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BRIDGING THE GAP: CULTURAL WEALTH AND COLLEGE TRANSITIONS FOR UPWARD BOUND STUDENTS

A Dissertation Presented

by

ASHLEY J. CARPENTER

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2019

College of Education

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BRIDGING THE GAP: CULTURAL WEALTH AND COLLEGE TRANSITIONS FOR UPWARD BOUND STUDENTS

A Dissertation Presented

By

ASHLEY J. CARPENTER

Approved as to style and content by:

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Chrystal George Mwangi, Chair

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Jennifer Randall
Associate Dean of Academic Affairs
College of Education

DEDICATION

our backs
tell stories
no books have
the spine to
carry

women of colour - rupi kaur

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate this dissertation to the people who sacrificed the most so that I could earn this degree. I am so humbled by my supportive community that has guided my path. My Grandma Carpenter, Dr. Grandma Miller, Granddaddy, and Papa have served as the inspiration to this project and continually motivate me towards trying my hardest, and reinforcing that "life always has the best intentions for me."

I am so incredibly appreciative of my mother and her sweet guidance and wisdom. She is my inspiration and has changed the lives of so many. I think of moments watching her teach, and always wanting to grow up to be just like her. To my father, who is one of the smartest people I know, I thank him for always helping me solve problems and consistently reaffirming my worth. To my beautiful baby sister, Amber—the Beyoncé to my Solange—I am so proud of her and her blossoming law career. We are going to be a super powerful team; BBO.

I could not have done it without my incredible committee of Black woman scholars. I thank Dr. Chrystal George Mwangi for always believing in me and supporting *all* of my ideas (even the ones that needed a tad more guidance). Dr. Keisha Green for serving as an all-encompassing mentor, and continual support system. And Dr. Dania Francis for her proactive questioning of this topic, and continually pushing me towards new ideas and concepts. You all have enhanced my scholarship and life in so many ways, and I am so blessed to have such a supportive and dedicated committee.

I also acknowledge and appreciate the participants in this study, who have worked tirelessly to go the extra mile towards building a better future for themselves and others. Thank you for your voices!

ABSTRACT

BRIDGING THE GAP: CULTURAL WEALTH AND COLLEGE TRANSITIONS FOR UPWARD BOUND STUDENTS

MAY 2019

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Often when assessing the success of minoritized students, deficit models place the weight of low achievement on students' cultural identities, thus blaming them for their lack of success. However, many minoritized students combat this erasure by using their cultural capital, wealth, and identities to transition and persist through college. Using Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth model, this study explored the ways that 20 first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx Upward Bound alumni implemented their cultural wealth to transition and persist through the postsecondary pipeline, and investigated the role of an Upward Bound program preparing them for college. Through artifact/photographic elicited, semi-structured interviews, this study found that these Upward Bound alumni used their cultural wealth, comprised of their (1) Familial Influence and (2) Resistance to transition and persist through college. This study also found that this Upward Bound prepared them for college, by illustrating the importance of forming (3) Community and the development of their (4) College and Culture Predisposition. These findings significantly contribute to transition and persistence literature, as it furthers research surrounding the complexities of navigating the educational pipeline for first-generation,

low-income, Black, and Latinx college students. Additionally, this study adds to the discourse on Upward Bound programs and the necessity of providing students with holistic college knowledge, comprised cultural and academic provision. This study can be used to inform policies, practices, and programs with best practices to support the success of minoritized college students.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The transition from high school to college is both challenging and stressful for most students (Filipkowski, Heron, & Smyth, 2016); however, this transition is even more daunting for students of Color, first-generation students, and low-income students (Flennaugh, Howard, Malone, Tunstall, Keetin, & Chirapuntu, 2017; Lopez, 2005). First-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx students have the lowest college enrollment rates among traditional college-aged students (Cooper, 2011; Nuñez & Sansone, 2016; Sams-McPhaul, 2018). Even though there are higher numbers of minoritized students graduating from high school, many do not enroll in postsecondary institutions—and if they do attend college, they persist at much lower rates than their peers (Benette, & Okinaka, 1989; Booker, 2016). These outcomes are further exacerbated when examining the persistent systemic disparities, policy trends (i.e., pre-college program budget cuts, repeal of affirmative action), and inequitable K-12 school conditions of this student demographic (Flennaugh et al., 2017).

Considering these systemic and institutionalized inequities, researchers have found that pre-college programs serve as a successful tactic in improving college readiness for students of diverse backgrounds (Bloom, 2008; Hayward, Brandes, Kirst, & Mazzeo, 1997). However, there are a limited number of published studies that examine issues of college readiness and transition from the perspectives of pre-college program students and alumni—who viscerally confront the challenges that impact their educational experiences (Rubin & Silva, 2003). If policymakers, scholars, practitioners, and educators want to address the educational disparities of first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx college students, their voices need to be highlighted. Therefore, this study examined the experiences of twenty college students, who participated in

an Upward Bound program and used their cultural wealth to transition and persist through postsecondary education. Throughout this dissertation, Black is capitalized because it functions in my text and in American culture more broadly, as not just a descriptor of skin tone but as a designation of an ethnic group.

Overview of Upward Bound Program

Seeing the low rates of minoritized students transitioning into college, several institutionalized interventions and responses have been enacted to combat these disparities. One of the most prevalent intervention practices was the creation of college access and preparation programs. In the 1960s, as a way to help end the War on Poverty during the Johnson administration, federal TRiO programs were created to assist families and students entering higher education (Pitre & Pitre, 2009). TRiO is not an acronym, rather it refers to the three programs (Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Student Support Services) that were initially funded by Congress under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965. As a result, there are over 1,000 TRiO programs currently servicing students who live below the poverty line (COE, 2013; Graham, 2011).

Within this dissertation, I focused on the first TRiO pre-college program, Upward Bound. This pre-college program was created through the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, in conjunction with the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Partridge, 2018; Perna, 2002; Hayward et al., 1997). Upward Bound programs are federally funded grants that serve 9th through 12th grade high school students. These programs aid students in developing the skills and resources necessary to gain admittance to, and successfully complete college (Bloom, 2008; Strayhorn, 2011). Due to federal regulations, two-thirds of the students in the program must be considered low-income and first-generation, while the remaining one-third could be either. Notably, most

programs enroll a higher number of first-generation *and* low-income students than required (Dyce, Albold, & Long, 2013).

As a program, Upward Bound requires a meaningful commitment from its participants. During the academic semesters, students attend math, science, and English tutoring sessions after school. In addition, programs host field trips for students to visit local colleges and universities, participate in cultural awareness activities and career days, and attend workshops ranging from developing study skills to social activism (Sams-McPhaul, 2018; Villalpando & Solórzano, 2005). During the summer, students are offered a six-week intensive academic program where they have the opportunity to stay on their local college campus and take courses. The academic school year and summer components are implemented to aid students' educational experience, by providing a head start to coursework they will have to take during the following year and offering insight in areas of self and academic improvement (Perna, 2015).

Currently, it is estimated that there are over 780 Upward Bound programs across the country aiding over 60,000 first-generation, low-income students with their postsecondary pursuits (UMass News & Media Relations, 2018). Even though these programs have a solid lobby in Congress, strong bipartisan support, and have survived altering national economic conditions and political administrations over the past fifty years, there have been some new devastating changes. Upward Bound programs have to apply every five years to renew their federal grant funding. And unfortunately, within the current Presidential Administration's budget, these programs are sharing $254 million to support program staff and students in comparison to the $313+ million in previous years (Blumenstyk, 2017). These budget cuts have occurred through overt and covert ways. For example, over the past year, at least 40 colleges and organizations with Upward Bound programs have had their grant applications rejected by the

U.S. Department of Education for minor grammatical errors (e.g., double-spacing rules, use of the wrong font, or other minor technical glitches) (Blumenstyk, 2017). Cutting the budgets of these programs or eliminating them has detrimental effects on minoritized students' academic success. Legislative officials around the country acknowledge the importance of this program and have pleaded with Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos to "apply some common sense" to the Upward Bound application process (Blumenstyk, 2017). Vice President for Public Policy and Communications at the Council for Opportunity in Education, Kimberley Jones, has said that “programs like Upward Bound change the lives of real people, and members of Congress are witness to that” (Blumenstyk, 2017, para. 17). I, and many other scholars, practitioners, and policymakers know the importance of programs like these. Therefore it is imperative that research studies, similar to this dissertation, are implemented to accentuate the need and importance of Upward Bound programs across the nation.

Problem Statement

College graduates contribute higher levels of productivity to the economy in various ways, including higher earnings (compared to those without degrees), higher tax revenues to the government (local, state and federal), and lower rates of unemployment (Austin, 2010). For example, in 2016 about two-thirds of the labor force had at least some college experience (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). And at the individual level, high school graduates can earn approximately $1.2 million over a lifetime, whereas Bachelor's degree holders can earn approximately $2.1 million over a lifetime, and Master's degree holders can earn $2.5 million over a lifetime (Tamborini, Kim, & Sakamoto, 2015). Even though researchers have shown that most students attend college for monetary benefits (Britt, Mendiola, Schink, Tibbetts, & Jones, 2016), there are also other substantial benefits. Networking, developing your ways of thinking,

higher rates of wellbeing, happiness, and civic engagement are just some of the benefits that are afforded to students in their college environments (Helliwell, 2003).

While these outcomes illustrated the importance and benefits of higher education, there are several systemic problems that impact postsecondary degree attainment for minoritized students (classism, racism, sexism, etc.). As these larger cultural and societal issues impact minoritized students' educational trajectories, this next section addresses three larger issues that comprise my problem statement: (1) gaps in degree attainment due to systemic disparities, (2) the lack of rigorous assessment of pre-college programs, and (3) the lack of intersectional analyses and cultural validation of minoritized students in academia.

Gaps in Degree Attainment

When disaggregating postsecondary graduation rates of students that are stratified marginally (i.e., race/ethnicity, class, parental education level), there is a substantial gap in degree attainment (Brock, 2011; Gurin Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002). Approximately, 90% of low-income first-generation students do not graduate within six years, which is higher than the national average of 55% (PNPI, 2017). Of those percentages, a quarter of white and Asian-American students are first-generation, in comparison to 42% of Black students and 48% of Latinx students (PNPI, 2017). Furthermore, in the last twenty years, only 21% (increase from 15%) of Black students and 16% (increase from 9%) of Latinx students have attained Bachelor's Degrees, in comparison to 43% (increase from 29%) of their white peers (The College Board, 2013). Even though there is an increase of first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx students matriculating to college, there are systemic and institutionalized factors that impact their transition, persistence and graduation rates.

For example, Black and Latinx students experience oppression in their schools and society

through forms of classism, racism, academic tracking and other biases (Alemán & Gaytán, 2017; Chang, 2016; Oliver, Andemeskel, King, Wallace, Ben-Zeev, McDougal, & Monteiro, 2017). At the elementary and secondary levels, minoritized students attend schools whose educational conditions are severely inadequate in comparison to their peers (Blitz, Anderson, & Saastamoinen, 2016). Many of these students attend public schools in urban areas that have fewer experienced teachers, are suspended or expelled at triple the rate of their white peers, and placed in special education classes at very high rates (Mulroy, 2011; Knaggs, Sondergeld, & Schardt, 2015; Sams-McPhaul, 2018). The racial and classist implications of society often seep into our school systems, which create a cycle of underrepresentation and unpreparedness for higher education (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, Solórzano, 2009). Therefore, even in college, there is still a continual trend in which racial/ethnic minorities, low-income, and first-generation students lag behind their counterparts in matriculation and retention (Guiffrida, 2006; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Rhee, 2008).

Lack of Pre-College Program Evaluation

Pre-college programs aid in improving the college readiness of minoritized students (Bloom, 2008; Hayward et al., 1997; Kinney-Walker, 2016). These programs are designed to serve students who experience the largest barrier to accessing education: individuals whose parents did not attend college and those individuals who did not have the economic resources to attend college. Thousands of first-generation and low-income students receive academic assistance within their transition from high school to college through programs like Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Student Support Services. However, only a few pre-college programs have been rigorously evaluated (Buck, 1982; Gándara & Bial, 2001; McElroy & Arnesto, 1998; Partridge, 2018), and current empirical studies suggest that most of these

programs are only marginally successful (Carr, 2014; Myers & Schirm, 1996). This is because we know little about the long-term educational outcomes of these students. For example, many studies only explore the impact of Upward Bound programs on the college application process but do not examine what happens to students once in college.

Further, several of the Upward Bound evaluative processes are designed for general reporting (Cahalan & Goodwin, 2014; Sams-McPhaul, 2018), but are not about program improvement or participant knowledge. Scholarship is missing valuable information, particularly the opinions and experiences of participants, within evaluation data. Tierney and Hagedorn (2002) argue that “the point of evaluation ought not to be merely a theoretical argument or a bureaucratic requirement that does not lead to change” (p. 218). Inclusive evaluation processes of Upward Bound programs will add to pre-college literature, and improve access for minoritized students through enhanced program design. I contend that the feedback from actual Upward Bound program alumni, including this study’s participants, can significantly contribute to research about these federally funded programs and enhance programs’ overall effectiveness.

Cultural Invalidation

Within this dissertation study, the intersectional identities participants held impacted aspects of their transition to college. Minoritized students are often exposed to white ideologies that devalue, marginalize, and silence their racial and cultural backgrounds (Cooper, 2011; Museus, Yi & Saelua, 2017). The educational practices implemented through academia, often create and sustain a monoculture and monolingual environment based on white, male, cisgender, middle-class expectations (Gopaldas, 2013; Paris & Alim, 2014). In this environment, minoritized students are forced to erase their cultural identities, in order to flourish within the "standard" of American education (Valenzuela, 1999). When the culture of minoritized students

is erased from their academic experience, it has dire consequences for their social and educational outcomes. Some of these negative attributes include lower rates of success, retention, graduation, matriculation, sense of belonging, and commitment to their institutions (Brown, Morning, & Watkins, 2005; Johnson, Soldner, Leonard, Alvarez, Inkelas, Rowan-Kenyon, & Longerbeam, 2007; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Given that there is a damaging absence of cultural integration and appreciation of minoritized students, understanding their cultural assets is necessary for examining their transition and persistence experiences.

Gaps in degree attainment due to systemic and institutionalized barriers, lack of rigorous assessment on pre-college programs, and the lack of intersectional analyses and cultural validation of minoritized students are just a few of the issues present when assessing the achievement of minoritized students and pre-college programs. This dissertation aimed to add a rigorous culturally responsive lens to the scholarship on pre-college programs, and minoritized students' transition and persistence.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the experiences of first-generation, Black and Latinx, Upward Bound alumni as they transitioned into and through postsecondary education using photograph/artifact elicited semi-structured interviews. Since first-generation, Black and Latinx college students have been systemically disenfranchised within various forms of the hegemonic education system (Hatt-Echeverria & Urrieta, 2003; Berliner, 2006), this study situated the students' narratives as essential provisions in addressing inequities. As indicated in the sections above, minoritized students' culture is often not celebrated in or out of the classroom. However, many minoritized students combat this erasure by using their cultural capital and wealth to transition and persist through college (Samuelson & Litzler, 2016;

Strayhorn, 2010; Yosso, 2005; Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002). Therefore, the purpose of this study was twofold, as it: (1) explored the ways that first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx college students used their cultural wealth to persist and transition into/through post-secondary education, and (2) investigated the role of an Upward Bound program preparing them for college. I am guided by the following research questions:

- How do first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx Upward Bound college students use their cultural wealth within their transition and persistence through college?
- How do first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx students perceive the role of Upward Bound in preparing them for college?

The first research question examined how students used their cultural wealth and capital to overcome challenges on campus, which aided in their transition and persistence in college. The second research question addressed the skills and knowledges students received through participating in the Upward Bound program. As these students have graduated from high school years prior to the interview, artifact and photograph elicitation helped them remember their program experience. Furthermore, the second question was crucial due to the financial status and credibility of current Upward Bound programs. As aforementioned, within this political climate, there has been a dramatic decrease in federal funds for Upward Bound programs (Blumenstyk, 2017). These budget cuts threaten the ability of programs to continue extending higher education opportunities to students from diverse social and economic backgrounds. The need for federal funding is important, and an increased and sustained federal funding agenda depends on evidence that these programs are effective and successfully impact the lives of their participants (Perna, 2015). This study provided scholars, practitioners, and policymakers with information

needed to validate minoritized students' cultural wealth, and better understand the impact of pre-college programs.

Research Design Overview

In understanding the implications of (re)affirming students' culture within their transition to college, this qualitative study used Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) model as a guiding theoretical framework. The CCW model was most appropriate for this study because it viewed students' cultural identity as a valuable and important part of their learning process and endorsed the cultural resources students acquired from their communities and family (Yosso, 2005). The qualitative design allowed me to gain an experiential understanding of the participants' perspectives, and to make meaning of their experiences (Stake, 2010). Facilitating photograph/artifact elicitated interviews allocated an opportunity to form a deeper and authentic understanding on how first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx college students used their cultural wealth to transition to college. I also was able to examine students' perceptions of an Upward Bound program on their cultural wealth and academic and social development.

I used purposeful sampling to select twenty sophomores through senior first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx college students who are alumni of an Upward Bound program in the Northeast. The data generated from the study was analyzed using narrative inquiry and thematic analysis. Counter-storytelling and the inclusion of narratives provided a methodology that is rooted in lived experiences and social realities (Flennaugh et al., 2017). In addition to the narratives and photographs/artifacts from participants, this research project was informed by a review of the literature on pre-college programs, cultural wealth and capital, college transition and persistence, and the institutionalized structures of the academy for minoritized populations.

Significance

This dissertation is significant for many reasons. It (1) addressed the need of rigorous participant-driven qualitative research about pre-college programs and persistence, (2) illustrated the significance of having culturally competent and equitable college campuses and pre-college programs, and (3) justified the necessity of more culturally sustaining and asset-based frameworks in research and praxis.

Participant-Driven Qualitative Research

There are several significant studies on increasing the educational attainment of minoritized students, however many of these studies have a quantitative approach and were unable to conclusively identify specific strategies of Upward Bound programs and services (da Silva Cardoso, Dutta, Chung-Yi, Johnson, Kundu & Fong, 2013; Moore, 1997). Most studies evaluating Upward Bound programs discovered quantifiable changes in such areas as participants' academic achievement levels, or rates of high school graduation or college enrollment—but these were determined by standardized measures (Myers & Schirm, 1996; Nettles, Scatton, Steiberg & Tyler, 2011; Richardson, 2008). Very few studies have examined *how* these students were able to achieve academically and socially. Therefore this dissertation is significant, as it used students' narratives to inform the field of higher education of the impact of pre-college programs, examined the barriers experienced in post-secondary education, and provided mechanisms for overcoming these obstacles to be academically successful.

Using the first-hand experiences of first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx college students provided an organic contribution to discourses surrounding policy, practice, school reform, and federally funded programs, by focusing on the most important constituents in higher education—the students. This research is necessary because it highlighted a community

that is often marginalized within higher education; and "as a nation, not tapping into the tremendous potential of our low-income, first-generation, minority youth will have serious economic and social consequences. Addressing the aspiration-attainment gap is critical to the future of our country" (Dyce et al., 2013, p. 147).

Significance to College Campuses and Pre-College Programs

College Campuses. Acknowledging and celebrating minoritized college students needs to be a priority for all academic institutions—from pre-K to graduate school. This study should be significant to colleges and universities' faculty, staff and administrators, as it provided some insight into their diverse student body populations. As all students, regardless of background, are adjusting to their new college environments, this period is particularly critical for minoritized students (Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012). Issues of leaving families (and their cultures) at home, and feeling uncomfortable and "out of place" are some of the nuances of students' racialized college experiences (Lopez, 2005). For many minoritized students, their perceptions of campus climate are hostile (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harris, 2016) and can lead to difficulty in adjusting academically, socially, and formulating a sense of belonging (Booker, 2016; Johnson et al., 2007). Therefore, it is imperative that students of all backgrounds are immersed in an environment where they can encounter various racial and ethnic differences, build awareness and appreciation for those differences, feel like they belong, and are not discriminated against through forms of racism, classism, and microaggressions (Alemán & Gaytán, 2017; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). Colleges and universities can use participants' narratives and findings from this dissertation to alter their campus climate strategies and programming.

Pre-College Programs. The goal of most pre-college programs is to increase the rates of students enrolling in and graduating from post-secondary education (Knaggs et al., 2015; Perna, 2002; Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2015). In support of this programmatic mission, this dissertation stimulated discourse and research around the success of pre-college students' transition and persistence to postsecondary education. Therefore, this dissertation research is significant to pre-college outreach programs and affiliates because it examined the programmatic approaches used to transition from high school to college, and what empowered students to persist once enrolled. The minoritized college students, who participated in this pre-college program, are valuable resources in determining effective strategies and culturally affirming approaches. While using their insightful narratives, this dissertation provided pre-college programs and affiliates with more information about the complexities of navigating structural forces to successfully transition and persist.

Culturally Sustaining / Asset-Based Frameworks

This study situated the pursuit of postsecondary education within a framework that acknowledged the cultural and structural issues that have consistently afflicted minoritized college students. It was important that this analysis was culturally competent and holistic in order to validate students' stories and counternarratives. There are a number of foundational studies that have asset-based frameworks (Garrison & Gardner, 2012; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000; Tierney, 1992, 1997, 1999), but this is somewhat atypical in higher education research. Unfortunately, many models use a cultural-deficit approach and are not appropriate when examining a demographic of complex identities (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Tinto, 1975, 1993). Chapter two will go into more depth on the consequences of these deficit models.

Over the past years, there has been a demographic shift within the traditional college-going population, and these models are not applicable. The traditional view of an undergraduate college student as an 18 to 22-year-old, full-time, white person, who lives on campus, only represents a small portion of students on contemporary college campuses (Keller, 2001; Kerby, 2015; Museus & Harris, 2010). Students of Color, first-generation, low-income, and other historically underrepresented and under-resourced groups are attending college at much higher rates than before (Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000; Nuñez & Sansone, 2016). There needs to be more empirical assessments on integrating cultural components or strategies to enhance *all* students' college experience (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002; Villalpando & Solórzano, 2005).

Therefore, I used Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth model to frame my inquiry. Yosso's (2005) approach is significant because it further explained how students in this study navigated college and overcame their challenges due to their various forms of capital (aspirational, familial, linguistic, navigational, resistance, and social). There is a need for pre-college program literature to use more culturally responsive frameworks, like Yosso's CCW model, to investigate the success of their programs and students. If students are viewed from a deficit lens, their experiences will be invalidated and posited as invaluable in academic spaces (García & Guerra, 2004).

Identifying successful and unsuccessful aspects of pre-college programs for minoritized students contributed to the educational literature needed for practitioners, educators, administrators, and families assisting minoritized students throughout the higher education pipeline. Throughout this dissertation, it was important not just contextualize the successful aspects of students' experiences, but to unpack the unsuccessful or destructive components that hindered their persistence and transition. Their feedback and narratives can help create policy

and further discourse around altering or discontinuing harmful practices in college access programs and campuses.

Definitions

For consistency of interpretation within this dissertation study, I want to provide the following list of definitions in order to clarify meaning and alleviate possible misunderstanding of terminology.

Black

Black is defined as the racial identity of descendants of African countries and territories. Within this analysis, the word "Black" is capitalized to emphasize the complex cultures rooted in this identity (Oliver, et al., 2017). Furthermore, I have also decided to not capitalize the word "white" within this analysis, in order to dismantle the unmerited power and privilege of white identities within historical contexts (Izadi, 2011).

Classism

The horizontal stratification of a population to designate differences based on wealth, income, occupation, status, group identification, level of consumption, and family background (Gordon, 1994).

Continuing-generation

Students who have at least one parent or guardian that has earned a Bachelor's degree (Ishitani, 2006).

Counternarratives

Narratives from the vantage point of those who have been historically marginalized. There are three types of counternarratives: personal stories, other people's stories, and composite

stories (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). For this dissertation, the counternarratives were constructed using the personal stories that depict the students' perspectives and lived experiences.

Culture

Commonly shared norms, behaviors, and values of a particular group, which may include language, food, music, clothing, rituals, grooming, etc. (Villalpando & Solórzano, 2005). Within this dissertation, culture was dynamic, cumulative and influenced students' processes of identity formation. Students' described their culture as intersections of their race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, and language.

Cultural Capital

The social assets (education, intellect, style of speech, clothing, etc.) that promote social mobility and enable an individual to interpret various codes of the dominant culture (Bourdieu, 1986). The research on cultural wealth suggests that individuals possess different amounts of cultural capital, which explains why some students meet school standards and finally achieve higher levels of education, and why other students do not (Gartman, 2002; Yosso, 2005).

Cultural Wealth

"An array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and used by communities of Color to survive and resist racism and other forms of oppression" (Yosso, 2005, p. 71).

First-generation

Students whose parents or legal guardian did not complete a baccalaureate degree. Thus, the student will be the first person within their immediate family to earn a bachelor's degree. (The College Board, 2013).

Institutional Oppression

The systematic mistreatment of people within a social identity group, supported and enforced by the society and its institutions, solely based on the person's membership in the social identity group (García & Guerra, 2004).

Latinx

A term used here in respect to all genders, and accurately reflects the political, geographical, and historical links among Latin people (Ramirez & Blay, 2017).

Low-income

Students whose family income is below 125 percent of the federally established poverty level for their family size (The College Board, 2013).

Minoritized

Unlike the word minority, this word is used to emphasize the social constructs that have enacted less power and representation of disenfranchised groups in society. Demographics that are minoritized often endure discrimination and prejudices that are forced upon them because of external factors out of their control (Okun, 2015).

Persistence

Students' decisions to remain or withdraw from the college or university they are attending. This is also a characteristic which explains why some students are able to overcome adversity and be successful within their academic institutions (Benette & Okinaka, 1989).

Pre-college programs

An academic outreach and access program for students prior to attending an institution of higher education. Typically, the programs are university or college-based providing academic skills to middle through high school students (Dyce et al., 2013; Thayer, 2007). As there are

outreach programs that start at the middle school level, pre-college programs denoted within this study primarily examined high school-based programs.

Racism

A system of exploitation, ignorance, and power used to oppress people on the basis of race, ethnicity, mannerisms, color, culture, etc. (Chang, 2016).

Retention

Refers to a student who has remained enrolled at the same institution for consecutive semesters (Morales, 2014).

Transition

The period of change that students go through from high school to college (Filipkowski et al., 2016).

Underrepresented

Populations that are inadequately represented in higher education (Pyne & Means, 2013).

Students of Color

Students who represent historically underrepresented racial backgrounds in higher education (e.g., African Americans, Latina/os/x, Chicanas/os, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, Native Americans) (Yosso et al., 2009). Yet there is this hidden erasure that occurs using this label, that haphazardly groups all non-white students together. As I argue that these labels further negate students' intersectional identities, this study uses this term to describe Black and Latinx students.

Organization of Study

Chapter One provided an overview of this dissertation topic, including the study's background and purpose, research questions, research design, significance, and definitions of

relevant terminology. Chapter Two is a comprehensive review of relevant key literature related to minoritized students in college, particularly within their transition from high school to college, and how this impacted persistence at their institutions. This review examined the importance of cultural capital within their postsecondary education, as well as present literature on the societal and institutionalized inequities that impacted their college experiences. Chapter Two concludes with a summary of my theoretical framework, and an examination of Upward Bound programs on academic achievement. Chapter Three outlined the research methodology used within this study. This section included a discussion of qualitative methods, narrative inquiry, participant selection, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. Chapter Four provided an outline of my themes, surrounding participants' (1) **Familial Influence** and (2) forms of **Resistance** used throughout their transition and persistence to college. Participants also talked about how Upward Bound prepared them for college, by talking about the importance of forming (3) **Community** and the development of their (4) **College and Culture Predisposition.** These themes corresponded with Yosso's (2005) six forms of Community Cultural Wealth. Lastly, Chapter Five will conclude with a discussion of findings and provide implications for policy and practice.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examined literature through five sections: (1) the barriers minoritized students face in the educational pipeline related to college preparedness and how these obstacles impact their college attainment and sense of belonging, (2) the impact of deficit models on low-income, first-generation, Black and Latinx college student persistence, (3) how students use their assets to transition and navigate college, and the importance of institutional structures examining student success through asset-based lenses, (4) Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth model as the study's theoretical framework and (5) an analysis of pre-college programs'–Upward Bound specifically–processes to aid students with their application and transition into college. Notably as this dissertation advocates for asset-based frameworks, I examined my literature using several contemporary texts from marginalized authors. Their scholarship is rooted in culturally affirming practices and positionalities, that provide a holistic lens in examining minoritized student success.

Persistence in College

The persistence of low-income, first-generation, Black and Latinx students in higher education must be a priority for academic institutions. Within this review, college persistence referred to students' decisions to remain or withdraw from the university they are attending (Booker, 2016). Minoritized students are more susceptible to push-outs, drop-outs and withdrawal from college in comparison to their peers (Perna, 2015; Wolniak, Davis, Williams & Casano, 2016). Noting these disparities, student persistence and retention has become a major issue within the field of higher education. Not only does retention impact individual students, but it also impacts institutions. For example, in a study of graduation rates of 1,699 four-year

colleges and universities around the United States, Raisman (2013) determined that U.S. colleges and universities collectively lose approximately $16.5 billion in revenue annually due to student departure. When students leave their institutions, colleges and universities are not only losing students' tuition money and potential funds they might have spent on campus, but also the costs of recruiting other students to keep up their student body numbers (Modo Labs Team, 2018). And high attrition rates are a poor reflection on institutions (Chang, Cerna, Han, & Saenz, 2008). The difference in price for recruiting a new student and retaining an existing one can be as much as $5,460 to $35 (Raisman, 2013). Thus, the cost of admitting a new student is on average much higher than retaining a current student. Even though students should not be treated as commodities or monetary objects, we must question why institutions are not putting more focus on retaining students.

As these attrition rates impact universities at the macro level, college retention directly affects students on the micro level. The decision to withdraw from college often represents a significant loss in time, energy, money, and an overall investment of college degree attainment (da Silva Cardoso et al., 2016; Morales, 2014). However, many of the factors that influence students' decisions are external (out of their power) and are not decided by one sole reason. The institutional type, levels of student engagement at a university, types of academic advising support, campus racial climate, faculty interactions, and peer support are just some of the factors that impact student persistence (Harwood et al., 2018; Kosciw, Greytak, Giga, Villenas, & Danischewski, 2016; Rankin & Reason, 2008; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

Since colleges are seeing the impact of attrition rates, there have been various college-wide initiatives implemented to aid retention. Initiatives like first-year courses and programs, cultural centers, formation of online community programs, campus advocacy offices,

implementation of student success services, and academic skill building workshops for students and parents, are just some of the strategies colleges have employed to aid student retention (Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007; Johnson et al., 2007; West, Donovan & Daniel, 2016). Although researchers have shown that several of these institutionalized initiatives do aid student retention, many of these strategies are segmented and not strategically integrated into the overall curriculum, or academic and social experience (Vega, Moore, & Miranda, 2015). This study can be used to inform colleges and universities on how to better serve minoritized students, by learning from student experiences. Integrating students' voices within institutional structures can help strengthen fundamental components of college retention practices. Essentially, colleges and universities must stop trifling around the margins of retention and establish a unified and concentrated effort (Tinto, 2009).

Barriers to Persistence

In understanding the high school to college transitional complexities of first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx Upward Bound college students, we must examine the larger issues that are present. While there are numerous educational barriers linked to this student group (e.g., systemic racism and classism, less resource support to go to college, lack of knowledge about the value of a college education, lower educational aspirations, lack of parental knowledge of the college application process) (Chen, 2005; Choy, 2001; Conley, 2007; Engle & Tinto, 2007; Gibbons & Shoffher, 2004); this dissertation primarily examined belonging and being underprepared for college, due to the direct correlation these aspects have on minoritized student transition and persistence to college. Although I am only focusing on these two issues, they are not mutually exclusive, as they overlap between belonging, readiness, and the other educational barriers mentioned above.

Over the past three decades, college readiness and sense of belonging have emerged as fundamental concepts in college student persistence literature (Benette & Okinaka, 1989; Booker, 2016; Camara, 2013; Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007; Hausmann et al., 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Lombardi, Seburn, & Conley, 2011; Museus et al., 2017; Musoba, 2011). Strayhorn (2015) implemented a study on young Black men in STEM and found that their academic preparation before college, and feeling like they belonged to their discipline were critical factors in being academically successful. Inequity in college preparation is particularly an issue for specific racial and ethnic sub-groups, as well as low-income and first-generation college students. Lack of academic achievement and preparation for minoritized students is typically attributed to cultural and environmental differences that impact school performance (Stewart, 2007; Tsoi-A-Fatt Bryant, 2015). However, scholars, teachers, and practitioners must provide equal focus on the deficiencies and disparities in school systems, particularly in high minoritized areas.

Furthering this, even if minoritized students are able to apply and enter post-secondary education, many are unable to persist due to feeling like they do not belong. Sense of belonging is directly correlated to college students' engagement, persistence, course grades, and academic motivation (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005; Johnson et al., 2007; Museus et al., 2017). Therefore, if students feel like they do not belong, they will likely not be successful in their academic environments—thus adding to university attrition rates. If first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx students are not academically prepared prior to enrolling into college, nor have the social or academic supports to feel like they belong once there, colleges and universities will be at a significant disadvantage for not retaining them.

College Readiness

Scholars Lombardi, Seburn, and Conley (2011) have defined college readiness, as the combination of core academic knowledge, skills, and habits needed to be successful in higher education without any remedial coursework or training. Others have measured college readiness through quantifiable measures like SAT/ACT scores, Advanced Placement (AP) courses and exams; enrollment in certain rigorous mathematics and science courses; high school graduation rates; and high school exit exams (ACT, 2013; Camara, 2013; Musoba, 2011). However, within this dissertation, I expanded the understanding of college readiness to provide an inclusive definition for minoritized students. Therefore, college readiness was holistically defined to include the ways students understood traditional college culture, cultivated study habits, and accessed support and resources once enrolled (Lombardi et al., 2011).

A number of scholars have examined college readiness through a deficit-based lens, centering on 'deficiencies' produced from minoritized students' communities and families. For example, the lack of academic achievement for this student group is often attributed to the cultural and environmental differences, which impact school performances (Steward, 2007). As I acknowledge that certain cultural tropes hinder some of the success of minoritized students in higher education, there must be a stronger focus on unpacking the systemic disparities that exist within these school systems. Many minoritized students lag behind their peers due to inadequate courses, resources, and support systems in schools (Flennaugh et al., 2017; Nuñez & Sansone, 2016). Therefore, this section of the literature review examines college readiness through two primary educational issues for minoritized students: access to rigorous coursework and the lack of experienced teachers in their schools.

Rigorous Coursework. According to Dougherty and Mellor (2010), the completion of rigorous college-level coursework is more predictive of college success than grade point average,

standardized testing data, and class rank. A 2002 report from The College Board (2013), stated that a rigorous high school curriculum is one of the most significant factors in predicting college degree attainment. Further concretizing this study, ACT, Inc. put out a report in 2013 stating that "students today do not have a reasonable chance of becoming ready for college unless they take a number of additional higher-level courses beyond the minimum core" (p. 1). In this report, they found that almost 28% of students who enter a four-year college or university must enroll in at least one remedial course, and nearly 40% of students entering a 2-year post-secondary program must take at least one remedial course. And unfortunately, about 70% of students who take one or more remedial course at these institutions will not earn a college degree (ACT, Inc., 2013). Often these types of rigorous classes (e.g., AP, IB, dual enrollment) provide content knowledge, study skills, and cognitive strategies necessary to be successful in these college environments (Tsoi-A-Fatt Bryant, 2015). Scholar Musoba (2011) found that taking rigorous courses, particularly math classes, is directly linked to higher levels of college readiness. And students that have access to these college-level classes in high school are more likely to succeed in higher education (McGee, 2013; Roderick, Coca & Nagaok, 2011). Even though some schools may not offer AP classes, there has to be a full complement of academic courses available to students (i.e., algebra I, geometry, algebra II, calculus, biology, chemistry, and physics) in order to for these students to thrive and compete with their more privileged peers (Soares, Rodrigues & Delgado, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Unfortunately, even if these types of classes are offered in minoritized students' high schools, many Black and Latinx students do not enroll in them. Often Black and Latinx student students are steered towards taking lower-level courses, instead of college preparatory classes (Moore, Slate, Edmonson, Combs, Bustamante, & Onwuegbuzie, 2010). A study presented by

the U.S. Department of Education (2014) reported that Black and Latinx students represent 37% of high school enrollment, but only 27% of students will take AP courses—and of that small percentage only 26% of students will even take the exam for college credit. Access to rigorous coursework matters, particularly for minoritized students. These courses help students develop the practices, skills, and confidence needed to be academically engaged at the collegiate level. Unfortunately, students of Color "are not getting the same opportunity to learn as their white classmates" said past Secretary of Education John King in an interview with reporters in Las Vegas (Morton, 2017, para. 3). Since fewer students of Color are enrolled in these classes, fewer students are likely to graduate from college due to lack of rigorous academic exposure and starting college with no academic credit (Kuhn, 2016). King believes that if minoritized students do not have the same resources as their peers, they will earn less, be positioned in lower serving jobs, or even end up in prison (Morton, 2017). Scholars Klopfenstein and Thomas (2010) agree by saying that "AP, IB, and dual enrollment is a way to close the achievement gap" (p. 182), and rigorous high school coursework is just one step of the high school to college pipeline.

Teacher Quality. Low-income, first-generation, Black and Latinx students attend schools that are often under-resourced, lack quality teachers, and are in impoverished areas. In a study about college readiness, scholars Dougherty, Mellor, and Jian (2006) found that the quality and intensity of college preparatory and advanced placement courses must be improved for students across the nation. The National Equity Atlas (2014) reported that among all public schools, 42.62% of students of Color were in high-poverty schools while only 7.64% of white students were. The lack of equipment and books, district financial support, rigorous instruction, and academic and social support systems impact the college readiness of these students (Morales, 2014; Tierney & Jun, 2001). And just as it is important for minoritized students to take rigorous

classes before entering college, those classes have to be taught by qualified teachers. “Most state standards do not define rigorous outcomes at the course level, so teachers are not teaching to essential course outcomes and students aren’t learning them” (ACT, Inc., 2013). The No Child Left Behind organization deems “highly-qualified” teachers as individuals who have obtained (a) a bachelor’s degree, (b) full state certification or licensure, and (c) prove that they are knowledgeable about the subject they teach. Therefore, these school districts must be responsible for providing students with qualified teachers that have this criterion.

However, the onus should not be solely placed on teachers for the lack of college preparation in these low-income schools. Heltebran (2008) revealed that teaching at any level is complex and takes years of practice. Therefore, ‘good teaching' is subjective. Guarino, Brown, and Wyse (2011) found that at the core, good teaching involves the interweaving of content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and appreciation of the multifaceted nature of students. Even though an educator may have gone through certain licensures to teach, it does not mean that they will teach in a highly-qualified manner. We need teachers in the classrooms of minoritized students to not just know about content, but how to teach effectively and efficiently to this demographic (Center for Teaching Quality, 2017). Most importantly great teachers are not born into their expertise, they evolve with experience.

Additionally, many Black and Latinx students are taught by white teachers, which may impact how their culture and cultural wealth is valued in the classroom. Currently, there are more students of Color in public schools than there are white students (Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015). And as expressed in earlier sections, the education system is still dominated by the white gaze of academic achievement (Han, 2012; Nettles et al., 2011). What further complicates this argument is that white teachers often come from white neighborhoods, attended predominantly

white colleges, and were taught by white teacher educators (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2004). Thus, it is imperative for teachers to examine their white privilege and white identities before engaging in educational practices with students of color. Scholar Geneva Gay (2000) says,

> While most teachers are not blatant racists, many probably are cultural hegemonists. They expect all students to behave according to the school's cultural standards of normality. When students of color fail to comply, the teachers find them unlovable, problematic, and difficult to honor or embrace without equivocation (p. 46).

When white teachers recognize their positionality in relation to their minoritized students, they will serve as a better resource to them. Linking academic achievement to cultural awareness is imperative for all students, particularly students of Color, to excel within the overall educational system.

Section Summary. This section of the literature review examined college readiness, and the importance of having access to rigorous coursework (e.g., AP classes, IB classes, dual enrollment) and quality culturally affirming teachers. Access to rigorous coursework for minoritized students is crucial because it provides students with the academic skills and knowledge needed to be successful and competitive in college (Kuhn, 2016). Unfortunately, even if these students are offered rigorous classes, many minoritized students are discouraged from enrolling (Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2010). The lack of quality teaching and advising in conjunction with the lack of rigorous coursework, impacts students' transition from high school to college. As there is literature on rigorous coursework and quality instruction, there is very little research about examining the two issues through students' voices. This study contributed to the literature by addressing this gap through students' stories, particularly as many of these

students may have been able to navigate some of these college readiness challenges given their participation in an Upward Bound program.

Sense of Belonging

This dissertation examined the pathway from high school graduation to college graduation, by understanding the factors that impact minoritized student transition and persistence. Minoritized students must be academically prepared for entering college to compete with their affluent peers. In addition, these students must be supported and validated once in college. Research on low-income, first-generation, Black and Latinx college students found that sense of belonging in college is positively associated with persistence, retention, and degree attainment (Booker, 2016; Museus et al., 2017). As humans, we all want to fit in or belong to certain groups, and on college campuses this is no different. Sense of belonging is defined as the psychological sense of being a valued and appreciated member of one's respective college community (Hausmann et al., 2007). Baumeister and Leary (1995) define *belonging* as an individual's sense of being valued, included, encouraged and overall accepted by others. *Sense of belonging* is defined by Hagerty and scholars (1992) as "the experiences of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment" (p. 173). Irrefutably sense of belonging or connection to one's environment is one of the most powerful human needs, since we all are looking to form and maintain social bonds with one another (Booker, 2016).

Students of Color who feel like they belong have higher GPA scores (Museus et al., 2017), and levels of persistence and retention (Johnson et al., 2007; Booker, 2016). For example, an earlier study with Hurtado and Carter (1997) analyzed the concept of belonging, by developing a scale using Bollen and Hoyle's (1990) sociological theory of individuals' perceived

sense of cohesion. They found that beyond the first-year, most Latinx students felt racial hostility and perceived their campus climate as hostile, which impacted their matriculation after junior year. Similarly, using Hurtado's and Carter's (1997) work, Hausmann and colleagues (2007) found that sense of belonging was the most significant factor for the intent to persist for 254 Black and 291 white students at a predominantly white institution (PWI). Therefore, if *any* student feels disconnected from their campus environment, their engagement in and out of the classroom could be hindered.

Being involved, engaged, and affiliated to one's campus impacts students' social integration and academic progress (Dyce et al., 2013; Gándara & Bial, 2001; Solórzano et al., 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1998). Students, particularly Black and Latinx students, who feel a sense of affiliation to their universities are more likely to feel as though they belong on their campuses (Booker, 2016). If students feel connected to their universities, they are more likely to work towards the rigorous expectations associated with higher education successfully (Freeman et al., 2007). Unfortunately, many minoritized students (based on class status, racial identity, and college-generation status) do not feel like they are a part of their universities. Whether they are othered through microaggressions, discrimination, hate crimes, students consistently feel unwelcome (Solórzano et al., 2000; Yosso et al., 2000). In unpacking sense of belonging from a lens of structural racism, the next two sections address the impact of discrimination and microaggressions.

Discrimination. Several studies address the impact of prejudice and discrimination of minoritized students on college campuses (Chavous, Harris & Rivas, 2004; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Lopez, 2005; Okun, 2015; Yosso et al., 2009; West et al., 2016). Feagin and colleagues (1992) contend that discriminatory racial incidents include verbal aggression (e.g., racist graffiti

and jokes), physical assault, cultural dismissal, and overall stereotyping. Even though minoritized students may not experience all of these forms of discrimination, studies show that students rank racial bias, discrimination, and prejudice as the most significant problems they face at their PWIs (Ehrlich, 1994; Radloff & Evans, 2003; Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007; West et al., 2016). Researchers have found that students of Color feel most discriminated by their teachers, peers, and administrators (Nettles et al., 2011; Okun, 2015; Oliver et al., 2017). And due to the frequency of these incidents, many minoritized students internalize these biases. For example, Hurtado, Carter, and Spuler (1996) address the internalized messages of discrimination by saying that "even the most talented Latinos are likely to have difficulty adjusting if they perceive a climate where majority students think all minorities are special admits [and] Hispanics feel like they do not ‘fit in'" (pg. 19). Unfortunately, many students internalize these messages of discrimination because they are more difficult to pinpoint as discriminatory since these biases are not as overt as other forms of racism. Thus, it is crucial to contextualize discrimination on the interpersonal level, because several studies that address racial group inequities reveal more insidious ramifications of racism (e.g., incarceration rates, healthcare recipients, educational attainment), which culturally-deficit perspectives and pedagogies dismiss as non-racial matters (Comber & Kamler, 2004).

Unfortunately, these internalized messages also happen in students' day-to-day interactions in the classroom. Nora and Cabrera's (1996) study examined nine public universities across the country and found that Latinx students reported high numbers of being singled out in the classroom due to their background. Most of the participants in their study indicated overhearing racial/ethnic stereotypes from faculty at least once within their college career. Years later, Lopez's (2005) study substantiated this claim by stating that students experience greater

degrees of racism from year to year. Students contended that they were "being discriminated against" and were "treated rudely because of [their] race" (p. 350). However, the most notable feedback centered on their academic performance. Many students "doubt[ed] their ability to succeed in college" and believed that their "academic background was inadequate." This was due to "others having expectations of poor performance," "lack of professors and students of [their] race" on campus, and "[professors and peers] having expectations of poor performance" (Lopez, 2005, pp. 355-357). These perceptions of discrimination and prejudice in their classrooms are directly associated with their classroom performance, academic experiences with faculty, and intellectual development (Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Oliver et al., 2017). So not only are minoritized students feeling the anguish and everyday stress associated with college experiences and adjustment (Oliver et al., 2017), these stressors are magnified due to racism.

Microaggressions. Within campus racial climate literature, studies show that students' experiences with racial microaggressions are steadily increasing (Garcia, 2016). Racial microaggressions are often illustrated as indirect forms of racism. Defined as "subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of Color, often automatically or unconsciously" (Solórzano et al., 2000 p. 60), racial microaggressions are a common and often enacted practice. These "brief and commonplace verbal, behavioral, or environmental" actions truly impact the campus racial climate for all students, due to these practices being seen as repetitive, familiar, and appearing as acceptable by society (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273). However, these marginalizing and discriminatory practices are pervasively dangerous and impact the campus racial climate for all students.

As addressed in previous sections, most of the discrimination students experience happens in classroom settings. For example, Solórzano and colleagues (2000) examined the

campus racial climate for Black students attending elite universities. Within their study, many students commented on the invisibility they felt in the classroom, and if they were not *completely* ignored, they were hyper-visible. This hyper-visibility manifested in many ways, particularly when faculty maintained low expectations of them. In their study, one student recounted the time he was accused of cheating. He said, "[The instructor] said, ‘we think you've cheated…we just don't know how, so we think we're gonna make you [that the exam] again'" (Solórzano et al., 2000, p. 66). Even after retaking the exam (in a room alone), this student scored a 98%. Not only was he unfairly accused of cheating but underwent academic and emotional labor to prove his worth. These negative experiences are damaging to students' educational trajectory and instill self-doubt. Forms of isolation, yet hyper-visibility, often drain students due to the intense scrutiny and negative perceptions of Black Americans (Oliver et al., 2017). Over time, these incessant and mundane experiences can lead to mental, emotional and physical strain known as "racial battle fatigue" (Smith, 2004). And unfortunately, students are experiencing this battle in and outside of their classrooms.

These microaggressions exist for Latinx college students as well. A study with Yosso, Smith, Ceja, and Solórzano (2009) found that Latinx students reported high levels of racial microaggressions, such as jokes from peers and faculty, as well as institutional and interpersonal microaggressions. Often these microaggressions are rooted in connotations about culture, phenotype, accent, surname and immigration status (Yosso et al., 2009). Solórzano's (1998) earlier study of Chicana/o scholars also talked about how damaging these statements are. Microaggressions included stereotypical assumptions, nonverbal gestures, and racially assaultive statements, such as: "You're not like the rest of them… you're different;" "I don't think of you as a Mexican;" "you speak such good English;" "but you speak without an accent." (pp. 125-126).

Similar to the experiences of Black students, the negative impact of microaggressions for Latinx students can make them feel emotionally drained, want to drop out of school, or feel like an "outsider" (Luna & Tijerina Revilla, 2013). Microaggressions are a form of racism that further marginalize students of Color on campus and foster a hostile campus racial climate.

Institutions benefit from understanding factors that influence retention, such as sense of belonging, in hopes of creating substantive initiatives or changes in undergraduate programming for students' college and career advancement (ACT, 2013; Camara, 2013; Gibbons & Shoffner, 2004; Hooker & Brand, 2010; Lombardi et al., 2011). For example, implementing initiatives like a first-year seminar for students could address a variety of issues like financial literacy, diversity, study skills, etc., which are associated with positive academic and social higher education outcomes and persistence of first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx students (Booker, 2016; Zamani, 2000). Creating cultural centers and mentoring groups for this demographic serve as a mechanism for self-esteem (Hope, Chavous, Jagers, & Sellers, 2013), satisfaction (Green & Glasson, 2009), and increased levels of persistence and retention (Nora, 2004). Consequently, if students can form a strong connection to their campus and community, it will increase their sense of belonging.

Section Summary. Understanding sense of belonging is not only important for this dissertation but all persistence literature, because it contextualizes the experiences of minoritized students and their cultures in academic and social settings. As this section cited literature on retention and sense of belonging while in college, there needs to be more scholarship examining the correlation of retention and sense of belonging prior to college. As aforementioned, many of the students' high school experiences impact their college trajectory. Within this study, I focused

on aspects of persistence at the college level, and examined transition and collective belonging at the K-12 level through participants' high school stories.

Furthermore, dominant cultures (i.e., white, continuing-generation, middle/upper-class) on campus often shape the campus racial climate, which may be incongruent to the customs, identities, skills, and knowledges that many minoritized students bring to their institutions (Museus et al., 2017). Therefore, this dissertation highlighted the cultures of marginalized students through counternarratives, which aim to disrupt dominant culture systems. This dissertation was informed by the extensive literature on college readiness (rigorous coursework and quality instruction) and sense of belonging (microaggressions and discrimination), and contributes to current scholarship by providing a holistic examination of minoritized student experience in and out of the classroom.

Deficit-Based Models

The academic preparation students receive before college, and the sense of community and belonging necessary to succeed once in college, is essential in examining the barriers of student persistence for minoritized students. However, when scholars examine the retention, persistence, and attrition of minoritized populations, it usually is framed under a deficit orientated guise. According to Yosso (2005), one of the most mainstream forms of contemporary racism and discrimination in American education systems is deficit thinking. This framing criticizes minoritized students' cultures for their lack of success and does not examine the institutionalized inequities that hinder their experiences (Yosso, 2005; Samuelson & Litzler, 2016). There is little empirical evidence to support culturally deficit models (García & Guerra, 2004), however, these models are still used to explain school failure. Culturally deficit models often blame minoritized students, their parents, and their communities for lacking certain

attributes deemed necessary for success in higher education (Luna & Tijerina Revilla, 2013). Further, deficit models argue that the cultural values of minoritized students are to be blamed for low occupational, aspirational, and educational attainment (Comber & Kamler, 2004; Richardson, 2008).

There are also cultural tropes attached to minoritized student experiences, which are further compounded by these biased models. For example, immediate gratification, cooperation in lieu of competition, and a tendency to minimize the importance of education and upward mobility are deemed as negative cultural attributes of these students (Dyce et al., 2013; García & Guerra, 2004). Kimura-Walsh, Yamamura, Griffin, and Allen (2008) indicate that some researchers fail to understand the intersectional complexities (and identities) of minoritized populations, and how this impacts students' educational pathways. Deficit perspectives are incredibly damaging because educators, scholars, and practitioners are not able to see the strengths, knowledges, and skills of these communities, due to silencing students based on their marginalities (Chavous et al., 2004). There is a biased postulation that these students lack the educational and personal tenacity to persist through college—and unfortunately, these negative beliefs are reinforced by educators who tend to have lower expectations for minoritized students' academic success (McGee, 2013). Thus, furthering the institutionalized hierarchy of power and inequality for these students, where their experiences are not seen as assets but as deficits. Even though this dissertation is asset-based, it is important to contextualize the history of deficit frameworks in higher education. Given the context of my dissertation study, the next section of this literature review discusses Vincent Tinto and his impact on retention scholarship.

Vincent Tinto and Retention

A renowned assessment model of student retention is Vincent Tinto's (1975) Student Integration Model (SIM). This model was the start of many national dialogues on undergraduate retention (Duque, 2014; Kerby, 2015). Tinto contends that involvement (i.e., with peers and faculty, academic involvement, campus involvement) is significant in the assessment of undergraduate student retention. Essentially this model theorizes that students who integrate socially into their campus community will make more significant commitments to their institutions, and are more likely to graduate in comparison to their peers who are not as integrated (Tinto, 1975). Even though Tinto's SIM model has been supported, revised, and criticized over the last 40 years, it has significantly influenced how practitioners and scholars view undergraduate retention and graduation (Braxton & Lien, 2000).

About a decade later, Tinto (1987) reexamined student undergraduate retention through a model of institutional departure. He designed a longitudinal assessment study based on Durkheim's (1951) theory of suicide to examine the nuances of students' decisions to leave higher education. Durkheim (1951) argues that if an individual has adequate social networks and sufficient moral integration, they are less likely to commit suicide. Tinto incorporated these ideologies in his SIM model, asserting that students' success and integration into college was "dependent upon the degree to which they are able to integrate into the social and academic life of postsecondary institutions" (Tierney, 1999, p. 82). Accordingly, if the individual has a balance of academic and social integration into college, they are less likely to drop out (or engage in this concept of suicide).

At the time of the formation of Tinto's (1987) second iteration of the model, Gerdes and Mallinckrodt (1994) developed a longitudinal study of retention using Tinto's model to address the importance of academic and social factors on persistence. The experiences of 389 college

students were analyzed using a survey at a large Northwestern public university. Gerdes and Mallinckrodt (1994) found 25 items that impacted college students' retention, and 13 of those items were associated with personal/emotional adjustment issues. As I do believe that integrating academically and socially aids student retention, there needs to be a contextual examination of why students are not able to fully integrate, and what truly prohibits their experiences. Tinto's (1975) first iteration of SIM aimed to differentiate types of leaving behavior (i.e., academic failure, voluntary withdrawal, permanent dropout, temporary dropout, and transfer) in academia, but he postulated white ideologies as the norm to fit in. Unfortunately, that is problematic as it posits minoritized students' experiences as insufficient for success. The next section will further examine how this deficit-based theory can be damaging for this student demographic.

Minoritized Students and Cultural Suicide. Tinto's work has been one of the most frequently cited and empirically tested frameworks within higher education literature (Braxton & Lien, 2000), however, it is often critiqued (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Godor, 2017; Tierney, 1992, 1999). His assessment is limited, as it solely relies on the relationships of students and their institutions, which does not holistically encompass minoritized students' identities and experiences. He advocates for minoritized students to erase forms of their culture in order to fully integrate into the larger hegemonic culture of white, cisgender, middle/upper-class expectations (Tuck, 2009). Tinto contends that students must undergo forms of cultural suicide, in order to remove themselves from their communities and cultures. He claims that by removing their identities, they will be able to assimilate into the dominant culture of their colleges and universities, which will inevitably lead to success in higher education (Tinto, 1975). Conversely, if they fail to assimilate, they will fail in college (Tierney, 1999).

As mentioned in Chapter One, there has been a demographic shift in the college-going population; students of Color, first-generation, low-income and other historically underrepresented and under-resourced groups are attending college at much higher rates than before (Alemán & Gaytán, 2017; Chang, 2016; Perna, 2015; Tamborini et al., 2015), therefore models like these are not applicable in contemporary college settings. Rendón et al. (2000) argues that,

> The assumption that minority students must separate from their cultural realities and take the responsibility to become incorporated into colleges' academic and social fabric in order to succeed (with little or no concern to address systemic problems within institutions or to the notion that minority students are often able to operate in multiple contexts) becomes central to the critique of Tinto's student departure model (pg. 29).

Tinto's argument for the removal of minoritized students' culture is rooted in classist and racist ideals (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Rhee, 2008). He also asserts that minoritized students' parents fail to assimilate and embrace the educational values of the dominant group and are not supportive of educational achievement and attainment for their children (Tierney, 1999). Tinto (1975, 1999) argues that middle- and upper-class students have the tools needed to be successful, so their experiences need to be replicated by low socioeconomic students to effectively navigate college.

This type of dangerous deficit thinking still permeates society today, where students' cultural backgrounds and assets are deemed as irrelevant to their success in college. Scholars Kiyama (2010), and Pyne and Means (2013) found that minoritized students who embrace their cultures, and are connected with students of shared cultural heritages are more likely to persist through college. Furthering these ideologies, a study with Case and Hernandez (2013) examined

30 Latinx students and found that those with “elevated consciousness of their ethnic identity,” as well as “acceptance” of their identity were more equipped to persist at their PWI, and progress toward their goal of degree attainment. Research on the experiences of minoritized students’ needs to be inclusive and encompassing of all their intersectional identities, as well as explored in a manner that deliberately highlights and acknowledges their cultural assets.

In noting the importance of cultural integration and celebration of identities, it is crucial that scholars, policymakers and practitioners do not transfer "the problem of educational inequity from the institution to the student, [but] identifies cultural background as an essential element for academic success" (Tierney, 1999, pg. 85). Notably, institutions that *are* committed to their students' diverse needs have higher levels of retention and persistence (Astin, 1997; Hope et al., 2013; Hoston, Graves, & Fleming-Randle, 2010). Students' interpretation of an institution's opportunities and challenges impacted how they interacted on campus (Rhee, 2008). As previous studies have examined diversity through the notions of institutional structures (i.e., racial makeup of student body), it inadvertently created a limited understanding of institutional practices and interactions (Chang, 1996; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Museus & Harris, 2010). If students feel "cared for" by their academic institutions, then they will "care about" their schooling (Valenzuela, 1999).

Foundationally this dissertation argues against Tinto's (1975) retention model, and the necessity to erase students' culture to integrate into their university and campus settings fully. Even though Tinto's model is not culturally relevant, he does illustrate the importance of focusing on minoritized students at the individual level. As an early-career scholar, I have seen the importance of working with students at the individual level and not just supporting them monolithically. But even so, his model is not useful because Tinto does not unpack the

complicated racially driven and tense college environments for underrepresented students. Most importantly, we see that multiple factors impact the roles of college students and the various complexities they have between their communities, cultures, and campuses (Cooper, 2011; Hurtado and Carter, 1997; Patton, 2010). Many students are told to erase who they are because their cultures and identities are not cared for nor "fit" into mainstream hegemonic forms of education. It is imperative to note that this is completely false, and their experiences are necessary for success.

Student Assets

My dissertation situated the intersectional identities of first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx students as assets. There are many scholars who also facilitate research through an asset-based lens (see Achinstein, Curry, Ogawa, & Athanases, 2016; Ceja, 2004; Garrison & Gardner, 2012; Cano & Castillo, 2010; Oliver et al., 2017; Ovink, 2013; Sy & Romero, 2008; Yosso, 2005; White, 2016; Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002), however higher education literature often fixates on the negative narratives that posit these students as “at-risk,” “vulnerable” or “disadvantaged” (García & Guerra, 2004; Godor, 2017; Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson & Covarrubia, 2012). While I acknowledge that the societal and institutional obstacles associated with poverty, racism, and classism does impact students' transition and persistence—I contend that these obstacles do not extinguish students' talents and gifts, but limit the opportunity for them to be fully actualized.

Often minoritized students’ contributions are underappreciated or even unnoticed within higher education systems, because they are categorized by markers that deem them as underprepared, under-resourced, or “needy” (White, 2016). In a 2011 study, Bourke and Jayman interviewed 25 students and found that students resisted labels like “at-risk” because they felt it

was an inaccurate representation of their positionalities and disempowering to their identities. Essentially, students felt that they were more valuable than what those limiting labels portrayed. Similarly, Lazarus-Stewart's (2013) study illustrated how problematic it is for researchers to *solely* focus on students of Color as being underprepared and at risk for attrition. When researchers do that, it masks the differences between minoritized students and their peers and disguises the structural inequities that cause low persistence and achievement rates (Lazarus-Stewart, 2013). Many students are facing challenges that require thoughtful and intentional institutional support due to various structural inequalities; however, institutions and higher education scholarship must not assume that these students are deficit based on their positionalities.

It is important that higher education institutions and literature reshape the way we think about minoritized student success and assets. Since the "traditional" undergraduate student (e.g., recent high school graduate from high-performing schools whose parents have had a successful college experience) is not representative of most students today, universities must shift the assumptions and beliefs they hold about their minoritized students (Oliver et al., 2017; White, 2016). Museus and colleagues (2017) argue that incorporating minoritized students' diverse cultural heritages, perspectives, and knowledges can result in positive educational environments for all students. For example, Jayakumar (2008), and Chang and colleagues (2003) found that exposure to diversity and various identities help facilitate the development and success of students from all backgrounds. Many white students who attend PWIs grow up in predominantly white neighborhoods and have limited exposure to racial diversity before college (Radloff & Evans, 2003). The lack of interracial contact between students impacted their views towards others, their support for campus initiatives, and overall perception of campus racial climate

(Hausmann et al., 2007; Lopez, 2005). However, researchers have found that students who have intergroup racial relations with their peers are more connected to their university (Han, 2012), and have higher levels of retention, satisfaction and intellectual/social self-conceptualizations (Swann & Bosson, 2010). Therefore, cultivating an institutional cultural climate that appreciates the diversity from first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx students would not only aid the transition of this demographic but enhance the experience of all students, faculty, and staff.

Low-income, first-generation, students of Color possess varied experiences and characteristics necessary to be successful in today's higher education realm. For example, Garrison and Gardner (2012) found thirteen strengths that contributed to the success of first-generation college students: resourcefulness, strategic thinking, self-reliance, practical realism, flexibility, persistence, positivity, hopefulness, self-confidence, insightfulness, compassion, gratitude, and balance. Stephens and colleagues (2012) further concretized the importance of emphasizing first-generation college students' assets by saying that these students had higher rates of interdependence (e.g., being a role model and helping out with family) than their affluent peers, which aided their college success. "Often, driven by their own experiences, [minoritized students] bring a keen sensitivity and insight to issues of equity and justice, which are sorely needed at a time when seemingly intractable disparities within society are straining social and economic structures" (White, 2016, para. 7). Minoritized students have strategies from their life experiences that can be used to succeed through various economic, social and mental challenges (Duque, 2014; Morales, 2014). And since the world is becoming increasingly diverse and urbanized, many of these students have the navigational knowledge needed to thrive in a global society (Gutmann, 2004; Jayakumar, 2008).

Resilience is glorified and seen as a vital characteristic of successful college students (Morales, 2014), yet I question why students (particularly minoritized students) have to be resilient in the first place. Researcher Farris-Fisher (2004) illustrated that students of Color must employ higher levels of grit than their white peers if they want to achieve both in and out of the classroom. For many minoritized students, surviving and thriving academically despite encounters of racism, discrimination and microaggressions require higher levels of physical and mental grit (McGee & Stovall, 2015). As many white students are dealing with stereotypical college student problems like overcoming difficult assignments and finding a work/life balance, minoritized students are also dealing with a range of other complex issues. Practitioners, educators, and scholars should be more focused on ending systemic oppression, rather than forcing students to navigate it. Consequently, it is important that researchers challenge deficit-based approaches and highlight the assets of minoritized students, because these students aid in the success of all students. If not, "as long as being a person of color or of modest economic means, or the child of parents who did not go to college, is deemed to be, first and foremost, an indicator of potential failure, the integrity of our proclaimed expectation of success is undermined (White, 2016, para. 4).

Understanding the implications of resilience from the lens of deficit and asset-based pedagogies was incredibly important to this dissertation study. Therefore, this dissertation project was meticulous and deliberate in contextualizing cultural capital, resilience, and grit. As many minoritized students are forced to use their resiliency to dismantle racism and confront stereotypes on their college campuses, their tenacity and grit would not be necessary to survive if these institutions were less racially hostile and combative. Still, knowing how resilient students

process their academic journeys can provide insight to educators, scholars, and practitioners on how to better support these students at their PWIs.

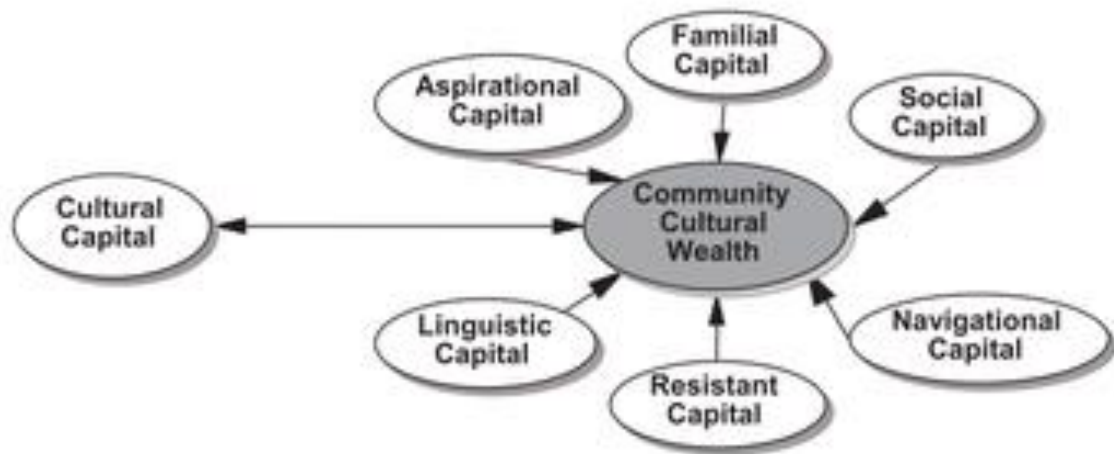
Theoretical Framework

In understanding the implications of reaffirming students' culture and background in higher education scholarship as assets, this dissertation used Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) model as a guiding theoretical framework. Previous literature on persistence and pre-college programs is often informed by Bourdieu's (1986) concept of cultural capital (Yosso, 2005; Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002). Bourdieu contended that the knowledges of upper- and middle-class demographics are deemed as valuable capital to a hierarchical society. He then argues that if one was not born into a family that had these forms of knowledge, they could acquire social mobility through formal schooling (Bourdieu 1986; Yosso, 2005). However, Bourdieu's cultural capital framework does not holistically encapsulate the complex identities of minoritized students, nor address their dynamic experiences (Strayhorn, 2011; Villalpando & Solórzano, 2005). Within higher education literature, some scholars (see Sheeran, Brown & Baker, 2007; Sullivan, 2002) have used Bourdieu's (1986) cultural capital framework to examine minoritized students through a deficit-based lens, with an assumption that these students do not possess any culture of their own (or argue that their culture is not relevant). As a result, many education systems work from this assumption of constructing ways to help "disadvantaged" students, whose race and class background have left them lacking the necessary capital for social mobility (Yosso, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999). Bourdieu's framework has been problematically used to suggest that by engaging in hegemonic behavior, students finally *acquire* the cultural capital needed to be successful in college (Perna, 2002; Tierney, 1999).

This conceptualization of Bourdieu's (1986) cultural capital framework consistently reinforces the perceptions of dominant power in society and does not acknowledge the strength of communities of Color (Tierney & Jun, 2001). However, by designing this research study within a CCW framework, I resisted the notions of deficit culture by viewing the students' cultural identities as a valuable and important part of their learning process. Yosso's (2005) model of Community Cultural Wealth addresses capital within six parts: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational and resistance (*see figure 1*). Each tenet of the CCW model is linked together and defined by students' experiences,

> *Aspirational capital* refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers. *Linguistic capital* includes the intellectual and social skill attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style. *Familial capital* refers to those cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition. *Social capital* can be understood as networks of people and community resources. *Navigational capital* refers to skills of maneuvering through social institutions. *Resistant capital* refers those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequalities (Yosso, 2005, pp. 79-80).

Figure 1. Community Cultural Wealth Model



Source: Yosso (2005); Adapted from Oliver & Shapiro (1995).

This model is most useful in analyzing the experiences of minorized students, as it validates the ways they employ various forms of capital. This asset-based (and strengths-based) theoretical framework endorses the cultural resources that students acquire from their communities and family. It is designed to capture the various talents, strengths and lived experiences of students of Color, and how they are used within higher education (Yosso, 2005). The Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) model "refocuses attention on the deficiencies of the schooling processes that failed to provide adequate academic preparation for the students, shifting some of the major responsibilities for the students' academic needs from their families and toward the schools" (Villalpando & Solórzano, 2005, p. 21). Community Cultural Wealth model places less onus on students' deficiencies, and critiques the educational methods used in sustaining inequity through social reproduction.

Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth model was used within my interview protocol and within my data analysis (see Chapter Three). This model served as a tool that garnered equitable and accessible education, and demonstrated the necessity to restructure our education systems and social institutions through the lenses of minoritized students' skills,

networks, abilities, and knowledge. My dissertation applied this model in a way that furthers discourse surrounding the assets and strengths of minoritized students, to discourage the use of deficit assimilation practices that continually posit these students as inferior, and to advocate for the implementation of culture within pre-college programs and assessment. Furthermore, this study illustrated how Yosso's (2005) six forms of capital allow first-generation, low-income, students of Color to transition and persist within the academic system, despite the institutional and historical neglect of the American public-school system (Luna & Martinez, 2013).

Pre-College Programs

Researchers have found that pre-college programs can serve as a mechanism to highlight minoritized students' assets, and aid in processes of applying, transitioning, and graduating from postsecondary education (Gullat & Jun, 2003; Irizarry, 2000). State and federal government, public/private universities, and private organizations have sponsored these intervention programs in America over the past fifty years (Partridge, 2018). Through their collaboration, pre-college programs were designed to improve the college readiness and academic preparation of underrepresented students. Pre-college programs typically represent three types of outreach: informational outreach, career-based outreach, and academic enrichment (Gullatt, 2003). Choy, Horn, Nunez, and Chen (2000) found that pre-college programs have doubled the odds of students enrolling in postsecondary education, and increased participants' academic, social and developmental skills.

These programs also help concretize the K-16 pipeline and expose students to conventional campus life and college experiences (Perna & Swail, 2002; Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002). Student participation in pre-college programs is linked to higher levels of homework completion, parental engagement (Pitre, C. & Pitre, P., 2009), service learning (Dyce et al.,

2013), positive emotions, and intrinsic motivation (Heinrich, Meyer, Whitten, & Urban, 2009). "College preparation programs tend to capture the attention of students and their families along critical pathways in the pipeline to colleges such as college aspirations, college enrollment, and college completion" (Perna & Swail, 2002, p. 101). Fundamentally these programs are necessary for increasing college exposure for students, cultivating a college-going identity, and providing skills on how to be successful once there (Cooper, 2011; Gullatt & Jun, 2003).

The term "pre-college" is applied in many ways, however in this dissertation it refers to campus-based college access programs. These programs serve as a supplementary component to students' high school curricula through additional coursework and classes during the academic school year (Gullatt & Jun, 2003; Mulroy, 2011). As aforementioned, this is important because many minoritized students attend high schools that are under-resourced and are not provided with a comprehensive college preparation course load (e.g., AP/IB classes, advanced science, and math, multiple foreign languages) (Perna, 2002). Tierney and Hagedorn (2002) support these claims by suggesting that these programs were designed to assist colleges and universities in recruiting and retaining students who have traditionally been left out of higher education, and to provide supplemental academic support. Many of these pre-college programs also have a summer institute program which provides students with opportunities to engage with traditional college life; from eating in the dining halls, staying in the residence halls, taking college classes with professors, working on research projects, these mechanisms attempt to increase college awareness for students not predisposed to it. Ultimately, pre-college programs make an important contribution to the academic preparation of historically minoritized groups in higher education (Perna, 2002; Zamani, 2000; Villalpando & Solórzano, 2005).

These pre-college programs also help students with the college application process, particularly with choosing a college. Researchers have argued that students' selection process follows a particular staged cycle (Elateman & Hossler, 1996; Cabrera & LaNasa, 2000; Freeman, 1997; Hamrick & Stage, 1998; Nora & Cabrera, 1992). And one of the models that impacted this dissertation study was Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) Three Stage Model for College Choice. This model included three steps about college choice: (1) thinking about college (predisposition); (2) deciding about the necessity of college (search); (3) and choosing a college to attend (choice/selection). As each of these stages is important to students' trajectories, this predisposition stage is incredibly impactful due to pre-college involvement. Several factors influence their predisposition and college choice stages: student characteristics, peer relationships, educational activities, and school characteristics. Research on the predisposition stage also highlights the impact of college choice on students' lives, particularly during their pre-college engagement (Contreras, Chapman, Comeaux, Rodriguez, Martinez & Hutson, 2018). School curriculum, teachers and counselors, parents and peers all play an essential role during this stage to infuse excitement and motivate students to strive for academic and college success (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). This concept of predisposition will be further discussed in Chapter Four.

While there are several benefits of participating in pre-college programs, many of these programs do not examine the importance of, nor incorporate, students' culture into their programmatic strategies and curricula. Several of these programs solely engage students with aspects of academic achievement (e.g., academic advising and tutoring), or only assist in the processes of applying to and entering college (e.g., SAT preparation and completing a FAFSA) (Strayhorn, 2011; Perna & Swail, 2002). As it is important that students do receive these

academic provisions on navigating the college system, these programs need to offer holistic support within their students' transition. Thus, pre-college programs must provide minoritized students with cultural *and* academic navigational tools (Dyce et al., 2013; Villalpando & Solórzano, 2005).

Successful culturally affirming pre-college programs embed aspects of culture throughout their academic curricula to enhance student educational outcomes (Lopez, 2005). Many of these programs strive to improve students' chances of enrolling in higher education by highlighting and celebrating dimensions of students' culture (Mulroy, 2011; Villalpando & Solórzano, 2005).

> [Culturally affirming pre-college programs] are quite explicit about the need for, and the process by which they involve students' parents and family, mentors, and peer groups. These programs appear to be aware that these activities serve to reinforce the students' cultural norms, beliefs, and values, even though it is accomplished in a less formal way than offering a course or workshop on a culturally specific topic. (Villalpando & Solórzano, 2005, p. 19)

When programs intentionally embed students' culture in ways that are culturally sustaining and asset-based, it reaffirms the notion that students' cultural background and identities are critical components of achieving success (Jun & Colyar, 2002).

Upward Bound

Within this dissertation, I explored the experiences of student alumni from an Upward Bound pre-college program in the Northeast. As described in Chapter One, Upward Bound programs originated from the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. In the beginning, only 17 pilot projects were implemented, and by 1966 there were over 200 colleges and universities serving 20,000 students (Levine & Nidiffer, 1996). Now there are over a million students who have

participated in Upward Bound programs over the past 50 years (Partridge, 2018). Upward Bound programs have been evaluated several times at the national level, in 1967, 1969, 1971, 1973, 1976, 1997, 1999, 2004 and ending with a longitudinal report of graduation rates from 1999-2009. There are a wide range of topics covered within studies and evaluations on Upward Bound. Some studies focused on college entrance rates, high school graduation rates, and students' ability and motivation to succeed in college (Cahalan & Goodwin, 2014; Graham, 2011; Pitre, C. & Pitre, P., 2009; Thayer, 2007). However, many of these studies have not looked at the cultural aspects that impact alumni transition and persistence.

While qualifications for participation in Upward Bound programs do not specify about racial or ethnic group, there are specific guidelines about income. Since participants have to meet standards that qualify them as low-income according to the Department of Education, we can assume Black and Latinx students will heavily populate the program since their household incomes are typically less than their white peers (Britt et al., 2016). Therefore, it is important that research on this topic provides a holistic cultural examination of *all* factors that impact student identity. Such a lack of rigorous evaluation on the effectiveness of these programs further emphasize the need for new and innovative research on this topic. This dissertation contributes to current literature, because it further stimulates the movement of research that promote constructive action of Upward Bound programs concerning minoritized students' academic success and cultural wealth.

Upward Bound programs are designed to contribute to the overall development of minoritized students' academic and social success. For example, Kinney-Walker (2016) implemented a case study of four Upward Bound graduates who were enrolled in their second year of college, to understand the role of Upward Bound programs and student identity. Within

this study, four themes were found in relation to student persistence: (a) that being a student is one identity among many, (b) being a student is a means to an end, (c) students persisted in the face of challenges, and (d) Upward Bound provided an environment conducive to forming a student identity (Kinney-Walker, 2016). These findings were important because it revealed that Upward Bound did contribute to the formation of student identity positively in three ways: (a) as an opportunity for exploration in college, (b) to create positive student behaviors, and (c) support and encouragement from staff (Kinney-Walker, 2016). Upward Bound programs not only aid the academic development of students, but also their social integration and development. Owens (2013) designed a study to examine the leadership contributions of group members and used Upward Bound participants to explore these concepts. In this study, Owens (2013) found that based on the skills learned through an Upward Bound program, students were able to provide valuable input to leaders of campus organizations, and aided campus leaders in achieving their organization's missions and goals. Gullatt and Jun (2003) even argue that the skills and resources students receive from Upward Bound programs, are just as competitive of pre-college programs available to more advantaged students.

Critique of Upward Bound Programs. While some studies have found that Upward Bound programs or components of the program have a positive effect on student achievement and academic performance, other studies have found that the program has had no impact, or even a negative impact on student success. In 2009, under the Bush Administration, Upward Bound programs across the U.S. were put under a lot of scrutiny based on the results of a nation-wide evaluation. The U.S. Department of Education published a longitudinal study of Upward Bound programs from 1990 to 2000. According to this report, Upward Bound programs had "no detectable effect on the rate of overall postsecondary enrollment" (Avery, Howell, Page &

College, 2014, p. 2). Unfortunately, the Bush administration declared Upward Bound programs as ineffective. This announcement came at a pressing time because parents, current and former Upward Bound students, and legislators were hoping that this study would aid in their favor for funding opportunities with policymakers (Graham, 2011). However, Cahalan and Goodwin (2014) dug into the data of that study and developed an ED-PSS QA review form and performed an internal review and analysis of all of the data files from that study. Within their project they found evidence of sample and non-sample errors, along with bias with non-response of surveys distributed (Cahalan & Goodwin, 2014). Most importantly, they discovered that Upward Bound programs *did* have a positive impact on student academic success. However, the erroneous findings from the Bush Administration did unwarranted reputational harm to Upward Bound programs across the country, particularly with funding (Cahalan & Goodwin, 2014).

Often the findings of pre-college programs conflict with one another because evaluating the effectiveness of these programs are not uniformly standardized (Knaggs et al., 2015). Many programs use most of their resources to aid students in gaining college admission, resulting in limited resources for supporting and tracking students once in college (e.g., time-consuming, expensive, resource intensive) (Broton & Wilder, 2009; Pena, 2002; Villalpando, & Solórzano, 2005). According to scholars Hooker and Brand (2010), many programs do not have the resources to contract outside researchers to conduct assessments, nor have budgetary funds for evaluations throughout the academic and summer months. Often these programs are serving more students than the grant allocates for, and are typically understaffed (Irizarry, 2000; Perna, 2002). The lack of longitudinal data for these Upward Bound programs limit the information that researchers can receive about the program's impact on students once in college. Furthermore, the limited availability of rigorous research on college and career programs restricts the scholarship

of effective practices necessary for policymakers, scholars, teachers, and practitioners to aid underrepresented and under-resourced students (Hooker & Brand, 2009; Vega et al., 2015).

This dissertation contributed to pre-college program literature in several ways. First, there is a need for pre-college program literature to use more culturally responsive frameworks (i.e., Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth model) to investigate the success of their programs and students. If students are viewed from a deficit-lens, their experiences will be invalidated and posited as invaluable in academic spaces (García & Guerra, 2004). Second, identifying successful aspects of pre-college programs contributed to the educational literature necessary for practitioners, educators, and families to assist students through the higher education pipeline. Third, this dissertation added to the rigorous scholarship on pre-college programs and student success, in hopes of improving program design. Overall, these students' college experiences and perspectives of their college preparation program offered contributions that can potentially enhance their pre-college program's effectiveness.

Chapter Summary

In sum, the existing literature indicates that first-generation, low-income, Black, and Latinx students often struggle with matriculating, retaining, and graduating from college due to the historical and socio-political implications of society (Booker, 2016; Brown et al., 2005; Solórzano et al., 2000). Several of these issues are further exacerbated in the college setting, because minoritized students are often academically underprepared and made to feel like they do not belong (Museus et al., 2017; Stephens et al., 2012). Countless low-income, first-generation, Black, and Latinx students come to college without taking advanced placement courses or other college preparation coursework (Stewart, 2007). And if they are offered these courses in high school, they are often taught by inexperienced teachers or advised not to take them (Morales,

2014; Thayer, 2007). This unfortunately positions these students as less competitive than their peers, in terms of preparation for college.

Furthermore, many of these students struggle within college environments because their institutional climate make them like they do not belong nor "fit in." Even though previous deficit-based scholars have indicated that students must deny their cultural heritages to succeed in college (Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1999), more asset-based scholarship contends that cultural heritage is positively associated with adjustment and belonging among college students (Booker, 2016; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Likewise, positive campus racial climates are associated with a greater sense of belonging (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005; Museus et al., 2017), and illustrate the congruence between students' home and campus cultures is significant (Museus & Maramba, 2011).

Subsequently, pre-college programs can assist minoritized students with their transition from high school to college, and possibly address some of these systemic problems. Particularly as there is a need for pre-college program literature to use more culturally responsive and asset-based frameworks to investigate the success of their programs and these students. Research on these programs must examine the experiences of students once they get to college, as students' achievements could influence programmatic development and design.

This study contributed to the literature by addressing the aforementioned research gaps and examined the ways Upward Bound alumni used their cultural assets to transition and persist through college. This research investigated how Upward Bound programs reinforced and developed students' cultural wealth and capital. Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth model is used within this study, because it captures the range of knowledges, aptitudes, talents, and network connections minoritized students used to navigate, engage, and avoid multiple forms of oppression in and outside of college. This theoretical framework concretized the

importance of valuing students' identities as assets. As we know that these students have several assets that contribute to their success in college, scholarship must be more intentional about highlighting their strengths. Given this literature review, my dissertation engaged in research that uses equity-grounded and culturally sustaining approaches to address the needs of student transition and persistence for first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx Upward Bound college students.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study was theoretically framed around Yosso’s (2005) Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) model to assess the mechanisms Upward Bound alumni used within their transition and persistence through postsecondary education. This dissertation was designed in a manner that deliberately affirmed student voice (Gándara, 2002; Yanow, 2000), which analyzed students’ stories through narrative inquiry. Twenty undergraduate sophomores through senior students who participated in an Upward Bound pre-college program in the Northeast, were interviewed to discuss their pre-college program experiences and the program’s impact on their persistence through college. Participants also brought an artifact or photo to elicit conversations about their experiences in the Upward Bound program, and discussed the use of cultural wealth in their college navigational processes. Through students' narratives and artifacts/photos, I examined how students used their cultural wealth within their college transition and investigated the role of an Upward Bound program preparing them for college. The following research questions guide this study:

- How do first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx Upward Bound college students use their cultural wealth within their transition and persistence through college?
- How do first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx students perceive the role of Upward Bound in preparing them for college?

This chapter will discuss the following research methodology components: pilot study background, research design, the rationale for qualitative research, selection of the study

participants, data collection, data analysis, data quality, researcher role/reflexivity, and limitations.

Pilot Study

During the Fall 2016 semester, I designed and implemented a study that investigated the experiences of students who participated in a pre-college program that focused on cultural wealth (capital) *and* academic skills. As aforementioned in my previous chapter, culturally affirming pre-college programs are critical to the success of minoritized students, but typical programs only emphasize educational development, not cultural wealth or social integration. These pre-college programs need to offer holistic support that provides minoritized students with academic *and* cultural navigational tools necessary for their college transition (Dyce et al., 2013; Villalpando & Solórzano, 2005). My pilot study's research questions were: (1) how are minoritized students (i.e., first-generation, low-income, students of Color) who participate in culturally affirming pre-college programs, prepared to transition into college? And (2) what were the ways that pre-college programs emphasized the intersectional culture of their students, to aid in their college transition?

For the overall study, I recruited a sample of participants that met the following criterion: (1) identified racially as an ALANA student (African, Latinx, Asian, Native American); (2) participated in the pre-college program analyzed in the study; (3) qualified as a first-year undergraduate student during the 2016-2017 school year; and (4) came from families, in which neither parent has a Bachelor's degree, and/or qualify as low income. The participants for the pilot study were attained through purposeful homogenous sampling. Recruitment procedures yielded three interview participants; all three students identified as first-generation, Black or Latina college women, which is reflective of that year's graduating class. I also interviewed the

coordinator of the program, a first-generation, Black man, whose narrative was used to triangulate data and contextualize the culturally affirming practices of the program.

Similar to this dissertation study, in-depth semi-structured interviews were used for data collection. All of the protocol questions were crafted using Yosso's (2005) six forms of capital. For example, questions surrounding navigational capital included: "Describe what it's been like to transition from [your high school] to college?" "What role, if any, do you think your ethnic or cultural background play out in your high school and college experience?" Other questions surrounding resistant capital included: "Have you felt any challenges during your educational journey?" "What are you the proudest of thus far in regard to your educational journey (good grades, thinking more critically, getting into to college, etc.)?" Before beginning the interviews, each participant read and signed an informed consent form. During that time the participants had the opportunity to ask any questions, create their pseudonyms, and engage with me as a researcher.

Within the pilot study, I discovered two larger findings for each of my research questions. The first research question examined the transitional process of minoritized students from high school to college. This research question and its' findings have guided the direction of my current dissertation study. *Cultural Reflective Self-Identity* and *Student Resiliency* emerged as the main themes addressing students' cultural capital within their college navigation processes. Participants in this culturally affirming Upward Bound program contended that this program furthered their cultural skills, which allowed them to self-reflect on their identities and positionalities at their PWI. Participants also indicated that a fundamental tool in navigating the college system was the ability to acknowledge hardship and move forward. Two of the three participants indicated that resiliency was an innate aspect of their identities and was surprised to

see how this differed from their peers. The second research question on the programmatic mechanisms used to affirm students' culture resulted in two findings. *Fostering Community* and creating *Cultural College Predisposition* was central to the program's mission for supporting student transition. Students indicated that they were able to transition from high school to college more easily than non-program participants, due to exposure to stereotypical college life before coming to campus. All of the student participants mentioned that they had never been on a college campus before enrolling into the pre-college program. Students contended that participating in the program gave them the academic and cultural navigational skills necessary to feel more comfortable in their new environment. These findings also corresponded with each tenet of Yosso's (2005) CCW model, however *resistance*, *navigational*, *social*, and *familial capital* were the most prevalent within this study. These findings also closely align with this current dissertation study as well. A closer examination of the fostering of community and developing cultural and college predisposition will be further discussed in Chapter Four.

Through executing this pilot study, I was able to restructure my theoretical framework, implement more purposeful sampling techniques, and further refine my interview guides and analytic strategies. Yosso's (2005) CCW model was primarily used in designing my pilot study's interview protocol, but within this dissertation study, I was more deliberate in integrating the framework. During my pilot study, I was very intentional in trying to incorporate *all* six forms of cultural capital from the CCW model within my interview protocol. However, my findings illustrated that certain forms of capital were more important and salient in my participants' experiences than others. Therefore in this dissertation, I used Yosso's (2005) CCW model in designing my interview protocol but did not confine my interview questions to fit into six binary categories, but rather three larger categories (family and background, Upward Bound experience,

and collegiate experience) that incorporated aspects of the model. The CCW model was also used within my interview protocol and during the third cycle of analyzing my data through deductive coding.

After implementing my pilot study, I realized I should also alter my sample criteria. Rather than looking at the experiences of ALANA (African, Latinx, Asian, and Native American) students, I only examined the racial identities of Black and Latinx students. As the experiences of Asian and Indigenous students are important and often understudied in higher education literature (Mosholder, Waite, Larsen, & Goslin, 2016; Pae, 2013), most pre-college programs primarily serve Black and Latinx populations in comparison to any other racial or ethnic group (Irizarry, 2000; Thayer, 2007). Additionally, my pilot study only examined the experiences of first-year, first-semester college students. While first-year students' narratives were important in understanding the transitional processes to college, I wanted to learn more about the role of cultural wealth on their college persistence. Therefore, in order to holistically examine transition and persistence, I broadened my dissertation sampling criteria to include students who have completed two or more semesters of college. Ultimately the findings of my pilot study helped me structure my dissertation in a way that embedded and incorporated culture holistically.

Research Design

Research on how minoritized students from pre-college programs make meaning of their transitional experiences is currently limited (Kinney-Walker, 2016; Partridge, 2018). Participants' firsthand reflections can serve a useful resource for administrators, guidance counselors, universities, and policymakers to gain insight on how to best serve this population. Therefore, centering on participants' voices through artifact/photo elicitation and semi-structured

qualitative interviews provided information on how these students were able to navigate the educational system.

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

Implementing a qualitative study was the most appropriate method for this research project, because it provided a detailed review of the phenomenon of diversity and culture in pre-college programs; gave me the resources to examine how pre-college programs aided students during various transitional periods (academically, culturally, socially, etc.); and provided a rich description of participants' experiences. Qualitative research uses an organic approach to understand the phenomena in context-specific settings, whereas the researcher does not manipulate the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2002). Maxwell (2008) furthers this by saying that "qualitative researchers often study a single setting or a small number of individuals or sites, using theoretical or purposeful sampling" (p. 245). As all of my participants attended different types of post-secondary institutions (i.e., community colleges, single-gendered colleges, PWIs, HSIs), qualitative inquiry allowed me to acknowledge and examine their college experiences through context-specific settings and purposeful sampling.

Qualitative research is also beneficial in obtaining culturally relevant and culturally specific information about the opinions, behaviors, values, and social contexts of specific populations (Saldaña, 2016). To reach a deeper and more rigorous understanding of how first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx college students perceived the effectiveness of their pre-college program within their transition, and how they used their cultural capital and wealth within these processes—I listened to their voices and stories.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry was used to unpack students' stories and academic trajectories. Often

described as a qualitative research approach that involves analyzing, generating, and reporting stories of life experiences as data, narrative inquiry "honors lived experiences as a source of important knowledge and understanding" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 42). Coulter and Smith (2009) say that narrative research lives in an intangible, interpretive space and "strives to portray experience, to question common understandings" (p. 577). Thus, if we want to learn about the experiences of first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx college students, we must examine the experiences of the students impacted. Narrative research gave me the opportunity to provide results on multiple modes of thinking and stories, and not just one singular answer (Coulter & Smith, 2009; Schaafsma & Vinz, 2011). And as a researcher I was not searching for specific facts or truth, but rather learning about individuals' experiences through time, and how their choices and lived events impacted their worldview.

Using the life stories of students, particularly those of complex marginalized backgrounds, was the best way to elucidate student experience and provided a more in-depth understanding for scholars, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. Barone (2009) contends that there is a necessity to tell the stories of marginalized people through research, particularly to document their stories to be passed onto future generations. As acknowledged throughout this dissertation, the stories of marginalized students are often not discussed within academia due to being seen as deficits. The construction of counternarratives used within narrative inquiry encouraged minoritized students to share their stories in ways that have not been told or heard before (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The information gained from these new stories, or stories told in new ways, interrupted the dominant deficit-based narratives that are based on stereotypes, tropes, and inaccuracies. Through the use of counternarratives in narrative inquiry, students' stories challenged the hegemonic, stereotypical, and prejudicial tropes

associated with being a first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx college student. Within this dissertation study, I emphasized their counternarratives to contextualize the structural realities that impacted their cultural narratives. Therefore, using narrative inquiry allowed my participants to talk about their past and present experiences. These narratives brought together reason and emotion (Schaafsma & Vinz, 2011), and must be considered as valuable assets in research and literature.

Research Context

The pre-college program within this inquiry is located in the New England area. Each interviewee participated in the same Upward Bound program while in Liberty high school (LHS; pseudonym used), but attend different colleges and universities. LHS is under-resourced and designated as a level four high school. The level four designation places this school as one of the lowest performing and least achieving public schools in the state of Massachusetts. LHS falls well below the average rates of student outcomes, in comparison to any school in the same and neighboring district. This high school has one of the lowest Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) scores, low attendance, and graduation rates, has high suspension rates, and houses a higher percentage of special education students in comparison to the neighboring high schools and districts. Only one-third of students graduate within a four-year rate, and nearly 70 percent of those students who graduate enroll in post-secondary education. Understanding how this Upward Bound program is situated at my participants' high school, provided context for the necessity of resources before college.

The LHS Upward Bound program was chosen for this study, due to my pilot study findings and the program's deliberate attempt in affirming students' culture. This social justice-based program "acknowledges the barriers that face [our] students due to issues of race, class,

gender, sexual orientation, ability, and other differences… And is an intentionally inclusive program that recognizes and celebrates diversity" (Program Website*[1], 2019) When I implemented my pilot study, I found that students were provided opportunities to engage with others of similar identities about navigating various “othering” social spaces. Students contended that having unconventional dialogues and workshops about their minoritized identities was pivotal to their navigation and transition to college. These types of conversations promoted critical self-reflection about multicultural issues, which was helpful when they entered college (Moss, 2008). The majority of the students started their college career with high educational aspirations (Kao & Tienda, 1998), due to the program upholding advanced education as the foundation to their vision of cultural and social uplift (Flennaugh et al., 2016; Gullatt & Jun, 2003). In various aspects, this pre-college program was intentional and deliberate in their curricular and programmatic plans.

Research Sample

There are over 1,000 Upward Bound programs across the country that provide resources and opportunities to high school students to successfully apply, transition, enroll, and persist through higher education (Cahalan & Goodwin, 2014). To be eligible to participate in this pre-college program, students must either come from families in which neither parent has a Bachelor's degree and/or qualify as low income. Typically, students that are qualified for this program come from homes where they are the first person to go to college, and receive free or reduced lunch (Kinney-Walker, 2016). Students can participate in these pre-college programs from freshman to senior year of high school, and range from various race/ethnicities and genders.

Sample Criteria

[1] To ensure the confidentiality of the research site, the program website will be cited in the references but not within the dissertation paper.

Although most pre-college programs serve students based on income status, and parental education level, this dissertation also examined racial identity due to these programs serving large numbers of racially minoritized students. For this study, I recruited a sample of twenty participants that met the following criterion: (1) identified racially as Black and/or Latinx; (2) participated in the pre-college program analyzed in the study (at least two academic years, and one summer session); (3) qualified as a college sophomore through senior during the 2018-2019 school year (have persisted at least one year, or completed at least two semesters of college); and (4) came from families, in which neither parent has a Bachelor's degree, and/or qualify as low income.

Participants were selected on the basis of their involvement in Upward Bound, the level of their parents' and their post-secondary educational attainment, their race, and socioeconomic status. The level of participation (two years and one summer) in the Upward Bound program is important to this study because 37% of students enrolled in Upward Bound programs dropout during the first year due to the high demands of the program (Stevenson, 2018). Additionally, 40% of the students in Upward Bound programs are projected to leave the program within the first 12 months (Sams-McPhaul, 2018). Therefore, if a student remains in the program for at least two years, they have demonstrated a commitment to the program, and possibly achieved the goal of Upward Bound programs—college enrollment and persistence. Upward Bound programs require a huge commitment from their participants. Students are asked to stay after school multiple days of the week, attend Saturday sessions during the academic school year, and commit to a rigorous six-week program during the summer. Many participants have other responsibilities and commitments (e.g., jobs, sports, family) that prohibit them from fulling retaining in pre-college programs. However, this culturally affirming Upward Bound program

was deliberate in trying to retain student participation. They implemented strategies like providing bus tokens for students to go home after school, communicated schedule conflicts with sports coaches, and assisted students in finding jobs that were conducive to the program's schedule. These strategies were useful in making the program more effective in improving student success.

Sample Selection

The participants for this dissertation study were recruited through purposeful sampling as "information-rich cases" (Patton, 2002). All participants shared characteristics and traits that connected to my research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In accordance with the criteria for narrative research design, the target sample size for this study was small (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry research typically only has a few participants due to the in-depth collaboration between researcher and participant during data collection, as well as a more detailed presentation of findings (Haydon, Browne, & van der Riet, 2018). Because I only investigated *one* Upward Bound program that specifically implemented a cultural wealth perspective, there was a smaller population to sample from. Furthermore, even though the Upward Bound program within this study has nearly 100% college acceptance rate, there was limited data on how many students have persisted past their first semester of college.

Alumni from the LHS Upward Bound program who meet the criteria for the study were contacted via email (*see Appendix A*). I received the list of students who meet the requirements for my research from the director of the LHS Upward Bound program, who served as my supervisor while working as a Graduate Assistant for the program. I had already established a relationship with these students and the LHS Upward Bound program, and maintained contact with the three students from my pilot study as a means of re-entry into the Upward Bound

community. During the initial contact with the participants, I identified myself and provided information about the goals and purpose of the research project. I contacted 57 students who met the criteria, and 24 students responded. Due to some scheduling and communication mishaps, my final sample yielded 20 participants (*see figure 2*). Upon agreeing to participate in the study, a date, time and location were determined for face-to-face interviews. At that point, each person was asked to sign an Informed Consent Form (*see Appendix B*) and a Media Release Form (*see Appendix C*). The media release forms allowed students' likeness and images to be used within this dissertation study, as well as for educational purposes and reproductions. The consent and media release forms were sent electronically to each participant, along with a confirmation email detailing information about the interview and project. I reviewed the consent and media release forms with each participant at the interview, to ensure that any of their questions about the study could be answered. Notably, the Institutional Review Board approved the implementation of this study (*see Appendix D*).

Figure 2. – List of Study Participants.

- Community College = CC
- 4-Year Land-Grant University = LGU
- 4-Year Liberal Arts College = LAC
- 4-Year Private Women's College = PWC
- 4-Year Public University = PU

**Pseudonyms were chosen by participants.*

Participant ID*	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Language (*in order of language first learned*)	Institution Type	Year in School	IB Classes
Alex	Woman	Black	English	LGU	Sophomore	Yes
Amber	Woman	Black	English	PWC	Junior	No
Anita	Woman	Black/ Jamaican	English | Patois	LGU	Junior	No
Aspen	Woman	Black/Haitian	English | French | Creole	LGU	Sophomore	No
Celeste	Woman	Black/Jamaican/Bahamian	English	LGU	Sophomore	Yes
Darwin	Man	Black/white	English	PU	Junior	No
David	Man	Latinx/Colombian	Spanish | English	LGU	Sophomore	Yes
Donna	Woman	Black	English	PWC	Senior	Yes
Elle	Woman	Black/Haitian	English | French | Creole	LGU	Junior	Yes
Freddie	Man	Latinx/Dominican	English | Spanish	PU	Sophomore	No
Jerome	Man	Black	English	LGU	Senior	Yes
Joe	Man	Black	English	CC	Sophomore	No
La'Dajah	Woman	Latinx	Spanish | English	CC	Junior	No
Lloyd	Man	Latinx/Dominican	English | Spanish	LGU	Sophomore	Yes
Nick	Man	Latinx/Puerto Rican	Spanish | English	LAC	Sophomore	No
Nicole	Woman	Latinx	Spanish | English	PU	Sophomore	No

Sarah	Woman	Black	English	CC	Sophomore	No
Seraphina	Woman	Latinx/ Puerto Rican	Spanish | English	LGU	Junior	Yes
Tyrique	Man	Black	English	LAC	Sophomore	No
Xavier	Man	Latinx/Puerto Rican	Spanish | English	LAC	Sophomore	No

Data Collection

Within this qualitative research project, I used two forms of data collection: in-depth interviews and artifact/photo elicitation.

In-depth Interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews were used for data collection within this project. The interviews took place in person so that they were interactive (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). I developed an interview protocol (*see Appendix E),* but the semi-structured nature of my interviews allowed for flexibility based on each participant's' narrative. Unlike structured interviews, which require the researcher to ask the same questions in the same manner to all of the participants, the semi-structured nature of these interviews was more fluid and adaptable. This enabled me to ask more open-ended questions, omit questions, add questions, or change the order, so that my interview was arranged as more of a discussion (Daly, 2007). Semi-structured interviews allowed me to have follow-up questions, so that I could probe for deeper understanding and insight of the participants' narratives (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). This interviewing technique worked well with narrative inquiry research methods because of the natural progression and flow of stories and counter-narratives (Chan, 2017). Each interview lasted between 90 to 120 minutes. I audio recorded the interviews with participants' consent, and professionally transcribed recordings using Rev.com or Temi.com.

Using my research questions and Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) model as a guide, my interview protocol was organized into three sections: (1) family and background, (2) Upward Bound experience, and (3) collegiate experience. The family and

background section focused on the students' upbringing, family expectations, and cultural identity/wealth. Some questions included: "What are some of your most prominent identities (race, gender, class, etc.)?" "What has been your biggest challenge being away from school?" The Upward Bound experience section investigated the level of college preparation (e.g., access to resources, knowledge of choices, academic preparation) students had when applying and transitioning into college. Some examples of questions in this section included: "What impact did Upward Bound have on your academic preparation for college?" "What were you expecting to get out of the Upward Bound program?" The last section on collegiate experience examined the academic and social experiences participants had as a minoritized student on campus, and what techniques they used to persist at their universities. This section closely examined the various funds of knowledge the students possess. Some questions in this final section included: "What inspired you to go to college?" "Please talk about your experiences as a [insert identities] on your campus." The goals of these sections were to elicit responses that could answer my two research questions and challenge dominant assumptions and majoritarian stories (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). My research questions are informed by the six tenets of Yosso's (2005) CCW model that aimed to create counternarratives that "exposed, analyzed, and challenged the majoritarian stories of racial privilege in order to further the struggle for social justice (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). Furthermore, Solórzano & Yosso (2002) contend that these counternarratives can be used to help strengthen traditions of "social, political, and cultural survival and resistance" in and out of the classroom (p. 32). Ultimately my data collection applied a narrative inquiry framework that used counternarratives to present research grounded in the experiences and knowledge of first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx college students.

Artifact / Photo Elicitation

Since most of the participants in this study graduated from high school years before the interview, artifact and photo elicitation was used to elicit full descriptions from past memories (Harper, 2002; Harrison, 2002). Photographs and artifacts within semi-structured interviews provoke responses and "evoke information, feelings, and memories that are due to the photograph's [or artifacts] particular form of representation," and most importantly stimulate "latent memory…. values and beliefs, while connecting to core definitions of the self to society, cultural and history." (Harper, 2002, pg. 15, 22). Participants were asked to bring two artifacts and/or photos to the interview. One artifact/photo indicative of their Upward Bound experience *and* one artifact/photo indicative of their current college experience. Artifacts could have included, but are not limited to, diagrams, drawings, writings, scrapbooks, video diaries, documents, figurines, graphics or media images (Stanczak, 2007).

Having the students bring photographs or artifacts to the interviews, allowed participants to contribute to the meaning-making of their ideas and narratives. As experienced in my pilot study, many of my student participants struggled with remembering their past high school experiences and could not formulate a clear definition or understanding of identity and cultural wealth. By bringing some medium to the interview, I was able to foster dialogue amongst my participants for more in-depth critical engagement and thinking. Many of the artifacts and/or photos students brought elicited some emotional response and triggered memories that they had not thought about in a while. Artifact and photo elicitation also encouraged participants to start thinking about this dissertation topic prior to the interview, which made them more prepared to speak about their experiences. Participants had the opportunity to discuss the significance and meaning of their artifacts and/or photos during the beginning of the second (Upward Bound

experience) and third (collegiate experience) sections of the interview protocol. Artifact and/or photo elicitation provided the visual cues to support detailed follow-up and probing questions needed to concretize my understanding of their transition and persistence during the interview. It also allowed me to engage in conversations about my research questions with participants in more accessible ways.

Data Analysis

For this project, all of the interviews were recorded and transcribed, and then imported into NVivo 12+, a qualitative data management software. A picture was taken, or electronically sent, of the participant's artifact and/or photograph brought to the interview. Data from both of these sources was transferred to my hard-drive and then imported onto my laptop. My dissertation chair, Dr. Chrystal George Mwangi, and I are the only people that have access to the data files. I listened to the audio recordings several times and reviewed journal notes to gain more insight into emerging themes. The data for this study was analyzed through three multi-phase coding cycles for an iterative and ongoing process. The first cycle coding process was (1) in vivo coding, followed by (2) focused coding, ending with (3) deductive coding using Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth model. By coding within these three cycles, I was able to analyze various themes throughout my interviews and artifacts/photos.

This research project created meaning from students' perspectives and stories through narrative inquiry and three cycles of coding, to organize common themes across collected stories as well as acknowledge their nuanced lived experiences (Polkinghorne, 1995). Even though certain cycles of coding dissected my participants' narratives, implementing narrative inquiry throughout my data analysis helped configure the data as a whole, while sustaining the richness of specific stories. Narrative inquiry research also allowed for a thematic analysis of participants'

stories, because the "primary attention is on the 'what' is said rather than 'how,' 'to whom,' or for what purposes" (Riessman, 2008, p. 54). While my three iterations of coding interpreted certain aspects of my participants' counternarratives, narrative research allowed me to examine the "patterns, narrative threads, tensions holistically, and themes either within or across an individual's experience and social setting" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 132) throughout the entire data analysis process.

In Vivo Coding

Within my first cycle of coding, I engaged in an in vivo coding process. In vivo's root meaning is "in that which is alive," and within qualitative research it refers to a code that is a short word or phrase from your actual dataset (Saldaña, 2016). In vivo coding was most appropriate in analyzing my data because the codes were literal phrases taken directly from participant interviews (Strauss, 1987). This was particularly important for my narrative inquiry study, as I wanted to center on my participants' voices directly. In vivo coding captured "behaviors or processes which were explained to the analyst how the basic problem of the actors is resolved or processed" (Strauss, 1987, p. 33), and "helped us to preserve participants' meanings of their views and actions in the coding itself" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 55). As it was important to accentuate my interviewees' voices within my data, I engaged in line-by-line coding to keep track of participant-inspired codes, rather than researcher-generated codes (De Cuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloh, 2013). The transcribed documents were read several times, and key phrases pertinent to responses to the interview questions were highlighted and underlined to identify and emphasize main ideas and perspectives. Doing line-by-line coding allowed me to gain a closer look at what my participants said and enabled me "to take compelling events apart and analyze what constitutes them and how they occurred" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 125). This pushed

me to not conflate their stories and experiences with my thoughts and experiences (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, & Hoagwood, 2013). This initial coding process was vital because it allowed my participants' narratives to emerge from the research and be the focus of my study.

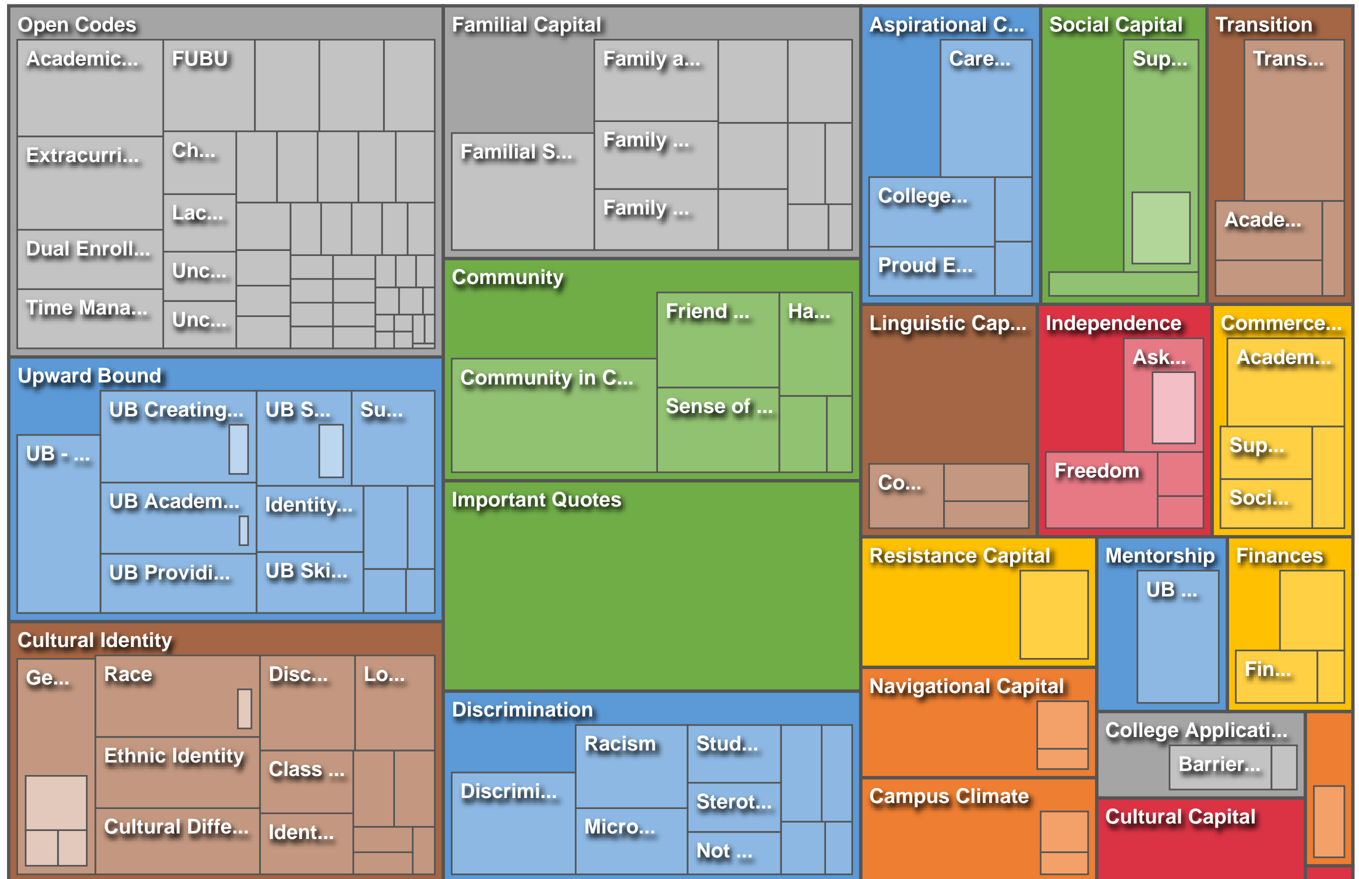
Focused Coding

After I engaged in my preliminary analysis of in vivo coding, I began a second coding process that was more focused. Focused coding was used to explore the most frequent or significant codes from my original in vivo codes (Saldaña, 2016). Focused coding allowed me to compare my newly constructed codes across all of my participant interviews for comparability and transferability of the data (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). This was helpful for my processes, since my interviews were semi-structured and there were differences in the ways my participants engaged with my research questions.

Having the ability to use the most significant and/or frequently used codes from the first coding process allowed for the most analytical and rigorous assessment of my data (Gonzalez, 2016), and most importantly helped me develop prominent categories and themes (Saldaña, 2016). This part of the coding process was more researcher driven than the open coding of my participants' narratives since I connected the themes together. This was done by comparing each of the emergent codes from my interviews, to refine the smaller categories into broader themes. Nodes (NVivo codes) were created in NVivo 12 + by manually placing participant responses into my open coding nodes as well as my larger parent nodes associated with my research questions. Use of the NVivo 12+ word frequency and text search query functions permitted the identification of possible themes from the most frequently used words and text in each node. The verbatim responses generated by NVivo 12+ were compared to the

participant experiences manually highlighted in the transcripts and used to create clusters and themes (*see Figure 3*).

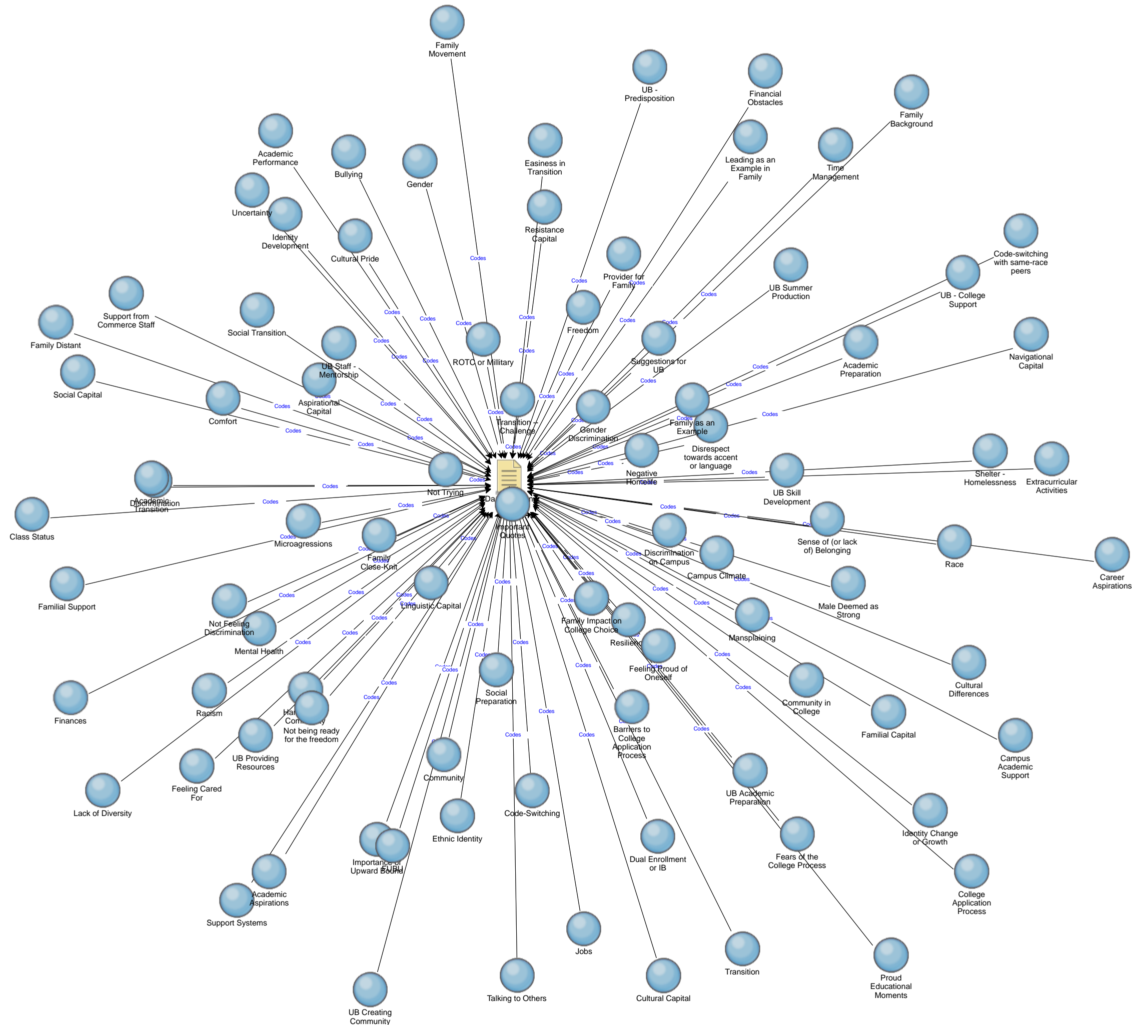
Figure 3. - Nodes compared by the number of coding references created in NVivo 12+.



Attention was placed on repetitive and recurring Nodes and themes found in the data. These textual descriptions were used to synthesize the data and determine the central or parent themes. Relevant parent themes were consolidated when overlapping occurred, and subthemes were derived from the child nodes to arrive at the essence of the meaning of each lived experience (*see Figure 4*). Some of the examples of these parent and child coding themes included: campus climate (culture shock, university response); community (comfort, friend circle, survival friends); cultural identity (cultural pride, cultural differences, disconnect from identity); and discrimination (microaggressions, double consciousness, tokenism). The responses from the

participants were reviewed in detail until data saturation was reached and no new themes or information were identified. Data saturation was achieved when there are no new data, coding, or themes identified (Fush & Ness, 2015).

Figure 4. – Visualization of the structural coding and themes for participant interview (Nick).

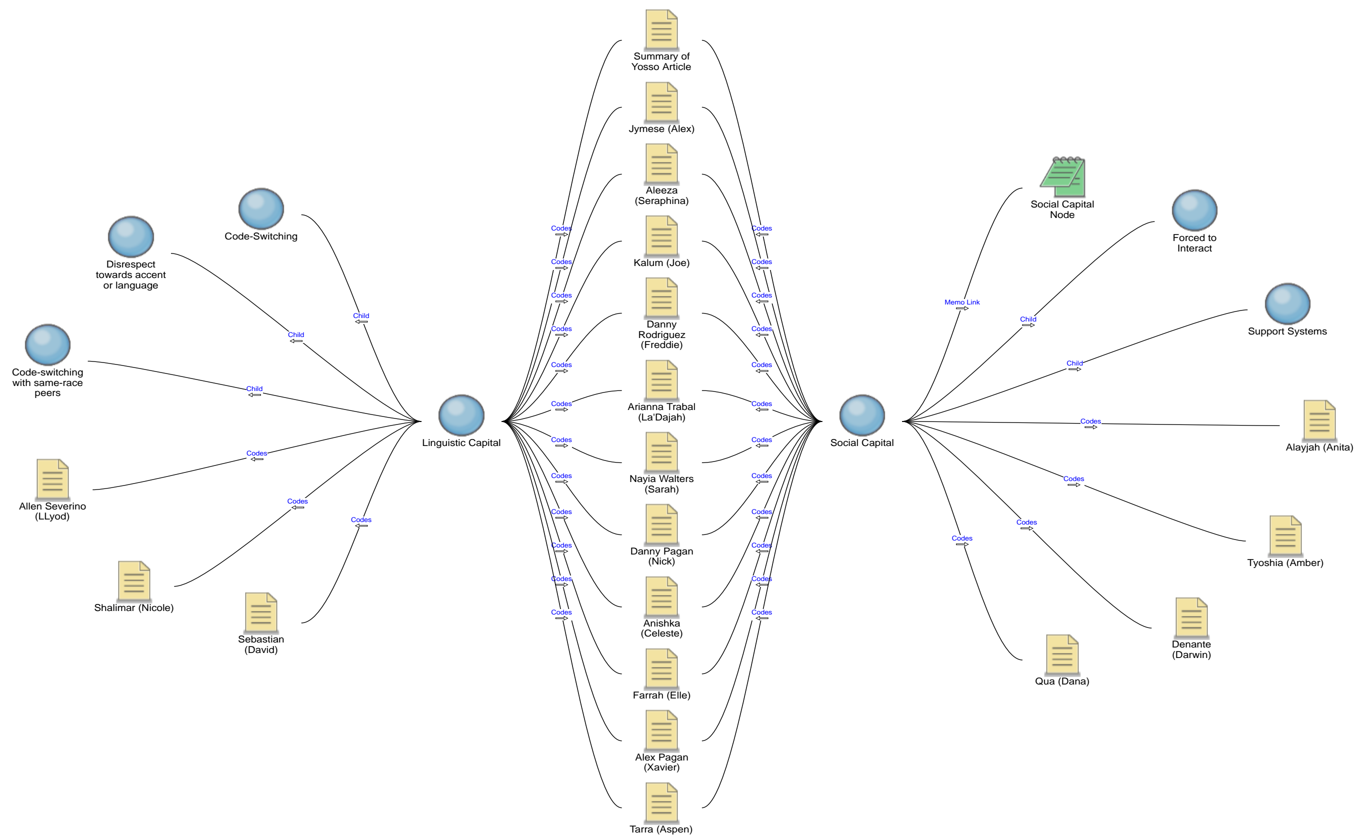


Deductive Coding

After my second iteration of coding, I went through a deductive coding process using the six forms of Yosso's (2005) CCW model as top-down codes (aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational and resistance). From this, I did a cross-node analysis by examining the emergent common themes across the different data points (student interviews and

artifacts/photographs) in the NVivo 12+ program. Within this portion of the analysis, I was able to group similarly themed responses together and drew comparisons amongst participants and Yosso's (2005) CCW framework (*see Figure 5*). This enabled me to see which forms of cultural capital were used within participants' transitional and persistence methods. Descriptive content about the codes was developed from comparing the codes to the existent literature on pre-college programs, minoritized students' transition to college, and aspects of my conceptual framework.

Figure 5. – Visualization of a cross-node analysis between the Linguistic Capital and Social Capital nodes.



Data Quality

During the qualitative research process of this dissertation, I implemented specific techniques to ensure the trustworthiness and interpretation of my findings. I engaged in three iterative procedures to most accurately reflect the perspectives of first-generation, low-income, Black, and Latinx students by doing internal member checking, peer debriefing, and

methodological triangulation. Given my closeness to the research topic and study sample, it was important for me to disclose my positionality, as seen in the next section. This disclosure was the result of a constant process of reflection on my motivations of conducting this study, and how my identities could have impacted my data collection and analysis. Therefore, member checking was an essential first step in illustrating the authenticity of my findings. After each interview, there was a debriefing period where participants could clarify any of their responses and could ask follow-up questions regarding the coordination of the study. Most participants were comfortable with their responses and had no questions regarding the study's logistics.

Additionally, to ensure credibility, each interview transcript was e-mailed to the respective participant. Participants were able to examine their narratives as a form of member checking. By reconnecting with my participants in this manner, I was able to verify the accuracy of their statements and stories, which furthered my understanding of the themes derived from my data (Andrew, Richards, & Hemphill, 2018). Member checking helped determine whether or not my findings matched students' multiple realities (Schwandt et al., 2007), which provided an accurate picture of the participants' stories (Chua & Adams, 2014). At that time, participants also had the chance to endorse, correct, or add to any of the transcribed interview data (Palinkas et al., 2013). Due to the approval of student narratives and findings, a follow-up interview was not necessary. Therefore, after the agreement of the narratives from the participants, I continued with peer debriefing.

The second part of my verification process involved conversations between a network of peers. I am a part of a Women of Color Dissertation writing group that is comprised of interdisciplinary qualitative and quantitative researchers, K-12 educators, and higher education practitioners. While being in this group, I had my colleagues, of various backgrounds, provide

rigorous and honest feedback (Daly, 2007). Andrew and colleagues (2018) said that having dialogues with external researchers could enhance the overall trustworthiness of a study. Therefore my peers, who are unaffiliated with my research, confirmed that my findings were consistent with the data, provided analytical and grammatical feedback, and assisted with brainstorming my ideas. They also helped me unpack my over/underemphasized points, vague descriptions, general errors, biases, and assumptions (Palinkas et al., 2013). Most notably, I found this peer debriefing group influential in my research, because they challenged me to consider alternative techniques in exploring my interviews.

Lastly, I engaged in methodological triangulation through various forms of data collection (semi-structured interviews and photo/artifact elicitation) about the same phenomenon (Polit & Beck, 2012). Methodological triangulation was beneficial in providing a comprehensive understanding of the data, increased trustworthiness, confirmed findings, and enhanced the phenomenon being studied (Casey & Murphy 2009). The usage of triangulation allowed me to interpret and analyze my two forms of data to strengthen the outcomes of my study. Through analyzing my participant's narratives in conjunction with their artifact or photo brought to the interview, I increased the trustworthiness and cogency of the data collected in each research phase (Altrichter, Feldman, Posch, & Somekh, 2008). By doing this, I produced more rigorous and authentic findings.

Researcher Role and Reflexivity

Throughout this dissertation process, I engaged in a continuous process of reflecting on my positionality concerning my research. My personal background, educational, and professional experience are the motivations for conducting this research, and impacted the ways I engaged with my participants and data. Reflexivity was imperative to this study because it

required me to be cognizant of my positionalities, particularly when collecting and interpreting data (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Schram, 2006). My role and relationship with the students, as well as background identities, were important to consider when I explored my data.

As a researcher, I acknowledge that my background and experiences vis-à-vis gender, socioeconomic status, education, race, and ethnicity, college-generation status, inform all that I do and how I navigate the world. As a Black woman, my race and gender are often the most salient identities I hold, particularly in predominantly white educational spaces. Therefore, I was very intentional in including a racialized lens to my study. In correspondence with the literature and my *own* personal experiences, there was a presumption that many participants would have experienced similar racialized issues on their campuses (microaggressions, racism, stereotyping, etc.) (Chang, 2016; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Solórzano et al., 2000). These similarities provided me the opportunity to build community, camaraderie, and trust among my participants, since I resonated with many of their experiences.

Even though I was considered to be an 'insider' to my participants due to my racial and ethnic identities, there were some stark intersectional identity differences that impacted my experiences. As a continuing-generation, middle-class, suburban-educated scholar, I know that there are some innate privileges I hold that impact the way I navigate higher education. From my grandmother having an Ed.D. in Education, to my mother being my own high school guidance counselor—I have had robust academic, professional, mentoring and emotional networks that have aided my transition from high school to college. I also recognize that growing up in a suburb of Chicago, my K-12 experiences are different from my participants (i.e., technology in the classroom, rigorous courses available, government funding, varied extracurricular activities),

also impacted my current academic trajectory. Staying attuned to these differences and similarities was critical in ensuring the trustworthiness of my study.

Being reflective was important during this dissertation process due to my relationship with my participants over the past years. Since 2014, I have worked either a Graduate Assistant or Summer Instructor of a College Readiness course for the students in this Upward Bound program. I have had first-hand experiences with many of the participants in this study, particularly within their transition from high school to college. Within my various roles with the Upward Bound program, I have seen many facets of their transitional experiences. I have assisted students with their high school coursework, taken them on college tours, edited their college application essays, and taught them about test-taking strategies. Therefore, it was important for me to continually reflect on my roles as researcher, mentor, and instructor, because of the subconscious impact I could have on participants' perceptions and responses.

Instead of steering away from these intersectional identities that impacted my research, I was cognizant of how these roles could potentially affect my study. Throughout my research process, I wrote reflexive memos/journals about my positionalities and experiences that helped attenuate my assumptions and emphasized student voices. I also engaged in reflexivity with my women of Color dissertation writing group by debriefing with them throughout my data collection and analysis processes. By being transparent about my research process and using rich, thick descriptions of my findings, I was able to ensure that my students' voices were the core of the study. Additionally, narrative inquiry allowed me to take a subjective position in connecting with the participants' worldview (Haydon et al., 2018). Therefore, the relationship I have with student participants should be seen as an asset to this research project, because it

provided authentic access to the stories of first-generation, low-income, Black, and Latinx Upward Bound alumni.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative inquiry study was to explore the stories and experiences of 20 first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx Upward Bound alumni and their transition and persistence from high school to college. I examined how these students used their cultural wealth formulated from their families, communities, and networks to aid in their transition and persistence through postsecondary education. In narrative inquiry design, participants share their accounts of stories and lived experiences that provide the context and framework for life situations (Pepper & Wildy, 2009). The data collection and analysis from these semi-structured, artifact/photo elicited interviews contained rich insights that uncovered themes associated with some barriers and methods used within their pursuit for higher education. Through Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) assessment of narrative inquiry, each student helped identify factors that answered my two research questions:

1) How do first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx Upward Bound college students use their cultural wealth within their transition and persistence through college?

2) How do first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx students perceive the role of Upward Bound in preparing them for college?

While I analyzed the students' narratives, it became clear that they used their lived experiences garnered from their families, friends, peers, community, and Upward Bound program to transition and persist through their post-secondary institutions. Students were able to describe how their varied life experiences defined their academic journeys and overall trajectories. I first start with a brief synopsis of each student's background and then present their narratives through

the lenses of Yosso's (2005) *aspirational, navigational, social, resistance, linguistic*, and *familial* capital.

Student Profiles

The data presented within this dissertation support the belief that first-generation, low-income, Black, and Latinx Upward Bound alumni possess varied skills that aid in their navigation through college. Notably, while they all have cultural similarities, there are also stark differences among the students that make them not a monolithic group. Presented below is a brief narrative of each student's story.

Alex: Alex is a Black woman, who is a Sophomore at a four-year land-grant institution. She was born and raised in Alabama and moved to New England for high school. Music has been very influential in her life, as she has played various instruments throughout her K-16 educational career. She currently plays for her university's marching band, where she had "*the best experience of [her] life playing in the 2018 Rose Bowl.*" She enjoys playing sports with her guy friends, *"because they are less drama."*

Amber: Amber is a Black woman in her first semester at a women's college in New England. After she graduated from high school, she attended two different community colleges spending two semesters at each institution. Amber recently changed her major to criminal justice, due to the recent murder of her 15-year old brother who "*was brutally murdered by a police officer in [her hometown].*" The death of her brother has impacted her academically and emotionally in college. She has always "*had anger issues,*" but is "*working on bettering herself as a person.*"

Anita: Anita is Junior at a four-year land-grant university in New England. Her father is Jamaican, and her mother is a Black woman from New York. Anita has several campus jobs, but her "*favorite*" is working for her campus' Black culture center. She really "*appreciates bringing*

her community together," since she "*learned early on, that you need people to survive*." Her family is a "*huge part of her life,*" but she appreciates keeping her distance from them. Participating in the Upward Bound program helped her "*understand the importance of freedom*," which is "*the secret to [her] success*." Anita was a participant in my original pilot study.

Aspen: Aspen is a Sophomore at a four-year land-grant university in New England. She is a Haitian woman who "*appreciates being able to speak English, French, and Creole.*" Upward Bound taught her about the "*importance of finding community*." Therefore, she remains involved in her home-town by tutoring students at her previous high school (this is through a campus sponsored organization). She feels that it "*takes a village*" for students to survive in college. She is close to her family but is "*constantly being compared against [her older] sister*," who also goes to the same university.

Celeste: Celeste is a Black woman in her Sophomore year at a four-year land-grant university in New England. She is Jamaican and Bahamian, but she "*doesn't think about [her] ethnicities, because [she] doesn't want to…or have to.*" She also tries not to think about the racism that happens on campus, so that she is noy an "*'angry Black woman' all the time*." Although she does feel that her university "*silence(s) students of Color.*" She has always "*been a decent student*" all of her life and was Salutatorian in her high school.

Darwin: Darwin is a Junior at a four-year public university in New England. He feels very connected to "*being Black,*" and is "*most comfortable being around Black people,*" even though he was raised by his white mother and most of the people in his friend group are white women. He "*enjoys being a teacher for them* [white people]" regarding educating about oppression. He appreciates being away from his family, as he has always "*tried to escape from them.*" Darwin

also appreciated being in Upward Bound and taking International Baccalaureate (IB) classes. These resources gave him "*criticality skills"* to examine oppressive structures.

David: David is a Latinx man from Bogotá, Colombia. He is a Sophomore at a four-year land-grant university in New England. He moved from Colombia right before his Junior year of high school to the New England area. Language is a very pertinent part of his identities "*as [he] struggled to communicate… even with other Latinos.*" He often felt "*unconscious judgment*" for his accent, which impacted aspects of his various transitions (e.g., from Colombia to the U.S., high school to college). He is very close with his mother, as she "*works two jobs to pay for [his] education."* They have a reciprocal relationship where "*she relies on [him], and [he] reli[ies] on her, but [he's] always been independent.*"

Donna: Donna is a Black woman and a Senior at a women's college in New England. In high school, she was at "*the top of her class.*" Her mother is a "*tremendous support system and has helped [her] academically, financially, and emotionally throughout [her] past four years.*" She lived on campus for the first three years and is now commuting to school from her home-town. She feels "*incredibly supported at [her] school,*" and claims that there have never been any "*instances of discrimination*" at her university. Most notably, she calls her institution "*home.*"

Elle: Elle is Junior at four-year land-grant university in New England. She is connected with her Haitian culture and finds her "*multilingual-ness (sic) really important to [her] identity*." Her family was adamant about "*making sure [she] knew who [she] was.*" Even though she is not "*as close to [her] mother*" as she once was, she appreciates "*having them as a support system.*" On her campus, she often finds herself pushing her peers to "*think more broadly,*" even if that means being perceived as an "*angry Black woman.*" Elle was also a participant in my original pilot study.

Freddie: Freddie is a Latinx man, in his Sophomore year at a four-year public university in New England. He "*was not as close to [his] Dominican culture before [he] joined Upward Bound.*" He uses his college experiences "*to learn more [him]self and others.*" During his first semester of college, he struggled with some mental health issues but "*appreciated [his] family's support.*" He is also an incredibly talented rapper (he even rapped during the interview) and is interested in music and boxing.

Jerome: Jerome is in his Senior year at a four-year land-grant university in New England. As a Black man he is "*incredibly proud of [his] identity,*" but "*conscious of all the bullshit attached*" to being a Black man. He emotionally told stories about being confronted and stalked by police on campus and throughout his college's town. He "*never ever felt like [he] belonged.*" He is an active member of the #BlackLivesMatter group on campus and makes sure that the "*administration hears what [he and his peers] have to say.*" He said that Upward Bound gave him a "*reality check*" on how college will be socially, but "*didn't prepare [him] academically.*" He is "*really excited to start [his] real life, and inevitably graduate to bigger and better things.*"

Joe: Joe is a Sophomore at a community college in his hometown. He was homeschooled until 6th grade until the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) got involved due to a domestic issue between his parents. He is "*extremely close*" to his mother, who has been "*handicap since [he] was born.*" He chose to attend the community college in his hometown so that he "*wouldn't leave [his mother's] side.*" He indicated that he lacks some interpersonal skills but contends that "*Upward Bound taught [him] how to talk to people*." This was helpful, as he often felt "*people didn't notice [him]*."

La'Dajah: La'Dajah is a Latina woman in her third year at a local community college. She is often "*misconstrued*" and "*hypersexualized*" based on her attire that she wears (i.e., crop tops,

shorter skirts/dresses); this has also limited her interactions with other women "*due to their jealousy.*" While in college she has tried to "*move away from the stereotypes of [her] Latinx family [and identities]*," and is now more interested in "*being different than them… in every way."* She is continually "*learning about [her]self*" and "*appreciates being at college, and making something of [her]self.*"

Lloyd: Lloyd is a Latinx man in his Sophomore year at a land-grant university. He "*likes how close [his family is] to campus,*" as they often come and visit him. He is currently living with one of his classmate's family members "*so that he can save up money.*" He occasionally commutes back to his hometown during weekends, to work in his family store. He took a full IB course load in high school, which he felt has helped him be "*academically prepared*" for his full load of engineering courses.

Nick: Nick is a Puerto Rican student in his Sophomore year, at small Liberal Arts college in New England. He was born and raised in Puerto Rico, before moving to a homeless shelter in California. During his freshman year of high school, he moved to New England with his family. After high school he went to a military training camp for six months, but "*felt kinda lost*" once he got back from training. He "*was grateful for Upward Bound being there to assist [his] college choices.*" He also credits most of his "*growth as a person*" to Upward Bound. The program "*made [him] appreciate [his] culture more, be better than [he] was, and to challenge [him]self.*"

Nicole: Nicole is a Sophomore at a four-year public university in New England. She is a Latinx woman, who often "*feels that she has to prove something to people.*" She "*tries her best to find community*" amongst Black and Latinx students on her campus. She appreciated the "*cultural lessons*" learned from Upward Bound, and continually seeks "*a mentor on campus.*" She was bullied in high school, which impacted the way she integrated into her university.

Sarah: Sarah is a Black woman starting her second year at a community college in her hometown. She transferred from a four-year public university due to a "*racialized incident in her residence hall,*" and financial issues. She said it was a huge "*culture shock being around so many white people.*" Her family also impacted her transition and persistence, as she frequently moved and lived with various family members. One of the main reasons why she wants to go to college is so that she "*wouldn't end up like her parents.*"

Seraphina: Seraphina is a Latinx woman, in her Junior year at a four-year land-grant university in New England. She was born and raised in Puerto Rico and moved to New England during her Junior year of high school. She is extremely close to her "*familia,*" who serve as the "*motivation for [her] to be successful*" while in college and throughout her life. She is very tied to her Puerto Rican culture and tries to stay connected through "*food, language, music, books... basically everything.*" Seraphina was a participant in my original pilot study.

Tyrique: Tyrique is a Sophomore at a small Liberal Arts college in New England. As a Black man, he feels that he "*gets stared at, but doesn't feel blatantly prejudice by everyone…just some*" in his small college community. He feels as a "*big Black man*" no "*students are going to mess with him,*" especially being on a predominantly white campus. He is currently paying for college using his mother's G.I. Bill, who he "*tries to make proud.*" He is the oldest of three sisters and goes to college "*to be their provider and role model.*" He wants to "*start the wave*" for people in his family to go to college.

Xavier: Xavier was born and raised in Puerto Rico, before moving through various homeless shelters in California. After living in California for a few years, he moved to New England where he "*still didn't feel safe.*" His "*ghetto language*" (broken English) impacted him in high school, and still impacts his academic scholarship in college. Now he is in his Junior year at small

Liberal Arts college in New England. Even though he felt like he "*couldn't communicate properly,*" he was still viewed as a "*class clown*" who "*got along with everyone.*" He feels connected to his College, and it's made him "*hella comfortable*" to be there.

Narrative Findings

As I began to develop and unpack the various themes emerging from the data, participants' narratives revealed how students made meaning and responded to diverse life experiences. Often the stories or counternarratives of Black and Latinx students go unheard within academia (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). However, this dissertation study positions their stories as assets that defy the dominant educational narrative. Their stories counter the scholarship and public policies that attempt to hinder the success of marginalized Black and Brown students. In answering my first research question in understanding how first-generation, low-income, Black, and Latinx students use their cultural wealth to transition and persist through college, there were two significant findings: (1) **Familial Influence** *(familial capital)* and (2) **Resiliency** (*resistant capital).* In answering my second research question about students' perceptions on their role the role of Upward Bound in aiding their transition to college there were two larger findings: (3) **Community**, or as Aspen said, *"It takes a village;"* and (4) **College and Culture Predisposition.** While forms of *linguistic capital* factored into students' cultural wealth and transition, students relied on their families to concretize and even cultivate their *resistant* and *cultural capital* to transition and persist through college. Participating in the Upward Bound program also impacted students' persistence, due to their formation of community and experiencing stereotypical college-life before enrolling. Furthermore, as many students within this study described how they aspired for college and "fantastic careers," *aspirational capital*

was more broadly framed within their narratives. Although there is overlap between and across the findings, the findings are presented separately for clarity.

Familial Influence

Familial capital or “those cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition” was most prominent within this study (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Consistent with previous literature (Carey, 2016; Mulroy, 2011; Sy & Romero, 2008), familial support was a salient theme in understanding the influences of participants’ achievement outcomes in college. Most of the students contended that their relationship with their family, whether positive or negative, impacted their transition and persistence into college. The support students received from their parents manifested in two larger ways, as it: (1) impacted students’ academic performance and college choice; and (2) provided an example to follow or to defer from.

Family Impact on Academics and College Choices

Within this dissertation study, every participant indicated that the familial support they received influenced their academics and college choices—which ultimately impacted their transition and persistence into college. For many students, similar to Tyrique, their parents had been “big on education since [they] could remember.” Even though parents of Color are often blamed and stereotyped for the academic achievement gap between white and Black/Latinx students, student participants defy these beliefs. Parents of Color are often seen as “not caring about their children’s education” (Muhammad, 2007, p. 187) or having a “lazy parenting style” (Jun, & Colyar, 2002, p. 201). However, several students affirmed a narrative of valuing their academics and education, due to their families’ messaging and support. For example, Amber said that "education was something instilled in me for a long time." She went on to say, "My parents

are really big on education…like it's not a competition, but it is. It's like, good grades get rewards. We show our good grades, and they are proud of that. And I am proud of that." Being successful was something significant to Amber as she struggled at the beginning of her academic career. She said she "wasn't the best student in high school, which inevitably impacted [her] college career."

As Amber recently just transferred to her third institution, she believed she had a more successful transition due to the supportive messaging she received from her parents. Amber continued to say, "even though it may have taken me longer, I knew I could do it. I know I need an education; they taught me that. So I know here [in college] poppin' with straight As." These messages of academic encouragement during Amber's transition, helped further her educational desire (*aspirational capital*)—which motivated her towards degree attainment and successful persistence. The messaging she received from her parents made her not "want to give up" which motivated her academic achievement. Research has shown that support and encouragement from parents are associated with greater educational aspirations among students and college choice (Bean-Folkes & Ellison, 2018). Amber's narrative suggests that this messaging is also useful in moments of transition, as she sought this support when she transitioned from high school to college, and later transitioned from community college to a four-year institution. This type of celebratory support was positively associated with student success. Darwin furthered this sentiment of familial recognition, by describing his family as having "very positive reactions towards academic success. Just a lot of praise." Most notably, students received this type of familial support even if they weren't as academically successful. Seraphina described the time she failed calculus during her first semester of college,

> My first semester I failed calculus. That was crazy. I told my mom, and she was pissed (*awkwardly laughs*). But really, she was just supportive; like we made an action plan together. I took the class again during the summer and got a B+. She really focuses me, academically.

This *familial capital* and value put on education pushed students to persist through challenging moments. The action plan that Seraphina created was just one of the many mechanisms that furthered her persistence for a successful educational trajectory. Implementing this tool also enhanced the *navigational capital* she used during difficult academic moments. Her mother's involvement, support, and advice furthered her academic achievement and success and *familial capital*.

The academic support students received from their families also influenced their college decisions and choices. For example, Jerome "knew he was always going to college," since that was something his family instilled in him. Even if college was their only option after high school, several students indicated that their parents were the ones that pushed them towards that direction. Like Jerome, Elle said that her "mom stressed it. Like, 'You're going to school. If you don't go to school, you're gonna be working full time. No one's going to be staying in the house and just chilling.' So, I kinda had a choice, but not really (*laughs*)." Like Elle, many students had the *aspirational capital* that motivated them to apply, transition and persist through college. As she jokingly indicated that she had "no choice" to go college, she cultivated this college-going identity based on the support she received from her family. Again, defying this notion, that families of Color do not value or care about educational success. From a community cultural wealth perspective, Amber's parents activated both *familial* and *aspirational* capital by

encouraging her to go to college, and work towards degree attainment. She uses the support of her familial networks to propel her through academia.

As all of the participants were first-generation students, many parents were unfamiliar with the college application process. Several of the participants' families indicated that they lacked the necessary college knowledge needed to aid their students. Thus, many parents relied on their children to inform them about college choice; while students simultaneously relied on their parents for educational support. Lloyd talked about this reciprocal supportive narrative, "[My father] tells me that he trusts my decisions. He's a little confused on the process. But I know he just wants to me to go to college, do good, get a good job, and be set." Celeste also had similar experiences with her parents,

> My parents never went to college. They didn't really understand what was going on (*laughs*). Like my dad would always feel some type of way for me asking for his personal stuff. But the thing is, we just kept talking about options and choices. I learned a lot from Upward Bound, and that info really helped me have tough conversations with them… they like trusted me.

This perceived lack of college knowledge did impact some students and their college choices, but it also created an opportunity for families to talk to their students about how their college choices would affect *them*. In fact, parental influence on students' post-secondary decisions is often stronger than any other group including teachers, counselors, mentors, or friends (Bardick et al., 2004; Carey, 2016; Creamer & Laughlin, 2005). As students did not always have their parents to guide their college path their *navigational capital*—influenced by their *familial capital* and Upward Bound program—helped them towards their goal of persistence and degree attainment.

Noting how significant parent influence is for college choice and academic success, many of these conversations were about the proximity from home and the financial cost. For example, Lloyd described the in-depth discussions he had with his mother,

> She just said, 'make my own decisions'. So I chose to go [this school] 'cause it was cheaper, and it's not that far from home. So if they want to visit, they can. They really were influential on where I wanted to go… they supported what I said.

This support that Lloyd received from his family concretized his college decision, which made him have no "buyer's remorse" on choosing a university to attend. Lloyd appreciated being less than an hour away because his family was able to visit him on campus (*see figure 6*), rather than having to go back to his hometown. Staying on campus, and not going home frequently, allowed him to integrate and develop community. Students who were more integrated into their campuses had increased levels of campus satisfaction and persistence (Knaggs et al., 2015; Samuelson & Litzler, 2016). Furthermore, Lloyd's family appreciated seeing him on campus in "[his] natural element." This type of *familial capital* and support aided his success in transitioning from high school to college.

Figure 6. – Lloyd with his family during a visit. Image blurred by the researcher for participant confidentiality.

Even though most (*n*=15) students within this study lived on campus, they still wanted to be close to their parents and families. Some families, like Seraphina's, "struggled with seeing [their child] grow up." She continued to say, "They knew that I needed to go to college, but they really didn't want me to go far. I come home probably every two weeks to visit my brothers and sisters. I appreciate having them, being able to rely on them." Joe was another participant who talked about the importance of being close to his family. He was an incredibly talented student in high school and had an expected family contribution (EFC) of zero, which allowed him to receive the maximum amount for financial aid. With the "help of Upward Bound, [he] was accepted to 12 schools" across the New England area, and two of these schools had given him a full-ride. But one of the biggest reasons he chose to go to a community college in his hometown was to be close to his mother. "I don't wanna be away from my mom. Because she's handicap and stuff, and so I don't wanna just leave her behind." When I asked Joe if he would ever leave her to go to a four-year institution, he said: "As long as she needs me, I'll stay."

Notably, every student within this study attended school within a 2-hour radius. As some of the students did apply to some out of state colleges, most students wanted to be closer to their home networks. As Aspen said, "I wanted to be away from [my family], but not like away-away. They are still my safety net… but don't get me wrong, I do like my freedom." Previous scholars have addressed that first-generation, low-income, Black, and Latinx students often attend universities closer to home due to family obligations (e.g., being the caretaker or financial provider), or lack travel resources needed to attend schools further away (Marquez Kiyama et al., 2015; Sy & Romero, 2008)—and these students were no different. I also argue that these students appreciated having an accessible "safety net" close by. Being able to rely on their parent's support and knowledge during stressful times, aided the ways students successfully

transitioned and persisted. Even though they were close to home, sometimes not by choice, they were comforted by their *familial capital* which helped them navigate their academic institutions. And I note, that no matter the geographical location, students would have been exposed to institutionalized adversity.

In addition to being close to home, the cost of college was a huge factor for many families and students. Even though many of these students received large grants, scholarships, and FASFA packages, several students felt that they were now adding a significant financial burden to their families. David shared this story about his mother,

> It was hard because my mom had to get another job to afford college. I feel like she's making such a big sacrifice for me because she leaves the house from Monday through Friday at 6:00 am and doesn't come back until 10:00 pm. She's out of the house all day working. She's always doing something to help me, and she's always doing her best to help me with whatever she can (*sighs*). I don't want to say I am a burden, but it's hard not to feel this way.

David and his mother had immigrated to America about six years ago. He and his mother are incredibly close, and he's "grateful for all of her support." He contends that "[he] couldn't have done it without her." This type of sacrifice (monetarily or otherwise) and support was a common thread amongst several of the students' stories. Dana said,

> A lot of people think I'm mean because I made my mom... Well I didn't *make* her, because she could have had made me pay half or all of it. But she didn't make me pay the out-of-pocket costs for three years, and we live 10 minutes away from the school. And I still chose to stay on campus.

Some students felt guilty for their family's financial support, while others were intentional about paying their way through college and receiving familial support in other ways.

Anita is in her Junior year of college and has worked two jobs for the last five semesters. Even though she appreciates her family being there for emotional and social support, she does wish she had more financial assistance from them.

> Yeah. My family is on the poor end, so I work two jobs at school. And it's stressful. I don't have money to just not be able to work, and to get all my work done, and all that without having to worry about jobs. I do enjoy my jobs, but it's a lot of work at the same time. If I could not work in college, I would. Like don't get me wrong, my family has been there to support me through so much shit, it's just that I wish they could help me money-wise. And they can't. I mean they would if they could, but they just can't.

Even though Anita's family could not provide financial support, having their social and emotional support aided her persistence through tough moments. As previous research has indicated that students who expect their parents to provide financial support for college are 66% more likely to attend and graduate from a four-year college (Wright, 2018)—Anita beat these odds. She used her *resistant capital* to successfully persist through her college career, and "feels completely confident" about graduating next year. Her *resistant capital* allowed her to counterattack the various challenges, particularly financially, that impacted her trajectory at her four-year university.

Being the first person to go away to college was an exciting, yet nerve-racking aspect of participants' educational journeys. Familial interest and encouragement have been proven to sustain and foster academic achievement and success for students (Carey, 2016). Even if families were not able to provide the financial means for their students, their support impacted the ways

they navigated the college application process. As familial support looked differently for each participant, it was comprised of either emotional, physical, or financial support. Receiving this type of familial support positively impacted their transition and persistence through college.

Family as an Example

Our families often set the foundation of who we are as people. Within this dissertation, *familial capital* refers to how students use their past familial experiences to motivate, encourage, and persist through challenging obstacles and overall life events. Several students talked about the hardships they experienced growing up with their families. Many of these foundational experiences impacted the ways that students viewed and aspired for college. For example, Xavier's story was rooted in this theme. He was born and raised in Puerto Rico until he and his family moved to California "for a better life." Unfortunately, due to some domestic related issues between his father and mother, they were forced to live in a homeless shelter temporarily. This experience catapulted his relationship with education and thinking about his future. While sharing his story, he said:

> I think that what me and my family went through in our life, inspired me to go to college. 'Cause I knew that if I'd go to college and stuff like that, I could get a way better job than anybody in my family. And I could get paid a lot, and I could help them in the future. Like I never want to have to live the life I lived before, you know?

When sharing his story, he explained that he does not have any "shame" for where he has been, but these experiences and *familial capital* are the motivation behind his goals. While in college, he continually "thinks about these experiences with [his family]" as motivation to be successful and attain a degree. Most notably, he hopes that through his degree attainment he will be able to give back to his family and improve his family's generational wealth and capital. He has seen the

struggles of his family, and uses their experiences to further his *familial* and *resistant capital* needed to navigate college.

Freddie's narrative also shared this underlying notion, of seeing his parents struggle and wanting a better life and education. He said, "My dad instilled in me the importance of education. He was like, 'if you don't want to grow up and be like me, cleaning,' ‘cause he works at the hospital cleaning. He's like, ‘you need to go to school'". The *familial capital* and value of education that Freddie's father instilled in him, is what pushes him to continue working hard. He knows that his father works hard being a maintainer, but believes that education will be a platform for upward mobility and other occupational options.

Sarah was also adamant about shifting away from her parents’ experiences, to "make something for [her]self." According to Sarah, her parents “have never ever ever ever been stable… [which] played a role in showing me a lot what not to do when it comes to like school and life in general.” She continued to say, "My parents are my biggest inspiration, I guess. I wanna make something of myself, by not being either of my parents.” When I asked her why she didn’t want to be like them, she said, “'cause they didn't go anywhere, and they're still in the same predicament that they've been in since I was born, I guess, and before then, so. Yeah, we haven't really made it anywhere since then.” Since she was in middle school, her parents consistently moved around, forcing her to attend various schools and live with different relatives. Sarah described some of this disruptive movement,

> We move around a lot so. So we're in a different apartment every six months basically. So that was part of the reason why I was initially never stable when it came to school either. But I soon learned that school would be the place I had the most consistency. School was always my outlet.

For Sarah, school served as a place where she could escape some of the havoc of her home, as it was one of her primary spaces of stability. This pressure at home pushed Sarah to focus on her academics, while spending more time at school than at home. It is important to contextualize that the *familial capital* Sarah gained from her family is what led to her persistence in college. Even though her experiences with her parents were not always positive, she utilized her familial occurrences as motivation for a different trajectory and goal of degree attainment.

Some students, particularly the Latinx students in this study, talked about stereotypical tropes associated with their ethnic identities. Even if they believed that these stereotypes were not necessarily true for all Latinx people, they felt as though their families exhibited some of these characteristics. Therefore, some Latinx students were deliberate in distancing themselves away from these cultural stereotypes. For example, La'Dajah is a Latinx woman who attends a community college in her hometown. As she is beginning "to grow up and become successful," she started noticing behaviors of the women in her family, that do not align with some of her beliefs and attitudes. "I guess I just didn't wanna fall into the Puerto Rican stereotype of just having kids and being a mom, and that's it. And I really want a lavish lifestyle, so I kinda have to go to college." Within her story, she talks about how she does not want to follow in her family's footsteps and wants to be on a different path. She continued to say,

> "Okay (*chuckles*). So not to put my family on blast, some of the women in my family have never gone to school or don't work and refuse to work and kind of rely on the government to survive and to support themselves... To add to that, they may sleep around with men to help them survive also. So, that just disgusts me completely."

Like Sarah, La'Dajah's *familial capital* is contextualized to understand how families can provide an example of who not to be. They contend that this negative type of familial knowledge is just

as important as other knowledges and stories passed on to them. The relationships they have with their families, their familial backgrounds, and familial histories provide the capital and drive for the students to push for success, or as La'Dajah said, "stay away from that path." *Familial capital* should encapsulate all learned lessons and attributes of students' familial backgrounds and not just those deemed as virtuous.

Other students within this study positively attributed their persistence and determination in college to their *familial capital.* For several students, their parents were incredibly influential in instilling motivation and pride in them. Students like Nicole appreciated hearing the stories of empowerment (or *cultural capital*) gleaned from her parents, grandparents, uncles, and aunts to overcome certain obstacles and situations. Even though many people in her family hadn't finished high school, they still motivated her to "do better, and be better." She shared that graduating from college would mean that,

> I made it. I did something. I improved my family's name. I think my great-grandfather and my grandfather didn't go to school. He never went to elementary school, none of that. My grandmother as well, a lot of them took care of their own siblings and stuff. My parents were the only ones that finished high school. So for them, for both sides, not being able to have that opportunity, for me to finish high school to actually go and go to college is a huge step.

Nicole's story is rooted in making her family proud and improving her family name. Even though her parents and grandparents were not able to attain a college degree, their historical narratives were central to her academic success. She was able to accumulate this *familial capital* through respective role modeling, which helped her improve her life goals and family's future.

Section Summary

Within this section, *familial capital* encompassed the cultural knowledges that were passed down through families' histories, memories, and narratives to aid students' transition and persistence through college. Many participants in this study described the power in the encouraging and reassuring stories received from their families. This familial support fostered high expectations and aspirations in forms of advice or narratives, which were fundamental in attaining and maintaining academic success. Several parents in the study had little to no college experience but were steadfast about encouraging their students to aspire for postsecondary education. This parental encouragement began at a very early age for many of the students, which made them feel that college was an assumption and not an option. These attitudes differ from deficit-oriented stereotypes that argue that most parents of first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx students are disinterested in the education of their children (Muhammad, 2007; Tierney, 1999). Instead, the narratives in this study align with previous research indicating that family members are children's first teachers (Wright & Ford, 2016). Several parents told their children about the hardships of growing up and believed that education was a mechanism for social mobility. Other parents taught their students about the importance of hard work and sacrifice, which not only motivated students to try harder academically but served as a reminder of their strength when confronting obstacles. These teachings promoted messages indicating that knowledge is power and necessary for success, and reinforced their *familial* and *resistant capital*.

Even though most students valued the lessons taught by their parents, some students realized that their parents and other family members were employing teachings on who not to be. Some parents were not able to provide the social, emotional, or financial support to their children because they lacked the resources and knowledge to do so. It is important to realize that participants still validated their families' struggles but were adamant about steering away from a

similar path. These students used their *resistant capital* garnered from family experiences to look beyond their present and past circumstances to strive for a greater future. Ultimately, family interactions (whether positive or negative) and *familial capital* influenced the development of each participants' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors towards education and life. Their *familial capital* inevitably helped guide and navigate them through various social contexts in college and beyond (Yosso, 2005).

Resistance

The second larger finding of my first research question, examined the ways that students used their *resistant capital* to transition and persist through college. As illustrated in the earlier section, students' *familial capital* often interacted with their *resistant capital*. *Resistant capital* refers to the "knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenge inequality" (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). Through the implementation of Yosso's (2005) definition, students within this study were able to persist in challenging moments (e.g., discrimination on campus, lacking academic motivation) due to their *resistant capital* molded by their cultural wealth. Foundationally, *resistant capital* is rooted in the experiences of communities of Color securing collective freedom and equal rights. According to Yosso (2005), people of Color have received this form of capital through the historical legacy of engaging in social justice. Under this notion, many study participants used their *resistant capital* in difficult moments in and outside of their classrooms. For most participants, their resistance was shaped by their families' *cultural capital* and wealth. Thus, students indicated that their adaption of **Cultural Capital** and **Resiliency** were mechanisms used in their transition and persistence through college.

Cultural Capital

Within this asset-oriented study, participants frequently challenged the deficit thinking of their peers, professors, colleagues, and even family members. Particularly in moments that they felt that others were demeaning their character and abilities. Students disrupted this deficit thinking through their personal adaption and interpretation of *cultural capital* and cultural wealth. "Cultural wealth is an array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and utilized by communities of Color to survive and resist macro and microforms of oppression" (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). Several participants indicated that they used this capital to navigate their college settings successfully. For most students, their *cultural capital* was rooted in their ethnic and racial identities. As Xavier said, "I love being Hispanic, I'm like really big into my culture. We're like a really strong people." Nick also talked about how his *cultural capital* is rooted within his Latinx heritage. He shared his story,

> No matter what either president, or anybody in office, or anyone who is literally another soul walking on this, or another body walking on this earth. I will always, always, no matter what they say, I will always claim myself as a Puerto Rican. Because of all the things that my family has gone through on the island, because I was raised on the island, because I speak the language that comes from the island, and because I was born to two parents who were born and raised on the island. And I know people, I love the island. You love a state because you come from it, and you interact with it, you interact with everyone in it, and you do things there that keep you entertained and you wanna be there and wanna be a part of it. And that's exactly how I feel about Puerto Rico. The flag, the music, the people, the language, the food, it's just something that if I wasn't born into it, I would envy someone who would have it.

Nick was born and raised in Puerto Rico before moving to California with his family. While sharing his story, he consistently referred back to his Puerto Rican pride and heritage. His resiliency and *cultural capital* are tied to his identities, "We are a really resilient people. No matter what happens to us on the island, we always bounce back." He is emboldened by the resiliency of his family in Puerto Rico during the hurricane, and their ability to "bounce back." Moreover, he uses this type of "bounce back" resilience to successfully transition into college. When sharing his college transition story, he said: "Of course I didn't notice a lot of Hispanics right away. I mean it's a mainly white (*whispers*) campus… But that doesn't deter me from being me. It actually makes me stronger into who I am." Nick and many other participants were proud of their cultural identity, which influenced the development of their *resistance* and *cultural capital.* Therefore, in expanding on the literature and definitions of *cultural capital*, participants contended that having a strong identification and pride in their cultural identities made them more academically and socially successful in college (Bannon, McKay, Chacko, Rodriguez & Cavaleri, 2009). This interpretation of their *cultural capital* was the foundation of students' confidence, resiliency, and motivation to preserve through college.

Elle also talked about how her *resistant capital* is rooted in her racial and gendered intersections. Even though she knows that she experienced oppression based on these identities, she still persists. She talks about the challenges associated with her identities, "Since we're Black and we're in the U.S., we're going to be treated differently. And especially that we're women too, and how we're just looked as vulnerable. But we're also stronger." Alex also talked about this strength rooted in her Black womanhood. She said, "I take being an African American female pretty seriously. I mean it's kinda the first thing you notice… Like not to put others races and stuff down, but we are kinda stronger cause of society and stuff." Based on sociohistorical

realities, Black women have been placed in disadvantaged positions as evidenced by these participants. They acknowledge that society deems them lesser than due to their intersectional identities but contend that their strength aids their persistence. Amber also talked about how her power is rooted in Black womanhood,

> I just think Black women are incredible. Though I think all women are incredible. But I'm gonna have to say Black women get it the most. Black women, African-American... However, you wanna put it. I think we really are strong. We can handle everything. I mean we *do* handle everything.

Amber and Alex embody the deemed strength of being a "Strong Black Woman," capable of handling all types of situations and enduring adversity. Amber indicated that her mother was influential in building this strength and "instilling #BlackGirlMagic." This "strong Black woman" narrative is rooted in the desire of showcasing the strength of Black women, despite experiences of adversity, racism, and sexism and so forth (Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018). Even though the "Strong Black Woman" narrative is criticized for the praise (and expectation) of Black woman to survive trauma; for these students, it is still the foundation for their *resistance* and *cultural capital.*

Sarah also felt that this "strong Black woman" narrative was central to her *resistance* and *cultural capital*,

> It's always been me, and I've built it up into who I am today, and I'm always gonna keep growing, so I'm not always gonna be a low-income Black woman. I'm gonna make something of myself, and then I'll be an even better Black woman.

Within this example, Sarah acknowledges the strength of her Black womanhood but is also interested in improving herself and her other intersectional identities. She uses her racial and

ethnic identities, which are rooted in her *cultural capital,* for motivation for a progressive future. Celeste also shared the narrative of how Black womanhood has impacted her persistence,

> Like we're just so strong. Like my best friend is super resilient and she accomplishes so much on campus (*see figure 7*). I love having classes with her, because she's like the quintessential Black girl (*laughs*). She's smart, motivated and dedicated…like everything, especially academically. She motivates me, cause she's just like #BlackGirlMagic (*spirit fingers*).

Figure 7. – Celeste with her best friend on campus. Image blurred by the researcher for participant confidentiality.

Celeste values the resiliency rooted in her best friend's Black womanhood, which propels her to do well academically and socially on campus. Seeing her friend's "#BlackGirlMagic" motivates her to persist through college.

Linguistic Capital. Other participants linked their *linguistic capital* to their resiliency and interpretation of *cultural capital. Linguistic capital* refers to the various language and

communication skills students bring with them to their college environments (Yosso, 2005). Elle recalled conversations she had with her mother using her *linguistic capital*, “If I'm stressed sometimes, I call my mom and she'll give me proverbs, Haitian proverbs or Haitian sayings that she told us when we were younger. Yeah, just to reassure me.” These linguistic proverbs are fundamental aspects of funds of knowledge and *cultural capital,* passed down through generations of Elle's family. She uses these historical narratives and stories when she needs a sense of hope, encouragement, reassurance, and motivation.

Seraphina also talked about how these proverbs, or "*dichos,*” were helpful for her during trials and tribulations. During her interview, she talked about thinking of her families' "*consejos*” (advice) when needing encouragement. “In my opinion, we are a very positive people. We don't believe that the glass is half empty, it's half full, so we're almost there. That type of mental framework that helps me be who I am. It helps me deal with whatever obstacles I have.” This intergenerational perspective provides Seraphina the perseverance she needs. Like Elle, Seraphina uses her *cultural capital,* which is rooted in her ethnic and linguistic identities, as a way to survive difficult situations. The stories that are passed down, capture the practical wisdom that informed participants’ abilities to make meaning of life situations. Arguably, these students are enacting their *linguistic capital* and *resistant capital,* simultaneously. Yosso (2005) also talks about the importance of storytelling for students of Color. She contends that storytelling is a part of students’ lives prior to coming to campus, and that they bring “skills that may include memorization, attention to detail, dramatic pauses, comedic timing, facial affect, vocal tone, volume, rhythm, and rhyme” (p. 79) to aid their persistence.

Multilingual participants indicated that their *linguistic capital* helped them navigate society. Elle said her multilingual tongue was reinforced by her mother, "as we were learning

English, we also learned French and Creole. She didn't want us not to be able to speak to her family back home. So teaching us her native tongue, that was very important to her." For Elle and her mother, it was not only important for her to be able to communicate with her family, but to remain rooted in her culture. For Elle, "being multilingual is not only marketable, but is a daily reminder of who I am." David also talked about how "being bilingual in this country is valuable." He shared a story of his appreciation for his Spanish language,

> I started a job in McDonald's. Sometimes, some people would just come in and try to mumble. Or try to say some things, but they clearly didn't know English. If they looked familiar or if they asked me if I spoke Spanish, when I said, ‘Yes,’ a smile would just glow up in their faces. They'd be like, ‘Oh, thank you!’ They would start ordering in Spanish, and they feel so much comfortable. I felt like that helped me in the fact that knowing Spanish and being able to speak it. Well, that's my first language. I always speak it at home when I'm at home. That's the only language I speak with my mom. It's just something I'm always gonna keep from Colombia, and I'm probably gonna be using it for the rest of my life. Yeah, that would be something that I did in Colombia, and I still do now that helps me.

For David, speaking Spanish is a skill he brought from Colombia which impacted the way he made meaning of his life experiences. Not only does his *linguistic capital* aid his processes of navigating the world, but it also disrupts the dominance of the English language. Due to the agentive role that the English language plays in educational and societal settings, David uses his tools rooted in his culture and language to help others. Even at McDonald's he provides a voice of power for other Spanish-speaking people and sees the positive impact. His *linguistic capital* reflects the necessity to view bilingual identities (particularly those of marginalized people) as

assets. Most notably, David regards his language as a historical repository that allows him to stay connected to his past, and move forward in society (Baker, 2006).

Other participants also contended that their multilingual identities were predictors for success and identity development. Their *linguistic capital* reflected the idea that they possess vital language and communication skills. Nicole also talked about the advantages of being bilingual. Nicole said,

> I think that in certain situations, once I say I speak Spanish, they'll be like, 'Oh well, that's great. You can communicate with more people.' Plus, I think being bilingual has helped me with school stuff. Like I have always been good in English, because I read and wrote in Spanish and English as a kid.

Being bilingual gave Nicole the *linguistic capital* necessary to be academically successful and to. express identity. As research (Telli, Rasch, & Schnotz, 2018) has shown that being bilingual has many cognitive benefits (e.g., higher attention span, the ability to multitask), Nicole's ability to switch between one language to another enhanced the way she engaged within her English-speaking classroom. When students celebrate their languages in school, it dismantles the inherent dichotomy of choosing their home culture or succeeding in school (Nieto, 1996). Seraphina also talked about the advantages of her *linguistic capital,*

> I think it is an incredible advantage. I am bilingual. That means a lot nowadays, for the world has been so globalized. In my opinion, you cannot go to the supermarket and expect someone not to understand when you're talking in Spanish because three out of five people definitely know a little bit of Spanish. I think it's an incredible advantage, not just culturally because you're able to understand other people, and to be interested in a language and how they use it. But it's also a great advantage academically. I am able to

> get a job easier just because nowadays a lot of companies are looking for people to speak more than one language, just because of the fact that there has been such an incredible change migration-wise of all people from all countries.

Several elements within Seraphina's story address the *resistant, cultural* and *linguistic capital* she uses in multiple aspects of her life. From being in the classroom to going to the supermarket, she illustrates that her bilingualism is an incredible asset that provides her marketability in a diverse world. Ultimately, she notes that this world and academia are changing, and uses her language as a tool to successfully navigate these institutions.

Code-Switching. For other participants, their *linguistic capital* was demonstrated through their ability to code-switch in various environments. Code-switching is broadly understood as the alternate use of more than one language in the same conversation or discourse. Linguist John J. Gumperz (1982) defines it as "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems" (p. 59). Many participants revealed that much of their college success was due to the understanding of, and adherence to code-switching—or "speaking right" or white. It is essential to contextualize how the linguistic practices of students of Color are celebrated and spoken in their homes but disempowered in some college settings. Whereas, students felt that they must change or alter their native tongues (e.g., Ebonics, Spanish, Creole) to successfully transition and persist. Celeste, a native Patois speaker, talked about her adjustment with language. She said,

> I feel like when I'm talking to my them [white people] it's just completely different. I transform into a different person. For some reason, you don't want to do it, but you still feel like you have to adjust yourself slightly to fit in with them sometimes. I mean that's something I'm trying to work on, but it's just... I don't know. If I'm talking to people in the

> Black community like informal, but if I'm talking to them [white people] for some reason, formality just kicks in. I don't know. It's very weird. I don't notice it's happening until after I'm just like, 'Wait. What was that?' Yeah. It's not just me because there's a lot of people, like we'll be having an informal conversation and say the person gets a phone call, could switch completely. I guess it's just something in the Black community that we just feel the need to code switch when we're around people from different cultures.

While sharing her narrative, Celeste verbally struggles with understanding why she goes back and forth between dialects, almost as if she is reprimanding herself for the switch in discourse. She realized that this formality she has with white people differs from the informality she has within the Black community. Even though Celeste does not want to modify her dialect, or even notices when she is changing it, she seems to alter who she is based on the accommodation of other dominant cultures.

Nicole also talked about this notion of accommodation based on language, particularly with her white peers. She said,

> I feel like I change all the time… I have to really think about what I'm gonna say. I'm put on the spot, and I feel like I have to be careful with what I say. Especially when I just talk to white people, in general. I feel like I have to change the way I say things in order for them to understand or to not offend them, so they just don't feel threatened.

Nicole is conscientious of trying not to offend white people based on things she says, and how she says it. Due to the structural inequalities that have deemed whiteness as the natural, normal, standard way of communicating, students of Color often find themselves adapting to the dominant culture to persist in college successfully. Xavier also finds himself altering his identities for a more seamless college transition. He said, "So I'm also learning how to speak

properly, I'm learning how to talk like that. So my whole life I've been raised in kind of the ghetto form or whatever. So my language here they... Sometimes they don't understand my type of slang language or what I'm saying. So I've had to change that." For Xavier, his "ghetto form" of language is rooted in his cultural and ethnic identities. He feels that he has to switch his native tongue, to accommodate and be "understood" by his white peers.

Sometimes this type of code-switching propagates a stereotype vilifying people of Color as intellectually and socially inferior (Martínez, 2013; Zisselsberger & Collins, 2016). However, I contend that these students used their *linguistic capital* to successfully persist and transition by recognizing the oppression that exists within these linguistic shifts, while assimilating to dominate cultures. Many participants did not think code-switching was inherently wrong but just made communicating with white people easier and quicker. Even if students did not view this code-switching as an asset, it did help them transition and persist through hegemonic traditional-English speaking institutions. As these students were celebratory of their languages and accents within their home networks, academia subconsciously made them feel like their native languages are "misunderstood."

Even though some students felt that they needed to change their communication styles to adapt to white hegemonic normality, some students used their *resistant capital* to refute these language shifts. Darwin acknowledged this shift in language while remaining true to oneself,

> "(*Laughs*) We all have that switch where it's like, I'm at work, I'm gonna use specific vocabulary there and talk a certain way there. And then at home or with certain friends, depends on who, I'll use more slang around, I won't care. Like with my Black friends I am more sarcastic, and with my white friends, I am more uptight. But really I just stay true to who I am. I am [Darwin], and that's it."

As a Black-identifying man (he has a white mother and Black father), he talks about negotiating between racial worlds. As a person with two racial identities, he can draw from two worldviews, as he primarily grew up in a white household, but went to a predominantly Black high school. Darwin was able to code-switch with various racial communities, by coexisting as an outsider and insider. He continues to say, "Because white people generally just don't know it and don't understand it. They have a natural assumption that their experience is similar to everyone else's. And it's like when they say certain things of their observation, and they don't get how their wording could be harmful." His cultural lens is significantly different from white people who live in predominantly Black communities, or Black people who live in predominantly white communities. Yet, he negotiates these identities by remaining "true" and authentic to his core. Even though he does not make excuses for the white people in his life, he recognizes how harmful their ignorance can be.

Anita talked about the importance of code-switching but remaining authentic to who she is,

> So obviously, if I'm giving a presentation, I'm gonna be more professional. But if I'm not with people of Color, I won't use some of the words that I would if I'm with my friends. So not necessarily... I won't talk extra proper, but I'm not going to be not... Okay. So I see it like as three lines, at the top is extra proper, in the middle is regular, and then at the bottom is how you are with your girls. So when I'm with white people, I'm just regular. I don't do the most, and I don't overdo it.

For Anita, she knows that her communication style might change based on audience, but she does not want to "overdo it," or drastically change who she is. When I asked why she does shift, she said, "Because not everybody will understand you, who you are. If you're not trying to get to

know somebody that you're code-switching for…They just need to get a little glimpse; you just need to get your point across in the easiest way for them to understand, and then move on." Anita uses her deliberate shift in language and *linguistic capital* as mechanisms of *resistant capital,* by remaining true to herself. When she needs to communicate to a broader audience, she shifts her dialogue, which reinforces her *navigational capital*. She negotiates this aspect of double consciousness defined as the sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others (Du Bois, 1903), to accommodate dominant norms but remain authentic in order to navigate these white educational spaces (*navigational capital*). Sarah also talked about this double consciousness and language shift,

> I don't really talk to that many people on campus, but the people that I do talk to, I don't know, it's not as extreme as if I was talking to one of my Black friends that I've been close with for a while. I'm not that comfortable with them [white people] yet, so it's like it's still normal [Sarah], and not extravagant [Sarah]. So yeah, you gotta code-switching here and there.

Like Anita, Sarah uses her double conscious and code-switching as a mechanism to persist within her college setting. She realizes that it is necessary to communicate with her white peers but does not want to diminish her authentic self by overly accommodating their needs. Even though participants code-switched to navigate their academic institutions, they contended that it should not be the default mechanism needed to be respected or intellectually validated. These students used code-switching as a survival mechanism that exhibited their *navigational capital* required to gain access to new dominant cultures, and ultimately successfully persist. I contend that their ability to negotiate their various vernaculars displayed the *resistant capital* they used to navigate hegemonic institutions.

Within this study, students defined their personal *cultural capital* through their *linguistic* and *resistant capital.* For many students, their family's language helped them in times of need while remaining rooted in their racial and ethnic identities. Other students exhibited their *linguistic capital* by code-switching. These dialogic shifts in language made many students negotiate their identities while assimilating to the dominant culture; while other students used their *resistant capital* and stayed true to themselves.

Resiliency

Another significant factor that concretized students' *resistant capital* was their overall resiliency, or as Elle said, "I think it's just the resiliency in the culture." For many participants, their resiliency was defined as "the ability to cope with adversity and overcome the most challenging circumstances" (Hassinger & Plourde, 2005, p. 319). These students considered themselves resilient due to their ability to successfully persist, despite experiencing adversity and obstacles on campus. The individual factors that comprised their resiliency was their ability to prove people wrong and defy stereotypes on and off campus. Students were able to identify oppression, yet resist internalizing it. For Sarah, her resiliency was rooted in "proving people wrong." She often received messages saying,

> They think that you can't go to college. They think that you can't get certain jobs. Them thinking you can't do it. Or people not taking you seriously when you do certain things or say certain things. And when you do those things, you're proving them wrong.

Sarah used people's skepticism as inspiration to fulfill her career and academic goals. As she yearns to be validated, she used her "haters as motivation."

Nicole also talked about this notion of proving people wrong. Her racial and class identities were seen as strikes against her, yet these same identities provide her the

encouragement to succeed. She talked about how her identities impacted her parents and now impact her.

> I think it's just wanting to prove that even if I am Hispanic... I guess seeing my parents struggle, like economic standing, financial standing. But for me, it's more of my ethnicity, and to me it's like, I have to beat the financial, but also the ethnicity and trying to prove people. And prove to myself that just because my culture is this, that I can succeed in this country. Like it's harder for us [students of Color] being here on campus, but also in life. But it's just kinda trying to figure out my strengths and weaknesses and trying to figure out what to keep pushing for.

Nicole has seen her family struggle due to their socioeconomic status, but feels as though she further struggles due to the intersections of classism and racism. She is empowered by her Hispanic culture but contends that she has to prove something to herself and other people. As she is still “growing up and figuring herself out,” she asserts that her resiliency is embedded in her racial and ethnic motivation.

Celeste also talked about the importance of defying stereotypes, “I feel like you have to be somewhat independent of that sometimes. Defy the odds because there's so many stereotypes that come with being a certain culture.” Like Sarah, Nicole and Celeste feel that they have to prove something to people based on their intersectional identities. Irrefutably, these students believe in themselves regardless of what their “haters” have to say. Amber also talks about this notion of proving people wrong based on her racial identities,

> How do I put it? Throughout my life, we're more put out there to do more, do better, because we're a certain race. Or that we're dumb because we're this, 'cause we're this Color. We're actually told that... I was told I wasn't gonna make it out of out of high

> school. And that I should just be a hairdresser, 'cause my mom's a hairdresser. But still, we're downgraded a lot. Or I'm downgraded a lot, because of the Color that I am, how I look, my hair, what kind of hairstyle I have, my nose, what I wear, and how I talk.

Since Amber could remember, she has been told that she would not be capable of reaching her goals, like obtaining a college degree or graduating from high school. Even though she is proud of the life her mother has made as a hairstylist, she knows that college will afford her different career opportunities. She acknowledges that her physical appearance (e.g., hair, clothes, phenotype) impact the way society views her, and claims that these characteristics are seen as negative attributes. However, Amber's resiliency and *resistant capital* defy these messages due to her high self-esteem, independence, and confidence. She ends her story by saying, "But for real, I am a boss ass bitch. No one can tell me anything."

Community Resiliency. For other students, their resiliency started at home and in their communities. For students like Freddie, their *resistant capital* was formed through their survival of "street stuff" occurring in their neighborhoods. Freddie recounted his life growing up,

> It's easy to get caught up in a lifestyle that doesn't cater to you getting your diploma. You know? Just street stuff. I never really got involved in that stuff. Although it always surrounded me. I have a lot of friends, I guess former friends at this point, that got caught up in that stuff. Also, family members that I grew up with that are the same age as me; we were kids, we were so innocent, now I'm 19 and they're 19 and they got caught up in that, and I didn't. So yeah. Me, it never really happened to me, although it surrounded me. I was smart enough and strong enough and lucky enough (*laughs*) to get through it, I guess.

Freddie's resiliency is entrenched in his ability to survive an environment that discouraged academic and social mobility. He alludes to a life of crime and violence that many of his family and friends had fallen victims too. He contextualizes the innocence of his peers that got "caught up in that stuff," by appreciating his strength, intelligence, and luck. Nick also talked about how his intrinsic motivation was key to surviving the negative aspects of his community, "I wouldn't say it was super tough, it was more straightforward. Like life, you gotta do what you have to do in order to succeed. You gotta stay on top of your things. Know yourself. Know what's best for you. Stay out of trouble. And I have that in me, others don't." His resistance is rooted in his strength, which allows him to stay out of trouble. He mentions that this intrinsic tenacity is what has allowed him to "stay on top of things," even amid adversity.

Dana also talked about this intrinsic motivation that allowed her and her peers to resist negative community influences,

> Because we could've did whatever. We could've gotten into bad situations with whoever in [hometown]. But instead we just decided to stay in school for those couple of hours and actually do something that would better us when we graduate.

For Dana and many other students, participating in Upward Bound aided their resistance against the negative aspects of their communities. Upward Bound provided a place to stay after school and work, in the midst of an area struck by crime and violence. I contend in the next section that participating in the Upward Bound program was a form of *resistant capital;* whereas students decided to learn in the classroom, and not in the streets. Dana also talked about the mindsets of her and her peers, which also impacted their resiliency. She said, "Because not everyone wants to learn more in order to get a better pay, in order to leave their situation. So, I don't know. I think the mindset itself is a disadvantage." Her resiliency aided her desire (and achievement) to leave

her past situation and community. Dana’s methodical mindset for a positive future fuel her *resistant capital*.

Campus Resiliency. Not only did students enact their resiliency within their communities, but they also used it within their college environments. For many students their resiliency on campus was rooted in their racial and ethnic identities. Their cultural identities motivated them for success, and inevitably aided their transition and persistence into higher education. Joe talks about his resiliency on campus,

> Being a Black male… I know how schooling and education and different jobs and stuff. I know that it is a barrier that a lot of people have to cross, and so I'm always aware of it and keeping out for it. So, I know how to be able to handle it, in case something like that ever comes up on campus.

Even though Joe has not experienced any blatant forms of racism or discrimination on campus, he still prepares himself for these potential encounters. He continued to say, “I actually haven’t experienced it, especially not in a way that I've seen with others. It's probably happened, but I haven't had it impact me yet. And I'm doing my best to make sure that it doesn't have to happen.” Notably, many students of Color prepare for academic and social success differently than their white peers. Instead of worrying about test preparation or managing a work/life balance, many Black and Latinx students are preparing themselves for campus discrimination and microaggressions. For example, Darwin talked about the importance of being resilient in order to persist through oppression. He said, “'Cause we have to deal with prejudice and racism. And then when you grow up through that, you have to learn to handle each situation. The prejudice alone could just lower your self-esteem.” Darwin’s *resistant capital* is molded by his oppressive life situations. He talks about how perceptions of racism are negatively associated with self-esteem

but positively associated with distress (Szymanski & Gupta, 2009). As Darwin contended, the negative racialized perceptions of students of Color cause psychological distress that impacted their persistence in college.

Anita also talks about this resiliency formed through oppressive experiences, particularly at a predominantly white institution (PWI). She said,

> I wouldn't necessarily say we're tougher, but at the same time, we are told from the beginning that this isn't a place for us... Well, that other people don't welcome us into it. So, we already go into being in school knowing that some people might not want us here. So, I think, awareness.

Anita, Joe, Darwin and other participants have this awareness or double consciousness (Du Bois, 1903), that forces them to recognize discrimination and rise above it. Anita feels as though she does not belong on her campus, and that her white peers may not want her there. Yet in spite of this adversity and lack of sense of belonging, she still persists. She uses her awareness of this discrimination as a mechanism for her resistance. Sarah also uses this awareness as motivation for success in the classroom,

> It kind of just drove me to still stay in class and stay active in the class and all that stuff. To show them [white people] that I'm here, even though I stick out like a sore thumb in the class, but it's like, I'm still here. I'm still a classmate, just like you.

Even though Sarah feels that she sticks out because she is the only student of Color in class, she deliberately reinforces and validates her existence. She feels as though she does not belong on her campus, but still works just as hard (or even harder) than her white peers.

Other students also had to "try twice as hard" as their white peers on campus. Alex shared her experiences of being at a PWI,

> I would just say I have to work a little harder than others. I feel like people get things easier than I would, because I don't have that type of like access to help and stuff like that. Like I don't get things. I don't know how to explain it. Like it's the 'twice as hard thing.' Sometimes I see my peers getting stuff, that I have to work much harder to receive.

Alex talked about how she had to work twice as hard as her white peers, but only got half as far. Even though Alex has not experienced blatant racism or discrimination from her white colleagues, she addresses the unearned privileges they receive. Within her story, she talked about how the white students in her classes were more academically prepared, but still got the same (or worse grades) than she did. She said, "It's crazy. You would think that since they come to school more quote-un-quote, prepared than I did, they would be smarter, but they're not (*laughs*)." Even though some of Alex's white peers have come from more academically rigorous environments, she still feels that she is on their level. Her resiliency is rooted in her motivation and attitude.

Discrimination on Campus. For most participants, their *resistant capital* was necessary to survive situations of racism, discrimination, and microaggressions on campus. As Yosso (2005) defines *resistant capital* as recognizing and persisting amongst adversity, many participants told stories about exhibiting these characteristics daily. This next section will provide some context of some of the racism, discrimination, and microaggressions students were forced to endure on campus. Alex talks about how these experiences impact her daily routine on campus,

> Not only will they give me dirty looks, but they [white people] will, like, intentionally bump into me. But they will like literally pretend that I'm not there, just like walk through

> me. I'm like 'Bro, like I'm literally right here. Like a whole person.' I don't know. Just little things like that. It kinda really annoys me.

Alex experiences this hypervisibility, yet invisibility on campus. As she validates her own humanity, people on her campus blatantly act like she is not even there. White people often attempt to dictate the ways that people of Color navigate spaces. Due to societal hierarchies, many white people feel like they can dominate public spaces due to their brazen privilege (Moore & Bell, 2017). Anita also talked about this invisibility she felt from her white peers during her initial transition to college.

> I feel like women are overlooked in a lot of instances and spaces. Like, if I raise my hand in class, I'm sure that I can get called on now. But freshman year, this was a thing that I thought about a lot, white men get chosen more. They feel entitled in spaces, like when walking. Or even something simple as holding the door, or something, passing the door.

Due to Anita's race and gender, she feels as if she is consistently overlooked, particularly in spaces with white men. She feels as though they receive more opportunities and luxuries in class while taking up more physical space. Like Alex, their white peers on campus often make Black and Latinx students feel inexistent and rejected (Wilkins-Yel, Hyman, & Zounlome, 2018). La'Dajah also felt this rejection with her white peers in the classroom. She described her experiences,

> I honestly felt like the white girls did not wanna work with me at all. I remember in the psychology class, they would be like, 'Okay, so make groups,' and I'd try to throw myself out there like, 'Hey, you wanna work together?' And she looked me dead in the face and just completely turned the other direction. I was like, 'Okay.' So it was like the girls didn't wanna work with me, so that was kind of annoying.

Incidents like these negatively impact students' sense of belonging. As La'Dajah tried to develop an academic relationship with some of her white peers, she was met with rejection and ignorance. Often students of Color internalize these negative messages, presumably because these are more difficult to identify than overt forms of discrimination (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Thus, La'Dajah feels annoyed by her peers and unconnected to her academic classroom community.

Tyrique also talked about these frustrating moments of invisibility on campus. He plays on his colleges' intramural rugby team (*see figure 8*), and occasionally feels "challenged" by some of his white teammates. These incidents significantly impacted him during the beginning of his transition to college. He recounted some of those experiences,

> It's crazy, like sometimes this motherfucker [white rugby teammate] will literally speak to everyone in the locker room but me. And I know he sees my big Black ass. Like this was when I first got to college, so I didn't know if it was just hazing or something else (*chuckles*). But it's only escalated over time. To be honest, he was just straight up racist, 'cause he doesn't act like this to any white boy. In the beginning it really messed me up; like kinda made me feel like I didn't belong here.

When I asked Tyrique about how he manages this situation, he said, "honestly I don't even let it get out of hand. Cause he's intimidated, like they're [white people] intimated. Always. Like it's crazy how that stuff used to bother me when I first got here, and now I'm like 'bump that.'" When Tyrique first transitioned from high school to college, he felt as if his teammate was exclusionary and prejudice. Even though he jokes about being hazed, he feels that his teammate's behavior is blatantly racist and makes him feel like he does not belong to his campus nor team. However, Tyrique has remained diligent within his college career and is now captain of his

rugby team. He has used his *resistant capital* to not only persist in a toxic situation but progressed socially as a student-athlete.

Figure 8. – Tyrique with some of the "people he's cool with" on the rugby team. Image blurred by researcher for participant confidentiality.

Like Tyrique, Seraphina experienced discriminatory events on campus that impacted her initial transition into college. She said,

> Yeah. I didn't exactly notice it right away. I think at this point of my life, I think I was a little bit in denial just because I was very excited about being one of the first people in my family to actually go to college, so other things didn't matter. I didn't exactly understand exactly how much it [racism] affected me until it was to the point where I'm like, "What the hell?" Actually, it's very bothersome. It's actually distracting me from all the tasks I have to do at hand. It reached a certain point where I'm like, 'How am I letting it affect my day-to-day activities?'

As a first-generation student, Seraphina was unsure of the ways racism and discrimination manifested on campus. She was so excited about the newness of her college experience, that other problematic issues were not as poignant. However, she quickly realized that it was impacting her daily experiences. When I asked her to describe some of the ways she's affected by racism on campus, many of her discriminatory experiences were with her professors. She continued to share her story,

> Like, 'Oh, so this certain student wouldn't be able to do this,' or just the type of looks that they will give some students. For example, I saw a lot of professors give white students leeway on assignment deadlines and stuff, and when another student will approach them they were like, 'No, you're late. You didn't even talk to me.' I'm like, 'You do understand that not a lot of minority students feel comfortable enough to go forward to the professor and ask for help?' It is a very intimidating action that, at least most white students, take for granted. It goes back to just this cultural idea that's like, 'Oh, this is where they are' (*holds her arm out*) especially predominantly white folks, 'And this is where we are' (*holds her arm out lower*), minorities.

It is crucial to contextualize how faculty, staff, and peers can shift the ways students of Color engage and interact on their campuses. This uncaring attitude exhibited by some of Seraphina's faculty members is associated with adverse student outcomes like low self-confidence and self-esteem, anxiety, intimidation rejection and uncertainty (Torregosa, Ynalvez, & Morin, 2016). Due to the lack of comfortability Seraphina experiences in the classroom, she avoids engaging with some of her faculty. Not only does this negatively impact her sense of belonging, but could impact her academic success—whereas, she feels so uncomfortable with her professor that she does not even ask for help. Even through this discrimination and presumed biases, Seraphina

continues to be academically successful. She ends this narrative by saying, "but now I'm a Junior getting ready to go [study] abroad. I've got me, no matter what." Thus, illustrating her continued confidence, resiliency, and *resistant capital.*

Celeste also attends the same PWI as Seraphina and talks about some of the dynamics that happen with her white professors. Celeste describes her feelings about them,

> A white liberal professor is like the worst thing ever, because they portray themselves as if they're your ally, but then they're only doing that 'cause it's not directly affecting them. It's easy for them to do that, but if it's taking something away from them, then you kind of see them back down. So, I don't really care for them personally and I mean, they're a part of the problem because they're only half-assed people so yeah, it is what it is.

For Celeste, she finds that the “allyship” presented by her white professors as inauthentic and harmful. She feels that many are not genuinely concerned with her social or academic progress, but will talk about diversity and racial issues because “it’s hip now.” For her, it is more harmful for white professors to “act as if they care about things that happened to Black students”, than to assist at all. Jerome also has had similar experiences with some of his professors. He told a story about an uncomfortable moment he had in a class. He said,

> To be honest, the professors are almost worse than the students (*chuckles*). I remember we were reading something about Black people in class, and the professor literally kept staring at me. Like he wanted me to say something about the piece. It made me so uncomfortable. Even though I didn’t want to say anything, I felt forced to. Like even this white dude came up to me after class talking about it.

It is imperative that professors like Jerome’s recognize their (in)advertent racist actions. Jerome’s professor not only tokenized him but made him feel obligated to remark on his race.

His professor’s deplorable behavior negatively impacted the classroom environment for Black and white students. When students feel like they must serve as a race ambassador, it takes away their ability to just be a student. Instead, they feel like they must perform for their faculty in order to succeed. Xavier also talks about racist experiences in classroom discussions with faculty,

> Some of my professors would be like, ‘Oh, Hispanics and whatever, and Tr*mp is good,’ and stuff like that. And you're just like, ‘What the heck?’ And I wouldn't be the only one who gets offended, ‘cause there are also some people that are white in this school that are with people of Color.

Like Jerome, Xavier feels that some of his classroom discourses surrounding race are offensive and uncomfortable. He feels that some of his faculty members are more vocal about their disdain towards Latinx people based on things said by the current president. He and Jerome note that this type of behavior exhibited by their faculty disrupt the classroom climate and negatively impact students’ connections in the classroom, including their white peers.

Nicole also felt an unsettling pressure in her classroom due to the current political climate and her Latinx heritage. She talked about an uncomfortable moment with a professor in class during her first year of college.

> I think last year I tried really hard, my freshman year, I had an English class and I was the only minority in that class. Out of last year and this year, I think out of all my classes I would honestly say that I've been the only minority. So to me it was very uncomfortable, but I always try to push myself. Especially, because I had a professor who I thought I had an issue with, because she kind of put me on the spot when it came to a question about being a minority on campus, and said a whole lot of positive Tr*mp stuff. And I felt like

> it was kind of rude of her. So we did have a conversation after class. But after we dealt with that issue, she told me that I need to not be shy and talk to students, but I still feel like she was invalidating me.

Nicole felt burdened by the expectation of representing Latinx culture in class discussions and peer group settings. Not only was she uncomfortable due to the harsh conversations about the current political climate, but was tokenized and pressured to comment. Even when she tried to talk with faculty members about this experience, she felt further silenced and invalidated. Often participants' faculty members lacked the culturally responsive classroom management skills needed to facilitate racialized conversations with their students of Color. Even though some of these traumatic events did impact them, they were still able to continue their college journeys; again, reinforcing that their *resistant capital* aided their transition and persistence.

Hate Crimes. Other students experienced more visceral, and potentially violent, forms of racism on campus. Notably, violence in schools is uniquely attributed to students of Color. Students of Color have reported a significantly higher levels of fear for a range of violent scenarios, including physical assault, theft, vandalism, murder, hate crimes, microaggressions, hate speech, threats and crime in general, in comparison to their white peers (Jones, Perrin, Heller, Hailu, & Barnett, 2018). These types of events irrefutably impacted the ways students transitioned and persisted through college. Elle talked about how this affected her at her four-year land-grant PWI,

> There was a couple of incidents that happened recently, actually. There was an employee who works at [academic building]. And he was targeted. Someone called the police on him because he looked suspicious and he was holding a gym bag, and he thought ... I don't know what they thought he was carrying, but that was crazy. When I first heard

> about that, I was like, ‘Really? This man worked here for how many years, and you guys did him like that?’ And then ... what was it? Was it last week? And then, word came out that someone wrote in the [residence hall] bathroom, ‘Kill the [residence hall] niggers.’ And the thing in [residence hall] kinda hit close to home, 'cause I was in [residence hall] last year. And it was mainly white people in [residence hall]. My floor was only four of us Black girls on there.

There has been a recent influx of white people calling the police on people of Color for solely ‘existing,’ due to the underlying dynamic of feeling that these public places cannot be shared (Jones et al., 2018). Many white people use the contentious, and sometimes dangerous, relationship between Black people and the police to ensue further harm and trauma. As these tactics and behaviors are not new, they impact the ways that students of Color navigate their collegiate spaces.

Freddie also talked about the impact of targeted hate crimes at his public PWI. He recalled how these experiences impacted his transition,

> My first year, my first semester here, a bunch of racist incidents were happening. People would write racist things on someone's door. It went semi-viral. Some other stuff happened, where apparently these dudes wrote, they drew swastikas and stuff. Like I just got there, and it was just so much... It's the type of thing where it could have been a prank, but why would you do that?

Instead of devoting his time to his academic and social transition from high school to college, he encounters discrimination and hate speech. For many students of Color, their experiences of racial tension and discrimination impact their first-year transition into college. Events like these directly affect their sense of belonging, persistence, and overall perception of campus (Museus,

Yi, & Saelua, 2017). When I asked Freddie about how these events impacted him during that transition period, he said,

> Just the person I am, all these racist incidents, all these things went down. I'm the kind of person where when something happens like that, I try not to give it attention, because the person that did it, probably feeds off of that. They're probably laughing their ass off, you know? I felt like I had mixed feelings about, let's go on a march and talk about how messed up this thing is. It kinda made me look at people on this campus differently. Kinda makes me feel unsafe.

These explicitly racist incidents made students feel unsafe and unwelcome on campus. Rather than a safe haven from racism and violence, Freddie's campus became a place of hostility, where he's unsure of how to react. Unfortunately, these types of vicious attacks are popularly occurring on campus, which is evidenced by the fact that nearly a third of all hate crimes are reported on school grounds (ADL, 2008). Darwin attends the same PWI as Freddie, and talked about how these events impacted his persistence and perception of his campus.

> There were a bunch of racist attacks. Like someone posted racist comments on someone's dorm…it was just disgusting and how this campus needs to change. I think everything is very indirect and unconscious. I feel like this campus has some unconscious racist tendencies.

Darwin and Freddie were alarmed by the messages of hate declared on their campuses. Defined as "speech that expresses or incites hatred toward people on the basis of some aspect of their identity," these hate speech messages impacted the ways they transition and persistence through college (Moore & Bell, 2017, p. 25). What even furthers their discomfort and disdain towards these campus events is the lack of university response. Racial hate crimes almost seem endemic

to colleges and campuses across the nation. Often freedom of speech is celebrated, and incivility is barely punished. Whereas PWIs do not respond quickly or even react to some of these events, and often put the onus of addressing these hate crimes on the students experiencing the oppression.

Unfortunately Sarah, who attended the same university as Freddie and Darwin, was directly impacted by the racist messages on campus. She described some of the events that happened on her residence hall floor,

> Yeah, it was my friend and her roommate in the dorm, down the hall from me. That was the first note that got slid under the door. And she was the one that got knocked down with her stuff in her hand and was being called stuff. So that's why I think they're just targeting a certain type of people, like the people in Urban Ed. [a college bridge program]. There were other notes for Puerto Rican and Dominicans, calling them 'Spics.' And so that's how you know somebody knows who they are because they're targeting certain types of people.

Often this type of speech incites violence and further discrimination (Harris & Ray, 2014). And unfortunately, students of Color at this public university were directly impacted by this targeted violence. Later that week there was a suspected school shooter on their campus, resulting in a mandated lockdown. Sarah describes this terrifying experience,

> They thought there was a school shooter on campus. He was Caucasian and had a big backpack on and a trench coat, and he looked suspicious. I guess they went to the police on campus and they told him about it, and then they shut the whole campus down. So we were stuck in the... It wasn't even an auditorium, it was like not a gym either… but we had to leave and then everybody had to get real quiet and stuff. So it was just scary that

> day. It was a nerve-racking day. Then everybody was calling their parents and stuff and I was like, 'Should I call mine? I don't think this is serious, but maybe I should.' So I did, and yeah, it was just a weird day.

No one should have to go to school worrying about their death. Yet, school gun violence continues permeating schools and colleges across the nation. These mass shootings and hate crimes continue to devastate and negatively impact all students, particularly students of Color. Even though there was not an active shooter on campus, Sarah was completely distraught by the situation. Traumatic events like these negatively affect minoritized students' social and academic experiences and sometimes lead to their exit or transfer (Samuelson, & Litzler, 2016). And unfortunately for Sarah, this theory was proven. This experience was so disturbing that she ended up transferring to a community college in her hometown. She described the internalized conflict she had before transferring,

> It's like I had an inner conflict with myself on whether or not I wanted to stay at [four-year public university] based off the racial things that were going on there. Because it's like, 'I should stay so that they can see that I do belong here just like them,' and then the other side of me is like, 'No, maybe I should go where I feel comfortable at.' It's like I was forcing myself to be comfortable there because I didn't wanna leave, and them think that I'm leaving just because of what they said… even though it was just because of what they said.

Sarah struggled with deciding what was best for academic and social success. Not only did she feel like she did not belong on campus, but felt as though she needed to prove her resiliency to her white peers. As she "forced" herself to be comfortable on campus, she knew that it was not a conducive environment for her to successfully persist due to the actions of her white peers.

Sarah's enacts her *navigational capital,* by transferring to an academic environment more favorable to her needs. And uses her *resistant capital* to make a hard decision to successfully persist. Nicole also described what it was like being a marginalized person on campus during the lockdown. She remembered how frightened she was that day,

> I think the biggest one was when we thought we had an intruder in our school. And because of the racial issues, we were told that it was a white man in a trench coat, and that they were looking for minorities. And because our campus, there's not a lot of minorities, a lot of the minorities were freaking out because it's like we can easily be spotted, and it's not like we can hide as well. And I feel like for me that was the point where I was like, I don't wanna be here anymore, this is too much for me, I'm just trying to get an education and that's it.

These hate crimes terrorized many participants and impacted the ways they transitioned and persisted through their institutions. These attacks created a hostile campus climate for students, solely based on their perceived membership in a racial or ethnic group. Nicole was overwhelmed by the violence and discrimination on her campus, particularly as it impacted her sense of belonging and commitment to her university. However, she makes a point of addressing her *navigational capital,* by reinforcing her goal of degree attainment. Thus demonstrating her *resistant capital* which was used to navigate through these racialized incidents.

Resistance Styles

Even amid the heinous events described within the previous section, participants were able to successfully transition and persist due to their *resistant capital.* For most students their resiliency was foundational during their initial transition to college, and as they persisted through their colleges and universities. Students' persistence can be explained using Solórzano and

Bernal's (2001) constructs of (1) resilient resistance and (2) conformist resistance. In a 2000 study, Yosso indicated that most students of Color demonstrating resilience would fall in between these two sectors. Resilient resistance occurs when participants strategically challenged inequality, even if they could not fully articulate the structural design of inequality and oppression (Yosso, 2000). However, most participants in this study had a conformist resistance style. Conformist resistance is the set of actions of students who are motivated for change but are not actively working on challenging or changing the system of oppression (Yosso, 2000).

Resilient Resistance. Even though there were two different resistance styles revealed within this study, very few students demonstrated a resilient resistance style. This resilient resistance style is generated from the margins, which allows students to be successful amidst inequality. For most students of Color, "navigating through the educational pipeline, their success depends on survival" (Yosso, 2000, p. 181). And for a handful of participants, advocating for equality and speaking up for justice were mechanisms used to demonstrate their resilient resistance. For example, Seraphina was more adversarial in talking about how oppression impacted her campus and community. She described her resistance style,

> While it is difficult and sometimes incredibly frustrating, because the way for me to fight, let's say, oppression, or even racist people, it's to confront it. Not just keep quiet in the corner, and to be vocal of my differences. Because my identities have impacted their culture, as much as their culture has impacted mine.

For Seraphina, it was essential to voice her discomfort and remain vocal in the face of oppression. She was adamant about fighting against racism and discrimination. Tyrique also expressed the importance of addressing oppression head on,

> I don’t know how to change things on campus, I just know this ain’t it. Like there were some protests on campus, and we need to continue doing that kind of stuff. They need to hear us. We need to remain visible at all times. Like I know that other tactics might need to happen… I don’t know what they are, but something needs to happen.

Tyrique illustrated the importance of being vocal about the oppression that exists on his campuses. He advocates for social justice but isn't sure how to achieve it institutionally. He just knows that "something needs to happen." Other than Seraphina and Tyrique, Jerome was the only other participant to have a more confrontational resistance style. His *resistant capital* was directly connected to the ways he advocated for institutionalized social change. He shared his story about how his Black manhood and advocacy impacted his persistence,

> Like it’s wild to see the stuff that happens on campus and in the world. Like as a Black man, I consistently feel that it’s important to speak up how inequality exists, particularly for us [Black men]. It’s important that we talk about action and *do* action. Whether we’re talking about police brutality, campus shootings, violence in our communities, it’s important to take a stand. Since I’m in my last year, I have seen the importance of speaking out, and speaking up. I think staying rooted in this work has helped me get here, to be honest.

As Jerome is in his last year, he contends that speaking up against oppression has aided his persistence and “ultimate goal of graduation.” His *resistant capital* is rooted in his resilient resistance against oppression and inequality within society and on his campus. Therefore, Jerome has been able to succeed within the educational pipeline as a “resilient resistor” (Yosso, 2000). Through his advocacy on campus and taking a stand against institutional inequality, he has been able to “survive and/or succeeding through the educational pipeline as a strategic response to

visual microaggressions" (Yosso, 2000, p. 180). Being a resilient resistor often requires students to be more outspoken and at the forefront of various movements. As this type of resistance is needed in students' academic environments, most of the participants were more in the background of campus activism; whereas they enacted social justice through different methods.

Conformist Resistance. Most participants within this study had a conformist resistance style, where they were able to successfully persist amongst oppression but did not directly confront oppression or inequality. These students would strive towards equity, but only within the existing social conventions and social systems. For most participants, these events of oppression and discrimination were not new to them, and have pervasively existed. Racism's legacy is prevalent among many white Americans, which is often unveiled on participants' campuses. Thus, many students like Xavier were just "over it and everything like that." Amber also had a similar sentiment regarding her oppressive experiences on campus, "Well now, I laugh at it. Before, it was hurtful. I just brush it off now, 'cause I'm just so used to it. Even though, you're not supposed to get used to it. But I'm just used to it now." Amber is accustomed to the racism and discrimination she received from her white peers. At first it bothered her, but now views it as a regular campus occurrence.

Aspen also talked about how she has acclimatized to the discrimination that occurs on campus, "After a while it's sad to say that you get used to hearing about stuff like that to happen, on a day to day basis. I shouldn't have to tell you when you're talking out of pocket for stuff that we find important." She continued to talk about the ways that racism manifests on her campus, but how she avoids engaging with it—particularly as she does not want to exude a racial and gender stereotype,

> I don't act crazy about them [white people]. You know, I'll just keep it to myself like okay, 'noted.' And walk away 'cause I'm not trying to make a scene or anything, 'cause every time you try to stick up for yourself, 'Oh, you're an angry Black woman.' So, I don't know. It's just irritating. But I just sit there, you know. Don't make any crazy faces, I just sit there. Cause we know it's gonna keep happening regardless.

Even though Aspen recognized these stereotypes as harmful and annoying, she is most comfortable with ignoring the discrimination that happens. Even though she does not respond or address the discrimination that happens to her, she persists through the oppression. Dana also exhibited forms of conformist *resistant capital* by not responding to it,

> But sometimes I kinda hold back just because, it comes out very attacking, and I don't wanna attack them [white people], 'cause everyone's entitled to their opinions. But it's like you can't just say whatever. I don't know... I'm thinking maybe the fear of being... I don't know how to say the word... Well, maybe it could be discrimination, the fear of someone actually have discriminated against me, but I just didn't know, because that's something that I don't look for.

Avoiding confrontation to oblige white feelings, is one of the ways Dana displays her conformist resistance style. Even though she does not say it explicitly, she insinuates that she does not want to fall under the "angry Black woman" trope nor be discriminated by it. By not responding to her white peers, Dana feels more in control of the ways she navigates her campus.

Celeste also talked about the importance of focusing on other aspects of the college experience, rather than the oppression that exists.

> Like, white students. They could be so insensitive. Then at the same time, you have to remember they grew up different. They don't really understand some things. Sometimes

> you kind of have to check yourself on that because you're like, maybe they don't know. I mean, you do see the weird glances and stuff like that, but I really try not to pay too much attention to it 'cause in this world you can't really avoid it, and that's really sad but, it is what it is. I mean, you could try your best to advocate and change stuff, but it doesn't really always work. It takes time, yeah, it's just something that I'm trying to muddle through basically.

Celeste ignores the blatant racism and discrimination on her campus. As she acknowledges the importance of advocating for change, she thinks that certain strategies may not sanction any transformation. She also feels that it may take too long for change to happen, so she just pushes her way through the mess of inequality. Lloyd also thought that it was best to avoid conflict and ignore the oppression that occurs on campus, particularly at his campus job. He described the internal conflict he has with addressing the inequality that happens on his campus, "Yeah, I do, but I don't. Like I want to, but I don't. I just feel I don't like to create tension or conflict, especially in the place that I see the same people all the time. So I just didn't want it to be like weird. So I just be quiet." Avoiding confrontation with discriminatory aspects of their campuses, was one of the participants' primary mechanisms for persisting and surviving. These students should not have to endure racism, oppression, or violence on their campuses to persist. Many felt that they should not create tension with their white peers due to fear of retaliation. Surviving and thriving despite multiple encounters with racism demonstrated their *resistant capital.*

Dana also brought up a significant factor that impacted her conformist *resistant capital* style. For her and other students, their resiliency was rooted in the fact that they primarily focused on themselves and their academics to be successful. Instead of focusing on external discrimination on their campuses, they focus on college trajectories. Dana continued to say, "I'm

a bookworm, I guess, so it's like, if it doesn't have to do with school, I don't... It's all back inside behind me, so it's like I'm not even focused on it.” She indicates that her academics provide a distraction from oppression—inevitably aiding her persistence. Joe also talks about the importance of not getting distracted by external oppression, and the importance of focusing on oneself and education. He said, “Just whatever I have to focus on at that time, then I just focus on that. I don't get distracted about stuff. I honestly just focus on myself and schoolwork.” Alex also talked about the importance of education as a distraction. She said, “Not that I isolate myself, but I just don’t pay attention. I'm just doing my own world when it's like me and studies. Of course, there’s times when things on campus make me feel awkward, but I really just am into me and my work.” David also has an interesting perspective on overlooking racism and focusing on his academics,

> Racism and all that, I don't really pay attention to it [on campus]. It doesn't bother me. I mean I’ve felt discrimination, but I just don’t pay attention. School's always been kind of like, show up and get the work done, do the homework and pass the test. So that’s what I really focus on.

Alex, Joe, Dana, Lloyd, and David felt that focusing on themselves, their academics, and college careers was the best way to survive their oppressive situations and persist through their institutions. They are academically successful because they are able to resist oppression while remaining in the educational pipeline. Research has shown that students of Color must exhibit more grit and resilience than their white peers in order to achieve both in and out of the classroom (Kinney-Walker, 2016). Not only are they enduring and encountering traumatic racism, hate crimes, and violence, they also remain academically engaged and successful by

focusing on the most important person—themselves. Irrefutably, all of the participants within this study used various forms of *resistant capital* to transition and persist successfully.

Section Summary

Every participant within this study used their *resistant capital* to transition from high school and persist through their institutions. *Resistant capital* for these students consisted of two components—acknowledging the presence of various adversities and achieving a positive outcome even through these difficult situations. Within this section, students'capital was rooted in their personal *cultural capital* and resiliency. These mechanisms aided the ways they navigated through their academic worlds, society, communities, and families. Participants' *cultural capital* was rooted in their ethnic and racial identities and pride. When participants felt unmotivated or needed reassurance, they remembered their racialized resiliency, vigor and strength. For many multilingual participants, their languages were expressions of their identities rooted within *resistance* and *familial capital.* These students remained connected to their identities by acknowledging and celebrating the culture and knowledges rooted in their languages. Other students exhibited their *cultural* and *linguistic capital* by code-switching in their college environments. As most students recognized the problematic nature of changing their dialects in order to engage with their white peers and faculty, they acknowledged its function as a tool needed to transition and persist successfully. This was an interesting dichotomy for many participants, as they critiqued the notion of "speaking right or white" while assimilating. As a tool for social mobility, students used this *cultural* and *linguistic capital* to survive.

Other participants demonstrated their *resistant capital* by exuding resiliency on their campus and communities. For many students, their initial experiences with cultivating their *resistant capital* occurred within their communities. All of the participants within this study lived

in a neighborhood that was impacted by a vicious cycle of violence and crime. And their survival and escape from this environment was significant in building their overall resiliency. Students were exposed to behaviors of their peers and families that were not conducive for their long-term goals. Participants then used these resilient mindsets on their campuses for success. Most participants experienced some form of racism, discrimination, microaggressions, or hate crime on campus. Black and Latinx students are in a unique position where they simultaneously access privilege (by going to college), while being exposed to institutionalized racism. Thus, many participants were stressfully tasked to simultaneously maintain their cultural identities, scholarship, personal safety, and wellbeing.

Exposure to these types of traumas impacted the ways students transitioned and persisted through college. Within this study, there were two main ways that students responded to these events, through conformist resistance and resilient resistance. For participants that had a resilient resistance style, they were more confrontational in addressing the oppression that occurred on their campus. Even if they did not know how to dismantle the institutionalized racism on their campuses, they were adamant about the necessity for change. Other students had a more conformist resistance style, where they recognized the oppression that existed but decided to ignore it and focus on themselves and their academics. In dealing with ignorance and prejudice, many students became more aware of handling the oppressive events that happened in society, communities, and campuses. They developed resiliency, strength, and endurance by focusing on their strength through challenging moments. Regardless of the adversity and difficulties participants encountered, these first-generation, low-income, Black, and Latinx Upward Bound alumni persisted due to their *resistance* and *cultural capital*.

Cultural and College Predisposition

Participating in Upward Bound provided students with exposure to traditional college life and helped further develop their cultural wealth and identities. For participants like Joe, Upward Bound had a significant influence on their success in transitioning from high school to college, "because [they] knew more of what to expect, instead of going in blind, and not having a clue what college is like." This predisposition to college culture made them feel like they "knew [their] campuses" already and created less of a culture shock. As Elle said, "participating in Upward Bound made me more confident in who I was when I got to [institution name]. When I first came here, I was completely fine. I wasn't nervous or anything." Anita also agreed, "I've been here plenty of times, so I wasn't shocked or anything. But if I hadn't had that experience, it would have been crazy tough." Students demonstrated that the mentoring from Upward Bound staff and instructors, and participation in the six-week summer institute program further developed their cultural and college predisposition. Their *aspirational* and *navigational capital* influenced the development of this updated predisposition. *Aspirational capital* refers to the hopes and dreams students have and expands on how students of Color continue to have high educational aspirations despite persistent education inequities (Yosso, 2005). For many students, this identity formation helped their transition and persistence experiences.

This section about cultural and college predisposition is influenced by Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three-stage model regarding college choice. Factors such as class status, family background, and previous high school experiences, all shape students' decisions to attend college. Although their model does address some of the tenets that impact students of Color experiences, it does not recognize how systemic racism and discrimination affect their college

choice. Thus, these next sections address how participating in this culturally-affirming Upward Bound program cultivated holistic cultural and college predisposition for students.

College Predisposition

All of the students participated in an Upward Bound program that provided them with year-long support and development. During the academic school year, students received various types of support: after school tutoring, going on field trips/college tours, attending college preparation workshops, and assistance with academic planning. Most notably, this Upward Bound program was housed in participants' high school for more hands-on support. In addition to this supplemental support during the school year, participants attended a six-week summer institute program. During the summer institute program, students lived in residence halls, ate in dining halls, took courses with university professors and instructors, and participated in other educational workshops and extracurricular activities throughout the day—or as Aspen said, "walking around and going to classes and stuff."

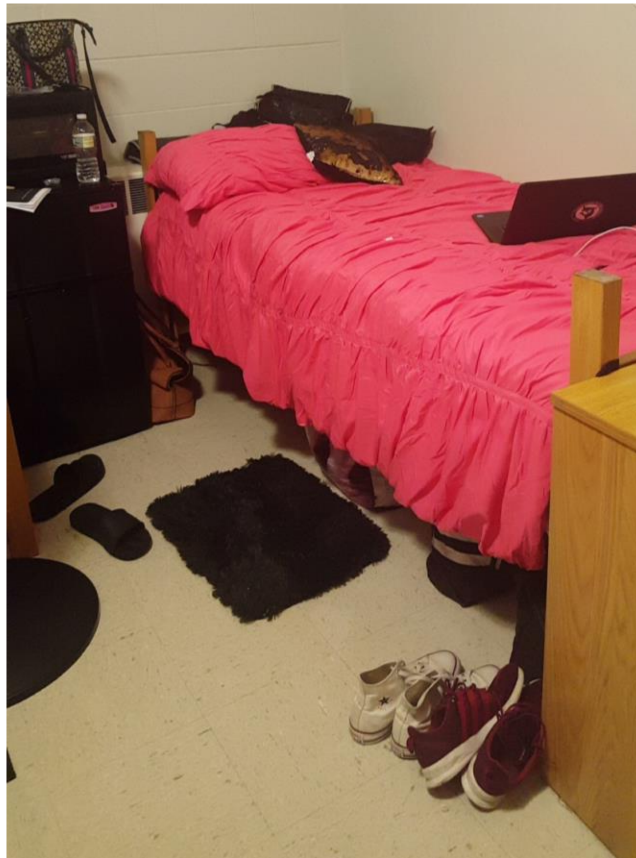
For most participants, this was the first time they have ever visited a college campus. Tyrique recalled his first campus visit, "I had never been on a college campus before Upward Bound. Like college really felt more comfortable because of them. I really got a lot of experiences." Visiting and staying on a college campus helped students visualize themselves going to college; thus increasing their *aspirational capital.* Dana illustrated this by saying, "I think they're [Upward Bound] the reason why I decided to go to a four-year school, 'cause even if anything, I probably would have just went to a community college and found my way there. Because they did do a really, really good job with just getting out of high school to go to college." Being on a college campus through Upward Bound, made students feel that college was

more tangible and accessible. For example, Elle talked about how helpful it was to be so familiar with her university, as she has stayed on this particular campus every summer in high school.

> We still had to attend classes and everything, but it was very helpful for the people that were going to be [at this university], because we were able to familiarize ourselves with the buildings. So, freshman year, I had classes in most of the buildings we were in during Upward Bound, so it was just natural. Yeah. I was really comfortable. I wasn't nervous when I moved in or anything, so I was already aware of the environment here. I even lived in the same residence hall, as I did then (*see figure 9)*.

Like Tyrique, Elle felt that being on campus significantly eased her transition from high school to college.

Figure 9. – Elle's residence hall room.



Elle talks about the college predisposition she and her peers received from participating in Upward Bound. She also feels uniquely grateful for her Upward Bound experience, as she is now attending the same university she has been visiting since her first year of high school. Thus, she used her *navigational capital* and college predisposition to thrive on her current campus. Freddie also talked about how transformative it was for him to stay on campus prior to coming to college,

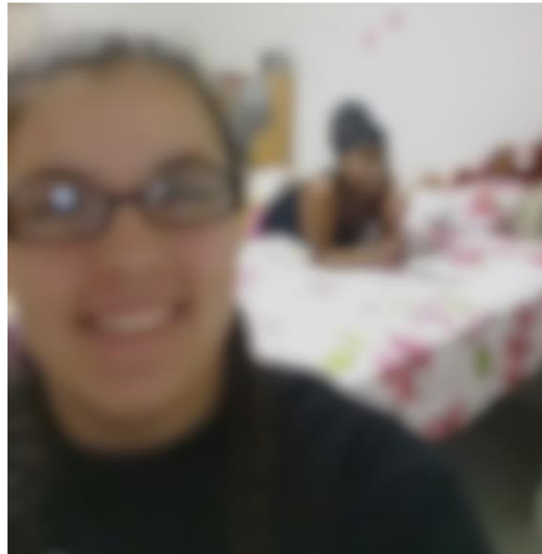
> I wanted to soak it in and be like, okay this is what it feels like to wake up in a college dorm and, eat at a college cafeteria. They had the best cafeteria. And go to a college gym and stuff like that. My goals were to just stay in the program, do what I gotta do, so that they can help me out with my college stuff.

For Freddie and many other participants, staying on a college campus was something they had never dreamed of. These experiences helped further students' *aspirational capital* and degree attainment goals. Being on a college campus concretized the high school to college pipeline, making students try harder and stay focused. Anita was also excited about staying on a college campus and experiencing "college life,"

> I was just so interested, I was like, 'Oh my god, we get to live in dorms?' And I just thought I'd be living like a college experience. I was living in a dorm (*see figure 10*), I was going to the Commons, going to class, and classes that college students would go to. So that's pretty much what I expected to see what it's like to be a college student, and honestly was similar to my experience now. But yeah, it was everything and more. It was more than what I expected. It was fun at the same time. We went on field trips as well, and college tours, and stuff, and then had class. I didn't expect us to have class and class work, but it wasn't like a terrible thing.

Anita's excitement about staying on a college campus was an underlying theme of all of the participants' narratives.

Figure 10. –Anita and her Upward Bound roommate. Image blurred by the researcher for participant confidentiality.



These experiences of going to class, visiting the student union, eating in the dining halls, exceeded her expectations of the program and aided her overall transition into college. Alex also talks about the predisposition and exposure of stereotypical college-life,

> We got to live in the dorm. We ate at the dining halls. So I had to do, what I had to do for my freshman year, even before my freshman year. Like we would be buying bed sheets and clothes and books and notebooks, as I would do for actual college (*laughs*). Like it's crazy, 'cause we literally had work to do. We would come back and do homework, and I had to stay up, type papers downstairs in the lounge. Like I had to do all that before I even got to college.

These initial experiences were foundational to their academic and social success on campus. This six-week academically intensive program helped acclimate participants to *some* of the academic and social expectations of college life. Even though these students experienced pervasive institutionalized oppression on their campuses, they were appreciative of learning about the

traditional aspects of the postsecondary pipeline. This exposure to stereotypical college life was an essential part of their transitional success.

Academic Development. Many participants talked about the advantages of the summer institute and how it helped them develop and apply various learning techniques and skills. The program focused on academic subjects in Math, Science (e.g., chemistry, biology), English, and Spanish. Lloyd recalled how fulfilling and robust his experiences were during the summer institute program,

> Going to Upward Bound in the summer. That was the one thing that definitely prepared me the most. I went every single year, even my senior year of high school. I haven't had one summer where I wasn't taking classes and stuff, so I've always been working. My work ethic has always been there. You know how in the summer, you lose a lot of information you process. I'm always working, I've never had a summer to just chill. I think that was a good push. Just the transition in general, it kinda mirrored being in a professor class. Meeting new people and stuff. Like even in the classes. Like [the English teacher] made us do revisions and stuff almost every day. We'd do a paper, and then, we'd revise it for a week, and then he'd give us another paper, and he'd make us still revise from the first week. It's kind of like what we do here in my English classes. It also kinda gave me the readiness for, like living on campus through the summer, and getting used to living by myself, and my friends, and not having my parents there. The freedom, and stuff, and time management. I don't have anybody to be on my back, or whatever. I have to get my own food, and stuff. The transition between that, it made it a lot easier, so when I was here I kind of already knew. Being that I came to this school from Upward Bound, I knew the campus, too, so that was a big help, too.

Lloyd illustrates how impactful his participation in Upward Bound was on his successful transition into college. He believes that this program provided him with the most guidance regarding his academic and social preparation for college. Several elements in his Upward Bound experience aided his perception of college awareness including, time management skills, a sense of independence, problem-solving skills, and rigorous academic courses which enhanced his writing proficiencies. For Lloyd and other participants, taking academic classes during the summer helped their brains remain active. He brings up this concept of “summer brain drain,” which argues that students lose approximately two months of math and reading skills during the summer (Leahy, 2018). Nick also talked about his appreciation of academically working during the summer,

> Upward Bound is one of the things that does take action during the summer, because for those six weeks that you are in Upward Bound, you're not just in a dorm room going downstairs playing games and meeting new people, and just talking about yourselves, and making a production or making a show. You're going to class, you're doing work, you're doing papers, you're doing Math, English, and Science. And it's keeping... It's not letting my brain develop the cobwebs. It's keeping the engine running and getting ready for the next year. Where if I'm taking geometry or calculus or whatever in high school, [Upward Bound] is there and they're gonna teach you that stuff. So when I go to high school, I'm like, ‘I've done this before. Ha! Fooled you’ And it's not like taking the course twice, but it kinda is, ‘cause you get to be like *pre*-prepared.

Nick talked about the comprehensive experience he had in the Upward Bound summer institute. He appreciates being able to meet new people, staying in the residence hall, playing games, and planning for the large talent show production. He and other participants also talked about how

the summer enrichment program helped eliminate learning loss. According to Leahy (2018), it takes teachers about three weeks to re-teach lessons from the previous year due to skills lost during the summer. Nick feels that he's beating the academic system, by being "*pre*-prepared" for the courses he plans to take during the academic year and keeping his brain active. This Upward Bound program helped prepare students for their transition, by offering them some insight on college academic expectations. Program directors indicated that this academic exposure through college predisposition, provided adaptive tools (e.g., time management and study skills) used to enhance their *navigational capital* and successfully persist.

Dana also talked about how this college-like exposure cultivated skills she uses in college now,

> I think the way that they had [the class schedules] setup, it was really good for the college setting, 'cause I don't remember going to my Science class every day. And when you go to college, you're only there probably once a week, maybe twice. So that actually really helped homework management, 'cause we would get homework. And if you're not gonna be there the next day, you would think, 'Oh. Okay, I'm not gonna do my homework today, then I'll do it tomorrow.' And this actually helped for when I did come to college, because I was already inside of the groove of 'Get out of class, do your homework.'
>
> Don't wait till the next day to do your homework, 'cause it's due in like a week from now.

Dana was able to develop homework and time management skills during these summer courses. By participating in this program, she learned the importance of sticking to a routine, staying organized, and defining goals. Alex also talked about the importance of year-round learning and how it aided her successful transition into college,

> They [Upward Bound] literally had us taking classes in the summer, like Science class, Math class, and Spanish class. And I was like, 'Why are we taking classes in the summer? Like, what? This is BS.' But we got the opportunity to learn from people that were actually professors at [this institution], and they took their time out [of] their summer to teach a couple of classes to *us*. Since we had classes in the summer, and especially as a bridge student, we did essays, and stuff like that in the summer. Because coming into college—if I would have taken that long break from high school and hadn't had Upward Bound in the middle—it would have been a jump, but it was like easier.

Alex contends that her transition into college was more accessible due to the academic support she received from Upward Bound staff and instructors. Upward Bound program directors were intentional about their academic development for students. As a previous instructor for the summer institute, I have seen the diligence and meticulousness of these program directors in creating a summer program that academically enriched students, and provided the college predisposition to support their successful transition. Through these courses, Upward Bound directors assert that students will "strengthen their ability to read, write and communicate; expand their vocabulary and improve their word usage; and improve their analytical, reflective and critical thinking skills" (Program website*, 2019). These skills that students attain from this program enhanced their *navigational* and *social capital* which aided their successful persistence.

Additionally for many students, this was the first time engaging with instructors of Color. Like Alex, many participants were grateful (and even empowered) for their instructors' time. As Jerome said, "I clearly didn't want to take classes during the summer (*chuckles*), but it was actually cool seeing teachers like me. It was like reassurance." Seraphina also talks about the importance of summer academic support and attentive teachers,

> But it's like a scientific thing when students go home for the summer, and when they return, they actually ... not exactly dumber, but it's an academically hard moment of transition, getting back into the habit of focusing on academics, and to take an interest in classes. For example [Science teacher], we love her, she was a very quirky Science teacher, and instead of just doing your basic labs, we actually did experiments. She went out of her way to make science fun for us, very interesting. My brain was tired, so I was happy about that. It was classes that were meant not to keep you exactly occupied, but to keep you and your mind interested. Because of this experience, out of everything, is what made my transition to college the way it was. Because I knew more of what to expect, instead of going in blind, not knowing... Not having a clue what college is like.

This predisposition to the college experience was significant to Seraphina's transition into college. Not only did these courses keep her brain active during the summer, but her instructors were strategic and intentional in designing a course that held student interest. As these students were initially opposed to taking courses during the summer, they were appreciative of the supplemental instruction that enhanced their academic performance in college.

Cultural Predisposition

All of the participants in this study shared stories of how this Upward Bound program deliberately implemented their cultural identities throughout various aspects of the program. Upward Bound provided opportunities for participants to learn more about their own cultures, as well as others. Nicole talked about this holistic development, saying, "[Upward Bound] helped students like me progress not just into college, but as people." Participants' languages, literacies, histories, and cultures were significant to their academic and social achievement. By participating in this Upward Bound program, students had the opportunity to learn and flourish

within an academic system that typically diminishes their identities. This Upward Bound program embedded aspects of culture throughout the program, to enhance student educational outcomes. While culture is often defined through a racial or ethnic lens (Ladson-Billings, 2010; Oliver et al., 2018), this culturally-affirming program defined it as dynamic and cumulative of student's intersectional identities. Within this dissertation, participants culture was inclusive of all of their identities (e.g., languages, racial, ethnic, gender, sexuality, immigration, body-ability) and was a continuous process of identity formation.

Culture in the Classroom. One of the ways that students developed their identities was through the implementation of culture in the classroom. For many students, this was one of the first times they had their cultures celebrated in academic spaces. Xavier talked about how this was significant to his educational and cultural development.

> They would make us write essays, study, and stuff like that. It was helpful because the professors would give feedback on how I could improve and stuff, 'cause I really didn't have that type of support in high school. So, I felt like that was really helpful. Like it even gave me an opportunity to practice my English too. The teacher was Spanish, so it was nice being able to talk to him in both languages. It was just nice to get extra help, 'cause he could kinda understand more than my other high school teachers.

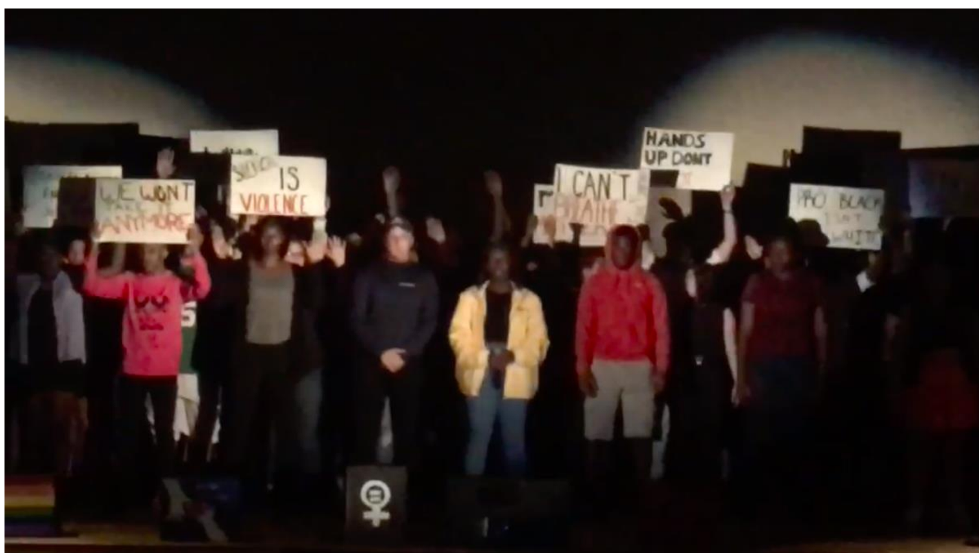
Students cherished participating in a program that provided holistic academic, social, and cultural assistance. Not only did Xavier receive college exposure, and academic support, he was able to practice his language skills in class. Even though English is deemed the "gatekeeper" in academia, he was able to experience the pleasure of having his native language celebrated within his classroom. Xavier's instructor was also a native Spanish speaker, so he appreciated being

able to discuss the nuances of writing and speaking in English from that lens. These experiences helped Xavier broaden his ways of learning and constructing his identities as assets.

Other participants talked about the value of celebrating intersectional cultures in the classroom. Many culturally-affirming programs strive to improve students' chances of enrolling in higher education by highlighting dimensions of their culture, and improving their academic preparation (Mulroy, 2011; Villalpando & Solórzano, 2005); and this program was no different. Aspen shares an example of how her instructors celebrated her identities in the classroom,

> That was that summer when all the police brutality got worse, like Philando Castile and Michael Brown and all of that. So in the English class, we went over a whole bunch of stuff talking about societal issues but from the view of Black poets and authors. We even analyzed songs about police brutality and everything. It was just eye awakening that summer. Like I felt so passionate it about it, I wrote this poem called "Dear white America" in class. I even read the poem during production [summer talent show], which ended in a march at the end (*see figure 11*).

Figure 11. – A still from a video of participants' march.



These “eye-opening” dialogues furthered Aspen’s development of her cultural consciousness. Participants developed a broader sociopolitical consciousness, that allowed them to critique the cultural norms, values, institutions, and beliefs that produce and maintain social inequities (Luna & Martinez, 2013). Aspen has an "ah-ha" moment, in which she simultaneously appreciated and learned more about her culture. Celeste also shared her experiences with developing her cultural consciousness. Her Upward Bound summer classes mirrored her current coursework, which inevitably aided her transition into college.

> Because it wasn't the generic prompts that the teachers in [high school] would give you, they were real-world prompts. And then in college, it's also the same thing. So they were more relevant to who you are, and honestly the more open you are to learn more about yourself and others, it will really help in college. I don’t know, like it makes you more grounded.

Celeste talks about the importance of being centered and rooted in her identities, particularly how it has aided her persistence through college. Her beliefs correspond with current literature, that contend that students of Color who move away from traditional cultural values and beliefs reported higher non-persistence attitudes (Booker, 2016). Thus, suggesting that remaining attached to one’s heritage culture serves as a mechanism for higher persistence rates. The validation of students’ identities within their Upward Bound program, reinforced their *cultural capital* and *aspirational capital.* Having their identities affirmed through their classroom experiences, made them appreciate their education and furthered their aspirations for degree attainment.

Cultural Identity Development. These racialized conversations also aided the ways students perceived their identities on and off campus. For students like Xavier, this holistic

development made him more appreciative of his diverse identities. He shared that while he was in high school, Upward Bound gave him the *navigational capital* and knowledge needed to navigate a PWI,

> There's different type of races in the Upward Bound program, so it kind of gave me a perspective of, I'm not going to be the only one feeling left out, or anything like that. So, and it made me closer to every race within people of Color... And in the Upward Bound program, there were more 'colored people' than there is on campus, but Upward Bound prepared us to deal with that kinda stuff.

For Xavier participating in Upward Bound made him feel connected and even comfortable on a white campus. He appreciated being surrounded by people of Color during the summer institute, which later served as a mechanism for him to persist at his institution. He also enjoys being able to celebrate the various ethnic identities among his peers. Lloyd also talked about the value of learning about his and others' ethnic identities, "It definitely helped me see more about how other people act, 'cause I saw all types of Latinos. It kinda widened my view." Even though most students in the program shared some identity markers (i.e., low-income, Black or Latinx, first generation), this Upward Bound program did not view them as a homogenous group. Program directors created an inclusive environment for students to draw on their native literacies, languages, and other aspects of their intersectional identities. This resulted in students appreciating their intersectional similarities and differences.

Aspen also talked about the value of participating in an Upward Bound program that affirmed their culture, and how it impacted her transition to a PWI.

> I feel like being in a PWI, especially coming from Upward Bound, strengthens the ways you moved around campus; especially race wise. Like your experience is not that hard,

> because you already came from a place where you are around minorities, and you know how to act around being in a sea full of vanilla. Upward Bound just gave us that sense of comfortability, I guess, or safety, 'cause you had teachers who were minorities themselves and then directors who are minorities, so they just knew where you were coming from. So you didn't have to worry about acting a certain way or being judged for being a minority, 'cause those were the people that were by your side the whole time.

Not only were students able to experience the traditional aspects of college life, they felt more comfortable because of their same-race peers and instructors. Staying on a college campus can feel intimidating in high school, especially if students feel that they stand out amongst other white students. However, this Upward Bound program was incredibly diligent and intentional in making participants feel secure and providing them a safety net.

Freddie talked about how Upward Bound helped him examine the ways he navigated the world. Freddie recalled these conversations,

> It's not that I didn't care, I just didn't think about, oh, I'm a dude. I'm straight. I'm Spanish. You know? But when I got to UB, they sort of made it clear that these are your identities. You got to embrace it, that's what makes you stand out from other people. I'm like, yeah, that's true. I feel like it strengthened my individuality ‘cause it made me realize that even though you have your identities, so many other people had those too. You sort of have to just be your own person, but like appreciate what makes you, you.

Freddie valued learning about his collective identities, while still maintaining his individuality. This is crucial for many students of Color, because historical retention literature advocates for students to lose their authentic selves in order to assimilate into dominant culture (Tinto 1975, 1987). Participants and culturally-affirming scholars contend that students of Color, who are

connected to their cultural identities, have higher chances of succeeding in college (Samuelson & Litzler, 2016). Lloyd also shared why he appreciated Upward Bound for challenging him to reshape and enhance his world view.

> It definitely helped me see more Latinos, and kinda learn more about who I am. Like there's all these other races, and I was hanging out with all types of ethnicities of people. I don't know if this makes sense, but it kinda made me like, empowered and stronger in who I am. Like when I got to college, I knew I was like a Latino man, and like this is how I am seen; like this is how I navigate society and stuff.

Both Freddie and Lloyd talk about the development and understanding of their cultural identities through the Upward Bound program. This program furthered students' cultural skills, which allowed them to self-reflect on their identities, positionality, and *cultural capital*. Joe describes one of the self-reflection activities,

> For the guys, we had little meetings and stuff so that we would talk about things. Like how we were feeling, how society kinda constructs us [men of Color], societal constructs, stuff like that. I remember we made these "male-boxes" (*see figure 12*) and put stuff in it. It actually got really emotional (*awkward chuckle*)."

Figure 12. – Joe's "Male-Box"

Lloyd, Freddie, and Joe appreciated these racialized and gendered discourses that exposed them to aspects of their identities, which furthered their cultural predisposition. These conversations broadened students' awareness and appreciation of their worlds and made them reflect on their positionalities. Aspen talked about the value of having a space to examine the historical and socio-political issues of race in America,

> 'Cause the whole summer was all fun and games, but with all that stuff happening in society, particularly to Black people, we got very serious and had really intense conversations about everything going around us. It was just eye-opening. Like not just learning about society, but also myself.

Aspen felt that these conversations helped broaden her positionality and cultural awareness. Having these conversations about how their identities function in society, provided them a broader perspective of how they could be potentially treated at their PWIs. This program contended that it is not just important for students to have traditional exposure of college through college predisposition, but need to understand the ramifications of navigating academia as a marginalized person. These participants realized that navigating the college sector is not just about traversing the academic world, but using cultural and social cues (*social* and *navigational capital*) to navigate a hegemonic system that was not created for their success.

Section Summary

Stemming from Hossler and Gallagher's first phase in their three-step model, this section explored the ways this Upward Bound program reinforced participants' cultural and community predisposition. Notably, Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model needs to be expanded to include cultural characteristics, as systemic oppression impacts college choice. Being exposed to "stereotypical college life" and learning more about their identities, aided their college

persistence. Many students had never been on a college campus, prior to their participation in Upward Bound. These experiences eased their transition and created less of a "culture shock." Participants were supported in achieving their academic goals and skills, provided tools for college exploration and engagement, and motivated to pursue post-secondary education. Their participation in this six-week program, helped strengthened their ability to read, write, and communicate; improved their analytical, reflective, and critical thinking skills; and ultimately expanded their worldviews and *navigational capital* need to occupy their white campuses.

During the summer institute program, participants continued to acquire the skills and knowledges that promoted positive personal growth and development. This Upward Bound program was deliberate in designing curricula and activities that explicitly critiqued traditional educational practices. This program helped students feel more comfortable and informed about their intersectional cultural identities. Thus, students had the skills to critically challenge the notions of marginality that reproduce social hierarchies and legitimate inequality on their campuses and in society. Having these discourses in high school, better prepared them for the oppressive events that happened at their universities. Even in their summer institute classrooms, participants were able to draw on their native literacies, languages, and skills to be successful—illustrating their *navigational* and *resistant capital.* Acquiring these skills and knowledges from the Upward Bound program helped improve their educational outcomes and achievement.

Community

Participants' development of community positively impacted their transition and persistence through college. Many students, like Jerome, talked about the importance of establishing community "for survival." This formation of community exhibited their *social capital*, which was used to persist through their institutions successfully. Yosso (2005) defined

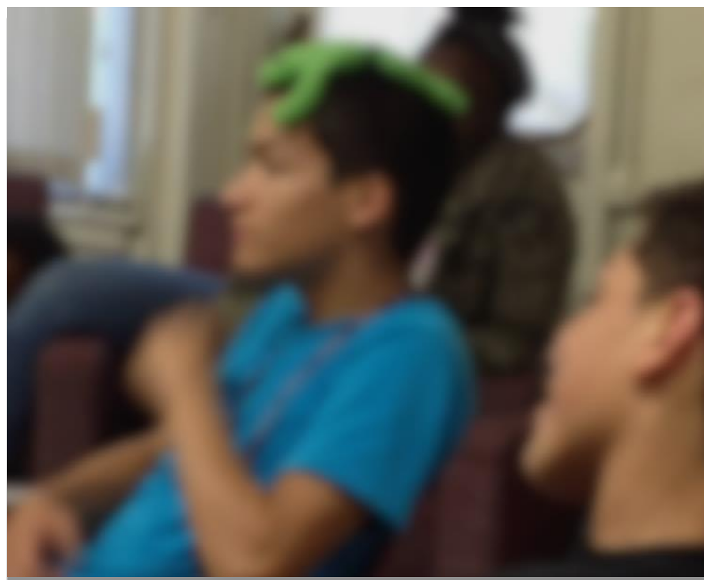
social capital as the peers and social contacts students use to gain access and navigate social institutions. Participants illustrated that the Upward Bound program taught them the importance of building relationships with their peers, staff, professors, and administrators. Amber affirmed that Upward Bound provided a "toolbelt of tricks" necessary for her persistence. Sarah also talked about *social capital* or the "toolbelt" she developed through the program, "We even talked about building relationships with people and connections and everything too, and getting help with high school too, not just college help." The goal of this culturally-affirming program is to "support every participant in achieving their highest academic potential in each year of high school, and to establish healthy habits which will help sustain that success throughout college. Every activity is designed to develop and nurture these skills and habits" (Program Website*, 2019). Through these activities, students developed the *social* and *navigational capital* to successfully navigate their educational institutions that sustained dominant cultural norms. Through the development of community networks, students were able to successfully persist.

Finding community was necessary for participants to be academically and socially successful in academia. For many students of Color, their racialized experiences on campus negatively impacted their sense of community. Thus, many students reported lower levels of sense of belonging, and commitment to their institutions (Booker, 2016). This often results in students of Color being less likely to graduate from their PWIs or forced to transfer to different institutions (Filipkowski et al., 2016). Students who reported a strong sense of community, often talked about the importance of stable and dependable people, and being surrounded by a network of people that are committed to their positive well-being and growth (Palinkas et al., 2016). Within this section, students' sense of community was fostered through three ways: (1) through the mentorship of Upward Bound staff, instructors and Tutor Mentors (TMs), (2) the

development of community among Upward Bound participants in high school, and (3) cultivating community on their campuses, as a mechanism for survival and persistence. For many participants, being a part of their pre-college program felt like a "second family" because of the mentorship and academic, social, and emotional support they received from Upward Bound staff, instructors and Tutor Mentors (TMs). Nick talked more about how he is comfortable in the program because of his "second family,"

> And in Upward Bound, we always... We can be who we are. Literally, I can be me. I can speak Spanish, I can translate, I can dress how I want and be dumb. Literally, in this picture, where I have a stuffed animal on my head (*see figure 13*). But Upward Bound kind of got me close to a whole bunch of people. At one point, Upward Bound was like, 'Look, these are the people that are gonna be in the program. This is a family. We are a family.'

Figure 13. – Nick "being comfortable" and "being himself." Image blurred by the researcher for participant confidentiality.



For many participants similar to Nick, Upward Bound was a space that not only cultivated community among students, but also stressed the importance of finding support networks (*social capital*). The guidance and direction participants received from Upward Bound directors and staff in high school irrefutably impacted their trajectories once in college.

Mentorship

Every participant in this study indicated that their participation in this Upward Bound program helped improve their academic and social experiences in high school. Since the Upward Bound office was physically located in their high school, participants saw the program as a literal "safe space." Jerome said, "It was like yeah there was [Liberty High School], but Upward Bound was my main high school. Like being in the UB room was literally my favorite classroom. It was like home." Participating in Upward Bound was not only a place where students could feel safe and comfortable, but it felt like home. And arguably feeling at home in the Upward Bound program, made students' schooling feel more connected to their education (Museus et al., 2017; Pendergast et al., 2018). As David said, "It was like they made me feel at home in a foreign place." During the interview, David showed a photo of his Upward Bound family "just being wild and having fun… everything was just so genuine" (*see figure 14).*

Figure 14. – Upward Bound participants and TMs on their way to a field trip.

Participants argued that being in Upward Bound was a "safe space" for them to be their authentic selves, build community amongst their peers, and receive mentorship to aid their educational trajectories. Making their schooling feel like home, furthered students' *aspirational capital* and drive for success.

As all of these factors were important to student success, participants illustrated that the mentorship they received from Upward Bound affiliates was central to the development of their cultural awareness and *social capital*. Many scholars have highlighted the critical need for minoritized students to have academic mentors in addition to parent and family networks (Jones et al., 2018). For many of these participants, the Upward Bound directors, instructors, and TMs were not only mentors, but were seen as "family members." Amber talked about how she valued the mentorship from Upward Bound staff, and how it was influential on her overall well-being,

> I would have to really say that Upward Bound pushed me... I have a learning disorder so I wanted to give up so many times because I felt dumb and couldn't understand what was going on in school sometimes. It was like a safety net, almost. Yes, yes. Even now, I can still go there and be like, 'I need help with this, or I need help with that.' We all connected... We would talk about stuff that happened outside of school, and we grew our relationships, so it made us a certain way. I can talk to them about why I'm stressing about school, as if I'm at home with my family.

Amber shared that the staff of the Upward Bound program helped her emotionally, socially, and academically. When she was unmotivated or academically insecure, the Upward Bound staff supported and encouraged her. Amber views the Upward Bound community as a family and appreciates how candid she can be around them.

Other participants also shared that they were more likely to achieve their educational goals due to the mentorship they received prior to college. Lloyd recalled how influential the Upward Bound staff was in helping him graduate from high school,

> Yeah, they definitely helped me graduate. Like, they had tutors and stuff. They definitely helped me. I mean I also think that some of it was mostly me having my good work ethic, but they were always definitely there. They always had the computer ready if you needed to print. If you needed tutors, they always had them. Somewhere to just chill and socialize, they were there. I know they definitely helped people, especially if you were behind in stuff.

Participants like Lloyd truly appreciated having consistent academic, social, and emotional support. As he acknowledges his ambitious worth ethic, he appreciates how accessible the Upward Bound staff was in high school, and the various resources they provided. He continued to talk about the staff's more hands-on approach with mentorship and academic success.

> I never was, but if you had a low—actually, no, I think I had the medium once—if you had a low grade, or you're not showing up to classes, they'll know. They'll find out, and they'll call you down, right during the day, and they'll tell you, 'What's going on? We're going to make you come here almost every day after school. We're going to call your parents and make sure you get your work done.'

This type of proactive mentoring (also known as intrusive mentoring) style, was critical for these students. This type of hands-on approach is often used with minoritized students, which encourages both mentees and mentors to be assertive in asking for and offering help (Jones et al., 2018). This style of mentorship also enhanced participants' *navigational capital* and *social capital*, which encouraged students to be more proactive in navigating challenges they

experience through their academic trajectories. It also strengthened their *social capital* by providing a support network even after students graduated.

Aspen also talked about the program's proactive membership style, "Yeah, you didn't have a choice, like I said, [the program staff members] did not play. So, they were on you grade-wise. If they saw you slip in the slightest, they called you down, and made sure you got yourself together. I kinda keep this same mentality about my grades now (*laughs*)." Often this type of advising and mentorship helps students rectify problems before they evolve into bigger issues. For these students, this type of hands-on approach helped them achieve academically and enhanced their preparation and transition to college. This type of mentorship style represents the perfect conduit between developing relationships and building trust with students (Avery et al., 2014). Xavier also talked about the importance of this mentorship style and acknowledged how the Upward Bound staff is always there for him, "I know that I have them as well, and they always check up on me, sometimes to see how I'm doing and stuff like that. So I knew that if I needed help or whatever, that they were really going to help me out on everything I need." For many participants, their mentorship with Upward Bound staff existed on a continuum that varied from informal/short-term to formal/long-term mentorship.

Sustaining relationships with Upward Bound staff, instructors, and TMs was rooted in their *social capital*; whereas, students still maintained these social networks while in college. Sarah also talked about the importance of sustaining social networks,

> I don't know, building relationships was important and memorable too. Yeah, and making connections with TMs there, and I still talking to some of the TMs too. I don't really talk to them on a daily basis, but I follow some of them on social media and we

> communicate there. So I see what they're doing and stuff. It’s nice to have that network still.

Even if Sarah only engages with her networks via social media, her *social capital* allows her to remain connected with her mentors. Her interactions with TMs are useful in navigating the college sector due to their experiences and guidance. The support she received via social media aided her transition into college, which factored into the development of her *social capital.* Freddie also talked about the importance of sustaining his relationships with TMs while in college,

> Like, these tutor-mentors are college students. So I would talk to them and ask them questions about college. And I guess it was pretty cool to be able to interact with college students every day. I would ask them, ‘What's college like? What's it like having a roommate, you don't know? Stuff like that. I feel like socially it helped. Some of the TMs, the mentors would give me their numbers and be like, ‘Oh reach out to me if you ever need anything.’ So I still talk to them about stuff, so I’m able to depend on them.

Upward Bound staff, instructors, and TMs helped form participants’ resources and networks, or *social capital.* For participants like Freddie, the TMs served as accessible mentors that provided thoughtful insight even after the program formally “ended.” Even on their current college campuses, participants used their *social capital* to access their extensive network when needed.

Participants shared that they were able to receive accurate information and thoughtful advice from these sustained relationships and networks. Several participants talked about the importance of developing relationships with Upward Bound staff, instructors and TMs because they were supportive, reassuring, and relatable. Amber also shared how the mentorship she has received is influential of her *social capital*, which she still values and utilizes even while in

college. Amber shared a story of how she has always remained connected to her Upward Bound family and the importance of social networks,

> When I first met [Upward Bound director], he explained how it was gonna help me out. How if I needed…like if I wanted another family they're there. He was all like, 'We're family, we're big on this. We'll help you get there. We're not just here for college. We're here for other things, for tutoring, for if you need somebody to talk to.' They was really there. They was always understanding, and like have always been there. Like even from the beginning... (*drifts in thought*). Yeah, they were really, they were probably the reason why I did graduate, to be completely honest. Still to this... I still keep in contact with them. I was just talking to [Upward Bound program director], I think a few weeks ago. Like even when I was transferring from [local community college] to here, they helped me with my transfer credits and advisors and stuff. I still talk use them. They taught me the importance of asking for help and finding like networks to help.

The Upward Bound directors were not only helpful during Amber's high school to college transition, but also her transition from community college to four-year women's college. Amber contends that this program helped her attain a high school diploma (*aspirational capital*), and guided her college choices. As this was the third school Amber had enrolled in—she attended two community colleges before attending her four-year women's college—this program helped her find her best fit, even if it took longer than other participants. This program's support was not just about getting students to college, but finding a college that best suits their needs in order to persist.

This program also instilled the importance of utilizing her *social capital,* to find academic and social networks that can enhance her transition and persistence experiences. She continued to say,

> At [four-year women's college], I think they're more hands-on with you and they care... like they show that they care more. You miss a class, somebody in your classroom is telling you, 'This is what we did, this is what you need to do.' You miss a class, your teachers are calling you or texting you or emailing you. I think it's more of a family at [four-year women's college] like it was in UB.

Having hands-on mentoring and support was critical to Amber's transition and persistence. Without having a mentoring model similar to the one implemented in her Upward Bound program, she would not be as prosperous. Amber developed the skills to search for resources to ask for help (*social capital*), and reach out to her Upward Bound mentors in time of need.

Based on participants' stories, this Upward Bound provided a great support system for students to transition in college, and to find social networks once enrolled. Participants and retention literature argue that minoritized students are more academically and socially successful in college if they have some mentorship and guidance (Jones et al., 2018). Upward Bound's proactive mentoring style promoted students' sense of well-being by challenging the negative opinions they may have of themselves, and demonstrating the importance of creating and sustaining relationships. Irrefutably, the mentoring received from Upward Bound affiliates aided students' successful transition and persistence through college.

Community in Upward Bound

The second component of understanding the impact of community on participants' experiences, is rooted in the Upward Bound program's intentionality of fostering community

among participants. Within this program, students were taught the importance of developing and sustaining networks in their personal, professional, and academic lives. This mechanism, or *social capital,* was used within students' transition and persistence through college. As Tyrique said, "UB taught me that it was important to network, not just with important people (*laughs*), but with everyone. You never know who you might need." Tyrique's development of *social capital* is fostered through the mentorship he received from participating in the program. Darwin also felt this same sentiment and said, "I feel like we all really felt connected. Even the people you just didn't like necessarily, we were still somewhat connected, 'cause we would really just try to help each other in all ways." Nicole furthered this concept by saying, "Socially, yeah, like I learned the importance of networking. I would even say, with more people that I didn't expect to be friends with." Participants learned the importance of developing networks with people across various social circles. This *social capital* was used to help students build relationships with others, while navigating the high school to college pipeline (Strayhorn, 2010). Thus, one of the major tenets of this Upward Bound program was the development of community and networks amongst peers.

Even though these students would graduate high school and attend institutions across the New England area, this Upward Bound program was deliberate in fostering participants' *social capital* by instilling the importance of networks no matter where they were. Elle talked about this concept, "Because all of us were not going to the same school. We were separating. But the thing that still holds us together is Upward Bound. And [Upward Bound instructors] were like, 'Wherever you go, you're still part of the UB family.' So that was cool." This establishment of community was fundamental to student success. Celeste also talked about the importance of Upward Bound instilling aspects of *social capital* and community. She said,

> Basically, from being in Upward Bound, I would say, 'you know how they say no man is an island?' That's basically what I got from there, because Upward Bound it's like a family setup. Once you're in the family, you're in the family for life. Those people are the people that they're always there for you or whatever.

Celeste and Elle share that this Upward Bound program reinforced the importance of community. She showed a group picture of her and other participants and said, "she appreciates having them in my life, no matter what school we're at" (*see figure 15*).

Figure 15. – Celeste and other Upward Bound participants and TMs.

For these participants, it wasn't just about being friends with people in high school, but cultivating a network of peers and resources to further develop their *social capital.* As aforementioned, these peer networks were helpful in their transition and persistence in college. This program continually reinforced the importance of sustaining relationships with people on and off campus. Dana also talked about how she was able to develop long-lasting relationships with her peers, "Peer networks… that's one thing that I got out of Upward Bound, 'cause when

we graduated, I still have those friends. We became outside-of-school friends. I was like, 'You're my friend, we're gonna stay friends'."

For these participants, it was important to contextualize the impact of community development, and how it affected their experiences in high school and college. Aspen talks about the program's intentionality about cultivating community. When I asked her what her biggest takeaway from the program was, she said,

> How important a sense of community is. In the beginning of the summer, you just walk in with your couple of friends or whatever, and you're like looking around at people that you don't know. But every summer, everyone was a family. So that sense of community was very important. Because you can't do things alone... It takes a village to do basically anything. So without a community, what are you...You can't get stuff done on your own, you need people to help you. You can't be stuck in your ways, type thing, so...Yeah, community is very important.

The notion of community as a mechanism for survival was a theme across multiple stories. This program was deliberate in creating community amongst peers and illustrating the importance of working together and asking for help. As Aspen alluded to the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child," this Upward Bound program was a foundational element of their village.

Developing Communities of Color on Campus

Participating in this Upward Bound program taught students the value of developing and sustaining various networks and resources during their transition into college. Many students revealed that participating in a program with other students of Color was a factor that increased their levels of comfort and development of a community. Freddie said, "Yeah, because I was surrounded by Black people in Upward Bound. I was surrounded by Hispanics. So even in

college, I kinda tried to keep the same group." For many participants and other students of Color, having peers of Color increased their sense of belonging, persistence, and institutional connection (Kinney-Walker, 2016). Many students of Color stick together in order to decrease racial stigma and vulnerability towards stereotypes, and further gain validation and develop culturally affirming identities (Chan, 2017). Amber said, "Yeah, there's not a lot of people my color. But we all stick together." For most participants being with their peers of Color was more "comfortable and peaceful." As Jerome continued to say, "It's always just a lot being with them [white people] (*laughs*). They're just so much. I just feel more comfortable with what I know." For Jerome and other students forming a community of similar-race peers enhanced their transition and persistence in college.

Alex furthered this sentiment saying, "I literally don't interact with anyone unless they're a part of my race. And that sounds weird, but like, I don't know, I feel more comfortable being social or on people that are familiar with. So it's just comforting." For many students, being around racially homogenous groups made them feel more comfortable amid an environment that maintained oppression and discrimination. As demonstrated by participant narratives and previous scholarship, students of Color are less likely to feel a sense of belonging on a college campus than their white peers (Knaggs et al., 2015). Tyrique also talked about the positive correlation between sense of belonging and student of Color engagement, "It's important to find your crew. That's how you last through all the bullshit," as he showed a picture of him and his "colored friends…literally" on campus (*see figure 16*). Within Tyrique's narrative, he talked about how he purposefully sought a crew of Black and Latinx students because he "related more to them."

Figure 16. – Tyrique and his friends of Color after participating in their universities' "color run." Image blurred by the researcher for participant confidentiality.

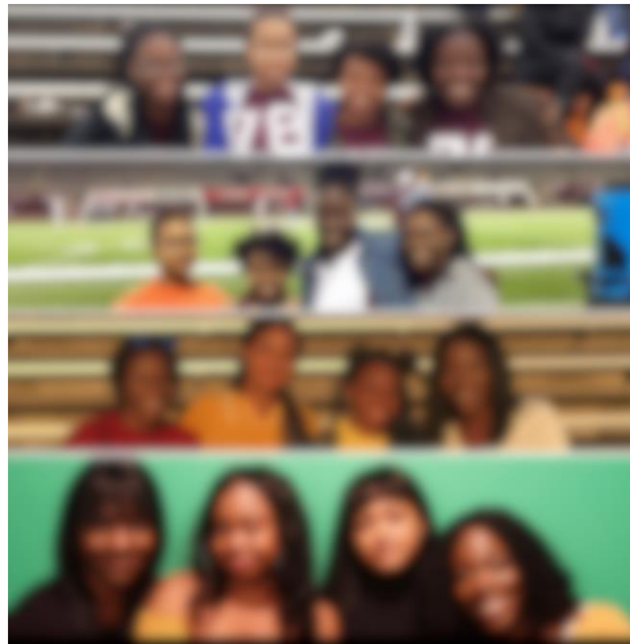
Surrounded by an academic culture based on their white peers, many minoritized students are likely to feel as though they do not belong, nor attend campuses reflective of their social identities (Samuelson & Litzler, 2016). For these students, they used their *social capital* to find networks of peers, and their *navigational capital* to persist amidst oppression.

Being among similar-race peers was a salient theme among all of the participant narratives. As Dana said, "But I think the people that I surround myself with are like, are alike." For many students, regardless of background identities, this is the first time that they are interacting with people of different nationalities, religions, class backgrounds, races, ethnicities, etc. (Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012), and are adjusting to these different cultures and new environments. However, for Black and Latinx students staying within their same (or similar) racial group led to a more successful transition and persistence into college. Elle talks about how these elements were discussed within her Upward Bound program, and how she used her community networks as mechanisms for successful persistence. She recalled a conversation she had with the Upward Bound program director at the time, "It goes back to what [program director] said, 'owning your space and always finding an outlet of people that you can connect to, that you can always go to.

So that helped'." Now entering her third year, Elle talks about the importance of forming a community in college, especially amongst those with similar racial and ethnic backgrounds. While sharing her story of community, she shows a photo of her roommates (*see figure 17),*

> I don't know. It's like when I'm around them, it's like immediate support from them. They're able to understand a few things about the culture that other people wouldn't understand if they were not raised in a Haitian household. So yeah. We need to be part of the united front. It's better to be united than divided, so...yeah. That was important.

Figure 17. – Elle with her Haitian friends in their first through fourth year of college. Image blurred by the researcher for participant confidentiality.



This community of same-race peers has helped Elle persist through college. She alludes to the importance of being a "united front" with her friends of Color during antagonistic events on campus, illustrating *navigational* and *resistant capital*. By finding her community of Haitian women (*social capital*), she feels more comfortable on her campus—thus, aiding her persistence.

Lloyd also shared a similar sentiment about finding community with other students of Color, and how it impacted his college experiences. He said,

> We're all kind of in the same kind of boat, me and my friends. I don't know if that was like, I don't think that was intentional. I think it just subconsciously happened (*chuckles*). I definitely feel more comfortable around people of Color, especially coming from [home town]. It was mostly just people of Color. [In college] it's like, opposite, so I try to look, I guess, for more people of Color.

Even though Lloyd may not "intentionally" seek out people of Color during his initial transition into college, he does appreciate how comfortable he is with being around people of similar backgrounds. Noting that his home town was a predominantly Latinx environment, he values his peers' similarities. Often the social relationships of all people are based on perceived similarities. Background traits such as religion, education, income, and geographic location are highly correlated with race (Samuelson & Litzler, 2016), thus influencing Lloyd to cultivate community with people that reminded him of his hometown. Celeste also describes how her same-race peer group has positively impacted her retention on campus.

> I feel like being at [four-year land-grant institution], I found my community, so I'm just kind of associating with people like me. I honestly don't think there's anything wrong with that, but at the same time, it doesn't mean that I don't associate with people outside of what I identify with at the same time. If you look at the way we're separated, we're separated by race. I don't care what they say, we're definitely separated by race, like the majority. I mean you'll find like people from different races in all the different areas on campus, but the majority you can definitely tell that we're separated in some way. I mean, I like it because it's comfortable, I guess.

Celeste struggles with wanting to broaden her friend social network to be more inclusive, but appreciates how comfortable she is with people of the same race. Celeste also brought up the

physicality of segregation that exists on campus. For her it is two-fold, being segregated on campus has increased her sense of belonging, but she also argues that this is not the best mechanism to increase diversity or improve campus climate (Marshall, 2002).

Other students shared the same sentiment as Celeste and talked about the importance of ethnic enclaves, and how it impacted their sense of belonging and persistence through college. Nicole also spoke about the physical segregation that happens on her campus. For her, these communities of students of Color make it “easier to get through school.” She shares her story,

> Especially in the DC, which is the dining commons. What I notice is that a lot of us, minorities, we sit in this one spot, all the time. And if not, we're in tiny groups all around. Like you wouldn't see a mix of all of us at once. I know for us minorities, I think it's easier to clique on to each other, just because we can relate. I think it's just the easiest way to get through school, or the day itself. I've tried to become friends with white people, but I think that because of my history. And because I feel like sometimes, they don't know how to talk to me or say things in the right way... I try to educate, but it gets to the point where it feels like I'm forcing myself to be in a situation where I'm not comfortable. And why be friends with someone that doesn't understand who you are? I think that being Latina on this campus is difficult. I think for white people, obviously, it's more comfortable for them.

Nicole contextualizes the mechanisms she uses to persist through her PWI. She, like Celeste, acknowledged the physical segregation between students of Color and white students. She asserts that students of Color clique together because they find it easier to relate. For many students of Color, staying with same-race peers or other marginalized groups, made them feel like they belonged on their campuses, thus leading to higher levels of persistence (Booker, 2016;

Kinney-Walker, 2016; Samuelson & Litzler, 2016). Nicole also talked about the interracial dialogues she had with her white peers, and their perceived lack of cultural competency. For her, it is easier to be with people that innately understood how she navigated the world, rather than struggle trying to explain it. Irrefutably, being around those of similar identities helped participants feel accepted and welcome. These participants are surviving even amidst oppression and discrimination on campus, demonstrating their *resistance* and *navigational capital*. Moreover, their *navigational capital* is molded by their ability to further develop their *social capital* and community on campus.

Cultural Organizations and Centers. As demonstrated in literature and with participants, many students of Color feel an array of cultural acceptance issues at their institutions (Museus & Harris, 2010). Many students felt more “comfortable” with their same-race peers, which positioned them to gravitate towards one another. For many participants joining cultural groups and engaging with cultural centers on campus, played a meaningful role in their college transition and persistence. Students recognized the importance of sustaining this ethnic and racial community, thus increasing their networks and *social capital*. Aspen demonstrated how the formation of a community can be used as a navigational tool. She talked about how her Haitian community on campus has aided her persistence and cultural development,

> Well, being Haitian didn't change when I got to campus. I still, if people ask me, I still say I'm Haitian. I was never embarrassed when I got here to say that, even though people thought we were a “shit-hole” country and all that (*hearty laugh*). And then being in the cultural groups and everyone is just lifting up where they come from. The Nigerians on campus are very proud people, they're very proud of their culture. And I like that. I like

> seeing people from the African diaspora just lift up their ethnicities, 'cause there's a time when none of us wanted to say, ‘Oh, we're from this country, that country.’ 'Cause being Black wasn't cool, but like I said about being Haitian. Being around people of Color just helped me stand firm in my identity, I guess. It made me feel like, ‘I can do this’.

Aspen talked about how her participation in these cultural groups on campus furthered her connection and cultural pride in her Haitian heritage. When sharing her story, she talked about the importance of remaining connected to her ethnic identity, as it has increased her sense of connection and persistence. Aspen showed a picture of the “popular Haitians” on campus (*see figure 18*), which included her and her two best friends. She recalled a time when she felt that Black people were not as proud of their ethnic identities; arguably due to the pervasiveness of white supremacy (White, 2016). However, she and other ethnic students of Color are proud of their *cultural capital* and wealth. She views these community networks and *social capital* as assets that increase her sense of belonging. Aspen shared that she would not have sought out these community networks without the guidance of her Upward Bound program. As she and her Upward Bound peers were surrounded and supported by students of Color in high school, they attempted to replicate these models on their college campus.

Figure 18. – Aspen with some of her friends in the Haitian community. Image blurred by the researcher for participant confidentiality.

Anita also talked about the importance of campus organizations and multicultural spaces. Currently, one of Anita's three jobs is working in the Black cultural center on campus. She said that "this is one of my favorite jobs because I get to work with people like me." She continued her narrative saying,

> Well, at the [Black cultural center] a lot of RSOs [registered student organizations] use our space for their meetings, so I'm pretty sure I've hosted maybe all of the culture RSOs in the [Black cultural center] since working there. So I see their meetings, and I know who they are, and they know who I am 'cause they always have to check in with me and all that. I like working here because I just feel like I belong. I mean 'cause, you're definitely feeling like you're an oddball in class or...A lot of classes, there's not a lot of Black people in them. So if I know people of Color are in my class, we all sit together. We just look like the oddballs out. Like a cluster or even when we're not together, we just look like an oddball over here, an oddball over there. Just feel like you're out of place.

Anita talked about how students of Color often feel aspects of isolation and segregation on campus. She also talked about how students seek refuge with each other, by sitting together in class. However, working in the multicultural center "is one of [her] best college experiences,"

and has made her feel less like an “oddball.” She and other participants contend that participating in RSOs and visiting the Black culture center, were associated with higher levels of ethnic identity awareness, ethnic activism, sense of ethnic victimization, and commitment to promoting racial understanding (Knaggs et al., 2015; Wilkins-Yel et al., 2018). When I asked Anita about some of her memorable experiences on campus, she showed a picture of a paint-night event she hosted for the Black cultural center (*see figure 19*). Every positive experienced Anita shared about her community, was rooted in her experiences within the Black cultural center and the culturally based organizations. Anita not only sought community for her own transitional and persistence experiences, but facilitated community development amongst her same-race peers.

Figure 19. – “Paint night” in the Black culture center.

For many students, these cultural centers provided a space for students to “have fun and be themselves.” This was a critical tool for students’ persistence as they often felt unwelcomed

or ostracized on their campuses. These spaces provided a place of "sanity" as Lloyd described. He talks about his experience with the multicultural center on campus,

> Here it's like, opposite than [hometown and high school]. So I try to look, I guess, for more people of Color. I like the cultural place. I went there a lot, and it was like a bunch of Hispanics from everywhere around the world and stuff. Yeah, it was cool there. I know they did some presentations and stuff about Southern America, and the Caribbean. I definitely liked going there. It was definitely a good time. They had this one event where they were playing Spanish music, and dominoes, and had pizza, and people were dancing. Yeah, so like, yeah, it was definitely a good experience, like place to go.

Having a community to return to and feel comfortable with, was integral to Lloyd's sense of belonging on campus. Thus, positively affecting his success and persistence at his institution. Consistent with the literature, forming this community provided a space for Lloyd and other participants to empathize with each other's experiences, and build a space for minoritized ethnic and racial success while at a PWI (Moore & Bell, 2017).

Sarah also talked about the importance of finding community among her same-race peers on campus,

> Because there are very few Black faces on campus, you gotta find people. And I figured I'd be able to meet more of them [Black students], if I went to the meetings, because I'm comfortable around my own kind, I guess. I don't know, I think I just fit in more.

When she first came to her campus, she found community by joining a #BlackGirlMagic group on campus. She said that this space allowed her to "talk about all the crazy shit that happened on campus," particularly during the periods of violence and hate crimes occurring on her campus. Sarah used her *social capital* to find a community to help her persist through these intense

moments; thus, illustrating her *navigational capital* and reinforcing *cultural capital*. For many students of Color, these self-segregated spaces allowed them to vocalize their concerns with peers feeling the same oppression. She continued to say, “we always had fun. I miss that community. They were always there for me. Like I guess its cliché, but you really need people. It really takes a village” (*see figure 20*).

Figure 20. – Sarah and her friends in the #BlackGirlMagic group.

Xavier also talked about how his connection with his Latinx peers aided his persistence in college,

> I don't want to really say it like that, but there was a lot of white people here, and there's not a lot of people of Color or Hispanics or anything like that. So when I first got here, I was like, ‘Oh my God.’ And then I noticed that there was a faculty member who said that they have a group for Hispanics and Blacks, it's like a connected type of thing. And they had a ‘Men in Black’ dinner, and we got invited there. It made me feel better because I'm not the only one who knows Spanish here. There's like this ALANA group. They try to

bring culture here (*chuckles*). So, they have dances and stuff like that. And music, cultural music. And then they have food. So, sometimes, they have some Hispanic food, Jamaican food. They'd have mixed foods. And I'm like, 'Oh my God.' Because here, there's not a lot of cultural food. There was even a day where you bring a flag or something like that, and people will bring the flag that represents them, and we'd just walk around campus, and people will be like, 'Oh my God,' you're from Australia, you're Puerto Rican, you're Mexican, you're this?'

When Xavier first transferred from high school to college, he was stunned to see the lack of diversity. Even though Upward Bound provided him exposure and college predisposition, witnessing the lack of diversity was a still a culture shock. For these participants, both informal and formal social ties to their peers of Color increased their likelihood of positively adjusting to the first year of college and returning for their second year (Fischer, 2007). Now as a sophomore, finishing his fourth semester of college, he attributes his successful transition and persistence to his community of peers of Color and the support of the ALANA group. Participating with this group also "made [him] feel better," because it was a place that celebrated his Latinx culture with food, language, music, and conversation. He appreciates not only learning and experiencing the customs of his same-race peers, but also those of other minoritized students.

Section Summary

For all of the participants in the study, having participated in the Upward Bound program impacted their academic and social integration into college. Students talked about the importance of cultivating a network of peers in order to successfully persist at their universities. Participants indicated that the mentorship they received from the Upward Bound staff, instructors and TMs provided them a reciprocal relationship that further cultivated their *navigational*, *social*,

aspirational and *cultural capital*. This formation of capital started when students were in high school, in which participants felt that the Upward Bound program was a “second family” and “safe space.” Students appreciated having approachable, supportive and accessible mentors throughout their high school career. For many participants engaging with TMs, and other near-peer mentors concretized their aspirations for going to college. Having this type of mentorship with instructors and TMs made college seem more tangible. The Upward Bound program directors intentionally empowered students to resist oppressive structures and promoted students’ self-awareness and access to higher education. The mentorship and *social capital* students received helped them feel less alienated and increased their resiliency in overcoming difficult challenges at their PWIs. All of these factors aided participants’ successful transition and persistence through college.

Community was also a salient aspect among all of the participants’ narratives, and most claimed that these networks were essential to their success. Joining multicultural organizations and participating in activities within their cultural centers, made students feel more comfortable, secure, and valued on their predominantly white campuses. By building this community, students were able to establish a safe space on campus where there could express their opinions, concerns, and values (Harwood, Mendenhall, Lee, Riopelle, & Huntt, 2018). This community also allows them to share similar experiences about microaggressions and otherwise alienating and discriminatory instances that happen to students of Color at PWIs (Moore & Bell, 2017). Within students’ ethnic enclaves and cultural centers, students felt that they were finally welcomed on campus, and that their culture was represented and validated in their academic spaces. Using their *social capital* to form these networks and their *navigational capital* to persist amid oppression, these students disrupted and challenged white hegemonic educational spaces.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study examined narratives of 20 first-generation, Black and Latinx, Upward Bound alumni, who successfully transitioned and persisted through college. Through artifact-photo elicited interviews, participants shared details of their various lived experiences. This final chapter provides an interpretation of the themes that emerged from participant narratives, as they related to perspectives of Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) model and other extant literature. This chapter will also discuss implications for policies and practices for minoritized students, college campuses, and Upward Bound programs. I conclude the chapter addressing potential limitations that existed within the study, and future research ideas.

Through the analyzation of narrative inquiry, participants' stories answered the following research questions:

> (1) How do first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx Upward Bound college students use their cultural wealth within their transition and persistence through college?
>
> (2) How do first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx students perceive the role Upward Bound in preparing them for college?

My study examined how these students used their cultural wealth and identities to transition from high school, and persist through postsecondary education. These Upward Bound alumni spoke to how they used their cultural wealth, comprised of their (1) Familial Influence and (2) Resistance, to transition and persist through college. Participants also illustrated that Upward Bound prepared them for college, by talking about the importance of forming (1) Community and the development of their (2) College and Culture Predisposition.

Often when assessing the success of minoritized students, deficit models place the weight of low achievement on students' cultural identities (Chan, 2017; Piña-Watson et al., 2017); thus, blaming students for their lack of success (Valencia, 2010). However, within this dissertation, I examined how students used their cultural identities as mechanisms for their successful transition and persistence. In unpacking my four findings in Chapter Four, three key takeaways bring these findings together, which will be discussed in this chapter: (1) importance of family, the (2) development of cultural college knowledge, and participants' (3) resistance strategies. As all six forms of cultural capital were discussed within this study, students often navigated their postsecondary spaces using more than one. This dissertation interprets the development of the CCW model for a more holistic examination. As most higher education studies use the CCW model to examine college preparation and selection processes (Liou, Antrop-Gonzalez, & Cooper, 2009; Perez & McDonough, 2008), this dissertation used the CCW model as a framework to assess student transition and persistence. While this asset-based model is helpful for higher education research, very few pre-college studies employ a community cultural wealth focus—particularly in relation to understanding the persistence of first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx students. Examining student persistence using an asset-based model will offer scholars, educators, and practitioners a better understanding of how to support minoritized students at the collegiate level.

Importance of Family

In contrast with deficit-based literature that argues that parents of Color do not care about their students' education, and are less engaged in their child's academic life (Carey, 2016; Jun, & Colyar, 2002), many students within this dissertation argued that their familial networks were foundational to their successful transition and persistence. Students' stories and photos add to the

literature surrounding the assessment of family engagement within higher education. This dissertation found that students' connections with their families, whether positive or negative, impacted the ways they successfully persisted. While some students appreciated hearing the stories of their families' hardships, others viewed their families' lack of degree attainment as "unambitious" and "lazy." For these students, seeing their families struggle did not reinforce a sense of gratitude like it did with other participants, but more so disdain. However, I think it is necessary to further contextualize how these feelings of contempt for their families' lack of accomplishments, is still familial capital.

As familial capital is traditionally defined to include the knowledge about one's culture through the development of family members, I argue that the *familial capital* tenet of Yosso's CCW model should be expanded to include all lessons and attributes of students' familial backgrounds—even those that are not deemed as traditional assets. Even though students contended that they did not want to be like their families, they still utilized their familial experiences to achieve their academic and professional goals. I argue that feeling so much disdain and contempt towards their family's lack of achievement, was just as motivational as students feeling empowered by their family's diligent work ethic. Particularly as all of the participants argued that seeing their parents struggle made them motivated about going to college, and inspired them to achieve.

I challenge the idea that *familial capital* and family support will look the same for all students. Whereas, we must include all aspects of students' familial histories. This dissertation provides persistence literature a more holistic and culturally-affirming lens, to situate the engagement of families of Color as assets to their student's success. Even if society (and some students) do not contextualize the barriers associated with the lack of social mobility for some

parents of Color, I argue that their narratives impacted the motivation for students' success amid adversity. Participants and minoritized students more broadly observe and experience familial histories and struggles which inform their cultural knowledge and familial capital. Thus, students enacted these forms of capital to overcome challenges in order to pursue degree attainment, and ultimately have a better life than their parents. However, it is import to contextualize further why these students did not value their parents' struggle. As many of these students acknowledged the barriers in society that exist for people of Color (i.e., racism, classism, language, housing, employment discrimination, healthcare disparities, prejudices in the criminal justice system) —including their parents—they still ascribed to the hegemonic beliefs about what "success" looks like in society. Whereas, students attempted to dismantle and debunk stereotypes about themselves, but still employed these dominant values towards their parents' lack of achievement. Unfortunately, these students failed to see the direct connection between access and mobility (e.g., educational attainment and access to jobs), even though they were directly impacted by it. I contend that these students are "critical conformists" (or have a conformist resistance style), where they challenge and acknowledge the disparities that happen to society, but still value these oppressive societal beliefs and dominant attitudes.

Familial Messaging

Building on *familial capital*, I contend that the reaffirming messages students received from their families is what made them care and remain dedicated to their academic studies. According to students' stories, parents and family members shared the value of education as an equalizer for social mobility. As most students first heard about college from their families at home, I and other scholars, argue the importance of parental and family influence in stimulating initial collegiate aspirations and *aspirational capital* (Marquez-Kiyama et al., 2015; Sy &

Romero, 2008). For these students, family messages also reinforced their *resistance, navigational, familial, capital.* Students alluding to multiple types of capital reflect the interactive nature of the CCW model, and the tendency for different types of capital to be used in conjunction with one another (Yosso, 2005). Family messages of academic encouragement—characterized by communicating expectations for achievement, discussing school matters and learning strategies, and preparing for the future—helped improve the educational desire and degree attainment for participants. This research demonstrated that support and encouragement from parents are associated with greater educational aspirations and persistence, for students of Color at the college level. And from a Community Cultural Wealth perspective, this furthered students' *aspirational capital,* which was a mechanism used to support their success at their PWIs. This study furthers persistence literature, by contextualizing the importance of motivation for students of Color. Maintaining these hopes and dreams (*aspirational capital*) of degree attainment, regardless of uncertain barriers, served as effective motivation for persistence (Huber, 2009).

Multilingual students also received other forms of familial messaging which positively impacted their transition and persistence, and further developed their *linguistic capital.* Within this dissertation, being multilingual was not just the ability to speak non-English languages (i.e., Spanish, French, Creole), but more inclusive of dialects like Ebonics, Patois, Spanglish, and other forms of cultural slang. Their ability to possess multiple languages and communication skills helped them navigate various educational environments. Expanding on linguistic literature, participants illustrated that their languages expressed identity and were rooted in their cultures (Baker, 2006; Schaafsma, & Vinz, 2011). These students particularly used this *linguistic capital* on campus when they needed the motivation to continue persisting. For example, remembering

proverbs or *dichos* (advice) from their families were tools used when they needed encouragement or encountered challenges. These stories passed down, captured the practical wisdom that informed participants' abilities to make decisions and meaning of life situations. For participants sustaining their multilingual tongues while traversing hegemonic-language structures, illustrated their *resistance* and *linguistic capital.* Their languages and dialects were tools that allowed them to remain rooted in their past ancestors, while sustaining their identity for future generations. As bilingual education policies frame learning and speaking non-English languages as a detriment in the context of schools, this study advocates for implementing a CCW lens to adequately assess the strengths multilingual students bring to their educational experiences.

Upward Bound as Family

When students shared narratives and photos of their experiences in Upward Bound, the word "family" was frequently used to describe the bond they had with Upward Bound peers, directors, instructors, and TMs. These relationships were influential on students' success in high school because they provided various social networks and groups when needing to navigate difficult situations (Yosso, 2000; 2005). Their *social capital* was further developed by Upward Bound instructors relaying the importance of finding people to connect with. Therefore, while in college, students of Color used their peers and other social contacts to gain access to college and other social institutions (Yosso, 2005).

A significant tenet of understanding the development of participants’ conceptualization of familial support, stemmed from the cultivation of relationships they had with Upward Bound staff. For these students of Color, having a mentor was positively correlated to their academic success and postsecondary persistence. Adding to the existent retention literature, these positive

interactions and relationships with educators resulted in an increased sense of belonging, community and improved self-worth (Galbraith & James, 2004; Nora & Crisp 2008). For example, the mentoring students received in high school made them feel that they could “be themselves” in and out of the classroom. Students gave examples of how Upward Bound staff would be the first people they would share their joyous life and academic moments with (i.e., forming a new romantic relationship, getting accepted into college, or starting a job); but also sought after their support in moments of crisis (i.e., homelessness, food insecurity, mental health issues). For many participants, this Upward Bound program was a “second family” that provided social and academic support (Gullatt & Jun, 2003; Sams-McPhaul, 2018) through a close personal relationship (Avery et al., 2014; Johnson, 2016). Program directors helped decrease the impact of mitigating internal and external forces that impeded students’ persistence and success. This authentic reciprocal relationship students had with Upward Bound directors was often described as “tough love.” Upward Bound directors implemented a more proactive (or intrusive) mentoring style, which was a holistic approach to addressing students’ complex needs (Williams, Burnett, Carroll & Harris, 2018). This intrusive style of mentoring was positively associated with the transitional success students had in college, because they addressed students’ problems before they worsened.

These findings furthered research illustrating the positive effect proactive mentoring has on students of Color (Williams et al., 2018). Yet a significant factor that impacted students’ transition and persistence in college was the lack of hands-on support. These Upward Bound alumni had grown accustomed to having mentors help guide them in moments of adversity. However, when left without these relationships, particularly in the midst of oppressive educational spaces, students felt less academically and socially supported. Even if students had

some sort of academic advisor or were involved in a formal mentoring program, it did not provide the consistent hands-on mentoring they previously received.

As participants adapted their navigational tactics when realizing that they did not have their "second family" on campus, they still yearned and sought out that proactive approach. For example, after the interviews, several students asked if they could remain in touch with me about “school stuff.” Even after my three-hour interview with Sarah, we sat and created an academic plan for the rest of her semester. Participants’ acknowledgment of the lack of support they receive on campus also demonstrates their *navigational capital.* As someone in their social networks, who has served as a previous instructor, students were adamant about reaching out to me and asking for help in navigating their various academic experiences (*social capital*). While I argue that it is essential that students of Color receive the tools needed to navigate their colleges before college, students must also be supported once they enroll. Facilitating a continuous pipeline program will increase the likelihood of successful persistence. These mentoring relationships widen educational and career horizons, provide academic and social support, and overall aid student success and persistence (Sharpe, 2018).

Development of Cultural College Knowledge

As college knowledge typically surrounds the college-going process and academic requirements for admissions (Conley, 2005; Hooker & Brand, 2010), participants and I contend that college knowledge needs to be more holistic for minoritized students. For example, scholars have traditionally discussed college predisposition through the framework of Hossler and Gallagher’s (1987) three stage model for college choice. And within this dissertation, this concept of predisposition is used to examine how students’ college and cultural predisposition aided their transition and persistence into college. As each of these stages in Hossler and

Gallagher’s three-stage model is important to students' trajectories, this predisposition stage is incredibly impactful due to pre-college involvement (Johnson, 2019; Muhammad, 2007). In congruence with research on the predisposition stage, students' pre-college engagement is one of the most significant factors in successful transition and persistence into college (Contreras et al., 2018; Pitre, C. & Pitre, P., 2009). Students used their college knowledge and predisposition gained from their Upward Bound program, to understand the dualities of college experiences to navigate through educational institutions with dominant cultural norms. Therefore, in expanding the context of *navigational capital*—which refers to their skills and abilities to navigate social institutions, including educational spaces (Yosso, 2005)—students contended that their *navigational capital* was developed through their initial exposure to stereotypical college-life and the validation of their cultural identities.

Navigational capital was also clearly connected to students’ *resistant capital,* as these knowledges and skills were tactics students used to maneuver through educational institutions not intended for their success. For example, as a navigational strategy, students integrated their identities into their academic systems and challenged the traditional norms associated with hegemonic education structures. Students first experienced the validation of their identities through their participation in a culturally-affirming pre-college program, that provided context for academic and social integration. Collectively participants talked about how this program emphasized high expectations around being college ready. Despite their backgrounds and perceived barriers, these students were expected to perform like “traditional” college students. Experiencing year-round academic and social support provided students a pathway that made their navigation to college more manageable, than peers of similar backgrounds (Kinney-Walker, 2016; Sams-McPhaul, 2018). Participating in an immersive, collaborative, and transformative

residential experience made students excited about going to college, which developed their *aspirational capital*. Staying in the residence hall, eating in the dining halls, going to the recreation center, and participating in campus organizations (e.g., campus fine arts program, stand against racism event) made students feel more comfortable once they matriculated to their campuses.

However, this exposure was just one aspect of their college knowledge and predisposition. Students talked about how it important it was to learn more about their cultural identities before coming to campus, as it helped them navigate hegemonic white spaces. Upward Bound instructors, directors, and TMs shared experiences and tools that provided a broader view of the possible institutional challenges they may experience. As they all experienced forms of racism, discrimination, and microaggressions on their campuses, students indicated that this holistic exposure made them feel more comfortable because they "knew what to expect," and furthered their *cultural capital.* For these students, their culture and *cultural capital* was dynamic and continuously evolving. As historical literature defines *cultural capital* as the "skill and familiarities of cultural codes and practices of the dominant class" (Bourdieu, 1985; Robson & Sanders, 2009, p. 106), I used Yosso's (2005) CCW model and my participants' narratives to construct a more holistic definition. In contrast with the hegemonic views that sustain dominant cultures (i.e., white, middle-class, continuing-generation) within academia, participants embedded their cultural identities into aspects of their educational trajectories. Therefore their *cultural capital*—comprised of their knowledges, languages, skills, experiences, ethnic and racial pride—was used to persist through postsecondary education successfully. By integrating their identities into their academic systems, they challenged the traditional oppressive education structures; thus, reinforcing their *resistant capital.*

Accordingly, just as it was important for students to receive the academic provisions needed to succeed, having conversations surrounding the racialized implications of college was just as beneficial. Celebrating and having pride in their cultural heritage was an essential tenet in the development of their *cultural capital.* Participants contended that having a strong identification and pride in their cultural identities made them more academically and socially successful in college (Bannon, McKay, Chacko, Rodriguez & Cavaleri, 2009). Therefore, this dissertation study challenges educators, scholars, and policymakers to think critically about implementing culturally responsive teaching to support students' academic learning that is inclusive of all marginalities (Bean-Folkes, & Ellison, 2018; Piazza, Rao, & Protacio, 2015). Participant narratives provide researchers an understanding of how all minoritized students' *cultural capital* is linked to their ability to make beneficial educational decisions and navigate the higher education landscape (Pascarella et al., 2004). Understanding this landscape is essential if researchers, educators, and policymakers if they genuinely want to improve campus climates for all students.

Resistance Strategies

As students' cultural and college predisposition and interpretations of family engagement impacted their transition and persistence through college, these tactics were not enough to survive the discriminatory and oppressive experiences they felt on campus. In conjunction with these elements, students developed various resistance strategies to aid their persistence.

Community as a Form of Resistance

Irrefutably, participants' development of community on and off campus significantly impacted their transition and persistence through college. Stemming from the African proverb that "it takes a village to raise a child," every student talked about the importance of cultivating a

network to navigate their campuses successfully. Therefore, this current study contributed to this understanding of the sense of community by advancing knowledge about minoritized students' networks at PWIs. Participants' narratives expand the CCW definition of *social capital* (Yosso, 2005), by contending that their same-race and peers of Color were the social contacts utilized to gain access to college and other social institutions. Consequently, this research justifies students' formation of self-segregated racial enclaves. Self-segregation is often a natural manifestation of identifying with a community that students of Color at PWIs use for self-preservation (Tatum, 1999, 2017). Race-based organizations and (multi)cultural centers provide students of Color a "home away from home," where they could socialize and support other minoritized students (Patton & Hannon, 2008), and discuss issues of racism and discrimination that occurred on campus (Conerly, 2018; Gándara, 2005; Patton, 2005, 2010). These spaces allowed students to persist through adversity successfully, and created spaces for their cultures to be celebrated even amidst the pervasive whiteness on their campuses. As most college campuses are designed to be utopias that center white students, I contend that these cultural enclaves are not only necessary, but healthy for students of Color. Particularly as these spaces, provide students of Color across the nation, safety in times of hate crime and violence on their campuses, and opportunities to feel connected to their universities.

Additionally, this research furthers the scholarship that indicates that students of Color, who join race-based student groups, typically have the best educational outcomes (Alemán & Gaytán, 2017; Grier-Reed et al., 2008). Yet I do acknowledge that self-segregation should not be the only retention or persistence strategy implemented for these students. Notably, Gurin and colleagues (2004) found that students of Color with meaningful diverse peer experiences had a

greater interest in learning about racial and ethnic groups other than their own, and perceived less division among different racial and ethnic groups. It is imperative for students to have an extensive network of colleagues across various circles to receive all of the academic and social tools needed to persist. And based on societal hierarchies, students will need social networks outside of their similar-race peers.

However this dissertation study argues that culturally based spaces on campuses, aid students of Color to adapt to an environment that is typically isolating and discriminatory. Furthermore, I argue that scholars who contest the self-segregation of students do so from a deficit-based lens that views minoritized students' communities as problematic and unnecessary to their success. By the institutionalized nature of PWIs, students of Color are typically forced to interact with different races, particularly with white people. Whereas, white people often can navigate their campus without even knowing or engaging with marginalized races (Marshall, 2002). For example, a report by the Public Religion Research Institute showed that 75% of white students have entirely white social circles, while almost two-thirds of Black students engage solely with other Black people (Robert, Cox, Fisch-Friedman, & Vandermaas-Peeler, 2018). And just based on these statistics, if anyone is guilty of unconscious self-segregation, it is white people. My findings demonstrate that cultural organizations and centers create critical spaces for marginalized students, but do not demand racialized isolation.

If I put this in the context of my own life, I am the current president of the Graduate Students of Color Association and enjoy spending time with my community of similar-race peers. But like my participants, I also have opportunities to interact with people of different heritages through coursework, and other organizations and positions across campus. My participation and desire to spend time with these particular students do not demand nor restrict

my engagement with my white peers. This self-segregation reinforces student's *resistant capital* by advocating for methods to support student persistence in an environment not designed for their success. Notably, many of these ethnic enclaves provide students of Color at PWIs with networks to support each other, while working together towards dismantling institutionalized barriers. This social network (*social capital*) renders students of Color with additional tools needed to successful persist by reducing their exposure to discrimination, which occurs via limiting their social interactions to racially similar friends and creating spaces for them to belong. Furthermore, as there is research indicating the importance of increasing diverse student engagement and its positive correlation with belonging, retention, and persistence for <u>all</u> students (Kerby, 2015; Morales, 2014; Williams et al., 2018); I think it must be noted that the onus should not be placed upon students of Color to insert *their* identities into the lives of their white peers. If institutions truly value having a diverse student body, students should not be forced to have interracial social engagement. But instead, institutions should demonstrate the validity of all students' heritage while providing an option of cultural solitude.

Code-Switching as an Act of Resistance

Collectively students talked about the informal and formal "rules" of adhering to certain types of languages or "speaking right" (i.e., white) to navigate their college setting. As I contend that most people change their dialects depending on the audience, some students were unconscious of these behaviors, while others tried to remain "authentically" themselves. Yet, my findings situate code-switching as an act of resistance that enabled students of Color at PWIs to gain access to new dominant cultures. In contrast with literature that argues that code-switching or altering one's dialect while at a PWI negatively affects the academic and social performance of some students of Color (Stanford & Muhammad, 2018); many participants did not think code-

switching was inherently wrong, or that it negatively impacted their performance in college. Several students talked about how code-switching was used to make communicating between people faster and easier. Other students talked about how people of Color code-switch as a "survival mechanism" that allocated privileges for upward mobility on campus (i.e., within their campus jobs and student organizations). Participants indicated that they might alter their dialogues, but did so in a manner that did not undermine the authenticity of their racial identity. In fact, I argue that mastering a white value system was not only a useful tool in successfully persisting through college, but reinforced tenets of their *navigational* and *resistant capital.* Learning how to remain true to their racial and ethnic identities, while still employing (I even argue, exploiting) hegemonic cultures furthered their successful careers. This dissertation illustrated that code-switching for students of Color often implies some degree of proficiency in multiple vernaculars. Meaning that if others could not understand what they were trying to say in one dialect, they possess the various assets and capital necessary to switch to another.

Most notably, even if students acknowledged their code-switching, they contended that it should not be the default mechanism in trying to communicate with white people. Even though students used their code-switching as a tool to navigate their college settings, they were aware of the implicit damages that could happen. Whereas, many students were adamant about making sure they did not hide their identities, native tongues, dialects, or cultures when code-switching. As code-switching is often seen as a sign of linguistic deficiency (Martínez, 2013; Thomas, 2018), these students did it as a form of resistance and integration. However, on a broader level, we must challenge educational systems that reinforce the necessity to make students code-switch. As I contextualize the laziness and privilege that comes from white people not being able to "understand" the words of people of Color, it is important to realize that students exist in

hegemonic educational spaces. These students attend universities where their native tongues and languages are silenced and disempowered, but affirmed in their home communities. If educational systems were more receptive and inclusive of students' linguistic differences, students would not have to feel like they need to code-switch. Policymakers, educators, and scholars must continue challenging educational systems to foster classroom and campus atmospheres to celebrate the languages associated with students' identities. Therefore, if we do not challenge the dominant narrative of traditional hegemonic English, there will be detrimental stratification and exclusion within our educational systems. This research study acknowledged the tension of code-switching that challenged students to remain authentic, while trying to survive and persist. Ultimately, I agree with Anita when she said that "code-switching is necessary, as long as you don't overdo it."

Conformist Resistance

Participants talked about how their innate forms of strength and resiliency helped them continue pursuing their educational careers, even though oppressive events on campus. Knowing how to survive and navigate these problematic situations reinforced their *navigational* and *resistant capital.* Comprised of Solórzano and Bernal's (2001) constructs of resistance, participants demonstrated either (1) conformist resistance or (2) resilient resistance. Resilient resistance participants strategically challenged inequality, even if they could not fully articulate the structural design of inequality and oppression. Whereas, conformist resistance participants were motivated for change, but were not actively working on challenging or changing the system of oppression (Yosso, 2000). Notably, most participants within this study had more of a conformist resistance style when confronting issues of inequality on their campus. They fundamentally understood that discriminatory issues on campus needed to be addressed, but

instead disregarded the problem nor sought a solution. Examples of this included how some students were unbothered by protests happening on campus, but felt that student presence could potentially antagonize the situation. Rather than challenge the institutional practices that sustained inequality, or acknowledge the lack of university response which elicited the protest, these students focused on the reactions of those that are oppressed.

However, participants' conformist resistance is further evolved than Solórzano and Bernal's (2001) definition. Even though these students do not holistically challenge structural inequalities, they were more focused on improving situations at an individual level. Often the responsibilities of addressing racial discrimination and oppression fall on the backs of students experiencing the oppression (Dixon-Román, 2017). And one cannot blame students for working towards their goal of degree attainment, rather than structural oppression. Constantly feeling like one does not belong nor safe on campus, can be incredibly draining to students that are already trying to adapt and succeed in a new environment. These experiences can be psychologically taxing, resulting in psychophysiological strain or what has been referred to as race-related stress (Britt et al., 2016; Lopez, 2005). It is also important to critique systems that reinforce students' necessity to demonstrate grit. In addition to examining the ways students enact their resiliency through oppressive situations, we must contextualize why students have to do this in the first place. If we do not acknowledge the institutional factors that hinder students' educational outcomes, it unjustifiably holds minoritized students responsible for larger structural and contextual inequalities (Anderson et al., 2016). Therefore, we must examine how we can abolish oppressive barriers for minoritized students, rather than just exploring ways to successfully persist through them.

This study's findings illustrated that first-generation, low-income, Black, and Latinx, Upward Bound utilized various strategies to successfully transition from high school and persist towards degree attainment. Participating in an Upward Bound program that instilled academic and cultural knowledge helped students navigate white educational spaces. Pre-college programs that support students' cultural wealth *and* implement a rigorous academic component would be able to address some of the problems that sometimes arise within empirical work on minoritized groups in academia. And, ideally, allow educators, administrators, faculty, practitioners, teachers, and policymakers, to understand how experiences of marginalization and privilege affect the shape and character of American education. Furthermore, by using various forms of Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural wealth, this study was able to construct a deeper understanding of how students implemented these resistance strategies on and off campus. Participants provided examples of how they used their abilities, resources, networks, and wealth of knowledge not only to survive systems of higher education but also thrive (Huber, 2009).

Implications for Policy and Practice

Using the Community Cultural Wealth model helped support this dissertation in problematizing the experiences of students of Color in predominantly white educational spaces. This study demonstrates that first-generation, low-income, Black, and Latinx students possess the variant forms of cultural capital necessary to support their transition and persistence through college. As a result, several implications can be gleaned from their experiences, which can be adapted to improve the educational experiences of minoritized students within college outreach programs and higher education. These strategies serve to empower students in developing various skills needed to transition from high school to college successfully, and to persist through postsecondary education. This dissertation study also contributed to existing literature

surrounding the complexities of navigating the educational pipeline as a minoritized student and can be used to guide future research.

Implications for Pre-College Programs

Cultural and academic development. Within this study, participants cited straightforward and realistic mechanisms as sources for their successful transition and persistence through college. Participating in a culturally affirming Upward Bound program holistically examined and celebrated students' intersectional identities (i.e., gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, religion). Noting that Upward Bound programs are designed to support first-generation and low-income students, most of these constituencies are often students of Color as well (Kinney-Walker, 2016; Sams-McPhaul, 2018; Thayer, 2007). Thus, requiring them to navigate the college sector differently than their poor white peers. As it is important for students to receive academic provisions needed to be prepared for college, participants contended that integrating their intersectional identities into their educational program and having thoughtful discussions surrounding race and campus racial climate, positively influenced their transition into college. Therefore narrowing the focus on enrollment to solely include first-generation, low-income, students of Color (particularly from urban areas) can provide students with more resources on navigating the difficulties of degree attainment. As this program is still useful for low-income, first-generation white students, particularly from rural areas, students of Color must be equipped with more holistic and methodical tools.

Given the findings within this study, I recommend Upward Bound educators, directors, and staff frame their programs to focus on cultural wealth and academic development. Programs that effectively incorporate both of these approaches can significantly impact the ways students enter and navigate their college settings (Villalpando, & Solórzano, 2005). For example, during

the summer institute programs students can be offered an elective course where they can learn about their various identities. Similar to the class I implemented with this Upward Bound's summer institute, students would have the opportunity to learn about multiple critical conceptual frameworks (i.e., critical race theory, feminist theory) to an examine foundations of oppression. Conversations within these courses allowed students the opportunity to vocalize their thoughts about inequitable education systems. They found that this development of cultural knowledge and cultural was useful for their college enrollment, as many of these concepts were discussed within their college courses and it provided them a context to further examine the institutionalized oppression that existed on their campuses. Implementing a summer course that centered on college knowledge surrounding the racialization of college campuses, will further students' *navigational* and *resistant capital* needed to navigate their PWIs.

Familial stipends and support. Just as it is necessity to implement practices that validate students' identities, we must recognize the pivotal role parents and family members have on students' college aspirations and transition to college (Tierney & Auerbach, 2005). Therefore, pre-college programs must develop more innovative strategies to engage and inform parents and families of best practices for minoritized student success. Study participants talked about how their parents had workshops about completing the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), and expectations of the summer institute program, but these parental engagement events occurred sporadically throughout the academic year. Since these events were helpful with providing parents with more information (Bettinger et al., 2012), sustained participation by parents and families will be more useful in supporting their child's success (Jun & Tierney, 1999; Marquez Kiyama et al., 2015).

While research has shown that parents of Color often do not have the resources that allow for traditional immersive engagement in their child's education (due to job scheduling, lack of childcare, etc.) (Ceja, 2004; Marquez Kiyama et al., 2015), it is important that pre-college programs implement more accessible policies and practices around parental engagement. As it will be hard to implement programming that would be conducive for all families, programming stipends should be allocated to families that participate in the workshops. Not only would this further incentivize and enhance familial engagement, but could partially compensate parents for taking time off, or finding child care to attend the events. Parents could also receive reimbursement for child care and/or transportation, as this study's Upward Bound program already provides students with bus tokens. As this dissertation does acknowledge that there have been numerous budget cuts and that funding is tight for these programs—I contend that these financial stipends would enhance familial engagement. Working with districts, grant-funding foundations, or implementing a stipend budget within program grants could be a way to receive the additional funds.

Furthermore, the transition into college not only impacted first-generation students but also affected their parents and other familial networks. Upward Bound programs should offer workshops for parents of first-generation students to provide them the college knowledge and *social capital* needed to best support their child in a new and stressful environment. As there is increased pressure and stress on these students in school—due to maintaining their familial obligations and college coursework and activities—having parents attend these workshops could help them contextualize the experiences of their students to better serve their child's needs. Additionally, these workshops can enhance the relationship between students and their parents, while furthering parental engagement in their child's education. As students' relationships with

their parents often change while in college (Marquez Kiyama et al., 2015), being provided some insight regarding these transitions will help parents learn about the college process, and help familiarize them with college and campus resources.

Financial support for pre-college programs. Most importantly at the policy level, there needs to be increased and sustained funding for Upward Bound programs to function. These programs counteract the countless barriers that keep marginalized, talented students out of college. Upward Bound programs offer critical outreach and counseling services, tutoring sessions, mentoring programs, and other initiatives that increase the academic and financial literacy for students navigating the college application and enrollment processes (Partridge, 2018; Vega et al., 2018). Irrefutably, these programs have been the cornerstone of high school success and a pathway to higher education for generations of minoritized students. And unfortunately, due to the current presidential administration, the funding of many TRiO programs has significantly decreased or been completely cut (Blumenstyk, 2017). Rather than making drastic cuts to educational programs, research and funding support should be investing in the futures of first-generation, low-income, Black, and Latinx students. Upward Bound programs have successfully served to close the education gap that exists between many minoritized students and their peers (Kinney-Walker, 2016; Partridge, 2018; Thayer, 2007). Creating policies that sustain funding support for this program will help students achieve educational success.

A way to sustain programmatic funding support could be through foundation partnerships. For example, the Lumina Foundation provides grants to organizations that support first-generation, low-income, students of Color (Lumina Foundation, 2018). This foundation focuses explicitly on racial justice and would be able to financially support the various cultural initiatives of pre-college programs, while deepening the impact of educational equity.

Since Upward Bound programs must use their federal funds for specific activities and programming designated through the grant (Calahan & Goodwin, 2014), partnering with other foundations could generate more research and funding for other 'unaffiliated' projects (i.e., work-study programs, attending cultural events, providing stipends to families). As it is unfortunate to see that other Upward Bound programs—at MIT and St. Olaf College for example (Levy, 2013; VanDerveen, 2018)—have been impacted by these drastic budget cuts, they have sought external funding to support their students' needs. Therefore, these pre-college programs should collaborate with foundation partnerships to receive external funds to enhance and sustain student success.

Implications for Academic Institutions

Upward Bound Alumni Mentors. College personnel should consider the impact of mentoring programs on minoritized students in partnership with local Upward Bound programs. All of the participants in the study appreciated having an Upward Bound mentor, and indicated that they would not have been able to navigate the postsecondary pipeline without their support. Reproducing institutionalized mentoring practices would positively impact the ways that students transitioned and persisted through college. Upward Bound directors and college personnel should consider developing a mentoring program in which low-income, first-generation, Black, and Latinx students are paired with an Upward Bound alum upon entering college. Implementing this mentoring program at the beginning of students' trajectories would be most beneficial to their transition, especially for first-generation students (Choy et al., 2000; Filipkowski et al., 2016; Hoston et al., 2010). As found within this study, pairing students with mentors from similar racial or socio-demographic backgrounds can enhance student transition as well (Taylor, 2015)—and I argue that this should be taken a step forward. As there are over 800 Upward

Bound programs and 70,000 Upward Bound alumni, students should be paired with an Upward Bound alumni mentor (from either their previous program or an affiliated program within their college area) to aid their transitional processes. Not only would their peer mentor understand the various nuances of that particular college campus, but could support student's transition from the lens of an Upward Bound alum. This educational and interpersonal support will enrich students' persistence, satisfaction, and transition. This cohort of Upward Bound alumni would be able to provide resources and support for students, enhance the *social capital* of both constituencies, and fully concretize Upward Bound's goal of creating a continuous postsecondary pipeline.

Racialized Enclaves and Communities. As indicated throughout this dissertation, participants appreciated being able to find community amongst same-race peers, or other Black and Latinx students. Their *social capital* and peer networks increased their sense of belonging, which resulted in higher rates of persistence in college. Many of these students indicated that participating in race-based student organizations and attending events in (multi)cultural centers (i.e., Social Justice Centers, Black Culture Center, Latinx Cultural Center) made them feel connected. The history of culture centers stems from the emergence of students of Color at PWIs demanding a space where they can build a community amongst those that share the same identity (Patton, 2010). And within this study, cultural centers created a "safe space" for participants to celebrate their identities in an environment that promotes inclusivity. These cultural centers also helped bring together various identity-based student organizations across the campus and played an essential role in students' social integration. Most notably, many students talked about their enjoyment in single race or ethnic groups and organizations. As some students had multicultural centers and organizations on their campuses that celebrated all non-white identities (e.g., Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous), most students appreciated being part of groups that just solely

focused on their identity. Participating in events and cultural centers that only targeted specific identities (e.g., Latinos Unidos, #BlackGirlMagic group, Haitian American Association) made them feel more connected to their campuses, by being with peers with more direct similarities. As all students of Color benefit from cultural centers on campuses (Conerly, 2018; Patton, 2010), college personnel should examine more deliberate ways of disaggregating students of Color experience, rather than implement diversity practices that lump all non-white students together in one group.

Completion Grants. Lastly, as this dissertation expanded research to include the strategies that first-generation, low-income, Black, and Latinx used to persist through college successfully, universities and colleges should also consider the barriers that also hinder their successful degree attainment. And within this dissertation, financial resources and responsibilities were significant factors that impacted students' transition and retention. Therefore universities and college should rethink financial aid to implement more holistic funding for marginalized students, like completion grants. These grants are designed to provide low-income college seniors, whose financial resources are almost depleted, an economic boost to aid their persistence (Douglas-Gabriel, 2017). As participants and researchers have agreed, many students towards the end of their career have exhausted their college savings and traditional forms of financial aid (Britt et al., 2016). Thus instead of dropping out or taking longer to graduate due to minimal funds, these small grants can provide students the resources to complete their college degree. Some universities have endorsed these grants through a semester stipend, or the implementation of tuition and book discounts to students willing to take a full course load of 30 credits to graduate on time (Douglas-Gabriel, 2017). Therefore, this financial program will not only support students in finishing their degrees, but will help institutions sustain their tuition

and degree-completion numbers. As completion grants are a new concept for many public universities, these grants reshape the traditional thinking of financial aid. Rather than viewing financial aid solely as a tool for accessing college, it would also be a tool for degree completion and persistence.

Limitations and Future Research

Although this dissertation achieved its outlined objectives surrounding the research questions, there are some limitations associated with this study. This study examined the experiences of 20 first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx students who participated in an Upward Bound program. Per this study's definition of persistence, these students had successfully persisted by completing their first year of college and matriculating full time. However, this study was initially designed to also examine the narratives of Upward Bound alumni who were not enrolled in college. And unfortunately, due to lack of participant response (e.g., phone numbers disconnected, schedule alignment, potential embarrassment), their stories were not examined. As it is important to understand the successful mechanisms used within student transition, it is just as important to assess what tools did not work well or hindered student success. As this Upward Bound's programmatic mission was to help students graduate from high school, enroll into college, and ultimately graduate from college—researchers should examine why some students were not able to achieve these goals. Hearing from students that did not persist through college would be helpful in the creation of future retention strategies.

The second limitation was based on my connection and affiliation with the program. My personal relationship with the all of the participants (i.e., assistant writer on the program grant, summer instructor, colleague of the director of the program) could have impacted my positionality as a researcher in this project. As this positionality has provided me some 'insider'

knowledge with the participants, there are some potential limitations due to my familiarity. However, member checking and peer debriefing ensured that I was unbiased in my data collection. Through copious note taking, recorded audio, and approval of transcript verbiage by participants, I remained conscious of my positionality as a researcher. Additionally, my third limitation is about the longevity of the study. As I only formally met with participants one time during their college career, this was just a snapshot of their experiences while at their universities. As other longitudinal studies on transition and persistence have noted (Booker, 2016; Filipkowski et al., 2016; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Lopez, 2005), studies at single period can only examine relationships and ideologies, but not necessarily causality. Future research should implement a longitudinal study of students from this program, for an accurate representation of their complete transition into college, and to identify other student success trends for Upward Bound programs.

Additionally, one of the broader concerns of many participants was their perception of the lack of university response towards these acts of violence and trauma. They felt that the current political climate allowed for their peers (and even teachers) to elicit prejudicial responses towards them and other racially minoritized students. Interestingly, since the presidential election of 2016, hate crimes have increased by almost 20% (Yan, 2016). In response to the increase of this bias and discrimination on college campuses, bias-response teams were created. These teams, typically comprised of student affairs administers, were designed to respond to reports of bias incidents, hate speech and crimes on college campuses (LePeau, Morgan, Zimmerman, Snipes, & Marcotte, 2016; McDermott, 2013). As some of the institutions that participants attend already implement some of these practices, more deliberate research on the effectiveness of these techniques would be useful for student success assessment. Accordingly, very little empirical

research about bias-response teams has been done (LePeau et al., 2016; Miller, Guida, Smith, Ferguson, & Medina, 2018), so it is essential to examine how effective these strategies are for minoritized students.

As this dissertation assessed students' identities holistically, future research should disaggregate students' identities to fully understand their transition. Even though minoritized students are often seen as a homogenous group, the needs of this student body are varying and unique. Noting that all these students are classified as “students of Color,” there is this hidden erasure that lumps all of the students together in one “non-white” category. It should be recognized that Black and Latinx people are all very different, yet are still marked and ‘othered’ as being part of the same category. For example, there was a common thread of racism and discrimination that impacted all of the students, but sometimes Black and Latinx students were treated and responded differently to situations. Whereas Black students were constantly bombarded about issues about police brutality, while Latinx students were consistently questioned about immigration issues. Furthermore, an analysis surrounding gender would also be useful. Many of the Black women discussed the intersections of their race and gender (particularly the Strong Black Woman narrative), but most of the Latinas focused on either their race *or* gender when addressing their narrative. While there was more consistency between the stories of Black and Latino men in the study, it is important to disaggregate how their racial and gendered experiences impacted their transition and persistence.

Finally, little to no studies have used photovoice as a methodology to examine persistence and pre-college programs, particularly through the lens of minoritized students. As all of the students within my study enjoyed finding and showing photos and artifacts of their experiences, future research should expand this analysis and integrate asset-based photo-voice

(or artifact/photo elicitation) methodologies. As the voices of first-generation, low-income students of Color are often silenced within forms of education, highlighting variant aspects of their experiences and identities would be valuable to future research.

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT E-MAIL

Dear Upward Bound Alum,

My name is Ashley Carpenter, and I am a PhD candidate in the Higher Education program at the University of Massachusetts – Amherst. I am writing to invite you to participate in my current dissertation study, because I think you will add a unique perspective to my research. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the experiences of first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx Upward Bound college students, and how they transition from high school to college.

If you are willing to participate, I will ask you to share your experiences about participating in Upward Bound while in high school, and if (and how) you use that experience to navigate your current college setting. During the interview I ask that you bring:

(1) A photograph (physical or digital) or artifact (e.g., figurine, documents, writing, scrapbooks, piece of clothing etc.) that could describe your Upward Bound experiences **and**

(2) A photograph (physical or digital) or artifact (e.g., figurine, documents, writing, scrapbooks, piece of clothing etc.) that could describe your current college experiences.

The interview will take place at a mutually agreed upon location (coffee shop, library, etc.) of your choice. The interview should be approximately 90 – 120 minutes and will be audio-recorded. At the end of the interview, you will be given a $25 Visa gift card.

I would greatly appreciate your participation in this study. The findings in this study can provide best practices to help educators meet the needs of minoritized students.
Thank you again for your consideration and let me know if you have any questions. If you would like to participate, please contact me at ajcarpenter@umass.edu or at 630-991-8079 (via call or text).

Warmest Regards,

University of Massachusetts – Amherst
Educational Policy, Research & Administration
Higher Education Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Consent to Participate in Research

Title of Research Study:
Bridging the Gap: Cultural Wealth and College Transitions for Upward Bound Students

Introduction and Purpose:
My name is Ashley Carpenter, and I am a Higher Education PhD Candidate at the University of Massachusetts – Amherst, in the College of Education. I would like to invite you to take part in my research study, which examines how first-generation, low-income, Black and Latinx Upward Bound students use their identities and college outreach program experiences to transition from high school to college. Students who wish to participate must meet the following criteria:

1) Identify racially as Black and/or Latinx
2) Have participated in the Liberty High School (pseudonym used) Upward Bound program for at least two academic years, and one summer session
3) Qualify as a college sophomore, junior or senior during the 2018-2019 school year (Must have persisted at least one year, or completed at least two semesters of college)
4) Come from families in which neither parent has a Bachelor's degree, and/or qualify as low income.

Procedures:
If you agree to participate in my research, I will conduct an interview with you at a time and location of your choice. The interview will involve questions about your experiences participating in Upward Bound while in high school, if you use that experience to navigate your current college setting, and Yosso's (2005) cultural wealth model (aspirational, familial, social, navigational, resistance, linguistic capital). It should last approximately 90 – 120 minutes. You are asked to bring **two** artifacts or photographs that are (1) representative of your experiences in Upward Bound, and (2) representative of your current college experiences.

With your permission, I will audiotape and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide and will be used for transcription purposes only. If you choose not to be audiotaped, I will take notes instead. If you agree to being audiotaped but feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview, I can turn off the recorder at your request. Or if you don't wish to continue, you can stop the interview at any time. I expect to conduct only one interview; however, follow-ups may be needed for added clarification. If so, I will contact you by e-mail/phone to request this.

Benefits:
There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study. It is hoped that the research will explore the benefits of deliberately and directly implementing minoritized student's culture into the curriculum and design of pre-college programs.

Risks/Discomforts:
Although there are no overt risks of participating in the study, some of the research questions may make you uncomfortable or upset. You are free to decline to answer any questions you don't wish to, or to stop the interview at any time. As with all research, there is a chance that

confidentiality could be compromised; however, I am taking precautions to minimize this risk (see Confidentiality section).

Confidentiality:

Your study data will be handled as confidentially as possible. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used. The primary investigator (Ashley Carpenter) will guard against such a risk by removing identifying information from the data collected and keeping all information in locked storage and password-protected computers.

When the research is completed, I may save the tapes and notes for use in future research done by myself or others. I will retain these records for up to four years after the study is over. The same measures described above will be taken to protect confidentiality of this study data.

Compensation:

Upon completion of the interview, participants will receive a $25 Visa gift card.

Rights:

Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to take part in the project. You can decline to answer any questions and are free to stop taking part in the project at any time. Whether or not you choose to participate in the research and whether or not you choose to answer a question or continue participating in the project, there will be no penalty to you or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Questions:

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me. My contact information is in the header of the document.

Consent:
You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your own records.

If you wish to participate in this study, please sign and date below.
Participant's Name (please print):
____
Participant's Signature: ____
Date: ____

Reference:
Yosso, T.J. (2005). *Whose culture has capital? Race, Ethnicity and Education, 8*(1), pp. 69–91.

Contact Information:
Ashley Carpenter
ajcarpenter@umass.edu | 630-991-8079

APPENDIX C

MEDIA RELEASE FORM

Title of Research Study:
Bridging the Gap: Cultural Wealth and College Transitions for Upward Bound Students

The researchers would like to use the [photos/video/audio] shown or taken during the interview, for use in educational/scientific presentations. As part of this study, the following types of media records will be used of you during your participation in the research:

- Photographic Image
- Video Recording
- Audio Recording

Please indicate what uses of media listed above you are willing to permit, by initialing next to uses you agree to and singing the form at the end. We will only use the media in the ways that you agree to.

________ The [photos/video/audio] can be studied by the researcher for use in this research project.
________ The [photos/video/audio] can be used for educational purposes.
________ The [photos/video/audio] can be can be shown/played to subjects in other research studies.
________ The [photos/video/audio] can be posted to websites, including social media sites.
________ The [photos/video/audio] can be shown/played in public presentations.
________ The [photos/video/audio] and/or personal transcriptions can be used for scientific or scholarly publications.
________ The [photos/video/audio] can be used for scholarly conferences, meeting, or workshops.
________ The [photos/video/audio] can be used for reports/presentations to any research funding agencies.
OR
________ I do not wish to be captured or to have any of my media displayed.

I have read the above descriptions and give my consent for the use of the media records as indicated by my initials above.

______________________________ ________________________ ____________
Participant Signature: Print Name: Date:

By signing below I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

______________________________ ________________________ ____________
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Print Name: Date:

If you have concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, contact Ashley Carpenter (630-991-8079; ajcarpenter@umass.edu)

APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL FORM

Certification of Human Subjects Approval

January 25, 2019
Ashley Carpenter, Education
Chrystal George Mwangi, Educ Policy, Research & Admin Lynnette Leidy Sievert, Chair, UMASS IRB

University of Massachusetts Amherst

108 Research Administration Bldg. 70 Butterfield Terrace
Amherst, MA 01003-9242

Research Compliance
Human Research Protection Office (HRPO) Telephone: (413) 545-3428
FAX: (413) 577-1728

Protocol Title: BRIDGING THE GAP: CULTURAL WEALTH AND COLLEGE TRANSITIONS FOR UPWARD BOUND STUDENTS Protocol ID: 2018-4910
Review Type: EXEMPT - REVISION
Paragraph ID: 2

Approval Date: 01/25/2019 Expiration Date: 08/12/2021 OGCA #:

This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Massachusetts Amherst IRB, Federal Wide Assurance # 00003909. Approval is granted with the understanding that investigator(s) are responsible for:

Revisions - All changes to the study (e.g. protocol, recruitment materials, consent form, additional key personnel), must be submitted for approval in e-protocol before instituting the changes. New personnel must have completed CITI training.

Renewals - All renewals need to be submitted at least 2 weeks prior to the expiration date listed on this approval letter. Final Reports - Notify the IRB when your study is complete by submitting a Final Report Form in e-protocol.

Consent forms - A copy of the approved consent form (with the IRB stamp) must be used for each participant (Please note: Online consent forms will not be stamped). Investigators must retain copies of signed consent forms for six (6) years after close of the grant, or three (3) years if unfunded.

Use only IRB-approved study materials (e.g., questionnaires, letters, advertisements, flyers, scripts, etc.) in your research.

Unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others - All such events must be reported in e-protocol as soon as possible, but no later than five (5) working days.

Please contact the Human Research Protection Office if you have any further questions. Best wishes for a successful project.

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

*Aspirational Capital [*ac*]; Familial Capital [*fc*]; Resistant Capital [*rc*]; Linguistic Capital [*lc*]; Navigational Capital [*nc*]; Social Capital [*sc*]

- Do you have any questions before we begin the interview?

Family and Background (Personal History and Cultural Wealth Development)

- Tell me a little about yourself.
- What are some of your most prominent identities (race, gender, class, etc.)? [*sc; fc*]
  What has shaped you to identify in this way?
- What are some of the traditions or customs associated with being [insert identities]? [*sc*]
  What are some of the benefits of being [insert identities]?
  What are some disadvantages of being [insert identities]?
- Would you say that you have a strong attachment to your [identity group]?
  If yes, what does this look like to you? If no, can you explain why not?
- Tell me a little about your family. [*fc*]
- Who are your biggest support systems at home? [*fc; sc*]
  How do you keep in touch with them?
  Are they supportive of you while you are at school? If so, in what ways?
- What role did your immediate or extended family play in your decision to go to college and the selection process? [*fc*]
- What has been your biggest challenge being away from home?
  How did you overcome this challenge?
- Did you ever find yourself code-switching to acclimate to certain environments? [*lc*]
  Is there a difference in the ways you express yourself at home with your family and friends, versus in your academic settings?
- What languages are used in your household? [*lc*]
  How did your language(s) help you succeed? In society? In academia?
- Did your high school prepare you for college academically? If so, in what ways? [*nc; sc*]
- Did your high school prepare you for college socially? If so, in what ways? [*nc; sc*]
- How helpful were your high school teachers and guidance counselors in assisting you in entering and completing college?
  How did they feel about you being a member of Upward Bound?
- Have you felt any challenges during your educational journey from high school to college (racism, stereotypes, marginalization, lack of support etc.)? Explain. [*rc*]
  What were some challenges you came across that made it hard for you to succeed in school?
- How did you navigate through some of the educational challenges you faced? [*rc*]
  What strategies did you use to navigate these challenges?
- Did any of your identities help you navigate these challenges? If so, in what ways? [*nc; sc; rc*]

Upward Bound Experience

- What artifact or photo did you bring that was representative of your Upward Bound experience?
  Why is this significant to you?
- How were you first introduced to the Upward Bound program?
  Why did you join?
- What were you expecting to get out of the program? [*ac*]
  Were you able to attain what you sought after? Why or why not?
- Did participating in Upward Bound help you to graduate from high school? If so, in what ways? [*nc*]
- What were your biggest "take-aways" from being in that program?
- Do you think Upward Bound prepared you academically for college? How so? [*sc; nc*]
- Do you think Upward Bound prepared you socially for college? How so? [*sc; nc*]
- Did you attend weekend classes / tutoring sessions?
  Can you describe some of your experiences while participating in the weekend sessions?
- Since you participated in the Summer Institute, can you describe some of your most memorable experiences?
- Did participating in the Summer Institute program impact your transition to college? [*sc; nc*] If so, in what ways?
- Were the classes/courses you took in the Upward Bound Program different or similar to the other classes you took while in high school?
  How were they different? How were they similar?
  Did you talk about your various identities in these classes?
- Did you encounter any barriers or struggles as you navigated the college application process? [*rc*]
  If so, how did you overcome these obstacles?
- Did participating in a program like Upward Bound, further shape your identities? In what ways? [*sc*]
  Has Upward Bound had any influence on who you are as a person?
  As a result of your Upward Bound experience, do you feel you got to know yourself better? If so, in what ways?
- Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this Upward Bound program?

Collegiate Experience

- What artifact or photo did you bring that is representative of your current college experience?
  Why is this significant to you?
- What inspired you to go to college? [*ac*]
- Why did you choose to attend [insert College or University name]?
  What is your major? Why did you choose it?
- Did you transfer schools or colleges? Why or why not? [*ac; nc*]
- Are you involved in any activities while in college? If so, can you describe your involvement? [*sc*]

Why did you get involved with these specific activities?

- Describe what it's been like to transition from high school to your current institution?
  - What has been the hardest part of this transition?
  - What has been the easiest?
- Did Upward Bound aid in your transition from high school to college? If so, in what ways? [*sc; nc*]
- What has been the biggest adjustment going from high school to college?
- Please talk about your experiences as a [insert identities] on your campus. [*sc; nc*]
  - What role do these identities have in your daily interactions with students?
  - What role do these identities have in your daily interactions with faculty?
  - What role do these identities have in your daily interactions with the overall institution?
    - Have those experiences changed, from when you first go to campus to now? If so, how?
- Have you felt any resistance along your educational journey (from peers, professors, the institution as a whole, family, community)? [*rc*]
  - In what ways did your relationships with your family or community help you?
  - In what ways did your relationships with Upward Bound staff or students help you?
- Where do you go when you need help with something (academically, socially, financially, etc.)? [*sc; nc*]
  - What support networks do you have on campus?
- What are you the proudest of, thus far, in regard to your educational journey (good grades, thinking more critically, getting into to college, etc.)? [*ac*]
- Can you name one person who has been influential in your educational success? [*sc; fc; nc*]
  - How was that person influential?
- What are your aspirations after college? [*ac*]
  - How confident do you feel in accomplishing these goals?

Other

- Finally, is there anything that you would like to add or clarify?

Those are all of the questions I have for you at this time. I will be transcribing this interview and will forward a draft copy for you to review for accuracy. Here is my email address and phone number [business card with email address will be given to participant]; if within one week you decide that you would like to add anything to the interview, please do not hesitate to email or call me with additional information. Thank you for your willingness to participate.

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