



Howard, T. C., Tunstall, J. D., & Flenbaugh, T. K. (Eds.). (2016). *Expanding college access for urban youth: What schools and colleges can do*. New York: Teachers College Press.

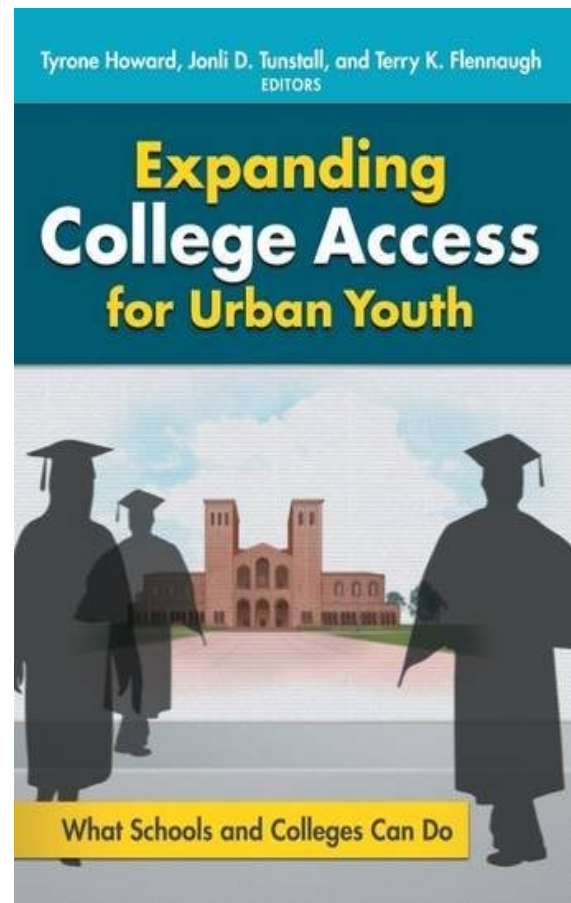
Pp. 182

ISBN: 978-0-8077-5764-2

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In *Expanding College Access for Urban Youth: What Schools and Colleges Can Do*, Howard, Tunstall, and Flenbaugh (2016) edit a timely and important examination of the historical and persistent inequities students of color face in their attempts to access higher education. Their scholarly work challenges the widely adopted mindset that educational opportunity and access to enriching educational programs is open to all. This book places emphasis on the educational disparities that disproportionately affect Black and Latino communities, the two largest non-white groups in the US. In comparison to their white and Asian American peers, Black and Latino students are less likely to complete high school and enroll in and complete college (Howard, 2010).

Howard, Tunstall, and Flenbaugh (2016), all seasoned scholars whose research agendas focus on race, culture, and equity in education, joined emerging scholars with close ties to school-university partnerships to address one major research question: What roles have public institutions (namely pre-K-12 and postsecondary) played in helping to ameliorate the chronic underperformance in many low-income, urban communities? To answer the question, the authors examined 10 years of data



from a school-university partnership (Vice Provost Initiative for Pre-College Scholars, or VIPS) that has been “addressing the leaky parts of the educational pipeline in a manner that improves education prospects, life chances, and community vitality for underserved students” (p. 3). VIPS is comprised of high school students, their families, high school staff, and current university students, who serve as mentors for the prospective high school students. The guiding principles of VIPS include critical pedagogy, social justice youth development, and sociopolitical development. Indeed, the program seeks to “develop competitive African American college applicants while engaging them in praxis in order to analyze the circumstances affecting the state of African American educational and social achievement” (p. 33). This principle seeks to “build a pipeline” of students that can lead to greater access to prestigious colleges and universities to disadvantaged students for years to come.

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the text is the extensive and clearly articulated review of literature, which appropriately situates the work within the areas of urban youth, the importance of postsecondary education, and the obstacles urban youth face in accessing postsecondary education. According to the authors, there are several components tied to a student’s likelihood to enroll in college. Tracking in pre-K-12 courses is one of the greatest factors causing the underrepresentation of students of color in higher education. Tracking is the placement of students into classes based on their achievement levels as translated by standardized measures and purported career interests, sorting them into courses based on classifications such as fast, average, or slow (Gamoran, 2009; Oakes, 2005). Students of color disproportionately occupy the lower academic tracks in pre-K-12 classes, making them less likely to be placed in advanced courses that would make them competitive

candidates for selective colleges and universities (Oakes, 2005).

Through the literature review, the authors mindfully dismiss the idea that socioeconomic status is the sole sociological issue concerning educational equity. They cite research pointing to poverty as one of the most pressing factors in chronic educational underachievement (Ekono, Jiang, & Smith, 2016) and carefully weave contemporary research revealing the “disturbing” intersection of race and poverty (Anyon, 2014; Cass, 2010; Gorski, 2013) throughout the narrative. Indeed, they point to the reality that race, in most cases, dictates socioeconomic status. African American, Latino, Native American, and Southeast Asian families disproportionately fall below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014), tying issues of economic status to issues of race and ethnicity.

Among other issues, the authors point to lower expectations of non-white students made by the predominantly white, monolingual, middle-class teaching force (Delpit, 2006, 2008, 2013) along with the lack of human and social capital to help these students gain access to college counselors and experts to guide them through the enrollment process (Hearn, 1991; Kim & Schneider, 2005; Person & Rosenbaum, 2006). The authors cite research conducted by Gándra (2002) and McDonough (1997), who found students of color are more prone to see their assigned counselors as “impediments who prevent access to college preparatory courses and information” (p. 22).

Structurally, the opening chapter of the text lays the theoretical groundwork for the urgent need of programs that seek equity in college access. The authors then introduce the history and background of VIPS, which spawned as a response to declining numbers of students of color, specifically Black students, in colleges and universities at competitive 4-year institutions in California. The authors explicitly define the importance of mentorship to the success of programs like

VIPS. While the explicit discussion of mentorships is integral to the book, the strongest part of this section of the text is the authors' incorporation of the voices of students and major stakeholders in the college admissions process in the program by incorporating qualitative interviews with the students. This qualitative depiction of a school-university partnership includes real students and mentors in order to bring life to the sobering statistics regarding access to higher education for Black and Latino students. While statistics are important for pinpointing areas of need, personal accounts of those affected by historically exclusionary policies underscore the urgency for change and provide personal accounts that resonate with readers who may have a limited knowledge of how race and poverty affect students' access to higher education.

*Expanding College Access for Urban Youth* is a valuable resource for anyone interested in the broad field of social justice and for those

seeking to enact change. In the closing chapter of the book, the authors make a plea to the readers for reform. In order to alter the system, they make specific recommendations to policymakers, K-12 schools, and colleges and universities. Among the recommendations, they call for policymakers to improve counseling and university support to increase access to higher education for underserved populations. They also call for universities and K-12 schools to cultivate stronger partnerships with each other and create visions for inclusion, where all students are valued within the schools. They point to data affirming that education fosters "greater political participation, better access to health care and longer life expectancy, fewer engagements in substance abuse and criminal activity, and higher lifetime earning" (Krueger et al., 2015). As such, it is our duty to ensure all youth have equitable access to enriching educational experiences.

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### About the Reviewer

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**Supported by the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University**

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