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Exploring the Black White Achievement Gap: The Connection Between Upward Bound, Oppositional Culture, and the Multicultural Navigator Concept

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EXPLORING THE BLACK WHITE ACHIEVEMENT GAP: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN UPWARD BOUND, OPPOSITIONAL CULTURE, AND THE MULTICULTURAL NAVIGATOR CONCEPT

by

MIA HORACE

Under the Direction of James Ainsworth

ABSTRACT

Racial equality in the United States educational system has long been and continues to be a source of debate. Specifically, the disparities between whites and other minority groups have been increasingly more critical. Blacks and Latinos consistently score lower than whites on standardized tests and academic course work. There have been several explanations given for poorer school performance by certain minority groups than whites. In this dissertation, I explore the black white achievement gap through the examination of one widely known explanation, oppositional culture theory. This research investigates the major tenets of oppositional culture theory and the contemporary multicultural navigator concept. Using a grounded theory method of analysis, I examine the connections between suppositions of the theory and black students in the Upward Bound academic achievement program.

INDEX WORDS: Black white achievement gap, Multicultural navigator, Oppositional culture, Self-efficacy
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MIA HORACE

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Arts and Sciences Georgia State University 2012
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandparents, Ralph and Helen Barnhart. They paved the way for my family to begin the journey of higher education, doing so at a time when it was a more difficult endeavor for African Americans.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First I give thanks to God who kept forging a way for me to continue on in this process. I must give a very special acknowledgement to my husband, Jor-El, who made sure I had every tool I needed to finish. He did the heavy lifting for our family so that I could have time to write, encouraged me when I felt like crying, read drafts without complaining, and provided technical support so my challenges wouldn’t get the best of me. I am so grateful to have had a loving mate to see me through. Next, I would like to acknowledge my mother, who encouraged me from day one to be all I thought I could be and more. I would be remiss not to thank my Zion, who has spent almost his entire life being patient while his mother pursued a PhD, and my sweet little Jori for somehow knowing how to be understanding. I thank CJ for all those times she talked me home after class when I was sleepy on the road. To my friends Winnie and Al Molloseau, who opened their home to me when I needed a quiet place to write, I have to say thank you. I would also like to acknowledge my dissertation committee for their patience and guidance. My chair, Jim, hung in there with me no matter how slowly I went or what hiccups I encountered. I am indebted to him for not abandoning me along the way. To all of my friends and family members who ever gave me a word of encouragement, I am so very grateful. This could have been a very lonely journey, but God, my friends, and my family helped me to stay the course.
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1 INTRODUCTION

In America, racial equality in education has long been a source of debate. The disparities have existed primarily between whites and other minority groups and explanations have run the gamut from highly cultural to highly structural. According to Ansalone (2006) equal educational opportunity in America is still not easily achievable, despite the fact that the Supreme Court’s ruling, in Brown v. The Board of Education, was that segregation in schools is “inherently unequal.” While America still struggles with systematic deficiencies in the educational system that promotes educational inequality, there are cultural barriers in the opportunity structure that have remained prevalent as well. As a result, we must seek to determine not only what the barriers are to equal educational opportunity but also what the effects of these barriers are to students’ performance in school. When one examines the differences in the school performance of blacks and whites we must inevitably attempt to understand the issues that serve as a hindrance to blacks performing as well in school as whites.

Providing explanations and anecdotes for the differences in achievement, by race, existing in the American educational system is a complex task with multi-faceted layers. Blacks and Latinos continuously attain lower levels of academic achievement, as evidenced by grades and test scores, than whites. Some view this issue as simply as the classic debate between W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington in which the key to mobility and success lies in either pulling one’s self up by the boot straps or patiently waiting for equality to manifest itself, respectively. Though research indicates that both blacks and Latinos have higher educational aspirations than whites, particularly when the family socioeconomic status is controlled for (Qian and Blair 1999 & Cheng and Starks 2002), Mickelson (1990) asserts that attitudes are not as effective in improv-
ing achievement. Mickelson specifically explores the “paradox” of blacks placing value upon education but this not translating to high performance in school. Mickelson concludes that it is important to take into account students’ displays of “abstract,” or dominant ideology attitudes, versus “concrete” or those based upon experiences with an unequal opportunity structure. Mickelson asserts that there is no attitude-achievement paradox when high school grades are linked to concrete attitudes. In essence, the paradox occurs when students demonstrate a realization that there are structural barriers and their performance in school is affected negatively. The issues related to the achievement gap are complex, and they have changed over time.

According to Lee (2002), the achievement gap between black and white students decreased during the 1970s and 1980s but began to grow or remain steady in the 1990s. Despite the brief reprieve from a steadily growing achievement gap, the gap has overwhelmingly remained constant. The debate about reasons for the persistence of the achievement gap continues to fuel research, which yields varying results. Family characteristics, social structure, cultural differences, and educational systems are a sampling of the explanations found to be connected to the achievement gap (Ogbu, 2003; Carter, 2005; Boykin & Ellison, 1995; Akom, 2003; Sampson, 2002; Ainsworth Darnell & Downey, 1998).

While there have been many explanations given for racial differences in educational performance, my research will analyze the tenets of one such popular explanation, oppositional culture theory. The thrust of my research is the expansion of John Ogbu’s oppositional culture theory, which has been a dominant theory in the quest for discovering racial differences in school performance for over thirty years. Ogbu’s theoretical perspective has evolved over the past thirty years, but the main point of his argument has remained the same. Ogbu contends that black students perceive fewer returns on educational achievement than do white students, based upon
their cultural orientation to the dominant mainstream, and furthermore demonstrate a resistance to “acting white” by rejecting excelling in school. In essence, being members of a minority group whose cultural expectations differ from the mainstream, coupled with their perceived lack of opportunity for upward mobility, causes black students to differentiate their behavioral patterns regarding educational attainment.

Ogbu (1990) argues that “involuntary minorities,” people who did not come to the United States of their own will, don’t believe that they have many occupational opportunities or benefits from education, and they develop an oppositional culture in which resistance to school is paramount. Involuntary minorities are groups that underwent enslavement or were conquered or colonized, such as African Americans, Native Americans, Mexicans, or Puerto Ricans. When comparing themselves to the dominant group, whites, they become disillusioned with their chances of having the same economic prosperity and career advancement.

The way minorities interpret their history—whether they became minorities voluntarily or involuntarily, together with the impact of societal treatment or mistreatment—shapes the pattern of the collective solutions they forge for their collective problems in society at large and in education. Because of their different modes of incorporation, voluntary and involuntary minorities tend to interpret similar problems differently and forge different solutions to those problems (2003: 52).

The theory describes the “caste-like” climate of the educational system in American society. Ogbu (1978) asserts that as blacks are placed in the lowest caste in American society, the education they receive is inferior to the education that whites receive. Ogbu characterizes this initial blockage of educational equity as the catalyst for moving blacks away from more sought after career roles accessible to whites as adults.

Ogbu’s theory is further expanded by introducing the concept of “the burden of acting white” (Fordham and Ogbu 1986) into the framework. Fordham and Ogbu contend that involuntary (caste-like) minorities who achieve academic success undergo harassment from their peers
who are of the same race, due to their school performance. They thus begin to equate striving for academic achievement to acting white. Ogbu posits that the Black students he studied “feared that adopting White ways would be detrimental to their collective racial identity and solidarity” (2003: 189). Some of the “White ways,” that were avoided were those that would have been beneficial to school success, such as making good grades and studying.

Adding a contemporary view to oppositional culture theory, Carter’s multicultural navigator concept (2006) forwards the discussion of “acting white,” contending that black youths’ resistance is not to academic excellence, but rather a rejection of specific white cultural values, such as style of music and speech. Additionally, some black students have the perception that schools demand behaviors that are not racially authentic in order to reach the threshold of approval. Carter posits that black youths are very much believers in the value of earning an education as a means of mobility; however, there becomes a balancing act when attempting to remain connected to black cultural values while complying with the rules of the dominant culture. Referring to the group most adept at handling this balancing act, Carter claims the “cultural straddlers” negotiate schooling in a way that enables them not only to hold on to their native cultural styles but also to embrace dominant cultural codes and resources” (2006:13). In order for black students to become “cultural straddlers,” which Carter targets as key to being successful in the dominant culture, “they require adult models,” who may be “the teacher who comprehends and perhaps has even lived the experience of poverty, who can respect the multifaceted nature of culture, and who possesses enough insight to convey to students how to use different cultural know-hows” (Carter 2006:150). These models are what Carter refers to as multicultural navigators.
1.1 Purpose of the Study

This research focused on oppositional culture theory, the burden of acting white theory and the multicultural navigator concept. Specifically, the research explored how each relates to students who are black, low-income, potential first generation college students and were participants in the Upward Bound Program, which is a program geared towards helping students achieve educational success and advancement. While Latinos experience the same achievement gap in education that blacks do, this research focused on the black-white achievement gap due to the racial composition of students in the Upward Bound Program. The research examined:

1) whether or not participants in the Upward Bound Program experience oppositional culture and the burden of acting white;

2) whether or not the Upward Bound program can serve as a tool for both cultivating cultural straddlers by providing multicultural navigators and

3) the effects of Upward Bound participation for black students.

Due to the income and background characteristics of the minority students served in the program, Upward Bound was a viable group through which to test the relevance of oppositional culture and companion theories, the burden of acting white and the multicultural navigator concept. The black students in the Upward Bound program were an excellent group to study because they represent not only the type of minority that Ogbu posits would be susceptible to oppositional culture and the burden of acting white, but they also embody elements of possible cultural straddlers to which Carter refers. Additionally, the Upward Bound program provides compelling subject matter due to the component that allows for a possible connection between program goals and the multicultural navigator concept. Upward Bound seeks to promote academic success that is measured by college attendance. Upward Bound counselors serve as the guides for
students throughout this process. Studying black youth in the Upward Bound program allowed a view of students’ reactions to maintaining themselves in an academic environment, which is valued by the mainstream; it also allowed a view of the extent to which the black students in the program needed or utilized Upward Bound counselors in a multicultural navigator role.

This research extends earlier research by assessing oppositional culture and the burden of acting white within a specific programmatic framework. While the achievement gap between blacks and whites has been studied from various theoretical standpoints, including oppositional culture and the burden of acting white, research has not extended to examine oppositional culture within a specific programmatic framework; in addition previous studies have not examined plausible solutions in depth. I investigate not only the existence of oppositional culture and the burden of acting white, but also how the programmatic dynamics of Upward Bound affect the theory. Integral to the study is the way blacks in the Upward Bound Program perceive their benefits to education as well as the behaviors displayed as a result.
2 LITERATURE REVIEW

John Ogbu’s oppositional culture and burden of acting white theories have provided fuel that has kept the dialogue and research surrounding the black white achievement gap at the forefront. Ogbu’s early research and iterations that have followed have remained prevalent through later research that both supports and refutes Ogbu’s work. Prudence Carter challenges Ogbu’s work, adding in depth characteristics of students who fall within the framework of his assertions as well as more nuanced explanations for students’ ideological stances towards education. Exploring the work of Ogbu and Carter and understanding various theories regarding the black white achievement gap lies at the heart of this research.

The literature review is divided into five sections that illustrate the issues that are pertinent in studying the black white achievement gap as they relate to this study. The first section is an explanation of oppositional culture theory, the burden of acting white theory, and how they relate to Upward Bound. The second section is an explanation of the multicultural navigator concept and how it relates to Upward Bound. The third section is a detailed description of Upward Bound, the programmatic framework through which the tenets of oppositional culture, the burden of acting white and the multicultural navigator concept are examined. The fourth section details theoretical perspectives that have rivaled oppositional culture and research related to the black white achievement gap. The last section provides clarity as to how self efficacy fits into the dynamics and interplay of the before mentioned concepts.

2.1 Ogbu’s Theory

Ogbu’s theory began in 1974 with the publication of his dissertation work in Next Generation Studies in Anthropology. In this work Ogbu attempts to develop theory that explains minority children’s poorer performance in school than white children. Ogbu argues that the United
States and other countries have a “caste like” society in which minorities are ranked accordingly. The dominant caste is whites, with minorities of varying backgrounds falling beneath this caste. Moving away from the term “caste” minorities, Ogbu coined the term involuntary minorities. Ogbu asserts that minority students are prepared academically by schools according to their assumed low future social and occupational opportunities. “Because caste minorities perceive their future chances for jobs and other benefits of education as limited, they are not so strongly motivated as the dominant group members to persevere in their school work” (Ogbu 1978: 41). Ogbu argues that the perception of few returns from education may not be a conscious thought of involuntary minorities, but the perception does indeed play a major role in the efforts they put forth in school.

Involuntary minorities, according to this theory, view education as a means of progression that serves to advance only whites; immigrant minorities, however, have the reference group base of their home country and perceive the United States as having a better opportunity structure than their home country. Whereas immigrant minorities may be more likely to imitate behaviors, such as academic achievement, that are often attributed to whites, involuntary minorities will more likely take an oppositional stance. They have seen formal education as a benefit whites and are “not so strongly motivated to persevere in their school work” (Ogbu 1978.) According to Ogbu, though immigrant minorities experience challenges, they are not as discouraged about future outcomes because their group of comparison is in their home country. They are usually faring better economically, comparatively, than they would have been had they tried to seek the same prosperity in their native countries.

A challenge involuntary minorities face is they traditionally have not been able to compete on a level playing field with whites. As part of the involuntary minority group, blacks have
experienced such barriers as glass ceilings in the workplace and unfair hiring practices. They have not seen education yield the same results in employment for them as it has for whites.

Ogbu (1978) explains that though individual blacks have a desire for education as a means of improving ones’ self, collectively they desire to make headway in a society that values them less than it does whites, a caste like society. “For although blacks say they desire education and although they try in many ways to change the education system so that their children will receive better education, black students neither make sufficient efforts in their studies nor match their aspirations with accomplishments” (Ogbu 1978.) Ogbu asserts that there may be a surface desire for educational attainment among blacks, but the motivation to excel in school is not shown in indicators of achievement such as test scores and grades.

2.2 The Burden of Acting White

Ogbu’s earlier theory fell short to the extent that it did not address involuntary minorities who perform well academically. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) followed their previous research, asserting that “the burden of acting white” negatively affects these minorities. According to Fordham and Ogbu (1986), same race peers ostracize black children that achieve good grades in school for “acting white;” excelling in school is something that is seen as taboo and outside of the cultural norms of blacks. While oppositional culture theory as a whole focuses on a rejection of achievement based upon perceived inequality with the dominant culture, the burden of acting white speaks to a rejection of achievement for fear of being perceived as trying to emulate the dominant culture. From an oppositional culture frame of reference, blacks have developed a stance of distancing themselves from the culture that is contrary to their own. “Minorities regard certain forms of behavior and certain activities or events, symbols and meaning as not appropri-
ate for them because those behaviors, events, symbols, and meanings are characteristic of White Americans” (Fordham & Ogbu 1986:181).

While Sampson (2002) finds that high-achieving black students receive some pressure from peers to do poorly in school and modify their behaviors in a negative fashion, this does not deter the students from aspiring to do well. Sampson does not assert that because the attitudes about education of students in his sample are not affected, the pressure cannot affect them; he asserts that the pressure could, but just is not evidenced in his study. Similarly, Lundy (2003) and Mickelson (1989) find that differences in resistance to school are present between genders, rather than races and ethnicities.

Using NELS data, Cook and Ludwig (1997), Ainsworth Darnell and Downey (1998) and Lundy (2003) find that there is not a greater resistance to school among black students; nor are high achieving black students ostracized by their peers. Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) examine four major hypotheses of the resistance model, challenging their ability to ring true when tested utilizing a national data set. The researchers investigate 1. the claim that involuntary minorities perceive less benefit to education in terms of their future career outcomes 2. the claim that involuntary minorities resist school more than immigrant minorities and whites 3. the claim that “high-achieving” involuntary minorities receive negative peer sanctions and 4. the claim that school resistance explains the achievement gap between involuntary minorities and immigrant minorities and whites. Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) find that black students may resist school through poor academic behaviors, but they demonstrate better attitudes toward schooling than their white peers. Additionally, they find that blacks are more optimistic about their futures and perceive that education is important.
Seeking the same answers as Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey in terms of students’ attitudes toward schooling and penalties from peers for success, Cook and Ludwig (1997) also seek to determine whether any negative sanctions for academic success that may be present for black students are also present for white students. They find that even for black students in predominantly black schools, peer groups are supportive of high achievement; both blacks and whites are able to be a part of peer groups that applaud academic achievement. Harris (2006) finds that oppositional culture does not explain racial differences in school achievement on a large scale. Analyzing specifically whether or not black students perceive good school performance as “acting white,” Harris (2006) finds that only about 17% of underachieving blacks and high performing blacks combined believe good school performance is acting white. Furthermore, Harris (2006) finds that blacks who perform well academically tend to have less trouble getting along well with their peers. Lundy (2003), assessing peer relations and school resistance, also finds no support for oppositional culture in analyzing racial and ethnic differences in school achievement. Lundy does, however find that males rejection of academically astute behaviors is stronger than females.

The results refute Ogbu’s assertions that blacks perceive less opportunity or benefits from education. The findings of the previously cited research are more consistent with students who participate in Upward Bound. Upward Bound is a program whose purpose is educational opportunity, which creates a paradoxical situation with black Upward Bound students if oppositional culture theory is assumed. Black Upward Bound students belong to a racial group that fits within the involuntary minority category described by Ogbu. As such, their attitudes towards school and achievement are more than likely marred by the unequal opportunity structure they deem society offers. A program that promotes college attendance and academic preparedness
would not be of interest. However, the fact that the individuals in the study participated in the program demonstrates that they do not fit the attitudes characteristic of involuntary minorities.

Akom (2003) challenges the suggestion of the uniformity of involuntary minorities’ attitudes towards schooling by analyzing resistance as it relates to a specific population within involuntary minorities. In a two year ethnographic study of high school females who were members of the Nation of Islam, similarities in work ethic and attitudes towards education were found between these females and voluntary minorities. This study suggests that if involuntary minorities are placed in an environment in which high achievement is the expectation amongst other blacks, oppositional culture and the burden of acting white are eliminated. While the tenets of Ogbu’s theory are refuted regarding academic success, the study did find resistance among black students in the Nation of Islam when mainstream values and teachings were at odds with their religious beliefs. The study attributes the absence of oppositional culture and the burden of acting white to the black achievement ideology promoted by the Nation of Islam. Likewise, the current research seeks to discover if black involuntary minorities in the Upward Bound Program express similar attitudes to those in Akom’s study, demonstrating an achievement ideology promoted by the program. In addition, the Akom (2003) study begs the question if there can be resistance to mainstream culture when it conflicts with religious values, couldn’t there indeed be resistance to the mainstream culture when it is not aligned with racial cultural values? While previous studies (Cook and Ludwig, 1997; Ainsworth Darnell and Downey, 1998; Lundy, 2003; and Harris 2006) indicate that education is important to blacks there has been a dearth of research explaining other cultural values of blacks that may present oppositional culture through a different lens. As Carter suggests “there exists as much difference in educational approaches-
both in terms of culture and racial and ethnic ideology- within racial groups as there is among them (Carter 2005: 25-26).

2.3 Multicultural Navigators

Providing an essential missing link to conceptualizing oppositional culture theory is Carter’s (2005) multicultural navigator concept. As indicated previously, a key component in grasping the idea of an oppositional culture is the recognition that it may manifest itself in ways that do not directly speak to a black students’ acknowledgement of resisting academic achievement, but rather resisting cultural differences that result in poorer school performance by blacks. Carter (2005) describes multicultural navigators as individuals who are adept at strengthening the achievements of groups with limited access to equal opportunities. The ability of the multicultural navigators is rooted in their in depth in understanding of the social, cultural, and economic circumstances faced by these groups. Many of them have experience, which comes from first hand knowledge of dominate and subordinate social standings and additionally the acumen to be upwardly mobile in spite of the oppressive opportunity structure. Carter suggests that in order for “involuntary minorities” to thrive in mainstream culture while “keepin’ it real,” they must learn to be cognizant of how the effects of perceived marginalization can impede success. Carter posits that black youths need “multicultural navigators who can demonstrate to them how to overcome poverty with critical, self loving, and other-respecting perspectives, who do not make them feel ashamed of who they are but rather proud of how far they will go” (Carter 2005, 155).

With students possessing different social survival characteristics and abilities, multicultural navigators have the task of assessing how to best instill pride and determination in them. Carter asserts that students in her *Keepin’ It Real* study belong to one of three groups “that characterize how they manage their identities, cultural styles, and educational beliefs” (Carter 2005,
Among these are the “noncompliant believers,” “cultural mainstreamers,” and “cultural straddlers.” Each group represents different levels at which black students adhere to mainstream norms in educational practices. Noncompliant believers are the students who experience the most ill fit between “their beliefs, school engagement and school achievement” (Carter 2005; 12). These students do not necessarily refute mainstream ideals about achievement, but they do however allow their racial self concepts to affect the extent to which they will comply with behaviors associated with being good students. Cultural mainstreamers are capable of seeing the material culture associated with middle and upper class whites as normal rather than a realm reserved only for whites. They obey the rules related to school, regardless of any rejection they may receive from their same race peers for “refusing to embrace their own racial and ethnic speech codes and musical, interactional, and social styles” (Carter 2005;13). Cultural straddlers are the group most adept at following the mandates of the school while maintaining and embracing their own cultural linkages. “These students possess the resources to navigate strategically between multiple cultures, including their ethnic and peer groups, communities and schools” (Carter 2005; 13). Carter (2005) posits that both cultural mainstreamers and cultural straddlers do well in school, but whereas cultural mainstreamers seek the support of teachers, parents and employers to navigate their cultural realms, cultural straddlers also include their peers in their navigation efforts.

E lecting to include peers, Carter surmises, is the preparation piece that is needed for optimal success in the future. While it is important to indoctrinate one’s self to the ideals and values of the dominant culture of which one is a part, it is equally important not to sacrifice one’s own group identity. Being a cultural straddler allows individuals the opportunity to do what is necessary to survive, or even thrive, in the dominant culture while maintaining a sense of con-
connection and belonging to one’s own cultural reference point— in essence, the ability to code switch. Being able to successfully go back and forth between the dialects, practices, and traditions present in one’s culture while successfully embracing the same in the dominant culture is critical to the success of successful students (Hill, 2009, Koch et. al. 2001, & Doss & Gross, 1994).

2.4 Upward Bound

Upward Bound is a program that could possibly be seen as an incubator for cultivating cultural straddlers. The program provides guidance in the academic as well as the social components necessary to be successful in school. While the program does not serve only minority students, it could possibly serve as a link in closing the black-white achievement gap by virtue of its structure and what it was created to do.

1Upward Bound is a federally funded TRIO program that was authorized under the Higher Education Act of 1965. The acronym TRIO symbolizes the first three programs of the eight that were eventually created. Student Support Services, Educational Talent Search and Upward Bound were the original programs made possible by The Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965, which was signed on November 8, 1965 in order to “strengthen the educational resources of our colleges and universities and to provide financial assistance for students in post secondary and higher education” (Pub.L. No. 89-329). The HEA was designed to provide more opportunities for educational advancement, specifically for lower and middle income families. At the time of the Act’s inception, there was a cry across the country for a response from the Executive level of government.

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1 Upward Bound has three components that each focuses on college attendance: Classic, Veterans, and Math Science. The Classic component serves high school students; Veterans serves military veterans, and Math Science serves high school students with an emphasis on math and science preparation. For the purposes of my research references to Upward Bound will be to the Classic Program.
government to issues such as poverty and uplifting communities. In response to the need, the HEA was signed into law (U.S. Department of Education Website).

In conjunction with the two other programs, Upward Bound was started to provide assistance to students and inspire them to seek a college education. Upward Bound is designed to give guidance to high school students who are from families determined to be low income by U.S. Department of Education guidelines and those whose parents or guardians do not hold Bachelor’s degrees. The intention is that, with the assistance of the program, students will graduate from high school and attend institutions of higher education.

Students participate in tutorial services and enrichment activities each year they are in the program. Upward Bound program personnel monitor participants’ grades, test scores, and academic performance. Students receive assistance in math, laboratory science, composition, literature, and foreign language. Upward Bound provides opportunities for social growth in students. They are exposed to cultural activities designed to help them expand their knowledge base and give them the tools they need to become well-rounded individuals. Activities may include plays, dance performances, dining etiquette workshops, guest speakers, and others that are similar. Imperative to the process of becoming well rounded, particularly for black students, is learning to find ways to manage cultural norms that are relevant to mainstream values as well as those that are specific to African American culture. The issue becomes problematic for black students when trying to negotiate the terms of what it means to be proficient in all necessary cultural arenas.

According to Carter’s multicultural navigator concept, minority students need guides to help them gain this level of proficiency. Upward Bound’s cultural mission is consistent with many of Carter’s ideas in that the goal is for students to experience activities that are helpful to
their personal and academic development; according to the multicultural navigator theory, learning tools for success in pertinent cultural settings should be a part of students’ learning experiences. The tools for success that they learn may not be in accordance with the students’ personal or cultural views for success, which makes them cultural straddlers in the multicultural navigator model. As a part of preparation for success, students receive academic counseling. Program personnel ensure that participants are enrolled in a college preparatory curriculum, are taking the proper courses each year, and are making satisfactory academic progress. In essence, participants are guided through the process by staff members trained to help them focus on their future success, as deemed so by the dominant culture. Participants must remain on track each year of the program in order to apply for college their senior year.

Freshmen, sophomores, and juniors in the program are assisted with a variety of topics such as study skills, time management, and standardized test preparation. High school seniors in the program receive assistance in completing college admission applications, including application fee waivers in many instances. Another component of the senior year experience is the completion of financial aid paperwork and/or scholarship applications for college.

From the onset of the program the purpose of bridging the gap between those who did not have access to educational opportunity and those who did was of utmost importance. The program is undoubtedly one that offers many resources to participants. While qualifications for the Upward Bound Program do not outline preference for a specific racial group’s participation, the qualifications are specific about income guidelines. With participants having to meet low income levels as determined by the U.S. Department of Education, it is not difficult to fathom that African Americans heavily populate the programs, with African Americans’ incomes typically being less than whites’ incomes. “The wealth gap in the United States holds dire implications
when we consider its interrelationship with other social inequalities” (Johnson, 2006). The Upward Bound program has become one of the conduits for combating the black/white academic achievement gap. The question remains to what extent the program bridges the gap. The dropout rate for Upward Bound students is approximately twenty percent, which is more than forty percent less, on average, than peers who do not participate in the program (Moore et. Al. 1997). According to a national evaluation of Upward Bound, students who had the lowest expectations of completing a college degree, which equates to mainstream success, at the time they enrolled in the program, received the greatest impact from the program (Myers et.al. 2004). Furthermore, the study concluded that each year of participation in Upward Bound increases post secondary persistence by approximately nine percentage points. Are there certain components of the program that make school achievement inevitable? Could it possibly be effective in producing the cultural straddlers Carter’s (2005) research describes?

Carter (2005) asserts that multicultural navigators are an essential tool in helping involuntary minority students find balance in and manage the various cultural realms they are a part of. Other research has also recognized the different realms blacks must navigate through. According to the Triple Quandary Theory, blacks are simultaneously a part of three cultural realms: the mainstream (White, middle-class), the Afro-cultural, and the minority realms (Boykin, 1986; Boykin & Ellison, 1995.) The triple quandary theory gives credence to the disjuncture between the values of the school setting and certain values within black culture.

The mainstream realm, as outlined in the research, is a reflection of individualism and competition, which are considered White middle-class values. The African American culture realm reflects the cultural experiences of people of African descent in America. The minority realm is a reflection of oppression faced by Blacks in America. The school setting typically rep-
resents the mainstream (Boykin & Ellison, 1995). Whereas many Black families emphasize communalism and value expressiveness (Boykin, 1986), there may arise a conflict because most classrooms can be characterized by high competition and individualism (Moore & Rowley, 2002). Black students find themselves unsure of how to navigate the realms in order to be successful academically. Carter (2005) would surmise that Black students need to have cultural knowledge that is inclusive of the common background knowledge, values, and beliefs that are shared by mainstream white Americans (Bradford & Harris, 2003). Carter’s (2005) work gives credence to the disconnect between some involuntary minorities’, specifically noncompliant believers, belief in education juxtaposed with their level of compliance with the cultural mandates associated with obtaining an education.

While Carter posits that it is not a lack of belief in the value of obtaining an education, but a resistance to abandoning their cultural identities, central to Ogbu’s argument is involuntary minorities’ perception of unequal chances at prosperity, which manifests itself through school performance. Research affirms that these perceptions of lackluster prosperity, in comparison to whites, are not misplaced. Orr (2003) surmises that students who come from families with access to CDs, IRAs, and other various types of money are already leaps and bounds ahead of students whose families do not. Wealth is a component in terms of equal access to educational opportunity. Being able to pull from various funding streams to pay for private schools, tutors, or other types of opportunities is an advantage that students living in poverty do not have.

When poverty is viewed according to the disproportionate numbers by race, one can more clearly see the disadvantage black students have. Holyfield (2002) notes that 26% of African Americans live in poverty, 25.6% of Latino Americans, almost 50% of Native Americans, but only 10.5% of whites live in poverty. The figure for individuals living in poverty is doubled or
more for minority groups. In 1993 white households had an average net worth of $45,740, and blacks’ net worth was $4,418. In 1995 the median annual household income for whites was $37,178, $22,860 for blacks, and $22,293 for Latinos. For entire groups in this country, decent health care and housing, a high quality education, and a living wage are but a dream” (Holyfield 2002: 64). One would not assume that involuntary minority students’ perceptions of success are not influenced by their parents’ level of poverty. Most Upward Bound students come from the poverty that Holyfield (2002) describes. They are faced with challenges that adults have a difficult time coping with, but they must find a way to be productive students regardless.

The “material conditions,” discussed by Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998), in which black students often live, such as high unemployment and non-traditional family structures are also barriers to school performance. According to the research of Sampson (2002) students from low-income families who have structure within their lives fare better in school than those with less structure. For both students who do have that structure and students who do not, but especially for students who do not, Upward Bound is a source of structure that students can draw from. Tyson (2003) asserts that it is not the opportunity structure that fosters black students’ negative attitude about schooling but the effects of their experiences. Tyson argues that the factors most affecting attitudes towards school are the schooling experience and the roles teachers play. Black students are taught that associations with certain aspects of their culture are negative and not deemed appropriate in the learning environment. The connotation for the students is that they are failing to be successful in school, perpetuating a negative attitude towards schooling.

The fact of the matter does not lie in the assumption that black children, especially those who are economically disadvantaged, do not posses or display appropriate cultural ways of knowing, but that there is a lack of expression of dominant cultural values necessary for success
in school. Cultural capital does not manifest itself in a single functional manner; it lends itself to varying purposes in different situations. Black cultural capital, as described by Carter (2005), is used by some black students to “maintain group identity and distinctive cultural boundaries” (p.49). Conversely, dominant cultural capital, as posited by Bourdieu (1986), provides a pathway by which the future societal success of students can be predicated upon. As posited by Carter (2005), “students who attend the Head of the Charles in New England in the fall and learn that an oarsman is to regatta as a sprinter is to relay race find cultural capital working for them academically, especially as they prepare for their SAT exams” (p.49). Therefore, students displaying elements of dominant cultural capital may indeed be held in a different esteem than students who do not. Research has yet to clearly examine the effects that possessing dominant cultural capital can have on the attitudes and academic performance of students.

A thorough examination of the triggers of poorer school performance by blacks than whites is necessary. For example, if black students are aware of the barriers faced by their parents, which they likely are, Ogbu’s (1978) theory is well founded. If black students see only whites reaping the benefits of educational advancement, it is possible that they would develop an aversion to educational achievement. Likewise, they could as easily develop an aversion to acting white if it means being shunned by the peer group they identify with in terms of race. Similar to Ogbu’s theory of the burden of acting white, Morgan and Mehta (2004) introduce disidentification theory in which black students devalue academic achievement. The theories differ in that disidentification theory does not posit that social ramifications of academic achievement are evident in everyday interaction, but rather manifested as “a series of individual responses to pervasive stereotypes” (Morgan and Mehta 2004: 86). Both theories give credence
to the assertion that black students respond negatively to social stigma that is rooted in academic achievement.

It seems that a program, such as Upward Bound, that provides supplemental assistance to students who are minority, low income and potential first generation college students is a necessity if they are to compete as a whole with students from more affluent backgrounds. Additionally, black students are part of a society in which their culture isn’t valued in the educational realm (Carter 2005, Boykin 1986, Boykin & Ellison 1995), and they are victims of inequality (Johnson 2006) that still runs rampant in the U.S. Clearly, the problem of the achievement gap will not correct itself. At what point does intervention take place that helps to close the achievement gap, and what type of intervention is necessary? Research shows the need for black students to have “multicultural navigators,” as described by Carter (2005), and assistance in gaining the cultural capital necessary to be successful in the educational arena (Delpit 1995). Low-income minority students are faced with what may seem like insurmountable challenges. In their day-to-day lives they are confronted with issues of racism and discrimination, and in addition they are part of an educational system that has done little as a whole to alleviate some of the inequities that exist. The question is what can be done to begin the process of evening the playing field between white and minority students.

Researchers (Delpit 1995 & Carter 2005) assert that disadvantaged youth need guidance to be successful in the dominant mainstream. As Delpit argues, black students need to be taught the “culture of power”. By this she is stating a case similar to Carter’s (2005) in that black children need to be taught how to be comfortable in and navigate through situations in which the dominant group asserts the “culture of power.” They need to be aware of the linguistic and other
Differences that can either be a hindrance to them or something that they navigate through with ease.

Delpit gives the argument that black students are not part of the culture of power that exists in schools. This is a place of privilege in which middle and upper class whites have an advantage due to specific cultural capital that they inherently have by being a part of the dominant culture. Delpit argues that it is the job of teachers to convey to black students the politics of the position they are in and teach them to be successful within the culture. Language codes and value systems that come naturally to white students, according to Delpit, have not been taught to black students. Delpit asserts that black teachers need to play a role in teaching the pertinent components of the culture of power that may be missing from black students’ purview, but they must also play a role in teaching black students the value of their own culture. Understanding how to be successful within the dominant culture is important, but losing the value of one’s own culture within the process is detrimental.

It is the role of Upward Bound personnel to service individual students according to their needs. If the Upward Bound program is designed to promote the academic success of all who participate, a key for student improvement could be targeting personnel to be these multicultural navigators. “Still, in a land of opportunity that is fraught with racial, ethnic, class, and sociocultural dynamics, many low-income African American and Latino youth desire exposure to those who understand their own social realities, and many, especially the non compliant believers, value non-dominant cultural capital” p.149. Carter asserts that inserting multicultural navigators into students’ lives will help them to have a fluid movement through both dominant and non-dominant settings “where cultural codes and rules differ” (2005:150).
As a portion of the Upward Bound personnel’s job is to arrange and/or present workshops that will be beneficial to the students whom they serve, a series of workshops to teach young minority students that particular skill would be a good use of workshop time. In addition to the normal services provided by Upward Bound, it is imperative that the focus also captures the needs of individual groups as well. As evidenced in the research (Carter 2005), minority Upward Bound students can benefit from having specialized assistance that helps them to deal with the specific pressures of being a minority.

Along with the assistance on developing skills to embrace both dominant and non-dominant cultural capital, minority Upward Bound students could benefit from workshops on race, poverty, and class in America. Many of them are in the midst of these issues, and there is a lack of understanding as to the effects. It would benefit them to have a better understanding of the structure of American society and how their participation in Upward Bound can help them to overcome inequality.

2.5 Self Efficacy

Despite barriers one may face there must also be some amount of emphasis placed upon one’s belief in his or her own ability to achieve a given outcome- self-efficacy. What students believe they can accomplish is critical to their levels of achievement. As noted by Margous and McCabe (2004), it is not possible to know the level of self-efficacy necessary to influence academic performance, but there is a balance between it having a positive effect and a negative effect on student performance. It can, however, be noted that there are factors that contribute to one’s sense of academic self-efficacy. Among those is the role parents play in students’ development of self efficacy.
Ogbu (1978) pointed out the negative outcome that parental influence, whether directly or indirectly, can have on student achievement, but research shows that there are also positive results that arise from parental influence. According to Bandura (1986) when people do not have a high sense of self-efficacy in any given situation, they may put forth less effort in achieving. Weiser and Riggio (2010) claim that the development of this self-efficacy is strongly tied to family background. The researchers assert that characteristics such as family structure, parental child relationships, and parental involvement in school can greatly impact academic outcomes for students. Kenny (1987) describes positive parent child relationships as those that exhibit emotional support, warmth, and facilitation of independence, and according to Weiser and Riggio (2010) these relationships can be a powerful determinant of children’s levels of self-efficacy.

One of the strongest predictors of school persistence and performance is self efficacy (Wood and Locke 1987; Schunk 1991; Bandura 1993). Nurmi (1991) posited that parents set the stage for children’s development of values and aspirations. As such, Nurmi theorized that parents can heavily impact children’s perception of their future orientation towards success and their “internal beliefs in their own influence over the future” (p. 52).

2.6 Summary

A vast range of literature exists that describes the achievement gap between blacks and whites in the United States. Some early theories have been refuted; others, such as oppositional culture and the burden of acting white, continue to be explored. Further investigation is necessary to provide deeper understanding of the black white achievement gap and possible anecdotes for combating it. Assessment of oppositional culture theory, the burden of acting white, and the multicultural navigator concept provide insights into the black white achievement gap, which is
pertinent to making progress towards shrinking the gap. Additionally, examining the problem beyond the obvious structural barriers and bringing focus to more of the agency related aspects of achievement, such as self-efficacy, can also provide insight into how to best equip larger numbers of individuals with the tools necessary to be successful in the dominant cultural main-stream. It is a mistake to discount the role that self-efficacy plays in academic achievement, and understanding more about the roots of self-efficacy moves us a step closer to understanding how to solve the problem of the achievement gap.
3 METHOD

3.1 Rationale for Qualitative Research

Identifying the causes of the black white achievement gap and the nuances that subsequently lie within each is a matter of careful study of various possibilities. Investigating the work of John Ogbu (1978) and Prudence Carter (2005) using a group of black students who were low income, potential first generation college Upward Bound alumni allowed for in-depth analysis of the background of students in terms of the achievement gap. Qualitative research lent itself to following up for clarification of data and being able to determine the depth of correlations that may have existed in the data. As stated by Howe (1992), “explaining human behavior requires appeal to beliefs, desires, and goal-directedness” (p.239). In my attempts to add to the body of knowledge regarding the black white achievement gap, I felt it of the utmost importance to delve into aspects of the participants’ experiences that they had some choice in controlling, such as friends and habits, and the rationale behind those choices. I sought to ascertain information beyond the structural reasons for the achievement gap, such as unequal schools and racism. Doing so called for a qualitative research approach versus quantitative.

When utilizing a grounded theory methodology a researcher must make a decision regarding the approach to the use of literature. In its original form, introduced by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, grounded theory methodology was, and still is, conducted without investigating prior literature on the research topic (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Glaser 2007). The theory that emerges is to do so without the influence of pre-conceived thoughts and impressions gathered from other literature. More modern approaches to grounded theory suggest that literature, personal experiences, and professional experiences can assist in developing theoretical sensitivity (Strauss & Corbin 1990; Charmaz 2006). I follow the latter approach to grounded theory.
Grounded theory methodology can be used in a variety of different contexts, but for this research I focused on the examination of oppositional culture theory against a specific program model while assessing the effectiveness of this program in achieving equity for students of color, making grounded theory an ideal choice. As stated by Strauss and Corbin (1990) “qualitative methods can be used to uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is yet known” (p.19). The study was designed to better determine if the Upward Bound program has a place in achieving educational equity for students of color as well as provide a method of exploring oppositional culture theory that has not been utilized in previous research.

Using the grounded theory method not only allowed the oppositional culture theory to be explored, but it also served as a catalyst for the emergence of new theory. GTM is an ideal research method for studying the black/white achievement gap because the debate over the root causes has continued for decades, and a methodology that allows theory to emerge was beneficial due to it having the flexibility to either support existing theory or introduce new theory. Of the research that has been done regarding the black white achievement gap, there has not been a study with GTM as the method of analysis. Grounded theory methodology provided a more rich understanding of the black white achievement gap as well as the contributions of Upward Bound to academic success of alumni and their perceptions of academic achievement.

The grounded theory method was first introduced by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss forty years ago in response to an untapped realm in qualitative data analysis that restricted research to existing theories. With GTM, Glaser and Strauss envisioned flexible methods of data analysis which allow the generation of new theory that emerges from the data. In the creation of these methods Glaser and Strauss sought to encourage new understandings of social phenomena through a lens of discovery. They felt that “improving social scientists’ capacity for generating
theory” was an important step to be taken in qualitative methodology (Glaser & Strauss 1967; p. vii). It is important to employ methodologies that are suited to the type of research being done. Because the black white achievement gap has been a continued source of debate, with little resolve, utilizing a research methodology that allows theory to emerge is a plausible means of gaining further insight into the problem.

The overarching idea behind GTM is that theory emerges from the data itself (Strauss 1987; Strauss & Corbin 1998; Charmaz 2000). Data comes in a wide array of formats such as field notes, diaries, transcripts, newspapers, and many others. The qualitative data being analyzed must be rich or sufficient enough for theory to be discovered (Charmaz 2000). In order to ensure the necessary depth was present in the data the interview schedule was followed, but careful detail was given to follow up questions. While grounded theory methods allow flexibility in the techniques used for data analysis, there are very specific stylistic measures and features that must be incorporated in a GTM study. These include theoretical sampling, making constant comparisons, and the use of a coding paradigm, which will ensure that concepts are developed (Strauss 1987).

Strauss defines theoretical sampling as “sampling directed by the evolving theory; it is a sampling of events, activities, populations, etc” (Strauss 1987; 21). Theoretical sampling is the analytic strategy that GTM researchers use to decide which data to collect and how to organize the data into groups and subgroups, according to similarities. By making theoretical comparisons between and within these, the researcher is in essence allowing the theory to materialize. Theoretical sampling is of great importance in the theory discovery process. In the initial sampling of approximately the first six interviews, as many categories as possible were identified.
Grounded theory is a valuable strategy for conducting qualitative research because it is suitable for a broad scope of research topics and can be modified to fit a particular research goal. A major value of GTM is that it can be used in conjunction with other qualitative research methods, such as historical comparative methods. Grounded theory is unique in its ability to both build theory while simultaneously serving as a data analysis tool.

A limitation of GTM is the lack of consistency about how to do grounded theory properly. Many researchers find grounded theory methodology difficult to do because there is disagreement, even among the main proponents of grounded theory, about procedural issues. When researchers endeavor to use GTM they inevitably find that there has been much variation in the practice of grounded theory since Glaser and Strauss first introduced it forty years ago. The original methodology outlines four phases of coding; Glaser (1978) outlines two phases along with several sub phases; and Strauss (1987) and Strauss and Corbin (1998) outline three phases of coding. It is not clear which methodological practice will yield the desired outcome. This research closely followed the latter coding guidelines.

Another limitation of grounded theory is that it is very time consuming. No matter which method of coding a researcher chooses to use, the process of using GTM is lengthy. Each step, according to the creators and modifiers of the method, is crucial in the theory discovery process. There is a tendency to want to skip steps or not complete them to the fullest extent because it is such a labor intensive process.

In order to assess the quality of a study, it is necessary to have a set of criteria by which it is judged. Strauss and Corbin (1998) assert that the criteria used to judge research that uses GTM should be evaluated according to the following: the way in which the sample was collected, the major categories that emerged, the events or incidents that pointed to the categories, the
manner in which theoretical sampling guided the data collection, the hypotheses pertaining to conceptual relations, instances in which the hypotheses did not explain what was happening in the data, and how and why the core category was selected (see Appendix E for full description of criteria). Based on the seven criteria for evaluation outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998) I conducted research using transcripts from interviews with Upward Bound alumni and counselors.

3.2 Foundational Paradigm

Every researcher has a paradigm from which he or she operates. It is the foundation upon which theory and analysis are built. As such, my research efforts are rooted in an interpretivist paradigm. The stance of the researcher can often be determined by the audience simply by nature of the manner in which the research was conducted. GTM, however, is not a purely positivist nor interpretivist methodology. It was designed so as not to exclude any researcher from following his or her beliefs. A qualitative method can just as easily be looked upon as interpretivist, positivist, or critical (Klein and Myers 1999).

Ontology

In an interpretivist paradigm, data are derived from the accuracy with which a researcher describes an event, practice, or behavior and its ability to account for the happenings within a phenomenon, population, or subject being studies (Lin 1998). The only realities are the researcher’s depiction of what has transpired and the sense the researcher is able to make of realities presented by the research subjects or circumstances. As stated by Berger and Luckmann (1966):

“What is “real” to a Tibetan monk may not be “real” to an American businessman. The “knowledge” of the criminal differs from the knowledge” of the criminologist. It follows that specific agglomerations of “reality” and “knowledge” pertain to specific social contexts, and that these relationships will have to be included in an adequate sociological analysis of these contexts. (P. 3)
The perspectives brought to light by the subjects provide the validity for the merits of a study; however, the lens through which the researcher views is subject to his interpretation of reality, based upon lived experiences.

**Epistemology**

“Interpretivism, with its constructivist view of knowledge and intentionalist conception of causation, encourages a view of humans as active and self-creating” (Howe 1992: 243).

Though I had knowledge of the population being studied, it was not until I was able to analyze the experiences of the participants in the study through the scope of their words that I could construct a narrative. The participants created their own narrative, which I weaved together, making the effort in creating knowledge collaborative. The ways of knowing available to me came from my perceptions of participants’ words, responses, and body language. My prior experience as an Upward Bound Counselor and an Upward Bound Director played a role in my interpretations of subtle nuances that may have gone unnoticed by someone who had never had close interaction with that population of students.

While my questions and the theoretical sensitivity I was developing shaped the framework of the trajectory of each interview, it was the interaction between the participants and me that gave rise to meaningful data. I acted as a sponge, soaking up each piece of knowledge imparted to me by participants. My understanding of their meanings was clarified with each thought shared with me.

**Axiology**

The values that were intuitive to me as a researcher were not discouraged within the interpretivist paradigm but rather a recognized occurrence within the chosen methodology. I chose to interview Upward Bound alumni and counselors because I believe their stories can have
a profound effect on further understanding the black white achievement gap. I believe that education is the great equalizer, but I do not believe this to be so in a traditional sense, such as the education obtained from books. I value the point of view of individuals who have been marginalized and find that their insights can lead to a greater understanding of the extent of structure and agency in the ongoing discussion about blacks’ underachievement in comparison with whites.

These values set the tone for the nature of my inquiry and the desire to contribute to this body of knowledge. Granted, these values caused me to constantly grapple with and keep my level of objectivity in check. This consistency of remaining cognizant of my values contributed much to the overall success of the research.

3.3 Researcher as Instrument

As an individual with six years of experience working in TRIO programs, four of which were in the Upward Bound, I had insider status while collecting data. The alumni and counselors interviewed allowed me to do so without hesitation due to my understanding of their population and community. It would be untrue to lead the reader to believe that certain opinions had not been formed while working so intimately with the population studied. The opportunity to conduct this study, however, gave me the ability to see the population from a new and fresh perspective. Certainly the population was and remains dear to me, but in that admission lies the strength of my ability to discover theory that would speak to encouraging progress in alleviating issues of achievement within the population, which would require setting bias aside.

The issue of whether GTM is inductive, deductive, or a combination of both remains unsettled. Charmaz (2000) points out that grounded theorists avoid interpretations based on previous research or theoretical frameworks, which would require deductive reasoning. However,
LaRossa (2005) concedes that connecting concepts to other concepts based upon past research or theories is acceptable. It is difficult to argue that researchers bring no biases into their grounded theory analyses. However, as pointed out by Strauss and Corbin (1990):

To begin with, the researcher has to be thinking about the data—preferably steeped in them, to know a lot about the area under study. At the same time, he or she has to be puzzled or disturbed about some feature of those data or about their interpretations, so that questions and answers will be raised and sought. Although knowledgeable about the data and theory, the investigator somehow has to escape the very features of his or her work that may otherwise block the new perspective inherent in the sudden hunch, the flash of insight, the brilliant idea, or the profoundly different theoretical formulation. (P.29)

I submit that in working with the population of Upward Bound participants, I became intrigued with the questions surrounding their achievement and success. I was indeed steeped in the data in that I was immersed in the lived experiences of the students on a day to day basis. I began to contemplate how so many students in this particular group could defy both societal and theoretically based expectations of them. I knew from research that their achievement, or lack thereof, had been chalked up to several explanations that never seemed to ring true to me, or at least not to the extent purported by research. It was at that point that my desire to better understand the black white achievement gap intensified. I had access and opportunity to make a difference in this ongoing debate. The vested interest I had and prior knowledge I’d gained made me more determined to respect the guidelines of the GTM process in order to legitimately weigh in on the discussion.

The reality is that GTM is both an inductive and a deductive process. While indicators, concepts, and categories do emerge from the data, the linkages between them stem from the researcher’s recognition and prior knowledge. When a researcher makes the necessary interpretations in grounded theory he or she is deducing what is happening, not only from the standpoint of the data, but also from the personal experiences and knowledge he or she may have. GTM is in-
ductive in the sense that theory is produced from analyzing the data itself but deductive in the sense of the role the researcher plays in the analysis.

Grounded theory methods require what is often called immersion in the data. The techniques used in GTM not only allow for but demand that researchers truly get to know their data. Each piece of data is reviewed and constantly compared, and this makes it possible for a researcher to make new connections between concepts and indicators that may have otherwise been missed. GTM is useful in analyzing textual materials such as interview transcripts, field notes, and observations, among others, and thus the interviews I collected made GTM ideal. In ethnographic studies researchers observe cultural groups in their settings, and the interpretations that the researcher makes can only be from his or her own experiences. With GTM, constant comparison of the data is believed to ease the effect of researcher bias, as does disclosure of the researcher’s position during an ethnographic study. In ethnographic work, from the collection of data to the analysis and interpretation, the researcher sees the group being studied through the lens of personal experiences. GTM also involves analysis of the data through the lens of personal experience or knowledge.

3.4 Using the Literature

Use of the literature was a difficult aspect of using GTM to navigate both from a methodological standpoint and from the stance of technical process in dissertation writing. Historically, there are differences amongst the originators of GTM and their contemporaries regarding how the literature should be utilized. The original instructions of Glaser and Strauss (1967) do not support using previous literature to develop theory in any way. The premise is that doing so would distort the researcher’s perception of new theory development in favor of finding evidence to support existing literature or knowledge. The originators of the methodology suggest that pri-
or literature should be reserved only for comparison and discussion of data after data collection of the current study is near completion.

The process of completing a dissertation, however, requires extensive review of the literature before a topic is fully vetted. Fortunately, all is not lost in terms of methodological soundness from doing a literature review first. There are grounded theorists who believe it is unnecessary to ignore previous literature (Charmaz 2006). Strauss and Corbin (1990) even suggest that after a particular category has proven to be relevant to the data, exploring prior literature to determine what was ascertained about the category is appropriate. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that technical literature can be used in a number of ways. Among them are 1) to stimulate theoretical sensitivity 2) as secondary sources of data 3) to stimulate questions 4) to direct theoretical sampling and 5) as supplementary validation (pp. 50-52).

3.5 Sampling

For the purposes of this study sampling techniques followed the guidelines of grounded theory methodology in each stage of research. Individuals who had specific knowledge about the Upward Bound program were selected to participate in the study; however, the techniques of grounded theory served as a guide relational, discriminate and theoretical sampling. Early on in the stages of a study, “open sampling can be done purposively or systematically” (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p. 176).

During the open coding phase of this study sampling was done purposively. Initially, I was concerned only with the fact that participants had been in an Upward Bound program. As I was sampling to discover categories that would be relevant to the study, I wanted first to ensure that I left enough latitude for the maximum number of categories to emerge. This allowed for later ease of theoretical sampling or “sampling on the basis of concepts that have proven theoret-
ical relevance to the evolving theory” (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p. 176). The memos I had done helped to provide me with various pathways I could explore to become more specific in the sampling process, and in doing so I identified a segment of the population whose voice and story I had not represented—individuals who had not attended college. The properties and dimensions for each category were greatly enriched by the use of theoretical sampling. Without the use of theoretical sampling, the pertinent information learned from Kesha, Sasha, Bruce, and Jessica would not have been included in the study. Once it appeared that categories had emerged as being theoretically relevant, meaning they were continuously present throughout the data the process of sampling specific events and responses, relating them to one another, allowed for teasing out properties and dimensions.

3.6 Recruitment

Using a snowball sampling technique, black Upward Bound alumni were located and interviewed. As a former Upward Bound director, I had kept in contact with some of my former students, and they in turn had kept in contact with former students from their program as well as other Upward Bound programs. Twenty-four total alumni were sought, and as the data collection and analysis technique, grounded theory, does not prescribe for pre-determined numbers, this number was flexible should the data not completely emerge in the stated number. Alumni for the study were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six years old. I made certain to collect data from alumni who continued on to college as well as alumni who chose a different path. Analyzing information from alumni who proceeded to college versus those who did not provided the opportunity to glean insight into more of the cultural and structural factors that affect perceptions of success and behaviors. Utilizing recent alumni allowed information to be extracted from individuals who had the full benefit of completing the Upward Bound program, and it also al-
owed participants to speak upon recollections of Upward Bound participation that were relatively fresh.

Additionally, I contacted a convenience sample via telephone of six counselors who are members of the Virginia Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel, the professional organization serving Upward Bound personnel in the state of Virginia, to request their participation. Again, having been a former Upward Bound director, I was able to contact former colleagues who, in turn, were able to give me contact information for individuals whose input would be useful but whose contact information I did not have. Selected counselors had three or more years of experience in the field to ensure they had the appropriate knowledge base to provide adequate data. Interviewing the counselors provided more information that supported or refuted the idea of the Upward Bound program providing multicultural navigators for black students. Getting a better understanding of the extent to which Upward Bound counselors played a role in students becoming cultural straddlers was also a benefit to interviewing personnel.

3.7 Data Collection

This research data was derived from conducting individual interviews with thirty total participants over a five month time frame ranging from September 2010 to January 2011. Each interview was conducted in a library study room, participant’s home, office, or empty classroom. I suggested the choice of location but clarified with each participant that the location was comfortable and suitable for him or her. Each participant was spoken to via telephone prior to conducting the actual interview. I provided a brief overview of the purpose of the study and why they were selected to participate. This conversation allowed for questions from them before they arrived at the interview, and it also gave them the opportunity to decline participation before arrival. I also provided an overview of the information to participants at the beginning of each in-
terview, once again explaining their ability to stop participation at any time. Each participant read and signed the appropriate consent form.

The interviews, especially those initially conducted, followed the appropriate interview schedule (see Appendices A and B for interview schedules) as I wanted to ensure that I was collecting all the necessary information. As I continued in the process, the interview schedules were also followed, but I learned to interject more follow up questions and probe deeper into topics that had the potential to give rise to new information. I asked questions from the interview schedule in the order that made the most sense for each particular interview so as not to interrupt the flow. Participants were comfortable with a more conversational tone, and I attempted to keep the nature of interviews directed in that vein. Interviews averaged around 45 minutes.

3.8 Demographic Survey

Each participant completed a brief survey prior to the interview (See appendices C and D) inquiring about basic information pertinent to their participation in the study, such as identifying information and years of involvement in the Upward Bound program. Information from the demographic surveys aided not only in follow up questions, but also in later comparisons of participants that bore fruitful information relevant to the study.

3.9 Field Notes

I took time after each interview to record facts that may later have some level of importance during analysis. I took note of information such as where the interview took place and the mood or demeanor of the participant. I reviewed this information with my memos, which will be described later, as I thought it would be helpful as I was recalling the impact of certain interviews when comparing them with others.
3.10 Data Analysis

3.11 Coding

Qualitative data is assumed to be inductive, that is, moving from observation to theory. The qualitative researcher approaches the research topic with a general question rather than a particular theoretical perspective. The neutral position of the researcher allows theory to be discovered rather than imposed upon a topic. The discovery of theory takes place as researchers go through the phases of open, axial, and selective coding.

Open coding is the first step in analysis and involves breaking the data down into “discrete parts,” comparing them for similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin 1998; p. 102). During open coding the researcher does either a line by line analysis of the data or a sectional analysis. It is during this phase that indicators—words, phrases, and or sentences—are linked to concepts—labels or names for indicators. It is through the constant comparison of data that theory begins to emerge. By doing a line by line analysis, I was able to flesh out concepts and indicators in preparation for developing as many significant categories as possible. Going through the data line by line for the first several interviews conducted allowed me to sharpen my theoretical sensitivity.

An important element in the understanding of induction and deduction in GTM is grasping the fact that “grounded theory is based on a concept-indicator model” (Strauss 1987; p. 25). The indicators are taken directly from the data being analyzed and are words or phrases that essentially provide the context for the development of concepts. Though grounded theory is seen primarily as inductive, there is support for it being both inductive and deductive simply in the nature of the analysis. An assumption of qualitative research, including GTM, is that the researcher remains unbiased in the data analysis process. However, many recognize that the per-
spective of the researcher cannot be completely objective. Researchers bring their experiences, opinions and biases along with them, subconsciously even, as they are analyzing data. Indicators are selected and grouped according to the researcher’s current knowledge and experience. “What is a valid indicator, and what is not, is in the eye of the beholder” (Larossa 2005; p. 853).

An important part of open coding is theoretical saturation, the point at which indicators are not contributing anything new to concepts. It is often difficult, especially for novice grounded theorists, to ascertain when theoretical saturation has been reached. After nine interviews I felt I had reached saturation. While this may have been so in light of the lens through which I was viewing the data it was important to go back through the data collected and look for missed opportunities for theory in the data, broadening my lens and opening my mind to new categories. “It is not unusual in the early stages of a research project for investigators to overlook or fail to pick up on the significance or meaning of certain events or episodes because of lack of sensitivity” (Strauss & Corbin 1990: 181). LaRossa (2005) suggests that researchers be mindful of how abstract a concept is; if it is too abstract, there will not be enough indicators, but if it is not abstract enough there will be too many indicators.

Concepts become categories once they are linked to one another. Categories symbolize a more defined set of similar happenings, actions, issues or behaviors. It is the constant comparison of data that forwards the coding process along, and thus the discovery of theory. By sampling the data I had already collected, I was able to recode such that the data became more cohesive; I was then able to move forward with continuing interviews according to the holes and gaps that I found.

As a result of re-analyzing the data, I conducted twenty one more interviews which consisted of a wider range of participants. Among the areas that needed to be explored further was
data from individuals who had not gone to college after completing the Upward Bound program, males, and counselors in the Upward Bound program. Gathering data from individuals representing these perspectives proved to be invaluable in the development of my theory. Originally, after conducting nine interviews, unbeknownst to me I’d gleaned only surface level data; there was little richness or depth. I hadn’t allowed the theory to develop richly and properly. Staying true to the methodology outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990), I was able to ascertain avenues I had not pursued effectively. As I continued to collect data I emerged into the phase of axial coding.

During axial coding the theory discovery process continues by identifying subcategories and consists of “intense analysis done around one category at a time” (Strauss 1987; p. 32). Subcategories clarify the answers to questions such as who, where, how and why. LaRossa (2005) explains that subcategories do not translate to being under a category, but rather related to a category. During the axial coding phase the researcher is adding depth to the categories that were identified during open coding by giving them properties and dimensions. Properties are the “specific characteristics of a category,” and dimensions are the range within a category (Strauss & Corbin 1998; 101). It is during the axial coding phase that researchers should begin to develop hypotheses about the relationships of categories.

During the axial coding phase, I carefully explored each category. Doing so allowed me to focus on fleshing out the dimensions. Determining the dimensions within categories provided further insight as to whether categories had been properly named and identified. The dimensions that I was able to discover revealed, in some cases, that the general connotation of a particular category may have been correct, but there was better wording that more clearly depicted what each category expressed about the data. Developing each category to the fullest extent made the
comparisons between the categories more fruitful, thus making determination of the relationships between them more concrete.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) define selective coding as “the process of integrating and refining theory.” In this phase of coding, the categories that have emerged during the coding process are examined for their relationship to one another. This phase of coding can be considered as the culmination phase because the categories that have emerged from all of the coding and constant comparisons will be pulled together to demonstrate the theory that has been discovered. In order to build theory the categories that have emerged through the coding process should be interrelated and the relationship between each of the categories should be clear. In addition, the category that carries the most explanatory power is chosen as the core category, or central category, which has the power to bind the other categories together in order to weave a narrative.

3.12 Memoing

As mentioned earlier, the constant comparisons between and within concepts and categories help theory to emerge throughout the process. A helpful tool in recording discoveries and thought processes that emerge throughout the process is memo writing. Memos can serve as ways of tabling an idea that a researcher feels may be helpful later on in analysis or even in recording hunches that he or she may get as the process unfolds. Memos are insights that the researcher has and can be used as the researcher sees fit throughout the stages of coding.

I found it helpful to utilize memos from the first attempts of data analysis through the last phases of coding. Doing so reminded me of connections in the data that may have been lost in the process had they not been noted at a particular moment. For example, two particular memos that turned out to be important in theory development are as follows:
“It appears that what may come w/ the black/white dichotomy sometimes is awareness of lack of socially accepted behaviors. Check SW’s comments against DW’s comments.” Also, “Could the “self-loving encouragement” be UB staff encouraging students to embrace who they are culturally while still adapting to mainstream expectations? Loving one’s self and accepting who you are is a theme that runs through the interviews.”

Integrating

Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that integration, the process of compiling the story line together into a narrative, is a daunting task. Much coding and development of categories has been done up until this point, and it then becomes time to bring the pieces together into a logical and cohesive fit. They posit that there are five steps which must be followed in order to complete this process. The first step is 1) “explicating the story line” 2) “relating subsidiary categories around the core category” 3) “relating categories at the dimensional level” 4) “validating those relationships against the data” and 5) “filling in categories that may need further refinement and/or development” (pp.117-118).

The process of integration does not occur in the linear fashion in which one may naturally like to handle it. Rather, it involves a nuanced series of movements in and out of each step. The manner in which integration occurs in each study is the same, as the guidelines for achieving it are the same. For this study, the process of integration seemed more manageable due to the attention to detail given in each phase of coding. Once the core category was determined and the remaining categories were assembled accordingly, the matter at hand was fleshing out the appropriate dimensions. It was important to comb back through the data for each individual category to make certain the data sufficiently supported the narrative being created.
3.13 Data Management

Not being a seasoned researcher, the task of managing data was difficult and took much thought and preparation. A particularly difficult aspect of data management was transcription. Interviews with Upward Bound participants and counselors were recorded and transcribed; however, from the process of deciding how much to transcribe to creating the time between interviews to actually do it was difficult. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that seasoned researchers may not need to transcribe all interviews, but novice researchers should do so as the theoretical sensitivity to decipher whether one has gathered as much as is necessary will not likely be developed. Accordingly, every interview was transcribed. The Dragon Speaking Naturally 10 software was used to transcribe the majority of the interviews. However, to expedite the process of transcribing in order to focus on analysis, latter interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist.

3.14 Ethical Considerations

Maintaining the integrity of any research within an institution of higher education begins with obtaining proper approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and therefore following guidelines set forth in the research proposal. I made certain to keep myself aligned with the components of the study as outlined and approved. As GTM does not dictate a specific number of subjects to interview, but the IRB does, I had to adhere to both sets of guidelines. I did so by remaining close to my data to determine whether or not changes needed to be made to the proposal I submitted for IRB approval.

An additional consideration was the fact that I had been in close contact with several of the participants during their time as Upward Bound students, as several of them had attended the program I directed. Because of this I had to take extra care and time in explaining about the vol-
untary nature of their participation in the study. For the alumni whom I had had more direct contact with, I spent more time discussing the importance of viewing me as a researcher versus an individual who had administered their program and shared parts of their lives with them. My concern was that they would feel the need to say things they thought I would want to hear rather than giving me their honest thoughts and opinions.

I also had an ethical consideration on a personal level. I contemplated this research for a number of years, and I have always been passionate about working with the population of students represented in the Upward Bound Program. Specifically, I have had a strong curiosity about the black students in the program who meet the low income, potential first generation college student characteristics. I wanted to be able to contribute information that would speak to their specific issues with academic achievement and find support for how the gap between black and white students could be closed. Therefore, I had to constantly remind myself to remain neutral. I had seen many of these students “achieve” great things, and I therefore knew that it was possible and that there were students who did not fit at all into the oppositional culture framework of academic achievement. In seeking to understand why, my personal suppositions and theories could not be a relevant factor in data analysis.
4 RESULTS IN CONTEXT

The questions that guided the original purpose of this research, whether or not participants in the Upward Bound Program experience oppositional culture and the burden of acting white and whether or not the Upward Bound program assists in producing cultural straddlers are addressed in this chapter. Additionally, I explain the importance of the role of self-efficacy in the achievement paradigm of the black students studied; self-efficacy, one’s belief in his or her ability, emerged as the central theme or “core category” of this research. I provide a summation of the grounded theory analysis that took place and the factors that spoke to the final results.

4.1 Oppositional Culture and the Burden of Acting White

The Upward Bound alumni repeatedly demonstrated not only their belief in the benefits of education and the ability to get it, but also a recognition and rejection of the potential stigma of the burden of acting white. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) contend that a major reason some blacks perform poorly in school is their view of superior academic performance as acting white and ascribing to such as an invitation to being shunned by other black students. The burden of acting white adds another dimension to oppositional culture, suggesting that black students’ perceived aversion towards school performance is not simply due to a lack of belief in the returns to education, but also an unmistakable desire to remain racially and culturally authentic. There was recognition by students that some behaviors were attributed to acting white, but this did not seem to be a deterrent. Dessie stated:

I would say that when people were referring to acting black, most people would think of acting ghetto, not having a lot of knowledge, not having enough education, not having a good vocabulary, and when people referred to people acting white it was pretty much saying that you are smart, you know what to say, you’re getting good grades, you know what you wanna do in life. So I didn’t pay any attention to that at all.
This same sentiment was echoed by Shaquelle, who stated:

Oh my God, I was always known as the white black girl because I don’t speak ebonics, and I speak in complete sentences or I try to. I don’t use a lot of slang words. I don’t use profanity so I guess I was considered the white girl because I spoke proper English um but I don’t really think that my race is defined by my language. I believe my race is defined strictly by my skin color and maybe my build, but not necessarily my actions because there are also the white people that act black according to society’s view so whatever you want to deem as black acting because they curse or talk a certain way and if you dress a certain way or act a certain way you’re considered a part of the African American community instead of the white or Caucasian community. I just kind of look at it like at the end of the day I know who I am and what I am, and I’ll define my race by my actions.

Shaquelle recognized that definite views on what is considered white behavior or black behavior are promoted within society, but these views did not prevent her from staying the course she had chosen for herself. It was not with her white peers but her black peers that she came to be known as the white black girl. Being referred to as “acting white” did not cause Shaquelle to behave differently or succumb to behaviors deemed as more black. Both Shaquelle and Dessie displayed a strong resilience to negative commentary.

Shaquelle can be likened to Carter’s (2005) description of a cultural mainstreamer. Cultural mainstreamers, asserts Carter, “often rejected their co-ethnic peers’ cultural codes about how to dress and speak, about musical tastes, about racial composition of friendship network” (p. 33). Carter explains that these students exhibit characteristics that are ideal to teachers and do not have trouble assimilating into dominant cultural values. Shaquelle was labeled “the white black girl” because she did subscribe to behaviors that were seen as racially authentic. She found herself at odds with the cultural characteristics that were deemed as authentic in African American culture versus the dominant culture. While acting white was not a characterization that Shaquelle seemed to find bothersome, it nevertheless gave credence to cultural distinctions
made by members of minority groups. Shaquelle did not bother trying to fit into expectations her black peers may have had of her, as evidenced in her statements.

I found that students who were cultural mainstreamers were equally equipped with support, cultural capital, and mentorship, but they were lacking the ability to code switch. These students demonstrated an inability to reconcile their own culture with the dominant culture, but this did not seem to affect their ability or desire to achieve. Shaquelle clearly demonstrates that the burden of acting white was present, but the burden was not such that school performance suffered as a result. As noted in figure one, the ability to code switch was a component of the model for self-efficacy, but it was also an important factor in students’ ability to become the ideal cultural straddler. Students who were lacking in the code-switching category did not suffer academically, but they did not fare as well socially, which prevented them from being in the optimum position of a well-rounded student.

Bringing more insight to the discussion, Howard shared the vantage point of being black amongst various cultures and how those dynamics manifested themselves. Howard shared:

In high school my mom went to the county and switched my school, and it was different than the city schools because the city schools were mostly urban and basically ninety percent black. When I switched schools the school was about fifty percent white, thirty percent black, and twenty percent other. So now it went from me just competing or being average with everyone else to me competing with the white kids and the middle Easterners and the Africans and the Asians and everyone else.

Howard stated that the students from other countries “all got good grades and all pushed each other.” Fordham and Ogbu (1986) claim that minorities who came to the United States voluntarily do not feel the same societal pressures to perform academically because their outlook identifies America as a land of opportunity versus an oppressive success stifling nation. Howard’s account of foreign students getting good grades supports Fordham and Ogbu’s assessment
regarding voluntary/immigrant minorities, but the explanations regarding involuntary minorities’ poor performance in school are not as strongly supported.

The students in this study who appeared to be well adjusted to the dominant culture, comfortable within their own culture, displayed the most confidence, and were college attendees were all what Carter (2005) termed cultural straddlers. I discovered a correlation between students possessing all four categories, as depicted in figure 2, their level of self-efficacy, and them being cultural straddlers. The ideal scenario for students is for them to easily navigate the cultural codes in the dominant culture as well as those within their own culture.

As the data emerged in this study, and Fordham and Ogbu’s assertions regarding involuntary minorities’ attitudes about school were not supported, the grounded theory methodology constantly yielded data indicating self-efficacy as a critical component of this study. As will be explained in the following chapters, the participants in this study, despite obstacles and barriers before them, found ways to persevere and achieve academic success as defined by this study—graduating from high school and attending college. They believed in their ability to do so, and they did not allow their minority status to define the depths of their success.

Many factors emerged as important in the academic success, as defined in chapter three, of students studied. However, each factor that emerged played a supporting role to self-efficacy (see figure 1). Support, mentorship, dominant cultural values, ability to code switch and cultural capital each emerged as significant in terms of their effect on black students’ academic success. Subsequent chapters explain the dimensions and direct impact of each of these. As posited by Margolis and McCabe (2004), the whole key to being successful in an endeavor does not lie in the fact that they believe in themselves and their capabilities; however, the environment and support mechanisms in place, coupled with self-efficacy is critical.
Figures 1 and 2 provide an understanding of the needs of participants in the study that emerged in the data as relevant in them achieving a higher level of success. In figure one, each factor that could be considered a barrier to student self-efficacy, if it were lacking, is depicted. Support, dominant cultural values, mentorship, the ability to code switch, and cultural capital are structural in nature, but they directly affect student self-efficacy in terms of academic achievement. Figure 2 provides an understanding of the direct impact of lacking certain elements on levels of student achievement. From figure two, the elements that emerged in the data as necessary to fitting Carter’s depiction of cultural straddlers, non-compliant believers, and cultural mainstreamers is displayed.
Figure 1 Model for Self-Efficacy
4.2 The Role of Self-Efficacy & the Makings of Cultural Straddlers

Skinner et al. (1998) surmised that youth displaying high self-efficacy have a greater chance than their peers with low self-efficacy of setting higher, more substantial goals for themselves and challenging their abilities. Research has also shown a connection between self-efficacy and black students’ future educational expectations (Kerpelman and Mosher 2004, Lent et al. 1984, and Saunders et al. 2004). Similarly, students in the current study realized the value of obtaining higher education and were confident in their ability to produce these results. When directly asked about whether or not it was important to get good grades in high school Renita’s response was:

It was for myself and my black friends they really didn’t care about education. So it was my job to rise above that. I let myself know I can do it, and I would feel smart when I got good grades. When I got to the White side’s; level it was like okay I’m up with you guys. Let me push myself to continuously improve.

This was the type of response that was pervasive throughout the interviews conducted. Most participants displayed a strong belief that they had the ability to excel and persevere. Dorian’s viewpoint was representative terms of self-efficacy; it embodied the tone expressed by many participants. When asked a similar question about getting good grades, Dorian’s response was:

Well me as a person like I always want to do my best because of the type of personality I have. I feel like I’m better than anybody. I feel like I’m confident in myself and when I see somebody else doing good I can do better. I just try harder and harder. Me and other people had that conversation where most people in the world, well not even in the world, in the program, they’ll see somebody doing good and think they can’t do that, so they’ll just stop. I always expressed to them you can do the same thing and get the same grade. You breathe the same air they breathe and they put their pants on the same way you put your pants on; so just push yourself.

Of the twenty four students interviewed, twenty went on to attend college immediately after graduating from high school; one had a delayed entry to college, and three did not attend
college. Renita and Dorian represented the majority of the students interviewed in terms of their views on education and their role in making educational success a reality. Both of these participants used a word that was repeated continuously throughout the interviews—“push.” The participants spoke about pushing themselves to succeed, regardless of circumstances or disadvantages. The word push was also used continuously in a different vein, referring to a push they received from others; this will be addressed in subsequent chapters. As demonstrated by Dessie, a needed push from someone else is beneficial, but one’s ability to motivate himself is important in the completion of goals:

I don’t think they (peers) really thought about what they wanted to do. I don’t think they really cared. I think they were just doing it (college) because there was someone else saying you need to be in school. After my first year of college I’ve seen a lot of my peers go to college and drop out and just do nothing or work. You wouldn’t think that even some of these were people who were A students…model students and they just totally crashed and burned.

This statement by Dessie gives credence to the supposition that it is important for students to both have someone to push or encourage them and want to achieve for themselves.

Having someone to simply say that college is an endeavor one needs to undertake does not yield the same results as being “pushed,” especially when self-efficacy may be an issue. While interviewing Kesha, I was given deeper insight to both sides of this coin. When asked what influenced her thoughts about education Kesha’s response was:

I would say that the goals I had – wanting to go to college, wanting to be looked at in a positive way, I knew that my academics had to be a plus. To maintain the honor roll and even so perfect attendance cause that was a big thing.

When asked why she joined the Upward Bound program, her response was:

I felt that it was a good opportunity to experience different things in life to get me more motivated for the next level in life, which was college at that time, and to get me out of my comfort zone to experience different things that were out
of Richmond, and I felt like that was the best way to do it was through the program.

Kesha spoke of motivation and getting herself prepared for the next level in life in terms of those things being necessities. Her statements did not indicate recognition of traditional barriers as hindrances to her success. Instead of being complacent with her life as it was, she seized an opportunity to join a program that allowed her to go further than she could have otherwise. Kesha demonstrates the supposition of Margolis and McCabe (2004) that struggling learners must have goals that are important to them on a personal level in order for self-efficacy to have a positive impact. While Kesha’s grades in high school were not horrible, they also were not stellar. She struggled in some subjects but by the same token had goals that kept her moving forward rather than regressing. Her ultimate goal was college, and seeing things outside her environment that signalled success was motivation for her.

The students represented in this study, though involuntary minorities, did not exhibit negative attitudes towards education, as presented by Ogbu (1978, 1988, & 1991) Fordham and Ogbu (1986). The lack of success that some minorities experience in school, they posit, is due to a perception of school being a benefit to white Americans rather than black Americans. In this study, participants were keenly aware of the necessity of receiving an education and cognizant of the likelihood that it would be important to their future success. The trepidation they expressed about pursuing education was not due to thought processes that deemed education yielded few results for them. Shaquelle expressed a sentiment that was prevalent throughout the interviews with the Upward Bound alumni:

> Education has always been extremely important to me and my family because I know without education you can’t get anywhere in life. I can’t get anywhere in life unless I get up and do that paper I didn’t want to do or unless I study for that test I put off. Its just always been something that I know I have to do.
Shaquelle did not cast a shadow of doubt cast upon her ability to earn higher education, nor was there a lack of realization about the importance of doing so. Self-efficacy and determination were demonstrated, and education was held in high regard. Additionally, Shaquelle did not see her parents’ lack of receipt of higher education as an indicator that she should not strive for it herself. To the contrary, she believed that education would have been instrumental in him obtaining a higher degree of success in his career, which encouraged her. Shaquelle expressed:

…I do believe that if he (Shaquelle’s father) had a college degree his business would have lasted a lot longer than what it did. He had his own drywall business, and it didn’t last too long because of funding and different things, but I think if he had a good college education he would have been able to keep it afloat.

Jeremy expressed a similar value in education, which stemmed partially from his father’s having not obtained one. Jeremy stated:

Yeah um my dad he had a good job; he worked at Phillip Morris at the time, but once he retired he had nothing to fall back on…I mean you can have a good job and not have a high education like a masters degree and stuff, but its best to have the higher education so you can get a better job for sure.

Shaquelle and Jeremy expressed without reservations that education was a valuable tool in ensuring future career success. They clearly saw the returns to educational attainment though their parents did not benefit from it. While Shaquelle was a cultural mainstreamer, she is an example of the shared value placed on education by the mainstreamers and the straddlers, as expressed in the data.

As noted in Harris’s (2011) findings, “the notion that black parents are catalysts for the cultural norm attributed to black adolescents that undervalues education and leads to educational disengagement” (p.70) is not supported. The findings in this study also do not support the supposition that the personal choices about education made by black parents, for whatever reasons, negatively impact their children. The impact of parental influence found in this study was noted
in the level encouragement, or lack thereof, parents gave their children. The level of encouragement by parents, or the push so often expressed in this study, is what made the difference in students’ motivation about education.

Similar to Shaquelle and Jeremy’s parental situations was Michelle Arnold’s. Michelle’s mother did not obtain education beyond high school. She would be the first person in her family to go to college. The difference in those two alumni and Michelle was not the recognition of the returns to education, but the willingness to remain dedicated to the educational process to receive the returns. Upon interviewing Michelle, it became clear that the types of students described in Carter’s (2005) study-cultural mainstreamers, cultural straddlers, and noncompliant believers, were represented in this study. It became important to understand the background and circumstances that contributed to students fitting into each of these categories. There were eleven students I considered to be cultural straddlers, 7 cultural mainstreamers, three non-compliant believers, and three that didn’t necessarily fall into a category.

Unlike her peers, Michelle felt that the journey of receiving an education was too long and arduous to pursue. In reference to college she said “That was always a dream not reality, so it was like I could do this, but look how long it’s going to take.” Michelle, whose story is told in chapter five, was a noncompliant believer. I discovered that the noncompliant believers in the study lacked three of the five categories depicted in figure 1: support, specifically parental support, code switching, and dominant cultural values. Noncompliant believers can be depicted more closely in figure 2. The darkened areas in each circle represent the factors that are absent amongst noncompliant believers, cultural mainstreamers, and cultural straddlers.
Figure 2 Student Types
4.3 Noncompliant Believers

Noncompliant believers, like all students in the study, had the cultural capital and mentorship that they gained from the Upward Bound Program. However, this was not enough to ensure their success. Without the dimensions of support, code switching, and dominant cultural values, these students were unable to make manifest the realization of graduating from high school, going to college, and remaining there.

As asserted by Carter (2006), the descriptor non-compliant is not indicative of these students’ lack of affinity or appreciation for education. Rather, the term non-compliant speaks to a choice by the students to identify with norms more culturally accepted amongst their own instead of white culture. Being non-compliant does not indicate a resistance to school but rather a choice not to subscribe to accepted behavioral codes, as deemed so by whites. I found in this study that a belief in dominant cultural values was not sufficient to drive students towards their ultimate goal of college attendance and completion; students had to transform this belief into action.

The non-compliant believers in this study received mentorship through the Upward Bound program; however, there may also be non-compliant believers who do not have mentors in their lives. The influence of mentorship on the actions and thought processes of non-compliant believers would have to be fully assessed in a sample representative of students with and without mentors. The non-compliant believers in this study fit the characteristics described by Carter (2005), though they had mentorship. This is important because it underscored the fact that mentorship is not the ultimate determinant of a student becoming a cultural straddler. The interviews with Michelle and Sasha provided a wealth of information on the impact that missing components of the achievement paradigm depicted in figure one can have on students.
Michelle and Sasha

Michelle and Sasha were outliers in terms of their motivation and attitudes regarding education. They both demonstrated that they saw the returns to education, but their motivation and follow through were not as strong as their other peers. Each of these young women had roughly the same opportunity structure and access as the other students in the study, but the choices they made about their education did not follow the same pattern as their peers.

Michelle

Michelle did not doubt her ability to obtain higher education, but she was an outlier in terms of her motivation to excel academically. Michelle was reared in a single parent household by her mother. Michelle’s mother was a high school graduate who went to college briefly after high school, dropped out, and went back to pursue a college degree around the time Michelle graduated from high school. An average student, when Michelle’s guidance counselor approached her about applying for the Upward Bound program, the idea was something she had not thought about for herself. When Michelle approached her mother about joining the program, her mother’s response was “oh, that will be nice.” Michelle was intrigued by the thought of “living on the campus and doing different stuff.” At that time, Michelle’s mother had not yet begun her college degree, but she was certainly amiable to her daughter joining a program that would facilitate her heading in that direction. However, she did not require Michelle to accept the invitation to join the program.

Michelle spent four years in the Upward Bound program. She spoke about the various experiences, such as college campus visits that she had in the program and she even had aspirations at one point to attend Morgan State University. She explained that the Upward Bound counselors pushed her to persevere and continue on to college. However, as Michelle began ma-
triculating through college, she felt the urge to quit. She began to feel that challenges were too daunting for her to continue on, and she decided to drop out. Michelle explained that her mother told her she should go to college right after high school. At the time Michelle’s mother told her what she should do, she did not go the extra mile to make certain she followed through. Michelle explained:

She didn’t do that (go to college from high school) and you know what I’m saying, its when you get out of high school and go straight to the work force, you just get comfortable with making that money. It’s just hard for you to go back to school. You just get too comfortable with the minimum wage.

Michelle witnessed the results her mother attending college and making the decision that it was not something she wanted initially. Inherent in this observation was the fact that her mother chose immediate financial gratification over pursuing her college degree at that time. This influenced Michelle’s decision to follow the same path her mother followed. Michelle’s motivation to attend college was affected, not only by the example set by her mother, but by the lack of strong encouragement by her mother. While Michelle’s mother told her to go to college when she graduated from high school, she did not “push” her. Unlike most of the other participants in the study, the ultimate decision regarding college attendance belonged to Michelle. Other participants’ parents were forceful, either by word or by deed, in facilitating students’ college attendance. Their parents may have traveled the same educational path and been in the same type of career as Michelle’s, but they demanded that their children strive for more.

Lacking the encouragement to see past traditional barriers to education, Michelle decided the military would be the best option for her. When I prompted Michelle to share why she made the decision to join the military she replied: “It’s a guarantee- guaranteed money. Um, if it really don’t work out for you, you can always put that on your application, and that can, you know what I’m saying, help you get a job.” She continued on to say “I guess I will go back to school
because, I’ll do the military thing and they will be paying for school then, and it wouldn’t be such a hassle on my mom and me about paying the tuition back.”

Finances were a pervasive issue among all of the participants in the study, as they were all former Upward Bound students, but the stark reality of the challenge lack of finances presented was especially relevant for Michelle. Whereas other study participants were keenly aware of their financial challenges and sought ways to immediately disarm them, Michelle lacked the desire to do so. That “push” to persevere regardless of circumstances did not come from her mother. She explained “…I think in a way my mama kind of pushed the issue, but she pushed it you know what I’m saying, she pushed the issue because she wanted me to better myself, so it wasn’t in a oh you got to go to school, but it was just she wanted me to do better than her basically.”

Sasha

Sasha graduated from high school and did not attend college. Similar to Michelle, the parental support Sasha received was not conducive to her excelling academically and attending college. Michelle, however, received somewhat of a push from her mother, but Sasha received no push at all. Sasha was from a single parent home of which her mother was the head. Sasha’s mother did not attend college and held a minimum wage job. Lack of formal education, however, was not the factor that prevented Sasha’s mother from supporting her daughter attending college. According to Sasha, she was on her regarding decisions about college. Sasha shared:

My mom do not like going, like further education, because of her religion. So I was the one who wanted to go to school, and she was like it’s no purpose just because of her religion. There was just a whole big mess.

Sasha’s mother was a member of the Jehovah witness faith, which does not promote or encourage higher education. Sasha explained that the belief within the faith is that higher education can distract young people from their ultimate purpose of serving God, whether by focusing on learn-
ing their discipline rather than the Bible or by participating in the partying and drinking that some undergraduate students do.

Due to her mother’s beliefs, Sasha was in a category by herself. She was the only student in the sample that received absolutely no encouragement from a parent to attend college. Religion, especially in the African American community, is often seen as a source of encouragement. In Sasha’s case, however, religion was used to discourage her pursuit of higher education.

For Sasha, attending college was an endeavor she would have had to undertake without any assistance from her mother. She enrolled in the Upward Bound program with the program’s focus on college attendance in mind. She stated “I still wanted to go to college even though my mom didn’t (want me to), and it helped like after twelfth grade, it still helps you get into college.” Sasha’s desire and motivation to attend college was not affected by her mother’s lack of support until it was time to follow through. Sasha was affected by her mother’s lack of encouragement, and when I asked if she had any feelings about it she shared “Yes, I have always been upset about that. I have always told her most parents force a child to go to college, and you are the different one.”

When it was time for Sasha to apply for college the challenge was met with hesitation and lack of focus on her part. Sasha was well aware of education being necessary, but she did not have the ability to place it within the context of her life. “…I know that most people can’t get a job unless you have a high school diploma, and then some jobs you have to have a college degree, and it’s kind of hard trying to get a job now; so you should go to school and learn something that you are interested in and try to get a job in that field.”

While Sasha displayed awareness about the importance of furthering her education, she did not fulfill this goal. It was a fascinating finding that even when equipped with the awareness
of the necessity of education, as well as the knowledge of how to obtain it, Sasha still chose not to pursue it. While Sasha indicated that she still wanted a college education, despite her mother’s lack of support, this is not what her actions showed. She did not likely realize the effect that not having parental support for her higher educational endeavors had on her ultimate inaction regarding college attendance. Sasha did not give any indication from her perspective as to a major reason for her choice to delay higher education.

There was a stark difference in the attitudes towards education of those whose parents were encouraging and those who had parents like Sasha’s and Michelle’s. In looking at the attitudes towards education of students who had supportive parents, I was able to ascertain that their positive attitudes and belief in themselves were strongly correlated with the combination of having this and the mentorship component, which will be discussed further later in the chapter. Parents were instrumental in shaping students views and thoughts about education and, to a great extent, how much they believed in their ability to further their education.

Parents are, for most people, the initial source of information and training for life children receive. This study supports the assertion that multicultural navigators can, to some extent, be parents. Michelle, Sasha, and each of the other student participants demonstrated the influence parents have over students beliefs about education. Economically disadvantaged parents, like the ones represented in this study, were not able to articulate the nuances of the dominant culture to their children, but they were able to influence their children such that education was seen as a must, except in the case of the non-compliant believers. This study demonstrated that parents have the influence to be multicultural navigators, but perhaps issues of economic status and class would prevent parents from being able to fully engage in helping their children gain all of the skills necessary to straddle cultures.
4.4 The Roots of Self Efficacy

The natural question that arose was the origin of this belief in their ability. It became clear that there were common connections shared by the students, which undergirded that belief. As mentioned earlier, parental support, mentorship, cultural capital, and dominant cultural values each emerged as an important piece in understanding the strong belief exhibited by the student participants.

Parental and peer support were directly linked to students’ self-efficacy. The word that appeared in the majority of participant interviews was “push.” Students referred to that push from parents and peers as motivation to achieve. When students were encouraged by their parent or guardian and/or their peers to do well in school, it added to their confidence level. The support they received was a major contributing factor in their will to graduate from high school with an academic record that would allow college attendance. Ironically, as will be demonstrated in chapter six, students who did not receive positive reinforcement from their peers were not negatively affected; they stayed the course of academic success set forth for themselves. Students’ ability to remain outside the category of the non-compliant believer that Carter (2005) describes was certainly linked to this support. Non-compliant believers embody a mindset that is indicative of an unwillingness to subscribe to critical survival skills for success in the mainstream. The support students received aided in them maintaining their focus and keeping an achiever’s attitude.

In addition to the support mechanisms of parents and peers, the Upward Bound program served as a constant source of encouragement for students, which effectively contributed to their motivation to achieve. This reinforcement came from their peers in the program as well as the infrastructure of the program that provided incentives for academic achievement. Providing op-
portunities for students to grow and develop their individual talents was a component of the Upward Bound program. The program allowed students to feel good about achievements they were able to make, thus increasing their sense of value and worth. While the Upward Bound program does heavily emphasize academic achievement, it also hones in on the holistic development of participants. This particular aspect of the program is of great importance because there are often limitations, be it structural or otherwise, that hamper black students’ ability to develop and applaud their individual gifts.

Both Grace and Howard articulated an idea that one would not assume had to be taught by anyone to anyone- to be themselves. Freedom of expression and not having to think about whether or not the manner in which one has done so are luxuries that can be taken for granted. It was not until Grace and Howard expressed an answer to a question in the exact same way and conveyed what I surmised other students in the study were expressing that I realized this key factor. When I asked Howard and Grace about the greatest lessons learned from staff members they each said “to be myself.” Howard shared, “That’s one thing I can say Upward Bound helped me with… becoming more and more comfortable with myself.” He described his most memorable experience in Upward Bound as “doing the play. My last summer I played Kirk Franklin (a gospel singer). It touched everybody, and I don’t know why, but it made me happy to see everybody else so happy.” For Howard, that ability to connect with others based upon something that he was able to bring to the table and to have value placed upon it made a world of difference to him. Similarly, Rashid expressed “When I danced in Upward Bound it was a real good experience, um because I never had the confidence to go up on stage and do something like that before. And it just, it did a load for my confidence.” In essence, the program allowed Rashid to blossom and find relevance in a way he hadn’t been able to before.
Given the focus in schools on skills that underscore the culture of power, which Delpit (1995) describes, it is critical for black students to find ways to immerse themselves in environments that give credence to other skills they may possess. The extent to which the Upward Bound provided a platform that helped students to believe in themselves was a major finding in this study. This study provided a window of opportunity for the realization to be brought forth that black students do find themselves in positions of not being able to be their true selves in all arenas, especially those environments where mainstream cultural values are in effect.

Connected to students’ sense of self-efficacy was mentorship. Specifically, it was important that students had mentors who were able to communicate the importance of obtaining education while still being allowed to remain true to their personal values, beliefs, and orientation towards education. The guidance received from Upward Bound counselors and high school personnel was pivotal in students’ ability to not only understand mainstream values in terms of success, but also craft their own definitions of success accordingly. As will be demonstrated in chapter five, the combination of Upward Bound counselors developing close relationships with students and sharing knowledge important to their success in the dominant culture allowed them to help students effectively.

Another very important piece of data that emerged was the effect that students’ acceptance or rejection of dominant cultural values had on their sense of self-efficacy. This piece was interwoven with support and mentorship due to those factors heavily influencing students’ attitudes about dominant cultural values regarding education. Students’ mentors stressed to them the importance of graduating from high school and obtaining a college degree. Additionally, their parents and peers influenced their attitudes. The influence of parents and peers was powerful in terms of students’ thoughts about their ability to achieve.
The last area of critical importance that emerged as instrumental in contributing to students’ belief in their ability to achieve academic success was cultural capital. The exposure they had to dominant cultural values and the knowledge base gained from this exposure allowed students to see the possibilities within reach for themselves. The Upward Bound program provided that exposure to the participants studied. Interview after interview, the students’ ability to visit college campuses and have cultural experiences outside their norm influenced their belief in their ability to achieve such goals. Undergirded by the exposure and knowledge they gained from participating in these activities was the mentorship they received and the guidance that helped them to place these goals within their own cultural context.

Each category identified as significant was connected to support the core category of self-efficacy. Elements of John Ogbu’s theories were not supported, but Prudence Carter’s multicultural navigator concept did indeed play a role in the theory that emerged from this study. Upward Bound personnel as well as school personnel gave not only the definitive “push” that the participants in the study so often identified; they also taught them to set new markers for success that defied generational traditions of mediocrity. In the chapter regarding mentorship, these individuals are likened to multicultural navigators, as described by Carter, because they helped their students to see and use academic success as a prize rather than a penalty. They helped the students to maintain their focus on getting an education while holding on to their personal beliefs. Because of the multicultural navigators in described in the chapter on mentors, students were able to reach the conclusion that pursuing an education did not preclude them from being who they were; it simply created avenues for them to expand their potential.
5 CULTURAL CAPITAL AND DOMINANT CULTURAL VALUES

The students who participated in this study came from backgrounds that were so far removed from the dominant cultural norms that being exposed to them through the Upward Bound program was culture shock. The former Upward Bound students were part of a social class that typically faces a scarcity of resources, which are more readily available to individuals in the dominant culture. According to Dika and Singh (2002) and Horvat et. al. (2003) the social and cultural capital that come from the access to these resources is the source of perpetual inequality in education. Cultural capital is important in terms of promoting equality because it provides opens doors to upward mobility and success. Lamont and Lareau (1988:156) define cultural capital as “institutionalized, i.e., widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors, goods, and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion.” Higher academic achievement is positively correlated with higher socio-economic status. The main source for students of obtaining even a modicum of the cultural capital necessary for mobility in society was the Upward Bound program.

The overarching theme of the Upward Bound program was academic achievement. However, as expressed in the data, the program provided much more for the participants. The federal guidelines for the program dictate that enrichment activities must be done in addition to academic assistance initiatives. This indicates an acknowledgement amongst law makers that academic enhancement cannot be the sole means of closing the achievement gap and preparing students for their futures. The Upward Bound program, while providing tutoring and academic assessment, also spends a great deal of time taking a more holistic approach to student development. The education of students in the Upward Bound program transcends beyond the classroom.
Renita Smith captured the essence of how the Upward Bound program set her on a course of achieving mainstream skills and standards. She shared:

One of the Upward Bound Directors she was very strong as an individual and I can definitely say that we received a lot of training under her as far as our values, language, attitudes, how to speak properly, and time—the main thing that she impressed upon us is being on time to events. Also, the way you look is important for first impressions so you want to have yourself clean and presentable.

Renita continued on to share “like mainly if we were in public, she was really serious about us not acting ghetto and ladies acting like ladies and boys acting like gentlemen.” In essence, Renita’s Upward Bound Director taught her acceptable means of navigating the dominant cultural landscape. There are certain standards of language, attitudes, and speech that are not necessarily taught in students’ home environments. Renita realized that what she was receiving from her Upward Bound Director put her in a position to be upwardly mobile and gain the cultural capital necessary for success.

These findings support those shared in the last chapter regarding mentorship and Upward Bound personnel, but they also speak to the relevance of the cultural capital students in the Upward Bound program gained. Being successful as a minority in the dominant culture is greatly dependent upon one’s ability to gain the cultural know how associated with that culture. This bears true not simply in the realm of adult life, but it begins in the classroom. Morris (2005) found that teachers equated the quality of a student through class association, specifically middle class, aesthetics were a determinant of class belonging. Carter (2003:148) found that “students seen as unintelligent did not conform to the dominant expectation of clothing and deportment that teachers associate with intelligence and diligence.” Howard, a student in my sample, echoed this sentiment saying, “sometimes it just depends on where you are in society and how society views the things around you and what you do.” The students who lacked the knowledge of how
to fit into acceptable standards were not given the same academic opportunities as students who assimilated to dominant cultural norms (Condron 2007). This was evidenced in accounts in previous chapters shared by Dorian as well as Shaquelle. Dorian shared how teachers paid attention to him and encouraged him once his attitude and academic achievement were acceptable. Likewise, Shaquelle shared how behaviors of hers that were looked upon by her peers as “acting white” were looked upon favorably by her teachers, making her a “teacher’s pet.”

Dumais (2002) asserts that the importance families place on various aspects of the educational process becomes part of the fabric of children’s views on education. According to Bourdieu (1983; 1973) attributes of social classes are passed down generationally through parents by placing value on cultural symbols. Education can be seen as one of these cultural symbols. In this study, while most parents placed value on education, the importance placed upon it would not yield the same results for the students that it would in a middle to upper class family. This is due to the lack of match between the desire for education and the means and knowledge to successfully obtain it. Donna explained of Upward Bound:

…it helped me better my writing for starters. It helped me in math to learn this is what I really wanna do. This is what I absolutely like, and um it helped with science too because I’m not too big on science and the extra push in science ahead of everyone else in my school gave me a good push. …They pushed us by telling us not to give up, to keep trying, and to really motivate us.

Certainly Donna expressed having gained a certain type of capital; she was displaying the curricular effects of Upward Bound. There is an ongoing conversation about the nature of cultural capital and to what extent it affects educational outcomes. According to Bourdieu (1977), dominant cultural capital is perpetuated by schools through a system that rewards students for having evidence of appropriate and valued knowledge. This knowledge is gained from being participants in higher “status cultures.” DiMaggio (1982), however, posits that cultural capital
has a direct impact on school performance. This is consistent with what he calls the “social mo-
bility model, meaning that dominant cultural capital can be gained by individuals for whom this
knowledge is not generational, whereas Bourdieu purports that elements of cultural knowledge
are passed from one generation to the next, amongst higher status cultures.

Consistent with DiMaggio’s interpretation of cultural capital, Shaquelle also expressed
how she chose to “do things differently because of Upward Bound,” as compared to a friend of
hers that was not in the program.

As far as enrolling and applying for colleges, Upward Bound really stressed doing
college applications and doing them early, and I had already sent off two or three and I’m
talking to her and she hasn’t even decided whether she wanted to go to college or not.
Just as far as like getting paperwork in on time-like for our senior finals, she just kind of
lollygagged about it, and I went ahead and got it done because I knew I was going to
have to look at Ms. Yarbrough Saturday, and that was not gonna be a good look.

In essence, Shaquelle and Donna gained the cultural capital of learning not only to put
education at the forefront, but also how to do so. It is great to have the desire to obtain an educa-
tion, but it is an entirely different and complex issue to understand how to do so when one is a
first generation college student. Doing anything for the first time can be a daunting or challeng-
ing experience, but adding the pressure of a lack of guidance to something as large in scope as
attending college can exacerbate the challenge. Renita brings the importance of dominant cul-
tural values into perspective stating:

It (education) was very important because I went to high school with mostly white kids
and so of course they already had their ideas about educational views before they got to
high school and I’m like I have no clue what to talk about and what you mean by college,
and when I’m around them and through Upward Bound I said okay well I want to go to
college too and my high school was very competitive as far as education. And so finish-
ing Upward Bound and going to college was a big success for me.

For an individual who has not had parents or anyone in their immediate circle attend col-
lege, how to go about putting one’s self in position for successful college entry as well as the
prospect of actually enrolling can be huge hurdles. Conversely, an individual who has seen the process of taking the appropriate classes in high school, maintaining a decent grade point average, and applying for college, due to his or her parents having done so, does not face the same trepidation as their previously described counterparts. The Upward Bound Program provided students with the necessary cultural capital regarding academics that they needed.

Postsecondary enrollment is the culmination of years of mental and academic preparation and processes. For some students, postsecondary enrollment is viewed as a rite of passage with students and parents making personal and academic preparations at length (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999). However, for most low-income students, college enrollment is not the anticipated next step and these disadvantaged students are more likely to drop out of high school and not attend college than to enroll in a postsecondary institution (U. S. Department of Education, 1999; Gandara, 2001; Gullant & Jan, 2002; Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002). Understanding the academic preparation for attending college is critical, but it is also important to capture the essence of the mental preparation that must also take place. I posit that having dominant cultural capital and acceptance of dominant cultural values played a major role in the success of students in this study.

In addition to dominant cultural capital Shaquelle also shared that she learned what basically equates to the confidence of knowing accepted patterns of behavior, similar to the knowledge Renita Smith expressed she gained from the program. She expressed that she was taught:

How to handle yourself in the real world. I know for me it really taught me that there’s time and a place for everything, and it taught me how to you know learn when to speak my opinion and learn when to keep my opinion to myself and how to follow deadlines. And I know for me it showed me how to interact with other people… I know how to put myself out there in a positive way versus a negative
way or the no no’s as you call them. Just I kind of learned how to carry myself as a young lady being in Upward Bound.

She accepted the culturally acceptable patterns of behavior, which in turn helped her to be successful by mainstream standards. The guidance Shaquelle received proved to be instrumental in her development and movement towards becoming a cultural straddler, as Carter (2005) conveys.

Renita, Donna, and Shaquelle each expressed important skills they obtained as a result of participating in the Upward Bound Program. While these particular skills may seem to be more common sense, for students that have not been exposed to them in their homes, they are more difficult to cultivate. These types of skills are vital to student achievement. As a result of gaining these skills, students felt more comfortable in social and academic situations that would have otherwise been difficult for them to thrive in.

Exposure

Another key piece that emerged from the data was the importance of the role exposure played to elements of culture common in the mainstream played in students’ development and ultimate sense of self-efficacy. Samantha expressed the exposure the Upward Bound program gave students as an eye opening experience:

New York, senior year, that was um, experience. I had never been to New York. I had got to see places you know, um, that people didn’t see, you know. I got a chance to be on top of, no, inside the Statue of Liberty. Seriously, I’m in here like looking at my friends with me. We saw the play Mary Poppins. Seriously, how do you get to see Mary Poppins? Broadway, some people don’t do that. You know, sitting in Richmond, I want to go see that, no; we got a chance to go see that. You know, um, sit down together um, we went on top of the Empire State Building. We had the nicest view that people take for granted. So when you look at it, we will say okay, we are okay, you know. Some stuff that we take for granted and once you get to look at all this information that you have learned, it will be like, some people don’t have it, and I got it. It would kind of um, it shocks
you. You know, see that you see all the sites; you stand on top of the Empire State Building. You know, a view of New York, going to the Statue of Liberty, get on a boat, you know, different experiences.

I asked Samantha why she thought those experiences were important to have and if the thought those experiences were important to her success in life. She responded:

Everybody doesn’t have that. Everybody can’t get it. Yeah, it kind of makes you look at life differently. What if I wasn’t here, what if I couldn’t make it, what if, um, if I sat there and played all my years in high school, and when that pressure comes to college…But once you look at a sight like that you will say, I’m here.

The opportunity for exposure that Samantha had been given through the Upward Bound program was not unnoticed by her. She recognized that the experiences she described were life changing moments that changed her perception of the reality that was available to her. No longer was she a high school student, sitting in Richmond, Virginia, wondering with uncertainty about the path she needed to take for her future. She became a young woman confident in the fact that a future full of success and experiences she had only day dreamed about was within reach. According to Gullant and Jan (2003), Martinez and Klopott (2004) and Tym, McMillion, Barone and Webster (2004), when low-income and potential first generation students are exposed to postsecondary institutions and college-level work, they are afforded a “vision of themselves undertaking and succeeding in postsecondary education,” (p.10) opportunities which students are afforded when involved in the Upward Bound Program. Dorian expressing that he never could have seen himself attending Duke University before the Upward Bound program took him on a tour was a prime example of how exposure changed students’ views of themselves. A tour of Duke University is not something most economically disadvantaged, black, first generation college students would have had the courage to do. When the Upward Bound program placed them in a higher education environment, creating a sense of belonging in a pre-
viously unchartered territory, it made a difference to the students; they believed that it was possible to attend college and achieve more than they thought themselves capable of.

Upward Bound helped to instill in students a sense of the importance they needed to place upon dominant cultural values while helping them to remain comfortable with their own culture. Placing value on formal education, learning expected and/or acceptable patterns of behavior, being cognizant of style of dress, using dominant cultural vernacular, and appreciating aspects of the dominant culture they may have been underexposed to (i.e. plays, museums, and the ballet) are the things study participants expressed they were taught by the Upward Bound Program. While these things are not likely difficult for whites, especially those who are minimally middle class, they are more difficult for economically disadvantaged blacks.
6 SUPPORT AND MENTORSHIP

There is much to be said for the role of support and mentorship in students exhibiting the self-efficacy needed to persevere in educational attainment. This research yielded the results that parental and peer support had a profound effect on students’ view of themselves in the context of mainstream expectations for success. I found that parental support was manifested in varying levels, and the more parental support students received, the more they believed in their ability to achieve academically and felt motivated to do so. Likewise, the mentorship students received greatly influenced the value they placed on education, their personal identities within the framework of mainstream values, and their ability to navigate within dominant cultural values.

Students whose parents were adamant about them obtaining an education and excelling did not question whether or not they could or should. According to Kerpelman et.al. (2008) the support students received, specifically from their mothers, was instrumental in their future educational outcomes. Wilson and Wilson (1992) posited that post-secondary education attainment is heavily dependent upon the amount of support students receive at home. Additionally they asserted that mothers’ expectations are of particular importance. In this study, when parents were ambivalent or non-chalant about students furthering their education, the students were far less likely to be motivated. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, while positive peer support did reinforce students’ inclination towards academic achievement, negative peer influences did not affect students’ motivation or cast doubts on their ability to achieve. Students did not factor peers that attempted to exert negative influences into their equation for achieving.

6.1 Involved Parents

For students whose parents have not completed high school or do not have an education beyond high school, the high school graduation, college enrollment, and postsecondary persis-
tence rates are especially impacted (Choy, Horn, Nunez & Chen, 2000; Camblin, 2005). Dispro-
portionately, economically disadvantaged and first generation students hail from families with
low educational attainment (Terenzini et al. 1994; Choy, 2001; Gandara, 2001), thus generational
cycles of low educational achievement are in danger of persisting. Results in this study support-
ed the supposition that involved parents consistently changed the trajectory of students. Involved
parents, particularly mothers, had an unbelievable influence on the choices students made about
their lives.

The majority of mothers represented in this study were single mothers. Their stories
spoke to a growing type of family structure in the black community—fatherless homes. Any
number of negative issues can be attributed to black children lacking fathers in the home, but an
unexpected positive result of having female-headed households was the emphasis the mothers
placed upon obtaining higher education. The mothers’ overall inclination towards pushing their
children to further their education could possibly be attributed to a desire to stop the cycle of
poverty as well as have career prospects that surpass their own. The following exchange be-
tween Rashid and me exemplifies the attitudes, behavior, and level of involvement of many of
the mothers in the study.

Interviewer: Why did you join the Upward Bound Program?
Rashid: Um, I thought it was going to be a good experience for me, and two, I felt as if it
would help because um, I was so focused on college and me and mama was so focused
on getting me into college in middle school that we felt like going out to this program
would help, and I had planned for um, what program was it? I applied for Partnership for
the Future too, but I decided to stay with the Upward Bound because I just liked Upward
Bound more. It had more experiences, college stuff. Partnership for the Future was just more of a work thing.

Interviewer: So your mom encouraged you to apply?

Rashid: Oh yeah, she encouraged me to apply… She came with me to the interview, she told me everything I did right and did wrong on my interview, and we went from there, and she has been supportive all the way through.

Interviewer: So when did you know that you wanted to go to college?

Rashid: Um, it was about my freshman year, I mean there weren’t too many options. She told me if I didn’t go to college, I had to go um I had to get in the army, get a job, and rent was kicking in after I graduated.

Interviewer: So she always stressed college to you growing up?

Rashid: Yeah, um, always because she felt like it wasn’t too many jobs out there for you if you didn’t have a degree. She said now back in her time maybe it was jobs out there if you didn’t have a degree. You could graduate high school and still end up pretty good. She said but now with the new economy and the way things are you have to have a degree to do something.

While Rashid’s mother did not possess a college degree herself, she imparted to her son, early in his academic career, the importance of obtaining one. The strong influence from his mother was a source of encouragement throughout his life. Though his family was not well to do and did not necessarily possess the knowledge of how to attend college, his mother certainly understood the importance of doing so.

The majority of students in the sample had parents who were like Rashid’s and Samantha’s. Their mothers did not make education an optional endeavor. Like many of the other par-
ents of students in the sample, Samantha’s mother completed high school and found a job that did not require a college degree. Serving as a dietary aide in a hospital, Samantha’s mother once had aspirations to attend college, but she became pregnant at a young age. Samantha had several older brothers who did not complete high school, and as the youngest and only female sibling, she found herself the beneficiary of her mother’s maturity and life experiences. Samantha explained her mother’s position on education:

Before I went across that stage in high school (she said) oh, you are going to college. It was no, no you cannot sit around the house and not go to college. You need a job, a good one. You are not going to sit there and settle for something less.

Samantha’s mother had reared her older siblings with a large degree of financial difficulty, and she found it overwhelming to continuously encourage them while being the primary bread winner. Samantha’s mother “pushed” her to obtain an education more than she did her older children. She saw Samantha as her last opportunity to encourage her children to exceed her educational and success level. Samantha focused on the importance of the “push,” saying:

Because the way I’ve grown up, I had people to push me. You know, keep going. I had friends, you know, um, everyone around me seemed like, you know my teachers, my friends, the counselors, principals, everyone that see that I can do something. My mother and my father pushed me, my grandmother pushes me, um, my godmother, you know. Look at my nieces and nephews, and when they say auntie, I want to be like you. I want to do the things that you did. I want to go to the school that you went to- (I say) no you know because I don’t want you to go to John Marshall (high school). I want you to go to a school that will better your education better than, you know, I think John Marshall would do.

Samantha’s words epitomize a connection and realization that it is difficult for many people to come to: success and poverty alike can be generational and cyclical. When Samantha asked her mother why she was being so hard, she explained “I’m doing what your grandmother and your grandfather told me to do, and they didn’t accept Fs from me.” The push Samantha’s mother received was to make good grades, and the push Samantha received was the step further to go to
college. Samantha’s drive and motivation came, in part, from the push she received from those around her, especially her mother. Important to note was that Samantha passed this drive, determination, and belief that achievement is possible on to the next generation in her family.

Samantha gave a glimpse of the impact that familial expectations and support could have on children’s educational outcomes and expectations. Any number of factors could also positively or adversely affect these outcomes as well, but this study gave credence to the direct impact of parents’ influence on children’s decision making processes and actions taken to further their education. Dorian expressed:

My parents made me feel like I could do anything I wanted to do, and when I showed my teachers I was smart at school they did the same thing. It made me believe in myself more and more, and I thought education was more important by the end of high school. It was a way I stood out for doing something good.

Dorian’s statement is so powerful because it underscores the importance of parental support, but it is also packed with insight about the far reaching effects of teachers’ reactions when black students subscribe to acceptable behavior patterns. By virtue of the fact that Dorian demonstrated he was “smart”, his teachers invested in him and encouraged him. This speaks to black students needing to display certain characteristics to feel valued for what they are able to contribute to an academic setting. Dorian went on to say:

I didn’t want to disappoint my mom or my dad. My dad has always been around to get on me about making good decisions, and especially after my mom died he really pushed me to stay on the right track. He talked to my teachers and my Upward Bound counselors about how I was doing. My dad worked a lot, but he still made time to see what was going on with me.

Dorian’s father played the strong role that most study participants’ mothers played in terms of academic encouragement. The death of Dorian’s mother thrust his father into playing a more active role, and he “pushed” Dorian to excel. Two fathers were mentioned as having been influential in their children’s decisions and attitudes towards education.
Dorian’s interview also allowed me to glean more information about the nuances of the support piece. Dorian shared, “when my mom died my friends in the program and some staff became like family to me.” It was important to have the support of parents, but from Dorian it can be ascertained that family can come in different forms. In the section entitled “peer support” we can further see evidence of positive peer support making a difference for students.

A critical piece of the discussion regarding achievement is the role structure versus agency plays. Jessica, like Samantha, had a mother who pushed her to excel academically. She joined the Upward Bound program because it was something her mother wanted her to do. During high school, Jessica attended four different schools and maintained a job. She explained:

I was working too hard. I held a job all through high school, um, eleventh grade I was working and going to school, and by that time um I had a lot on my plate. I was involved in extracurricular activities um, twelfth grade, needless to say, well, Mr. Hoarns and Ms. Yarbrough stayed on me about coming back to the program and making sure I was in college. Twelfth grade I think I experienced a burn out. I was at J. Sergeant Reynolds, I was working, and I had four or five classes at TJ… With working, I had four classes—college calculus, college speech, Western Civilizations, um and college composition. Plus I had um four classes at TJ, so that means waking up at 5:00 in the morning, going to TJ until about um 11:30, getting on the bus, going back to J Sergeant Reynolds um leaving Reynolds about 1:00 and coming back for my 1:30 class to my last class at Thomas Jefferson (high school) then going to work.

The pressure of having to work and attend school caused Jessica to drop out of the Upward Bound program and out of high school her senior year. Jessica had to work to buy essential items for herself and contribute to her household, and when faced with the choice of continuing to feel overwhelmed or cutting something out, she chose to cut something out—school. Something that can supersede desire to achieve and ability to achieve is having those things compete with basic survival needs.
Jessica’s achievement story could have ended when she dropped out of high school and out of the Upward Bound program, but it did not. Jessica received support and encouragement to find a way to excel. She explained:

I was exhausted, but um, I kept in contact with Mr. Horns, and Ms. Yarbrough was always encouraging me to go back to school and to finish up, and eventually I did and today um, I’m still with Ms. Yarbrough, still receiving advice on what to do, scholarships to get, so on and so forth.

Unlike Sasha, Jessica outlined clear reasons that she was not ready to attend college directly after completing high school. Circumstances beyond her control, such as working and helping to provide for her family, overwhelmed her. She noted the support she received from Upward Bound staff members, even after she dropped out of high school, as contributing factors to her return to education.

6.2 Peer Support

Within the safety and comfort of the Upward Bound program, students expressed that they found the support and encouragement of like-minded individuals. Shaquelle stated:

I try to surround myself with like-minded people, so lot of my peers we all kind of really stressed about our education and were goal oriented when it came down to our education and trying to meet deadlines. We kind of kept each other motivated about our- that-s something else I learned in Upward Bound- stay around like-minded people because if you’re a lazy person with a motivated person nine times out of ten your laziness is going to rub off on them; so you don’t want to be lazy at the end of the day and ya’ll aren’t going to get anything done. So…just stayed around like minded people, and we all had the same attitudes about graduating from high school and doing something with our lives.

These peers were in no way perfect students, but they did demonstrate a higher level of concern about their academics than students who were not in the program. Charris shared:

Well my friends outside of Upward Bound I just looked at it like they didn’t want to try. But some of my friends outside Upward Bound they acted like they knew what education was about but they didn’t care; they didn’t take it seriously. Inside Upward Bound they wanted to push it and be better than the rest, and it was like a competition (friendly) inside the program.
Howard shared a similar sentiment when I asked him if there was a difference in his friends in the Upward Bound program and outside the program (related to attitudes about grades). Laughing, he said “Um yes. Everybody in Upward Bound wanted to make good grades.” Regarding the feelings of his less academically inclined friends outside Upward Bound and his academic achievement Howard said, “They congratulated me. I’ve never had anybody to discourage me from doing anything, but you could tell they really didn’t care- about their grades.”

As mentioned earlier, positive peer influences were appreciated added encouragement for the students but not necessarily a motivating factor that influenced their sense of self-efficacy or ultimate achievement paradigm. Negative peer influences, by the same token, did not discourage their desire to achieve. Kesha explained that her black peers “looked at it (high academic achievement) like maybe she’s a teacher’s pet or she’s just too perfect…even though it was my peers saying that I had my family saying it was a good thing so I knew it was good even though they didn’t feel that way; so I still kept moving forward.” She further explained “in the long run I knew that if I wanted to achieve the certain goals that I had for myself my academics had to be a plus.” Similarly, regarding positive peer attitudes and her academic achievement, Dessie stated, “they (peers who were “slackers”) thought it was good. Actually towards graduation I could see it in them. I could see that they were proud of me, and it felt good to know that they were proud of me.” Describing the difference between negative peers outside the program and positive peers Dessie shared:

Well there were a few slackers who actually looked at me progressing as in a negative way. They would say things like you think you’re smart. You’re going to school, who cares? But from people who were doing the same thing they were proud. They were happy; we would congratulate each other. We got a bad grade on a test we would be happy instead of downing each other we would say oh you’ll do better next time. Others would just say who cares I did better than you, forget this. It was a big difference.
When I asked Dessie why she thought the negative peers had that type of reaction she shared:

Because I think their outlook was just negative in general. It could be because they didn’t have the same push behind them to do good. Maybe at times there was someone telling them they weren’t going to be anything. Maybe they were jealous because they weren’t doing the same thing, and instead of doing the same thing they would just down you for doing good.

Dessie’s statement was insightful because it embodied the sentiments of her Upward Bound peers in that negative peer commentary did not have dramatic effects on her. She recognized that there were individuals who were not afforded the same opportunities as she was, such as having someone to push and encourage them. The support and encouragement received from adults seemed to offset any negative feedback from peers. As stated previously, most of the participants in the study had strong parental support, which laid the foundation for their success.

The participants in this study consistently demonstrated that oppositional culture and the burden of acting white were of no consequence to them. Their accounts cannot speak to every black student’s experience, but their accounts do provide insight as to preventative or coping mechanisms that were in place to help them successfully avoid oppositional culture and the burden of acting white. The participants did not say they had never experienced being made fun of or ridiculed for being academically inclined, but surrounding themselves with positive peers seemed to serve as a piece of a shield in which they were encased. Their Upward Bound peers were, in some ways, a barometer by which they measured whether or not they were on track.

The Upward Bound program must be recognized as a contributing factor in their level of comfort with academic achievement due to it having provided a conducive atmosphere. Having positive peer influences allowed them to be comfortable in their decision to make education a priority in their lives. For individuals who have grown up in a time when racial authenticity could be called into question for excelling academically and fitting the mold of a “good” student
behavior wise, surrounding one’s self with others who aspire to the same goals is part of a strategy. The students positive peer circle became part of the success strategy. The push that student participants in the study referred to did not just come from adults; it came from peers as well. The push came from people who were in the same age range, doing the same positive things, encouraging one another.

The positive peer influence was a potent tool that study participants took advantage of, but the negative peer influence was not something to which they succumbed. Why would one be influenced more by positive, rather than negative, influences? As demonstrated in the data, acting white was not a label that the some of the participants in the study were able to avoid from their peers, but it was a label they were able to take in stride. Of the twenty four students interviewed, approximately half of them specifically mentioned, in their own words, the burden of acting white. From the data gathered, I concluded that students were able to remain above the fray of negative peers when they were surrounded by a plethora of other positive influences, namely parents and mentors.

6.3 Mentors

As demonstrated by Jessica, members of the Upward Bound staff played an important role in her ultimate decision to go back to finish her diploma and enroll in college. Upward Bound staff members never stopped reaching out to Jessica after she dropped out of high school. By showing her that they were invested in her success and that a part of her success was dependent upon her returning to school, they were able re-direct her path. Upward Bound staff members had a clear mission of students being academically successful, but the mission could not have been complete without also addressing some of the mediating factors that prevented full realization of that success. Upward Bound staff members used various methods to break down any
walls that may have existed between them and program participants in order to gain their trust and respect. I would describe the staff members’ interactions as personal and intrusive. As will be expressed later in this section by Upward Bound counselors interviewed, it was necessary to take a hands on approach to student success. The participants in the study recognized the mentorship they received from Upward Bound staff members, and the staff members recognized the mentorship they must provide to ensure their students’ would thrive.

Pascarella (2004), Adelman (1999) and Terenzini et al. (1994) contend that low-income and first generation students need intervention and support programs that will encourage academic success. I found that many of the students in the study viewed Upward Bound staff members as not only encouragers of academic success, but also extensions of their family of origin. The Upward Bound staff members were able to achieve a level of success in persuading students to enroll in college in part because of the close relationships they forged with students. I cannot be certain as to whether or not creating a familial bond was a conscious choice on the part of counselors, but certainly the family atmosphere gave counselors the entre they needed to have students not only hear them but listen to them. The participants comparisons of Upward Bound staff members to family members underscored the need and desire Upward Bound students felt to be supported by family.

Renita explained:

I actually called the director my other mom. She let me know the do’s and don’t’s in certain situations so I could come to her any time and ask her about any situation whether it was college, her personal life, or with her school life. So I felt I could always come and have a conversation with her.

The sentiment of Upward Bound staff members being like family was repeated numerous times throughout the interviews. Samantha stated, “(the tutor counselors) they are in college already, so you look at it like okay, these are like our parents away from home, our big brothers and big
sisters away from home.” The pertinent information gained here was that while the Upward Bound students did not gain the knowledge that would allow them to pursue higher education in their homes, they received it from what they considered to be surrogate family members. This is critical because it helped to bring to light the importance of having support from kinship ties of a sort in order for students in this population to achieve success.

Participants in the study were provided with resources that allowed them to seize and view education as an opportunity. Researchers have found that for many children education is a “ritual without consequence,” that lacks importance or effectiveness (Howard & Levine, 2004). Furthermore, it is theorized that the poor view education as not being a “useful investment of time,” for there lacks a connection between the importance of education and opportunity as witnessed in their everyday lives (Howard & Levine, 2004). To support this view, Howard and Levine (2004) discuss the lack of educated, successful role models in poor neighborhoods. Researchers found that the poor are plagued by “gang leaders, pimps and drug dealers,” positions of “success” for which there are no educational requirements (Howard and Levine; p.20). Because there is a high correlation between socio-economic status and the education attainment level of the parents of Upward Bound students, it would be logical to surmise that much of the Upward Bound population would also be exposed to the pseudo successes of “gang leaders, pimps and drug dealers.” However, the intervention Upward Bound students received through being exposed to positive role models proved to be invaluable to their ultimate success.

Some of the young men in the study alluded to the negative influences of drugs and illegal activity being a part of their everyday life outside Upward Bound. Both Jeremy and Dorian mentioned having friends outside the Upward Bound program who were either in jail or had family members in jail due to having wanted to make “quick money” or “hustle” versus doing
something “legit.” Those words in street terms refer to activities such as drug dealing, illegally selling firearms, and working in “chop shops” or stolen vehicle warehouses. When Jeremy and Dorian made reference to these occurrences, they mentioned them as though they were no big deal, but simply a part of the norm- their norm. These young men gave a glimpse into the double consciousness of their lives. On one hand they were part of a school environment that placed value upon achievement and college attendance, but on the other they were young men who were part of communities in which certain individuals placed value on making money quickly, even if it meant doing so illegally. These young men depended on Upward Bound staff members and considered them mentors. Jeremy shared about a staff member that “he was like a father figure away from home. He kept me out of trouble like he came at me with open arms and stuff like that; so it helped me stay on the right path and don’t do no dumb stuff.”

For Upward Bound alumnus, Jerry South, the role played by a positive mentor was key to his development as a young man as well key in shaping his ethnic identity. What Jerry describes is not an uncommon account, amongst the Upward Bound alumni, of the manner in which and the depth to which having a mentor figure affected their outlook and/or sense of self efficacy. Jerry recalled of an Upward Bound staff member:

Um, he knew, like he knew, like he knew the people I used to hang with and he always used to say that you need to stop hanging with them guys because they are going to go down the wrong path. And I used to be like no, you know, they are my friends, you know, and stuff like that, and he would always say you just need, you know, you need to get your mind right, you know, you have got an opportunity to go off to school, because he heard of me playing (football), because he was a teacher at a local high school that we played against, and so he heard of me, and he was just saying that you have got an opportunity to um, that you are going to go off to school and you need to know don’t waste it, because you are hanging around these certain guys.

Jerry remembered the staff member telling him to mind the company he kept because they could have been negative influences that prevented him from achieving his ultimate goal of college at-
tendance. Jerry’s account mimics that, especially, of the young men in the study; Upward Bound staff members helped them to stay on track. In the participants’ eyes the staff members were helping them to remain focused, and this was a part of what they did, but there was also a more strategic plan than helping them to stay on track academically.

Jerry also shared:

> It was me and my friend, and the black friend, we, me and him was the black guys in the class, and we had a lot of white guys and he would be real strict on us, compared to the other guys... a lot of people just see you as just a black person, and you are like, like he used to always tell us that and he is like you being black you need a, you have got to go beyond the call. You know, average, you know, as a white person that can just be average so, like I say, I just see that a lot, and he used to always tell us, at the time I didn’t see it, but now I see it, a lot, so, yeah, but he taught me a lot, and I wished I could thank him for that, if I seen him again I would thank him.

As a teenager, Jerry was not able to comprehend the importance of some of the lessons taught to him by the Upward Bound staff member who was, in essence, mentoring him regarding a subject that can be difficult to conceptualize at that age. As a young black man who had graduated from college and was in his first job, Jerry finally got it. He felt that he had been prepared for the realities of life beyond Upward Bound, and he recognized his mentor’s advice as valuable once he faced some of those realities. Having a mentor to guide him was critical in his development as a young black man just as it was in the case of Dorian.

Dorian described relationships between himself and Upward Bound staff members that he considered to be mentors:

> Mr. McIntosh encouraged me to check my attitude at the door, well really demanded it, when I came in his classroom. When I first came in the program I mouthed off to one of the staff members, and Mr. McIntosh pulled me aside and said I was acting exactly how people in society expected black boys to act. There was especially one TC (tutor counselor) I looked at as my big brother because like I said I was really shy and I had to really get to know these people, and they made you feel comfortable around them in getting someone to talk to about a lot of my personal problems.
Dorian’s account of his relationship with Upward Bound staff members not only highlights the mentorship he felt he received, but it also speaks to the familial bond between Upward Bound staff and participants previously mentioned. Additionally, Dorian’s account highlights a strategy Mr. McIntosh used to get Dorian to posture his attitude towards a more mainstream stance. By casting a negative light upon the expectations society has of black boys, Mr. McIntosh effectively persuaded Dorian to see how his attitude should defy those expectations. Mr. McIntosh helped Dorian to re-direct his defiance so that it could be focused towards something positive, proving whites wrong about blacks, rather than negative. Mr. McIntosh served as a multicultural navigator, helping Dorian to correct an attitude that could be a barrier to his success in the mainstream.

According to Carter (2005) multicultural navigators need to be able to relate to students’ unique backgrounds while providing them the guidance to be successful in mainstream culture. The impact Upward Bound personnel had in this respect was best articulated by Rashid:

Um I feel like the Upward Bound program helped me out a lot and the staff members were out of this world and all good people with a lot of patience, because I didn’t have patience, with a lot of patience, and they try to understand. They really try to throw themselves into their work by understanding us, and understanding our backgrounds, um, and some of the peers, well some of my peers like they, most of them that went to that Upward Bound program ended up in Virginia Union (University).

Rashid’s words were poignant because they inform us that not all adults he or his peers encountered tried to understand them. Rashid claimed that the Upward Bound staff members tried to understand them and their backgrounds. I gathered that taking the time to understand the individual program participants and where they came from is part of what allowed Upward Bound staff members to successfully gain access to their lives, this making assisting them a much easier process.
Support and mentorship proved to be absolutely critical to students’ success and sense of self efficacy. Carter (2005) presented a case for the need of multicultural navigators, and the results from this study indicate that Upward Bound staff members, in many cases, served as these individuals. There was also evidence of Upward Bound impacting students in a manner that persuaded them to want to one day serve as multicultural navigators themselves. Renita shared:

While in high school of course there were all white teachers and very few blacks, and it kind of played a different role on how you pursue and perceived information. Sometimes it was racial but they don’t mean it because they don’t understand what they’re saying. And so then when I decided to go with those changes it was more like okay for my education and being out there with African Americans. And that’s what persuaded me to become a teacher. I want to reach out to them and say this is what you want to do, this is what you don’t want to do as far as education. I know the value.

Renita shared this information in a matter of fact tone. She realized that there were changes she had to make to herself in order to be successful in mainstream culture. From the data collected in her interview, she did not demonstrate that a necessary change in her behavior was something she considered to be a major sacrifice, nor did she indicate that she viewed it as a rejection of her own cultural norms. She realized that code switching needed to be a part of her repertoire of survival skills and deemed it so important that she wanted to show other black students how to do so as well.

It would be difficult for a white teacher to explain to a black student what behavioral modifications needed to be made in order for the student to be as successful as possible. Furthermore, it would be difficult for a white teacher to explain how a student could maintain racial authenticity and a sense of pride for one’s own race while conforming to more socially acceptable behavior patterns. Therefore, individuals like Renita accepting the call to become multicultural navigators, as Carter (2005) suggests, is part of a bigger picture. As has been demonstrated in the results of this study, black, low income, first generation college students, in particular,
need assistance with finding their way into the mainstream and maintaining themselves once they are there. Their backgrounds make it difficult to beat the odds and become successful in a society where cultural and social capital plays such large roles in how one fares. Consequently, guides that are able to help facilitate the process are necessary.

6.4 Counselors Weigh In

The student participants in the study provided valuable insight into their perception of the Upward Bound counselors’ role, and the data from the counselors’ interviews corroborated and expounded upon what I learned from the student interviews. From the students I learned that Upward Bound staff members were indeed seen as not just role models, but also mentors. From the counselors I learned that each of them considered themselves mentors, and they did draw upon their race and unique experiences to mentor students. When I asked “How much of your role would you say is a mentor role,” the majority of the answers were given in high percentages or words like “much.” Ms. Yarbrough stated:

I feel 90-95% of my role involves mentorship, showing students what it means to be a young professional. Many students enrolled in the program learn by example. Because of their backgrounds and the strong influence of the media and the music industry pop artists, many students develop unprofessional habits, dress, speech, and attitudes that do not support success at the higher education level.

Ms. Yarbrough attributed students’ development of “unprofessional habits, dress, speech, and attitudes” to their backgrounds and the media. When I asked her to explain more about the habits and their effects at the higher education level she said, “some of these students get to college, if they make it to college, and they don’t know what hit ‘em.” They feel like they entered the Twilight Zone because everybody seems to know what do to except them. I try to make sure they don’t get to college and feel like that.” The combination of factors in their backgrounds that
made them more susceptible to the difficulties Ms. Yarbrough explained included being economically disadvantaged, first generation college students, and from single parent homes.

Ms. Yarbrough went on to explain:

I counsel students about what it means to be a young professional, such as being conservative in their dress, their everyday language, respect for themselves and the staff and teachers they have to interact with daily, let’s see…also things like time management, having good character and citizenship, and definitely giving back to the community.

In her early sixties, Ms. Yarbrough was the oldest of the counselors interviewed, and she also had the most experience as one at 15 years. She implied that she viewed the values she tried to impart to the students as something that got lost in this generation of students. When I asked her about the personal experiences she may share with her black students, as a person of color, she shared:

Because of my age and work experience, I make a point of sharing with students how my generation overcame challenges such as racism and other forms of discrimination as they pursued college degrees and successful careers. I remind them that they are so fortunate to be where they are. It isn’t necessarily that all the challenges have been overcome, but they are so much better off than my generation was at their age.

In essence, Ms. Yarbrough used the strategy of making their issues seem small in comparison with what her generation had to overcome to receive higher education. She said, “all that stuff they worry about with who has this and that and who doesn’t and who’s poking fun at them for this reason or that doesn’t mean a thing.”

I found that age played a major role in the various strategies counselors used to make connections with students. Counselors used their personal strengths and experiences to find the right method or combination of methods that worked. Ms. Thomas, in her mid forties, connected with students from a different perspective than Ms. Yarbrough. Ms. Thomas explained:

I feel students should have an understanding of how to be comfortable with themselves before trying to please others who enter into their lives. Our students enter into high
school as a unique individual molded by genes, environment, and a certain spark within himself. Yet, as they go through their day more often times they desire to fit in or be like others, which ultimately dilutes the spark that makes him unique. I try to circumvent those feelings through journal writing, create a “me” commercial, and drawing self portraits, to name a few.

When I asked Ms. Thomas to give an account of having witnessed students being uncomfortable with themselves and trying to fit in she explained how her Upward Bound freshmen wanted to mesh with the rest of the group, as they were new to the program, but that was not where issues really arose for students. She explained, “the issues came when the students went back to their high schools, some of which were rough, and it was harder to justify having attitudes that showed they cared about school. I’ve had students to tell me they wish they could go to a different high school.”

In high schools that were “rough,” as expressed by Ms. Thomas, students as a whole did not have an academic focus, and when the Upward Bound students she served did display this focus they were an anomaly. Ms. Thomas talked about helping students to be comfortable with themselves as well as with dominant cultural expectations of them, emphasizing the importance of being comfortable with themselves first. Being comfortable with themselves would enable them to feel unpressured in an environment where their personal attributes may not be the norm, whether black or white. She taught them that code switching was an essential and that it did not mean “selling out” (her words) or being disloyal to one’s own race or ethnic identity. Ms. Yarbrough’s statement supports Carter’s (2005) supposition about students in her study that remaining connected to one’s racial or ethnic identity was a salient issue that some struggled with.

While Ms. Yarbrough did not indicate that black students seemed uncomfortable with the idea of high academic achievement itself, she did indicate that they had problems, at times dealing with
being “different.” At times, as indicated in the data, being different meant lacking characteristics associated with the students’ race.

Upward Bound counselors utilized various tools to assist students in dealing with issues of achievement and identity. Regarding the utilization of her personal experiences as a person of color in counseling black students, Ms. Yarbrough explained:

I would be remiss to say I do not inform students of my personal experiences as a woman, and I happen to be of color. I feel as an effective counselor one has to utilize textbook theory, life experience, personal experience of others, and practical know how with a little common sense. It just so happens many of my experiences come from being a female of color.

Along those same lines, Ms. Parris explained:

I have shared with my students on countless occasions how my high school experience was...less than ideal. I attended a predominantly white high school, and there was immense pressure to perform academically; that’s what my high school was known for. I was an all around type of kid. I did sports, kept my grades up, was in clubs, and was popular. But there was no mistaking that I did feel a level of discomfort in trying to make sure I seemed “real” enough to the black kids who weren’t about the books but ideal enough to the white teachers and students. I know some of them struggle with that same thing, and we talk frankly about it.

Ms. Parris echoed both the personal experience I had as a high school student as well as the approach I took as an Upward Bound counselor. For Upward Bound students who expressed any degree of difficulty with fitting into the various dimensions of their reality, there were many one on one frank discussions with me. I can attest to the fact that because a student outwardly displays that he or she is a successful cultural straddler, this does not mean that there is not a degree of internal struggle. This is one reason it is imperative that multicultural navigators have some of the same lived experiences as the students they encounter, as Carter suggests.

Having same race Upward Bound counselors proved to be an important finding in this study, but the importance of having same race and sex Upward Bound counselors proved to be important for male participants. Mr. Washington, a counselor, shared information that resembled
what some of the male student participants expressed. When I asked if he shared any personal life experiences when counseling black students he expressed:

Do I? If I didn’t, some of these boys especially would never get it. Sometimes it takes a lot to get across to them why play time has to be over. Black men carry a heavy burden, and a little young brother trying to put together what it all means, and he doesn’t even have a father in the house ain’t a joke. I don’t say I know it all, but I tell them what I have to do as a grown ass man, excuse my French, to make it in today’s world. They know Mr. Washington keeps it one hundred with them when I say I have to pull my dreads back in a pony tail instead of letting them loose because having them at all is like pushing the envelope.

I asked if he found it difficult to tell them they may have to play down a part of their ethnic identity at times, and he shared:

I think the day is gonna come when we don’t have to; it is almost here. Soon Latinos are going to pass us as the minority and probably catch up to whites. When we are more of a melting pot than we already are, it will be a new day. Until then, it isn’t a big deal to roll with it as long as you know who you are. It is just like etiquette you learn for different situations. I tell them like this, if the average white guy came to a crumping contest with me, he might consider brushing up on certain vernacular or consulting with me about appropriate things to say or do. While black people have to do it every day, the concept is no different. Like the kids say, you “make it do what it do.”

Mr. Washington took the approach of imparting to young black men that at some point everyone negotiates something. Negotiation did not necessarily mean rejecting one’s racial or ethnic identity, but it did consequently necessitate the need to code switch.

The data reflected that there is value in students having same race mentors. Upward Bound counselors drew upon life situations that were unique to them as people of color to connect with students and relate to struggles they may have incurred. Having an individual who has walked the same path to impart their experiences and provide guidance on how to handle situations was important to the success of students in this study, but this fact also begs the question of whether or not it is necessary for mentorship to come from individuals of the same race. I posit that it is possible for whites to be multicultural navigators, but there must be a dedication to do-
ing a certain amount of code switching themselves. Whites certainly have the knowledge of dominant cultural values that is pertinent to student success, but ensuring that they are properly versed in black cultural values is a pivotal aspect of them becoming successful multicultural navigators. They must be willing to undergo the same code switching process that they would try to impart to students.
7 CONCLUSION

The black white achievement gap is a topic that has been grappled with and debated by social scientists for the past few decades. Why is it that blacks do not achieve at the same levels as whites? There have been no definitive answers to this question. However, each study on the topic has provided insight and moved us closer to an answer.

From this study, it was discovered that the ideal circumstances under which an economically disadvantaged, first generation college African American student excels involves an intricate set of circumstances that are not afforded to all. Even under the most favorable conditions, I discovered that the achievement gap was only closed to a certain extent. A student who had support, acceptance of dominant cultural values, cultural capital, the ability to code switch, and mentorship was far more likely to develop the sense of self-efficacy that emerged as a critical point in the achievement paradigm. Without these components being firmly in place, students lacked the absolute determination and belief in themselves that it takes to persevere and achieve despite structural barriers or personal obstacles that may otherwise dictate the trajectory of their life course.

The Upward Bound alumni in this study were involuntary minorities, as identified by John Ogbu. According to the resistance model put forth by Ogbu, these individuals would not be inclined to see the value in working hard to receive an education. If Ogbu’s theory were correct, 1) the structural barriers imbedded in a system that perpetuates inequality be so discouraging that students’ motivation would be non-existent and 2) the risk of losing one’s racial authenticity by “acting white” and achieving would not be worth pushing one’s self to excel. The participants in this study confirmed that behaviors such as high academic achievement, using proper English, and even certain styles of dress were considered acting white by black peers who did not assimi-
late to these behaviors. Additionally, some of the study participants expressed a certain level of pressure and/or teasing from these peers. What the students did not suggest was that the pressure and/or teasing in any way affected their attitudes about schooling or their desire to achieve. Negative peer influences were noted, but they were not considered a major hindrance to any of the study participants. It was the positive peer influences that were motivators for them. Students who had the same vision of achievement were instrumental in motivating and encouraging one another.

Akin to the peer support, and perhaps the most critical finding in the study was “that push” that participants received from parents and Upward Bound staff members alike. The sheer drive that students demonstrated stemmed heavily from their parents doing more than encouraging, but in a sense demanding that they strive for more than their life circumstances would dictate they were capable of. Though the participants were economically disadvantaged at the time they were members of the Upward Bound program, their parents did not allow this to be a crutch on which they could lean and make excuses for not excelling.

A particularly fascinating point that emerged about parental support was the role mothers played. At least eighty percent of participants who were most successful had mothers that were extremely adamant about their sons and daughters receiving an education. They themselves did not have four-year degrees, but they demanded that their children put themselves in position to go beyond what they had achieved, both educationally and vocationally. They did not know how to convey to their children the steps that were necessary to take in order to go to college, but they sent them somewhere that could guide their children’s paths more effectively than they could—Upward Bound. When I asked the participants in the study why they joined the Upward Bound program, the majority of them mentioned that it was at their mothers’ encouragement and urging.
It was at this important juncture that the “push” many of the students had received all along from their parents, particularly mothers, became a push that was shared by Upward Bound staff members.

For the students in this study, Upward Bound staff members often times became extensions of their families, but most importantly they were also mentors who held the missing keys to success that their biological families could not provide. Prudence Carter refers to the role the Upward Bound staff members played as multicultural navigators. The family extension aspect was something that I discovered in this study. Participants consistently referred to Upward Bound tutor counselors (college student mentors) as older brothers, sisters, or cousins, and adult Upward Bound counselors and directors as parents in addition to their biological ones.

Carter asserts that the multicultural navigator is an adult figure who is necessary in the lives of involuntary minority youth to help them become cultural straddlers, individuals equipped to operate successfully within their own cultural realm as well as the dominant cultural realm. The multicultural navigator is an individual who has shared experiences and is able to help students combat any issues regarding racial authenticity while simultaneously coaching them on the politics of mainstream cultural survival. I assert that Upward Bound staff members were able to uniquely serve in this role due to the rapport they developed with students. The students received “that push” from their parents, but they received “that push” plus knowledge from the Upward Bound staff members.

The surrogate family the students made reference to was an unexpected finding, and it is also aligned with Carter’s multicultural navigator concept. The Upward Bound staff members made it clear, whether directly or indirectly, that it was important and expected that students attend college. What was conveyed to the study participants through the college student mentors
(Upward Bound tutor counselors) was that it was quite possible to be “cool” and racially authen-
tic while assimilating to dominant cultural expectations. The tutor counselors served as role 
models, placing emphasis on this very point. The largest impact they had was being an accessi-
ble testimony to the fact that it is not necessary to give up the pieces of one’s self that make them 
an individual in order to be successful; it is, however important to realize the necessity of em-
bracing acceptable steps to and measures of success.

Older adult Upward Bound staff members provided a different type of mentorship. 
Along with the technical knowledge of how to graduate from high school, apply to college, and 
apply for financial aid came the wisdom of how to develop other skills that are considered im-
portant in the dominant culture. Among those are accepted patterns of speech, behavior and 
dress. Repeatedly, study participants expressed that they were impacted by the constant insist-
ence of Upward Bound adults to adhere to dominant cultural expectations, particularly in public. 
The connotation was that within the confines of one’s own culture, free expression of cultural 
influence could and should take place. However, if any of these behaviors were not aligned with 
the dominant culture, it was important not to openly display them. At first glance, this lesson 
may seem anti-minority culture, but it is instead the fine line that a multicultural navigator must 
be able to help students walk in order to be successful. It is a delicate balance to maintain- racial 
authenticity and dominant cultural acceptance. Students must be cognizant of the culture of 
power that Delpit writes about in order to seize their place in the mainstream. It often takes 
guidance to help students firmly grasp the concept that there is no shame in black culture, though 
aspects of it may be undervalued in the mainstream. 

The last critical piece the Upward Bound program provided to the students in this study 
was cultural exposure. Cultural exposure is a doorway to the culture of power. Black students
are not born into the culture of power, but they can in essence gain a spot by being exposed to aspects of the dominant culture, learning them, and subscribing to them. This in no way promotes shunning black culture; it simply encourages an active bi-cultural agenda. In his later work, Ogbu made reference to the fact that black culture is not a universal concept that encompasses all blacks in all walks of life. Certain truths that are so amongst some blacks may not necessarily be among others. However, there are certain behaviors and practices that are more associated with blacks than any other culture, and these are the ones of which I speak. Being immersed in one’s own culture without ever having first hand exposure to dominant cultural values and practices is a handicap. The Upward Bound program not only exposed the students to aspects of the dominant culture that were foreign to most of them, but it allowed them to understand that participation was within reach.

7.1 Policy Implications

From this study, I was able to ascertain that students did receive benefits from being exposed to dominant cultural values and that the benefits were far reaching. It would, however, behoove educational policy makers to take note of the many different components that are necessary to make significant attempts at closing the black white achievement gap when making cuts to educational funding. One may ask to what extent it is the responsibility of public schools to tackle the task of closing the gap, but public schools have the greatest access to and authority over the education of students.

The Upward Bound Program, as evidenced in the study, had a profound impact upon students and their achievement. Should the Upward Bound Program be expanded? If the Upward Bound Program cannot be realistically expanded, as the average cost per pupil is $5,000, it should certainly serve as a model for closing the achievement gap. The current study provided
evidence of the benefits of students having support, mentorship, and the ability to code switch, in addition to dominant cultural values; there is not one single formula for ensuring black students have these tools for success in place. However, it is important to recognize that historical shortcomings regarding educational equality in the United States necessitate that law and policy makers find themselves ever mindful of the gaps that have resulted. Acknowledging the historical role that the law has played in perpetuating inequality also means acknowledging the role that the law must continue to play in evening the playing field. As public schools do have the greatest access to black students, finding ways to incorporate the tools necessary to undergird success, as outlined in this study, is a step in the right direction.

Current laws and policies sanction low performing schools, often cutting funding and resources. Additionally, parents who are able to provide transportation for their children to attend a higher performing school are, under certain circumstances, able to do so if the child’s home school does not meet academic year progress. These policies make it difficult, if not impossible, for students to reap the benefits of pertinent resources and exposure to students from a wider range of backgrounds.

7.2 Directions for Future Research

The current study examined the effects of a comprehensive program, which provides mentorship and academic assistance, on black high school student achievement. As stated before, the results indicated that the components of the program addressed did have an effect on black student achievement. Looking at the effects of such a program longitudinally, from elementary through high school, would be valuable. One could determine whether concentrated efforts like those students receive in the Upward Bound program could do more towards closing the black white achievement gap if administered over a longer period of time.
Along with studying students over time, examining the success and choices made by similar students who did not participate in a program would be an excellent means of gathering data. This would give a better depiction of the effects of success that were directly related to Upward Bound participation. We would be able to ascertain the coping mechanisms or lack thereof utilized by students without program support.

Additionally, an avenue of research that should be pursued is an in-depth analysis of the impact of programs like Upward Bound on males versus females. Minor differences, such as topics for mentorship, were noted in the current study, but dedicating a study to that particular topic would provide valuable information on combating the achievement gap from a different perspective. Last, utilizing a nationally representative data set to test the findings of the current study would be an ideal avenue for research. Undergirding key elements of the findings in this research with a national data set would be beneficial in determining how much of the results obtained from this research was due to specific demographic factors.

The current study is important because it builds upon what has been learned from John Ogbu and Prudence Carter about the black-white achievement gap, and it provides information about formulating possible solutions. John Ogbu provided us with concepts, oppositional culture and the burden of acting white, which informed a different way of thinking about the achievement gap. His work played a large role in forwarding research that explored factors that impede minority students’ motivation to achieve. Prudence Carter provided us with a possible approach to addressing minority students’ issues in achievement—multicultural navigators. The current study addresses both Ogbu and Carter, calling for a treatment of the achievement gap that takes into account the myriad of factors that continue to plague minority students.
There must be a definitive stance on the needs of minority students in the United States. John Ogbu correctly identified that there is a distinct difference in the success outcomes of minorities who came to the U.S. voluntarily versus those whose predecessors did not come voluntarily. It can be learned from this study that with appropriate guidance, from multicultural navigators, and focused efforts, success is within reach for most students.
REFERENCES


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Gender in Oppositional Culture Theory.” *Evaluation and Research in Education* 17(1).


APPENDICES

Appendix A

Alumni Interview Schedule

Why did you enroll in the Upward Bound Program?

Describe your interaction with Upward Bound staff members. What types of skills in particular did staff members teach you? What attitudes and beliefs did they try to instill in you?

Did you consider any members of the UB staff to be mentors?

What are some of the greatest lessons you learned from Upward Bound staff members?

Did Upward Bound staff members ever share any personal life experiences with you?

What was the most memorable experience you had as an Upward Bound participant?

How did you view education in high school, and how do you view it now?

How did the peers you hung around most feel about school?

Was getting good grades in school considered a good thing to do by your peers?

Did you and your peers (inside or outside the program) ever talk about behaviors that were not typically associated with acting black? Can you give examples?

Did your parent(s)/guardian(s) have any influence on how you feel about education? If so, how?

Did you see education as a hindrance or help to your parents’ career success?

When did you make your decision regarding college attendance, and what influenced your decision?
Appendix B

Counselor Interview Schedule

Describe your role as an Upward Bound Counselor.

How much of the role is a mentor role?

Beyond academics, what kinds of things do you counsel students about?

Is there any variation in the guidance you give black students versus white students?

Do you discuss self-awareness issues with students?

How much do you draw from your personal experiences as a person of color when counseling black students?

Do black students in the program seem comfortable with the idea of high academic achievement?

How much do you stress the importance of academic achievement to the students?
Appendix C

Alumni Demographic Survey

*This information will not be shared or published*

Name_______________________________  Age _____ Gender______

Email Address________________________ Phone Number________________

In what state did you participate in Upward Bound?

What was the name of the college/university/organization where you participated in Upward Bound?

How many years did you participate in Upward Bound?

Did you graduate from the Upward Bound Program?
Appendix D

Counselor Participant Demographic Information

Name_______________________________ Age _____ Gender______

Email Address_______________________ Phone Number_________________

What is the name of the college/university/organization at which you serve as an Upward Bound Counselor?

How many years have you worked with Upward Bound?

Are you an alumnus of the Upward Bound Program?
Appendix E

Criteria

Criterion 1: How was the original sample selected? On what grounds?

Criterion 2: What major categories emerged

Criterion 3: What were some of the events, incidents, or actions (indicators) that pointed to some of the major categories?

Criterion 4: On the basis of what categories did theoretical sampling proceed? That is, how did theoretical formulations guide some of the data collection? After the theoretical sampling was done, how representative of the data did the categories prove to be?

Criterion 5: What were some of the hypotheses pertaining to conceptual relations (i.e., among categories), and on what grounds were they formulated and validated?

Criterion 6: Were the instances in which hypotheses did not explain what was happening in the data? How were these discrepancies accounted for? Were hypotheses modified?

Criterion 7: How and why was the core category selected? Was this collection sudden or gradual, and was it difficult or easy? On what grounds were the final analytic decisions made?