Title: College Readiness and Gender Equity
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Objective: This paper comprises a review of the literature on college readiness and boys and men of color in the United States. The ultimate goal of this paper is to provide an overview of the current programmatic landscape of interventions to promote college readiness and support boys and men of color. The literature review concludes with recommendations for policy, practice, and research to assist the LEAD Impact Group with their efforts to close the gender gap in college enrollment.

Problem Statement: Historically U.S. higher education was an exclusively white male domain. New social movements of the 1960s and progressive legislation motivated the democratization of higher education. In the 1980s, women began outpacing men in college enrollment (Freeman, 2004). Between the years 2000 and 2016, more women 18 to 24 years old enrolled in college, from 39% to 44%. Among men, there was also growth, 33% to 39%. Currently, over half of the national undergraduate population are women (56%). It follows that women are earning higher shares of associate's, bachelor's, and graduate degrees compared to men (de Brey et al., 2019). A disaggregated look at gender inequity in college enrollments reveals that men of color experience barriers that put them behind their peers. In 2016, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American women had a majority share of the undergraduate population compared to their male counterparts (de Brey et al., 2019).

One lever for promoting equity in postsecondary attainment is ensuring college readiness during a student's k-12 education. College readiness refers to equipping students with the requisite knowledge, skills, and opportunities for their successful matriculation to a postsecondary institution (Duncheon, 2015). The original motivation for this paper was to summarize the state of college readiness among male students with attention to factors that drive the gender gap. Moreover, we were interested in capturing current college readiness interventions, both gender-neutral and gender-specific, and their efficacy in promoting college access among men. While conducting this research, it became apparent that scholarly and practice interventions on college readiness and boys and men of color diverged. The literature on boys and men of color addresses educational barriers as well as broader systemic obstacles, such as economic underdevelopment, violence, and criminalization (Bryant et al., 2016; Dukakis et al., 2004; Huerta et al., 2020). Subsequently, interventions to support boys and men of color are holistic and based in culturally relevant practices.

What is the state of college readiness and eligibility among male students according to the research?
- Females academically outperform males in high school (GPA and class rank)
- Females also have an advantage in academic non-cognitive factors, such as social relationships with peers and high school counselors, that assist with college-going
- Males participate less in college readiness activities, such researching college options and talking with admissions counselors
- Males of color participate in Advanced Placement courses at lower rates and experience lower rates of performance
- Males of color participate in college readiness activities less compared to white males

Barriers for Males of Color
The mainstream research on college readiness is predicated on an individual-level analysis. Said differently, the consensus on what constitutes college readiness is a description of of individual capacity to acquire academic, non-cognitive, and college-related knowledge and skills in order to successfully enroll in college. Moreover, the discourse on college readiness is largely confined to the education system, such the availability of resources in high schools. Scholarship on males of color brings attention to larger sociopolitical dynamics in both the

education system and larger society. Male of color research addresses systemic issues that ultimately influence educational experiences and attainment among males of color. These include:

- Institutional racism in school environments
- Criminalization and over-discipline of boys of color
- Lack of culturally relevant education

What aspects of college readiness and eligibility do college access programs focus on?
The main goal of this project was to examine current college readiness interventions, including programs focused on boys and men of color. To accomplish this, a national program scan was conducted, identifying a sample of 61 programs focused on college readiness and boys and men of color. Fifteen of these programs were tailored to males of color. Based on the program scan, the following components of college readiness were prevalent among the interventions:

Definitions for each component are as follows:
- High school planning: Advising directed at ensuring the student is taking necessary courses in high school to be college-eligible.
- Academic support: Interventions such as tutoring, summer intensives, and after school supplemental instruction.
- College choice planning: Advising focused on identifying potential colleges aligned with the student's needs and academic profile.
- Admissions test prep: SAT or ACT preparation.
- Application assistance: Hands-on support in completing college, financial aid, and scholarship applications.
- College Exposure: College awareness education, college fairs and visits.
- Mentorship: On-going one-on-one support from a near peer or professional.
- Enrichment activities: Experiential or workshop-based education related to life skills, citizenship and leadership, and work experience.
- Financial Support: Include tuition scholarships, stipends, emergency funds.

The most prevalent practice in the program was college choice planning: 75% of programs included this component. This was followed by application assistance (72%), enrichment activities (58%), college exposure (58%), mentorship (46%), and admissions test prep (46%). In the subset of boys and men of color-focused programs, enrichment activities (80%) and mentorship (47%) were the most prevalent components.

Recommendations
- Conceptual: Integrate college readiness with cultural validation and a systems-level perspective
- Policy: Consider how policies in different sectors shape higher education access
    - Criminal justice policies
- Practice: College readiness programs adopt cultural validation in practices and programming
- Practice: Boys and men of color programs initiate partnerships with college readiness programs
- Research: Participatory action research, capture real-time impact from perspectives of boys and men of color, move away from description to exploratory, causal oriented research