether or not they are providing equitable college preparation resources and supports to the very students who need them the most.

Framing college planning within the context of race advances the conversation of structural inequalities inherent with the public school system that services the majority of American students, especially those of color. My role as a researcher is to teach others to first recognize and affirm these equities been to provide the necessary resources and policy changes that dismantle these conditions. Racism continues to run rampant, even under the leadership of an African-American president whose administration has demonstrated a significant commitment to equality and education for all.

As a female researcher of color I have to constantly be aware of race, class, and gender contexts at all times. This is the privilege of enhanced consciousness reserved for people of color, but it is also a stretch for those born into white privilege who often remain unaware of such. I am a unique individual who has experienced a host of authentic experiences. Like the participants in the study, my experiences do not have to be validated by others, but they do deserve to be acknowledged by those bold enough to admit that racism exists. Hopefully this research will hold the attention of those researchers and practitioners also bold enough to challenge their own role in the perpetuation of power structures that continue to stall the advances of civil rights progress.

It is not my intent to make others feel guilty about their privileges or shame to address such realities. Instead, this work was designed to inspire each of us to hold the mirror and ask ourselves, “What can I do differently to make sure my institutions consciously contribute to a more inclusive, nurturing environment for all students in need?” Until we shift our own actions the unfortunate realities that undergird this study may persist preventing even more students of color from making successful transitions into college, the workplace, and adulthood. It is my hope that this study will become a living document referred to by all stakeholders who bear responsibility for equipping adolescents for the successful transitions from high school to college. This includes counselors, school administrators, community organizational leaders, and parents. The Ervin College Awareness Questionnaire can be a helpful tool to establish a baseline for determining what students and parents already know or need to know about planning for college. Likewise, the interview questions were also

designed to identify gaps in awareness or preparation that might cause a student to fall between the cracks of an already broken public school system.

Most importantly, I hope to use this work and the lessons revealed to enhance the college knowledge and awareness of all urban students that I encounter in my roles as a mentor, educator, and college coach. This work was made possible by the students who chose to lend their voice to advance inquiry that would benefit others who may struggle with this overwhelming process. It surprised me that even though interviews were completed some time ago, several participants have reached out to maintain communication with me and even share updates of their progress or ongoing college planning needs. Although they see me as the source for help, their stories and self-identified challenges deeply inform my academic work and the design of programmatic interventions I use to equip their peers during college coaching sessions. Therefore, the completion of this project is an advancement toward participatory action research as I refine approaches to my work with parents, school staff, students, and community organizations using this information as a resource for what should be done in and by area high schools to eradicate college access gaps. Students and parents alike should be well versed in what one needs to know when applying to college-- especially in urban communities where educational attainment can transform generational poverty.

### **Black and College Bound Standing In the Gap**

The lessons learned through this research have already been embodied within the operational activities of the organization I founded, Black and College Bound Scholars, which works to improve college readiness of students from preschool through PhD. Black and College Bound Scholars provides college coaching, camps, and curriculum that empower

youth and their families to successfully navigate college and career readiness opportunities and to access diversity scholarship funding streams. We work with all demographics engaged in college and career planning. However, we specialize in those resources, partners, and pedagogies that empower students of color.

This organization also provides early college exposure through weeklong college tours and campus visits during school breaks. Last year's college tour took 50 teens to visit 10 universities throughout Texas, Arkansas, New Orleans, and Mississippi. Students were taught to advocate competitively while visiting the admissions teams at each university, resulting in more than \$800,000 in scholarships and many full-ride scholarships being secured during this tour. This year's spring break tour took 43 students to explore east-coast universities throughout Washington DC, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York City. Tour stops included many predominant HBCUs, but also included exposure to Georgetown University, University of Pennsylvania, and Fashion Institute of Technology to introduce more selective universities for consideration. As students became more familiar with their own bargaining power, they successfully accessed several hundred thousand dollars in scholarships. Most importantly, they were exposed to the possibilities that did not appear to be communicated by their perspective school-based CPGS models.

This study has reaffirmed the need to close gaps in college knowledge for all students, even beyond twelfth grade. It is imperative that groups like mine continue to partner with other community-based organizations and urban school districts to make significant impacts on the dismal college enrollment rates of urban students. The double handicap of race and class does not end with high school graduation. The fight for equitable access and support continues throughout higher education, and the struggle is real.

A recent Brookings study explored the challenges of being a poor student even after being accepted by more selective, wealthier colleges. Hoxby & Avery (2013) suggest that low income students do not even apply to the more selective schools even though financial aid set asides might make these schools cheaper options because they are seeking diversity. It also examined the economic disparities associated with the campus experience when tuition, books, and exam fees were so high they prohibited full participation of low-income students. Disparities in access prevailed and created social externalities for these students:

Just 8% of low-income students applied to a “reach” school and just 34% of high-achieving students in this group attended one of the country’s 238 most selective universities. (The study defined low income as being in the bottom fourth, income-wise, of families with a senior in high school. For 2008, the year studied, low-income meant a family income below \$41,472.) (Hoxby & Avery, 2013).

Findings from this study and previous research informed a greater understanding of the complexities associated with college preparation and access for an array of stakeholders. Gaps appear to be pervasive and never-ending. Thus, it is important that Black and College Bound not only focus on the needs of high school students, but also support students who are currently enrolled in college yet face different struggles in their efforts to stay the course towards college graduation. The history of legal segregation and denial of opportunity is well documented. It is imperative that we all do our part to dismantle academic systems and protocols that continue to exclude some because we too have become comfortable with the salience of traditions steeped in racism that make these educational disparities appear as norms we refuse to question.

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORMS FOR PARTICIPATION IN STUDY

Student Informed Consent Form for Project:

### **College Planning Experiences of Kansas City Students**

Dear Participant:

My name is Deana Ervin. I am a doctoral student pursuing a PhD at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. I am conducting a study to learn more about what high school students do to prepare for life immediately after high school graduation. This research study will examine the experiences of several area young adults to determine what is needed to ensure that all high school students receive the help they need to successfully transition from high school into college. As an upcoming or recent graduate, I would like to invite you to participate in my research by sharing your experiences thus far.

You can choose not to participate. The following information is provided to help you make an informed decision on whether or not you would like to participate. If you have any questions please feel free to ask them at any time. You are eligible to participate in this study because you are an upcoming or recent high school graduate who may have experience with planning for college after graduation.

**Purpose of the Project:** This study will investigate how local high school students currently experience school based college planning guidance services.

**Procedures:** You will be asked to participate in an online survey which includes a few questions where you describe any help you received or needed while exploring your options to attend college after graduation. Some participants may be invited to be interviewed a few weeks later. If selected, the interview will take approximately 45 minutes and will be audio-recorded to capture your responses accurately. The interview can take place at your home, local library, or a public place where you feel comfortable. During this interview you will be asked several questions about your experiences with school based guidance received while exploring your college options.

**Risks:** There is a potential risk for breach of confidentiality, although minimal. To address this the only minimal identifying information will be collected to confirm that you are a parent who meets the criteria being studied. Data security systems in place will store collected data on university password protected account which also has firewalls, encryption, and layers of safeguarding protections. Findings from this study will be attributed to groups of participants and not one individual. This is to demonstrate trends or patterns noted in survey responses among multiple participants while also preserving confidentiality of individual respondents.

**Benefits:** Information received during this study may help us gain a better understanding of how area students plan their transition from high school into college or the world of work.

**Confidentiality:** During this study, you will be asked to create a fake name to make sure that your identity remains unknown to others throughout this process. All responses provided

during this process will remain confidential using that fake name. If you are selected for an interview, audio recordings will be used to capture responses during the interview sessions. Sound files will be stored confidentially on a password protected drive on my university computer account, then destroyed seven years after the completion of this study. Any information obtained during this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but will be shared as aggregated data using unidentifiable descriptives, reporting trends or patterns noted from groups of respondents, not individuals.

**Compensation:** In return for your participation, you will receive \$5 for completing a questionnaire as a token of my appreciation for your assistance with my study. In a few weeks you may be selected for individual interviews that should last approximately 45 minutes. If selected for an interview, you will also receive a movie pass after the interview, if you choose to participate in an interview.

**Opportunity to Ask Questions:** You are welcome to ask any questions regarding this research and have your questions answered before agreeing to participate or during the study. You can contact me at any time by phone (913) 221-4106 or email [dlegxb@mail.umkc.edu](mailto:dlegxb@mail.umkc.edu). You can also contact my faculty advisor, Loyce Caruthers, at (816) 235-1044 or by email at [caruthersl@umkc.edu](mailto:caruthersl@umkc.edu). If you have questions concerning your rights as a research participant, or if you would like to report any concerns regarding this study, you may contact the University of Missouri - Kansas City Social Sciences Institutional Review Board, at (816) 235-5927.

**Freedom to Withdraw:** You are free to withdraw from this study at any time without suffering penalty or any other services you are otherwise entitled to.

**Consent:** If you consent to participating in this study, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire. If selected for interviews, you may be invited to be interviewed a few weeks later. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Email or Facebook Contact Info

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
[dlegxb@mail.umkc.edu](mailto:dlegxb@mail.umkc.edu) (913) 221-4106  
Email and Contact Info

Parent Informed Consent Form for Project:

## **College Planning Experiences of Kansas City Students**

Dear Participant:

My name is Deana Ervin. I am a doctoral student pursuing a PhD at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. I am conducting a study to learn more about what high school students do to prepare for life immediately after high school graduation. This research study will examine the experiences of several area young adults as well as parents to determine what is needed to ensure that all high school students receive the help they need to successfully transition from high school into college. As the parent of an upcoming or recent graduate, I would like to invite you to participate in my research by sharing your experiences from the parent's perspective.

You can choose not to participate. The following information is provided to help you make an informed decision on whether or not you would like to participate. If you have any questions please feel free to ask them at any time. You are eligible to participate in this study because you are the parent of an upcoming or recent high school graduate who may have experience with planning for college after graduation.

**Purpose of the Project:** This study will investigate how local high school students currently experience school based college planning guidance services.

**Procedures:** You will be asked to participate in an online survey which includes a few questions where you describe any help you received or needed while helping your student explore his or her options to attend college after graduation.

**Risks:** There is a potential risk for breach of confidentiality, although minimal. To address this the only minimal identifying information will be collected to confirm that you are a parent who meets the criteria being studied. Data security systems in place will store collected data on university password protected account which also has firewalls, encryption, and layers of safeguarding protections. Findings from this study will be attributed to groups of participants and not one individual. This is to demonstrate trends or patterns noted in survey responses among multiple participants while also preserving confidentiality of individual respondents.

**Benefits:** Information received during this study may help us gain a better understanding of how area students plan their transition from high school into college or the world of work.

**Confidentiality:** All responses provided during this process will remain confidential. Responses captured will be stored confidentially on a password protected drive on my university computer account, then destroyed seven years after the completion of this study.

Any information obtained during this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but will be shared as aggregated data using unidentifiable descriptives, reporting trends or patterns noted from groups of respondents, not individuals.

**Compensation:** In return for your participation, you will receive a movie pass, valued up to \$8 for completing a questionnaire as a token of my appreciation for your assistance with my study.

**Opportunity to Ask Questions:** You are welcome to ask any questions regarding this research and have your questions answered before agreeing to participate or during the study. You can contact me at any time by phone (913) 221-4106 or email [dlegxb@mail.umkc.edu](mailto:dlegxb@mail.umkc.edu). You can also contact my faculty advisor, Loyce Caruthers, at (816) 235-1044 or by email at [caruthersl@umkc.edu](mailto:caruthersl@umkc.edu). If you have questions concerning your rights as a research participant, or if you would like to report any concerns regarding this study, you may contact the University of Missouri - Kansas City Social Science Institutional Review Board, at (816) 235-5927.

**Freedom to Withdraw:** You are free to withdraw from this study at any time without suffering penalty or any other services you are otherwise entitled to.

**Consent:** If you consent to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire about your experiences as a parent during your student's post high school planning.

Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

_____	_____	_____
Participant Name	Date	Signature
_____	_____	
Parent Phone	Parent Email or Facebook Contact Info	
_____	<u>dlegxb@mail.umkc.edu (913) 221-4106</u>	
Signature of Researcher	Email and Contact Info	

APPENDIX B

ERVIN COLLEGE AWARENESS QUESTIONNAIRES ©

## Post High School Planning Student Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey. We want to learn what high school students or recent graduates do to prepare for life after high school. Your answers will remain confidential and will not be shared with anyone at your school. Again, thank you for your time and input.

### Tell Us About Yourself

Please enter your full name \*

How old are you? \*

What zip code do you live in? \*

Gender: \*

- Male  
 Female

What is your race? \*

- African American  
 Hispanic  
 Native American  
 Caucasian  
 Other:

What grade are you in? \*

- 11th grade  
 12th grade  
 Graduate - Class of 2011  
 Graduate - Class of 2012  
 Other:

**If selected to participate in a 60-minute interview, would you be interested in sharing your experience with planning for life after high school? \***

Participants selected for interviews will receive additional compensation. If selected, please let us know how to reach you:

- Yes  
 No

**Phone \***

**Email \***

**What is the highest level of education completed by each of your family members? \***

	Did not complete high school	GED Recipient or High school graduate	Some college courses taken	College graduate	Does not apply to my family
Mother or Guardian 1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Father or Guardian 2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sibling (If over age 17)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Do you think one of your parents or guardians will agree to complete a survey about your planning process for life after high school? \***

- Yes  
 No

**Have you ever been a participant in any of the following COMMUNITY BASED programs that prepare you for college? \***

This does not apply to any programs offered within your school. Check all community programs you have been a part of.

- Educational Opportunity Center  
 Kauffman Scholars  
 TRIO / Upward Bound/ Inroads/ Gear Up  
 Urban League ACT Prep /Project Ready  
 YMCA Y Achievers  
 Delta Academy  
 Black & College Bound  
 Other:

## Tell Us About School

1. What school do you attend? \*

2. How many years have you attended this school? \*

3. Which of the following best describes most of your grades during all four years of high school? \*

- Mostly As and Bs
- Mostly Bs and Cs
- Mostly Cs and Ds
- Mostly Ds and Fs

4. Which best describes your cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) for all years of high school? \*

Cumulative GPA is the average of every semester GPA during all four years of high school.

- 3.00 or above
- 2.00 - 2.99
- 0 - 1.99
- I am not sure

5. Which best describes your class rank? \*

All members of your school's senior graduating class are listed in order from the person with the highest cumulative GPA to the lowest. Your class rank determines where you fall on that list. Ex.) 43 of 100 seniors would list the person as being in the top 50% of their class.

- Top 25% of my school's graduating class
- Top 50% of my school's graduating class
- Top 75% of my school's graduating class
- I may be in the bottom group of my school's graduating class
- I am not sure

6. Please select the response that best describes what you think about education: \*

	Not at all true	Somewhat true	Very true	Extremely true
It is important to me THAT I KNOW that I am college bound.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

It is important to me that MY TEACHERS know that I am college bound.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important to me that MY FAMILY know that I am college bound.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important to me that MY CLASSMATES know that I am college bound.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
High school completion enables you to rise above the competition for jobs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
College completion gives you a significant advantage when seeking higher paying jobs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**7a. Do you consider yourself to be a "college bound" student? \***

- Yes  
 No

**7b. Why or why not? \***

**7c. What makes a student "college-bound"? \***

**7d. What do you think is the purpose of earning a college degree? \***

Choose ALL that apply.

- Prepares you to earn more money from the higher paying jobs.  
 Enhances your personal development.  
 Helps you decide career path.  
 You learn to apply knowledge to real world scenarios.  
 I do not know.  
 Other:

**8. How important is it for YOU to earn a college degree? \***

Choose the answer that best describes your views about college participation.

- College is not for everyone, especially not for me.  
 I have had enough of school and am ready to work full time.  
 I would like to go to college, but finances will not allow me to just now.  
 My school performance is not acceptable for college admission requirements.  
 I might attend college someday in the future, but not right now.  
 College graduation is a must in today's world so I need to earn a degree.  
 Other:

**9. How do you seek information you need as you plan your future after high school? \***

Please check ALL that apply.

- School/class assignments on college planning  
 Parents/Guardians require me to search  
 My athletic coaches provide information  
 Friends and family members share information with me  
 I visit school bulletin board postings  
 Internet searches  
 I have not begun planning yet  
 Other:

## Planning For Your Future

Please share a little about how you planned what you would do after high school.

**10. What will you be doing three months after you graduate from high school? \***

- Enrolled in community college (2-year college program)  
 Enrolled in a university (4-year college program)  
 Enrolled in a vocational program to learn a trade (Ex. Auto mechanics, Culinary, Construction, etc)  
 Military  
 Working full time  
 I am not sure at this time  
 Other:

**11. How many of the following have you completed during your planning for life after high school? \***

	None	1	2	3	4 or more
Recommendation Letters	<input type="radio"/>				
College Admission Essays	<input type="radio"/>				
Common Application	<input type="radio"/>				
Black Common Application					

10/2/13

Edit form - [ Post High School Planning Student Questionnaire ] - Google Docs

(for Historically Black Colleges and Universities)	<input type="radio"/>				
# of 2 Year (Community) Colleges Applied to so far	<input type="radio"/>				
# of 4 Year Universities Applied to so far	<input type="radio"/>				
College Fairs Attended	<input type="radio"/>				
Total College Acceptances Received so far	<input type="radio"/>				

**12. How often have you done the following to gain information on your top colleges of interest? \***

	Never	Once or Twice	3 to 5 Times	More than 5 Times
Contacted college admissions counselors (by phone, web, email, etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attended a campus tour/ recruitment event (Multicultural Day, Senior Visit Day, Weekend Stay, etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Followed a school on Twitter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Searched for scholarships offered specifically by that school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"Liked" the school on FaceBook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Searched YouTube videos on the school or campus life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Became an online "friend" to receive updates through social networking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**13. Please rate the planning assistance you received from different sources while determining your college action steps after graduation? \***

	Did not receive help from this source	Not at all Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Very Helpful	Extremely Helpful
Help From Home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help From School	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help From Community Organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Internet Research	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friends also planning for life after high school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/gform?key=0Ar5A1KjCElaOdG5SUIk2Ri1UemlWRmFSMXNURkJrQ0E&gridId=0#edit>

6/11

Friends who have already completed high school

**14. Please rate the college planning guidance you received FROM SCHOOL ONLY while determining your educational action steps after graduation? \***

	Lots of guidance received in this area	Just enough guidance received in this area	Guidance in this area received but more needed	No guidance received in this area
Career Inventories to Determine My Career Interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Researching College Admissions Requirements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
College Planning Websites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Choosing a college that is right for me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Awareness of HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges & Universities)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Selecting a Vocational Program of Interest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marketing Yourself to Campus Representatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scholarship Resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reviewing Military Options	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ACT Exam Planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Do You Feel Prepared to Manage Your College Search On Your Own?**

**XX. Please describe how prepared you feel you are to manage your college search on your own? \***

**15. Please rate the assistance you received from your school counselors in these areas while you were managing your transition plan? \***

	No Assistance Received At All	Some Assistance Received	Lots of Assistance Received
Setting Goals and Action Steps To	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Check Regularly

Time Was Set Aside to Monitor My Progress With Counselors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How To Choose A College	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Planning Checklist For 9th, 10th, & 11th Grades	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Researching Admission Requirements For Schools of Interest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**16. Please rate your awareness of the following components of the college admissions process: \***

College admission is the process through which students enter higher education programs at colleges or universities.

	I am not familiar with this at all	Somewhat familiar	Very familiar	Extremely familiar
Admissions process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Admissions timelines during senior year	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Admission requirements (minimum ACT score, class rank, GPA, etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Admissions personnel/campus liaisons (recruiters, financial aid officers, ambassadors, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**17. Please rate your awareness of the following campus programs and resources: \***

Diversity programs seek to ensure equal opportunity, access, respect, and inclusion throughout all aspects of college life.

	I am not familiar with this at all	Somewhat familiar	Very familiar	Extremely familiar
Campus Diversity Officers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Multicultural Affairs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Campus visit days designed especially for students of color	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Housing Options and Costs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**18. Please rate your awareness of the following components of the American College Testing (ACT) exam: \***

The ACT is a standardized test usually required for admission to colleges and universities.

	I am not familiar with this at all	Somewhat familiar	Very familiar	Extremely familiar
ACT test format (topics covered, number of questions per section)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ACT test preparation programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

in the community

ACT scores required for admission and scholarship packages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fee waivers to take the exam for free	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**19. Please rate your awareness of the following financial aid alternatives: \***

Financial aid refers to funding that is intended to help students pay educational expenses such as tuition, room and board, books and supplies, etc.

	I am not familiar with this at all	Somewhat familiar	Very familiar	Extremely familiar
PELL Grants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student loan programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Diversity scholarships for students of color	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Financial aid offered by your college/university of choice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scholarships offered by community groups (fraternities, sororities, churches, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How to complete the FAFSA (Financial Assistance of Federal Student Aid)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scholarship websites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work - Study options on campus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**20. How well has your school prepared you in each of the following areas: \***

	I Am Extremely Prepared	I Am Very Prepared	I Am Somewhat Prepared	I Am Not Prepared At All
ACT Test Taking Strategies for Success	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Preparing Strong College Admission Essays	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Selecting Future School Programs That Meet My Needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Career Planning Based on My Interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maximizing College Fair Participation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conducting Effective College Visits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scholarship Searches That I'm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Qualified For	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
College Planning Resources On the Internet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Academic Preparation Expected of College Students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**21. What was the MOST HELPFUL planning assistance you received from SCHOOL to help you plan your transition from high school? \***

**22. What do you still need more assistance with to finalize your plans after high school? \***

### Equipping All Students For Life After High School

As you reflect on the college planning needs of ALL students in your school, please share your ideas on what would be most helpful to make sure that ALL students leave high school with an action plan for success.

**23. Please rate your agreement with the following statements: \***

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
At my school low-performing students receive the same level of college planning support as high-performing students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Every student at my school is provided with an action plan to guide them after graduation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**24. What would you suggest to improve the college planning experiences of other high school students? \***

**25. What recommendations do you have for college planning workshops and when they should be offered to**

high school students to be most effectively used by students? \*

26. Which is the most effective way to offer college planning guidance to ALL high school students? \*

- Offer it as an OPTIONAL class for anyone interested
- Offer it as a MANDATORY class that everyone must take
- Students should just check in with their counselor as needed
- It should not be offered as part of the school curriculum

27. How important is it to make the following topics available to all students to help them be successful during their college planning: \*

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important At All
ACT Test Taking Strategies for Success	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Preparing Strong College Admission Essays	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Selecting Future School Programs That Meet My Needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marketing Yourself to Colleges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Researching Scholarships That I'm Qualified For	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
College Planning Resources On the Internet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### THANK YOU

Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences. Your input means a lot!  
Congratulations on your upcoming graduation and future endeavors.

## Post High School Planning Student Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey. We want to learn what high school students or recent graduates do to prepare for life after high school. Your answers will remain confidential and will not be shared with anyone at your school. Again, thank you for your time and input.

### Tell Us About Yourself

Please enter your full name \*

How old are you? \*

What zip code do you live in? \*

Gender: \*

- Male  
 Female

What is your race? \*

- African American  
 Hispanic  
 Native American  
 Caucasian  
 Other:

What grade are you in? \*

- 11th grade  
 12th grade  
 Graduate - Class of 2011  
 Graduate - Class of 2012  
 Other:

**If selected to participate in a 60-minute interview, would you be interested in sharing your experience with planning for life after high school? \***

Participants selected for interviews will receive additional compensation. If selected, please let us know how to reach you:

- Yes  
 No

**Phone \***

**Email \***

**What is the highest level of education completed by each of your family members? \***

	Did not complete high school	GED Recipient or High school graduate	Some college courses taken	College graduate	Does not apply to my family
Mother or Guardian 1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Father or Guardian 2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sibling (If over age 17)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Do you think one of your parents or guardians will agree to complete a survey about your planning process for life after high school? \***

- Yes  
 No

**Have you ever been a participant in any of the following COMMUNITY BASED programs that prepare you for college? \***

This does not apply to any programs offered within your school. Check all community programs you have been a part of.

- Educational Opportunity Center  
 Kauffman Scholars  
 TRIO / Upward Bound/ Inroads/ Gear Up  
 Urban League ACT Prep /Project Ready  
 YMCA Y Achievers  
 Delta Academy  
 Black & College Bound  
 Other:

## Tell Us About School

1. What school do you attend? \*

2. How many years have you attended this school? \*

3. Which of the following best describes most of your grades during all four years of high school? \*

- Mostly As and Bs
- Mostly Bs and Cs
- Mostly Cs and Ds
- Mostly Ds and Fs

4. Which best describes your cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) for all years of high school? \*

Cumulative GPA is the average of every semester GPA during all four years of high school.

- 3.00 or above
- 2.00 - 2.99
- 0 - 1.99
- I am not sure

5. Which best describes your class rank? \*

All members of your school's senior graduating class are listed in order from the person with the highest cumulative GPA to the lowest. Your class rank determines where you fall on that list. Ex.) 43 of 100 seniors would list the person as being in the top 50% of their class.

- Top 25% of my school's graduating class
- Top 50% of my school's graduating class
- Top 75% of my school's graduating class
- I may be in the bottom group of my school's graduating class
- I am not sure

6. Please select the response that best describes what you think about education: \*

	Not at all true	Somewhat true	Very true	Extremely true
It is important to me THAT I KNOW that I am college bound.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

It is important to me that MY TEACHERS know that I am college bound.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important to me that MY FAMILY know that I am college bound.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important to me that MY CLASSMATES know that I am college bound.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
High school completion enables you to rise above the competition for jobs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
College completion gives you a significant advantage when seeking higher paying jobs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**7a. Do you consider yourself to be a "college bound" student? \***

- Yes  
 No

**7b. Why or why not? \***

**7c. What makes a student "college-bound"? \***

**7d. What do you think is the purpose of earning a college degree? \***

Choose ALL that apply.

- Prepares you to earn more money from the higher paying jobs.  
 Enhances your personal development.  
 Helps you decide career path.  
 You learn to apply knowledge to real world scenarios.  
 I do not know.  
 Other:

**8. How important is it for YOU to earn a college degree? \***

Choose the answer that best describes your views about college participation.

- College is not for everyone, especially not for me.  
 I have had enough of school and am ready to work full time.  
 I would like to go to college, but finances will not allow me to just now.  
 My school performance is not acceptable for college admission requirements.  
 I might attend college someday in the future, but not right now.  
 College graduation is a must in today's world so I need to earn a degree.  
 Other:

**9. How do you seek information you need as you plan your future after high school? \***

Please check ALL that apply.

- School/class assignments on college planning  
 Parents/Guardians require me to search  
 My athletic coaches provide information  
 Friends and family members share information with me  
 I visit school bulletin board postings  
 Internet searches  
 I have not begun planning yet  
 Other:

## Planning For Your Future

Please share a little about how you planned what you would do after high school.

**10. What will you be doing three months after you graduate from high school? \***

- Enrolled in community college (2-year college program)  
 Enrolled in a university (4-year college program)  
 Enrolled in a vocational program to learn a trade (Ex. Auto mechanics, Culinary, Construction, etc)  
 Military  
 Working full time  
 I am not sure at this time  
 Other:

**11. How many of the following have you completed during your planning for life after high school? \***

	None	1	2	3	4 or more
Recommendation Letters	<input type="radio"/>				
College Admission Essays	<input type="radio"/>				
Common Application	<input type="radio"/>				
Black Common Application					

10/2/13

Edit form - [ Post High School Planning Student Questionnaire ] - Google Docs

(for Historically Black Colleges and Universities)	<input type="radio"/>				
# of 2 Year (Community) Colleges Applied to so far	<input type="radio"/>				
# of 4 Year Universities Applied to so far	<input type="radio"/>				
College Fairs Attended	<input type="radio"/>				
Total College Acceptances Received so far	<input type="radio"/>				

**12. How often have you done the following to gain information on your top colleges of interest? \***

	Never	Once or Twice	3 to 5 Times	More than 5 Times
Contacted college admissions counselors (by phone, web, email, etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attended a campus tour/ recruitment event (Multicultural Day, Senior Visit Day, Weekend Stay, etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Followed a school on Twitter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Searched for scholarships offered specifically by that school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"Liked" the school on FaceBook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Searched YouTube videos on the school or campus life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Became an online "friend" to receive updates through social networking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**13. Please rate the planning assistance you received from different sources while determining your college action steps after graduation? \***

	Did not receive help from this source	Not at all Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Very Helpful	Extremely Helpful
Help From Home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help From School	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help From Community Organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Internet Research	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friends also planning for life after high school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/gform?key=0Ar5A1KjCElaOdG5SUIk2Ri1UemlWRmFSMXNURkJrQ0E&gridId=0#edit>

6/11

Friends who have already completed high school

**14. Please rate the college planning guidance you received FROM SCHOOL ONLY while determining your educational action steps after graduation? \***

	Lots of guidance received in this area	Just enough guidance received in this area	Guidance in this area received but more needed	No guidance received in this area
Career Inventories to Determine My Career Interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Researching College Admissions Requirements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
College Planning Websites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Choosing a college that is right for me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Awareness of HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges & Universities)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Selecting a Vocational Program of Interest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marketing Yourself to Campus Representatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scholarship Resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reviewing Military Options	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ACT Exam Planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Do You Feel Prepared to Manage Your College Search On Your Own?**

**XX. Please describe how prepared you feel you are to manage your college search on your own? \***

**15. Please rate the assistance you received from your school counselors in these areas while you were managing your transition plan? \***

	No Assistance Received At All	Some Assistance Received	Lots of Assistance Received
Setting Goals and Action Steps To	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Check Regularly

Time Was Set Aside to Monitor My Progress With Counselors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How To Choose A College	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Planning Checklist For 9th, 10th, & 11th Grades	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Researching Admission Requirements For Schools of Interest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**16. Please rate your awareness of the following components of the college admissions process: \***

College admission is the process through which students enter higher education programs at colleges or universities.

	I am not familiar with this at all	Somewhat familiar	Very familiar	Extremely familiar
Admissions process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Admissions timelines during senior year	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Admission requirements (minimum ACT score, class rank, GPA, etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Admissions personnel/campus liaisons (recruiters, financial aid officers, ambassadors, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**17. Please rate your awareness of the following campus programs and resources: \***

Diversity programs seek to ensure equal opportunity, access, respect, and inclusion throughout all aspects of college life.

	I am not familiar with this at all	Somewhat familiar	Very familiar	Extremely familiar
Campus Diversity Officers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Multicultural Affairs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Campus visit days designed especially for students of color	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Housing Options and Costs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**18. Please rate your awareness of the following components of the American College Testing (ACT) exam: \***

The ACT is a standardized test usually required for admission to colleges and universities.

	I am not familiar with this at all	Somewhat familiar	Very familiar	Extremely familiar
ACT test format (topics covered, number of questions per section)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ACT test preparation programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

in the community				
ACT scores required for admission and scholarship packages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fee waivers to take the exam for free	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**19. Please rate your awareness of the following financial aid alternatives: \***

Financial aid refers to funding that is intended to help students pay educational expenses such as tuition, room and board, books and supplies, etc.

	I am not familiar with this at all	Somewhat familiar	Very familiar	Extremely familiar
PELL Grants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student loan programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Diversity scholarships for students of color	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Financial aid offered by your college/university of choice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scholarships offered by community groups (fraternities, sororities, churches, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How to complete the FAFSA (Financial Assistance of Federal Student Aid)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scholarship websites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work - Study options on campus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**20. How well has your school prepared you in each of the following areas: \***

	I Am Extremely Prepared	I Am Very Prepared	I Am Somewhat Prepared	I Am Not Prepared At All
ACT Test Taking Strategies for Success	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Preparing Strong College Admission Essays	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Selecting Future School Programs That Meet My Needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Career Planning Based on My Interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maximizing College Fair Participation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conducting Effective College Visits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scholarship Searches That I'm				

Qualified For	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
College Planning Resources On the Internet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Academic Preparation Expected of College Students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**21. What was the MOST HELPFUL planning assistance you received from SCHOOL to help you plan your transition from high school? \***

**22. What do you still need more assistance with to finalize your plans after high school? \***

### Equipping All Students For Life After High School

As you reflect on the college planning needs of ALL students in your school, please share your ideas on what would be most helpful to make sure that ALL students leave high school with an action plan for success.

**23. Please rate your agreement with the following statements: \***

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
At my school low-performing students receive the same level of college planning support as high-performing students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Every student at my school is provided with an action plan to guide them after graduation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**24. What would you suggest to improve the college planning experiences of other high school students? \***

**25. What recommendations do you have for college planning workshops and when they should be offered to**

high school students to be most effectively used by students? \*

26. Which is the most effective way to offer college planning guidance to ALL high school students? \*

- Offer it as an OPTIONAL class for anyone interested
- Offer it as a MANDATORY class that everyone must take
- Students should just check in with their counselor as needed
- It should not be offered as part of the school curriculum

27. How important is it to make the following topics available to all students to help them be successful during their college planning: \*

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important At All
ACT Test Taking Strategies for Success	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Preparing Strong College Admission Essays	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Selecting Future School Programs That Meet My Needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marketing Yourself to Colleges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Researching Scholarships That I'm Qualified For	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
College Planning Resources On the Internet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### THANK YOU

Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences. Your input means a lot!  
Congratulations on your upcoming graduation and future endeavors.

APPENDIX C  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## Appendix C Interview Protocol - Students

Student ID \_\_\_\_\_ Students Pseudonyms \_\_\_\_\_

Parent ID \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Classification: Senior Graduate

### Introduction

- Introduce yourself
- Discuss the purpose of the study
- Provide informed consent
- Provide structure of the interview (audio recording, taking notes, and use of pseudonym)
- Ask if they have any questions
- Test audio recording equipment
- SMILE-make the participants feel comfortable

### Questions

1. How did you learn about college or community options available for high school graduates?
2. How often should high school juniors and seniors meet with their guidance counselors?
3. What types of assistance did you receive while planning for your transition from high school?
4. What types of assistance do you wish you had access to?
5. What other sources of assistance with such have you tried to access?
6. What do you think all high school students should know when faced with the challenge of planning and preparing for life after high school?
7. Do you think there is a difference in the quality of college planning information or assistance received by different types of students?
8. What is missing that would ensure that all students successfully have a plan or a roadmap to direct their transition from high school into college?
9. What types of guidance counseling services should be provided to high school juniors and seniors to assist in their transition from high school into college?
10. Do you think students in other schools receive the same or different CPGS?

### Concluding Questions and Statements

- .. Thank them for their participation
- .. Record any observations, feelings, thoughts and/or reactions about the interview

APPENDIX D  
DATA CODEBOOKS

DATA CODEBOOK CODE LABEL	FULL TITLE	OPERATIONAL DEFINITION
4YR	FOUR YEAR PURSUITS	Institutions awarding bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees; beyond community college 2-Year associates degrees and vocational emphases. Implies heightened positioning or aspirations related to the pursuit of higher education.
ACCESS	ACCESS FOR ALL	Indicator of system wide services provided or common protocol extended to every student. Perceptions about school culture and student expectations or counseling model standard practices emanate from this construct.
ACCTBY	ACCOUNTABILITY	Indication of boundaries and responsibilities of different members of school based college or guidance counseling staff or monitoring of student progress.
ACT	ACT SCORE	Statistical measure of standardized college readiness assessment score used by college admissions officials to supplement school records and categorize student coursework, grades and class rank amongst national percentiles, for the purposes of making enrollment decisions. Ranges from 11-36.
ASPIRTN	ASPIRATION	Future college or career goals expressed. Apprehension of voice as student's express awareness of options, goal setting, planning and support needs. Perceptions about college bound pathways and likelihood emanate from this construct.
ATHLETE	ATHLETIC GUIDANCE	Instances where one's athletic ability or relationships afforded differentiated CPGS, requirements, or access through athletic coaching staff
AWARENESS	AWARENESS	Knowledge or understanding of factors, choices, or consequences that can differentiate one's access to superior positioning within an academic setting or sorting process.
BARGPWR	BARGAINING POWER	Awareness of opportunities associated with race, class, gender, athletic, or academic standing as it relates to admissions recruitment, scholarship opportunities, diversity initiatives, or other selection processes.
BARRIER	BARRIER	Expressed obstacle or challenge that may hinder progress in planning or achieving goals.
CAREER	CAREER INTEREST	Expression of career interests; also reveal more specific goals or decisions made about post high school aims.
CBMINDSET	COLLEGE BOUND MINDSET	Degree of proactivity and superior awareness of actions, attitudes, and activities required to attain higher education opportunities.
CLASS	NUMBER OF SENIORS IN CLASS COHORT	Numerical measure of senior class population.
COLLPERF	COLLEGE PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS	General expectations associated with successful course learning, communication, performance, and academic achievement within a collegiate learning environment.
COMMHELP	COMMUNITY HELP	Resources or programs accessed outside of school, participation in community based programs/services. Apprehension of support accessed beyond school based CPGS that may contribute to college bound mindsets and preparation.

CPGSPROVD	COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDANCE SERVICES & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED	Technical assistance provided where counselors provided services, guidance, or assistance associated with college planning guidance services (CPGS)
DECSNREM	DECISION REMORSE	Expressions of remorse or discontent with college planning decisions or school selections; desire to transfer or alter decision made
DISTRICT	SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPPORT	School district programs, resources, and personnel available to support students beyond school infrastructure
EARLYEXP	EARLY EXPOSURE	Access to college bound cultures, activities, behaviors, and practices before high school graduation.
ENGMT	ENGAGEMENT WITH COUNSELING OFFICE	Interactions with counselors, counseling office services
EXTSCHOOL	EXTENDED SCHOOL SUPPORT	Evidence of assistance or CPGS provided by school staff and administrators, outside of counselors officially responsible for such.
FAMHELP	FAMILY HELP	Familial support, contributions, encouragement, or lack thereof; Identification of support received from home environment and family members.
GPA	CUMULATIVE GRADE POINT AVERAGE	Statistical measure of all grades achieved throughout high school coursework. Undergirds explanations of college readiness based on historical academic performance with high school coursework.
H/L	HIGH - LOW DIFFERENTIATIONS	Perceived quality in college planning information or services provided to high performing students versus low performing students.
HBCU	HBCU FAMILIARITY	Exposure to any of the Historically Black Colleges & Universities or resources that specialize in higher education programs designed for college students of color. Founded for the sole purpose of educating the Black community, these 106 institutions include public, private, 2-year, and 4-year universities, medical schools and community colleges.
HELP	HELP NEEDED	Incidents where students need help with academics or help to explore options or make decisions related to post high school planning
INADEQ	INADEQUATE PREPARATION	Expression of insufficient academic preparation, rigor, knowledge, and self discipline required for college success.
MCAC	MISSOURI COLLEGE ADVISING CORPS PROGRAM	Activities related to \$1M Initiative where recent college graduates provide college planning knowledge, tools, and assistance to increase college enrollment of Missouri students, particularly first generation, low income, and underrepresented student populations.
MISSING	MISSING	Gaps in planning resources or processes that would help direct students planning their transitions from high school. Apprehension of perceptions of school based counseling model and suggested improvements to increase effectiveness.
MOTVN	MOTIVATION	Motivation needed or provided to encourage students that college is within their reach.

NO PLAN	NO PLAN	Absence of identified action steps required to achieve post high school objectives. Informs greater need for CPGS.
OPTIONS	OPTIONS	Choices or possibilities explored as part of college planning decision making processes.
OUTCOME	OUTCOME	Result of CPGS received or lack thereof.
PEER	PEER INFLUENCE	Peers influence beliefs or decision making.
PERCPTN	PERCEPTION OF COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDANCE SERVICES	Opinions expressed about the quality or nature of the CPGS available in school
PERSMGT	PERSONAL MANAGEMENT	Action steps where student is required to exhibit personal oversight of planning and execution of action steps related to deadlines, communications, securing documents, completing applications, and other personal responsibilities.
PLAN	PLAN	Evidence of identified planning needs or action steps to achieve post high school objectives. Informs need for CPGS or technical assistance.
RANK	CLASS RANK	Statistical measure of how student's academic performance compares to other members of the same graduating cohort. Explanations of rank undergird status as a high, average, or low achieving student within that specific school setting.
REACH	OPTIONS PRESENTED OUT OF REACH	College planning activities done in vain to expose students to options that may be realistically out of reach for attainment.
REFL GAPS	REFLECTIVE GAPS NOTED	Revelations expressed as students reflect on what could or should have been done in hindsight; Apprehension of one's awareness of gaps or areas where they were not as prepared as they would have liked, or affirmation that resources and processes provided fell short of CPGS needs.
RELATN	RELATIONSHIP	Indication of meaningful relationship with college counseling staff or school officials demonstrated by frequent engagement or interactions. Students perceive these interactions as caring or supportive.
RELIANCE	RELIANCE	Expressed indicators of limited support outside of school. Informs meanings around the degree of reliance on school based CPGS as a critical factor in college access and readiness.
RESGAP	RESEARCHER GAP NOTED	Area where student's processing of the situation or actions taken prompted questions about awareness gaps, overreliance on others, or distorted sense of situation --based on researcher's stance only.
SCHCULT	SCHOOL CULTURE	Perceptions of values, beliefs, behaviors, and norms that characterize school life and organizational climates within a particular setting.
SOURCE	SOURCES OF PLANNING HELP	Acts or resources used to inform or advance college planning process.
STATUS	STATUS	Current status and classification as high school or college student, or other.

STUDEXPCT N	STUDENT EXPECTATION	Formal or informal expectation the SCHOOL expressed to students about their responsibility to advance their own agenda or planning process. Informs explanations about school graduation countdown culture and stakeholder accountability for outcomes achieved. Also explains CPGS model established and communicated within each particular setting.
STUDINITV	STUDENT INITIATIVE	Areas where students should take the initiative to create their own goals, initiate planning or action steps.
STUDREC	STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS	Recommendations on best practices or process improvements made by students to help other students engaged in the process of post high school planning
SURVIVAL	NEED TO ADDRESS BASIC NEEDS AS PRIORITY	Maslow's hierarchical need for survival that trumps college planning aims
TECHDESRD	TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE DESIRED	Expression of CPGS assistance students wish they would have had during their transitional planning.
TIME	TIMELINE	Indication that time was a factor in decision making; or contextual details to inform proactive or reactive planning progress.
UNAWARE	LACK OF AWARENESS	Notable lack of awareness or understanding of basic tenets of college planning processes, resources, or protocols typically familiar to high school peers engaged in post high school planning activities or processes.
URB/SUB	URBAN SUBURBAN DISTINCTIONS	Perceived or actual expressions of differentiated experiences or resources of urban versus suburban students.

## References

- Aaron, M., & Eubanks, E. (1999). *The higher education of African Americans in Kansas City, Missouri: A history of Lincoln Junior College, 1936-1954*. Kansas City: University of Missouri.
- Abouhalkah, Y. T. (24 August 2006.) "More White students are leaving KC schools." The Kansas City Star.
- Allen, W. R., Griffin, K. A., & Walsh, E. (2009). *Towards a brighter tomorrow the college barriers, hopes and plans of Black, Latino/a and Asian American students in California*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Anderson, J. D. (1988). *The education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Anyon, J. (1997). *Ghetto schooling: A political economy of urban educational reform*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Anyon, J. (2005). *Radical possibilities: Public policy, urban education, and a new social movement*. New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Badger, E., & Thomas, B. (1992). Open-ended questions in reading. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 3(4).
- Barnett, M. J. (1981). *School desegregation in the St. Louis and Kansas City areas: Metropolitan interdistrict options*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.
- Becker, M. G. (2007). *A historical review of the desegregation of the Kansas City, Missouri public schools*. Bolivar: Southwest Baptist University.
- Blackwell, V. G. T., & Ukpokodu, O. (2006). *Factors which influence the academic motivation and disengagement of adolescent, African American males within a social-historical and psychological context*. Kansas City: University of Missouri Press, 2006. Print.
- Blanding, J. D. (2010). *A phenomenological case study of African American students who achieved success despite scoring low on standardized tests*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Missouri – Kansas City.
- Bloom, B. S. (1994) Reflections of the development and use of the taxonomy. In Rehage, K. J.; Anderson, L.W.; Sosniak, L. "Blooms' taxonomy: A forty-year retrospective". *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education* (Chicago: Nationals Society for the Study of Education) 93 (2).
- Bogdan, R., & Sari Knopp Biklen. (1988). *Qualitative research for education: an*

- introduction to theory and methods*. 3rd ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bogdan R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1992). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Butler, S. K. (2003). Helping urban African American high school students to excel academically: The roles of school counselors. *The High School Journal*, 87(1), 51-57.
- Carnevale, A., Smith, N., & Strohl, J. (2010). *Help wanted: Projections of jobs and education demand through 2018*. Center on Education and the Workforce. Georgetown University. June, 2010.
- Caruthers, L. (1999). Classroom interactions and achievement. In *What's Noteworthy on Learners, Learning & Schooling*. Diane Publishing Company.
- Caruthers, L. (2005) The unfinished agenda of school desegregation: Using storytelling to deconstruct the dangerous memories of the American mind, *Educational Studies: A Journal of the American Educational Studies Association*, 37(1), 24-40.
- Caruthers, L., & Davis, D. (2006). Meeting at the crossroads: Education of the ex-slaves and the challenges of the third generation of school desegregation. *American Educational History Journal*, 33(2), 79-88 .
- Caruthers, L. E., & Eubanks, E. E. (2000). *Raising silent voices: Using stories to transform the culture of urban schools*. Kansas City: University of Missouri.
- Chromy, J. (2008). Snowball sampling. In P. Lavrakas (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of survey research methods*. (pp. 824-825). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Ciotti, P. (1998). *Money and school performance: Lessons from the Kansas City desegregation experiment*. Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute.
- Clark, V. (2008). In-person interview. In L. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. (pp. 433-434). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- College Board (1999). *Reaching the Top: A Report of the National Task Force on Minority High Achievement*.
- Conley, D. T. (2007a). *Redefining college readiness*, Volume 4. Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center.
- Conley, D. T. (2007b). *Toward a more comprehensive conception of college readiness*. Prepared for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (2000). *Narrative inquiry*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.

- Constantine, M. G., Arorash, T. J., Barakett, M. D., Blackmon, S. K. M., Donnelly, P. C., & Edles, P. A. (2001). School counselors' universal–diverse orientation and aspects of their multicultural counseling competence. *Professional School Counseling*.
- Coulibaly, M., Green & Baker, R. D., & James, D. M., (1998). *Segregation in federally subsidized low-income housing in the United States*. Westport, CT: Praegar Publishers.
- Courser, M. (2008). Consent form. In P. Lavrakas (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of survey research methods*. (pp. 133-134). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Covello, L. H. (1967). *The Social Background of the Italo-American School Child: A Study of the Southern Italian Family Mores and Their Effect on the School Situation in Italy and America*. Brill Archive.
- Covello, L., & Cordasco, F. (1975). *Studies in Italian American social history: Essays in honor of Leonard Covello*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Cremin, L. A. (1976). *Public education*. New York: Basic Books.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Davis, D. (2004). Merry go-round: A return to segregation and the implications of creating democratic schools. *Urban Education*, 39(4), 394-407.
- Davis, D. M. (2007). *Resiliency reconsidered: Policy implications of the resiliency movement*. Charlotte, NC: IAP.
- Decuir, J. & Dixon, A. (2004). *So when it comes out, they aren't that surprised that it is there: Using critical race theory as a tool of analysis of race, and racism in education*. *Educational Researcher*, June/July, 26-30.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (1993). *Critical race theory: An annotated bibliography*. Charlottesville, VA: Virginia Law Review Association.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (1999). *Critical race theory: The cutting edge* (1st ed.). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. London: Sage.

- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2003). *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (Vol. 2). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dixson, A. D., & Rousseau, C. K. (2006). *Critical race theory in education: All God's children got a song*. New York: Routledge.
- Duncan, G. A. (2000). Urban pedagogies and the ceiling of adolescents of color. *Social Justice*, 29-42.
- Dweck, C. S. (2010). Mind-sets. *Principal Leadership*, 10(5), 26-29.
- Dyson, M. E. (2005). *Is Bill Cosby right?: Or has the Black middle class lost its mind?*. New York, NY: Basic Civitas Books.
- E.W.P. (Respondent 2) Confidential Interview. March 2007.
- Farmer-Hinton, R. L. (2008). Social capital and college planning students of color using school networks for support and guidance. *Education and Urban Society*, 41(1), 127-157.
- Farmer-Hinton, R. L. & Adams, T. L. (2006). *Social capital and college preparation: Exploring the role of counseling in a college preparatory school for Black students*. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.
- Flora, P. S. (2001). *Outside the lines: School desegregation in Kansas City, Missouri, 1973-1987*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Virginia).
- FOX TV News 10/31/08.
- Freeman, K. (1999). No services needed? The case for mentoring high-achieving African American students. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 74(2), 15-26.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Fryer, R. G., & Levitt, S. D. (2002). *Understanding the Black-White test score gap in the first two years of school*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Fuligni, A. J., & Hardway, C. (2004). Preparing diverse adolescents for the transition to adulthood. *The Future of Children*, 14(2), 99-119.
- Gall, J. P., Gall, M. D., & Borg, W. R. (1999). *Applying educational research: A practical guide*. New York, NY: Longman.
- Gardner, H. (1999). *Intelligence reframed: Multiple intelligences for the 21st century*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

- Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. New York: Longman.
- Gobo, G., Gubrium, J. F., & Seale, C. (2007). *Qualitative research practice*. London: SAGE.
- Gotham, K. F. (1997). *Constructing the segregated city: Housing, neighborhoods, and racial division in Kansas City, 1880-Present*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Kansas, 1997).
- Gotham, K. F. (2002). *Race, real estate, and uneven development: The Kansas City experience, 1900-2000*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Gotham, K., Schirmer, S. & Sandweiss, E. (2006). For the greater good of whom? Race, development, and civic values in the midwestern metropolis. *Journal of Planning History*, 5(4), 355-364.
- Green & Baker III, P. C., & Baker, B. D. (2006). Urban Legends, Desegregation and School Finance: Did Kansas City Really Prove That Money Doesn't Matter. *Mich. J. Race & L.*, 12, 57.
- Griffin, K. A., Allen, W. R., Kimura-Walsh, E., & Yamamura, E. K. (2007). Those who left, those who stayed: Exploring the educational opportunities of high-achieving black and Latina/o students at magnet and nonmagnet Los Angeles high schools (2001–2002). *Educational Studies*, 42(3), 229-247.
- Grbich, C. (2007). *Qualitative data analysis: An introduction*. London: Sage Publications.
- Gregory, A., Skiba, R. J., & Noguera, P. A. (2010). The achievement gap and the discipline gap two sides of the same coin? *Educational Researcher*, 39(1), 59-68.
- Hale, J. E. (2001). *Learning while Black: Creating educational excellence for African American children*. Baltimore, MD. The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hine, D. C. (2003). Black professionals and race consciousness: Origins of the civil rights movement, 1890–1950. *The Journal of American History*, 89(4), 1279-1294.
- H.N. (Respondent 1) Confidential Interview. March 2007.
- Harper, S. R. (2008). Realizing the intended outcomes of Brown: High-achieving African American male undergraduates and social capital. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 51(7), 1029-1052.
- Harper, S. R., Patton, L. D., & Wooden, O. S. (2009). Access and equity for African American students in higher education: A critical race historical analysis of policy efforts. *Journal of Higher Education*, 80(4), 389-414.

- Heller, D. E. (1999). Racial equity in college participation: African American students in the United States. *Review of African American Education, 1*(1), 5-29.
- Holcomb-McCoy, C. (2007). *School counseling to close the achievement gap: A social justice framework for success*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Holcomb-McCoy, C., Lee, V., Bryan, J., & Young, A. (2011) Ensuring college access for all: A call to the school counseling profession. *Counseling Today Online*.
- Holliday, A. (2002). *Doing and writing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publications, Ltd.
- hooks, B. (2000). *Where we stand: Class matters*. New York: Routledge.
- Hoxby, C. M., & Avery, C. (2013). The missing ‘one-offs’: The hidden supply of high achieving, low income students, *NBER Working Paper Series, Working Paper 18586*, December 2012.
- The Institute for Higher Education Policy (2001). *Getting through college: Voices of low-income and minority students in New England*. Washington, D.C.: The Institute for Higher Education Policy.
- Irvine, R. W., & Irvine, J. J., (1983). The impact of the desegregation process on the education of Black students: Key Variables. *Journal of Negro Education, 52*(4), 410-422.
- Isaacson, D. (2006). *Kansas City then & now*. San Diego, CA: Thunder Bay Press.
- Jackson, J. (2005). Leadership for public schools. *The Educational Forum, 69*(2) 192-202.
- Jackson, J. F. (2007). *Strengthening the African American educational pipeline: Informing research, policy, and practice*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Jaynes, G.D., & Williams, R. M. (1989). *A common destiny: Blacks and American society*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.
- Johnson, B. J. K. (2007). *Designed for failure: An analysis of African American male students' perception of the failure of traditional school structures to successfully educate them*. University of Missouri.
- Johnson, J., & Rochkind, J. (2010). *Can I get a little advice here? How an overstretched high school guidance system is undermining students' college aspirations*. Public Agenda.
- Jordan, W. J., & Jordan, S. B. (1998, September). *Report No. 23: Sources of talent loss among high-achieving poor students*. Center for Research on Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR). U.S. Department of Education. (Report No. 23).

- Jordan, W. J., & Plank, S. (1998). *Sources of Talent Loss Among High-achieving Poor Students*. Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk, Johns Hopkins University & Howard University.
- Kao, G., & Thompson, J. S. (2003). Racial and ethnic stratification in educational achievement and attainment. *Annual review of sociology*, 417-442.
- Khan, S., & VanWynsberghe, R. (2008). Cultivating the under-mined: Cross-case analysis as knowledge mobilization. *Qualitative Social Research*, 9(1).
- King, J. E. (1996). *The impact of federal housing policy on urban African-American families, 1930-1966*. Bethesda, MD: Austin & Winfield.
- Kisubi, A. T. (1993). *Voices of racial disharmony in Kansas City higher education* (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Missouri – Kansas City).
- Kleining, G., & Witt, H. (2000). The qualitative heuristic approach: A methodology for discovery in psychology and the social sciences. Rediscovering the method of introspection as an example. *Qualitative Social Research*, 1(1), Article 13.
- Kozol, J. (1991). *Savage inequalities*. New York, NY: Crown Publishers.
- Kozol, J. (2005). *The shame of the nation: The restoration of apartheid schooling in America*. New York, NY: Crown Publishers.
- Krathwohl, D. R. (1997). *Methods of educational & social science research: An integrated approach* (1st ed.). New York: Longman.
- Kreuger, R.A. (1988). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. London: Sage.
- Krysan, M. (2002). Whites who say they'd flee: Who are they, and why would they leave? *Demography*, 39(4), 675-696.
- Kuhn, T. S. (1962). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago: University Press.
- Kunjufu, J. (1990). *Countering the conspiracy to destroy Black boys*. Chicago: African American Images.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994a). The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children. San Francisco, CA. Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994b). *Just what exactly is culturally relevant teaching and what's it doing in a nice place like education?* In L. Parker, D. Deyhels, S. Villenas (Eds.) *Race is... Race isn't: CRT and Qualitative Studies in Education* (7-30). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American educational research journal*, 32(3), 465-491.
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). *Toward a critical race theory of education*. New York: Teachers College Record. 97(1), 47-68.
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (2006). *Education research in the public interest: Social justice, action, and policy*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in US schools. *Educational researcher*, 35(7), 3-12.
- LeCompte, M.D., & Priessle, J. (1993). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research*. 2nd ed. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Lederman, D. (2009). Defining 'College ready,' nationally. *Inside Higher Ed*.
- Levine, E., Sizer, T., Peters, T., Littky, D., & Washor, E. (2002). *One kid at a time: Big lessons from a small school*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lucas S. (2001) Effectively maintained inequality: Education, transitions, track mobility, and social background effects. *American Journal of Sociology* 106(6): 1642–1690.
- Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Albany N.Y.: Suny Press.
- Massey, D. S. (2005). The continuing reality of racial segregation. *The Next American City*, Issue 9.
- Massey, D. S., Condran, G.A., & Denton, N.A. (1987). The effect of residential segregation on black social and economic well-being. *Social Forces*, 66(1), 29-56.
- Massey, D. S., & Denton, N. A. (1989). Hypersegregation in U.S. metropolitan areas: Black and Hispanic segregation along five dimensions. *Demography*, 26(3), 373-391.
- Massey, D. S., & Denton, N. A. (1993). *American apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Maxwell, J. (1996) *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- McCall, N. (1994). *Makes me wanna holler: A young Black man in America*. New York: Random House.
- McIntyre, A. (1997). *Making meaning of whiteness: Exploring racial identity with white teachers*. SUNY Press.
- Mcwhorter, J. H. (2000). *Losing the race: Self-sabotage in Black America*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Merriam S.B. (1998) *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Merriam, S. B. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Miles, M., & Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Miller, J. (2006). *Cross-X*. New York: Farrar, Straus, And Giroux.
- Minor, J. T. (2008). Segregation residual in higher education: A tale of two states. *American Educational Research Journal*, 45(4), 861-885.
- Mishler, E. G. (1986). *Research interviewing: Context and narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Missouri Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education, History of the Missouri School Improvement Program.
- Missouri Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education, Core Data As Submitted by Missouri Public Schools as of November 27, 2006.
- Moran, P. W. (2004). *Race, law, and the desegregation of public schools*. New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing.
- Morantz, A. Harvard graduate student interview with Judge Russell Clark for the Harvard Project on School Desegregation, September 2, 1992. The project published "Money, Choice and Equity in Kansas City" in April 1994.
- Moustakas, C. E. (1990). *Heuristic research: Design, methodology, and applications*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

- Moustakas, C. E. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform. *The Elementary School Journal*, 84(2)113-130.
- Neisser, U. (1986). *The School achievement of minority children: New perspectives*. Hillsdale, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates.
- Newman, I., & Benz, C. R., (1998). *Qualitative-quantitative research methodology: Exploring the interactive continuum*. Carbondale Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Noguera, P. (2007a). Renewing and reinventing Freire: A source of inspiration in inner-city youth education. *Motion Magazine*.
- Noguera, P. (2007b) Rethinking the standards and accountability of No Child Left Behind. NY, NY. *Motion Magazine*, 1-3.
- Noguera, P., & Wing, J. Y. (2006). *Unfinished business: Closing the racial and achievement gap in our schools*. San Francisco, CA. Jossey-Bass.
- Oakes, J. (2005). *Keeping track: How schools structure inequality*. Yale University Press.
- Obama, B. (2006). *The audacity of hope: Thoughts on reclaiming the American dream*. New York: Crown Publishers.
- Ogbu, J. U. (1978). *Minority education and caste: The American system in cross-cultural perspective* (Vol. 78). New York: Academic Press.
- Ogbu, J. U. (1986). *The consequences of the American caste system. The school achievement of minority children*. New Perspectives. (pp.19-56). Hillsdale, NJ.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Ogbu, J. U. (1995). Cultural problems in minority education: Their interpretations and consequences—Part one: Theoretical background. *The Urban Review*, 27(3) 189-205.
- Olivas, M. A. (2005). Higher education as "place": Location, race, and college attendance policies. *The Review of Higher Education*, 28(2), 169-189.
- Orfield G. (2001). *Schools more separate: Consequences of a decade of resegregation* The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
- Orfield, G., Marin, P., & Horn, C. L. (Eds.). (2005). *Higher education and the color line: College access, racial equity, and social change*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

- Owens, T. C., & Olsen, E. K. (2007). *Life on the other side of the street: A study of the causes and socioeconomic consequences of intra-metropolitan migration and racial residential segregation in Kansas City*. Kansas City: University of Missouri.
- Parker, L., & Lynn, M. (2002). What's race got to do with it? Critical race theory's conflicts with and connections to qualitative research methodology and epistemology. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 7-22.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Pitre, C. C., & Pitre, P. (2009). Increasing underrepresented high school students' college transitions and achievements TRIO Educational Opportunity Programs. *NASSP Bulletin*, 93(2), 96-110.
- Price, H. B. (2008). *Mobilizing the community to help students succeed*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Raffel, J. A. (2007). Why has public administration ignored public education, and does it matter? *Public Administration Review*, 67(1), 135-151.
- Robertson, J., Scores on ACT point to many disparities. *The Kansas City Star*, 22 August 2013.
- Robertson, J., & Bormann, D. ACT is sobering news on school performance. *The Kansas City Star*, 22 August 2012.
- Rodriguez, E.R. & Bellanca, James. (1996). *What is it about me you can't teach: An instructional guide for the urban educator*. Arlington Heights, IL: IRI/Skylight Training and Publishing, Inc.
- Rosenbloom, D., & McCurdy, H. (2006). *Revisiting Waldo's administrative state: Constancy and change in public administration*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Rossman, G. B., & Rallis, S. F. (2003). *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Saumure, K., & Given, L. (2008). *Convenience sample*. In L. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. (pp. 125-126). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Savitz-Romer, M. & Bouffard, S.M., (2012). *Ready, willing and able: A developmental approach to college access and success*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Schirmer, S. (2002). *A city divided: The racial landscape of Kansas City, 1900-1960*. Columbia, MO: The University of Missouri Press.

- Schram, T. H. (2006). *Conceptualizing and proposing qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Shadish, W. R., Cook, T. D., and Campbell, D. T., (2002). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Shuman, A. (2005). *Other people's stories: Entitlement claims and critiques of empathy*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Siddle-Walker, V. (1996). *Their highest potential: An African American school community in the segregated South: An African American school community in the segregated south*. Univ of North Carolina Press.
- Siddle-Walker, V. (2001). African American teaching in the South: 1940-1960. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(4), 751-779.
- Siddle-Walker, V. (2003). The architects of Black schooling in the segregated south: The case of one principal leader. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 19(1), 54-72.
- Singleton, R.A., & Straits, B.C. (1999). *Approaches to Social Research*. (3rd Edition). New York: Oxford University.
- Stake, R.E. (1981). Case study methodology: An epistemological advocacy. In W.W. Welch (Ed.), *Case study methodology in educational evaluation: Proceedings of the 1981 Minnesota Evaluation Conference* (pp. 31-40). Minneapolis, Minnesota Research and Evaluation Center.
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1995.
- Stake, R. E. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Stewart, D.W., & Shamdasani, P.N. (1990). *Focus groups: Theory and practice*. London: Sage.
- Strauss, A. L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Swadener, B. B., & Lubeck, S. (1995). *Children and families "at promise" deconstructing the discourse of risk*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Swail, W.S., Redd, K., & Perna, L. (2003). Retaining minority students in higher education. A framework for success. *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report*. Volume 30 (2).
- Tatum, B. D. (2003). *"Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?": And other conversations about race*. New York: Basic Books.

- Tierney, W. G., Bailey, T., Constantine, J., Finkelstein, N., & Hurd, N. F. (2009). *Helping students navigate the path to college: What high schools can do: A practice guide* (NCEE #2009-4066). Washington, DC: What Works Clearinghouse.
- Tough, P. (2007). The class-consciousness raiser. *Money*, 6(19).
- True, J. L., Jones, B. D., & Baumgartner, F. R. (1999). Punctuated equilibrium theory: Explaining stability and change in American policymaking. In Sabatier, P. *Theories of the policy process* (97-115). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Van Manen, M., (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Vaughn, S., Schumm, J. S., & Sinagub, J. M. (1996). *Focus group interviews in education and psychology*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Walker, V. S., & Snarey, J. R. (2004). *Race-ing moral formation: African American perspectives on care and justice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Wang, M. C., & Gordon, E. W., (1994). *Educational resilience in inner-city America: Challenges and prospects*. Hillsdale, NJ: Routledge.
- Warren, C., & Karner, T. (2005). *Discovering qualitative methods: Field research, interviews, and analysis*. Los Angeles, CA.: Roxbury Publishing Company.
- Wilkins, A. (2006). Yes we can: Telling truths and dispelling myths about race and education in America. The Education Trust.
- Williams, B. (2003). *Closing the achievement gap: A vision for changing beliefs and practices* (2nd Edition). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Wilson, W. J. (1996). When work disappears: The world of the urban poor. *NY: Alfred Knopf*.
- Wilson, W. J. (2012). *The truly disadvantaged: The inner city, the underclass, and public policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1990). *Writing up qualitative research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data: description, analysis, and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Woodson, C. G. (1990). *The mis-education of the Negro*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.

Worley, W. S. (1990). *J.C. Nichols and the shaping of Kansas City: innovation in planned residential communities*. Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press.

Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: design and methods* (3rd Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Yosso, T. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69-84.

## VITA

A pioneer in the field of Youth Leadership Development & Urban Affairs, Deana Ervin has worked with a host of empowering organizations for more than 20 years. She designs programs that empower urban youth and their families, working closely with organizations and community leaders to share information and resources throughout urban communities. Her extensive experience includes serving as a HUD Harvard Community Builder Fellow, School Coordinator for the Kauffman Scholars Program, CEO for the KC Freedom Schools Initiative, member of the Governor's Committee on Homelessness, Education Chair for the Urban Summit, and U.S. White House Regional Coordinator for Faith Based Initiatives. In all of these aspects, Deana works closely with elected officials, mayors, governors, federal agencies, foundations, churches, and community based organizations to ensure that urban families have access to programs and opportunities that will improve the quality of life in the Midwest region.

Deana holds two masters degrees from the University of Missouri – Kansas City Bloch School, an MBA in Entrepreneurship; and an MPA in Urban Administration. Her doctoral studies consisted of an interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Urban Educational Leadership, Policy, and Foundations Studies, and Public Affairs & Administration. She is also a proud graduate of Prairie View A&M University School of Business. An author, wife, and mother of three, Deana can usually be found mentoring teens and college students, helping connect them to initiatives and causes that make a difference for urban youth and to college opportunities and preparation programs through a nonprofit she founded, Black & College Bound Scholars, which promotes college readiness for all ages ranging from preschool through PhDs.