

Introduction

[College graduation] will mean a lot [brief pause] I think about it every day, ever since I started college. Just being the first generation not only to go but also to finish. It's a good feeling; thinking about all of the things I had to go through until now. It's going to be a bittersweet feeling because of all the great people that I met along the way.

—Jamal

If I don't graduate from college, the relationships I built, what is that gon' say to my son? What is that gon' say about me? Who's to say I don't start questioning myself like that? It's not the end of the world. Might be the beginning of hell [laughs in amusement], but it's not the end of the world.

—Michael

Stakes Is High is about a select group of young Black men's educational experiences, their lives, and how they make sense of their pathways to and through college.¹ The eight young men whose lives make up this book all attended Ellis Academy (pseudonym), an all-male college preparatory secondary school located in a major urban city in the United States. My seven-year longitudinal study, which I began during the summer prior to when they started college, includes a retrospective view of their secondary school years and their meaning making throughout their postsecondary experiences.² In this multiphase study, I began by investigating their pathways to college, from their aspirations and the messages they received to their secondary schooling experiences, which

laid the groundwork for contextualizing and understanding their post-secondary schooling experiences.

During their secondary school years, the majority of these young men resided within or in close proximity to the school neighborhood. They primarily relied on public transportation in traveling to and from school and, as I have discussed in other published work, their secondary school years were complicated by interactions and challenges with people in the neighborhood. As one of the young men noted, in reflecting on navigating the neighborhood, “It was tough, it was difficult, it was a tough neighborhood—everybody don’t make it out. You have those that make it out, they come back and don’t make it out again. And you have those that make it out and don’t ever come back.”³ In addition, the secondary school they attended can be described as a counterhegemonic space where the culture of the school was centered on affirming Black boys.

Regarding the young men’s backgrounds, six young men lived with their mothers as the primary caretaker and adult in their household, one lived with both his parents, and one lived with a great-aunt and great-uncle who served as guardians. All the young men have siblings, ranging in number from two to seven; seven of the young men self-identified as low-income; and seven were first-generation college students (based on their parents’ degree attainment). I spent nearly 150 hours formally interviewing these eight young men over the course of this study and countless hours more communicating, checking in, and continuing conversations about a range of topics. As shown in their narratives in the previous epigraphs and the chapters that follow, all the young men thought about college to some extent, whether they aspired to go to college prior to attending, considered pursuing their athletic interests during their future college years, or devised strategies for completing college once enrolled. Their early thoughts about college were grounded in their lived experiences and the knowledge they developed during their adolescent years.

The stakes for Black boys and young men are both paradoxical and complex. Given the ways in which young Black men are repositioned in wider US society—namely, being marked as problems, considered to be in crisis, projected as oppositional, and relegated as disposable—they often are deterred from and placed at odds with educational success. At the same time, given the general and government-supported importance placed on college degree attainment (e.g., which endorses “college for all”),⁴ they are pushed to achieve educationally while also being systematically blocked

from what is held up as the ticket to long-term success in the United States. Whether through instructional design and curriculum, teachers' perceptions and beliefs about their abilities, or school-based policies and practices (e.g., discipline or selections for gifted education), Black boys and young men enter school buildings at risk of stereotyping, profiling, and being in trouble. They bear the brunt of generic educational expectations and are accosted by ideologies of meritocracy that both suggest and presume that they don't care about education. Too often, they are placed out of relationship with many school personnel and positioned beyond the school's caring networks. Moreover, they often are buried under the weight of a single story, a homogenized narrative, that predicts and expects educational failure.⁵

In this research project, I wanted to learn how these young men made sense of getting to college. Once they were in college, I talked with them at multiple points across their years there to explore their academic, social, and personal experiences. I explored their perspectives and experiences in real time, allowed them to lead the direction of various portions of our conversations based on some of their experiences and what they offered, and, as can be seen from the statements by Jamal and Michael, which open the chapter, I asked them to look forward and offer their point of view about future experiences and events, such as college graduation. Most importantly, in the chapters that follow, I situate my conversations with these young Black men with respect to their Blackmaleness—the combined impact of their racialized and gendered identities. Blackmaleness reflects the gendered racism that Black boys and men experience because of the ways that they are repositioned into the lower rungs of society, considered and treated as disposable, constructed as a perpetual threat, misread and misperceived in intentional and unforgiving ways, are susceptible to heightened levels of surveillance and secondary policing, and simultaneously experience hypervisibility and invisibility.⁶ In other words, I take account of how their Black male racialized-gendered identities matter in their social relations, interactions, and representations—in their lived experiences in general and, more specifically, in their “desire to achieve against the odds,” which education scholar Heidi Safia Mirza refers to as *educational urgency*, in their schooling efforts.⁷

Jamal, as he looked ahead to his anticipated educational accomplishments, considered and thought about his college years and future graduation through the lens of his lived experiences—“all of the things

I had to go through until now.” Throughout his college years, Jamal experienced frustration and anxiety due to academic challenges, had to contend with several instances of overt and passive anti-Black racism on campus, and battled with racial microaggressions and disparaging stereotypes specifically because of his Black male identities. These experiences, which were both consistent and ongoing, shook his academic confidence and undermined his sense of belonging in college. Thus, Jamal’s point that he had thought about college graduation “every day, ever since I started college” speaks to the range of these experiences (and others), provides insight into his sense of educational urgency and offers a glimpse into the potency of these young men’s narratives. Jamal was both tired and determined. He felt burdened by the lowered expectations placed on him and the stereotypes held about him—and other young Black men. At the same time, however, because of the wealth of his community, he received significant positive support along the way and felt empowered to accomplish his educational goals.⁸

Both similarly and differently, Michael’s educational urgency is evident in how he thinks about his ongoing efforts and educational focus. He thought about his educational endeavors and potential future graduation as testimonies to his sense of worth that not only mattered to himself, especially given the trials and tribulations he experienced through his educational journey, but also to his family because of his first-generation college status, and in particular to his son. In one of our conversations, Michael shared his belief that going to college could help change the history and trajectory of his family—both economically and in future opportunities. Given this heightened importance of college and what it could mean, he had internalized familial pressure and responsibility for attending college and also hoped to count graduation as one of his educational accomplishments. For each of the young men in this study, education was valued highly and their sense of its value was rooted deeply in their families and communities. As I show in the following chapters, in fact, the value they placed on education escalated through their experiences, the support and messages they received, and the educational investments they made as well. As a result, educational attainment mattered greatly to how they thought about themselves. Additionally, they calculated their future college graduation as an accomplishment that was both for and attributable to their families and communities. That is, the importance of education in these young men’s lives and narratives encompassed a drive for cultural, generational, and social change that was inseparable from their Blackness.

Stakes Is High relies on the authentic lived experiences, choices, decisions, and meaning making of young Black men to understand their lifeworlds, especially in relation to education. I use the phrase “Stakes Is High” as the title of this text for a number of reasons. First, and importantly, this phrase comes directly from these young men’s sense making. Second, as we discussed in a number of our conversations, they shared that they personally had a lot invested in and depending on their educational attainment, of which completing college was paramount. Third, and relatedly, stakes are high because of the ways that their aspirations and goals were embedded in their relationships; they discussed education as a shared value and something of collective importance to their families and communities. In addition, beyond their own desires, I use the phrase in several other ways: (1) to call attention to the daily realities of these young men’s lives; (2) to connect these realities to the choices and decisions they make and to some of the decisions made and perspectives held about them; and (3) to acknowledge the range of their knowledge and understandings, all of which can contribute to their current and future experiences, challenges, opportunities, and life outcomes. And, finally, I use the phrase to register the high stakes of research in helping to recognize these young men as experts and counter detrimental narratives about them, with researchers as fellow stakeholders in their representations and success.

These young men’s narratives help to reveal their experiential knowledge and serve as powerful counternarratives regarding how young Black men value education, the critical importance of their goals and efforts, and the worth they see and appreciate in their own selves and their lives. I use the young men’s narratives and experiences to ground each chapter of this book, primarily because I see these young men as experts on their own lives and experiences. That is, I wanted to provide space to help bring these young men’s narratives forward and allow them opportunities to make sense and meaning from their own experiences and perspectives. Some of the questions that guided this study included: How do these young Black men account for their pathways to college? How do they make sense of their secondary schooling experiences in relation to their aspirations and expectations for college? How do their Black male identities impact their educational journeys and experiences? What challenges have they experienced, how do they make sense of these, and what efforts did they undertake in trying to respond to or overcome them? Finally, in what ways do education, in general, and college, in particular, matter to their lives, their families, and their futures?

I pay particular attention to the lessons these young men extract from their efforts, decisions, trials, and triumphs during their educational journeys from secondary school to college. This research is set in the United States, and it is concerned with how these young men aspire to, prepare for, navigate, and negotiate college through critical personal strivings. I use a critical race methodological approach in this study to present research and findings grounded in young Black men's experiences, knowledge, and worldviews.⁹ This research is not simply about pushing back against the oft-cited and misguided perspective that prescribes deficits to Black youth. In this approach, I use these young men's experiences and stories as counternarratives that powerfully affirm their lives and humanity. I describe and examine the resourcefulness and commitment of these young Black men in forging their futures and demonstrate how their aspirations, communities, and efforts help keep them on their pathways to and through college. These young men's narratives must be presented as counternarratives because they run against the dominant stories often told about Black boys and young men and their education. In relying on and interrogating these young men's narratives, I aim to reveal their self-empowerment, sense of agency, and growing clarity about the role of education in their lives.

Counternarratives are an important element of critical race methodologies, as they are grounded in experiential knowledge. According to critical race theory (CRT) scholars Daniel Solórzano and Tara Yosso, CRT "recognizes that the experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination."¹⁰ In this book, counternarratives are employed to serve three key functions. First, they are critically useful as a way to expose and disrupt dominant racial ideologies. Second, they can be understood at multiple levels: the individual, the institutional, and the societal.¹¹ Importantly, in this realm, they can extend the understanding of personal or individual experience, such as Black boys' and young men's experiences, and help examine how racism operates through systems of privilege and power, especially in educational domains. Finally, counternarratives also provide an opportunity to interrogate the status quo and privilege that lie at the heart of dominant narratives, especially when juxtaposed with counternarratives.¹²

In giving name to educational urgency and explicating the ways in which it appears, is nurtured and pursued, and is deployed and revealed in the young men's narratives shared throughout this book, I underscore

a critical heuristic lens—that is, how these young Black men discover and learn for themselves—through which to both view and understand their lives and their pathways to and through college. The narratives offered throughout this book help exhibit young Black men’s knowledge and help recenter and give voice to their epistemologies and ways of knowing. As Solórzano and Yosso contended, “If methodologies have been used to silence and marginalize people of color, then methodologies can also give voice and turn the margins into places of transformative resistance.”¹³

Focusing on Black Boys’ and Young Men’s Education—and Lives

Success is often held up as the goal of education, though what success is supposed to entail can vary. In this research project, I wanted young Black men to define and characterize their own understandings of “success,” to narrate their experiences through their own interpretative lenses (as I generally followed their lead on where their narratives took us during our conversations), and to make sense of their decisions, choices, and experiences along the way. Overarchingly, I wanted success to be determined in their own terms and through their own lives. My understanding of my own success as a researcher was centered on trying to discern what these young men thought about themselves personally and also what they wanted to achieve educationally and in their professional pursuits postcollege. That is, I wanted to get a deep sense of what success meant and looked like and how it mattered in their lives. I also wanted to understand how education mattered in their lives by using college as the primary focus. Thus, it was integral to the research design and focus to rely on young Black men’s sense of empowerment and allow space for them to be experts about their own lives and educational experiences.

There are two discernible, and disturbing, patterns in ongoing conversations about Black youth’s schooling experiences.¹⁴ First, there is a hyperfocus on those students who do less well in school as it relates to outcomes (e.g., graduation). For instance, a range of conversations center on Black men’s departure from college as a basis for projecting their lack of educational seriousness and abilities. Some of this focus relates to oppositional culture, “cool masculinity,” and academic deficiencies. Second, for those young people who do perform well, stories and

discussions about them often rely on exceptionalizing their experiences. For instance, in a recent story about Hazim Hardeman's educational accomplishments and resilience in becoming a Rhodes scholar, reporter Susan Snyder noted that his path "was sinuous, improbable, the kind of story usually reserved for Hollywood scriptwriters."¹⁵ This characterization of Hardeman's experiences can, in some cases, be likened to the ways in which Black youth's aspirations and achievements are narrated in ways that are "unseen" or more of the daily unexpectedness.¹⁶ Instead, I affirm and echo sentiments asserted by education scholar Ivory Toldson: "When you truly know Black males, you expect their brilliance, rather than be surprised by it."¹⁷

If Black boys and men's educational accomplishments are "improbable" and attractive as Hollywood scripts, then by contrast their lack of achievement seems both expected and normative. This "normativity" or expectation of failure informs too many narratives that are peddled constantly about Black boys' and young men's lives and experiences, reinforces the status quo and the same old stories about them, and simultaneously neglects their needs and denies them educational opportunities. Instead of focusing on an individual undertaking as *the* story, what is more remarkable, exceptional, and overwhelmingly unnamed and underexamined in their experiences is the staunch anti-Black racism that confronts them in multiple facets of their lives. By anti-Black racism, I mean the numerous ways in which racial oppression against Blacks is both systemic and central to the US social order, being carried out in both logic and ideology as well as within and across social institutions (e.g., schools, criminal justice, etc.). The brutalities inflicted upon Black life stem from the violence and terrors in both the historical and present record, from colonization to enslavement to the present, that informs the condemnation and subjugation of Blackness. Further, anti-Blackness is predicated on Blacks' structurally antagonistic relationship with humanity as they constantly (and seemingly perpetually) are rendered as both "other" and nonhuman.¹⁸

As opposed to supporting such dominant narratives regarding Black boys' and men's "improbable" accomplishments, which are inherently anti-Black, we must ask: What barriers exist that delimit their achievement at higher levels? And why are people continuously surprised by their educational achievements and accomplishments and their intellectual and personal brilliance? Unless we're willing to ask these kinds of questions, Black boys will continue to face significant and undue inequities

in their educational experiences. Likewise, if we are not serious about improving their educational opportunities and life experiences, then the dominant narratives about and framings of them and the “surprise” about their accomplishments will continue to persist. As opposed to hailing the exception and pitying (or punishing) those who do not achieve at such levels, greater interrogations and analyses are needed of the ideologies, policies, and practices that (re)produce the status quo, limit their opportunities, and increase the stakes of their educational experiences. Moreover, given their firsthand understanding that “stakes is high,” the young men whose narratives comprise this book are living testaments to their hopes, aspirations, resistance, resilience, brilliance, and transformation. While they represent themselves as individuals, they are also representative of the type of knowledge and understanding we can gain when we center, listen to, and learn from Black boys and young men as they make sense of their own lives—as opposed to relying on the same old stories to tell us, and them, who they are.

Scores of Black men and boys are quite aware of the deficit-laden narratives that surround and delimit not only their educational opportunities but also their lives. I stand with education scholar Bianca Baldrige in the need for “relocating the deficit” and others who see, understand, and appreciate the brilliance and gifts of Black youth.¹⁹ During various conversations, each of the young men in this study discussed how they were confronted and accosted on numerous occasions, in their youth and young adult years, by anti-Black racism, symbolic and structural violence, and other people’s projections and denigrations of them and their possibilities. Thus, from an early age these young men had to develop a variety of skills and rely on various forms of knowledge and capital in order to manage and negotiate miseducation, negative messaging, stereotypical projections, and spirit murder (the general and specific disregard for their lives and the psychological trauma it produces), along with misrepresentations of them in their local communities, in educational settings, and in the media.²⁰ Importantly, then, the resilience, aspirations, determination, and resistance that these young men developed, sharpened, and called on over the course of their schooling did not simply occur in schools but also through their lives beyond school. That is, their lived experiences in general undoubtedly shaped their schooling experiences. In addition, their sense-making ability and the lessons that they deduced from their lived experiences in and beyond school also helped them develop and enhance their educational urgency.

Part of the motivation in writing this book is to allow space for young Black men to offer their own narratives about their lives and education—their aspirations, experiences, missteps, triumphs, and lessons. Core to my effort is focusing on Black boys' and men's *possibilities*—which centers the promise and potential of Black youth as learners, doers, and achievers and as individuals who are capable of accomplishing their educational and personal goals. The idea of possibilities also honors their resistance, recognizes the beauty and brilliance of who they are already, and appreciates and celebrates their becoming.²¹ The basic premise of this study is centered on the question, Who would know or articulate young Black men's educational journeys and experiences better than themselves? Thus, like other CRT scholars, I see and understand these young men's narratives to be born out of their experiential knowledge, simultaneous forms of resistance and affirmation, and the centrality of race and racism within their experiences. As Hazim Hardeman, the recent Rhodes scholar from Philadelphia, discussed in an opinion piece, one's knowledge of their experiences is a powerful tool that can inform their educational trajectory. In reflecting on his life and experiences, he explained, "This awareness has caused me to be sensitive about how I narrate my story. What I seek to reject, at every turn, is a narrative in which my individual success magically alchemizes into the dissolution of the barriers that makes my story the exception to the rule."²²

Similarly, my inquiries into these young men's lives, thoughts, and educational experiences are neither simply concerned with nor solely informed by schooling. As a way to honor and in an attempt to understand these young men's educational narratives, it remains important for me to "know" them. By "know," I mean to consider their educational experiences beyond school walls and understand that knowledge is developed and harbored significantly through one's life experiences. By "know," I also mean to spend time with, develop relational proximity with, be willing to both listen and hear, and, just as important, seek to understand their lives and experiences through discerning and reflecting on my own. Several aspects of my own identities and experiences are prominent in this research as well. I approached my study as a youth worker, as a former secondary school history teacher and athletic coach, as an individual who continues to serve and volunteer in Black communities in several locales, and as a Black man who mentors and works with many Black boys and men and other young adults of color. The position I hold, then, is based on my own lived experiences inside and

outside the classroom in addition to my experiences teaching, coaching, mentoring, learning, and interacting with Black boys and men in this manner over the course of my professional career.

It is important to note that I took a longitudinal approach in this study because I wanted to learn about these young men's experiences over a course of time that allowed space for critical reflections, sense making, and understanding—all through multiple experiences. That is, the narratives that these young men offer are dynamic and were collected over numerous conversations. In getting to know them, I spent time with them in their own domains even at times when I did not “interview” them, I did not ask questions about their schooling experiences, and I did not ask them to make sense of their experiences and decisions. As a result, even as I discuss what they shared and what I learned from them, this is all within a broader context of developing deep relationships and connections and a meaningful knowledge.

In considering the multiple (potential) contributions that Black youth offer us, counternarratives provide important and much needed space for their own truths, reasonings, and accounts. Indeed, what we must ask and reckon with is twofold: What is lost? And what are the costs of continuously silencing, denying, and ignoring Black life, Black struggle, Black triumph, Black progress, Black narratives? As the preeminent scholar W. E. B. Du Bois pointed out more than a century ago, the global history of Black people is one of strife.²³ And, as we connect this strife to the educational realm, all too often education is and continues to be a site where Black youth suffer from anti-Black racism and anti-Black state violence. Whether the speakers describe being subject to miseducation, whether they “wanna holler and throw up both their hands,” whether they imagine school is “like being a soldier in Iraq,” whether they feel as though it is them “against the world,” or whether they use resilience and capital to “transform school failure” into success, Black youth's narratives about their schooling experiences offer rich and critical insights about the conditions of education and the need for fundamental change and improvement.²⁴ More specifically, in this work, there is a great deal to learn from Black boys and young men as they counter, resist, and recover from the conspiracies and attempts to destroy them.²⁵

In many ways, some different and some similar, as it relates to their knowledge and epistemologies and other ways of knowing, the narratives of the young men in the current study are powerful, insightful, and necessary to be heard. These young men have learned valuable lessons about

loving and valuing themselves, leaning on their communities for personal and educational support, and trusting their experience to make sense of their lives. The struggles that the young men discussed throughout our conversations are academic, personal, familial, and communal; at the same time their struggles also are intergenerational. All too often Black boys' and men's lives, opportunities, and possibilities are limited on a continual basis across an array of social institutions (including schools) and public spaces. These realities make Black boys' and men's narratives that much more necessary and valuable in discerning and understanding how they think about their lives, themselves, and their experiences. Additionally, their narratives serve as much needed tools that can help dismantle and resist anti-Black sentiments, deficit-laden inquiries and ideologies, and lowered projections and underappreciation of who they are. As I discuss throughout this book, for the young Black men included in this study, their educational pursuits and experiences provided them with valuable lessons about their lives, livelihoods, and futures.

Overview of the Book

This book investigates three core issues regarding young Black men's pathways to and through college and their educational experiences. Black young men's educational experiences are a major area of research focus, given what they reveal about institutions and Black boys' and men's possibilities. Chapter 1 serves three primary purposes. First, I examine several critical reflections from the young men in this study to provide insight into their meaning making, theorizing, and interiorities. These reflections are related to their sense making about recent and ongoing events (such as the police killings of Black boys and men) and their Black male racialized-gendered identities. Second, I very briefly explore some of the salient literature on Black boys and men's educational experiences, with primacy given to their college years. This portion is offered as a way to contextualize their educational experiences. And, finally, I use the last portion of the chapter to detail how these young men's lives and narratives inform the theoretical approaches used in the study, which include critical race theory and the concept of educational urgency. I blend these two constructs to analyze these young men's experiences and meaning making and to provide new narratives about young Black men and education.

In discussing their educational experiences, I divide the following chapters into three parts. Part 1 (chapters 2–4) focuses on their secondary schooling experiences. Chapters 2 and 3 investigate the young men’s precollege years and their pathways to college. Chapter 2 explores the young men’s educational aspirations in the context of challenges they faced within their own and the school’s neighborhood. Most prominently, the young men discuss their college aspirations as being motivated by trying and wanting to get out of the neighborhood. In this realm, some of their college aspirations align with what education scholar Tara Yosso conceptualizes as aspirational capital (the ability to hold onto hope in the face of structured inequality).²⁶ In discerning and discussing their pathways to college in chapter 3, the young men give tremendous credit to their families and communities as driving forces for their aspirations and critical hope. In this chapter, I examine experiences that sparked their sense of empowerment and agency in addition to various messages they received and internalized about their potential. These young men give credence to various family members for their ongoing words of encouragement and high expectations for their educational pursuits. Also, they speak to the power of their community, especially their peers and school personnel, in supporting and encouraging their college aspirations. In discussing their reflections across these two chapters, I lay the groundwork and provide a context for these young men’s educational urgency.

Chapter 4 focuses on the young men’s reflections about attending a college preparatory secondary school. The goal here was to understand how they made meaning from various school- and academic-related experiences. In a sense, I focus on what the young men identify as most salient in supporting their aspirations and college going. Across their narratives, they discuss the strategies they developed and deployed, the support and messages they received, and how they internalized some of the lessons learned from and through their experiences. This chapter helps show the bridges between their aspirations and ideas about college with specific information, knowledge, and preparation they received.

In part 2 (chapters 5–8) I focus on these young men’s collegiate experiences. Chapters 5 and 6 pay particular attention to a range of challenges that the young men experienced during their early college years. In chapter 5, I hone in on their academic struggles and the ways in which their academic confidence, sense of belonging, and sense of self were shaken, undermined, and strained. By exploring their early experiences, I uncover their transition strategies and their efforts to meet

the academic demands of college. Through these experiences, I also shed light on their mindsets and sense of self. Chapter 6 examines how the young men pursued their educational and personal goals, even as they faced a number of unforeseen challenges. Some of these challenges are related to race and class, while others are much more personal and social. The challenges discussed across both chapters help provide a context for better appreciating the young men's various forms of capital as well as their resilience and educational urgency.

Chapters 7 and 8 build on the discussion from the previous two chapters and amplify the young men's pursuits and self-learning through their college experiences. Primarily, I investigate their notions of success, how they account for the successes they achieved during their college years, and what these experiences mean for their sense of self. I discuss the young men's interiorities to provide greater depth and insight into who they are, and I examine their sense of self-empowerment, which is birthed in and matured through their experiences. I connect this discussion to these young men's educational urgency and also tie their educational desires to their families and communities.

In part 3 (chapters 9 and 10) I hone in on the major themes and critical takeaways from this project. Chapter 9 summarizes the major findings offered within the book and considers how Black boys' and men's educational narratives matter. In this chapter, I revisit and give considerable attention to their collective discussions of the stakes of their educational experiences and their meaning making. In doing so, I bring together some parts of their narratives discussed throughout the book into a concerted focus, place them in conversation with each other, and relate them to the trials and concerns that proved prominent in their experiences. This discussion amplifies their theorizing and sense making and allows for understanding their educational desires with greater precision and insight. Through it centers on some of the more salient challenges of their educational journeys, chapter 10 serves as the conclusion and offers several recommendations. I combine micro- and macro-level views of the young men's efforts and discuss the need to restructure conditions and opportunities for greater successes.