

# College Choice for Black Males in the Community College: Factors Influencing Institutional Selection

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## Abstract

*In this study we examined the college choice process for Black males attending community colleges. Using data from the Educational Longitudinal Study, findings indicated that Black males who attend community colleges select their institutions based upon having a degree in their chosen field, the coursework/curriculum, job placement record, availability of financial aid, and academic reputation. Independent t-tests indicated Black males were more likely than four-year collegians to select an institution based upon the desire to live at home, for the school's easy admissions policies, for the school being the same as one attended by the parent, and the school's acceptance of college credit. After controlling for potentially mitigating factors, we found that students attended community colleges that placed greater importance on low expenses, the academic reputation of the institution, the school's easy admissions, and the school's acceptance of college credit. Recommendations for further research are extended.*

## Introduction

Every year, Black male high school seniors from around the nation make important decisions about their post-high school futures. During this period, many determine whether or not they will attend college. For non-college bound students, many will enlist into the armed forces or enter directly into the workforce (Nevarez & Wood, 2010). For those students who decide that college is the most appropriate path, they must determine what type of institution they will attend. For those Black males attending public colleges, the selection of post-secondary institutions is overwhelmingly in favor of community colleges (also referred to as public two-year colleges), where 70.5% of them will enroll. In contrast, only 28.5% will attend public four-year colleges and universities<sup>2</sup> (BPS, 2009).

It has been asserted by Bush (2004), that Black males attend community colleges to secure economic, political, and social mobility. For these students, the community college represents their *first* and

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<sup>2</sup> The remaining 1% attended public, less than two-year institutions.

likely *last* effort to obtain a postsecondary degree (Bush & Bush, 2004, 2005, 2010). Unfortunately, beyond these general assertions, little empirical evidence (if any) exists which delineates why Black males attend community colleges as opposed to four-year institutions. Extant literature on the overall community college student population illustrates that academically challenged students capitalize on the “open-door” policies of community colleges whereby prior educational performance is not taken into consideration in admission (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Nevarez & Wood, 2010). These students utilize community colleges as an opportunity to “restart” their educational careers. In contrast, high achieving high school students also attend community colleges; many of these students capitalize on low-cost educational programming to complete their general education requirements for transfer (Laanan, 2003; Lee, 2011). Still yet, some students, academically qualified or otherwise fail to take the necessary steps for four-year college enrollment such as completion of assessment exams, and as a result, attend community colleges (Hebert, 2001).

Scholars have noted the importance of investigating college enrollment decision-making factors. In particular, they advocate for an understanding of how decision-making differs based upon racial affiliation for students’ selection of two- and four-year institutions (Perna, 2002; Kurlaender, 2006). Further, research has also noted that the college choice process differs by racial affiliation (Lee, 2011). The intersection of race, ethnicity, and gender in relationship to the college selection process was the primary focus of our study. With this in mind, we investigated variables that influence Black male students’ decisions to attend public two-year versus public four-year institutions. Our research provides an enhanced understanding of the drivers which impact Black male students’ post-secondary selections, providing insight on the role that interests (e.g., institutional characteristics, life circumstances, attainment goals) have on college selection.

Guided by this notion, three primary questions emerged for our research. First, what are the primary reasons for college selection indicated by Black males who attend community colleges? Second, what differences are there (if any) in college selection factors between Black males attending community colleges as opposed to public four-year institutions. Third, holding potentially mitigating factors constant (e.g., prior academic achievement, finances, parent’s highest level of education, educational goals), are selection rationales predictive of attendance at a community college or public four-year institution?

## **College Selection**

Although our search of the literature revealed other sources about college selection and experiences of Black students (see e.g., Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Muhammad, Smith, & Duncan, 2008), we found Flowers (2006) and Wood (in press), the only two sources that specifically focused on Black male collegians in two- and four-year institutions. In particular, these studies examined differences between Black males entering and attending two- and four-year colleges. In terms of background differences, Wood (in press) found that Black males in two-year colleges were more likely to be older and have delayed their enrollment into college. Further, in community colleges, they have overwhelmingly greater odds of having dependents (by 555%), being married (by 284%), and being independent (464%). Two-year collegians also have significantly fewer years of preparation in foreign language, mathematics, and science, as well as lower degree expectations. Additionally, even when controlling for relevant extraneous variables (e.g., age, income, high school GPA), two year collegians were significantly more likely to have dependents, be independent students, have lower degree expectations, and have taken fewer courses in foreign language and mathematics.

Flowers’ (2006) work also provides insight to population differences between Black male collegians. His research examined academic and social integration differences between Black males in two-year colleges and four-year universities. He found that Black males in two-year colleges have significantly lower levels of academic (e.g., attending study groups, talking with faculty, meeting with advisors) and social (e.g., participating in school clubs, attending fine arts activities, participating in intramural sports, going places with friends) integration in comparison to their four-year counterparts. In all, population differences identified by Wood (in press) and Flowers (2006) illustrate that, in many ways, Black male collegians in two-

year and four-year institutions are “the same, but different.” While these studies focused on between-group differences among Black male collegians, they did not examine whether there are significant differences in factors influencing the college selection process among these males. To lay a foundation for such inquiry, we explored literature about college choice.

### **College Choice: Community College Students**

Data from the Educational Longitudinal Study (2006) indicate that male community college students select institutions based upon several primary factors, whether the college has; (a) the degree and courses they need; (b) the job placement record of the institution; (c) the academic reputation of the institution; and (d) availability of student financial aid. Extant research has focused on the effect of economic and resource trends on community college enrollment. For instance, Pennington, McGinty, and Williams (2002) identified several economic indicators that were correlated with increased community college enrollment. Unemployment rates were positively correlated with enrollment, meaning that as unemployment increased so too did enrollment in the community college. In contrast, three items were found to be negatively correlated with enrollment, including dollars disposable income, gross domestic product, and personal consumption. In essence, their research infers that positive market indicators lead to lower community college enrollment. Betts and McFarland (1995) reported similar findings, indicating that unemployment rate hikes result in greater full-time attendance at a community college. Further, Frenzos (2005) also employed economic indicators to examine enrollment trends. In contrast to findings from Pennington et al. (2002) and Betts and McFarland (1995), Frenzos (2005) noted that greater unemployment resulted in lower enrollment in continuing education courses and had no effect on traditional course enrollment.

While economic indicators of enrollment have been a critical area of inquiry, scholars have also examined differential enrollment factors among two- and four-year collegians. Joshi, Beck, and Nsiah (2009) employed National Longitudinal Survey of Youth data to investigate determinants of student enrollment in community colleges as opposed to four-year institutions. They found that students’ academic aptitude was a strong determinant of enrollment decisions. In this light, students with higher aptitudes selected four-year institutions while those with lower aptitudes were drawn to community colleges. Further, students who worked more hours per week had a greater probability of enrolling in a two-year college. Additionally, students whose parents had lower income levels were more often enrolled in two-year colleges as opposed to four-year institutions. They also found regional factors to be associated with college enrollment, whereby students in the north central, southern, and northern eastern states were more likely to enroll in four-year institutions as compared to two-year colleges.

In contrast to Joshi’s et al. (2009) study, several scholars (e.g., Lee, 2011; McCullough, 2010; Perna, 2000) have focused on differential predictors of enrollment by focusing on student demographics. For instance, McCullough (2010) found that having a mother in a professional career field and being advised to attend a specific college decreased the odds of community college attendance. Further analyses indicated that students who needed remediation or tutoring, and were biology majors were more likely to attend community college. In contrast, students were less likely to attend community college when they majored in engineering. Finally, McCullough noted that higher degree aspirations were predictive of attendance at four-year institutions. This finding correlates with findings from Perna (2000) who found that Black high school students with baccalaureate degree aspirations were more likely to select four-year colleges as opposed to attending a community college first, and then transferring to a four-year institution.

Cost of institutional attendance is a recurrent theme in the literature base on college choice. For instance, McCullough (2010) found that students, who selected a postsecondary institution for financial related goals or attended college as a result of its reputation, were more likely to attend community colleges. Similarly, Bers and Galowich (2002) also found finances to be a significant predictor of community college attendance. However, they took a unique approach to examining college selection factors. Instead of inquiring with students about their selection factors, they examined the role of parent’s in the college choice

process. They found that three in every five parents noted that the final determination on whether the student attended a community college was decided by them as opposed to the student. As a result, their findings indicate that parents play a key role in determining whether students attend community colleges. When parents were asked what factors they considered most in selecting a college, parents noted that financial concerns, perceptions of their child's immaturity, and belief that their child was ambivalent about their collegiate endeavors were primary determinants of selecting community colleges.

It seems that beyond demographic characteristics, financial concerns and location are primary drivers of community college attendance (Bers & Galowich, 2002; Lee, 2011; McCullough, 2010; Somers et al., 2006). For example, Lee's (2011) findings complement McCullough's financial findings, as well as finance-related and location findings from Bers and Galowich (2002). Lee (2011) examined college choice factors for high achieving students who attended community colleges in Mississippi. Lee found that the primary rationales for enrollment were affordability, availability of funding (specifically scholarships), location convenience, accessibility for programs of study, and reputation of the institution. The author concluded that for high achieving students, "no college choice variables impacted community college attendance by high academic ability students more than the combined influence of the related factors of cost, scholarships, and location" (p. 88).

This notion, focused on financial concerns and location, complements the choice model developed by Somers et al. (2006). This model served as the theoretical framework for this study. Using data derived from focus groups with 223 participants across five community colleges, they identified 10 primary factors that are indicative of students' decisions to attend a community college. These factors were aggregated into three primary constructs, including aspirations, institutional characteristics, and finances. Aspirations are inclusive of students' general desire: to engage in postsecondary education and to overcome perceived odds which proffer that they will not succeed in their academic endeavors. Institutional characteristics are specific to the location and convenience of the institution, open-access policies, expeditious services (e.g., admission, advising, and financial aid), academic quality, friendly campus climate, and access to support services. Further, course offerings which are applied in nature, having direct relevance to the labor market are also an integral choice factor. Finances were identified as a recurrent selection factor for students. In particular, the price of attendance was a strong driver for community college enrollment. They noted that students paid little attention to the cost of enrollment after financial aid and were more concerned with the overall "sticker price."

While Somers' et al. (2006) work employed data from an expansive number of focus group participants; their work did not delineate how this model may be applicable to sub-populations, such as Black males. Thus, it is unclear whether this model has any applicability beyond a general student population. Given the unique socio-historical and cultural realities of Black males, our study sought to understand the utility of Somers' et al. (2006) model in explaining college-choice for Black men in community colleges.

## **Method**

Data analyzed in this study were drawn from the Educational Longitudinal Study (ELS: 2002/2006). ELS is a nationally representative survey of youth which follows them from high school into college and/or the workforce (Bozick & Lauff, 2007). ELS is a multi-stage longitudinal collection of data which is inclusive of three waves. In the first wave, conducted in 2002, 16,200 high school sophomores from around the nation were sampled about their experiences in high school. This collection occurred when students were in tenth grade (sophomores in high school) and served as the base year for the survey. Subsequent follow-ups occurred in 2004 and in 2006. During the 2004 follow-up, respondents were likely seniors in high school, though a small percentage had dropped out, attained a GED, or graduated early. The variables included in the 2004 collection focused on issues relevant to academic achievement, high school experiences, and early departure from high school.

The 2006 follow-up included students who were sophomores in college (assuming they transitioned directly from high school to college) or were already in the workforce (Ingels et al., 2007). In particular, this follow-up collected data specific to postsecondary access, the college choice process (the focus of this study), as well as workforce participation, experiences, and outcomes. An additional wave of ELS is set to be collected in 2012, in order to continue exploration of college and labor market experiences and outcomes. The data employed in this study are specific to the 2006 collection (the second follow-up). The sample population was restricted to students who were both Black, male, and who either enrolled in a public two-year or four-year institution. As such, data analyzed from this study represents 77,791 weighted cases, accounting for 35,665 public two-year students and 42,126 public four-year students. The next section discusses the variables that were employed from this dataset.

### ***Variables***

Given that this study is interested in delineating the factors that influence student's choice of attending a public two-year or four-year institution, institutional type attended served as the dependent variable. Students who attend four-year colleges and universities were coded "0", while those attending public two-year colleges were coded "1." Seventeen independent variables were explored in this study. Each represented a potential rationale indicated by students for selecting their postsecondary institution. These variables included the following: low expenses, availability of financial aid, courses/curriculum, school's athletic program, school's active social life, living at home, being away from home, low crime, job placement record, academic reputation, school's easy admission, degree in chosen field, racial makeup, school's size, school's geographic location, school same as one parent attended, and school's acceptance of college credit. For each of these items, participants could respond on a three unit scale, "1" not important, "2" somewhat important, and "3" very important. Some analyses included control variables to mitigate the effect of extraneous factors on the findings. These control variables included high school grade point average, the highest degree expected, parent's highest level of education, and family income. These variables were controlled for given that prior research has shown that they influence the college selection process (e.g., Bers & Galowich, 2002; Lee, 2011; McCullough, 2010; Somers et al., 2006).

### ***Analytic Procedure***

A three stage analytic process was employed for this study. In stage one, descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard errors) are used to explore the primary factors that motivate Black males to attend community college. Data are also reported for Black males who attend public four-year colleges for comparison purposes. The second stage used independent sample *t*-tests to investigate whether differences between college selection factors were evident between Black males by institutional type. The final analysis employed logistic regression to determine whether college selection factors were predictive of institutional attendance (after controlling for prior academic achievement, finances, parent's highest level of education, and educational goals). Logistic regression findings are reported in the form of odds ratios, a ratio which depicts the probability of the occurrence of an event (Rudas, 1998). In this case, the event examined was institutional type attended (e.g., community college, public four-year college). Data from this study were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) complex sampling package. Data were weighted based upon the cross-sectional weight from the second follow-up responses (F2QWT).

### ***Limitations***

This research has two limitations of note. First, the three unit scale employed for college selection factors relies upon a restricted range of response options (e.g., not important, somewhat important, very important). A more extensive range of answer options, such as a five point scale, would provide greater insight into the nuances of college selection factors. That being said, other national datasets collecting information on college choice (e.g., Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study) are limited to a dichotomous selection factors. As such, ELS data analyzed in this study represents the most appropriate (albeit limited), alternative for examining college

selection. Second, extant research often describes college selection as a *process* (Bers & Galowich, 2002) indicating that selection is dynamic and modification of selection factors change over time. Given the restricted nature of the dataset (similar to other national datasets), we can only present selection factors in a static fashion, illustrating students' perceptions at one point in time. Thus, this study should be viewed as exploratory in nature, providing insight for future studies on this topic.

## Findings

The first research question posed in this study examined the primary college selection factors for Black males who attended community colleges. As noted, seventeen individual items contributing to college selection were examined in relation to respondents' institutional type attended (e.g., public two-year vs. public four-year) (see Table 1). Ranked by mean scores, the top five selection factors among Black males who attended public two-year colleges were (in rank order): degree in chosen field ( $M = 2.74$ ,  $SE = .020$ ), course/curriculum ( $M = 2.66$ ,  $SE = .018$ ), job placement record ( $M = 2.65$ ,  $SE = .029$ ), availability of financial aid ( $M = 2.59$ ,  $SE = .034$ ), and academic reputation ( $M = 2.54$ ,  $SE = .037$ ). These factors align directly with the primary college selection factors for male community college students. Moreover, these top factors in college selection mirrored those of Black males who attended public four-year institutions. Interestingly, the least important selection factor, school same as one parent attended, was shared by both Black males attending public two-year ( $M = 1.43$ ,  $SE = .041$ ) and four-year ( $M = 1.28$ ,  $SE = .023$ ) institutions. This finding is somewhat intuitive, given that many Black male students are first generation college goers, 69.7% of public-two year and 58.2% of public four year students (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

The second research question examine whether there were differences in college selection factors indicated by Black males in community college as opposed to those who attended public four-year institutions. Of the seventeen variables examined, independent samples *t*-tests identified twelve significant between-group differences. Two year collegians were significantly less likely than their four year counterparts to be concerned with the availability of financial aid ( $t = -3.219$ ,  $p < .01$ ), the school's courses or curriculum ( $t = 2.038$ ,  $p < .001$ ), the school's active social life ( $t = -2.298$ ,  $p < .05$ ), being away from home ( $t = -2.932$ ,  $p < .01$ ), the college's academic reputation ( $t = -2.487$ ,  $p < .05$ ), whether the institution had a degree in their chosen field ( $t = -4.092$ ,  $p < .001$ ), the school's size ( $t = -2.859$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and the school's geographic region ( $t = -2.763$ ,  $p < .01$ ). In contrast, two year students were significantly more likely than four-year collegians to base college selection on their desire to live at home ( $t = 4.520$ ,  $p < .001$ ), the school's easy admission policies and processes ( $t = 5.054$ ,  $p < .001$ ), the school being the same as one their parent attended ( $t = 3.196$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and the school's acceptance of college credit ( $t = 2.845$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

The final research question focused on whether selection rationales were predictive of the type of institution attended after controlling for potentially mitigating factors. Using logistic regression, seventeen individual models were ran using each selection factor as a predictor and controlling for prior academic achievement, finances, parent's highest level of education, and educational goals. Controlling for these factors allowed us to ascertain whether selection factors differed above and beyond potentially mitigating variables (see table 2). For example, the first model ran indicated the low expenses were predictive of institutional attendance. As such, Black males who viewed low expenses as being integral to collection selection had a greater odds of attending a public two-year institution ( $OR = 1.37$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This was true even when holding constant the four control variables. Other significant findings also emerged from this analysis. Black males who attended community colleges had lower odds ( $OR = .64$ ,  $p < .05$ ) of selecting college based upon the availability of financial aid. This finding may be indicative of the higher costs associated with attending four-year colleges and universities.

The school's athletic program was also a significant predictor of institutional attendance. The odds of Black males attending community colleges for the school's athletic program were lower ( $OR = .70$ ,  $p < .01$ ), than for those attending public four-year institutions. Further, selecting college as a result of wanting to be away from home was also a significant predictor of institutional attendance. Community college males

Table 1  
Mean Scores and T-Values for Important Factors in College Selection

	Public 2-Year	SE	Public 4-Year	SE	T
Low expenses	2.44	.034	2.39	0.38	1.119
Availability of financial aid	2.59	.034	2.69	0.18	-3.219**
Courses/curriculum	2.66	.018	2.81	0.19	-2.038***
School's athletic program	2.02	.042	2.04	.041	-.334
School's active social life	2.26	.034	2.37	.027	-2.298*
Living at home	1.95	.052	1.64	.047	4.520***
Being away from home	2.17	.042	2.30	.029	-2.932**
Low crime	2.37	.049	2.35	.042	.395
Job placement record	2.65	.029	2.72	.024	-1.720
Academic reputation	2.54	.037	2.64	.027	-2.487*
School's easy admission	2.32	.037	2.05	.038	5.054***
Degree in chosen field	2.74	.020	2.86	.018	-4.092***
Racial makeup	2.03	.045	2.11	.040	-1.356
School's size	1.87	.048	2.05	.035	-2.859**
School's geographic location	2.01	.055	2.17	.025	-2.763**
School same as one parent attended	1.43	.041	1.28	.023	3.196**
School's acceptance of college credit	2.10	.047	1.94	.046	2.845**

Note: \* <.05, \*\*<.01, \*\*\*<.001.

indicate low odds of this selection factor ( $OR = .61, p < .001$ ), than four-year collegians. In terms of academic reputation, Black males attending community colleges had greater odds of placing importance on the academic reputation of the institution ( $OR = 1.46, p < .05$ ). Further, community college males were also more interested in the easier admissions policies at their respective institutions ( $OR = 1.27, p < .05$ ). Finally, the school's acceptance of college credit was also predictive of institutional attendance. Black males who placed greater emphasis on this selection factor had greater odds of attending a community college ( $OR = 1.30, p < .001$ ).

In each of the seventeen logistic analyses, the model was significantly predictive of institutional type attended, as indicated by the Wald F which is the significance of the overall model fit. As such, regardless of whether the selection factors were significant, it appears that institutional type attended is also a function of the control variables. Inclusive of the predictors and controls, each model account for 40 to 43% of the variance in institutional type. All in all, seven variables were significantly predictive of institutional attendance, even when controlling for mitigating factors. As such, while Black males tend to select college for the same reasons (as indicated by the five primary selection factors), the degree to which they do so differs by institutional type attended.

## Discussion

In sum, findings from this study indicated that Black males who attend community colleges select their institutions based upon having a degree in their chosen field, the coursework/curriculum, job placement record, availability of financial aid, and academic reputation. Independent *t*-tests indicated that Black males were more likely to select institutions based upon the desire to live at home, for the school's easy admissions policies, for the school being the same as one attended by the parent, and the school's acceptance of college credit. After controlling for potentially mitigating factors, findings from this study indicated that students interested in low expenses, the academic reputation of the institution, the school's easy admissions, and the school's acceptance of college credit were significantly more likely to attend community colleges.

Table 2  
Odds Ratios for Important Factors in College Selection, with Controls

	<i>OR</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	<i>Pseudo R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Wald F</i>
1. Low expenses	1.37**	1.08-1.74	.42	71.50***
2. Availability of financial aid	.64*	.46-.90	.41	53.64***
3. Courses/curriculum	.90	.65-1.23	.40	66.29***
4. School's athletic program	.70**	.56-.89	.43	62.03***
5. School's active social life	.837	.63-1.11	.40	61.55***
6. Living at home	1.28	.99-1.67	.40	63.95***
7. Being away from home	.61***	.51-.72	.42	53.67***
8. Low crime	1.04	.81-1.33	.40	56.81***
9. Job placement record	1.04	.77-1.40	.42	52.10***
10. Academic reputation	1.46*	1.04-2.06	.41	52.87***
11. School's easy admission	1.27*	1.05-1.52	.40	67.18***
12. Degree in chosen field	.79	.59-1.06	.40	64.27***
13. Racial makeup	1.05	.84-1.30	.40	63.01***
14. School's size	.86	.66-1.12	.40	63.55***
15. School's geographic location	.79	.61-1.02	.41	72.87***
16. School same as one parent attended	1.13	.87-1.47	.40	69.02***
17. School's acceptance of college credit	1.30***	1.13-1.48	.41	55.66***

Note: \* <.05, \*\*<.01, \*\*\*<.001.

Findings from this study seem to correlate with extant research on community college students. As noted, this study was guided by Somers' et al. (2006) identification of factors influencing college choice for community college students. Their findings around institutional characteristics and student finance closely mirror the results from this study. For example, Somers et al. noted that convenience and location of the institution were primary selection factors; similarly, findings from independent *t*-tests indicated that living at home was an important selection distinction between Black males at two- and four-year institutions. Somers et al. also found that open-access policies were important selection factors for collegians. In like manner, independent *t*-test and logistic regression analyses from this research indicated that the school's easy admissions were greater for Black males who attended community colleges. These findings regarding convenience and location also correlate with Lee's (2011) assertion that location and convenience are primary selection factors for community college students.

Furthermore, Somers et al. (2006) indicated the importance of academic quality in students' college choice process. Likewise, descriptive and logistic regression analyses indicated that the academic reputation of the institution was a primary factor for community college selection and represented distinctive differences between two- and four-year collegians. This finding seems congruent with Lee's (2011) research, which suggested that reputation of the institution was an important selection factor for students attending community colleges. Finally, Somers et al. (2006) found that financial considerations were strong motivators for attending community college. Likewise, availability of financial aid was found to be a top selection consideration for Black males who attended community colleges as well as those attending four-year institutions. This correlates with findings from Bers and Galowich (2002), Lee (2011) and McCullough (2010) that identified financial related concerns, costs, and availability of funding as integral college selection factors for community college students.

Findings also suggest that job placement record was an important selection factor for Black males in the community college. While economic drivers were found to be relevant to the college choice process by previous scholars (e.g., Betts & McFarland, 1995; Frenzos, 2005; Pennington et al., 2002), extant work has

focused on labor market trends such as unemployment., this finding illustrates that economic models of college enrollment are also informative for understanding their enrollment in community colleges.

## Conclusions

Our study lends insight into college selection factors for Black males who attend community colleges. In particular, our findings have identified that Black males are more likely to attend community colleges for academic reputation, transitional ease (e.g., school's easy admission, and school's acceptance of college credit), and cost. In light of Somers' et al. (2006) model, data we examined had a strong focus on institutional characteristics and finance with a lesser focus on aspiration factors. As a result, future studies could examine how students' personal aspirations influence the college selection process and whether aspirational factors differ between Black males in two- and four-year institutional contexts. Additionally, we found that job placement record was indicative of college selection. Given this finding and other works (e.g., Betts & McFarland, 1995; Frenzos, 2005) that highlight the importance of labor market effects on community college enrollment, further studies can also examine the effect of labor market trends on community college selection with a specific focus on Black males.

Finally, as noted earlier, college selection has been described as a process, indicating that selection is dynamic and modification of selection factors change over time (Bers & Galowich, 2002). As a result, future works could employ qualitative methodologies to examine how selection factors may illustrate dynamic importance over time. Such work could focus on the messages directed to Black males from peers, family, school officials and others, and how those messages are internalized and affect the decision-making of Black males. Quantitatively, the *process* of college selection could be examined over an extended period using data from high schoolers and employing time series or repeated measures approaches to better understand how college selection factors may change over time. To that end, we hope that our study can be used as a starting point for further examinations of college selection among Black males who have and continue to overwhelmingly select community colleges as their primary pathway into postsecondary education.

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