College Readiness and Gender Equity

Historically U.S. higher education was an exclusively white male domain. Only following World World II did college enrollment for women accelerate, subsequently followed by greater access for students of color (Cohen & Kisker, 2009). 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).[1]

While the gender gap in postsecondary attainment has spurred scholarly interest to understand what has contributed to greater access for women, a research, practice, and policy agenda has emerged to investigate the obstacles facing men of color. 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). Efforts to address the race-gender gap in higher education span from the national level, such as the Obama Foundation's My Brother's Keeper Program and the National Alliance for Boys and Men of Color, to state-led initiatives. The California State University System and the University System of Georgia have implemented statewide

[1] However, women have long been underrepresented in the science and engineering fields at all levels of postsecondary education. See Hill et al., 2010; National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, 2019.

coordination to address disparities facing college men of color. In the effort to pursue racial and gender equity broadly, men of color have been neglected by institutional and systemic efforts.

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. College readiness traditionally focuses on equipping individual students to be successful college applicants. 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.

In what follows, we review established research on college readiness and the emerging line of scholarship exploring boys and men of color. A broad look at drivers of gender disparities suggests that high school academic performance, participation in college readiness activities, and social capital position women to have higher rates of college enrollment. A more nuanced look at boys and men of color points to systemic obstacles. Next, we present the findings of a national scan of programs focused on college readiness and boys and men of color. The program scan suggests that college readiness programs emphasize individual capacity building for college

admissions whereas boys and men of color programs tackle multiple issues to promote educational success. The paper concludes with recommendations for practice, policy, and research with attention to supporting boys and men of color access higher education.

Defining College Readiness

Scholars, policy advocates, and higher education leaders frame gender inequalities in college enrollments as symptomatic of problems grounded in students' readiness for college. Persistent inequalities may be due to differing definitions of college readiness. For instance, the New York State Department of Education determines college readiness with the Aspirational Performance Measure, based on earning a New York State Regents Diploma and scores above a set cut off on the mathematics and English Regents examination (Villavicencio et al., 2018). In Florida, the state's postsecondary education readiness test, administered in public high schools and Florida College System institutions, assesses students' capacity to take on college-level coursework (Florida Department of Education, n.d.). The California Department of Education employs multiple measures for college readiness, such as exam scores (e.g., Advanced Placement) and completion of college preparatory curriculum (California Department of Education, n.d.). At the national level, the Common Core State Standards includes an emphasis on college readiness. The Every Student Succeeds Act also incorporates college readiness in two broad areas: advanced course/dual enrollment and cross-sector partnerships, such as early college high schools (Malin et al., 2017). These examples restrict college readiness to test scores and coursework, measures that represent accumulated content knowledge. They also overlap with eligibility, such as California's A-G requirements and college admissions tests. However, readiness is a complex construct that extends beyond meeting prescribed requirements.

There is somewhat of a consensus that college readiness should be understood as the capacity of a student to matriculate and complete college without the need for remediation (ACT, 2007; Conley, 2008; Duncheon, 2015; Mijares, 2007). Readiness can be identified in terms of demonstrated academic skills and knowledge, such as GPA (traditionally high school and first-year college) and high school class rank (Bridgeman, 1991; Geiser & Studley, 2002; Kobrin et al., 2008). A more holistic definition of readiness centers on its constituent components. These are summarized in the following table and are briefly explained:

Table 1. Components of College Readiness (Duncheon, 2015, p. 8)

Cognitive academic factors	*Non-cognitive academic factors*	*Campus integration factors*
• Content knowledge • Cognitive skills	• Mindsets • Behaviors	• College knowledge • Relationship to self and others

Cognitive academic factors pertain to the core academic knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in college (Barnett et al., 2012; Conley, 2005; Porter & Polikoff, 2012). College preparatory coursework, such as California's A-G requirements and Advanced Placement (AP), provide students with opportunities to gain requisite mastery in core subjects that are necessary for later success in college (Adelman, 2006; Long, Iatarola, & Conger, 2009; Schneider et al., 1998). Along with domain-specific knowledge, cognitive academic factors include domain-general skills (Stemler, 2012). These include problem solving, research skills, argumentation, meta-cognition, and communication (Conley, 2008; ConnectEd, 2012; NRC, 2012). These skills may be acquired in college preparatory coursework.

Non-cognitive academic factors, like domain-general academic skills, are applicable to the overall college endeavor (Sedlacek, 2004). Duncheon (2015) considers mindsets and

behaviors as non-cognitive factors pertinent to college readiness. Grodsky and Riegle-Crumb (2010) found that students who have long assumed they would go to college were more likely to apply to colleges during the senior year of high school compared to peers who made a conscious decision while in primary or secondary school. An implication for readiness is that there is a segment of the population who take for granted that they will attend college; such a mindset motivates students to work harder in high school to be college eligible and competitive applicants (Grodsky & Riegle-Crumb, 2010). Among college students, a growth mindset has been linked to academic achievement (Broda et al., 2018). Thus beliefs and attitudes students hold can shape their readiness for college. Behaviors include various self-management strategies, such as study skills, goal-setting, and time management, as well being able to interact with faculty and peers to facilitate learning (Conley, 2008; Robbins et al., 2004). The National Survey of Student Engagement includes items related to learning strategies, which attests to the importance of behaviors that contribute to success in college.

Lastly, campus integration factors refer to college knowledge and students' relationship to self and others. Most pertinent to this discussion is college knowledge, specifically the information necessary to select and apply to colleges. College knowledge also involves being prepared to the cultural expectations of college and how it differs from students' experiences in the k-12 system (Conley, 2005; Robbins et al., 2004; Venezia, Kirst, and Antonio, 2004). Duncheon (2015) also includes relationship to self and others as a campus integration factor. Identity development and interpersonal skills are cultivated in college and critical to navigating the four or more years a student may spend on campus.

Factors Shaping Gender Inequality in College Enrollment

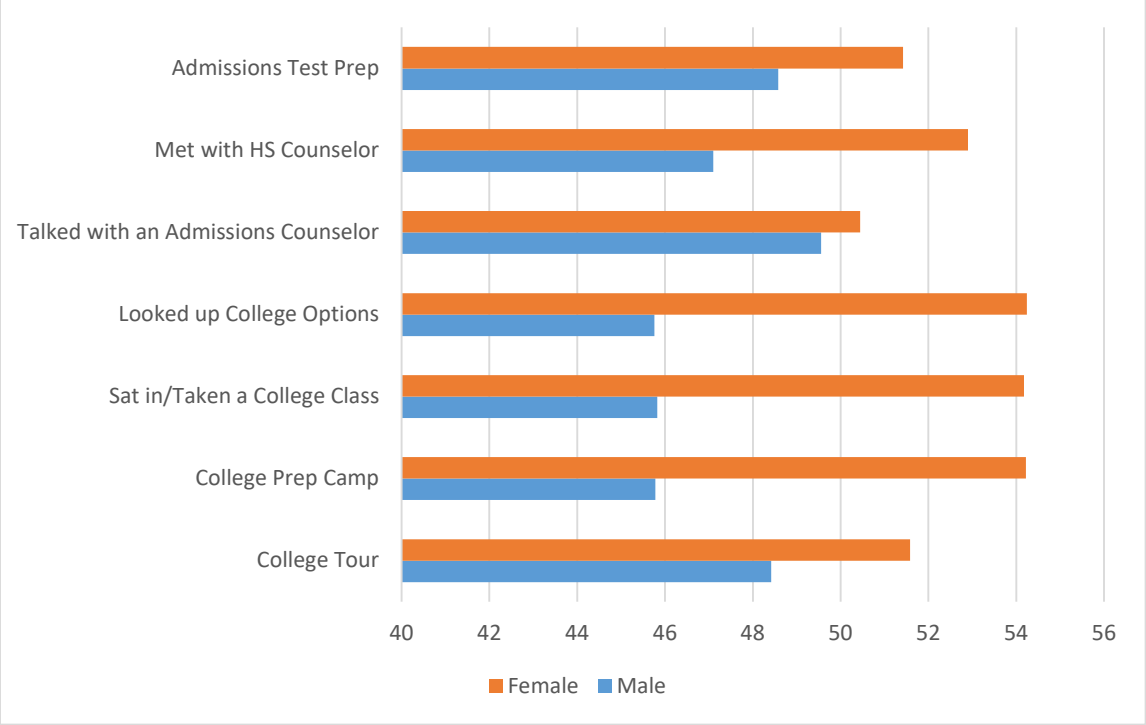
The study of gender inequalities in the educational pipeline have largely centered on ensuring girls and women have opportunities and outcomes comparable to their male peers. In terms of college readiness, the most prevalent academic factor to consider in accounting for male college enrollment is high school academic achievement. High school academic performance, such as a GPA and class rank, is a common criterion for college eligibility and admission. Conger and Long (2010) examined student-level data in Florida and Texas and identified that male enrollees have lower high school GPAs upon college entry, which was as significant predictor of credits earned and GPA in the first year of college—both measures lower, on average, compared to females. As an indicator of readiness, these findings are in concert with other studies that demonstrate females have historically earned higher grades in high school compared to males and are more likely to graduate from high school (Buchmann et al., 2008; Peter & Horn, 2005; Riegle-Crumb, 2006).

Research has also found that females may have an advantage over males in college enrollment due to non-cognitive factors (Fortin et al., 2014; Jacob, 2002; Riegle-Crumb, 2010). In a study of Texas student data, Riegle-Crumb (2010) found that academic orientation, specifically making plans for college, was the single largest contributor to the higher enrollment of females in both two- and four-year institutions. Among non-cognitive skills, Jacob (2002) considered being retained a grade as a proxy for behavior and social maturity. An analysis of the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) indicated that male students held back a grade were seven percentage points less likely than their peers to attend college (Jacob, 2002).

Finally, campus integration is another area in which males are disadvantaged compared to females. Data from the High School Longitudinal Survey (HSLS:2009) descriptively indicate

that males participate in college readiness activities at lower rates than females (See Figure 1). Males were approximately nine percentage points less likely to have looked up college options, have sat in or taken a college class, or participated in a college prep camp compared to females. The smallest gap was in talking to an admissions counselor, males trailed behind females by about one percentage point. Empirical research substantiates these descriptive statistics. Bryan and colleagues (2009) examined the Educational Longitudinal Study (ELS:2002) and found that females were more likely to talk to a high school counselor about college. In another study, Bryan et al. (2011) found a positive relationship between the number of high school counselors and frequency of student contact with the counselor on the rates of college applications. Further discussion about the effectiveness of college readiness activities are discussed in a later section.

Figure 1. Participation in College Readiness Activities by Sex.
Data source: HSLS: 2009.



Factors Shaping Racial Inequality in College Enrollment

To understand barriers facing males of color, racial inequalities need to be examined alongside the gender differences reviewed above. Relevant academic factors include academic achievement and course-taking. Across different studies, scholars have found significant differences in grades between white students and their Black and Hispanic peers (Kao et al., 1996; Nord et al., 2011; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). Relatedly, standardized test scores and high school graduation rates demonstrate persistent racial inequalities (Riegle-Crumb et al., 2018). In states in which college readiness is determined by academic performance alone, racial inequity is a clear barrier for males of color.

In terms of course-taking, studies have focused on participation in rigorous course-taking. One example is AP: the percentage of Black and Latinx high school graduates who earn AP credit increased between 1994 and 2013, but continued to lag behind whites (Kolluri, 2018). Black students make up low shares of AP test-takers; less than 10 percent of test participation in 18 AP subjects (Kolluri, 2018). Achievement on AP tests is also racially stratified: compared to 60% of White students enrolled in AP courses who earn a passing score of 3 or higher on the AP exam, only 26% of Black students and 43% of Hispanic students perform similarly (Aud et al., 2010). More recently, Judson and Hobson (2015) found that between 1997 and 2012, Black and Latinx pass rates on AP exams decreased (36% to 29% and 61% to 43%, respectively) while the pass rate among white students virtually remained the same. Outside of rigorous course-taking, students of color may be inequitably positioned to access college preparatory curriculum overall. Karabel and colleagues (2005) found that the 50 bottom feeder high schools into the University of California system, less than half offered UC-required high school courses to be eligible for

admission. These high schools were characterized by higher populations of students of color and lower family incomes.

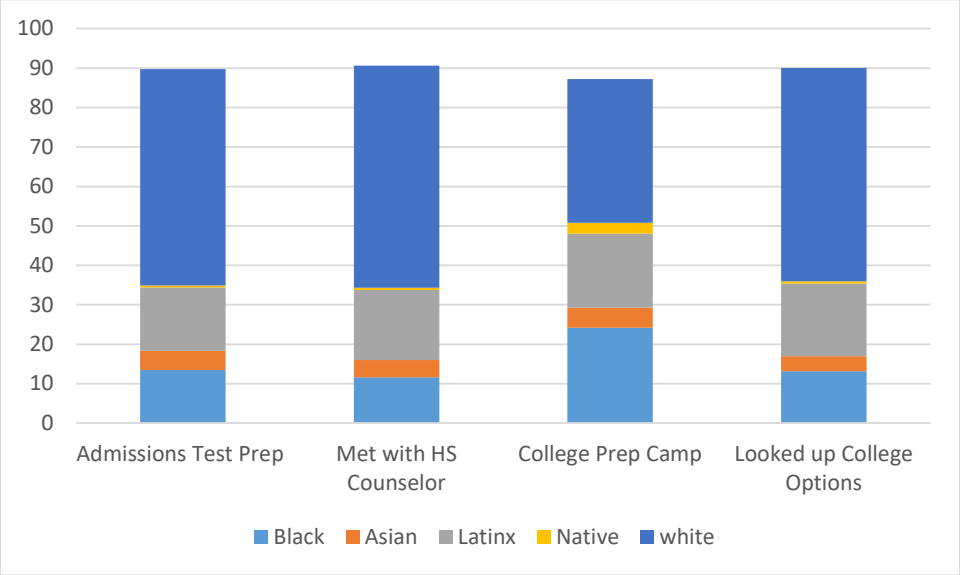
Studies of non-academic cognitive factors includes educational aspirations and social capital. In contrast to stereotypical perceptions that students of color value education less than white students, some evidence shows students of color do not hold lower aspirations compared to white students (Bohon et al., 2006; Toldson et al., 2009; Signer & Saldana, 2001). However, Cooper's (2009) study of the ELS:2002 demonstrated that males of color have had decreasing educational aspirations in comparison to their peers. In terms of the significance of college aspirations, Grodsky and Riegle-Crumb (2010) found that students who have long taken for granted that they will go to college are more likely to apply to college in their senior year of high school compared to their peers. Although white, native-born children of college-educated parents were more likely to be in the group of assuming they would go to college, social identity was not found to be a barrier in the development of college aspirations.

In regards to social capital, research shows mixed findings. Alvarado and An (2015) examined the HSLS:2009 and found that peer relationships had a stronger effect for white students' college readiness compared to other racial groups. In contrast, Hill and colleagues (2015) did not find race-related differences in the composition of students' social capital networks. Instead, the social capital networks were associated with the selectivity of students' first choice college. Those who relied on peers were less likely to pursue selective colleges.

Available research demonstrates students of color experience barriers when it comes to accessing information about college, a campus integration factor. A brief look at descriptive data from HSLS:2009 illustrates the inequalities between males of different racial identities (Figure 2). Thus, while males overall may have a disadvantage compared to females in terms of campus

integration factors, white males are accessing college readiness activities at a greater proportion compared to males of color. Overall, students of color begin the college choice process with less information and later in their high school journeys consequently applying to fewer schools (Galotti & Mark, 1994; Hossler et al., 1999; Hurtado et al., 1997; McDonough, 1997; Roderick et al., 2011). Relatedly, low-income urban Black and Hispanic youth generally have limited knowledge about college entrance exams and have less opportunities for test preparation (Deil-Amen & Tevis; 2010; Walpole et al., 2005). It is unsurprising then that students of color drop off at each stage of the college application process, including meeting the minimum academic requirements, taking the SAT/Act, and submitting a complete application (Avery & Kane 2004; Hurtado et al., 1997; Venezia & Kirst, 2005).

Figure 2. Participation in Select College Readiness Activities by Race and Sex. Data source: HSLS:2009.



Novel Explanations for Barriers to College Readiness Among 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. We briefly discuss some of these issues that, as we will see, are also taken up by current-day interventions focused on males of color.

The reproduction of institutional racism in education settings is one issue not addressed by traditional college readiness scholarship and interventions. All levels of schooling, including postsecondary education, have historically racialized and continue to be sites of racial discrimination (Harper et al., 2009; Patton, 2016). Present examples of institutional racism in education are stereotype threats (Steele & Aronson, 1995) and racial microaggressions (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Stereotype threat has been theorized as an explanation for lower academic achievement over time among highly capable Black students. Stereotype threat refers to the impact of actual or perceived negative expectations students of color fear they will fulfill, resulting in withdrawal and lower academic engagement. The negative impact of stereotype threat on academic achievement has been predominantly based in postsecondary settings. In the k-12 arena, teacher race and expectations of students have been shown to matter for student performance (Dee, 2005; Pigott & Cowen, 2000). Relatedly, racial microaggressions refer to subtle unconscious acts targeting people of color with an impact that reinforces racial isolation and discrimination (Sue et al., 2008). Research on racial microaggressions in educational settings broadly demonstrates that students of color experience racial microaggressions (Allen et al., 2013; Sue et al., 2009). Even as high-achieving students in elite

institutions, Black and Latino males encounter racial microaggressions, which render them vulnerable to isolation, disengagement, and not receiving the support necessary for college and career success (Harper, 2015; Perez, 2014).

Another factor impeding males of color in education is inequitable disciplining and exposure to criminal justice (Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Nolan, 2011). In the k-12 sector, males are overrepresented in disciplinary sanctions compared to females (Skiba et al., 2002). The types of sanctions—office referrals, suspensions, and corporal punishment—take time away from learning, which will have an impact on college readiness (Bain & McPherson, 1990; Cooley, 1995; Gregory, 1996; Imich, 1994). The use of police and institutionalization of zero-tolerance discipline have not had positive outcomes among racially minoritized youth due to the criminalization of trivial offenses and shifting disciplinary responsibilities from educators to police (Brown, 2003; Nolan, 2011). Peguero, Portillos, and González (2015) found that Latinx students who receive a disciplinary sanction are two times more likely to drop out. Several scholars have also observed how racially minoritized students in under-resourced schools are caught in a double-bind, having to deal with police harassment at school and in their community (Huerta & Rios-Aguilar, 2018; Nolan, 2011; Rios, 2011; Sojoyner, 2016). Encounters with police have been linked to lower test scores and a lower likelihood of matriculation to college among Black male youth (Legewie & Fagan, 2019; Johnson, 2015).

Structural inequities have resulted in materially inadequate schools for students of color and invalidating school environments regardless of school quality and funding (Reid & Moore, 2008; Venezia & Kirst, 2005; Venezia et al., 2003). Scholars argue that present-day inequalities in schooling, and thus college readiness, cannot be adequately addressed without full consideration of students' culture and the impact of racism on their educational journeys (DeCuir

& Dixson, 2004). Welton and Martinez (2014) argue that college readiness interventions cannot neglect students' families, cultural identities, and cultural knowledge, all of which are actively used to persist through education. By incorporating culturally responsive approaches to education, schools would be better able to attend to students' needs and their resources, all of which can inform interventions to eliminate barriers to college and promote readiness.

In the next section, we share the results of a national program scan of college readiness programs and interventions targeting males of color. Similar to the literature, we found differences in gender-neutral college readiness programs and male of color-serving programs.

College Readiness Interventions on the Ground

Non-profit and community-based interventions to increase college readiness for youth have long existed to increase higher education access among underrepresented populations (e.g., students who may be first-generation college-bound, from lower socioeconomic status families and from communities of color). As community-oriented interventions, college readiness programs are tailored to the specific context in which they operate, for instance, a particular high school, city, or county. They also tend to address the individual-level barriers, such as the lack of exposure to college knowledge and the need for hands-on assistance in navigating the college application process.

An emergent trend tied to the college readiness agenda is a focus on supporting males of color. In contrast to college readiness programs, initiatives to support boys and men of color integrate educational attainment within a broader set of systemic barriers and issues, such as incarceration and health. 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. Fiften of these programs were tailored to males of color.

The guiding criteria for the scan were as follows. First, I examined state college enrollment data from the *Chronicle of Higher Education 2020-21 Almanac*. I identified the top five states with college enrollments for each underrepresented racial/ethnic group (Black, Asian, Latinx, Native American, and Pacific Islander). As a result, I searched for college readiness interventions in the following states: Alabama, Alaska, California, Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Maryland, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Mississippi, Montana, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Utah. Next, I used directories from the National College Attainment Network (NCAN), the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), the Coalition for College Access, and the My Brother's Keeper Alliance to identify programs focused on college readiness, boys and men of color in the selected states. After searching through state listings in each of these directories, I supplemented with Google searches using the following keywords: *college access programs* [state] and [Black, Latino, Native, Pacific Islander, Asian] *male college access programs.* Sampled programs needed to have publicly available impact data with interventions that led to multiple touch points over a span of time.

Excluded from the program scan were organizations that did not report impact data and provided on-time interventions. While this was applied to all the gender-neutral college readiness programs, these criteria were relaxed to permit the inclusion of boys and men of color-specific programs. Additionally, all interventions included were majority community-based. The program scan did not include interventions initiated by a postsecondary institution as this would have exponentially widened the universe of possible programs. Programs that only served elementary or middle school students were also excluded. Finally, coalition and advocacy organizations

were excluded if they did not provide direct service. The full list of programs included in the scan can be found in the Appendix, which displays the program's components, geographic scope, and grades serviced.

Main Approaches to College Readiness

Based on the program scan, the following components of college readiness were prevalent among the interventions: high school planning, academic support, college choice planning, admissions test prep, application assistance, college exposure, mentorship, enrichment workshops, and financial support. Research has supported the general effectiveness of these interventions. College outreach programs have positive effects on high school academic achievement and college enrollment (Bettinger & Evans, 2019; Horn & Chen, 1998; Le et al., 2015; Snipes et al., 2006). Advising on college information, such as through interactions with high school counselors, also have a positive effect on college applications and enrollment (Bryan et al., 2010; Hurwitz & Howell, 2014). Overall, when students receive information about college and financial aid, they have higher college aspirations and admissions to college (Hoxby & Turner, 2013; Oreopoulos & Dunn, 2013). Financial support has been shown to increase college attendance as well as persistence, however, studies have been conducted on larger-scale private foundations and state programs (Angrist et al., 2015; Dynarski, 2000). Research is needed to identify the effectiveness of non-profit college readiness organizations providing financial support to student participants.

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. College exposure, application assistance, and college choice planning were explicit components in a third of these programs. Rather than assume these programs were not focused on college readiness, they sought to integrate the educational needs of boys and men of color holistically. In the next section, I highlight three programs to demonstrate the holistic approach to supporting boys and men of color.

In Focus: Interventions for Boys and Men of Color

Unity Council's Latino Men and Boys Program, Oakland, California

The Unity Council is a non-profit social development enterprise serving the Fruitvale district in Oakland, California. Its mission is to promote social equity and improve quality of life by building vibrant communities where everyone can work, learn, and thrive. The Latino Men and Boys Program (LMB) is a cohort-based youth achievement program serving middle and high school Latino students. The goals of LMB are to increase high school graduation rates and expose young Latino males to career options. The program employs a culturally relevant approach to provide holistic support. LMB also partners with the Alameda County Center for Healthy Schools and Communities to promote health and wellness. Program components include:

- Academic and career mentorship from Latino males
- Group meetings focused on providing emotional and social support, such as healing circles and discussions focused on trauma
- Individual academic support
- Employment counseling
- Health services and education from professionals and peer educators
- Parent support to mediate family conflict

In 2014, a program evaluation was conducted using focus groups and a questionnaire. Overall, the program helped participants 1) connect to health information and services; 2) critically reflect on choices in regards to interpersonal relationships and risky health behavior; 3) form bonds with mentors and fellow participants; 4) focus on career development and higher education; and 5) improve grades, attendance, and feelings of school connectedness

(Geierstanger et al., 2014). To date, LMB has served nearly 200 Latino boys and men and expanded its school sites from three to eight middle and high schools in Oakland.

BUILD, Chicago, Illinois

BUILD—Broader Urban Involvement and Leadership Development—is a leading gang intervention, violence prevention, and youth development organization. BUILD engages youth considered at-risk through an evidence-based model that includes restorative justice, conflict mediation, prevention, development, and behavioral health. BUILD operates through middle and high schools, and community-based sites. Program areas include:

- College access
- Career readiness
- Youth leadership development
- Mental health services
- Enrichment activities
- Gang violence prevention
- Mentorship
- Peace circles

In 2019, BUILD engaged 2,533 youth. Among participants, 56% identified as male, 71% as African American, and 24% as Hispanic. In terms of educational impact, 96% of BUILD youth graduated high school and 35 reconnected with school. In 2018, 96% of BUILD high school seniors applied to postsecondary institutions. Additional significant outcomes, from 2019, include 84% of court-involved BUILD youth avoided recidivism and 99% avoided gangs and arrest, and 33 youth detached from a gang. Youth also benefitted from mental health services and were referred to trauma-informed services.

Youth Leadership Institute's Fresno Boys and Men of Color Program, Fresno, California

The Youth Leadership Institute (YLI) operates statewide in California to create positive youth-led community change, social justice, and racial equity. In 2010, YLI established Fresno Boys and Men of Color (BMoC) to foster a community of young leaders who heal, advocate, and serve to make a healthy home for all. The program develops leadership and advocacy skills and restorative practices. BMoC serves male-identified youth ages 12-24 and offers bi-weekly meetings as well as month youth healing circles. The program also offers paid internships. BMoC youth leaders have engaged in campaigns focused on:

- Public health
- Public transportation
- Juvenile justice reform
- Safe schools
- Youth engagement in public service

BMoC was successful in establishing in creating a City of Fresno Youth Commission as well as the Fresno Police Chief's Youth Advisory Council. Youth leaders also worked to ensure that SB190 was enforced throughout Fresno County. The bill eliminated several fees for youth involved in the juvenile justice system. Youth leaders also expand their social capital through partnership with community organizations and elected officials. The program would benefit from documenting educational outcomes among youth leaders.

Assessing Impact

Among the programs examined in the scan, the impact data was almost entirely descriptive. Impact was reported in terms of program outcomes, such as data on the number of activities implemented and students served. Student outcomes were also reported, which

included graduation data, admissions test scores, number of colleges/universities student participants applied to, postsecondary acceptance rate, and scholarship dollars awarded or earned by students. Although such information was reported as resulting from the programs, the student outcomes cannot be deemed to have been caused by the specific program intervention alone due to the nature of the evaluation (descriptive as opposed to causal).

A few programs were evaluated according to causal methods. Bettinger and Evans (2019) conducted a school-level randomized controlled trial in Texas public high schools to evaluate Advise TX, a program modeled after the College Advising Corps. The model is a whole-school intervention: a recent college graduate is assigned as a college advisor to a high school. The college advisor's responsibilities pertain to the college choice planning, application assistance, and college exposure. Pooled results from three years of study did not indicate an impact on college enrollment due to the presence of the college advisor. Subgroup analyses revealed some enrollment outcome improvements. The authors observed an increase of two to three percentage points on immediate college enrollment among low-income and Hispanic students, with a concentrated effect on two-year college enrollment. The study supports the general effectiveness of providing college exposure, hands-on application assistance, and college choice navigation on college enrollment. The study contributes to the literature by establishing the effectiveness of a school-wide college readiness program.

A similar intervention, College Possible, was studied by Avery (2013) using a randomized trial and regression discontinuity. In addition to college choice advising, hands-on application assistance, and college exposure—the services provided by Advise TX/College Advising Corps—College Possible also offers tutoring to help student participants increase ACT scores. Participants undergo a selection process in the 10th grade and chosen students engage in

College Possible services in their 11th and 12 grade years. The majority of participants are first-generation college-bound students of color from lower-income families. Avery (2013) examined a pool of 238 eligible students, of whom 134 were randomly selected to be College Possible participants. Analyses demonstrate that College Possible participation promoted applications and enrollment at four-year and selective four-year institutions. A regression discontinuity analysis was also conducted with historical data, which demonstrated similar results as the randomized trial analysis. Although College Possible provides direct ACT tutoring, the randomized trial analysis did not find evidence of a program effect on ACT scores as both the control and treatment groups reported similar ACT scores.

` In terms of studying men of color-specific intervention, two studies have assessed the impact of culturally relevant education at the high school level. Dee and Penner (2019) employed a difference-in-difference approach to study the African American Male Initiative (AAMI) in Oakland, California. The analysis demonstrated that the implementation of AAMI significantly reduced dropout rates among Black males. The Expanded Success Initiative (ESI) in New York City Public Schools targeted Black and Latino males. Using a comparative interrupted time series analysis, researchers found that ESI had a positive effect on young Black and Latino male students' sense of fair treatment and belonging in school (Villavicencio et al., 2018). ESI also increased Black and Latino male students' social capital as this population was more likely to interact with adults to discuss their future. However, ESI had no impact on high school graduation, college readiness, or college enrollment. We provide recommendations for research in the conclusion.

Recommendations for Research, Policy, and Practice

The program scan revealed differences in the approach between gender-neutral college readiness programs and interventions that were male of color-specific. Gender-neutral college readiness programs tend to focus strictly on traditional components of college readiness (e.g., admissions test prep, application assistance, and college exposure). These programs also reported impact data, although descriptive and not disaggregated by gender or race in many cases. The few causal studies were conducted on traditional college readiness programs. The male of color-specific interventions tended to be framed in terms of the cultural contexts of their specific context and holistic needs of males of color including, but not confined to education or college readiness. The male of color interventions addressed additional social problems facing the population, such as incarceration and poverty, which pose challenges to being college ready. The differences in programming and availability of impact data indicate opportunities to better serve males of color.

A conceptual recommendation, and primary one, is revisiting how college readiness is conceptualized. When we initially noted the inconsistences in how states define readiness compared to scholarly investigations, we advocated for a consistent and widespread use of a holistic definition of readiness. Doing so may direct states, school districts, and practitioners to consider how to ensure males are receiving adequate academic support, counseling and college information, and opportunities to develop essential academic non-cognitive skills. However, the literatures on males of color suggests the need to examine issues such as institutional racism, school racial climate, discipline, and the benefits of culturally relevant education. An expanded notion of readiness might include ensuring school environments are themselves “ready” to support males of color, rather than obstruct their educational success.

On the policy level, educational leaders, foundations, and policy makers can begin considering how inequities in higher education intersects with other social disparities, such as male of color college enrollment and incarceration rates. Campaigns, such as Ban the Box, are aimed at increasing access for formerly incarcerated individuals and those with criminal records. A programmatic intervention is the California State University System's Project Rebound initiative is focused on instituting recruitment and retention programs for formerly incarcerated students throughout the system, and is currently at 14 campuses. Policies and funding for programs like Project Rebound are opportunities for promoting college access at these intersections of race, gender, and class.

At a practice level, the variety of existing program models are encouraging. Traditional college readiness programs can adopt culturally relevant approaches to serve males of color. Efforts can include including enrichment activities that address the systemic barriers facing males of color (e.g., learning policy advocacy, healing circles) and structuring mentorship programs that foster holistic student development and community building (e.g., individual mentoring nested within mentoring families). College choice advising can include introducing students to minority-serving institutions (MSIs) as options and college exposure activities might include campus tours to MSIs and presentations with campus services tailored for underrepresented students. In communities where it is possible to partner, male of color programs and college readiness programs can more closely collaborate to ensure males are receiving targeted college support within a network of holistic services that address other needs and barriers.

Finally, research needs to move beyond description. We suggest two future approaches. The first is an action-based, participatory approach to capturing the intervention's effectiveness

in real-time. One example is the plan-do-study-act cycle of evaluation used to improve quality in healthcare (Leis & Shojania, 2017). Participatory research includes those are the intended beneficiaries as researchers. A participatory approach lends itself as one method to assess needs and whether programmatic interventions are being implemented as intended and whether participants are reporting positive intermediary outcomes. The second approach is to design studies using causal methods, which can better ascertain the degree to which programmatic interventions are responsible for improved outcomes in college readiness, college enrollment, and other metrics.

Conclusion

In the current pandemic, higher education is at risk of both severe erosion and over-taxation of its resources. Males of color from lower-income and first-generation college backgrounds may be especially vulnerable to economic insecurity and lack of access to technology in order to participate in their schooling, which may further compound the issue of access and enrollment into college.[2] Decades of previous research have consistently found that males overall are academically disadvantaged in high school. Traditional notions of college readiness and related interventions have individualized the educational barriers facing males as they advance through the educational pipeline. The individual approach has not resulted in gender equity, which is hurting males of color the most. Research on males of color suggest a holistic and systemic view of obstacles that impede higher education access. On the ground practice interventions for boys and males of color address issues that college readiness organizations do not: criminalization, poverty, incarceration, violence, and wellbeing. To foster gender equity in college readiness, especially for underrepresented males of color, schools and

[2] https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-09-21/online-learning-hurts-poorest-la-students

other social policies need to be “ready” to serve males equitably. A desire for more males of color in college will not overcome the policies and practices that instead label males of color as criminals, land them in jail, and take time away from learning. Gender equity in college readiness cannot be a goal within a vacuum, but needs to be connected to equity in overall social outcomes and wellbeing for males and males of color.

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