College for All and Community College for None: Stigma in High-Achieving High Schools

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by Megan M. Holland — 2015

Background/Context: In recent years, college attendance has become a universal aspiration. These rising ambitions have been attributed to the "college-for-all" norm, which encourages all students to aim for college attendance; however, not all students are prepared for the college application process or college-level work.

Research Questions: This research examines how students interpret the pressure to attend college, particularly four-year schools, when not all students have the same resources needed to negotiate the college process. The study focused on the following questions: What are students' future educational and work aspirations? Is the college-for-all culture salient for them, and if so, how do they interpret it within the specific context of their high schools? How do they reconcile the pressure to attend college with a lack of economic resources, college knowledge, and college preparation?

Research Design: Qualitative methods were used to examine how students experienced the college-for-all norm and how this affected their college application behaviors and decisions. Semistructured interviews with 89 juniors and seniors were conducted across two racially and socioeconomically diverse high schools, and a subsample of students was followed over time to see how aspirations and plans changed and evolved. School counselors and other school faculty were also interviewed. Observations were conducted at the schools over two years, and a short survey was administered to students in the sample.

Findings/Results: The findings indicate that the "college-for-all" norm was interpreted as "four-year college-for-all" in the two high schools, contributing to the development of a stigma surrounding community college attendance. Less advantaged students displayed just as high aspirations as their more advantaged peers but were forced to deal with the community college stigma to a greater degree. Students developed a number of stigma management strategies that varied by race, gender, and class.

Conclusion/Recommendations: Social structures and inequalities can be reproduced by stigmatizing processes that tend to affect those who lack power and social resources the most. These social structures influence the ways in which people manage stigma, leading to multiple strategies that can both reify and question that stigma. The community college stigma can be problematic if students avoid such schools in favor of expensive four-year colleges that they may not be academically prepared for. Understanding the pressure students feel to attend four-year schools may help school counselors and teachers present alternatives to students in more positive ways and encourage schools to focus more on adequate college preparation, along with college encouragement.

With the institution of open admissions policies at many community colleges, the dream of a college education has become more attainable for many underrepresented and nontraditional students. These college aspirations have also been fueled by the rise of the "college-for-all" norm, which encourages all students to aim for higher education (Goyette, 2008; Rosenbaum, 2001, 2011). This rise in college aspirations is positive in many ways – research has found

that consistent college aspirations are an important component to successful college application (Klasik, 2012). However, scholars have also been critical of the college-for-all movement and argue that it does not incorporate more college preparation and a clear explanation of what to expect in college (Rosenbaum, 2001, 2011). Scholars have characterized recent cohorts of youth as "overly ambitious," in that they have high educational aspirations, but little understanding of what it takes to reach their goals and minimal preparation (Reynolds, Stewart, MacDonald, & Sischo, 2006; Schneider & Stevenson, 1999; see Baird, Burge, & Reynolds, 2008 for a review).

Despite the debates among scholars of education about the college-for-all movement and its effect on students, the field lacks an in-depth examination of how students interpret and navigate pressures to attend college, especially in different contexts. Depending on the school and community context, and the individual student, college-for-all may have different meanings. At highly successful schools, where many, if not all, students have high ambitions and attend some form of postsecondary education, increasingly high college expectations may put certain schools, such as community colleges, out of the running as acceptable destinations. The open-admissions policies at community colleges, which many have credited with making college-for-all more attainable, may work against such schools in making them desirable destinations. Research has shown that despite lofty goals, only slightly more than half of those who begin four-year degrees eventually finish (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2011), and for students who do not complete their bachelor's degree, each year spent in a university brings about the same economic gain as each year spent in a community college (Grubb, 1993, 2002). However, the cost of attendance at a four-year college is usually much greater, leaving many students in debt and without much to show for it. Considering this, it is important to investigate why some students may avoid community colleges.

I examine how students at high-achieving suburban schools experience the college-for-all culture and the conflicts that exist for less advantaged students between their four-year college dreams and their two-year community college options. I ask, What are students' future educational and work aspirations? Is the college-for-all culture salient for them, and if so, how do they interpret it within the specific context of their high schools? How do they reconcile the pressure to attend college with a lack of economic resources, college knowledge, and college preparation? Using data from a two-year field study of two high-achieving but racially and socioeconomically diverse high schools, and interviews with 129 respondents, I find that students interpret the push to attend college as a demand to enroll in elite four-year universities regardless of academic preparation or goals, which results in less advantaged and lower achieving students struggling to make their college dreams a reality. I examine the stigma (Goffman, 1963) associated with attending schools other than four-year universities that are created in these contexts, and the multiple stigma management strategies that students employ to avoid or explain their community college attendance when other plans are unattainable or fall through. Incorporating a more explicit analysis of structure and power into Goffman's (1963) theory of stigma, I show how race, class, and gender affect which students are more likely to have to deal with this stigma and how students' access to resources (such as financial and informational support) influences the stigma management strategies they employ.

This study contributes to the literature on the development of college aspirations and stigmatizing processes in schools in a number of ways. First, it

Related Discussion

shows how in high-achieving contexts, the college-for-all norm has increased college aspirations above and beyond "any college" to specifically four-year schools. In these schools, college destinations serve as markers of status, further increasing students' college aspirations. Most of the research on college-for-all has focused on its effects on students' achievement and college attendance, whereas this study examines how students are interpreting the norm and their struggles to live up to it. Second, the study focuses on how these concerns about status and high aspirations led to the creation of a stigma surrounding two-year schools. Prior research on stigma has not always taken into account how stigmatization can vary and the influence of both structure and power on stigma and stigma management strategies. The article incorporates Link and Phelan's (2001) and Parker and Aggleton's (2003) reconceptualizations of stigma to analyze how race, class, and gender mediate the impact of the community college stigma on students and serve to reproduce inequalities. And finally, this study focuses on the ways in which students attempt to deal with this stigma within a high-achieving school culture that encourages students to develop big dreams but fails to take into account the vastly different resources that students bring to bear on reaching those dreams. Racial/ethnic minorities and first-generation college students tend to have to deal with this stigma the most because of their low achievement, limited finances, and lack of information about the college process. Whereas middle-class students explain not attending college as "taking a year off" to travel or intern, essentially resisting the idea that one must attend a four-year college right after high school, less advantaged students must instead cope with the stigma of their postsecondary decisions.

LITERATURE

COLLEGE-FOR-ALL AND INCREASING ASPIRATIONS

Many scholars have discussed the implications of the rise of the college-for-all norm for students, school counselors, high schools, higher education, and society (Deil-Amen & DeLuca, 2010; Hoxby, 2004; Rosenbaum, 2001). This norm implies that everyone should and can go to college, two-year or four-year. The push for college began as a push to increase access for racial/ethnic minorities and low-income students, who attend college at lower rates (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010). Many have argued that college-for-all opens up doors and may even inspire students to work harder in high school if they believe that others have confidence in them and that college really is an option (Domina, Conley, & Farkas, 2011). However, others have argued that the push for college access has come without a concurrent push for an increase in college preparation. Rosenbaum (2001) argued that many high school graduates are not prepared for and not made aware of the academic challenges of higher education. Even though low-performing students may be accepted to universities or start off in community college, many are so underprepared that they have little chance of success (Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen, & Person, 2006).

Students' aspirations have risen to meet the demands of the college-for-all norm. From 1980 to 2002, the percentage of students who expected to attend college nearly doubled, from 43% to 85%, and that increase was even greater among students whose parents had not graduated from college (Goyette, 2008). Researchers have found that these growths in ambitions have outpaced increases in actual college attendance, resulting in an overly ambitious generation (Goyette, 2008; Reynolds et al., 2006; Schneider & Stevenson,

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  MEGAN M. HOLLAND is an assistant professor in educational leadership and policy at the University at Buffalo-SUNY. Her research focuses on the intersection of culture and structure in schools and how racial, gender, and class inequalities are reproduced in educational contexts. Her most recent research examines the linkages between students' high school experiences and their access to and persistence in higher education. Her publications include "Only Here for the Day: The Social Integration of

1999). This is especially true for less advantaged students: Despite equally high aspirations, racial/ethnic minorities and students whose parents are not college educated are less likely to realize their ambitions (Reynolds & Johnson, 2011). These inequalities indicate continued barriers to college access, which result from a variety of factors such as differences in wealth and income, informational disparities, organizational and resource differences among high schools, and higher education admissions processes (Bastedo & Jacquette 2011; Engberg & Wolniak, 2010; Hill, 2008; McDonough, 1997; Oliver & Shapiro, 1995; Roderick, Coca, & Nagaoka, 2011; Stevens, 2007; Venezia & Kirst, 2005).

Although the bachelor's degree may be idealized as the ultimate goal (Rosenbaum, Stephan, & Rosenbaum, 2010), it is the rise in the number of open admissions community colleges that has facilitated the college-for-all movement (Rosenbaum, 2004). High school counselors used to take on the role of "cooling out" aspirations among low-achieving students, citing the admissions standards of schools. However, with increased negative attention focused on this gatekeeping role, and the open admissions policies of community colleges, school counselors now encourage students' high ambitions and rely on two-year colleges to do the "cooling out" (Clark, 1960; Rosenbaum, 2001; Rosenbaum, Miller, & Krei, 1996).

Although community college can be the first step toward a bachelor's degree, it may not live up to the what students have in mind when they think of "college"—dorms, green, tree-lined campuses with quadrangles, parties, and new best friends. This disconnect between the college dream and what is attainable can prove problematic for many students. Although much research has documented these rising ambitions and college-for-all environments, the scholarship does not address how students negotiate these pressures and manage their high expectations in the context of their lack of preparation. How do they deal with these tensions between the idealized bachelor's degree and the difficulties of gaining access to a four-year college or university? I find that these tensions result in a stigma associated with community college attendance at the high-achieving schools in my study; however, this stigma, like the phenomenon of unrealized aspirations, disproportionately affects less advantaged students.

STIGMA AND STRUCTURES OF INEQUALITY

Prior research has examined how remediation within community colleges can be stigmatized (or destigmatized) (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002) but not how community college itself may develop a stigma in certain contexts. Goffman (1963) defined a stigma as an attribute that differs from the norm in such a way as to discredit a person and turn him "from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one" (p. 3). Although stigmas are many times physical marks that are easily identifiable and discrediting, other stigmas may be hidden in a person's history or not easily identifiable on first acquaintance and are therefore discreditable if brought to light. Goffman (1963) said that a stigma is "a special kind of relationship between an attribute and a stereotype" (p. 4). It is when an attribute is associated with a negative stereotype that it becomes a stigma. Because the stigma results from the relationship, Goffman acknowledged that an attribute is not discrediting in and of itself. In different situations or for different individuals, certain attributes may confer a stigma and others not. Stigma is not static and absolute; it is the product of larger social

relationships, and those relationships and resulting structures produce stigmatizing effects.

Scholars have not been as attentive to unpacking and exploring the "relationship between attributes and stereotypes" that Goffman (1963) acknowledged. Instead, work has mostly focused on stigma as an individualistic attribute rather than as a social process resulting from these relationships (Link & Phelan, 2001; Oliver, 1992; Parker & Aggleton, 2003). Examining the social process of stigmatization requires that attention be paid to social structures and how these structures influence the interactions between the stigmatized and others. Link and Phelan's (2001) reconceptualization of stigma, drawn from Goffman's (1963) original assertion that stigma is at the nexus of relationships, identified five interrelated components that together make up stigma: labeling, cultural beliefs connecting labels to negative stereotypes, sorting and distancing of labeled persons, status loss, and access to power to facilitate these components. Link and Phelan's conceptualization necessarily takes into account societal structures and hierarchies—who has power, how they got that power, and what resources are available to actors. Issues of power and structure influence not only who and what is stigmatized, and the effects of that stigma, but also the resources actors have to draw on to manage stigma.

Parker and Aggleton (2003) also injected notions of power and social structural position into their conceptualization of stigma. Drawing on theories of symbolic violence and hegemony, the authors argued that stigmatization is "a process linked to competition for power and legitimization of social hierarchy and inequality" (p. 18). Stigma becomes more than an attribute that affects an individual's identity and his day-to-day interactions—it becomes a tool that is used by those in power to reproduce societal inequalities.

Drawing on both Link and Phelan's (2001) and Parker and Aggleton's (2003) reconceptualizations of stigma, I focus on the process of stigmatization and struggles for power and status in this process. I highlight the role of social structures in influencing how stigma emerges, its effects, and how the resources available to different social groups influence the ways in which individuals manage that stigma. I take into account the role of social context and how powerful groups within a particular context can create stigmatized attributes as a way to reproduce inequality and protect their status. In the high-achieving suburban high schools in my study, community college attendance emerged as a stigma that tended to affect the most disadvantaged students. This stigma developed in response to larger messages about college-for-all; however, it was also contextual. In a less affluent, majority-minority high school a few miles away, attending community college would be a mark of status and advantage. However, stigmatization can be used as way to establish hierarchies and reassert power. In these racially and socioeconomically diverse high schools, where there are constant struggles for power across race and class, creating and perpetrating community college attendance as a stigma asserted the status dominance of White upper-middle class college-educated families. First-generation and racial/ethnic minority students are more likely to have to deal with the stigma. These students faced multiple obstacles to fulfilling the context-specific college-for-all ideal of their high schools because of financial barriers as well as challenges in accessing and making use of college information and assistance (Holland, 2013).

STIGMA MANAGEMENT

To deal with stigma, Goffman (1963) wrote that individuals could attempt to "pass" by concealing their stigma so as to blend in with "normals." To pass, the stigmatized must engage in "information control," such as name changing, moving, or relying on a small circle of confidants to assist with passing. These strategies are helpful for those who possess a "discreditable" stigma—one that is not obvious to an acquaintance. When an individual possesses a "discrediting" stigma—such as a physical handicap or deformity that he or she cannot hide, then he or she must engage in "covering"—strategies that focus on minimizing the effect of the stigma so as not to make social interactions with "normals" too awkward.

Gussow and Tracy (1968) argued that Goffman (1963) failed to take into account ways in which individuals may fight back against their stigma. Research on resistance has found that individuals may engage in resistant thinking and avoidance or interaction management (Riessman, 2000; Thoits, 2011; Zajicek & Koski, 2003), they may speak up for themselves and resist against those that stigmatize them (Riessman, 2000; Thoits, 2011) or embrace their stigma (Han, 2009; Zajicek & Koski, 2003). Other research has acknowledged additional ways of managing stigma. In studying homeless teenagers, Roschelle and Kaufman (2004) found that youth engaged in strategies of "inclusion" such as passing and covering, but also strategies of "exclusion" such as sexual posturing and verbal and physical confrontation. These exclusion strategies helped protect youths' sense of self when they felt they might be stigmatized but also reinforced their marginality.

In managing stigma, scholars have conceptualized two broad models of stigma management (Oyserman & Swim, 2001; Shih, 2004). The first is coping, which is a self-protective strategy. In coping, individuals try to minimize negative interactions with others because of their stigma. The second is empowerment. In this model, individuals try to draw strength from dealing with adversity and focus on positive outcomes. Although coping is more of a reactive strategy, empowerment is proactive. Strategies such as passing and covering might be seen as coping, whereas resisting could be seen as empowerment.

Although individuals may engage in strategies to resist their stigma on one level, there may also be contradictions and tensions in their presentations. Zajicek and Koski (2003), in studying singles in the United Kingdom, acknowledged that although some singles tried to portray themselves as "single and happy," they still felt ambivalence about their situation. Although they tried to resist the dominant discourse, they at times fell prey to feelings of self- doubt. Goffman (1963) argued that this is due to internalized conceptions of having a spoiled identity, and this makes it hard for the stigmatized to resist and band together. Goffman (1963) argued that this ambivalence about her own self may lead a stigmatized person to discriminate against others who readily bear the stigma as well. This lack of a group identity serves to prevent long-term and sustained resistance, and reproduce discrimination and inequalities.

I show how the students in my study exhibited the tension and contradictions that Zajicek and Koski (2003) argued that scholars of stigma need to be more

attentive to by engaging in multiple strategies. Among my respondents, most students neither accept that they deserve the stigma attached to community college, nor resist the dominant paradigm that devalues such schools. Instead, they attempt to explain and excuse their attendance, which serves to reproduce their stigmatization. The social structures that reproduce larger racial-, gender-, and class-based inequalities in education and society also serve to create inequalities in the types of strategies students have access to. These strategies are, for the most part, "coping" or "self-protective" strategies. Ironically, because of their financial resources, it is mostly White middle-class students who are able to engage in strategies that resist the stigma of going against the college-for-all norm. African American females struggle the most with dealing with stigma and engage in multiple strategies to deal with different stigmas. Many of the African American females in my study resisted the stigma associated with their race—that they are less intelligent and perhaps would do better in a "lesser" school—by refusing to attend community colleges. However, in resisting one stigma, they give power to another and highlight the struggles of students as they try to be empowered in the face of multiple and conflicting pressures.

DATA AND METHODS

I collected data during the 2010–2011 and 2011–2012 school years at two suburban high schools in the Northeast: Evanstown High School (EHS) and Park City High School (PCHS).[1] These schools have high graduation rates (over 95%),[2] rates of attendance at four-year colleges (approximately 75%), and levels of diversity. EHS is 61% White, 15% African American, 20% Latino, and 4% Asian, and PCHS is 49% White, 41% African American, 6% Latino, and 4% Asian. Both schools have a number of middle- and upper-middle-class students, but about 20% of their student populations qualify for free or reduced price lunch.[3] I conducted a two-year-long field study at these schools, incorporating focused observations with shadowing key informants and interviews with students, counselors, and teachers. Semistructured interviews with a variety of respondents allowed me to understand the multiple ways that the college-for-all norm was being interpreted and to understand students "in their own terms" (Lofland, 1971, p. 7, as cited in Patton, 2002, p. 21). Incorporating observations was necessary to grasp the context fully and enhanced my understanding of the nuances of how the community college stigma had developed and was interpreted by students, teachers, and counselors (Patton, 2002). In line with Lofland and Lofland's (1984) argument for the "mutuality" of both interviewing and observation, I used both methods to gather the richest data (p. 13)

In total, I conducted 225 hours of focused observations[4] at the schools during the two years, 135 hours at PCHS and 90 hours at EHS. I observed in classrooms, cafeterias, counseling offices, main offices, and around the general campus. I also attended as many college-related events at the schools as possible, such as college fairs; college representative visits; essay, application, and financial aid workshops; parents' nights; and instant decision days. I shadowed 5 students over the course of their school day, 2 African American male juniors and 1 African American female senior at PCHS and 2 African American female seniors at EHS.[5] Shadowing these students allowed me to see how students interacted with each other and with faculty on a day-to-day basis. I interviewed 3 of the students whom I shadowed, so I was able to compare what the students said to me about their experiences in their

interview with my own observations.[6] Additionally, I shadowed 3 adults who worked at the schools, a security guard at PCHS, and a counselor and an administrator at EHS. I chose these adults because I had observed that they had good rapport with many of the more disengaged students in the schools. By shadowing these individuals, I was able to observe their interactions with students and also gain access to student populations that were less visible.

I conducted interviews with 129 respondents, 89 juniors and seniors[7] and 40 faculty[8] and staff members (including school counselors, teachers, and administrators) across both schools. The majority of student respondents were randomly chosen from a list of students stratified by race and grade (69%).[9] Randomly selected students were invited to an information session where the study was explained and consent forms were handed out. After the interview, I asked students to recommend two friends, whom I then contacted about doing an interview. This snowball sample accounts for 13% of my overall sample. To access some harder to reach populations, who were less likely to come to the information sessions I held, I also recruited students I met while observing, which accounts for about 18% of my sample. My sampling methods were designed to create a heterogeneous sample so that I could understand common themes and patterns across social groups that were indicative of the high school context and also variations in interpretations within those social groups (Patton, 2002).

Eight students were interviewed twice during their senior year, and 19 were interviewed once during their junior and twice their senior year to examine how students' goals, aspirations, and explanations for their decisions did or did not change over time (see Table 1). After the initial interview, students filled out a short survey of demographic and academic information, as did those students whom I followed up with their senior year. A total of 86 students completed the initial survey, and 14 of those who were reinterviewed their senior year completed it.[10] I also collected achievement data on 88 students from the school (one student's scores could not be located), with students' and parents' permission.

I had separate interview guides for 11th and 12th graders and for first, second, and third interviews; however, the majority of my questions were the same across interviews to ascertain how students' decision making, preferences, and their college knowledge changed (or did not change) over time. Across these interview guides, my questions addressed five broad categories: classes and school, academic behavior, after-school activities, social groupings and achievement, and college planning. The data for this article draw mainly from the college planning section (see the appendix for examples of interview questions).

My student sample is 52% African American, 40% White, 2% multiracial (African American and White), and 6% other (Latino and Asian), and roughly evenly split by gender (see Table 2). Approximately 67% of the students I interviewed had one or more parents who had earned a bachelor's degree or higher, 27% had parents who had completed high school but not earned a college degree, and about 6% had parents who had not finished high school. Using grade point average (GPA) information provided by the schools, I classified students as high achieving (GPA > 3.5), moderate achieving (GPA 3.4–2.5) and low achieving (GPA < 2.4). Approximately 37% of students in my

sample were high achieving, 35% were moderate achieving, and 28% were low achieving.

Table 1. Total Students Interviewed Over Time

	Number of students interviewed only once (during their junior year)	Number of students interviewed only once (during their senior year)	Number of students interviewed twice (during their senior year)	Number of students interviewed three times over their junior and senior years	Total
EHS	9	24	4	11	48
PCHS	4	25	4	8	41
Total	13	49	8	19	89

Table 2. Total Students Interviewed by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

	African American	White	Latino	Asian	Biracial/Multiracial	Total
Males	24	18	2	0	1	45
Females	21	18	2	1	2	44
Total	45	36	4	1	3	89

During my observations, I took notes (when possible) and typed up these field notes within 24 hours. I created a structured note-taking outline for both student and adult interviews and used this to take field notes after each of my interviews. Interviews were transcribed, and my interviews and field notes were coded using ATLAS.ti software. Data for this article are drawn from a larger study on the college application process, and so data were initially coded based on these themes. As I went through my codes, I noticed additional

themes related to students' feelings about community colleges and noted that the concept of "stigma" came up repeatedly. I used focused coding (Charmaz, 2006) and used the most frequent codes to help me organize, sort, and conceptualize these emerging findings. As I returned to the field the next year, I did so with new questions and with an emerging framework around the concept of community college stigma. I engaged in theoretical sampling the second year, that is, "seeking and collecting pertinent data to elaborate and refine categories in [my] emerging theory" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 96). Considering the length of my study and the fact that data collection stopped for much of the summer, this was a very suitable strategy because I had ample time to code, analyze, and conceptualize my emerging theories and categories and then return to the field to test these theories.

As I continued to analyze my data, I used my emerging theory of stigma to develop additional focused codes. I then ran reports on the focused codes read through the reports and used theoretical coding, which "specifies possible relationships between categories you have developed during focused coding" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 63). In theoretical coding, I further refined the codes and themes, creating subcategories and also codes that linked concepts (see Table 3). For example, when I read through my coding reports on Stigma and Community College, I started to see that students were actively attempting to negotiate the stigma in different ways. I then developed codes to conceptualize these strategies (i.e., Transfer), codes that linked these strategies together (i.e., Coping linked Disengagement and Transfer), and codes that linked focused codes together based on their theoretical relationships (i.e., Sports linked Disengagement and Stigma). I also analyzed data from multiple sources, including student interviews, counselor, teacher, and administrator interviews, and observations to triangulate my data. (See the appendix for examples of coded data from multiple sources.)

Table 3. Codes

RQ1: What are students' future educational and work aspirations?	RQ2: Is the college-for-all culture salient for them and if so, how do they interpret it within the specific context of their high schools?	RQ3: How do they reconcile the pressure to attend college with a lack of economic resources, college knowledge and college preparation?

FC RQ1: Aspirations	FC RQ2:	FC RQ3: Stigma
Parent Involvement	College Competitiveness	Community College
	Perceptions of other students	College Knowledge
	Community College	Academic Preparation
	School Characterization	College Decision
	Parent Involvement	Finances
	Guidance Program	Other Options
	College Knowledge	Student Disengagement
	College Culture	Sports and Activities

TC RQ1: High Expectations	TC RQ2: EV Neighborhood	TC RQ3:
	PC Neighborhood	Coping
Low Expectations	Making fun of students	Sports
	College Status	Transfer
Stress	Maintaining Status	Refusal
		Resisting
		Passing
		Year Off
		Avoidance
		College Status

FINDINGS

HIGH-ACHIEVING CONTEXTS WITH HIGH EXPECTATIONS

At both EHS and PCHS, I found evidence of a highly salient college culture that permeated almost all aspects of the school. Despite some demographic and organizational differences between the schools, the similarities in their "college-going cultures" (Roderick et al., 2011) were remarkable. College was emphasized in a myriad of ways by the schools, from classrooms where teachers warned students that they "might be asked something like this in college," to the daily announcements that proclaimed the SAT word of the day (both at PCHS), to the bulletin board outside the counseling office that advertised the college destinations of seniors (at EHS). Every element of the school nudged students toward college aspirations. Both schools hosted 30–50 college representative visits by admissions officers each fall, sometimes

hosting three or four schools per day. Both schools also had college fairs, where 50–75 schools would attend. Each school held a variety of other college-related events, such as essay writing workshops at PCHS and mock admissions workshops at EHS.

Both counseling programs prided themselves on meeting with students at least once a year, starting freshman year or earlier, and college was always part of the conversation. In an interview with a school counselor at EHS, I asked her to tell me about some of the main things that the counseling program did to help prepare students for the college application process, and she said,

I mean, we start in eighth grade . . . as far as driving in that every single year counts. . . . We do have those conversations as early as the eighth grade . . . even as far as making sure you're involved in your high school community and local community as far as extra-curriculars and building an activity resume that would make you a good candidate for colleges as well. So we start the conversation in, I would say, eighth grade and then every year, there's a little bit more added on to it.

Even before students got to high school, they were being encouraged to think ahead about applying to college. This focus on college was evident every year after; each subsequent counseling meeting centered on college, whether it was exploring the school's college software database and taking career and personality inventories sophomore year, or going over a testing schedule and the application process itself junior year. Senior year, the counseling department focused on making sure that all students applied to college. At PCHS, I spoke with one of the school counselors informally during my observations. He told me that the staff spent a lot of time trying to reach those kids who were behind in the college process and would come up with a list in December of kids who hadn't applied anywhere and encourage them to apply somewhere. PCHS also held two "instant decision" days; on these days, less selective colleges, universities, community colleges, and technical schools visited the school, met briefly with students, and many times issued admissions decisions on the spot. These instant decision days were held in February and April or May, and every student who had not applied to college was called down to the counseling center and encouraged to attend. Clearly, making sure as many students applied to college as possible was a high priority in the counseling department.

Students also indicated how much college was a part of the culture at both PCHS and EHS. Some students felt a constant pressure to be thinking about college. For example, Anna, a White moderate-achieving female junior at EHS whose parents were college-educated, discussed how she felt about the constant talk of college.

Interviewer: So, how are you feeling right now about the whole college search process?

Anna: I think it's more work than it should be. I think especially nowadays it's all anyone talks about so, from the second you get into high school. . . . I feel like it shouldn't be that much, I don't think it should be all about college all the time

because I think it freaks people out and makes some like feel like . . . I need to go to college.

The school stressed college-for-all, and parents did as well. It may be that parental pressure, especially from upper-middle-class parents, influenced the schools to adopt such a college-going mentality. When talking with a counselor at PCHS about parent involvement, he mentioned how the same parents who hold screenings of documentaries lamenting the pressure on students to succeed nowadays also contribute to that pressure. He said, "Would they let their kids go nowhere? Absolutely not. State University is nowhere for their kids. And that's the irony of it." Another counselor at EHS said that recently, the parent of a sixth grader had called the high school wanting to have a meeting to plan her daughter's high school schedule even though high school was more than two years away. Students also talked about parental pressure. Harriet, a White high-achieving female senior at PCHS whose parents were college educated, said in her interview,

Harriet: I think it's more of a culture. . . . When I was little, whenever I'd be crying or something, my dad's thing was to say, "Harriet, stop doing that. Stop throwing food at the wall. Otherwise, you will not get into the college of your choice." And he still thinks that's funny. He cracks himself up. But I've always known. I was expected to do well. They don't take kindly to my shenanigans.

Interviewer: How did you know you wanted to go to college?

Harriet: Oh, no. There's no choice. I'm going to college. You don't seem to understand this. It's not that I wanted to go to college. I've always been told that I'll go to college. This is the progression in someone's life; you go to college. I'm going to college. It's just depends on what tier or level of college I will get into.

For Harriet, college had always been a part of the conversation in her home. Even from a young age, there was a pressure to get into college and attend the best one possible. Harriet rebelled against her parents' wishes by not caring about grades and not doing her homework, but she still scored very well on her SATs and was applying to a number of highly selective schools.

Students whose parents had not earned a college degree also felt a pressure to go on to higher education. In her interview, Ashley, a moderate-achieving White female senior at EHS, said that it could be stressful to be a student at Evanstown, and there was a lot of pressure to do well. When I asked her where that pressure came from she said,

Your friends, your family, I know my family; my parents didn't go to college. There's a lot of pressure. And then, the school, they want you to do well, so, there's always the emphasis on standardized testing and your placement. And the teachers really want you to do well and all my friends and I pretty much have the same GPA. So, there's not like competition but you don't want to be failing at class and your friend to have an A.

Ashley felt a pressure to go to college not only from her parents, who didn't attend themselves, but also from her friends and the school itself. Other students mentioned how, at their schools, it was so expected to go to college that friends and peers would question a student if he or she didn't go. When I asked Gary, a Latino high- achieving male senior at PCHS, whose parents were college educated, what it would mean if he didn't go to college, he said,

Of course with my father the rest of your life would be very difficult, but most of the people in Park City are going to college. If you read the statistics, half the people in the U.S. don't go to college, maybe even more I think . . . I remember it being a huge number and being really nervous like, "Wow, nobody goes to college." But most of the people in [this] school are going to college, because most people know to live in a town like Park City you have to have a college education.

Gary expressed that if he didn't go to college, he would disappoint his father. But then he dismissed the idea that his not going to college was even a possibility by saying that most people in Park City go to college, even though this may not be common practice in other schools.

For students at PCHS and EHS, despite coming from a wide range of backgrounds, college was a predetermined destination. Parents emphasized it, and the school environment saturated their daily lives with it. Students very much bought into the college-for-all norm no matter their social background. Almost every student I spoke to said that he or she planned to go to college.[11] However, exactly what "college" meant differed for counselors and students. For counselors and the school, the push was for any college for students—two- or four-year (though four-year colleges were talked about in classrooms and in college events much more than two-year). And either of these college options was pushed over other alternatives. When I interviewed an intern in the counseling department at PCHS, she told me that school counselors were not supposed to bring up vocational schools to students as postsecondary alternatives; they were only supposed to focus on college. As I will argue in a future section, among students and families, there was a competition for status. And when anyone could attend a two-year school, it brought no status. It was among students that "college-for-all" developed into "four-year college-for-all," and the stigma of community college appeared.

THE STIGMA OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The college culture at these high schools was successful in encouraging all students to aim for higher education. However, the high aspirations were not just for any form of postsecondary education. Although the schools had a very diverse student body, about 75% of graduating seniors attended four-year schools during the years I was observing (see Table 4).

Table 4. Postsecondary Destinations

Destination	Sample Total (2010-2011 & 2011-2012)	Sample Percent	PCHS and EHS (2010-2011)
Four Year	61	71%	75%
Two Year	18	21%	17%
Vocational	4	5%	3%
Work/Other	2	2%	6% (5% EHS)
Unknown	1	1%	(.5% EHS)
Total	86	100%	100%

Where a student went was important, not just for each student's college experience but also because college destinations were publicized. At PCHS, students told me that college destinations were printed in the town newspaper, and at EHS, students' acceptances were posted outside the counseling office. Students cared a great deal about this publicity. Felicity, a low-achieving African American female senior at EHS whose mother had not graduated from college, told me that she made sure another counselor knew of her acceptances because she didn't think her own counselor would post her "star" with her acceptance. Harriet (mentioned earlier) explained how the names of everyone who got into State University were posted online. She had applied to the main, more prestigious campus and to one of the less selective campuses in an urban area. She described what the reaction was when people found out she got into State University-Urban:

Somewhere online now, apparently, Park City High School [has] the list of people who got into State. Check it out, I don't know. Everyone's making fun of me, so it must be there somewhere that everyone's been looking at it. . . . everyone's making fun of me because I'm the only person who got into State-Urban because no one else applied to State-Urban, or wants to go to State-Urban. I don't even want to go to State-Urban but I just checked off the box because it was there.

Where students applied to and attended college took on a social importance at these schools, and as a result, attending less selective schools, particularly community colleges (otherwise known as "County"), as well as trade or technical schools, came with a certain stigma. Because in these students' minds, "everyone" went to college, attending a community college where just "anyone" could go was unacceptable. The vast majority of students aimed for four-year schools.

Lebron, a male senior at PCHS whose parents had gone to college, felt a lot of pressure to go to college and said that attending a community college wasn't acceptable.

Lebron: And in Park City, if you didn't have your stuff in, like, SAT, people will look at you some type of way, like, what are you doing

Interviewer: Uh-huh. People like the students or the teachers?

Lebron: Yeah, the students because everybody goes to college after high school.

Interviewer: Everyone goes to college?

Lebron: Yeah. It's hard to explain yourself by saying, oh, I didn't hand in no application yet. They'll look down upon you or something. But you never know what—what they could be going through, whatever. Or if you're going to a community college, too. . . you've got to go to a university.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. So, it's not good to go to a community college?

Lebron: Well, I guess if you have to. But they'll consider that like as a failure.

I met with Lebron at the end of April of his senior year. Lebron had gotten into one four-year college, but because of financial reasons, he was not going to be able to attend. He was still applying to schools and talking to college coaches (he wanted to play a varsity-level sport), though this was very late in the application process. However, Lebron was very determined that he would attend college despite having limited options only two months from graduation. He clearly would not accept alternate plans, even at this late stage.

Felicity, mentioned earlier, had spent much of her early high school career not doing very well academically. However, she was still determined to go to college and would not accept going to the local county college. Her counselor suggested this to her, and she refused to accept this possibility. She said, "[My counselor] just talks about Cedar County,[12] Cedar County, like, I am not going there, I don't care." Even though Felicity admitted that it was a good school and that going to community college for two years and then transferring might be a good option, she said, "you don't want to go there because people will make fun of you, but like I know it's a good school but I can't go."

Counselors at the schools also acknowledged the stigma attached to going to County. One counselor that I spoke to at EHS said,

There's a stigma here against going to Cedar County College even though we have one of the best in the nation. Encouraging them to go to County is met with lots of resistance and a negative perception of who the kids are [who go there] I think. I think that perception impedes their ability to be realistic about their options, kind of unfortunate.

She followed up by saying that the stigma associated with community college had its origins in "Ignorance, yeah ignorance and apathy I think. Yeah, because I think kids think only the kids who are not as smart or who can't make it at a four-year college will go to County but clearly that's not the case." The counselor said that not considering County was a problem for students because they may not be successful in a four-year school or may be missing out on the great programs available at the community college. When I asked if there was a stigma attached to community college or if she felt a push back from students when she suggested it, Ms. Radford, a counselor at PCHS said,

There's definitely a stigma I've noticed, and it's something you kind of have to approach in a sensitive way with students. You kind of—oh again, refer back to the hard numbers with them. And you open it up by saying, "Well, where are you considering going?" and kind of put it on them at first, and then that's when you can go to the hard numbers and you kind of suggest, "Well, it might be a good idea, you know, just as a fall back plan to consider applying to some two-year schools or community college."

This counselor also felt that it was difficult to get students to consider community college as an alternative and had to approach the subject very carefully.

Some students also mentioned that their parents would not consider community college a desirable college destination. Sophie, a high-achieving biracial female junior at PCHS whose parents did not graduate from college, said that college had always been a topic of conversation while she was growing up. "When I was little, I would be like 'Oh, where do you want me to go to college and stuff like that?' I guess they didn't really care when I was little but obviously [my mom] thought I must go to a good college and I'm not going to Prince County College."

STIGMA MANAGEMENT

Overall, students at these two high schools had high aspirations, reflecting national trends in college ambitions (Goyette, 2008; Reynolds et al., 2006; Schneider & Stevenson, 1999). Their high schools embraced a college-for-all mentality, emphasizing college in numerous ways from ninth grade on. However, as Rosenbaum (2001, 2011) has argued, EHS and PCHS were more successful in increasing students' college aspirations than in preparing them for college or the college admissions process. As a result, some students struggled to reach their college dreams more than others. In particular, racial/ethnic minority and first-generation college students had difficulties in gaining access to four-year colleges because of lower social and cultural capital, lack of information, limited finances, and structural aspects of the school (Hill, 2008; Klasik, 2012; McDonough, 1997; Roderick et al., 2011; Venezia & Kirst, 2005). Despite these inequalities, the four- year school gained high status among all students, which perpetuated a stigma surrounding two-year colleges (Goffman, 1963). Stigmatizing community college attendance became a form of dominance and allowed more advantaged students to assert their status over others (Parker & Aggleton, 2003). Being in high-level classes, having college-educated parents, and having the economic resources to buy college guidance through private counselors and pay high college tuitions

guaranteed that more advantaged students would not have to deal with the community college stigma. These structures and resources helped to perpetuate inequalities in postsecondary destinations and status.

Those students with few postsecondary options, who tended to mostly be African American and Latino, low-income, and low-achieving, were forced to deal with the stigma of community college attendance and had to develop stigma management strategies. For the most part, students used various "coping" strategies to deal with their stigma, which allowed them to protect their self-identities by explaining and qualifying their community college attendance (Oyserman & Swim, 2001; Shih, 2004). Some students did empower themselves when dealing with the stigma and engaged in resistant, though sometimes contradictory, strategies.

Transferring

Some students found the cost of attendance at a four-year college prohibitive. These students may have applied to four-year schools, and had the qualifications to get in, but in the end could not afford to go. They would then plan to transfer to these schools later, after attending County for two years. These students employed the transferring strategy, that is, they would state their intended "transfer" institution as their college destination when they were talking with peers and teachers about where they were going to school. For example, when I first met Kim, a low-achieving African American female senior at EHS whose mother was college educated, she told me she was going to go to a local four-year state university. As we talked more about her future plans, it became clear that in fact Kim was going to attend Cedar County College for two years and then planned to transfer to the university. Because she had applied to the university and been accepted, however, she told friends and teachers that she was attending this school. In some ways, Kim's use of transferring was somewhat similar to passing (Goffman, 1963)—when people casually asked her where she was going, she told them she was going to a four-year school.

Other students used the strategy in a different way: They thought ahead and employed it early on. For example, Jessica, a moderate-achieving White female senior at EHS whose mother had graduated college, thought that she could not afford to attend a four-year school. Her father was out of work, and both her parents had had medical issues recently. She was on free lunch and working at an after-school job to try to save up money to pay for her education. When I met with her in the fall of her senior year, Jessica was already pretty sure that she was going to go to community college for two years; yet, she still applied to a number of four-year schools with the plan to transfer later on. However, there was no real advantage to applying and getting accepted if she planned to transfer later because she would still have to apply again. As Jessica said, "If you definitely know you want to go there you say, 'Well, I'm going to County first and then I want to re-apply.'" Applying and getting into a few four-year schools, however, allowed Jessica to engage in the application process and feel secure that she was able to get into schools other than County. She also made sure to tell others who asked her about her plans. When I asked her if she had told some of her teachers where she was going to go to school, she said, "Yes. I did but I also let them know like I'm not just going to County, like I am going to Four-year Private University after because I want them to know, I'm not just going to stop. I actually have a plan. I have a goal

and that's what I want to do." Jessica still felt like she had to justify her decision to attend County by elaborating on her transferring plan.

Disengagement

Transferring worked well as a strategy for students who were able to navigate the admissions process and gain acceptance to a four-year school. Lower achieving students, who may not have been able to accomplish these tasks, employed the strategy of disengagement. Disengagement is a reaction to stigmatization and stereotype threat where a person no longer connects his self-esteem to his performance in a particular situation or to the opinions of those who stigmatize him (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998). Research has shown that individuals, in response to stigma related to intelligence and test outcomes, will stop basing their self-esteem on their intellectual or academic performances as a way to protect themselves and, in doing so, will lose motivation (Crocker & Major, 1989; Steele, 1992).

At EHS and PCHS, African American males were most likely to use academic disengagement as a strategy to deal with stigma. These students sometimes only applied to community college and didn't always hide their attendance. However, they tended to explain their attendance at community college as preparing them for professional sports or a vocation, rather than a professional or semiprofessional career. When I talked with Allen, a male senior whose parents had graduated from college, he told me his plan: "I'm going to Cedar County, do good there then go to another college and play." Allen played basketball and dreamed of being a professional player. However, Allen was under 6 feet tall and had not played on his school's team for the last few years. Allen acknowledged that playing professional sports may not be the most realistic goal, but he still thought about and explained his attendance at community college in terms of sports. When I asked him how long he planned to be at CCC, he said, "Yeah, I plan to be there for two years. If I blow up the first year like do ridiculously nice [in basketball] and get like an offer to go somewhere, I'll leave first year, if not, I'll just do my two years there, do pretty good. If I don't have any recruits I'll at least have, like, the tape [of college playing] and go from there." A number of Allen's friends were also planning to take this route. This strategy allowed students to justify their attendance at community college as a vehicle for sports or to prepare for a trade, which were both culturally acceptable for males. Adjusting their purpose for attending community college from one that was academically focused to one that focused on athletic or vocational goals also allowed low-achieving students to disassociate their identities from the stigma of community college attendance, which was seen as a destination for students who weren't as smart or academically prepared.

Taking a Year Off and Avoidance

Another strategy that students employed was taking a year off. Financially well off students were more likely to take a year off than less wealthy students, and they organized and made plans for this year. A few very high-achieving students with college-educated parents at PCHS told me they were toying with the idea of taking a year off and volunteering, studying, or traveling. When talking with me about their desire to take a year off and their potential plans,

these students did engage in some resistant thinking—they questioned the dominant discourse that all students had to attend college. Hester, a high-achieving White female senior at PCHS whose parents were both college-educated, said that she frequently went back and forth about taking a year off. She said she felt burnt out and frustrated that she had never made an actual "decision" to attend college. She said that her parents told her they would give her the money they would have spent on college if she chose to do something else. Hester said she was considering it.

But at the same time, I think everyone really needs a year to like—because we've been in the same pattern for the past 13 to 16 years. I've been in school since I was two. And that's a long time and it's been really, really, really stressful these past two years or three years actually. Sophomore year was worse than junior year. So I think like a year of decompressing and seeing other things before you decide what you want to do. College is more of just like the isolated bubble. Being in high school, being in college is like the next step.

Hester questioned whether it was the best idea to continue on to college and remain in a "bubble" instead of "seeing other things." She said she wished there was national program, like Israel's military service, where youth were required to commit to a year of community service. She felt that a program like that would benefit a lot of youth. In questioning the dominant paradigm of attending a four-year college immediately after high school, Hester engaged in some resistant thinking. Of course, the ability to consider these alternatives was greatly enhanced by her family's ability to provide for her financially if she chose to forgo college.

Students might also employ this strategy because they had not done well during high school and were not academically prepared to get into a selective college or university; they were disappointed in the outcome of their college applications and hoped to try again for a more selective school the next academic year; or they were unsure of what they wanted to do and needed some time to think. William, the one student in my sample who did take a year off, did so for some of these reasons. William, a White moderate-achieving male senior at PCHS whose parents were college-educated (but in another country), applied to three schools his senior year and seemed set on attending college when I interviewed him in the spring of his junior and fall of his senior year. However, when I interviewed him in the spring of his senior year, he informed me that he had decided to take a year off, travel, and work or intern in different careers to figure out what he wanted to do. William's parents had given him a specific sum of money to pay for college, and because he was unwilling to take out loans, William had significantly restricted his college search to a small number of schools that he considered affordable. He had gotten into two schools but considered them "very easy." He wanted to figure out what he wanted to major in and "not waste [his parents'] money." William realized that even in justifying his choice as taking a year off, he still had to deal with some stigma and the resulting questions. William also engaged in avoidance by trying not put himself in situations in which he would have to explain his choice. Other scholars have labeled this strategy as a form of resistance (Riessman, 2000). William was finding it difficult to explain his decision to his school counselor.

William: They [the counseling staff] talk about my decisions [about college] and stuff like that; I'm just very good at leading them astray.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

William: I never give them a proper answer. It's just like. "Oh, I just still, I don't know," and [my counselor] gets mad at me every time but I'm just like, "Oh, it's okay don't worry." Laugh it off and just like, "I'll concentrate on graduation." And he was like, "Okay."

Interviewer: Why don't you want to give him a straight answer?

William: Because if I give him a straight answer I feel like he's getting mad at me.

William avoided going to an "easy" school, one that was less selective, by taking a year off and reapplying the next year. However, this plan was still not socially desirable. Not attending any college was highly unusual; even though many students played with the idea of taking a year off, few actually did so. As a result, William also avoided telling his school counselor exactly what he was doing.

Melissa, a moderate-achieving African American female senior at EHS whose parents had not graduated from high school, said that she was afraid of failing in college and so chose to attend a vocational program in medical assisting. Although she felt secure with her choice, she also said that she had begun to dread conversations with teachers and other adults about her postsecondary plans.

When people ask me about college and stuff, I completely avoid them. I try to change the subject because I just hate talking about it. And still now because I feel like, "Oh, I think you should go to a two-year college, at least CCC to see like"—I'm like, "Well, I don't want to do that. I know what I want to do." . . . . And then, people are still saying that still. Actually Friday, a teacher was like, "Oh, where are you going?" And I'm like, "Oh, Lord, here we go."

Melissa's avoidance strategy also showed her resistance to the norms in school and her desire to pursue her own path.

William avoided having to consider the idea of community college and of going to a less selective school by taking a year off. He frequently mentioned in his interview that he was going to go to college, and he was going to reapply and take it more seriously next time. At the same time, he also avoided telling teachers and his school counselor what he was going to do next year. Melissa also practiced the avoidance strategy by attending a trade school. She avoided having to deal with her fear of failure in a more traditional college environment by attending a trade school, but because of the college pressure at her school, she started sidestepping discussions about where she was going to attend next year.

Refusal

The last strategy that I observed students employing was simply struggling against the odds and refusing to accept community college as an option. Those students who engaged in the refusal strategy were usually low achievers and lacked college-educated parents. They hadn't known or understood that their previous grades would affect their college chances as much as they did, struggled with the complex admissions process, and didn't have much help with navigating the application process. However, they still believed that the high aspirations and four-year college destinations promoted at their schools were for them and would not entertain alternatives. Asha, a low-achieving African American female senior at EHS, wanted very much to go to a four-year school and was upset when her counselor suggested she consider other options.

When I came for college, she [her counselor] kept saying County, go to County, go to County. But when I talk to other people, not students, other grown-ups and people who have went to college. In the college itself, they told me I had a chance. I can still go to their school. She just kept saying "Go to county first and then you can go to school." But I don't have to start at county.

Her counselor's insistence that she attend County deeply upset Asha, who instead sought out the help of another counselor to assist her in applying to four-year schools. Her friend, Felicity, quoted earlier, had the same counselor and also refused to consider County. She also received assistance applying to four-year schools from the other counselor. Mary, a female senior at PCHS whose mother had not graduated from college, was similar to Asha and Felicity in that she struggled a great deal with the college application process and also had not done very well in school. She was determined to go to a four-year school, however. I met Mary at the instant decision day held in February at PCHS. Students who had not yet applied to college were invited by counselors to attend the fair, interview with colleges, and many times get an admission decision on the spot. Despite the lateness of her applications and her low SAT scores and GPA, Mary only applied to four-year schools at the fair; this was in spite of the fact that many were financially prohibitive. When Mary got into one school, she told me how excited she was but was then disappointed when she saw the large price tag at the private institution. However, Mary was very against going to a community college. She told me in an interview later about her experiences with a counselor the previous year.

Mary: Last year I had an old guidance counselor and she suggested schools that she felt I will fall into because of my grades. And, my mom and me was not accepting that. Anything is possible and she was saying because I didn't look good on paper, top schools wouldn't really be interested in me. . .

Interviewer: What kind of schools did she suggest?

Mary: [A somewhat selective local college], Community Colleges and stuff.

Interviewer: Okay. That wasn't what you were interested in?

Mary: Not at all. And, I wasn't accepting any of that 'cause I have high aspirations and just because you struggle at high school that does not make or break you. So, we ignored her.

Similar to Asha, Mary was upset by her counselor's suggestion that she look at community colleges and dismissed the idea, continuing to try to attend a four-

year school.

The struggles of students who had few options and many obstacles but still refused to consider community college highlight many of the contradictions students felt and enacted in dealing with this stigma. Students like Asha, Felicity and Mary were engaging in resistance against other, society-wide stigmas surrounding their race, class, and gender. These students refused to be seen as unintelligent and as lacking motivation or ambition. They were determined to attend four-year schools and would not consider alternatives. Although they were actively resisting one stigma, their resistance to being labeled community college students served to reinforce the power of another and made clear how deeply they had bought into the dominant discourse of four-year college-for-all. Their struggles also highlight the inequalities in access to stigma management strategies that were the result of intersecting social structures. Males, most of whom were lower achieving and African American, were more likely to define alternative goals for themselves in attending college that were socially acceptable based on their gender. Middle-class students, who were more likely to have parents who had graduated college, discussed taking a year off rather than attending community college and then avoided discussing their choices further. Students who were higher achieving and able to navigate the college application process were more likely to use the transferring strategy. It was lower achieving African American females whose parents had not attended college who lacked more viable strategies. They simply pushed through with their aspirations, determined to achieve what their middle-class peers were and what the school had pushed on them from freshman year.

EMBRACING COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Although the college environment of the school had cultivated a stigma toward attending community college, some students did choose early on to attend a two-year school. A little more than half of the students in my sample who attended community college made that choice either junior year or early senior year.[13] The majority of these students were males, and many of these students were using disengagement as a stigma management strategy. However, some students were still considering professional or semiprofessional careers and majoring in more academic subjects but first wanted to attend community college before they transferred to a four-year school. These students were low achievers and unsure of their academic strengths. They seemed to give little thought to the college process and chose community college almost by default. For example, Matt, a moderate-achieving African American male senior at EHS whose father had graduated college, had known since junior year that he was going to go to Cedar County College. I interviewed him three times over the course of his junior and senior years, and he mentioned CCC each time. However, Matt knew little about CCC or about college in general. He had "chosen" community college but never really considered any options. Matt seemed to treat going to community college as a way to not make a choice: He had not considered alternatives, didn't know what he was going to major in, and was not sure what he wanted to do for a career. Amy, a White moderate-achieving female senior at EHS whose mother had graduated college, also chose early on to go to CCC. Amy's "choice" was also a way for her to avoid making any long-term decisions. Amy had a learning disability and found EHS large, intimidating, and difficult. She was not confident in her academic abilities, and although she wished to attend a four-year school, she was certain she

would not do well. Amy wasn't even sure if she would be able to make it in community college, and she had no other plans.

CONTEXT AND VARIATIONS IN STIGMA

Overall, I found the college cultures, the stigmas surrounding community colleges, and the strategies students used to avoid that stigma very similar across schools. This shows that context—in this case, similar high-achieving, college-focused high schools—is important in the development of different types of stigmas. The context can also affect the nuances in the ways people react to and work to avoid that stigma. I did find in my analyses that there were slight variations in how students dealt with the stigma attached to attending community colleges at each school because of the differences in location and reputation of their local community colleges.

In this northeastern state, each county has its own community college. EHS is located in Cedar County, and PCHS is located in Prince County. Evanstown and Park City were similar in that they were vibrant towns with many professionals who commuted into a large nearby city. Both had bustling town centers that included a number of ethnic restaurants, high-end boutiques, and shops. However, the counties in which the towns were located were very different. Prince County had a diverse group of middle- and upper-middle-class towns and urban, inner-city areas with high minority population concentrations and low-income housing projects. Prince County College had two campuses: the main one in an urban area and a small satellite campus in a suburb. Cedar County was much less diverse than Prince and more rural. Evanstown was the most "urban" area. Cedar County College was located about 20 minutes from Evanstown in a more rural area with a large, sprawling campus. CCC had a reputation for being one of the best community colleges in the area and had a full-time student retention rate of 70%, an overall graduation rate of 23% and a transfer rate of 22%. In comparison, PCC had a retention rate of 50% for full-time students, an overall graduation rate of 7% and a transfer rate of 13%.[14] These different locations (inner city vs. rural suburban campus) and reputations (graduation and transfer rates) created different contexts under which students were making decisions.

At Evanstown, the academic reputation of CCC made it more difficult for students to reject it as an option. Considering the expense of four-year colleges and the recent recession, CCC was a financially attractive option. This may be why I found that more students from EHS engaged in stigma management strategies that allowed them to explain their attendance, such as the transferring strategy. For students at PCHS, particularly White middle-class students, PCC was not a viable option in any form. Not only did PCC not have a good reputation, but the majority of students who attended PCHS would not feel comfortable traveling to the inner city area where PCC was located. These different county contexts meant that students at EHS had to figure out ways to make going to community college more acceptable, and at PCHS, students tended to avoid this option by taking a year off or attending junior colleges out of state.

CONCLUSION

At the heart of the college-for-all norm is a push for high aspirations and a belief that for all students, the "sky is the limit." The norm is based on the belief that high aspirations are a necessary and sufficient factor for college attendance and success, though recent research has demonstrated that this is not necessarily the case (Goyette, 2008; Reynolds et al., 2006). In the schools I studied, students across social backgrounds had bought into the norm and embraced it wholeheartedly. They wanted very much to attend college, and very few students chose alternative paths. Where students went was publicized and took on extreme importance for status—attending a community college, where anyone could get in, was no achievement at all in their eyes. This contributed to a stigma surrounding community college attendance.

Considering Link and Phelan's (2001) focus on power and Parker and Aggleton's (2003) emphasis on the ways in which stigmas can reproduce inequality, I analyzed how race, class, and gender influenced who was affected by the community college stigma at EHS and PCHS and how they dealt with it. I found that it was mostly low-achieving racial/ethnic minority students whose parents were not college-educated who had to deal with this stigma. These students may not have had the financial resources to attend a four-year school, may have been confused and intimidated by the application process, or may have made choices during high school that did not put them in the best position to gain attendance at four-year schools. I acknowledged that there were many contradictions and tensions in the strategies students employed and that sometimes students engaged in more than one strategy in an attempt to manage their stigma. Overall, I have argued that students engaged in coping strategies such as transferring and disengagement to explain their community college attendance in ways that allowed them to maintain their self-esteem. In feeling that they must justify their attendance, these students had bought into the dominant college-for-all paradigm. Other students resisted the stigma of community college and attempted to empower themselves through other strategies, though these too were fraught with tension. Students may have questioned some aspects of the dominant paradigm as a way to manage the presentation of their postsecondary decisions, but they had also bought into other aspects. White middle-class students, who had the most social and economic resources to draw on, engaged in some resistant thinking by taking a year off. These students questioned if it was the best decision to attend college. However, few took this route, and when they did, they sometimes used this as a way to "try again next year" to gain entry into a more elite school. Students also engaged in avoidance and tried to not answer questions about their postsecondary decisions. Finally, some students resisted other stigmas and dominant discourses that painted them as unintelligent and not ready for a four-year school by refusing to consider community college as an option. Within this resistance, however, was an acceptance of the legitimacy of the community college stigma.

This study adds to the literature on the rise of the college-for-all norm and on stigma. Although much research has questioned the effects of college-for-all on student effort and attainment, less is known about how the trend plays out in high schools and how students interpret it. Specifically, this study shows that context plays an important role in how students understand the message and how it influences their postsecondary plans. Second, this study highlights the complexity of stigma development and management. In particular, I show how social structures and inequalities are reproduced by stigmatizing processes that tend to affect those who lack power and social resources the most. These

social structures also influence the ways in which people manage stigma, leading to multiple strategies that can both reify and question that stigma.

This study was limited to two high-achieving suburban high schools and focused on the effect of that context. Future research should compare different schools across contexts to examine variations in the effects of college-for-all and differences in stigma development and management. In addition, future researchers may want to further disentangle the effects of race, class, and achievement on their own. In the schools in my study, and in my sample, these three variables were highly correlated. Finally, because I only interviewed a small subset of students over time, I cannot identify which stigma management strategy was more popular among students or more effective. Some students I interviewed in the beginning of their college process but did not follow up with later may have thought that they wouldn't have to deal with the idea of attending community college but then realized it was a distinct possibility when April or May came around. Because of this, it is difficult for me to quantify how many students engaged in which strategy, and I may have missed different stigma management strategies that students employed later on in the college process. Future work may benefit from interviewing a larger number of students over time or focusing data collection on students' final college choices in the spring.

Despite these limitations, this study does shed light on how students are developing college aspirations in the college-for-all era and the conditions under which they are making their college decisions. For students like Asha, Felicity, and Mary, who struggled mightily to avoid community college, there may be problems down the road if they enter four-year colleges for which they are underprepared or that they can't afford. Rising student debt and low graduation rates have led to many students leaving school with large debts and no credentials (Carey & Dillon, 2011). Understanding the pressure students feel to attend four-year schools may help school counselors and teachers present alternatives to students in positive ways or may urge schools and counselors to focus more on adequate college preparation, along with college encouragement.

Notes

1. All names of people, places, and institutions are pseudonyms. Student respondents chose their own pseudonyms. Some pseudonyms may have been subsequently altered for this manuscript to preserve confidentiality. Identifying

information relating to schools, counselors, and students has been altered to preserve confidentiality.

2. Percentages have been rounded to help preserve the anonymity of the towns and schools.

3. Data on school diversity and free and reduced lunch eligibility are from the National Center for Education Statistics for the 2010–2011 school year.

4. Focused observations are times when I was at the schools for the specific purpose of observing and taking notes. This does not include the hundreds of hours that I spent at the schools interviewing students, faculty, and staff, and conducting administrative tasks like scheduling and copying.

5. These students volunteered to be shadowed.

6. I interviewed the 3 female students. I asked the 2 male students to participate in interviews, but they never returned their consent forms.

7. I interviewed 41 students at PCHS and 48 students at EHS.

8. I interviewed 9 counselors, 2 administrators, 4 teachers, 3 coaches, 2 counseling interns, 1 security guard, and 1 counseling secretary at PCHS and 9 counselors, 4 administrators, 4 teachers, and 1 student support coordinator at EHS.

9. I oversampled African American students.

10. Some students did not complete the survey because of time constraints or technical difficulties with accessing the survey online.

11. Only 2 students I interviewed (both at EHS) never expressed a desire to or discussed a plan to go to college. One, a white male, planned to attend a trade school and take over his family business. The other was a Latino male at EHS who was undocumented and felt that that this gave him limited college options.

12. PCHS and EHS were in different counties, so the "local" community college was different for each. Cedar County College served Evanstown, and Prince County College served Park City. It was also common for students to attend community colleges in other counties, though the price would be slightly higher than if they attended their own county college.

13. A total of 17 out of 86 students in my sample attended community college, and 9 of those students planned on attending a community college early on in their college process.

14. Data are from the U.S. Department of Education. Retention rates are for students who began college in the fall of 2011 and returned for the fall of 2012. Graduation and transfer rates are for students who began college in the fall of 2009 and graduated or transferred within 150% of the normal time to complete their programs.

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APPENDIX

Interview Questions

I had three types of student interview guides: Year 1 (Junior Year), Year 2 (Senior Year First Interview), and Year 2 (Senior Year Second Interview). Some seniors were only interviewed once their senior year and would only be asked questions in the Senior Year First Interview guide. My interview guides for Year 1 and Year 2 (First Interview) were very similar. Questions were modified for Year 2 (Second Interview) because students were now at the end of the process. Some questions changed slightly between Year 1 and Year 2 based on my initial analysis of the data. This is when I saw the theme of stigma emerging, and I revised some questions to investigate this theme in more depth.

Following are examples of guiding questions asked of students who were interviewed three times over the course of their junior and senior years.

Theme	Y1 (Junior Year)	Y2 (First Interview Senior Year)	Y2 (Second Interview)	Comments
Aspirations (RQ1)	Where do you want to be in six years? How likely do you think it is you will reach your goal?	Where do you want to be in five years? How likely do you think it is you will reach your goal?	Last time you said you wanted to pursue XYZ, is that still the same? Has anything changed regarding your plans?	This question stayed the same from Y1 to Y2 (first interview) to see how students' plans changed. The question was adjusted for the second interview to measure how students' plans and aspirations did or did not change.

Aspirations (RQ1 & RQ2)	How did you decide you want to go to college? What is it you are looking for in a school?	How did you decide you want to go to college? What will going to college mean to you? If you didn't go to college, what would that mean?	Have you decided what you are going to do after graduation? How did you come to that decision?	I adjusted this question from Y1 to Y2 to understand students' aspirations more fully and flesh out their feelings surrounding college attendance. This question was adjusted for Y2 (second interview) because now students were moving from aspirations to expectations and plans.
College Decision Making (RQ2 & RQ3)	How are you going to decide which college you want to attend? How does the advice of your parents, friends, teachers weigh in?	How are you going to decide which college you want to attend? How does the advice of your parents, friends, teachers weigh in?	Have you decided what you are doing after graduation? How did you come to that decision? Do you feel like there is a difference between attending a two year vs. four year college? How do you feel about [two-year or four-year college]? How would you feel if you were attending a different type of college?	From Y1 to Y2 (first interview) the question stayed the same as it was asking students how they would make their decision in the future. I found that this was an area where students expressed their preferences about different types of colleges and wanted to make sure I explored this with students again in their second interview. Once students had made their college decision I wanted to ascertain how they felt about these decisions in light of the college culture at the schools and the pressure to attend a four-year college in particular.

Coding and Analysis

Focused codes: Aspirations = A; College Competitiveness = CC; College Knowledge = CK; Parent Involvement = PI; College Decision = CD; Stigma = S; Perceptions of Other Students = POS; Student Disengagement = SD;

Community College = CCl; Sports and Activities = S&A; GP = Counseling
Program; LCK = Lack of College Knowledge.

College names have been changed to institutions similar in size, selectivity, and
location.

Harriet, White high-achieving female senior at PCHS

Interviewer: How did you know you wanted to go to college?

Harriet: Oh, no. There's no choice. I'm going to college. You don't seem to
understand this. It's not that I wanted to go to college. I've always been told
that I'll go to college. This is the progression in someone's life; you go to
college. I'm going to college. (A) It just depends on what tier or level of college I
will get into. (CC, CK)

I told you Carleton was my first choice. (CD) Carleton is considered top-tier,
apparently, by my parents (CC, CK, PI). I really like it there. I think it's fantastic.
But I really like it there.

Interviewer: Why do you like it so much?

Harriet: I felt like they actually cared about the stuff that they were learning and
doing, whereas I didn't feel that way in any of the other colleges that I went to. I
felt that they actually read your application and cared who you were as an
individual, whereas I didn't feel like that at the other colleges I went to.

Interviewer: So went and visited every. . .

Harriet: Yeah, I visited 13 colleges.

Interviewer: Oh, my God.

Harriet: They're crazy with the colleges, I told you. The colleges are their
number one obsession. (PI) Where did I visit? Everywhere. I applied to . . . I
still have to finish Sarah Lawrence, it's due on 15th. I have to do Sarah
Lawrence. But I've applied to Carleton early decision II, so I'll be back February
1st. Smith, Hamilton, Williams, Georgetown . . . I'm not getting in there, not
getting into Williams either, but that's okay.

Interviewer: Why do you say that?

Harriet: I'm not good enough. If you look at the thing on the website, we're on
target. My GPA and my SATs scores match up. They match up mostly for all of
these places but that's just because my first two years held up my GPA to such
an amount that when colleges look at it, they'll be like, "Wait, she hasn't done
any work for the past two years." So it won't matter. But I'm not getting into
Georgetown, and Williams. I might get into Carleton. I'll probably end up at
Smith or Hamilton (CC, CK).

Where else did I apply? I know there're more.

Interviewer: You're applying to Marist.

Harriet: Yeah, I'm applying to Marist. I was going to apply to George
Washington but I decided against it. Grinnell, I only applied there because I guy
I knew went there. I'm stalking him. It's too cold for me.

Interviewer: Where is that?

Harriet: It's in Iowa, so it's freezing. I hate the cold, though.

Interviewer: It probably won't be so bad.

Harriet: I applied to State but that's because my parents made me (PI). I got in. Everyone's been making fun of me because they posted all the people online who got State (POS).

Interviewer: What do you mean posted them online?

Harriet: Somewhere online now, apparently, Park City High School the list of people who got into State. Check it out, I don't know. Everyone's making fun of me, so it must be there somewhere that everyone's been looking at it (POS). I don't use the internet. I don't have a Facebook. I hate people, I told you. I don't to save contact with anyone once I graduate from here. I'm not very technologically oriented.

I applied to State because I had to. It said, "Check off which school you're applying to." So, obviously, I applied to Main Campus. But then, it was like the other options. I was like, "Oh. It's the same cost for the application, no extra work. I might as well apply to Urban Campus." So I just clicked that one off, too.

And then, it got to Other Urban Campus, which was the third option. I was like, "That's too much." So I just didn't apply to Other Urban Campus, and I didn't apply to the nursing school or business, or whatever that was. I submitted it. I got into both of them but everyone's making fun of me because I'm the only person who got into State-Urban because no one else applied to State-Urban, or wants to go to State-Urban. I don't even want to go to State-Urban but I just checked off the box because it was there.

Now, apparently, people have been talking like, "Yeah, Harriet. She applied to State-Urban." Why is this a rumor? Why is this something someone cares about? (POS)

Allen, African American low-achieving male senior at EHS

Interviewer: So, how did you decide you want to go to college?

Allen: My mom told me to, like she said, you go into college, even my dad said says you're going to college. So I'm like, alright one college then. (A, PI)

Interviewer: Okay. They said it so you have to do it?

Allen: Yeah.

Interviewer: Is this something you want to do?

Allen: I don't really care, I don't really like school too much. So, I don't really care but I'll do it just to do it. (A, SD)

Interviewer: But what you'd rather do is there something you rather do?

Allen: Go straight to the NBA, but not, you have to do college, I don't know, I guess I have to go. I just want to do college or to sport they asked I don't really care for the aspect. (A, S&A)

Interviewer: How did you decide on CCC?

Allen: Because I looked at my grades. They're okay but not good enough to get in the school I want to get in, especially academic wise, so, I have to do this. I mean academic wise, like sports wise, I have to have a certain kind of grade. So, I'm just going to, I don't know, I'll just start at CCC probably, mostly by going there too, so, why not. (A, CCI, S&A, CK, CD, CC)

Interviewer: Do you have some friends that are going there?

Allen: Yeah. I have some friends out there right now.

Interviewer: Okay. What did they said about it?

Allen: They said it was okay, just chill and we got to do work, like a lot of work, I guess doable.

Interviewer: What are the schools that you would want to go to, that you don't feel like you're going in there?

Allen: Texas, State maybe. Those kind of schools. (CC, S&A)

Interviewer: How did you find out about like what their requirements are and stuff?

Allen: It was online.

Interviewer: Online?

Allen: Yes, tells you the GPA you have to have and SAT scores, so, yeah. (CK)

Interviewer: So, do you have a plan like how long you want to be at CCC and where you want to transfer after that or are you still going decide?

Allen: Yeah, I plan to be there for two years. If I blow up the first year like do ridiculously nice and get like an offer to go somewhere, I'll leave first year if not, I'll just do my two years there, do pretty good. If I don't have any recruits I'll at least have, like, the tape next because I haven't got the chance to see me and go from there. (CCI, S&A, CD, SD)

Interviewer: Well, will you be playing like, do have a team that you want to be playing on or something for basketball or will just be on your own? Is there a team that you're going to be playing on for basketball, like, when you're out at CCC do they have a team or anything?

Allen: Yeah, they have a team.

Interviewer: Okay. So, you're going to do that?

Allen: Yes. (S&A, CCI)

Interviewer: So, you looked at some of the other schools like those big name schools and that, you know, you feel like your grades weren't quite up to there. How did you decide on CCC then rather than another county college or another two year school?

Allen: Well CCC is the closest I think. Like I said, I know people there already, so it's like, comfortable I guess. (CD, CCI)

Interviewer: Did you already apply there?

Allen: Yeah, I applied but I have to get the thing back, something like a test.

Interviewer: Okay.

Allen: So, placement test I guess.

Interviewer: Did you write an essay or anything for that?

Allen: No.

Interviewer: Did you apply to any other schools?

Allen: No.

Interviewer: When you sat down for a meeting with your counselor, I guess, what did she talk about, like, in terms of colleges and stuff, did she make any suggestions for certain schools you should look at or anything?

Allen: Yeah, but they mostly were far and I didn't like kind of plan on going there. I mean from my grades, I didn't want to go to colleges just gone up and go nowhere.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Allen: To colleges, you're talking about, like, colleges no one has heard of and they're not even in, like, basketball contention like for anything. (CD, S&A, GP, POS)

Interviewer: Okay. So, that wasn't what you're looking for. So, you wanted to go to a school that could help you do something with basketball, that's like, the most important thing?

Allen: Yeah. (A, CD, S&A)

PCHS, November 2011, Essay Writing Workshop Field notes

WM = White male; BF = Black female; BM = Black male; CC = community college; STAR = nonprofit college counseling agency in Park City

After talking to School Counselor 1 for a while I went over and sat with School Counselor 2 while she helped a student. Two interns were also helping. The WM that was there, he had his laptop with him and had it open to the common app supplemental questions. He was working on it with School Counselor 1.

The girl School Counselor 2 was working with was a BF who was on the volleyball team and had written about an experience she had with racism while on a volleyball trip to Germany. She said she was going to go to STAR to get them to read it over today also. She said they were helping her develop a list too. She still needed to figure out her list and get her teachers to do recs for her (CK).

A student came up to her, Max, a BM and asked about sending transcripts to State. School Counselor 2 said absolutely nothing goes. Last year they sent them and sent counselor recs and they came back and told them not to send anything this year. Max said he had realized the due date of Dec 1st until someone told him and then he rushed to do it, but it only took him 15 mins. (LCK) He was surprised. I later asked School Counselor 2 about that and she said yeah, they figure that when they get the midyear report they will just check grades then.

I don't know how we got to talking about it, but we started to talk about how much kids don't want to go to CCs. This was after another student, Brenda, a BF sat down and School Counselor 2 read over her essay. She said that Brenda had come to the first essay writing workshop to brainstorm and kept coming to her for help with it. She said she was open to hearing about CCs, which might be a good idea for her because she wasn't sure if she was academically ready for another type of school. She said for other students she has to try to slip it in (CCI, S, GP). It can be a junior or a sophomore you are

talking to with a 1.0 GPA and when you ask them where do they want to be after high school, they will say college. He'll say I'm going to college. They expect it. It's a given. (A) They don't listen to the things we've been saying about what you have to do to get there. (A, LCK, GP)

Codes	Harriet (PCHS)	Allen (EHS)	Field notes (Counselors at PCHS)
Aspirations	- Oh, no. There's no choice. I'm going to college. You don't seem to understand this. It's not that I wanted to go to college. I've always been told that I'll go to college. This is the progression in someone's life; you go to college. I'm going to college.	- My mom told me to, like she said, you go into college even my dad said says you're going to college. So I'm like, alright one college then. - Interviewer: Is this something you want to do? Allen: I don't really care to, I don't really like school too much. So, I don't really care but I'll do it just to do it. - Interviewer: But what you'd rather do is there something you rather do? Allen: Go straight to the NBA, but not, you have to do college, I don't know, I guess I have to go. I just	- It can be a junior or a sophomore you are talking to with a 1.0 GPA and when you ask them where do they want to be after high school, they will say college. He'll say I'm going to college. They expect it. It's a given. - They don't listen to the things we've been saying about what you have to do to get there.

want to do college or to sport they asked I don't really care for the aspect.

- Interviewer: How did you decide on CCC?

Allen: Because I looked at my grades. They're okay but not good enough to get in the school I want to get in, especially academic wise, so, I have to do this. I mean academic wise, like sports wise, I have to have a certain kind of grade. So, I'm just going to, I don't know, I'll just start at CCC probably, mostly by going there too, so, why not.

Interviewer: Okay. So, that wasn't what you're looking for. So, you wanted to go to a school that could help you do something with basketball, that's like, the most

important thing?

Allen: Yeah.

College Competitiveness	- It just depends on what tier or level of college I will get into. - Carleton is considered top-tier, apparently, by my parents - I'm not good enough. If you look at the thing on the website, we're on target. My GPA and my SATs scores match up. They match up mostly for all of these places but that's just because my first two years held up my GPA to such an amount that when colleges look at it, they'll be like, "Wait, she hasn't done any work for the past two years." So it won't matter. But I'm not getting into Georgetown, and Williams. I might get into Carleton. I'll probably end up at Smith or Hamilton	- Allen: Because I looked at my grades. They're okay but not good enough to get in the school I want to get in, especially academic wise, so, I have to do this. I mean academic wise, like sports wise, I have to have a certain kind of grade. So, I'm just going to, I don't know, I'll just start at CCC probably, mostly by going there too, so, why not. **-** What are the schools that you would want to go to, that you don't feel like you're going in there? Allen: Texas, State maybe. Those kind of schools.
College Decisions	- I told you Carleton was my first choice.	- Because I looked at my grades. They're okay but not good enough to

get in the school I want to get in, especially academic wise, so, I have to do this. I mean academic wise, like sports wise, I have to have a certain kind of grade. So, I'm just going to, I don't know, I'll just start at CCC probably, mostly by going there too, so, why not.

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- Interviewer: So, you looked at some of the

other schools like those big name schools and that, you know, you feel like your grades weren't quite up to there. How did you decide on CCC then rather than another county college or another two-year school?

Allen: Well CCC is the closest I think. Like I said, I know people there already, so it's like, comfortable I guess.

- Allen: Yeah, but they mostly were far and I didn't like kind of plan on going there. I mean from my grades, I didn't want to go to colleges just gone up and go nowhere.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Allen: To colleges, you're talking about, like, college I know you've heard of and they're not

even in, like, basketball contention like for anything.

Allen: Okay. So, that wasn't what you're looking for. So, you wanted to go to a school that could help you do something with basketball, that's like, the most important thing?

Allen: Yeah.

Parent Involvement	- Carleton is considered top-tier, apparently, by my parents - They're crazy with the colleges, I told you. The colleges are their number one obsession. - Harriet: I applied to State but that's because my parents made me	- Interviewer: So, how did you decide you want to go to college? Allen: My mom told me to like she said, you go into college even my dad said says you're going to college. So I'm like, alright one college then.

College Knowledge			
	- It just depends on what tier or level of college I will get into. - Carleton is considered top-tier, apparently, by my parents - I'm not good enough. If you look at the thing on the website, we're on target. My GPA and my SATs scores match up. They match up mostly for all of these places but that's just because my first two years held up my GPA to such an amount that when colleges look at it, they'll be like, "Wait, she hasn't done any work for the past two years." So it won't matter. But I'm not getting into Georgetown, and Williams. I might get into Carleton. I'll probably end up at Smith or Hamilton .	- How did you decide on CCC? Allen: Because I looked at my grades. They're okay but not good enough to get in the school I want to get in, especially academic wise, so, I have to do this. I mean academic wise, like sports wise, I have to have a certain kind of grade. So, I'm just going to, I don't know, I'll just start at CCC probably, mostly by going there too, so, why not. - Interviewer: How did you find out about like what their requirements are and stuff? Allen: It was online. Interviewer: Online? Allen: Yes, tell GPA you have to have and SAT scores, so, yeah.	- The girl School Counselor 2 was working with was a BF who was on the volleyball team and had written about an experience she had with racism while on a volleyball trip to Germany. She said she was going to go to STAR to get them to read it over today also. She said they were helping her develop a list too. She still needed to figure out her list and get her teachers to do recs for her

Stigma

- I don't know how we got to talking about it, but we started to talk about how much kids don't want to go to CCs. This was after another student, Brenda, a BF sat down and School Counselor 2 read over her essay. She said that Brenda had come to the first essay writing workshop to brainstorm and kept coming to her for help with it. She said she was open to hearing about CCs, which might be a good idea for her because she wasn't sure if she was academically ready for another type of school. She said for other students she has to try to slip it in

| Perceptions of Other Students | - Everyone's been making fun of me because they posted all the people online who got State

Interviewer: What do you mean posted them online?

Harriet: Somewhere online now, apparently, Park City High School the list of people who got into State. Check it out, I don't know. Everyone's making fun of me, so it must be there somewhere that everyone's been looking at it

- I got into both of them but everyone's making fun of me because I'm the only person who got into Stat Urban because no one else applied to State-Urban, or wants to go to State-Urban. I don't even want to go to State-Urban but I just checked off the box because it was there.

Now, apparently, people have been talking like, "Yeah, Harriet. She applied to State-Urban." Why is this a rumor? Why is this something someone cares about? | Allen: Yeah, but they mostly were far and I didn't like kind of plan on going there. I mean from my grades, I didn't want to go to colleges just gone up and go nowhere.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Allen: To colleges, you're talking about, like, colleges no one has heard of and they're not even in, like, basketball contention like for anything. |

| Student Disengagement | - Interviewer: Is this something you want to do?

Allen: I don't really care to, I don't really like school too much. So, I don't really care but I'll do it just to do it.

-Interviewer: So, do you have a plan like how long you want to be at CCC and where you want to transfer after that or are you still going decide?

Allen: Yeah, I plan to be there for two years. If I blow up the first year like do ridiculously nice and get like an offer to go somewhere, I'll leave first year if not, I'll just do my two years there, do pretty good. If I don't have any recruits I'll at least have, like, the tape next in the because I haven't got the chance to see me |

and go from there.

Sports & Activities

- Interviewer: But what you'd rather do is there something you rather do?

Allen: Go straight to the NBA but not, you have to do college, I don't know, I guess I have to go. I just want to do college or to sport they asked I don't really care for the aspect.

-Interviewer: How did you decide on CCC?

Allen: Because I looked at my grades. They're okay but not good enough to get in the school I want to get in, especially academic wise, so, I have to do this. I mean academic wise, like sports wise, I have to have a certain kind of grade. So, I'm just going to, I don't know, I'll just start at CCC

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- Interviewer: Well, will you be playing like, do have a team that you want to be playing on or

something for basketball or will just be on your own? Is there a team that you're going to be playing on for basketball, like, when you're out at CCC do they have a team or anything?

Allen: Yeah, they have a team.

Interviewer: Okay. So, you're going to do that?

Allen: Yes.

- Interviewer: When you sat down for a meeting with your counselor, I guess, what did she talked about, like, in terms of colleges and stuff, did she make any suggestions for certain schools you should look at or anything?

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Community College	-Interviewer: How did you decide on CCC? Allen: Because I looked at my grades. They're okay but not good enough to get in the school I want to get in,	-I don't know how we got to talking about it, but we started to talk about how much kids don't want to go to CCs. This was after another student, Brenda, a BF sat down and School Counselor 2 read over her essay. She said that Brenda had come to the first essay writing

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workshop to brainstorm and kept coming to her for help with it. She said she was open to hearing about CCs, which might be a good idea for her because she wasn't sure if she was academically ready for another type of school. She said for other students she has to try to slip it in

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Counseling Program

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-They don't listen to the things we've been saying about what you have to do to get there.

| **Lack of College Knowledge** | - Max said he had realized the due date of Dec 1st until someone told him and then he rushed to do it, but it only took him 15 mins.

-They don't listen to the things we've been saying about what you have to do to get there. |