OCTAVIO VILLALPANDO
DANIEL G. SOLORZANO

Chapter One

The Role of Culture in College Preparation Programs: A Review of the Research Literature

The majority of precollege outreach programs that are designed to improve the college readiness of low-income students of color[1] are centered on academic enhancement activities. The main focus of these programs is to help students develop academic skills that will improve their likelihood of attending and succeeding in college. They operate under the assumption that students who participate in the programs are more likely to succeed in college than those who are not involved with the programs. But, while these programs probably do help students, as Gándara (2002a) observes, "it is virtually certain that they could meet with much greater success if the research were able to better identify which strategies are most effective for which types of students, under which conditions" (p. 100).

Indeed, despite decades of involvement by low-income youth of color in various types of college preparation programs, these students continue to be se-

verely underrepresented in higher education (Wilds, 2000). Their disproportionate enrollment and success rates have led many to question the impact that precollege programs play in the preparation of these students for college (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002).

In this chapter, we review the literature that focuses on the role of students' culture in college preparation programs. We synthesize the research that addresses the extent to which the transition of students of color to college is enhanced when they participate in precollege outreach programs that include a focus on their culture.

We begin with a discussion of how cultural integrity and cultural capital frameworks often inform the concept of culture in the college preparation literature. We argue that a cultural capital framework does not adequately capture the complex identities of students of color, which consequently helps explain why the present research in this area frequently reaches inconclusive or contradictory findings. We propose the consideration of a conceptual lens that builds upon the concept of cultural integrity to better understand the dynamic experiences of students of color who participate in college preparation programs.

We then synthesize the research on the role of culture in college preparation programs, highlighting the ways in which programs deliberately create initiatives and opportunities for students to integrate their respective cultural and racial identities as a way to make academics more effective. We conclude by discussing how to apply the conceptual lens proposed in this chapter to future studies of students of color and college preparation programs.

GUIDING QUESTION

Swail and Perna's (2002) exhaustive review of college preparation programs revealed that most programs include a strong emphasis on building academic preparation, but very little to no emphasis on integrating students' cultural identity, cultural needs, or cultural assets into the program. Why would programs designed to enhance the college readiness of low-income youth of color not include an emphasis on their culture or cultural identity as a formal programmatic focus? To some, while it might make sense intuitively that these programs should account for students' culture, there is little systematic investigation of the effects of incorporating culture in college preparation programs. A comprehensive research literature base does not yet exist to point programs toward the adoption of specific cultural components or related cultural strategies that can be helpful for students, although many scholars in this area have issued calls for the inclusion of culture and cultural components in precollege

programs (see Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002). Thus, our understanding of the role of students' culture in college preparation programs has remained uninformed by the research literature.

As we embarked upon this review, our guiding assumption was that college preparation programs for low-income students of color were probably most successful when they included a focus on both the students' culture and on the development of academic skills. This assumption framed our attempt to synthesize the studies that examine the extent to which the goals of college preparation programs might be enhanced when they emphasize the culture of the student. We posed the following question as a guide for this review:

> To what extent is it essential for college preparation programs to emphasize the culture of the student in order to enable her or him to get into a college or university?

FRAMING CULTURE

Cultural Capital

Our review revealed that much of the literature that included a discussion of culture in college preparation programs borrowed Bourdieu's (1986) concept of cultural capital to frame the way in which programs view students' racial identities and cultural needs. Bourdieu (1986) considered cultural capital as a set of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities that are possessed and often inherited by certain groups in society, and suggested that families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds do not have the privileged opportunities that families from higher socioeconomic backgrounds possess.

Even though Bourdieu explicitly conceptualized cultural capital as a class-based, not a race-based, analysis of culture, our review found that the literature frequently applies this framework to try to explain the complex relationships between the cultural needs of students of color and the role of college preparation programs. For example, in their review of the role of parent involvement in college preparation programs, Jun and Colyar (2002) address the importance of involving parents of color in college preparation programs as a way of transmitting cultural capital "from one generation to the next by parents who inform their children about the value, importance, and process of securing a college education" (pp. 203–204). The assumption is that a cultural capital framework helps to explain the experiences and needs of students of color who often come from working-class families and their interactions with educational institutions.

Cultural Integrity

Jun and Colyar (2002) also argue that accounting for family culture in college enrichment programs is essential to the success of students of color. They build upon the work of sociologists and cultural anthropologists, including Cummins (1997), Deyhle (1995), and Tierney and Jun (2001), to propose the adoption of a cultural integrity framework in college preparation programs that affirms students' cultural identity. A college preparation program designed within a cultural integrity framework reconceptualizes deficit notions of culture by viewing students' cultural identity as a set of positive traits in the learning process. This framework is premised upon the notion that the beliefs held by educators and teachers about students' identities and educators' roles in the structures in which the learning process takes place "are important in enabling or disabling the college intentions of low-income minority youth" (Tierney & Jun, 2001, p. 207).

   We found that the literature sometimes links the concept of cultural capital to a cultural integrity framework. Cultural integrity emphasizes the importance of affirming students' cultural identities, while cultural capital is often used to reinforce the power and influence of culture in society. Both concepts are used together to persuade college preparation programs to reconceptualize deficit views of the identities of students of color.

The Concept of Culture for Students of Color

Culture influences how learning is organized, how the curriculum is developed, and how teaching methods are implemented. In our review, we found that the concept of culture for students of color took on many divergent meanings. Some research equated culture with race and ethnicity, while other work clearly viewed culture through a much broader lens of characteristics and forms of social histories and identities.

   For the purposes of this review, our concept of culture draws from the work of scholars who have reconceptualized traditional sociological and anthropological deficit theories of culture (Tierney, 1993; West, 1993), language (Valencia, 1997), class (Giroux, 1983; Foley, 1997; McDonough, 1997), gender (Collins, 1986; Hurtado, 1989), and ethnicity/race (hooks, 1990; Solorzano, 1997) in order to provide more robust and valid explanatory frameworks for research in education and the social sciences. Building upon the framework of cultural integrity, we view the culture of students of color as a set of characteristics that are neither fixed nor static. We consider culture to be dynamic, cumulative, and an influence of the continuous process of identity formation. It is a process of behaviors and values that are learned, shared, and exhibited by a people. For students of color, their culture is frequently represented symbolically through language and can encompass identities around immigration sta-

tus, gender, phenotype, sexuality, regionality, race, and ethnicity. The broader contemporary youth culture in society is very often also represented among students of color.

But perhaps the most important dimension of culture for students of color is that it is very often a guide for their thinking, feeling, and behaving—indeed, it is a means of survival. The cultures of students of color can nurture and empower them. Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez, (1992) and Velez-Ibanez and Greenberg (1992) believe that, for Latinos, culture can form and draw from communal funds of knowledge, while Gordon (1995) views culture for African Americans as possessing a set of nurturing family characteristics.

Toward a Concept of Cultural Wealth

Despite Bourdieu's (1986) explicit intention to apply cultural capital to class-based analyses (see Dika & Singh, 2002), the college preparation literature borrows this framework to explain the experiences and needs of students of color. Based on our review, we propose an extension—or reconceptualization—of this framework when analyzing the relationship between students of color and college preparation programs. The conceptualization we propose here allows for a more robust interpretation of the role of culture for students of color in college preparation programs.

If we begin with the assumption that students of color, parents, and communities value educational achievement, and if we build on this assumption by using it as the basis for interventions like college preparation programs, then by adopting a cultural continuities approach (Weisner, Gallimore, & Jordan, 1988), we believe it is possible to improve the achievement of students of color. This approach examines the home and community for cultural activities that are compatible with school achievement. These culturally compatible activities are then adapted for program use. Indeed, like cultural integrity, viewing the student's home and community culture as a strength leads to intervention programs of mutual accommodation in which the schools, the student, and their families fashion their behavior toward a common goal of academic achievement. With this approach, we can ask whether there are forms of cultural capital that students of color bring to the college intervention table that cultural capital theory does not recognize or cannot see (e.g., parental value of education, awareness of parental sacrifices, hard work of the parents, etc.).

This approach allows us to identify and analyze how individuals and groups use different and often unrecognized forms of capital in response to educational subordination. Can these cultural and familial resources be considered a form of cultural resistance to educational subordination, a type of resistant cultural capital of those at society's educational margins (Solorzano & Villalpando, 1998)? In a sense, these questions represent a redefinition of cultural capital, since those who do not have the "traditional" forms might be dis-

playing a different form of cultural capital than those society acknowledges and privileges. Indeed, if we frame the concept of cultural wealth within the context of higher education, we might be better able to see how individuals and groups use their marginal status as a source of empowerment.

However, we first have to reconceptualize cultural capital by focusing on those attitudinal, behavioral, and familial assets that students of color bring to their school experience. By increasing our focus on marginalized students who rely on different forms of cultural capital to complete a high school diploma and aspire to a college degree, we can begin to more fully explore how their success might be affected by (1) their dependence on other students and teachers of color for support and mentorship, (2) their response to a curriculum and teaching pedagogy that emphasizes their background, and (3) school "multicultural" policies and practices.

We propose the concept of *cultural wealth* to encompass, along with students' unique cultural capital, other accumulated assets and resources such as students' navigational capital, social capital, economic capital, experiential capital, educational capital, and aspirational capital (see Auerbach, 2002). Our notion of cultural wealth identifies individual indicators of capital that have rarely been acknowledged and used as assets in examining the cultural and social characteristics of populations of color.

Gender and Culture

While we recognize that culture intersects with many dimensions of the identities of students of color, clearly gender plays a very significant role in how students experience college preparation programs. Our review failed to identify published empirical work focusing on how gender and culture intersect in college preparation programs. However, it is imperative to point out that any omission of a discussion of major differences in the precollege experiences between women and men should not be interpreted to suggest that both genders share the same educational experience or outcomes. Despite the lack of empirical work, on the intersection of gender and culture in college preparation programs, wherever possible in this discussion, we attempt to raise questions related to possible areas where women might have a different experience than men in college preparation programs.

In the next two sections, we illustrate how a cultural wealth lens might allow for a more appropriate analysis of the role of culture for students of color in precollege programs. We begin by synthesizing the major published findings in this area and, in the latter section, apply a cultural wealth concept to reexamine components of programs that are cited as models of cultural enrichment and academic skills development.

CULTURE IN COLLEGE PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Our review of the research began by seeking studies of programs that exclusively emphasize culture and pay little attention to the development of academic skills. However, the published empirical literature we reviewed did not identify any such programs. Instead, we found that college preparation programs that emphasize culture almost always also included an emphasis on the development of academic skills or, at a minimum, an awareness about going to college. Most of these programs strove to improve students' chances for enrolling in college by emphasizing some dimension of students' culture and by attempting to improve their academic preparation (Lockwood & Secada, 1999; Swanson, 1993).

Indeed, in a national survey, Swail (2001b) found that college attendance was the primary goal of 92% of outreach programs, with 88% of the programs claiming that they strove to improve student academic skills and 66% listing culture as a main component of their programs. While clearly the most common purpose of college preparation programs is to increase the college attendance of program participants, Swail's (2001) study underscores the emphasis that college preparation programs claim to place on cultural enrichment goals. We found that the real difference was in the *degree* to which programs emphasized culture. Some programs appeared to be more overt and explicit than others in their emphasis on culture, but most seemed to share a similar programmatic interest in developing academic skills or an awareness about college.

With respect to how the programs conceptualize culture, the literature we reviewed suggests that some programs are more aware than others about the different ways in which culture exists and manifests itself, though most appear to premise their analysis within a cultural capital framework. For example, some programs are under the impression that their emphasis on students' culture only comes about as a result of a formal activity, such as taking trips to museums with ethnic displays, attending ethnic music concerts, or by offering classes or workshops on cultural topics or issues. Other programs are more clear and intentional about how they infuse culture. They are quite explicit about the need for and the process by which they involve students' parents and family, mentors, and peer groups. These programs appear to be aware that these activities serve to reinforce the students' cultural norms, beliefs, and values, even though it is accomplished in a less formal way than offering a course or workshop on a culturally specific topic. Thus, our review found that in some instances, the students' culture is infused into college preparation programs in a way that is not always apparent or necessarily deliberate. In other instances, programs are quite intentional about how to achieve some degree of academic

success by striving for cultural integrity and viewing the students' culture as a form of wealth.

Our review did not identify any one particular culturally related activity that could be perceived as the best or most effective means of transmitting culture or achieving a modicum of cultural integrity. Students' parents and family, mentors, peer groups, and formal classes or workshops each appear to be important components of programs that allow students to maintain their own cultural integrity, ensuring that students' cultural backgrounds are viewed as critical ingredients for achieving success (Jun & Colyar, 2002). Other chapters in this book address the role of family, peers, and mentors in college preparation programs in detail, but below we offer a brief overview of how each of these components relates to the culture of students of color within these programs.

Family Involvement

Our review revealed that one of the most common ways that college preparation programs incorporate culture into their missions is by involving students' parents and/or their families. Swail and Perna (2002) discovered that more than two thirds of all programs offer a parental involvement component. For students of color, parent involvement in a college preparation program represents an important way of maintaining a connection with their culture. Jun and Tierney (1999) observed that while it was not possible to credit student academic achievement entirely to parental involvement, "it appears that many programs that make parents' involvement a priority also see student outcomes improve" (p. 57).

The literature suggests that a major reason for involving parents and family is to inform them about the various processes that they can undertake to help their children get prepared for and eventually admitted to college (Swail & Perna 2002; Gandara 2002a). According to Jun and Colyar (2002), this parental education component helps them acquire or develop the cultural capital necessary to help their children attend and succeed in college. Horn and Chen (1998) and Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper (1999) also found that students are more likely to enroll in postsecondary education when their parents have high expectations and are involved with them.

However, when viewed through a cultural wealth lens, involving families and parents of color in college outreach programs provides more than a vehicle by which information about or the value of college is transmitted or reinforced. As Gándara (1995) noted in her longitudinal study of educational mobility among Chicanos, the families and parents of students of color symbolize a powerful cultural representation that often enables students to shape their attitudes and aspirations around a sense of responsibility and commitment to their community. As Tierney and Auerbach elaborate in greater depth (chapter 2), programs that involve parents and, when appropriate, can provide services in

their native language, do more than transmit cultural capital to the families. Parents can transmit various elements of cultural wealth to the students and to the program.

Peers

Peers of students of color are another means by which culture is integrated into college preparation programs. Even though the literature is inconclusive about the extent to which adolescent peers help or hinder student participants in college preparation programs, most programs that are aware of the importance of peers operate under the assumption that they can serve a useful function.

Most college preparation programs enable students from similar backgrounds to support each other's academic goals as they transition into new, alien environments (Gándara, 2002a; Perna, 2000a). Gándara (2001) also points out that most AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), Puente, SOAR (Summer Orientation and Academic Review), and Posse Programs have specific peer group components designed with the purpose of supporting student peers. In fact, one of the most overtly noticeable features of the highly successful AVID program is the supportive peer culture that develops among the participants, who not only meet for a class period each day but also eat lunch together daily (Swanson, 1993).

While peer groups exist naturally in college preparation programs, these programs seldom appear to organize peer groups in a purposeful manner to serve a specific function. In their review of the role of peer groups in college preparation programs, Tierney and Colyar (see chapter 3) cite a study by Mehan et al. (1996) that calls for a purposeful structuring of peer groups in a college preparation program as a way for students to affirm their own ethnic/racial backgrounds and academic identities. Tierney and Colyar urge programs to think about peer groups as a valuable component of learning by organizing them into purposeful and functional teams.

Mentoring

As Gándara and Mejorado illustrate (chapter 5), many college preparation programs utilize mentors as part of their strategy to benefit students. In several programs, mentors also provide students with access to individuals of the same racial or ethnic backgrounds who can exert a positive influence. Yet while such efforts are believed to be effective, they are very much dependent upon the talents and commitment of the mentors. For example, some programs enable student participants to spend a great deal of time over a matter of years with their assigned mentor. The outcomes experienced by students in these programs vary greatly depending upon the relationship with their mentor. According to Kahne and Bailey (1999), those who have been involved in programs with committed, long-term mentors have enjoyed college enrollment rates that are

nearly double the rates of their peers who have not participated in such activities, while those who have been involved in programs with multiple mentors who lacked this same dedication demonstrated only minimal improvements on college enrollment rates.

Thus, while the role of mentors in a college preparation program can be quite powerful, it is a difficult kind of success to replicate consistently. Nevertheless, our review reveals that mentors for students of color are another way by which college preparation programs often infuse culture into their mission.

Cultural Instruction

The most formal way of bringing students' culture into college preparation programs is by offering workshops and/or courses on cultural histories and traditions. A cultural wealth lens recognizes this activity as a valuable way of acknowledging the social histories and identities of students of color. Our review found that college preparation programs that included some form of cultural instruction as a part of their program were usually very explicit about intentionally attempting to enhance the unique strengths possessed by students' culture. For example, the Frederick Douglass Academy in New York City focuses its college preparation efforts around the Black traditions of collective survival, racial uplift, and connectedness (Knight et al., 2000), while Puente teaches all of its courses using Latina/o resources and literature (Gándara, 2001).

Unfortunately, there are limited empirical published studies in this area, but the few available suggest that students of color exposed to cultural teaching strategies may demonstrate attitudinal improvements and a sense of cultural empowerment, although as Gándara (2001) noted, it is unclear whether their transition from high school to college is improved as a result of this specific strategy.

FOUR PROGRAMS PROMOTING CULTURAL ENRICHMENT AND ACADEMIC SKILLS

In this section we review, through a cultural wealth lens, examples of four programs perceived to be exemplary in their attempt to achieve academic enhancement and culturally enriching outcomes for students of color.

Program 1: College Prep Academic Track

The literature we reviewed highlighted a program that claims as a key feature the removal of underachieving students from general education or vocational tracks and places them in rigorous college preparatory classes while providing them with extensive support services. Students meet every day with a program teacher and class where they participate in such activities as academic tutoring,

writing development, note taking, test taking, study strategies, field trips, and motivational exercises (Fashola & Slavin, 1997; Gándara, 2001; Mehan et al., 1996). In addition, students are exposed to guest speakers who present information about preparing for college (Swanson, 1993).

The program claims to provide its students with "social scaffolding," which Mehan et al. (1996) defined as "the engineering of instructional tasks so that students develop their own competencies through their interactions with more capable peers or experts, and the building of a community of peers to support students' aspirations" (p. 78). Among the most notable findings from Mehan et al.'s (1996) evaluation of this program are: (1) improved college enrollment numbers; (2) particular effectiveness with African American and Latino students; (3) greatest effects on most at-risk students; and (4) the transmission of cultural capital. Even more than academic skill building, much of the program's impact is attributed to what is perceived as the transmission of cultural capital from teachers and mentors to the students. Services that help students improve test-taking skills and learn about the college application and decision process were believed to provide at-risk students with knowledge that they had previously not possessed.

The literature we reviewed on this program is guided by a cultural capital theoretical framework and frequently depicts student participants as deficient in a number of areas beyond academics. In fact, one of its main findings, the transmission of cultural capital, again assumes that the students did not possess any capital in their culture of origin and thus had to acquire it from the program. For example, an underlying assumption driven by this framework is that the students lack the motivation or desire to attend college because their families and communities have not valued education, as judged by the perceived disinterest among parents in becoming involved in their children's schooling. This myth continues to prevail, despite research by Gándara (1995), Stanton-Salazar (2001), Valencia, (1997), Valenzuela (1999), and others that clearly contradicts the misperception that families of color are not involved in or do not care about their children's education. It is one thing for the students to need information about college application procedures and college life, and quite another thing to conclude that they lack this information because their families have not valued their educational achievement enough to prepare them adequately for college. In contrast to a cultural capital framework, a cultural wealth lens allows for research that can reexamine "which strategies are most effective for which types of students, under which conditions" (Gándara, 2002a, p. 100).

Program 2: Promise of Financial Support for College

Our second example is of a program built on a promise to a class or group of elementary students that their college education will be paid for if they

successfully make it through high school. The scholarships are provided by an individual or corporate donor. The program also includes support in the form of college scholarships, counseling, mentoring, and tutoring, all designed to attempt to help students graduate from high school and transition into college.

Yet, while this type of program component claims to provide both "academic and cultural services," Kahne and Bailey (1999) conclude that it is much more weighted toward the social and cultural realm, and cite the "social development goals" of the program as evidence. Again, a cultural wealth perspective would not identify social development as a primary goal of a college readiness program for students of color. The literature on this program, again premised upon a cultural capital perspective, presumes that the students of color who participate in the program possess cultural deficiencies that prohibit them from achieving academic progress. A cultural wealth lens would refocus attention on the deficiencies of the schooling processes that failed to provide adequate academic preparation for the students, shifting some of the major responsibilities for the students' academic needs from their families and toward the schools.

Program 3: Ethnic-Specific College Preparation and Mentoring Support

This program was designed to serve a particular racial/ethnic student group by providing a 2-year college preparatory English class, a dedicated guidance counselor, and a mentoring program (Gándara, 2001). The English course integrates literature into its core curriculum written by authors from the same racial/ethnic group as the student participants, and the mentors and counselors are usually also of the same race/ethnicity as the students, indications of the program's strong commitment to maintaining cultural integrity. Strong family and parental involvement form another important feature of this program. Families are regular participants in program activities that try to give both parents and students a sense of inclusion in the education process (Gándara, 2001).

Some of the most notable findings by Gándara, Mejorado et al. in their 1998 evaluation of this program are that: (1) there is an increase in knowledge of and value for the college application process; (2) increased rates of students reach their potential; and (3) parents play an essential role in the program. The program appears to have had a significant positive impact on students' attitudes, aspirations, and preparation for going to college. Perhaps largely as a result of these factors, program students enrolled in college at a higher rate than nonprogram students (84% compared to 75%). Similarly, the high level of family involvement in the students' education is attributed by the evaluators to the various meaningful ways by which parents are included in program activities, and to the counselors' and mentors' ability to communicate with the families in their own language.

The literature we reviewed on this program presents a strikingly different conceptualization of the program's goals and participants. Neither the students, counselors, nor mentors are depicted as culturally deficient, nor is the program itself described as an effort to remedy perceived deficits, other than academic. The literature indicates that the program readily acknowledges the importance of maintaining cultural integrity in its services and design by enlisting the participation of culturally conscious counselors and mentors and by providing services in parents' native languages when necessary. Though the literature we reviewed on this program does not explicitly name a cultural wealth perspective, clearly it seems to adopt this kind of lens by, among other things, attempting to account for the importance of the participants' lived experiences as a basis for learning. It describes the goals of the program as deliberate efforts to recognize the value of students' cultures of origin while simultaneously enriching their academic preparation.

Program 4: Summer Bridge Program

This type of program is most often available to students of color from low-income households who have expressed interest in attending college but lack the resources for doing so (Gándara, 2001; Myers & Schirm, 1999). The program is structured around 4- to 6-week summer workshops that are hosted by a college campus and provide students with an academically intensive precollege experience. The program is often coupled with supplemental academic courses and tutoring, cultural events, and career/college/financial aid counseling. While it does provide some culturally oriented services, it is most often recognized predominantly as an academic preparation effort (Myers & Schirm, 1999).

Myers and Schirm (1999) observed that this program appears to have its greatest impact on students who are most in financial need and does not appear to have very much of an impact on improving academic performance. While this program did not demonstrate a significant impact on college enrollment rates for all students, it did seem to benefit students who were from low-income households, whose parents had not gone to college, and who had previously been the poorest performers in school.

Even though this is one of the longest-supported programs in the United States, organizational models and functions seem to be vastly different between the regions in which the programs exist. For example, at some campuses, the 6-week summer bridge component incorporates formal culture-based courses (such as Chicana/o History or the African American Experience) alongside an introductory algebra course or an English composition class. At other campuses, the emphasis is strictly academic, with almost no focus on students' cultural identities. Thus, it is difficult to assess or generalize the success of this program in integrating cultural enrichment activities with academic

achievement. What is clear is that a cultural capital approach that adopts a cultural deficit-based premise to designing its services or evaluating its effectiveness will likely fail to address many of the students' more relevant needs.

CONCLUSION

Our review reveals suggestive evidence that college preparation programs that have a focus on cultural enrichment *and* on the development of academic skills provide students with much-needed resources to enable them to attend college. The scant empirical work on the subject requires that we qualify our review of the evidence as merely suggestive rather than conclusive, though we concur strongly with the observations of important scholars in this area who agree that the most effective programs are those that include both academic and cultural components (see Gándara, 2001; Hagedorn & Tierney, 2002; Jun & Tierney, 1999; Kezar, 2000b; Oesterreich, 2000b; Perna, 2000).

Programs that only emphasize cultural enrichment strategies, while probably quite helpful, may offer only part of the solution. On the other hand, programs that utilize only academic services leave many of the most crucial life issues unaddressed for students of color (Kahne & Bailey, 1999). It is important to underscore that the real difference we found between college preparation programs was in the degree to which they emphasize culture deliberately to their advantage. Some programs appear to be very conscious of the benefits accrued from integrating a cultural enrichment emphasis with their academics, while others seem to be less aware or interested in placing much of an authentic focus on the students' culture.

In sum, the most significant findings resulting from our literature review are as follows.

College preparation programs framed by a focus on cultural wealth and academic skills development can have a substantial impact on college enrollment rates of underrepresented students. Even though these programs do not have a consistent effect on high school grades, students who have participated in them have demonstrated enrollment rates that are nearly twice as high as those of their peers who are not involved in such programs (Gándara, 2002a; Horn & Chen, 1998). Programs that can effectively incorporate both of these approaches can have an important influence on students' rates of college enrollment (Gandara, 2001).

Programs must be tailored to meet students' needs. While many programs may include some aspects of students' culture within their strategies, it is important that they continue to respond to individual needs to allow students to maintain and capitalize on their own cultural wealth. Hagedorn and Tierney (2002) note that "students approach school with multiple identities and if pro-

grams are to be successful they need to honor these identities in culturally specific ways so that learning fits" (p. 6). In other words, the implementation of generic cultural components may not be the best way to serve the heterogeneous student composition (even among the same race or ethnicity) of each precollege program. Programs should be developed based on the identified needs of specific students (Gándara & Maxwell-Jolly, 1999; Swail & Perna, 2002) and, since different students have different needs, different programs will need to be created to serve them (Jun & Tierney, 1999). Indeed, no one program can be considered a panacea for all students because there are so many divergent needs to be met and because of the large heterogeneous cultural composition of many college preparation programs (Swail, 2001b). Particularly important when considering students' needs is an understanding of how gender and culture intersect. While the empirical body of work around this important intersection is virtually silent, it is imperative that future studies take into account how women and men experience college preparation programs in order to ensure that programs meet their needs more adequately.

College preparation programs that provide a diverse array of components are most effective. The factors influencing college enrollment behavior between White students and students of color are different. While academic preparation tends to have the biggest impact on White students, more than any other factor, African American and Latino/a students have demonstrated a greater need for the acquisition of the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the college application process (Perna, 2000a). Thus, it is impossible for a college preparation program to identify one or two factors that will have a profound universal impact on college enrollment rates for all students, since students are each affected by different factors based on their racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and/or educational backgrounds.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Unfortunately, the single most important finding in our review was that not much empirical research has been published on the role of culture in college preparation programs. Most of the work we located was exhortative, and many of the evaluations and studies lacked methodological rigor in their design. As noted by Swail (2001b) and Tierney (2002), the evaluation of college preparation programs has proven to be a difficult task due to the lack of an overall schema consistently used in evaluating programs and because the evaluations are frequently carried out by untrained personnel.

There is an immediate need for research in this area that utilizes theoretical/conceptual lenses that do not presume that students of color are culturally deficient. We have proposed one such framework that views students' culture

as having multiple assets, or as a form of wealth. Future research should consider how best to design college preparation programs that account for the role of the poor schooling that students of color are often exposed to.

Finally, to more directly answer the question that guided this review: *To what extent is it essential for college preparation programs to emphasize the culture of the student in order to enable her or him to get into a college or university*? Well, it depends. Even though the contradictory and elusive nature of the empirical research does not presently allow us to state that it is indeed *essential* to emphasize the culture of the student, we believe that more appropriate theoretical lenses that guide future research on the topic will provide more definitive evidence about the importance of students' culture in college preparation programs. At this point, our review leads us to conclude that the research only provides suggestive, though quite important, evidence of the value of emphasizing students' culture in order to enable them to attend college.

NOTE

1. For the purposes of this chapter, we define students of color as persons who identify as African American, Native American, Asian American, and Chicana(o)/Latina(o).