Who Makes the Transition to College? Why We Should Care, What We Know, and What We Need to Do

VIVIAN LOUIE

Harvard University

Background/Context: In the last several decades, a college education, in particular the bachelor’s degree, has become the key to higher earnings, and overall, to a middle-class lifestyle in the United States. In an increasingly globalized economy, privileging information and communication technologies, it is more than likely that this emphasis on higher education in the American labor market will continue in the future. While we know much about the increasing link between a college education and social mobility, writ large, we know considerably less about who actually makes the transition to college, how this occurs, and why. Despite the strides made, large numbers of individuals are not making the transition to college. Among those who are, there are important differences in the kinds of postsecondary institutions they are attending, and in completion rates, with attendant implications for social mobility.

Purpose: This article has two purposes: (1) to synthesize the key facets of our knowledge base of how to expand the college pipeline and relatedly, to outline particular areas that have been under-examined across the disciplines; (2) to provide future directions that will allow us to better address this important inquiry along substantive and methodological lines.

Research Design: This article draws on disciplinary papers commissioned by the Social Science Research Council’s Transitions to College Committee. The discussion of preparation is framed around the contributions from the fields of anthropology, and political science; access vis-à-vis history, sociology, and demography; paying for college vis-à-vis economics; and completion vis-à-vis the field of higher education.

Conclusions/Recommendations: The article calls for an overall integrative model, e.g., K-16 and interdisciplinary, improved coverage in large-scale datasets, and a more refined mixed methods approach to attend to notable gaps in our understandings of the transition to college. Across disciplines, a key substantive gap is variation along the lines of race, ethnicity, immigrant status, gender, and age across domains, which needs to be illuminated.
Never in American history has the transition to college been as significant as it is today. In the last 30 years, a college education, in particular the bachelor’s degree, has become the key to higher earnings, and overall, to a middle-class lifestyle in the United States. In an increasingly globalized economy, privileging information and communication technologies, it is more than likely that this emphasis on higher education in the American labor market will continue in the future.

While we know much about the increasing link between a college education and social mobility, writ large, we know considerably less about who actually makes the transition to college, how this occurs, and why. The American system of education, both K-12 and postsecondary—as I will show, the two are closely aligned in under-examined ways, with the pipeline to higher education substantially grounded in the K-12 system—is large, complex, and serves increasingly diverse populations. Yet, large numbers of individuals are not making the transition to college. Among those who are, there are important differences in the kinds of postsecondary institutions they are attending, and in completion rates, with attendant implications for social mobility.

The existing research has clearly shown that ascriptive individual-level characteristics such as race and socioeconomic status combined with institutional factors, including the quality and social climate of K-12 and postsecondary schooling, are the answer. It is how that occurs, specifically, how the individual negotiates and is received by the educational system, to become prepared for, get access to, obtain financing for, and complete college, that remains unanswered. In short, we need a more complex framework to understand how inequalities in these processes have been and continue to be created. The goal of this special issue is to engage in this process, not to provide definitive answers, but to provide a roadmap towards developing a more useful framework.

None of this denies the strides that have been made in higher education. In fact, the idea that we should have universal higher education has only been with us since the 1960s, when the Civil Rights movement and related social movements ushered in equality of opportunity (see Gelber, this volume). The last 30 years have seen a measure of success in this regard, as evidenced by a dramatic rise in the number of institutions, along with enrollments, particularly among minorities, women, low-income students, and immigrants and their children, and in the availability of financial aid. Nonetheless, despite our popular conceptions surrounding higher education, and the policies enacted to promote access and completion, the pipeline to college continues to be blocked at critical junctures.

Even as the American educational system, from K-12 through higher
education, is arguably more inclusive than it has ever been, marginaliza-
tion and exclusion continue to exist. A student, who is by definition
included in the K-12 system by virtue of attending high school, can still
experience marginalization within that context. Such a process of inclu-
sion/marginalization, the focus of much anthropological education
inquiry, as Jill Koyama (this volume) cogently demonstrates, influences
preparation for college. Further, as so many of the authors in this volume
richly discuss, we have continued to build exclusionary practices around
preparation for, access to, paying for, and finishing college.

Consequently, those individuals who have the greatest need of the
returns to higher education today are often the ones who have the fewest
opportunities to tap into them. The goal of this chapter is to synthesize
the many insights of this volume’s disciplinary-based reviews to map out
what is known about the transition to college, what is not covered in the
extant literature, and where we need to be headed to increase our under-
standing of who makes the transition to college in the United States.

I will argue that the key to capturing the full complexities of this story
is developing better analytical tools—conceptually and methodologi-
cally—to answer the four questions that have framed our understanding
of the college pipeline. Each of the questions is crucial, and each builds
on the other.

• Who gets prepared for postsecondary schooling, and why?
• Who gets access to what form of postsecondary schooling, and why?
• How do we pay for higher education?
• What contributes to two-year and four-year degree completion?

If we do not act to find more nuanced answers to these questions, we
risk fundamental social and economic costs at several levels. Forty years
after the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, a his-
toric initiative designed to reduce differences in the quality of education
and the schooling outcomes of Black and White children, the achieve-
ment gap, as measured in types of schools attended and test scores, for
example, continues to persist along the lines of race and class. Moreover,
researchers are still trying to chart the educational trajectories of post-
1965 immigrants and their children. The last 40 years have seen the
resumption of large-scale immigration to the United States, incorporat-
ing individuals from diverse national, racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic
backgrounds. It remains unclear how this contemporary story of immi-
granting will complicate existing inequalities around the transition to col-
lege. Short of new policies, however, it is clear that only a fraction of our
population will gain the education and skills needed to join the middle class.

Such a scenario leads to the second domain, namely, the potentially grim consequences for our national economic well-being. Without a highly skilled, technologically sophisticated, and educated workforce, the United States faces losing its competitive edge in the global arena at a time when knowledge has become a determining factor in the wealth of nations. So far, the immigration of the highly skilled and highly educated to the United States, for example, the brain drain, has helped us avoid this fate. International students, however, are no longer exclusively flocking to the United States, and among those who do study here, an increasing number are deciding to return to their countries of origin rather than permanently settling here. Without the import of highly skilled talent, the economic well-being of the United States will instead be tightly linked to the development of its own domestic talent, a shift that makes matters relating to college preparation, access, financing, and success ever more important (Grissmer, 2005).

Finally, there are potentially important consequences to our national self-identity. The United States has historically prided itself as a nation in which social mobility is uniquely possible, as compared to other nations; hence, the term, the American Dream (Hochschild, 1995; Newman, 1999; Scott & Leonhardt, 2005). However, if inequalities around the transition to college increasingly serve as an important lever of stratification, as seems likely, then there is potential for a fault line in how we think about and believe in the American Dream. It is conceivable that a blocked opportunity structure might eventually be seen as normalized in the United States, rather than as an exception to the rule. Put another way, we risk alienation from the American Dream as something to even hope to translate into reality. In sum, research and policy on who makes the transition to college in the United States map the future course of our nation in very important ways: namely, group-level differences in who is achieving mobility, and who is not; what this means for our national well-being on the global stage; and what this means for how we think about ourselves as a nation, and the role of equality therein.

In this essay, I have two goals. My first goal is to synthesize the key facets of our knowledge base of how to expand the college pipeline. This charting of the knowledge base is both a discussion of social processes as well as outcomes, as the two are inextricably linked. Drawing on the insights of reports prepared for the Social Science Research Council’s Transitions to College Committee, some of them included in this volume, I argue that our existing research paradigms, while useful, are limited in speak-
ing to why these gaps exist, how they are experienced, and what we can do to reduce them. This speaks to my second goal, which is to provide future directions that will allow us to better address this important inquiry along substantive and methodological lines. That said, I should note that the individual contributors provide fine discussions of the lacunae in coverage within their individual disciplines. My purpose is more to synthesize central areas that have been under-examined across the disciplines.

This chapter is thus structured accordingly: In the first section, I discuss preparation, vis-à-vis anthropological research; access vis-à-vis history, sociology, and demography; paying for college vis-à-vis economics; and completion vis-à-vis the field of higher education. In my discussion of each of the four areas of the college pipeline, I will close with some thoughts on policy implications. Two points should be noted: First, I focus on how each essay relates to the particular domain in which I have situated them (e.g., preparation), although each touches upon all four areas. Second, the ordering of the disciplines is not meant to privilege one or one subset over the other, but rather, serves as more of a heuristic device. As I will demonstrate, each discipline brings a particular and valuable set of lenses to bear on the subject. In the second section, I set forth an overall theoretical frame for future inquiry, for example, an integrative model that bridges domains and disciplines to tap into the multiple complexities in the transition to college that have so far gone uncaptured. I conclude with a look at the range of methodologies that have been employed to examine who makes the transition to college, what they tell us, and what we need to be thinking about as we proceed further.

WHO GETS PREPARED FOR POSTSECONDARY SCHOOLING, AND WHY?

In this section, I will focus on the question of who gets prepared for postsecondary schooling. This is a question that necessarily involves discussion of the processes that influence academic preparation in K-12 for a successful transition to college, and the role of relevant stakeholders, namely, the school, family, community, and peer contexts.

*Anthropological perspectives: Culture, identification and belonging in schools*

Anthropologists of education have brought to the foreground how students experience K-12 schools, and in particular, the relationships therein to become prepared for postsecondary schooling. As Jill Koyama (this volume) identifies, a central concern for most anthropological
accounts, which focus on various units of analysis ranging from classroom interactions, a cohort of students, to a single school or community, is how students are situated and situate themselves in schools. The two processes are not necessarily the same, especially for those students who are disadvantaged due to class, race, or gender. This is because schools are themselves sites of contradiction: they offer promise of social mobility for students, but nonetheless often end up reproducing existing social inequalities.

Given the roots of anthropology, such inquiries have to do with matters of culture, namely, cultural capital (knowledge of how the U.S. educational system functions) and social capital (access to social networks that allow individuals to successfully negotiate the system). A limitation of previous studies was their focus on why low-income and/or minority parents did not interact with schools in the ways that middle-class White parents did. In the last two decades, the inquiry has shifted more to how disadvantages related to language fluency in English, culture, and social class can be bridged to facilitate more effective relations between families and schools around children’s education.

Another key shift in anthropological research on education has been the turning away from the “culture of poverty” argument that framed a mismatch between schooling institutions and low-income children, who were thought to suffer deficits in their home lives, towards a more nuanced exploration of institutions and systems as sites of capital to which children have unequal access. In these analyses, processes of marginalization, identification, and belonging within schools become central to preparation for the transition to college. In short, students that are engaged with the school they are attending are more likely to stay in school, do better academically, and consider college as an option. Conversely, students at the margins of school “are far more likely to disengage academically, to ‘resist’ schooling, and to forgo college attendance.” This sense of belonging occurs in what Koyama describes as “capital-rich settings”: for example, through connections made with teachers, college counselors, and staff (Valenzuela, 1999), through bridge programs, which are designed to bridge the gaps among the students’ existing knowledge base of how to get to college (and to finish), and through students in peer organizations, such as a migrant student club comprised of Mexican-descent high school students (Gibson, Bejínez, Hidalgo & Rolón, 2004), or in more informal peer groups (Brittain, 2002). Within these literal and symbolic spaces, students can find the necessary support to gain agency and thus, to promote engagement and achievement for one another.
It is important, however, not to associate agency exclusively with positive outcomes. Numerous studies have documented how students develop ideologies of resistance that culturally reproduce the class structure, and their place within it. Students already labeled by gatekeeping agents as disengaged or unlikely to achieve, can actively live up to those labels, rather than breaking free of them. Eckert’s (1989) analysis, for example, demonstrates how the “jocks” were socialized into thinking of themselves as integrated within the high school while the “burnouts” were socialized into viewing themselves as marginalized. Similarly, anthropological studies have shown that the labeling of students as “at risk” or “limited English-proficient” sets in motion a script not of the students own making, but one which they follow to the logical conclusion of academic underachievement.

Policy implications

In sum, while anthropologists emphasize macro considerations in preparation for college such as a sense of belonging within schools, they also acknowledge that one policy or theme might not fit all cases, and that further attention should be paid to particular school environments, and particular populations. There is also a need to focus more on the relationships between the individual student and family and institutions. Further research needs to investigate matters such as the informational blockages among the various stakeholders in K-12 schooling, which travel in multiple directions: teachers and administrators, who often do not know much about the family and neighborhood backgrounds of their students, and thus cannot tailor instruction or when necessary, intervention; and families, who lack knowledge of what their children are doing in school, and the relevant steps to completing K-12 and getting to college, and the consequences of missing out on those steps. There is a need to develop policies to foster a broader dialogue about the purposes and structure of schooling, the role of teachers and parents, and the very nature of appropriate discourse on these matters. As Lareau (1987; 2000), Lareau & Horvat (1999) and others have shown us, there is not a single uniform picture in these dimensions, either. What might be taken as commonsense understanding that “schools do this,” or “teachers do that,” may actually vary among parents according to social class, race, ethnicity, and immigrant status in important ways.
WHO GETS ACCESS TO WHAT FORM OF POSTSECONDARY SCHOOLING, AND WHY?

In this section, I will address the issue of stratification as it relates to the question of who gets access to postsecondary schooling, to which form, and at what point in the life course.

*History: Postsecondary school stratification, past and present*

As Gelber (this volume) maps out so well, historians look to the past to understand how “prior discrimination has shaped current inequalities in educational access and achievement.” The strength of the historiography of access has been the attention paid to the rise of postsecondary institutional stratification, and who is attending the various tiered schools, especially with regards to women, working-class individuals and immigrants, White ethnics, African-Americans, Latino/as, Asian-Americans, and Native Americans. While Gelber provides a fine overview of preparation, access, financing, and retention and outcomes, dating back to the nineteenth century, in this essay, I focus on access and the post-World War II period.

Ironically, the rise in enrollments and institutional expansion that have characterized the last 30 or so years has also been accompanied by a “prestige gap,” occurring at multiple levels: between four-year schools and two-year community colleges, between public and private four-year institutions, and among public and private four-year institutions. While greater numbers of individuals, including those from previously excluded groups, have entered the ranks of higher education, the system of higher education itself has been transformed to include differential tracks. In some cases, this prestige gap built on previous patterns. For example, as Gelber (this volume) notes, starting in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Columbia University assumed the status of the elite institution in the New York City area, relying on New York University and City University of New York to provide access to the larger masses of students, particularly those from working-class backgrounds; while graduates of the latter two schools received excellent educations, they did not have the chance to partake of the social and possibly economic rewards that came from attending Colombia. According to Gelber, at least two shifts contributed to the contemporary stratification of four-year institutions. The availability of government funding for higher education may have led institutions to increase their undergraduate selectivity in the hopes of increasing their competitive edge. Further, competition among four-year institutions for a shrinking population of young
adults, a demographic shift accompanied by the end of the baby boom, may have led to increased selectivity as a marketing tool.

A central if relatively under-examined line of stratification is the role of community colleges, which have become the starting point for many working-class students, particularly for racial and ethnic minorities. Debates have centered on the mission of community colleges, namely, whether community colleges serve as a stepping stone to the four-year degree, or serve to warehouse students into vocational training, who in the process become unlikely to move further up the postsecondary ladder (Dougherty, 1987; Brint & Karabel, 1989). As Gelber (this volume) notes, the extant literature on community colleges has not yet presented a fuller picture of how working-class students choose to attend community college, and how much these decisions are grounded in matters pertaining to individual preference for vocational higher education, financial constraints, or public policy.

In terms of racial groups traditionally excluded from higher education, we know the most from historiography about the experiences of African-Americans. As Gelber (this volume) points out, civil rights legislation, namely the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Higher Education Act of 1965, and the Equal Opportunity Program (EOP), opened the doors of predominately White institutions of higher education to African-Americans. The process was slow and uneven across regions. As a way of increasing enrollments in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a large number of schools adopted new policies designed to address issues of preparation (postsecondary remedial education programs), access (recruitment at largely Black high schools and revising of admissions criteria), and financing (increased financial aid).

The open admissions policy has been another method for public systems of higher education to promote racial, ethnic, and class diversity. This has played an especially visible role at the City University of New York (CUNY), which maintained the policy from 1970 to the late 1990s, granting admission to all high school graduates who met a minimum threshold of academic standards. Debates soon followed in the public and scholarly domains about the use of academic standards in higher education. Some criticized CUNY on the basis that with open admissions, higher education actually became remedial education. Others, however, demonstrated that open admissions provided crucial opportunities for students of diverse groups, including Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics, to have access to college, and subsequently to achieve mobility across generations. There were two important caveats—minority students had lower levels of completing a degree relative to Whites, largely due to lack of high school preparation and the need to work at paid employment while
taking classes. And over time, the possible effects of open admissions narrowed in scope, as more selective admissions criteria were put into place, tuitions rose, and remedial classes became a requirement for some. The result was a decline in access and success, especially among minority students (Lavin & Hyllegard, 1996).

Overall, an opportunity was missed, as such programs, regardless of content, did not focus on the important and underlying issues involved with access to higher education among African-American students. As Reuben (2001) astutely analyzes, the measures to draw greater numbers of African-American students continued to use the traditional language of merit without taking the opportunity to broaden the concept of merit, or to probe deeper into the academic pipeline to address the inequalities in K-12 schooling en route to postsecondary education. The choice to maintain the traditional rhetoric around merit put these programs on shaky ground, and by the 1990s, admissions to public and private universities of varying levels of prestige were increasingly based on traditional measures of test scores and grades, with commensurate declines in the college enrollment of African-Americans, particularly at selective institutions. Overall, the result has been that middle-class African-American students have tended to benefit from the opening up of higher education (Gelber, this volume).

**Sociology: Who applies, where, and why**

As Deil-Amen and Lopez Turley (this volume) fluidly document, sociologists have been concerned with how individual-level characteristics such as “socioeconomic status, family structure, gender, race and ethnicity, aspirations and expectations” matter in the ways students are received into K-12 schools and learn about and get access to a complex and stratified system of postsecondary schooling. A dominant model in the literature on individual characteristics and college access has been the Wisconsin Model of Status Attainment, initiated by William Sewell (1971), and furthered by Sewell and Robert Hauser (1975) and their collaborators in the early 1970s. Simply put, the Wisconsin Model, which initially focused on men, posits that family socioeconomic background, as defined by parental income, education, and occupation, has a powerful effect on an individual’s measured ability, educational attainment, occupation, and earnings. Subsequent studies have included women and individuals across race and ethnicity in a look at the role of socioeconomic status in their access to college with mixed results as to whether and how it has declined or alternatively, persisted. In terms of college attended, however, sociologists have continued to find strong effects of socioeconomic...
nomic status in whether individuals enroll in a community college versus a four-year institution. Another influence of family characteristics, not directly tied to socioeconomic status, include family structure, for example, two-parent v. single-parent households, and the number, spacing, and sex composition of siblings, which all bear upon educational achievement and attainment in terms of the resources families can accord to children (Powell & Steelman, 1989; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

In attempts to complicate the Wisconsin Model, sociologists have also become concerned about the differences and similarities between aspirations and expectations, and the role of socioeconomic status therein. Aspirations signal an ideal, or a hoped for result; expectations, on the other hand, are accompanied by a focused and realistic educational roadmap of specific steps to be taken, to translate the aspiration into outcome (Morgan, 1996). Schneider and Stevenson’s seminal work (1999) has shown the upward evolution of aspirations over time, with teenagers in the 1990s aspiring to be professionals, as compared to service and administrative workers as was the case among 1950s teenagers. As Schneider and Stevenson and others have pointed out, high aspirations do not necessarily translate into expectations and finally, outcomes, particularly for students who are disadvantaged by the confluence of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. In the work on how college aspirations are formed, their influence along with expectations on access, researchers have found that parents are important, specifically, the cultural and social capital used by parents in conjunction with K-12 schools to provide the roadmap to college.

High schools and colleges themselves, as institutional contexts, are crucial to access in that they respectively influence the decision-making processes of both students, as they think about where to apply and where to go, and the admissions committees, who grant entry. As McDonough (1997) has argued, within high schools, students are given different impressions of where they might fit in the college status hierarchy, and these often vary according to the students’ class backgrounds. Building on Bourdieu’s concept of the habitus, she calls for high schools to provide an institutional environment that will allow students from disadvantaged groups the structural and cultural advantages available to their peers from higher socioeconomic backgrounds both at home and within the school. There are also differences between high schools and what they can provide to their students in terms of college access. At the high end of the spectrum, elite preparatory schools, like the ones studied by Persell and Cookson (1985), have deep institutional linkages to officials at elite colleges, a relationship that affords their students an advantage in the competitive admissions process to highly selective schools. As Karen
(1991) has shown in the case of Harvard, the colleges themselves are embedded in complex organizational fields shaped by institutional competitors, corporations, graduate/professional schools, alumni, foundations, and the federal government as they make admissions decisions. This broader context in which postsecondary institutions find themselves is crucial to understanding how the admissions process actually works and how academic merit is but one criteria of evaluation.

**Demography: Age, timing, and the life course**

Demographers highlight the importance of age, timing, and the overall life course in access to college. Maralani (this volume) documents that while K-12 schooling is highly tied to age at earlier stages, for example, from early childhood through high school, there are substantially different processes for postsecondary schooling in the contemporary United States. The typical college student is no longer someone aged 18–22; instead, one quarter of our nation’s undergraduates are aged 30 and older. It is likely that this trend will continue, given the increasing number of students who complete high school through the General Educational Developmental Test (GED) rather than through graduation, and the relatively few age restrictions in higher education, with second and indeed, later chances to complete one’s postsecondary schooling.

The result is that the sequencing of the high school to college transition is no longer disconnected from marriage, parenthood, and employment as has traditionally been the case in the United States. Rather, a significant percentage of our college students must negotiate parts—if not all—of their postsecondary schooling, alongside marriage/cohabitation, parenthood, and employment. This has implications for matters related to access, as nontraditional college students might factor in issues of child care, family housing, and flexible class hours as they consider a return to school. Thus, in addition to the important variables of human capital, fertility (at what age individuals decide to have children), and family structure (growing up in a two-parent v. single-parent household arrangement), it is crucial to consider the role of age, timing, and the life cycle in who gets to pursue and relatedly, who gets to complete postsecondary education. Such an approach could help us explain intra- and intergroup differences in educational attainment, for example, the pathways that more “resilient” individuals from groups under-represented in higher education employ to return to school and get a postsecondary degree.

A good example is the work of Maralani (2004) on college entry among traditional high school graduates and GED recipients. Comparisons of the two groups reveal that measures such as social back-
ground and cognitive skills do not account for the differences in college entry. Rather, the fact that GED recipients are older, for example, in their mid and late 20s, and thus negotiating the other pressures of adulthood contributes to lesser rates of college entry as compared to their high school graduate counterparts. The inclusion of differences in age and timing increases and complements the explanatory power of factors like social background and cognitive skills.

Policy implications vis-à-vis access

How can we increase access to college among individuals from disadvantaged populations? As I discussed earlier, historiography has charted the positive effects of school-based policies during the late 1960s and early 1970s to increase representation of African-American students, including postsecondary remedial education programs, recruitment at largely Black high schools and revising of admissions criteria, increased financial aid, and open admissions. While the existing research demonstrates the key role affirmative action has played in college enrollment among Blacks and Latinos (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Karabel, 1999; Allen, Teranishi, Dinwiddie, & Gonzalez, 2000), such policies failed to broaden the concept of merit, making them vulnerable to opposition (Reuben, 2001). In California, for example, voters passed Proposition 209 in the mid-1990s, which prohibited the use of race in public higher education, and Black and Latino enrollments subsequently declined dramatically with professional school enrolments returning to the levels of the late 1960s. Other states like Texas have turned to percentage plans, an admissions policy that admits the top percentage of high school students by academic performance into public universities. Percentage plans, unlike affirmative action and class-based policies, do not explicitly use race or socioeconomic criteria. However, it has been shown that percentage plans do not maintain racial diversity and rather magnifies the effects of racial segregation in Texas high schools (Tienda, Leicht, Sullivan, Maltese, & Lloyd, 2003; Tienda & Niu, 2004).

Nationally, the controversy surrounding affirmative action culminated in the 2003 Supreme Court decisions in Gratz v. Bollinger and Grutter v. Bollinger. Both cases involved the admission processes at the University of Michigan, in the college for the former and in the law school for the latter. In the undergraduate case, the Court emphasized the importance of individualized review to assess all of the qualities each applicant might contribute to the diversity of the entering class, rather than a point system that assigned a certain number of points based on race. In the law school case, the Court ruled that some attention to numbers without a
rigid quota was permissible for the law school to create a racially diverse student body that would presumably foster “cross-racial understanding” and the breaking down of racial stereotypes.

Further policy issues to keep in mind around access is the role of academic criteria in how Black and low-income students are evaluated in the admissions process and non-academic factors in how older adults decide to return to school. According to Deil-Amen and Lopez Turley (this volume), sociologists have found that the quality of high school and the grades earned have more predictive power than SAT scores and, hence, have argued that they should be accorded more weight in the admissions process. It has been posited that market-driven forces around ETS and the College Board have instead kept the SAT as a key admissions criteria, placing Black and low-income students, who score lower on the SAT on average, at a disadvantage in access to college. Further, the demographic implications for our growing population of older college students means school officials need to take into account how child care, housing, and class scheduling can serve as a deterrent to such students, who are typically juggling multiple life-course demands.

HOW DO WE PAY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION?

The third key question in the college pipeline has to do with money. In this section, I address the issue of the cost of higher education, and what we know about its role in influencing access.

_Economics: The cost of college and how it affects access_

Students that are academically ready for college with a firm grasp of how to get access to college, face the crucial hurdle of how to pay for it. Given the rising costs of college tuition, the affordability of which is typically determined through a comparison of the median income of American families, the stakes here are substantial. As Long (this volume) demonstrates, researchers in economics and related fields have been interested in determining whether cost actually deters students of disadvantaged populations from considering college as a viable option, thus leading to self-selection out of the college pipeline; among those considering various colleges, the question is whether cost becomes a factor in choice of institution.

There exists a complex web of stakeholders in today’s financial aid system, and I defer to Long’s fine discussion to focus here on a brief schematic of the federal and state levels, what they provide, and recent shifts that have increased the burden on low-income individuals. At the
federal level, the traditional direct financial aid programs include the Pell Grant, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, and Stafford Loans. In 1997, in recognition of the increasing costs of college tuitions and fees, the federal government put into place the Hope and Lifetime Learning Tax Credits, which were given to students and families financing their children’s education. However, because the tax credits are based on income criteria, this policy tends to privilege middle- and upper-income families. States, meanwhile, provide both direct and indirect aid to students. An example of the former is that the list price of tuition at public colleges and universities for in-state residents has already been subsidized by the state. Other more direct state strategies of financial aid include grants to students. States, however, have increasingly shifted from need-based to merit-based grants. Finally, loans, with required repayment schedules, are available from the federal and state governments. Consistent with the overall trends away from need-based assistance, loans are increasingly replacing grants in financial aid packages.

The key question, then, is how does this complex matrix of financing matter in terms of college access, and how can we do a better job? As Long posits, data and methodological limitations have made it difficult for economists to make causal claims, as opposed to correlative ones, and much more work needs to be done in several domains, including how effects vary by race, ethnicity, and gender as well as income. Nonetheless, several key trends have emerged. In the research on how students choose which college to attend, the focus has been on the individual’s decision to apply rather than the decision of the colleges to admit. Manski and Wise (1983) and others have found that individuals self-select themselves out of applying for certain colleges based upon an assessment of whether they will get in and the projected return. Within this literature, it has been shown that financial aid is thus likely to affect who goes to which college. Price, for example, makes a difference. Studies have paid attention to costs and the decision to attend a community college versus a four-year college (Rouse, 1994; Alexander, Pallas, & Holupka, 1987; Hilmer, 1998). Long (forthcoming) analyzes the role of price along with distance and quality in the process of choosing to attend four-year colleges among several cohorts. She finds that while the effect of price has changed over time, price remains significant for low-income students. Both Long (2004) and Ganderton (1992) have found that financial aid plays a role in students choosing to attend a lower-ranked public college as opposed to a higher-ranked private counterpart. Loans might also prove a deterrent for individuals with low debt thresholds. As another example, while the returns to college play a strong role in the decisions
of high-achieving students over which college to attend, there is still an
effect of loans (Avery & Hoxby, 2004). Overall, the theme raised by Kane
(1999) and others is that the existing financial system does have some
effect on inequalities around college access.

Policy implications vis-à-vis paying for higher education

In her chapter, Long points toward two broad policy questions surround-
ing the question of paying for college. The first is a more philosophical
one that effectively maps out the terrain of stakeholders, namely, who
should pay for college? The answer is not as straightforward as one might
think. Depending on whom you speak with, the answer can be any one or
combination of the following, that is, the federal government, states, tax-
payers, philanthropists, and individuals and their families. Some have
argued, for example, that we should think of college schooling as a pub-
lic good much as we do the K-12 years; the policy implications of this per-
spective is certainly different from one that emphasizes the role of indi-
viduals saving enough to meet the costs of college. Thus, the answer to
this question leads to different conversations about whom should assume
what percentage of the cost, and then how this can be achieved. For
example, discussions of family contributions need to be situated in the
context of the rise in single-parent households, and the trend towards
granting aid based on merit rather than need (Johnstone, 2003; Baum,
2003).

The second, inter-related question has to do with the potential and
actual effects of financial aid as a lever for increasing access. While we
know that in the present system of financing, cost leads to particular deci-
sions about whether to attend college, and which kinds, we still need to
learn more about this important process to develop policy initiatives.
Relatedly, there has been much debate about whether access to informa-
tion about how to pay for college functions as a barrier to application and
enrollment among low-income students. Due to methodological con-
cerns, which I elaborate on later, economists are uncertain if information
about college costs and financial aid has a causal—as opposed to correla-
tive—effect on college access (O’Brien, 1992). If the answer is that
financial aid information serves as the primary route for increasing col-
lege access, then clearly policy-makers need to address informational
conduits. However, should financial aid play a supporting role, mediated
by other variables related to conditions of disadvantage, such as academic
preparation, then non-financial aid policy derivations need to be taken
into account.
WHAT CONtributes to TWO-YEAR AND FOUR-YEAR DEGREE COMPLETION?

The final piece of the puzzle around the transition to college is the route to completion of the degree. In this section, I discuss the complexities that surround this portion of the college pipeline.

Higher education: Pathways, persistence, and completion

What kinds of pathways do students take in the postsecondary pipeline, and what factors influence persistence and eventual completion? This has been the focus of the higher education literature. While the popular conception of the college student, and indeed, the focus of much of the extant research is of “the traditional-aged student attending a four-year institution,” there are in fact various types of college students, and diverse pathways they take through postsecondary education. Today, the traditional picture of college entry as occurring immediately after completion of high school, schooling taking place at the same postsecondary institution on a full-time, continuous basis, and completion occurring in four years after entry only applies to a fraction of the population. As Goldrick-Rab, Carter, and Wagner (this volume) note, “Students are moving in, out, and among colleges and universities at higher rates than ever before.”

In Goldrick-Rab, Carter, and Wagner’s essay, they discuss the numerous descriptors being used to capture the increasing complexity of the postsecondary education experience, with words like rebounding, reverse transfer, transfer swirl; in essence, these pathways are characterized by attendance at multiple institutions (both two- and four-year) for various lengths of time, including time out of the educational system altogether. Moreover, there are “subtle forms of tracking” that exist even among students who start off at a four-year institution, and overall, students from low-income backgrounds are more likely to suffer negative consequences from particular attendance patterns, as compared to their high-income counterparts.

That said, much of the transfer literature has focused on the route from a two-year to a four-year institution. As discussed earlier with regards to preparation and to access, academic preparation is key to college completion. However, students from minority and low-income backgrounds often lack access to curriculum that would prepare one for college, and they are also disproportionately represented in the ranks of community colleges. Thus, remedial education in community colleges is a key piece
of the completion puzzle. As this has been an under-examined domain of inquiry, we still do not have a firm grasp of what an effective remedial program would look like (Dougherty, 2002). Data on the commensurate payoffs to a community college education (no degree earned as opposed to an associate’s degree, and an associate’s degree v. a bachelor’s degree) have complicated ongoing debates about the overall mission of community colleges; whether they should be vocational, academic, or a combination of the two. Relatedly, some have highlighted the role of purveyors of information about community colleges as a way of facilitating better-informed decisions among students. Schneider and Stevenson (1999), for example, have argued that high school students should be better served in getting information about the two-year community college option and what it involves.

Just as the transfer literature focuses on community colleges, studies of completion have centered on four-year colleges. Goldrick-Rab, Carter, and Wagner provide a fine discussion of the changing definitions of completion, and then a demographic portrait of who is and who is not completing the undergraduate degree. Some key themes emerge: The first year is crucial, especially for students that are the first members of their families to attend college and/or are low-income. Similar to the sense of belonging that was found to be important to academic preparedness among high school students, social and academic integration are vital to persistence and completion of the college degree. An important model in this vein is Tinto’s (1987; 1993) theory of academic and social integration, which posits that students strongly embedded within college are more likely to stay within. As Goldrick-Rab, Carter, and Wagner (this volume) point out, Tinto himself and a number of other researchers have sought to elaborate on his model by attending to the needs of minorities and older/community college students, for example. The incorporation of these diverse groups has highlighted the different academic needs of college students. Similar to the research on the different learning styles of young children, the literature on higher education emphasizes the same learning styles, including cooperative learning and meaning-making among adults (Evans, 1994). Other academic factors related to persistence include smaller class sizes and faculty support for students, both of which facilitate persistence for women and minority students.

The means of achieving social integration among college students prove similar to those identified as key to fostering student engagement within the high school climate. College students need to experience a connection to the institutional community through exchanges with other students within the classroom and without, in school organizations and with faculty. One means of achieving this is through cognitive mapping
of the institution, affording students a sense of ownership of their experiences in college (Attinasi, 1989; Rodriguez, 2001). Students, particularly those from traditionally under-represented groups, also respond well to mentoring relationships with faculty, who provide not only academic support but also social support, relating to the particular socio-cultural aspects of students’ lives, and serve as role models.

Policy implications vis-à-vis completion

Although we know that a student’s integration into the college community is a key factor in the likelihood of persistence and degree completion, the typical structure of student services on most college campuses, two- and four-year, remains balkanized. Each college office maps onto a crucial piece of a student’s socialization into the institution. For example, the admissions office has the most comprehensive knowledge of each entering student’s family, social, and academic background; counselors at the dormitories, where students actually live, if it is a residential institution, have knowledge of the students’ everyday social lives; student affairs is responsible for coordinating cultural and social outreach programs; the academic departments serve as intellectual homes for students; and the office of career services provides counseling for students as they transition from college into the labor market or postgraduate education. Yet there is little sense in the existing literature of the extent to which and the ways in which these various stakeholders collaborate. If we are indeed serious about providing students a crucial sense of social integration at the college level, there needs to be a linking of the institutional offices that serve them. In this way, the student’s entire development can be brought to bear and traced over time towards the goal of completion. However, as I will elaborate in the next section in different domains, the process of creating linkages between areas with shared interests remains under-examined, although its importance is quite clear.

TOWARDS AN INTEGRATIVE MODEL:
A K-16 INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

The extensive corpus of research notwithstanding, a key theme across the review essays is that we need an integrative model designed to bridge domains and disciplines that will allow us to address the key gaps in our knowledge. In short, there is a need to integrate research, policy, and practice between K-12 schooling and higher education (Gándara, 2002). This can be described as a K-16 perspective. Price (2005) thus suggests that K-12 and postsecondary schools, which now relate to one another as
distant kin, become part of what he terms “one system;” such an integrative model would mean that K-12 schools have a better understanding of what students need to be prepared for postsecondary education, and postsecondary schools would have a clear picture of the particular skill sets with which their students are arriving. This is particularly important because the existing research of how K-12 experiences are associated with student academic outcomes and retention in college, while scarce, does suggest the following: pre-college curriculum and high school graduation requirements do not map well with requirements of college admissions offices and the labor market; the more rigorous high school curriculum one takes, the better chance a person has of not only enrolling in but also being prepared for college.

This integration can occur at various levels: state policies that encourage linkages between K-12 schools and postsecondary institutions; formal K-12/university partnerships; and further collaborations between higher education researchers and non-governmental and non-university research organizations that disseminate information about the transition from high school to college, the so-called Fifth Sector organizations (Price, 2005). As Goldrick-Rab, Carter, and Wagner (this volume) point out, there are also obstacles. For example, there are currently no incentives for K-12 institutions and colleges and universities to develop partnerships as they share no accountability mechanisms or funding streams (Venezia, Kirst, & Antonio, 2003). One of the few exceptions is the Early College High School, a collaborative effort between a public school district and a postsecondary institution, which receives funding from the Gates Foundation. The schools are designed to serve students, who are low-income, minority, and/or the first in the family to go to college, by bridging the gap between K-12 and college.

Additionally, there is the need for researchers themselves to adopt a K-16 perspective, rather than staying within the boundaries of the K-12 literature or alternatively, higher education. Scholars in both realms have emphasized, for example, the importance of institutional belonging to persistence and the role of different learning styles. Yet, few studies have looked at such issues from a long-term perspective, and our knowledge base is consequently lacking for it. Equally important is the need to adopt an interdisciplinary lens. Just as researchers tend to stay bound to one piece of the transition to higher education, they also tend to view research questions from a disciplinary lens. As the authors in this volume have noted, however, each discipline only speaks to a part of the puzzle. In her review of anthropology, Koyama (this volume) points out the need to pay attention to college access and retention from all its many varied dimensions—financial, academic, social, and cultural. That said, anthro-
ology as a discipline is better suited to investigating the relations of students within schools. Thus, our knowledge can be expanded if researchers move beyond the disciplinary lens to incorporate research findings culled from other disciplines. As Koyama posits, such an integrative strategy would help us attend to the “multiple factors required to enter and succeed in college.” In this vein, Long (this volume) notes that economists have paid little attention to the role of financial aid and the decision-making of nontraditional, older students. She observes that “the growth in loans may affect career decisions and the timing of marriage and having kids.” This is precisely the kind of area that would benefit from both a demographer’s and economist’s expertise—the former to investigate the role of age, and timing, and other life-course decisions, and the latter, the role of cost.

METHODOLOGICAL AND SUBSTANTIVE CONSIDERATIONS

In this concluding section, I synthesize where we need to push further in methodology, and the areas to which we need to pay further attention. As the review essays demonstrate, the existing research draws on multiple methods, including qualitative methods emphasizing social processes and the ways in which they are experienced and understood, quantitative analyses of large-scale educational data sets, legal cases, and archival data. That said, a key theme that emerged, and that I wish to elaborate on here, is how to integrate qualitative and quantitative methods, and what we gain from this; how to develop more sophisticated tools for establishing causal inferences, rather than correlations, using quantitative methods; and how to create quantitative datasets that speak to the kinds of questions we wish to investigate. I close with a look at the broad substantive gaps that the authors have identified.

Qualitative and historical methods: Contributions and challenges

As Koyama (this volume) points out, the emphasis in educational research, particularly funded studies of the U.S. Department of Education, has been on quantitative methods, with a recent focus on testing, given the mandates of No Child Left Behind. What we gain in terms of representativeness, however, we lose in complexity. In the absence of qualitative methods like interviews and participant observations, we do not have the tools to understand the meanings individuals attach to events and situations, and how they frame their decisions. Given the fact that these understandings and decisions are situated in the complex social contexts in which individuals are embedded, themselves shaped by
broader historical, social, and economic trends, the findings made possible by qualitative methods are crucial. As one example, we have much data suggesting that Black males are under-represented in higher education. However, we still lack an understanding of why and how this is occurring (Deil-Amen & López-Turley, this volume).

In historical research, Gelber (this volume) points out that the inclusion of student voices would complement our existing knowledge of structure and “intellectual life,” which is typically gained from the artifacts of administrators and professors in higher education. The inclusion of student voices would strengthen our understanding of topics that remain under-examined in history, such as “student choices, cultural tensions, or family expectations.” Further, methodologically speaking, there are also tensions in how historians approach their research that can work against the formulation of policy. He identified this as a fundamental tension between the need of historians to maintain the “discipline’s humanistic aspects” while at the same time, following the scientific approach with “reproducible” data and conclusions that can be further tested in other situations, and also provide implications and/or clear lines for policy. As an example, Gelber cites Mattingly, Anderson, Church, Curran, & Tobias’ (2004) finding that in historical analyses of college access, researchers typically situate their studies within particular campuses and neglect to pay attention to more macro questions surrounding higher education. Or as Gelber writes: “In general, historians are trained to produce histories of policy rather than histories as policy.”

In the next section, I investigate challenges that quantitative methodologists confront.

Quantitative methods: Challenges and possible solutions

Educational researchers using large-scale data sets have typically turned to those collected and maintained by the federal government, including the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972 (NLS72), the High School and Beyond (HSB), the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS88), the Beginning Postsecondary Study (BPS), and the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY). In this volume, Goldrick-Rab, Carter, and Wagner, and Long carefully map out the benefits and limitations of quantitative analyses of these various datasets. A strength of quantitative methods is the ability therein to establish a causal relationship. However, as Long argues with regards to economists, the challenges to doing so in higher education research are many, as “one must develop an appropriate strategy to isolate the effect” and to “deal with possible endogeneity between variables, reduce estimation
biases, and refute other possible explanations of their results."

In her chapter, Long provides two examples—affirmative action and the relationship between financial aid and persistence—that bear discussion here. With regards to affirmative action, particularly at elite institutions, a core problem is that certain measures used in the college admissions process are not available to quantitative researchers. It follows that quantitative researchers rely on test scores and high school GPA. However, even if criteria such as student essays, teacher recommendations, and extracurricular activities were available, they are subjective in nature and, consequently, do not lend themselves to quantitative analyses. Without them, however, one cannot demonstrate a causal relationship between racial preferences and admissions decisions. A different kind of challenge lies with scholarly inquiries into financial aid and persistence. In Long’s words: “The characteristics that are positively correlated with receiving aid (i.e., being from a low-income family or having high test scores) are also likely to be related with educational outcomes.” As a result, it becomes difficult to parse out which is driving persistence.

In Goldrick-Rab, Carter, and Wagner’s essay (this volume), it becomes apparent that such challenges and limitations are shared among researchers, regardless of discipline, as they seek to establish causal relationships employing quantitative data. In addition to endogeneity, point out Goldrick-Rab, Carter, and Wagner, higher education research is characterized by a lack of attention paid to selection bias, reliability and validity, response rates and missing data, and attrition. The strategies for addressing these thorny methodological issues exist, for example, hierarchical linear modeling can address institutional versus individual level effects, but they are not used often enough. In addition, logistic regression techniques, event history analysis, and survival analysis are effective strategies for establishing attribution of causality. While the first two are increasingly being used, survival analysis remains sparsely employed by leading analysts of higher education, despite the recent publication of a textbook on its application to education research (Singer & Willett, 2003).

There are also limitations posed by the currently available measures and the large-scale datasets themselves. In particular, Goldrick-Rab, Carter, and Wagner (this volume) note the disjuncture between the widespread attention paid to Tinto’s (1987; 1993) theory of academic and social integration, which practically speaking, maps onto such institutional services as student advising and study skills courses, and the relatively few studies that test the effects of these services on persistence. One difficulty has been that the variables do not necessarily accurately capture what they are designed to measure. Another issue lies with the datasets.
Put simply, there is a need to track students for longer periods of time, and to investigate the many steps of their diverse pathways. Longitudinal studies are crucial, but most do not measure student aspirations following matriculation and, thus, we cannot see with much clarity how aspirations change in the postsecondary process, a relevant question given the many pathways taken by students. Further, databases typically do not follow high students for more than eight to ten years after graduation, reducing our ability to track them over their life course. The coverage in some databases such as the Beginning Postsecondary Student Longitudinal Study (BPS) and the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) is limited to first-time and full-time enrolled students, an approach that misses out on the rest of the college-going population. Additional insights offered by Goldrick-Rab, Carter, and Wagner speak to the need for an overall integrative model, in this case, one that follows students “across school systems, and indeed state lines, in order to gather complete data on their schooling trajectories.” Along similar lines, the link between postsecondary education and mobility would be more fully elucidated if secondary and higher education databases were linked along with employment and earnings data.

Where to go next

Such an overall integrative model and more refined methods will allow us to attend to notable substantive gaps in our coverage, and move towards telling a more nuanced story of the transition to college. A key substantive gap across disciplines is variation along the lines of race, ethnicity, immigrant status, gender, and age across domains. For example, while we know that individual background characteristics affect how financial aid affects enrollment decisions, we need to pay further attention to the relationship between financial aid and the choices made by those groups that have increasingly joined the ranks of higher education, namely members of racial and ethnic minorities, women, and older students (Long, this volume).

The continuing large-scale immigration to the United States intersects with some of these dimensions in complex and to date, little-understood ways (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995, 2001; Louie, 2004, 2005; Mollenkopf, Waters, Holdaway, & Kasinitz, 2005). The education of immigrant children presents a distinct set of challenges that may also map onto the existing ones of native students, in such domains as social capital to a sense of belonging (Rong & Preissle, 1997; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Gibson et al., 2004; Kao, 2004; Louie 2005; Noguera, 2004). Future studies, for example, should investigate how immigrants map onto the
traditional Black-White racial paradigm in the transition to higher education. A *New York Times* article (Rimer & Arenson, 2004) suggests that Black college students are more likely to be the children of immigrants, rather than African-Americans of several generations. In what ways does this complicate our understandings of the experiences of Blacks and the transition to higher education? We know from the extant literature that being Black and immigrant might represent a distinct experience among immigrant newcomers themselves, presenting both shared challenges with African-Americans and ones particular to migration and ethnicity (Waters, 1999; Stepick, Stepick, Eugene, Teed, & Labisierre, 2001; Butterfield, 2004). In the case of Latinos, Trillo (2004) documents how the children of South American immigrants are incorporated into the institutional culture and curriculum at LaGuardia Community College in New York City, both of which center around the civil rights struggles that led to greater inclusion of African-Americans and Puerto Ricans at CUNY. How does this complicate Tinto’s model of social and academic integration?

We also need to consider how immigrant status matters, if at all, in post-secondary aspirations and outcomes, and the processes that shape them (Louie, in press). Is it meaningful to speak of a phenomenon as immigration and education, and in what ways? Additionally, there appears to be a gender gap, or at least gendered experiences in K-12 academic achievement favoring immigrant girls (López, 2003; Suárez-Orozco & Qin, 2006; Suárez-Orozco & Qin-Hillard 2004; Holdaway, 2005). How does this map onto overall patterns of parity for women in postsecondary enrollment and attainment? Gender itself merits additional investigation. Now that the challenges of access and completion have been met, are there other, more hidden barriers that remain for women (Goldrick-Rab, Carter, & Wagner, this volume)?

Finally, what do we mean by the term postsecondary education? To some, vocational training is included in this term, and yet, little research focuses on this domain. Further, the review essays point to a strong research emphasis on elite, four-year institutions of higher education, particularly private schools. Economists have typically focused on these institutions as they have historically provided the most financial aid. What this means is that our knowledge of financial aid packages offered to students, a measure that can improve our understanding of access but one that is rarely available, generally comes from elite institutions (Long, this volume). Historians have focused on this group of institutions, also partially due to methodological reasons, as elite schools have had the financial resources to maintain their archival records in ways that less selective schools have not. As Gelber (this volume) notes, what this means is that
“a synthesis of the expansion of regional public colleges and universities has not yet been written.”

It is only with more focused attention, using an integrative model and a combination of methods, to the educational problem of who is prepared for, gets access to, obtains financing for, and completes college that the many accounts that have not yet been written will be. The stakes are high. Depending on whether we take the lead, or alternatively, remain where we are, the transition to college will represent either the promise, or the decline of the American future.

I wish to thank the editors of this special issue: William Trent, Margaret Orr, and Sherri Ranis. I am especially appreciative of Sherri Ranis’ very thoughtful and insightful expertise throughout the process, and of Jennifer Holdaway’s always welcome guidance when she joined the project.

I also wish to extend many thanks to the Transitions to College Committee members for their very discerning and generous comments on this essay: Kevin Dougherty, Luis Fraga, Margaret Gibson, Patricia King, Barbara Lee, Jamie Merisotis, David Mustard, Michael Nettles, Margaret Orr, Julie Reuben, Barbara Schneider, Claude Steele, Vincent Tinto, and William Trent. I gained many insights from the individual essays written by: Jill Koyama, Vida Maralani, Bridget Terry Long, Scott Gelber, Sara Goldrick-Rab, Deborah Faye Carter, Rachelle Winkle Wagner, Regina Deil-Amen, Ruth López Turley, and Derek Price. I am indebted to the services of Laura Stein and Jeppe Wohlert, of the Social Science Research Council, who helped me negotiate the mechanics of writing an essay based on the contributions of so many.

Notes

1. Post-1960s large-scale immigration to the United States has also been characterized by arrivals of large numbers of migrants with few skills and relatively low levels of formal schooling. Please see Portes and Rumbaut (1980; 2001), Portes and Zhou (1993), Bean and Stevens (2003), Alba and Nee (2003), and Fix and Passel (2003) for a discussion of overall immigration trends, and the implications for incorporation into the nation’s labor market.

2. Price (2005) defines the Fifth Sector as non-governmental and non-university based research groups that disseminate reports on the transition from high school to college and the labor market.

References


door: Race, equity and affirmative action in U.S. higher education. *The Journal of Negro
Education, 69*, 3–11.
and the implications for freshman year persistence. *Journal of Higher Education, 60*,
247–277.
Avery, C., & Hoxby, C. (2004). Do and should financial aid packages affect students’ college
choices? In C. Hoxby (Ed.), *College choices: The economics of which college, when college, and
how to pay for it*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Student Financial Aid, College Board.
Russell Sage Foundation.
Butterfield, S. 2004. “We’re just Black:” The racial and ethnic identities of second generation
West Indians in New York. In P. Kasinitz, J. Mollenkopf, & M. Waters (Eds.).
* Becoming New Yorkers: Ethnographies of the new second generation* (pp. 288–312). New York:
Russell Sage Foundation.
Deil-Amen, R., & López Turley, R. N. A review of the transition to college literature in soci-
ology. *Teacher’s College Record*.
Dougherty, K. (2002). The evolving role of the community college policy: Issues and
research questions. In J. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research*.
G. Tierney, & L. S. Hagedorn (Eds.), *Increasing access to college: Extending possibilities for all students* (pp. 81–103). Albany: State University of New York Press.
Gelber, S. Pathways in the past: Historical perspectives on access to higher education.
*Teacher’s College Record*.
tion: Lessons from a migrant student club. In M. A. Gibson, P. Gándara, & J. P.
Koyama (Eds.), *School connections: U. S. Mexican youth, peers, and school achievement* (pp.
Goldrick-Rab, S., Carter, D. F., & Winkle Wagner, R. What higher education has to say about
the transition to college. *Teacher’s College Record*.
panel, Harvard University, Graduate School of Education.
Hilmer, M. J. (1998). Post-secondary fees and the decision to attend a university or a com-


Who Makes the Transition to College? 2251


VIVIAN LOUIE is an assistant professor of education at Harvard University, Graduate School of Education. She specializes in immigration, education, and globalization. Her research interests focus on how the children of immigrants and adult migrants gain the academic credentials and skills to achieve social mobility in a globalized world, with particular attention to the transition to higher education, and how they experience cultural shifts through the process of migration.