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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE CULTURE OF TWELFTH GRADE UPWARD
BOUND STUDENTS IN THE MIDWEST

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to better understand the culture of an Upward Bound College Preparatory Program in the Midwest and how it interacted with the culture of 12th-grade UB participants. In particular, the study examined how UB and the cultures that 12th graders belonged influenced students' decisions, progression, and adult transitions. UB serves at-promise high school students who are highly susceptible to academic, career, financial, and psychological challenges during their 12th-grade progression and transition. Therefore, the researcher conducted an ethnographic study that included observations, documents, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups with ($N = 70$) participants in the Midwest. Participants included ($n = 14$) active 12th-grade UB primary participants, ($n = 7$) non-active 12th grade UB secondary participants, and ($n = 49$) adult tertiary participants. During this juncture in their lives, 12th-grade UB participants typically have fewer supports, while facing challenges and social stratification associated with their cultural and demographic statuses. Findings illustrated that UB's 12th-grade culture disregarded developmentally appropriate curriculum, mentor support, and a balanced level of structured guidance. In turn, these cultural interactions also influenced 12th-grade UB participants' decisions to engage in school activities, participate in UB program activities, engage in college going behaviors, and choose a particular college. Gaining a better understanding of the 12th-grade culture in this UB program provides several insights on how to improve the program's services. Recommendations include more culturally relevant interventions, comprehensive school counseling programs, and the development of 12th-grade UB curriculums that address the holistic (i.e., academic, personal, socioemotional) needs of 12th-grade UB students.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Upward Bound (UB) College Preparatory Program is a federally funded program that supports historically disadvantaged and low-income high school students who wish to attend four-year colleges and universities. With over 700 UB programs nationwide, UB's ultimate goal is to "help students attend college who are qualified but who would otherwise be excluded" with the expectancy to improve "the nation's economic productivity" (Wolanin, 2003). UB programs help level the playing field by providing opportunities that eventually lead to equitable access for all students, including disadvantaged populations (low-income, first generation), thus increasing college enrollment and degree completion rates of marginalized groups (Pitre & Pitre, 2009). UB evolved from *Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty* and the *Economic Opportunity Act of 1964*. UB was first funded in 1965 (U.S. Department of Education, 2014) under the umbrella of TRIO. TRIO originally contained three programs and has now expanded to include eight programs. TRIO programs include: (a) Educational Opportunity Centers, (b) Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement, (c) Student Support Services, (d) Talent Search, (e) Training Program for Federal TRIO Program Staff, (f) Upward Bound, (g) Upward Bound Math-Science, and (h) Veterans Upward Bound. For the purposes of this paper, the researcher solely focuses on the UB program.

Previous researchers have reported on the broader curriculum of UB, the statistics of UB participants' academic outcomes, adolescent development, and broader stratifications relative to UB participants' first generational college students and low-income status (Butler, 1999, Butler & Bunch, 2005; Crockett & Beal, 2012; Thompson, Kuruwita, & Foster, 2009; Pitre & Pitre, 2009). Historically, students in the UB program have reported higher than average success rates, surpassing the national average for students in these categories (Balz & Esten, 1998; Helms,

2003). However, reports regarding the growth curve or the increase in the success of UB students are rare. Existing literature lacks an honest critique of the UB program beyond its strengths, while criticism of UB has not provided satisfactory supports for their oppositions and claims (Anderson & Larson, 2009). To this end, researchers have not studied the culture of 12th-grade UB students and how it interacts with UB's culture to influence program attrition, as well as how it may serve to affect their socio-emotional state, progression, decisions, and adult transitions. Sadly, existing literature also lacks an examination of the interactive cultural processes that may have contributed to the success of 12th-grade UB students. The researcher concluded that these gaps exist after conducting an extensive search of applicable literature from 1965 until 2014 using various databases, such as ERIC, Anthro Source, Proquest, Ethnic News Watch, EBSCO, SAGE, Psych Info, Web of Science, and Science Direct. This search included the following search terms: culture, disadvantaged youth, adolescents in transition, seniors, twelfth grade, Upward Bound, TRIO, transition programs, and college preparation. The search concerning UB, which involved checking literature from 1971 through 2012, produced several case studies and reports, 16 articles, and one research report pertaining to the TRIO Upward Bound Programs.

In order to address the aforementioned gaps in literature concerning UB and 12th-grade participants, this ethnographic study examines the culture of one Midwest Upward Bound College Preparatory Program and how it interacts with the culture (behaviors, attitudes, language) of 12th-grade UB students, potentially affecting their developmental progression, retention, decisions, and transitions from high school into adulthood. Twelfth-grade UB adolescents are at a critical point in development, in that they not only experience stigma related to their developmental state as older adolescents but are also challenged with overcoming major

life adjustments with little support (McElroy & Armestro, 1998; Muhammad, 2008; Oakes & Rogers, 2006; Rogers, 2012; Smith, 2008). Twelfth-grade UB students are likely to experience negligence, stigma, negative predictions, and additional stressors associated with their status as first-generation college students, people with low socioeconomic status, and African-Americans, also being less likely to engage in professional counseling services (Aughinbaugh, 2008; Bryan, 2005; Eriksen, 1959; Hoberman, 1992; Murray, 2009; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2016; Smith, Chesin, & Jeclie, 2014). Studying UB's culture and the interactive processes influencing the culture of 12th-grade UB participants' decisions could provide insights into the undocumented processes that contribute to the success of disadvantaged students' high school progression and transitions from high school. Additionally, documenting the cultural processes that serve to influence seniors' decisions, progressions, and transitions could lead to relevant program implementations and improvements that promote the success of future 12th-grade UB students.

Statement of the Problem

Numerous studies, evaluations, and reviews have reported the benefits of the UB program (Bergerson, 2009; Dervarics, 2011; Muhammad, 2007; Pitre & Pitre, 2009). Most of the research focuses on program completion and student reports, such as quantitative statistics related to the academic and career outcomes of UB students who were and were not retained by the program during their high school years (Bounds, 2014). Previous research has also placed an emphasis on reporting on areas such as student demographics, program features, resource allocation, and organizational structure (Anderson & Larson, 2009; Muhammad, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2014; Ward, 2006).

However, the culture of 12th-grade UB students and the socio-emotional experiences involved in their transitions has yet to be explored. Additionally, both active and non-active 12th-grade UB students has not been reported on in prior research. The actual experiences of students in the programs, beyond the curriculum and their development of positive relationships are rarely discussed or analyzed in the existing literature (Crocket & Beal, 2012; Gullat & Jan, 2003; Perna, 2002). Similarly, there was a lack of research on 12th-grade at-risk students, as well as research on how the culture of UB students influenced their decisions and health, during developmental transitions from high school into college (Bedolla, 2010).

A much smaller body of research has collected qualitative data about the culture of UB, as well how its delivery and operations of service interact with the culture of 12th-grade UB students. Previous studies tended to draw superficial conclusions that typically relied on self-reported data, the perspectives of those currently affiliated with the program, open-ended surveys, and/or isolated focus groups (Gullat & Jan, 2003; Perna, 2002, Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, & Thomas, 2008, Zulli and Frierson, 2004). Collectively, published research and evaluations of Upward Bound arguably suffers from what could be called ‘Snark Syndrome’ (Byrne, 1993), which is continued repetition of questionable research findings over time. Snark Syndrome can lead the public to believe that the UB program is completely good, effective, and fully conducive to assisting the cultural population that it serves. This bias may discourage researchers and evaluators from looking at proactive measures of improvement that would ensure both that the benefits of the program are being preserved and that the program continues to meet the needs of the students. This fear of potential consequences for acknowledging potential areas of improvement may also support barriers related to moving forward with effective UB improvement plans, thus inevitably decreasing the likelihood of UB’s continued existence as a

prominent and competitive program that serves the multifaceted needs of special populations (Field, 2007).

To be clear, as a former student in and employee for Upward Bound programs, the researcher fully believes in the value, potential, and need for UB programs to exist in the 21st century. Over the years, the researcher has witnessed the influence that the program has had on students' decisions and successes (Pitre & Pitre, 2009). However, the researcher also believes that there are many unrecognized problems in these programs, and that the honest discussions of their strengths and weaknesses need to happen before meaningful improvements can be made. The researcher recognizes that the people involved in these programs may worry federal funding can be jeopardized by such honest critiques. This worry has the potential to not only influence the results of previous research, which lacked the triangulation of observations and documents, but also affect the participants who self-reported in this ethnography. Additionally, program evaluators' unfamiliarity with the culture of the program, desire to be culturally sensitive, and general inexperience evaluating through a multicultural lens has lessened the level of criticism and also potentially contributed to Snark Syndrome (Gullat & Jan, 2003; Perna, 2002; Zulli and Frierson, 2004).

The researcher's experiences as an employee of UB in multiple capacities has led to the belief that the current culture of 12th-grade 21st century students significantly undermines both the traditional function of the program and the interactions that were designed to promote an increase in the number of students that are positively affected by the program. The researcher supports the continuous use of the UB program services that provide proactive and strategic approaches that best meet the needs of students through culturally competent and relevant supports resulting in the promotion of healthy development, decisions, progression, transitions,

and retention. Adequate evaluations and implementation of suggested improvements may help UB supersede program goals while surpassing the current number of students that complete high school and earn college degrees. The researcher believes it is critical to provide 12th graders with a culturally competent curriculum, professional guidance, and a constructivist approach (positive environments, strength-based approach). It is also important for adults to integrate a well-balanced approach that challenges and supports students with caring relationships and interactions, which promote development, positive decisions, and success.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to better understand the culture of this Upward Bound College Preparatory Program in the Midwest and how it interacted with the culture of 12th-grade UB participants. In particular, the study examined how these cultures influenced the students' decisions, progression, and adult transitions.

Research Question: What is the culture of this Upward Bound Program, and how does it influence 12th-grade participants' progression and transitions from high school into adulthood?

Research Design

The research questions and population being studied prompted the basis for this research design. An ethnographic study of the culture of 12th grade UB students can help us better understand the socio-emotional needs of these students and how to support their healthy development through culturally sensitive and relevant programming. This study will also discuss the significance of UB culture and the utilization of culturally responsive professional counselors

in order to recruit and impact diverse students. This may promote the establishment of multiple partnerships with schools, communities, and businesses, as well as strategic interventions in order to create an effective holistic approach that will assist the development of older adolescents in transition. In addition, the data collected in this study can lead to improvements in culturally responsive program curriculums, careers, and academic interventions, thus inadvertently providing better utilization of financial investments for this important program, as suggested by researchers such as Kimbrell (2013), Rodriguez, Rhodes, and Aguirre, (2014), and Ward (2006). Ultimately, conducting an ethnographic study of the culture of 12th-grade UB students provides a comprehensive view of the interactive experiences that affect their culture, decisions, and transitions, thus providing insights into specific strategies that will ensure that relevant organizational improvements are made to increase student performance outcomes and organizational impact. In order to collect the data, the researcher was immersed in a UB 12th-grade community and cultures as both a participant and nonparticipant observer for approximately four months. During this time, the researcher conducted observations, interviews, and focus groups. The researcher also collected documents, such as school and program records to corroborate data concerning primary participants. Data were analyzed using Gill and Boote's Framework (2012) highlighting how five components of culture (i.e., language, values, recurring problems, materials, and standard practices) interact. By analyzing these interactions, the researcher was able to uncover cultural patterns that affected UB students' experiences during 12th grade and their transition to adulthood.

The findings of this study may help professionals and organizations consider ways to help advance the support, health, success, and longevity of 12th-grade students in transition through developmentally appropriate cultural responsive pedagogy and practices that are

developmentally appropriate. In order to help professional organizations and stakeholders better understand the culture of 12th-grade UB students through their perspectives and better support the collaboration of stakeholders serving at-risk students, we may consider advancing research and practice through systemic changes. Systemic improvements would be comprised of the following: (a) researched based curriculum models, (b) interventions, (c) policies, (d) funding, (e) resources, and (f) the descriptive roles and hiring of personnel.

The participants in this qualitative study consisted of primary, secondary, and tertiary participants over a four-month period. The primary participants were 12th-grade UB students who were active in UB during the academic year of their senior year, participating in a minimum of two UB-sponsored events, excluding school lunch monitoring). Secondary participants were 12th-grade students who did not participate in UB's academic component as seniors, but had participated in UB previously. Twelfth-grade UB students and UB seniors are used interchangeably to describe the status of the primary and secondary students throughout the study. Both primary and secondary participants are UB students who were documented to graduate with the senior class of 2015 and/or UB students who have attended four years of high school. Tertiary participants included seven groups: (1) The parents of primary participants (active UB seniors), (2) secondary participants (non-active seniors), (3) parents of alumni, (4) past and present alumni, (5) past and present school personnel, (6) past and present UB employees, and (7) community leaders. The researcher collected data by using 30-60 minute semi-structured interviews, semi-structured focus groups, observations, and document analysis. Document collection included school records and UB applications, which provided demographic information. Interview protocol, observation protocol, and memoing were used throughout the study to guide data collection.

Significance

Conducting an ethnographic study of the culture of 12th-grade UB participants can provide critical insights into the cultural experiences and interactive processes affecting the academic, social, and emotional well-being of these students, all of which may inadvertently affect their attitudes, decisions, and transitional processes as citizens. Evaluating the culture of 12th-grade UB students is also important because of the developmental challenges and opportunities that exist during their transition from high school to adulthood. These transitions heighten the demand for all stakeholders, such as program directors, counselor educators, Professional School Counselors (PSC), and funding agencies to understand the cultural development of current participants and the structural components necessary to serve their needs and cultivate their successes (Muhammad, 2008; Murphy, 2014; Owens & Johnson, 2009). Understanding 12th-grade students' cultural development may lead to cultural competencies that guide effective interventions, which help older adolescents learn and maintain skills throughout developmental transitions (Bedolla, 2010; Coneal, 2002; Ratts et al., 2016; Sue & Sue, 2012; Sue, Arredondo, McDavis, & Roderick, 1992). It can also assist counselors and educators knowledge of the importance of how to encourage students' interest and career exploration in diverse fields, by providing comprehensive programming and collaborations to promote STEM-related fields, which are underrepresented by people who are first-generation college students, low income, and minorities (Kimbrell, 2013; Studer & Diamba, 2010; Boggie, 2012). Principally, stakeholders (e.g., counselors, UB, educators) can provide creative career guidance to engage, motivate, and encourage students to pursue various areas of interest, while helping them maintain financial stability and respectfully supporting who they are and their values (Benner, 2011; Butler, 2003; Howard & Terry, 2011; Rovai, Gallien, & Wighting, 2005; Murphy, 2014). These are important

factors to consider when working with 12th-grade UB participants, because these at-promise students are instead considered “at-risk” due to having few support systems in place. UB participants encounter various challenges such as stigma and discrimination that are based on stratifications related to meeting the criteria for participating in UB. These are barriers that UB programs try to buffer when trying to help them achieve success (Arnett, 2007; Benner; Bergerson, 2009; Coneal,; Huynh & Fuligni, 2012; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008; Lohfink & Paulsen, 2005; Pitre & Pitre, 2009; Ward, 2006).

UB students are first-generation and/or low-income students who are often labeled, stigmatized, and associated with negative statistics (high school dropout, delinquent, government dependent) (Belfield, 2010; Benner, 2011; Murray, 2009; Tipenko, 2005). They are also predicted to be less likely to transition to postsecondary institutions and complete college degrees (Kuh et al., 2008; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003; Marsh-McDonald & Schroeder, 2012; Rovai et al., 2005), with 43% of at-risk students withdrawing from college after their first year of attendance (Rogers, 2012). Hence, this study is critical because it aims to understand the needs of 12th-grade at-promise students prior to college in order to help them better succeed when they do continue their education. Supporting the academic success of 12th-grade UB students remains crucial to their independence, financial stability, and health, which in turn affects the U.S. economy. High school and college graduates are more likely to earn higher wages, pay taxes, and contribute as citizens, and they are less likely to incur the government costs associated with imprisonment and government assistance programs (e.g., child care resources, food assistance programs, energy assistance) (Belfield, 2010; Hammond, Linton, Smink, Drew, National Dropout, & Communities, 2007; Murray, 2009).

Stakeholders can benefit from research that identifies the cultural strengths and

weaknesses of a UB program that interacts with 12th-grade students' progression, decisions, and adult transitions. This will lead to improved future learning processes, increased program participation, and informed decisions that promote healthy adult transitions (Anderson & Larson, 2009; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006; Setlalentoa, 2013). Through this, counselors, program staff, parents, educational institutions, and stakeholders can utilize the information from the study to strategically guide 12th-grade students and modify program curriculums. This may engender research-based and culturally responsive curriculums, adequate resources (personnel) and supports, funding, experts, and collaborative partnerships that assist with students' healthy development as they progress through high school, prepare for transitions, and begin to navigate the adult realm of higher education institutions and careers. UB programs have been reported as beneficial in the past (Bergerson, 2009; Dervarics, 2011; Jehangir, 2010; Muhammad, 2007; Pitre & Pitre, 2009). However, demands to effectively support the unique population of students are high, and the need for support has been reported to extend beyond their transition from high school to college, as students seek additional assistance following their 12th-grade transitions. In other words, researchers have discussed mental health challenges related to change and high school transitions (Cleary, Walter, & Jackson, 2011; Huynh & Fuligni, 2012; Taylor, Doane, & Eisenberg, 2013). This is relevant because 12th-grade students are embarking on new areas of life, and many of them may experience transitions that require a change in environment (leaving for college), as well as cultural interactions, responsibilities, and social adjustments that come with learning how to navigate new systems of politics. The progression and transitions that 12th-grade students are likely to incur, emphasizes their need for additional coping skills and cultural identity development to successfully navigate post-secondary institutions. However, there is not a large body of research that address these issues, which makes it difficult to inform and thus provoke

strategic interventions for implementation (Daniels, 2013; Eriksen, 1959; Hoberman, 1992; Muhammad, 2007; Mireles, 2010; Murphy, 2014; Rovai et al., 2005; Schouten, 1991; Setlalentoa, 2013; Strayhorn, 2009; Zulli & Frierson, 2004).

In addition to transitional stressors, and ironically the disengagement due to the absence of a focused curriculum designed for the holistic developmental progression of seniors in transition, 12th-grade UB students are challenged to overcome multiple cultural stressors. The stressors from poverty, generational educational gaps, and conflicts are related to their cultural identities as they consider continuing their academics without a balanced level of support and direction (Benner, 2011; Coneal, 2002; Jehanigar, 2010; Marsh-McDonald & Schroeder, 2012; Messer-Davidow, 2006; Prout; Schouten; Smith et al., 2014; Rovai et al., 2005; Ward, 2006; Weber). Twelfth-grade UB students, therefore, encounter a plethora of emotional experiences and upheaval as they receive and make decisions during their developmental transition from high school in adulthood (Butler & Bunch, 2005; Crocket & Beal, 2012; Thompson, Kuruwita, & Foster, 2009; Prout, 1989; Schouten, 1991; Young, Marshall, Foulkes, Haber, Lee, Penner, & Rostram, 2011; Setlalentoa, 2013; Weber, 1995). These students have little support outside of UB, and only a small percentage transition to prominent (high admission requirement) four-year universities (McElroy & Armestro, 1998; Muhammad, 2008; Rogers, 2012; Smith, 2008).

There are numerous quantitative studies about UB and similar TRIO programs, as well as some qualitative studies about program designs and the positive benefits of UB (Bounds, 2014; Grimard & Maddaus, 2004; Gullat & Jan, 2003; Perna et al., 2008; Rogers, 2012). Although earlier reviews on this topic have examined the benefits of UB programs through program evaluation, its structure, and application of resources (Zulli & Frierson), not much is known about how UB culture interacts with the culture of 12th-grade participants to influence their decisions,

development, and transitions (Zulli & Frierson, 2004). These reviews did not provide a critical examination of the cultural experiences of UB participants, especially as it pertains to the cultural transitional processes experienced by 12th-grade UB participants. While the challenges of cultural identity development and learning for late adolescent students have been thoroughly studied in social science, psychology, and education, the effects of school and UB cultures in which UB 12th-grade participants interact remains unstudied in the field of counseling, as well as how those cultures influence seniors' emotional wellness.

As such, this ethnographic study addressed the interactive experiences of 12th-grade UB participants during transitions and how it influenced their program attrition, decisions, and, therefore, life projection. Analyzing aspects that affect the attrition of students is critical. Anderson and Larson (2009) report that two-thirds of UB students drop out of UB, but UB has also been reported to have successfully assisted 94% of its students in transitioning into colleges and universities (Helms, 2003). Therefore, it may be inferred that the insights gained from conducting this study will increase the retention rate of UB students through their 12th-grade year, thus increasing the number of students who successfully transition to post-secondary institutions improving their likelihood to become contributing citizens and decreasing the effect of negative statistics associated with participants' demographic stratification. Essentially, valuing and maximizing the financial investment of federally funded programs, such as UB programs and public education, can significantly affect the success of educated students: our future leaders.

Potential Limitations

The limitations of the study are consistent with the nature of qualitative studies, which include purposive sampling limitations, as well as researcher bias and generalizability.

Generalizability is not applicable for qualitative research, as qualitative methodologies are not intended to make generalizations based on quantitative criteria. However, qualitative research focuses on transferability and trustworthiness. The etic approach used for this ethnographic study allows the researcher to make cross-cultural comparisons between people and context (Banks, 1998; Headland, Pike, & Harris, 1990; Morris, Leung, Ames, & Lickel, 1999). Although this qualitative study is not transferable due to its quantitative design, the study exceeded, by far, the 5-7 minimal participants required for qualitative research. Additionally, primary, secondary, and tertiary ($N = 70$) participants in this qualitative study strengthened the qualitative research, allowing the use of triangulation as well as exceeding the recommended 12 primary participants needed to sufficiently code and saturate themes (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

There were limitations associated with purposive sampling; however, this was the appropriate methodology for ethnography. In order to conduct an ethnographic study and to learn about the culture of the people or program being studied, it was necessary to study the group of people within the specified culture. Therefore, the researcher lived in the community where the UB Midwest program was located for a minimum of four months. While studying one program can be seen as a general limitation of qualitative studies, studying the depth of one cultural group and living in their environment is part of the design of ethnographic studies. Furthermore, researcher bias is a limitation that ethnography accounts for, as its research design decreases researcher cultural bias by observing through the lens of the participants. Multiple data sources for triangulating data also serves as a method to decrease researcher bias. The researcher accounted for bias and potential limitations by establishing trustworthiness through transferability, credibility (prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, memberchecking), dependability (detailed methodology),

confirmability (non-bias data), and reflexive journals. Specifically, the researcher strengthened trustworthiness by including methods such as memberchecking to ensure data collected were accurate, reflexive journals to record data, and providing a positionality statement that allowed the researcher to continue to check for bias and remain open to alternative themes while observing through the lens of the participants. Trustworthiness was strengthened by the researcher providing direct quotes verbatim and selective transcriptions, as well as engaging in consultation in an effort to decrease researcher bias.

Twelfth-Grade Upward Bound Students

Twelfth-grade Upward Bound (UB) students are older adolescents who encounter emotional interchanges involving their identity, social class, and racial development as they transition into adulthood. The students involved with UB meet the program's criteria as low-income and/or first-generation college students, and many of them are from ethnic minority groups due to the stratification of socioeconomic status and race (Eriksen, 1968; Benner, 2011; Coneal, 2002; Huynh & Fuligni, 2012; Kerpelman & Skorikov, 2012 Schouten, 1991). Therefore, these students are considered "at-risk" of incurring high stressors and negative life outcomes, such as dropping out of high school, delinquency, drug abuse, health issues, and government dependency (Belfield, 2010; Benner; Murray, 2009; Tipenko, 2005).

Essentially, there are several components endured by 12th-grade UB adolescents, such as familial structure, peers, school climate, societal bureaucracies, and the organization and functioning of schools. These barriers are known to heighten their fear of transition, as well as increase the risk of engaging in self-defeating behaviors and making decisions that are contrary to their best interests and positive transitions into adulthood (Carrol, Houghton, Durkin, &

Hattie, 2009; Taylor et al., 2013). Historically, an individual's family's socioeconomic status (SES) and classification as a first generation college student has been said to carry major risks, as it relates to the development (adolescence, racial identity) and the successful adult transition of adolescents (Benner, 2011). Additionally, the dynamic interchanges of one's cultures (ecological systems) may serve as stressors and/or supports to their developmental progression and transitions.

In order to examine how the subcultures corroborate to establish a primary culture that influences the progressions and transitions of 12th-grade UB students, the researcher analyzed the data through Gill and Boote's conceptual framework (2012). Gill and Boote defined the five cultural relationships that interact to establish and maintain an understanding of the primary organizational culture, which consists of language, values, recurring problems, materials, and standard practices.

Positionality Statement

The researcher's experiences as a UB employee, program alumnus, and professional school counselor contributed to the researcher's belief that the unidentified structures, positive influences, and undocumented processes of the program have greatly influenced students' successes. UB's overshadowed processes have limited the reproduction of implementing beneficial program elements and can lead to additional diversion of what is valued under strict accountability measures and performance reports. This can eventually lead to the extinction of a program that has made and can continue to make a tremendous impact on the lives of students who have great potential for success and a great influence on the world and its many inhabitants. Likewise, the researcher believes that in order to promote continuous growth, intensify program

effectiveness, retention, securement of financial supports, and increase the likelihood of the program to continue exist, it is imperative that reports are made of UB's currently undocumented processes and the interactive processes that take place between the program and its students. This documentation is especially critical when considering the newly introduced programs that receive or compete for funding that do not truly operate or provide services to students, as they request funds, provide reports, and falsify the number and backgrounds of their students.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the dissertation chapters; chapter two provides background literature pertaining to the study; chapter three discusses the research methodology, as well as outlining the instruments, data collection process, analysis process, and appropriate measures taken to strengthen the validity of the proposed research; chapter four discusses the research findings; and chapter five provides recommendations and implications for future research and practice.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2 presents literature regarding the Upward Bound Programs and the purpose of their existence. Additionally, this chapter includes literature about the students and culture that UB is intended to serve.

Professional Significance

Historically, minorities underutilize services and counselors lack competence when working with diverse cultures. Therefore, it is important to broaden research in the area of multicultural competencies, especially as it relates to marginalized groups, such as 12th-grade UB students in transition. These students have been noted as needing interventions and culturally competent counselors to help them process their emerging identities, which will engenders healthy developmental progressions and transitions. This study aligns with counseling standards and laws, and is significant to the counseling profession because it supports diverse and/or at risk clients transitioning to adulthood and their communities. It reflects the legal statutes (e.g., Bryan, 2005; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA] of 2004; No Child Left Behind, 2004, U. S. Department of Education, 2015), as well as the mission, standards and ethics of professional organizations. Such organizations include the American Counseling Association (ACA), the American School Counseling Association (ASCA), and the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). These standards pertain to respecting the social and cultural diversity of all humans including those considered at-risk (e.g., low SES), by promoting their growth and development through academic, social emotional, and career opportunities and supports (ACA, 2005; ASCA, 2010; ASCA, 2012; Brody, CACREP, 2014; Brody, Chen, & Kogan, 2010; Herlihy & Corey, 2006; Lambie,

Hagedorn, & Ieva, 2010).

According to the ACA Ethical Codes (2005), counselors are required to provide culturally appropriate services. The ASCA Ethical Codes (2010) mandate that school counselors address the diversity of all stakeholders and provide comprehensive school counseling programs (CSCP) that serve all students. The ASCA Ethical Codes (E.2.c; A.10.b, C.2.b) expect PSCs to be knowledgeable regarding oppression and to advocate for diversity and equity. The ASCA Ethical Codes (D.1.g; A. 9.G; D.2.b) also promote data driven effective programs and collaborative partnerships to promote student success. Additionally, ASCA ethical guidelines encourage counselors to provide culturally appropriate communication (A.2.c), as well as information and supports that help counselees make informed decisions and have transitional opportunities (A.3.b). Therefore, it is important for counselor educators and professionals to encourage their colleagues, students, and supervisees to comply with ethical and legal standards and to enhance their cultural competency in order to adequately serve clients from diverse populations.

Opportunely, this research may prompt counselor educators, professional counselors (i.e., school, marriage and family, clinical mental health), and educational leaders to collaborate, advocate, and provide services for all students, including those considered at-risk (ACA, 2005; ASCA, 2010; ASCA, 2012; Brody, Chen, & Kogan, 2010; Larsen, 2002). The study may contribute to the field by providing information about 12th-grade UB students and how their interactive cultures deter or motivate their engagement and success. Studying the culture of 12th-grade UB students is relevant for counselor educators and counselors because the information may serve as a foundation for further research, multicultural competence, and group interventions to be conducted with similar populations. It may also enhance the cultural

awareness and behavioral practices of counselor educators, thus affecting future counselors who will work with 12th-grade adolescents from special populations, as well as their parents, schools, and programs (program referrals).

Moreover, examining the culture of 12th-grade UB students provided a foundation for consultation, information, and collaboration amongst legislators and stakeholders (parents, schools, and funding agencies) to increase the success rate of students. It may also emphasize the importance of respecting the role of professional counselors and may lead to improve stakeholder awareness of the impact that professional counselors may have on the socio-emotional development of students when integrated within systemic structures that promote their healthy development, thus engendering successful progression and transitions.

Essentially, the research findings may help stakeholders better understand the phenomenon and interactive processes that contribute to the success of students, the cultural areas that professionals need to nurture, and a means to be proactive in addressing conflicting cultures during their adolescent development. Studying the culture of 12th-grade UB students may provide the information needed to establish strategic systems, models and program cultures that engender desired outcomes of adolescent development and successful transitions. In an effort to enhance the percentage of students who have successful academic and career transitions, as well as increase the attrition, health, and transitions of older adolescents, it is important to identify a particular area of focus (e.g., transition skills, coping skills, decision making, interpersonal skills, goal-setting, self-regulation, emotional intelligence) (Bounds, 2014). Research in the following areas can help advance out competencies in efficiently serving diverse populations: (a) evidence based model for holistic programming, partnerships, (b) an expansion of multicultural competencies, (c) a model for a well-balanced counseling program for 12th-

grade students, (d) a model for designing an evaluation instrument for minorities, (e) and a model which could incorporate a hierarchy of the essential components that lead to successful outcomes for at-risk 12th-graders in transitions.

The Twelfth Grade Experience

Twelfth graders face critical decisions about their future. They are transitioning from being the eldest adolescent in high school to the unfamiliar platform of adulthood. During this time, many seniors are pressured to make decisions about their careers, colleges, independent living, and/or the possibility of moving to cities or states away from family, while reflecting on their personal values as well as the value of accomplishments provided by postsecondary institutions, all while they complete applications and await responses from colleges. Thus, 12th grade can be considered a year of pressure that evokes emotions related to uncertainty, insecurity, the unfamiliar, rejection, fear, separation, anxiety, and self-reflection. Subsequently, 12th-grade students require culturally competent counselors who are equipped to broach the developmental transitions they are experiencing. Counselors have the responsibility to not only be proactive in earlier grades, but also provide timely services through systemic counseling programs, culturally appropriate instruments, and collaborative partnerships that include a balance of personal-social, career, and academic counseling in order to support the healthy development and transitions of adolescents (ASCA, 2012; Butler-Byrd, Nieto, & Senour, 2006). In order to provide timely, research-based, culturally competent counseling, it is necessary for counselors to learn about the culture, needs, supports, and challenges of the diverse population that they intend to serve, allowing them to help educate parents, the community, and stakeholders on how to provide the most efficient support possible. Especially as it pertains to the context of preparing future

counselors, it is important to promote multicultural, sensitive supervision and professional development, as well as value the importance of helping school counselors' ability to meet obligations, while maintaining their wellness (Akos, Godnough, & Milsom, 2004; ASCA, 2012; Gunduz, 2012). For instance, this information can help school counselors collaborate with supplemental programs, and serve as informed liaisons who have the ability to make recommendations that are the best fit for students. Additionally, it can promote the design of comprehensive school counseling programs, and comply with their role to not only address the academic and career needs of students, but also intentionally systemize relevant and timely opportunities to cultivate the socioemotional development of 12th-grade students, including those who may need additional supports due to their at-risk status.

Additionally, 12th-grade UB students, at-promise students, and other individuals who may be classified as "at-risk" due to sharing similar characteristics may be considered vulnerable, but they are also resilient due to the likelihood of prior experiences that required them to build coping skills and confidence in their ability to adapt and persist through challenges (Butler, 2003). Although at-promise students may face various stressors that relate to their status, transition, and age development, which places them at a high propensity for mental illness and requires both coping skills and resources, it may be beneficial for counselors to suspend judgment and bias (Evans & Kim, 2012; Sue & Sue, 2012). Instead of providing a quick diagnoses (i.e., adjustment disorders), labels, and cultural insults that many of these students have experienced and detested throughout their lives, it may be beneficial for counselors to instead take a more pro-active approach and provide research-based, culturally sensitive interventions that can serve as a buffer for anticipated challenges and offset risky outcomes, future diagnosis, and cultural stigmas toward counseling (Arnett, 2007; Hoffman & Cleare-

Hoffman, 2011; Ratts et al., 2016; Sue et al., 1992). The use of diverse techniques have been suggested when working with minority groups, while culturally responsive pedagogy, CBT, and multicultural competencies have also been said to be beneficial (Benner, 2011; Butler, Lee, & Tippins, 2006; Ivey & Zalaquett, 2011; Ratts et al.).

Background of the Study

The historical trends of prejudice, racism, and inequality continue to persist in the culture and structure of the majority of educational institutions, thus affecting educational outcomes and stratification amongst individuals from different SES and ethnic groups (Hubbard & Mehan, 1999; No Country Left Behind, 2010). In other words, there is a relationship between an individual's SES and academic achievement, as well as a relationship between one's race and SES class (Edgerton, Peter, & Roberts, 2008). People of color are more likely to have a low SES, and individuals with low SES generally have lower academic achievement and are less likely to transition to postsecondary institutions than their higher SES counterparts (ACT, 2011; Bogart, Collins, Ellickson, & Klein, 2007; Brosh, Weigel, & Evans, 2009; Hallfors, Waller, Ford, Halpern, Brodish, & Iritani, 2004; Murray, 2009; Toro, Dworsky, & Fowler, 2007; Murray, 2009; Ward, 2006). The aforementioned cycle often presents a challenge for underrepresented groups who attempt to navigate educational systems, thus breaking the cycle of poverty, as well as academic stratification and employment gaps (Belfield, 2010; Bryan, 2005; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Howard & Terry, 2011; Huynh & Fuligni, 2012).

Improving Educational Equity

Several scholars have come to the realization that to deny educational achievement is to deny citizenship. Tipenko (2005) supports the notion that education is critical for one's ability to

make informed decisions, efficiently progress, and implement their rights as citizens. Tipenko further states that “knowing how to read, write, and understand is the foundation of any civilized society” (p.7). Literacy is important for a citizen’s capability to utilize their rights and function a law-abiding citizen. Therefore, it is imperative that citizens are literate in order support their ability to comply with the expectation of a citizens to comprehend and abide by laws, comply with tax requirements, and participate as an informed voter. Alexander and Alexander (2009) also discussed the significance of education and knowledge as it relates to one’s ability to truly participate in their citizenship rights, liberties and freedom, which may impact all citizens and our nation as a whole. Larsen (2002) acknowledges education as a personal and societal investment and states:

Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments... It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right, which must be made available to all on equal terms (pp. 42-43).

In other words, it is important for us to educate each and every child because “an uneducated child affects the general public” (Alexander & Alexander, p. 304), while an educated child can bring great gains to our society. There continues to be a stratification between one’s education attainment and statistics associated with criminal involvement, incarceration, income, financial government dependency, employment, and household incomes (Belfield, 2010; Murray,

2009). Non-high school graduates earn 43% less than high school graduates and are 80% more likely to be involved in criminal activity (Hammond et al., 2007; Murray, 2009). Essentially, investing in education can positively affect the U.S. economy and provide for a safer society (Murray, 2009). Therefore, in an effort to address historical deficiencies, as well as mitigate the educational, economic, and employment inequalities affecting our country, the government has issued mandates and provided funding for programs and interventions that are more aligned with social justice (Pitre & Pitre, 2009).

The understanding that “excellence for some without equity for all is an oxymoron” (Portes, 2008, p. 6) led to initiatives and mandates that have contributed to the development of college preparatory programs for marginalized groups, such as Lyndon Johnsons’ War on Poverty and Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 and the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002; Span, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). As a result of these mandates and laws, programs such as UB have been established to help shift cultures by challenging the deep-seated stereotypical prejudices and racial beliefs that have guided some educators to quietly deny access to certain groups and engage in the self-fulfilling prophecies that prove biased philosophies, which is analogous to institutional racism and prejudice (Billson, 1992 as cited by Butler, 1999). For example, both Hubbard and Mehan (1999) and Watt, Watt, Johnston, Huerta, Mendiola, & Alkan, (2008) discussed how school systems devised “gatekeeping” policies that made it difficult for certain groups of people to access advanced placement (AP) courses and increase their readiness for college. This included the creation of exclusionary tracking systems, thus limiting opportunities for marginalized students instead of providing supports like a paired coexisting course (Akos, Lambie, Milsom, & Gilbert, 2007). Hubbard and Mehan’s (1999) report also supports the theory that low SES and marginalized groups have had less access and exposure to

the role models, support, resources, and opportunities that promote healthy development and outcomes (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Coneal, 2002; Gredler & Shields, 2008; Hopson & Lee, 2011).

Upward Bound Programs

UB College Preparatory Programs were instituted to level the playing field by providing opportunities that can lead to equitable access to academics, and careers, thus increasing the college enrollment and degree completion of marginalized groups (Pitre & Pitre, 2009). It is imperative that we promote the education of all because educational opportunities affect educational achievement outcomes, which can lead to an increase in academic achievement, college readiness, and successful transitions to degree completion. UB began in 1965 as one of the three original TRIO programs that evolved from Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty and the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (U.S. Department of Education, 2014) and was the first federally funded program of the Federal Higher Education Act of 1965. Currently, TRIO consists of eight programs, all of which are typically housed on college campuses (Anderson & Larson, 2009). The eight programs currently under TRIO's umbrella include the following: (a) the Educational Opportunity Centers, (b) Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement, (c) Student Support Services, (d) Talent Search, (e) Training Program for Federal TRIO Program Staff, (f) Upward Bound, (g) Upward Bound Math-Science, and (h) Veterans Upward Bound.

TRIO was established to increase college attendance and college completion rates of low-income and marginalized groups (Pitre & Pitre, 2009). Programs serve individuals between the ages of eleven and twenty-seven who meet the following categories: (a) low-income, (b) first generation college student, and/or (c) individual with a disability (Jehangir, 2010). TRIO's programs were designed to prepare students for college, increase their potential to complete post-

secondary degrees, and help them maintain competitive careers, including those in which minorities are underrepresented, such as math and science. Some programs provide computer training, tutoring, study skill workshops, financial planning, preparation for college admissions exams, cultural experiences, and college exposure, while other TRIO programs may focus on mentoring, faculty networks, or research components that assist with graduate school. Additional literacy programs offered by TRIO provide basic literacy, vocational skills, and the life skills needed to increase the probability of college readiness and/or success. Ultimately, TRIO programs help level the educational playing field for low-income, minority, and first-generation college students

Although there are different programs, all TRIO programs are intended to provide the support needed to increase student skills, awareness, and motivation, which will make educational success a viable option. Over 2,700 TRIO programs exist to serve individuals between the ages of 11 and 27. TRIO serves approximately 866,000 low-income individuals, 25,000 veterans, and 22,000 students with disabilities. In 2004, there were approximately 400 Upward Bound programs serving 33,000 students (Zulli & Frierson, 2004). Upward Bound also serves 13 to 19-year-old adolescents in high school, supporting their academics and helping with both high school completion and transition into college (Butler, 1999; Zulli & Frierson). Each program qualifies for five-year grants, with an annual average of \$321,080. In 2013, the government funded 816 universities that housed Upward Bound programs, thus serving 59,143 participants for an annual total of \$249, 857,649 (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Program Components

Upward Bound programs are required to provide academic instruction; however, some

programs may also incorporate course advising, financial guidance, cultural exposure, college visits, summer residential components, and mentoring (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). In an effort to address the challenges that impact the success of underrepresented populations, most UB programs provided workshops and opportunities, such as tutoring, college visits, and cultural enrichment that teach a variety of skills (including studying and test taking), along with assistance with the college application process, financial aid, standardized college entrance exams (i.e., ACT, SAT), and college enrichment courses (Pitre & Pitre, 2009). UB Programs may differ in particular areas, but the primary goal is the same: to implement opportunities for students to increase their academic skills, interpersonal skills, self-regulation, self-awareness, self-esteem, and consider college a viable option (Anderson & Larson, 2009). It was reported that these programs systematically integrated opportunities for social interactions with a diverse group of people, providing opportunities for students to gain information and an awareness of unspoken rules and expectations. They also provided structured networking opportunities for students to build relationships and connect with peers who had similar goals, as well as individuals and university systems that they may not have otherwise been privy to (Edgerton, et al., 2008).

Furthermore, UB promotes several aspects known to further academic, career, and resiliency skills: pre-college exposure, high expectations, academic supports, cultural enrichment, mentors, tutors, skill building, life skills, problem-solving skills, self-efficacy, self-regulation, development, volunteering, parent training groups, advocacy, and sometimes strategies for dealing with racial and/or SES barriers (Brody et al., 2010; Burley, Barnard-Brak, Marbley, & Deason, 2010; Bryan, 2005; Butler & Bunch, 2005; Hargrove, Creagh, & Burgess, 2002; O'Brien et al., 2000). UB's curriculum typically includes components to promote

academic success, such as “goal setting, organization, time management, note taking, and test-taking strategies” (Ohrt, Lambie, & Ieva, 2009, p. 62).

Upward Bound Program Evaluative Literature

Upward Bound has made a significant contribution to closing achievement gaps (Gullatt & Jan, 2003). UB students are more likely to have positive outcomes when compared to students from similar demographic backgrounds. For instance, program participants were more likely to enroll in college preparation courses, know about financial aid, have high aspirations to attend college, take the ACT/SAT earlier, transition to four-year universities, earn a bachelor’s degree, and attend graduate school (Dervarics, 2011; Pitre & Pitre, 2009). Its students were also four times more likely to earn a bachelor’s degree than non-program participants from similar backgrounds (Gullatt & Jan, 2003). Furthermore, Gullatt and Jan’s study with ($N = 3,000$) students, which included a comparison group, illustrated that UB students were less likely to earn remedial high school math credits, took fewer remedial college courses, and were more likely to obtain financial aid. UB Latinos were also less likely to drop out of high school and UB Blacks were more likely to earn AP credits (Gullatt & Jan).

According to Barone, Maddux, and Snyder (1997), “believing that you can accomplish what you want to accomplish is one of the most important ingredients-perhaps the most important ingredient in the recipe for success” (Maddux, p. 335). Self-efficacy is “people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce desired effects by their own actions” (Bandura, 1977, p. viii). This notion is supported by Bogart et al. (2007) longitudinal study, in which ($N = 1963$) women at the age of 13 were observed until the age of 29. They reported that adolescents who had high aspirations to pursue college and high academic achievement were less likely to experience

negative outcomes, such as dropping out of school, mental health issues (i.e., depression), pregnancy, risky sexual behaviors, STD's, and suicide ideation. The aforementioned study is relevant to this ethnographic study because it relates to the interactive influences that affect students' efficacy, responses, and decisions.

Twelfth Grade Upward Bound Students and Young Adult Development

Twelfth-grade students are at a pivotal point in their identity development, as they forge toward success and continue to overcome predicted statistics and stigma based on their backgrounds (Arnett, 2006; Butler, 1999; Erikson, 1959). Twelfth grade Upward Bound students are often ethnic minorities who are challenged with adolescent and racial identity development as they approach their transition into adulthood (Benner, 2011; Coneal, 2002). They are also older adolescents from low socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds and are first-generation college students. This places them at a higher propensity than their counterparts to engage in risky behaviors, substance abuse, and violence, drop out of high school, incur mental health issues, become involved with crime, and contract sexually transmitted diseases (STD), all leading to government costs (Belfield, 2010; Carrol et al., 2009; Helms, 2003; Hutchinson, 2011; Murray, 2009; Milne & Plourde, 2006; Tipenko, 2005). Twelfth-grade students are making decisions that influence their future, particularly the success, health, and behaviors that largely affect their contribution, cost, and sociological place in society (Belfield, 2010; Murray; Tipenko).

The First-Generation College and Low-Income Students

First generation college students are four times less likely to pursue college degrees (Jehangir, 2010), while low SES students are also more likely than their counterparts to incur psychological distress (Hutchinson, 2011). Therefore, an individual's SES is a high indicator of

one's health, access to resources, behaviors, and educational attainment, all of which can negatively impacts family generational cycles of poverty and social class (Brosh et al., 2009; Cohen, 1998; Evans & Kim, 2012; Freudenberg & Ruglis, 2007; Messer-Davidow, 2006). Hence, individuals who never enroll in college are 10 times more likely to commit a crime, and 80% of the individuals imprisoned are high school dropouts, which costs \$29,877 annually per criminal (Hammond et al., 2007; Murray; Trostel, 2010). High school and college graduates are less likely to engage in criminal acts, which would decrease the incarceration costs paid by taxpayers. It is predicted that crime cost would decline significantly if the rate of college degrees increased by 16% (Murray, 2009; Siapoush, Abadi, & Arjmand, 2013; Trostel). As noted, investing in the lives of youth by providing educational opportunities has not only helped individuals achieve success; it can also positively affect our economy and our civilization (Alexander & Alexander, 2009; Anderson & Larson, 2009; Cohen, 1998).

Race and Academics Challenges

A majority of 12th-grade Upward Bound students are African-Americans that are first-generation and/or low-income college students (Coneal, 2002; Gredler & Shields, 2008; Pitre & Pitre, 2009). Although race and ethnicity are not a criterion for participating in UB, this particular Midwest program was predominantly African-American, which may reflect the stratifications between SES, educational attainment, and race, as well as the culture of the program, which in turn affects program reputation and potential recruitment. Nationally, African-Americans and Latinos have been reported to have lower academic performance, lower high school graduations rates, and to be less prepared for college than their Caucasian counterparts. For instance, 333,200 African-American students and 363,900 Latino students were scheduled to graduate in 2010 but

dropped out of high school (Alliance for excellent education, 2011; U. S. Department of Education, 2011). Latinos and African Americans attended four-year universities at significantly lower rates than their White counterparts (Hale, Chan, American Institutes, f. R., & Office of, 2006) while only 10% of Latinos earned a bachelor's degree by the age of 30 (U.S. Department of Education, n. d.). It can be inferred that their academic experiences in high school affect high school graduation rates, college access, and college completion.

Reports, such as the American College Test (ACT), grade point averages, and high school class rank, also show that these groups are less prepared for college at disproportionate levels (ACT, 2011; Jehangir, 2010), and are thus less likely to successfully transition into academia and respected employment. In fact, African American high school graduates were reported to be the least prepared for college; only 4% of African Americans met the Math, Reading, Science, and English ACT benchmarks. Those who meet the benchmarks are 75% more likely to earn a C or better in their college courses (ACT). Despite minority students' low performance on standardized exams, such as the ACT, 90% of African American students reported their desire to earn a college degree (ACT, 2011). Their aspirations to attend college speaks volumes, because an individual's goals and motivation to succeed have been reported to have a positive influence on their future (Bogart et al., 2007).

Participant Demographics

Twelfth grade UB students have successfully overcome many statistical risks and continue to strive for success, irrespective of the predicted negative statistic based on UB students' participation criteria. Although UB serves a diverse group of students, with a wide variety when it comes to race, religion, disabilities, and income, ethnic minorities (i.e., African Americans,

Latinos) make up a vast majority of the participant population being served, because they tend to meet the guidelines for participation (U.S. Department of Education, 2014; Zulli & Frierson, 2004). Upward Bound students are classified as “at-risk” students due to their ability to meet UB’s eligibility criteria as low-income or first-generation college students. Scholars state that “at-risk children and youth are those who are subject to environmental, familial, or societal forces over which they have no control and which adversely affect their ability to learn in school and survive in society” (White, Farmer, & Brody, 1984, p. 2).

Introduction to Academic Institutions

Many of the students considered in this study attended educational institutions that deficit models would consider a disadvantage, based on the learning values, experiences, and traditions deemed important by the educational systems that were established by the dominant culture in power (Howard & Terry, 2011; Helm, 2003; Swiweder & Levine, 1984). UB students are typically the same students who met the criteria for participating in Head Start Programs (Deming, 2009). Similar to UB, Head Start is funded by government grants and designed to decrease the learning gap of students who meet similar profiles as UB students, as well as help level the playing field by providing educational opportunities, thus leading to equitable opportunities for success (Deming).

Therefore, in order to appreciate the context in which UB students expeditiously manage potential learning curves (i.e., college readiness, navigating the unspoken rules and political systems, conflicting cultures), and embrace resilience, it is important to note the academic placement of low-income and first-generation college students at the start of their immersion into academic institutions, while simultaneously acknowledging their growth and the cultural

environments that interacted with their process and development to overcome the predictions placed on them to become a negative statistic (Gill & Boote, 2012; Butler, 1999, Howard & Terry, 2011; Zulli & Frierson, 2004). UB students are likely to exhibit invaluable and interminable strength beyond the simplistic equations that are often used to predict a students' potential success, which often leads to tracking, additional barriers known to be detrimental to continued progression, and limited access to supports that are extremely vital to maximizing the success of any human being.

Successful UB students had high success rates and overcame adversity beyond what may be expected of a student classified as “at-risk,” which provides a framework for researcher to learn from the cultural journey of students in order to increase the number of students who are going on to pursue and attain post-secondary degrees (Howard & Terry, 2011; White et al., 1984). In fact, Helms (2003) reported that 94% of Upward Bound students successfully transitioned into postsecondary institutions, despite barriers, at-risk labels, and projected outcomes based on the situations in which they were born. Hence, the researcher can utilize the experiences of successful students, in order to inform proactive interventions and to dismiss deficit thought processes (Butler, 1999).

For the purposes of this ethnographic study and with the support of resiliency research (Bryan, 2005; Burnham, 2009; Roberts & Ottens, 2005; Vazsonyi, Trejos-Castillo, & Young, 2008) the researcher has chosen to utilize the term “at-promise” instead of “at-risk” in order to represent 12th-grade UB students, as they have demonstrated great potential to overcome the odds predicted to deter their thriving success (Howard & Terry, 2011).

Adolescents

Understanding and proactively accounting for the identity development of adolescence is important because an individual's identity development drives their behavior, which in turn leads to positive or negative decisions, outcomes, and lifestyles (Erickson, 1959). High school is a critical period that significantly influences an individual's transitions in life, and therefore their quality of life. This is a time when adolescents need guidance while they search for their identities and inspirational leadership. According to Erickson's identity development theory, adolescent years are a pivotal age when students' cognitive development enables them to engage in abstract thought processes, allowing them to anticipate future identities and roles, as well as plan, set goals and make decisions pertaining to their future attainment and outcomes. Hence, adolescents are at a stage where they experience uncertainty, confusion, doubts, and unstable emotions regarding the emergence of their current identity and future identity as an adult.

Furthermore, a large percentage of high school students with limited opportunities engage in negative behaviors and poor life decisions, which leads to poor health-related behaviors, such as drinking, drug use, and risky sexual behaviors (Factor, Kawachi, & Williams, 2011; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Individuals who maintain features of resilience, however, are less likely to engage in self-defeating behaviors despite their circumstances (Varzony, Trejos-Castillo, & Young, 2008). Because of the outcomes that stem from identity development and resilience, it is necessary for adolescents to learn and master the tasks necessary to properly adapt and cope as they approach and transition into adulthood. It is also important for at-risk students to be exposed to situations and environments that support, model, and promote resiliency, coping skills, and the identity development needed to further their success (Dacey, 1982; Doane et al., 2015; Howard & Terry, 2011). Hence, resiliency is beneficial because it is highly unlikely for

adolescents to experience their adolescent years, transitions, and adulthood without facing change or challenges that produce stress (Bryan, 2005; Doane et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2013).

Older adolescents are at a pivotal stage, making critical decisions that can determine their destiny and affect our country (Aughinbaugh, 2008; Erickson, 1959; Murray, 2009). In addition to the complexities of adolescent development, certain students face challenges known to detour them from academic, career, and adult transitions. Therefore, the researcher has chosen to focus on a select group of individuals and the interactive cultures that affect their individual and group development (Butler, 1999, Erickson, 1959; Varzony, Trejos-Castillo, & Young, 2008).

Understanding the culture of 12th-grade UB students can increase counselor multicultural competencies and work efficacy, and also decrease burnout when working with students to advocate for their success (ACA, 2005; ASCA, 2010; ASCA, 2012; Bandura, 1977; Brody et al., 2010; Gullat & Jan, 2003; IDEA, 2004; Larsen, 2002, NCLB, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2014; Wynn et al., 2000). Collaborations with stakeholders to establish comprehensive program evaluations, comprehensive school counseling programs, and competent referrals may also increase counselor longevity and impact student outcomes (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Research pertaining to the culture of 12th-grade students can foster wellness by addressing students' developmental and socio-emotional needs, while improving program retention, high school completion, and college transitions. This can mitigate the heightened risks of 12th graders to engage in detrimental behaviors (e.g., sex, substance abuse) that lead to adverse outcomes (Belfield, 2010; Eby, Casper, Lockwood, and Bordeaux, 2005; Erickson, 1959, Moos, 1993, Murray, 2009; Stone, 2010; Tipenko, 2005; Varzony, Trejos-Castillo, & Young, 2008; Wynn et al., 2000; Mayberry et al., 2008). In order to encourage the development, success, and emotional

well-being of students, it is imperative that stakeholders collaborate and help students embrace the multitude of positive aspects within the cultures they belong to in order to help them as they experience their life journeys (Coneal, 2002). It is equally important to promote students' optimal developmental transitions and emotional wellness, as well as their access to and awareness of materials, technology, and information as they navigate through academic and life transitions (Bryan, 2005; Hughey, 2011; Lemon & Watson, 2011; Martinez & Klopott, 2005).

Cultural Identity development

Coneal (2002) conducted a qualitative study with ($N = 9$) African- American 12th-grade seniors enrolled in either Pre-Calculus or Calculus and found that high-achieving 12th-grade African-American students were less likely to identify with and positively view their African-American culture, which is known to have a negative impact on one's development and psychological well-being. Coneal's findings were relevant to the study of 12th-grade UB students, because it provided information pertaining to the students' perceived school experience, aspects that influenced their school choice, and how positive teacher and counselor interactions served as a contribution to their success. The study also provided insights into the systemic functioning that was reported to affect their interactions and, therefore, the attitudes, academic performance, and aspirations of students. For instance, Coneal reported that different counselors utilized different methods, such as meetings and the dissemination of pamphlets to convey important information to students, while high-achieving 12th-grade African American students were hesitant to participate in the extra-curricular activity due to their concern with maintaining their academics. Although this study can serve as contextual information, it is important to note the sample size ($N = 9$) and that high achieving math students were selected by their school counselors.

Socio-Emotional Needs of 12th -Grade Students

Climates influence relationships. An extensive review of the literature supported the notion that creating a positive culture can increase achievement, thus decreasing stratification amongst students who are underprivileged (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Gullat & Jan, 2003). Additionally, literature on school climate and the success of UB program participants provided a basis for the need for an ethnographic study in order to describe the culture of 12th-grade UB students (Creswell, 2010; Gill & Boote, 2012; Paschal, & Williams, 1970; Zulli & Fierson, 2004). Learning communities and positive environments that provide a balance of support and challenge have made significant gains in retention, academic achievement, and credit attainment (Dufour & Eaker).

Safe, supportive environments and positive relationships with adults and peers contribute to students' ability to make connections and belong to a positive group, thus engendering school engagement, positive decision making, achievement outcomes, and graduation rates (Fall & Roberts, 2012; Hopson & Lee). Therefore, it is important to encourage a positive, culturally sensitive environment that promotes enrichment, rather than deficit thinking and restrictive policies (Howard & Terry, 2011; Kahveci, 2010). Previous research has indicated that cultural climates have a huge impact on education and student outcomes regardless of at-risk labels; therefore, a culture needs to be considered within context prior to attempting to initiate any program or reform (Hopson & Lee; Hubbard & Mehan, 1999). Learning communities and positive environments that provide a balance of support and challenge have made significant gains for students' retention, academic achievement, credit earnings, GPAs, and personal satisfaction (Watt, Johnston, Huerta, Mendiola, & Alkan, 2008). For instance, Hopson and Lee (2011) conducted a cross-sectional quantitative study with an ethnically diverse group of middle

and high school students ($N = 413$) who were federally qualified to receive free or reduced lunch programs. Their study supported the importance of evaluating the interactive cultures that contribute to various outcomes. These findings indicated that when students perceived that they were in safe climates and had emotional supports as well as supportive relationships, they felt a sense of belonging and connection, which increased their academic success. Supportive cultures with positive adult and peer relationships have also been shown to contribute to student retention (Botman & Mensah; Gullatt & Jan, 2003; Rodriguez, Rhodes, & Aguirre, 2014). Botman & Mensah's (2012) grounded theory study with ($N = 23$) 20 12-grade students and three health science teachers found that a school's culture influences its students' identities, thus impacting their decisions and behavioral choices.

Relationships. Parental, peer, and adult relationships have been said to have positive effects on student health and development (Donenberg, Emerson, & Mackesy-Amiti, 2011; Gladding, 2012). Moreover, Botman & Mensah (2012) found that a student's relationship with respectable, positive, and supportive mentors and teachers positively impact his or her engagement, learning, and achievement. Supportive climates with adults and peers have also been shown to contribute to retention (Bandura, 1986; Botman & Mensah; Gredler, 2005; Gullatt & Jan, 2003; Rodriguez et al., 2014). For instance, Motulsky's (2010) phenomenological study with ($N = 13$) women reported that supportive relationships with others significantly contributed their thought processes and value systems, which in turn led them to further persist toward career aspirations. Motulsky's findings support the notion that researchers need to evaluate the culture of 12th-grade students in order to understand their cultural needs, interactions, and program cultures, as well as the adult competencies necessary to engender trusting and caring relationships to promote students' success and adult transitions. These studies also signify the

importance of the climate and interactive components that contribute to child outcomes. When students felt they belonged, were supported, had positive peer groups, and had relationships with caring and trustworthy adults, they were more likely to be successful.

Extra-curricular involvement and peer relationships. Furthermore, literature was also found regarding the effect of involvement on students' perceptions of belonging, identification, and esteem, therefore affecting achievement and goal attainment. Knifsend and Graham's (2011) study with ($N = 864$) 11th-grade students found that the students who participated in two or more extra-curricular school activities were more likely to have a positive outlook regarding school, as well as feel a sense of belonging, connectedness, support, and acceptance. Therefore, the study reported that moderate levels of extracurricular involvement led to feelings of belonging, high goals, grades, achievement, behavioral choices, and 12th-grade performance. It can be implied that students' participation in extra-curricular activities provided opportunities for them to connect and socially engage with peers.

Adult relationships. Collaboration between mentors, families, and role models are said to increase the efficacy, outcomes, career opportunities, and college access for at-risk students who are underrepresented, and UB parents were said to be highly involved in the lives of program participants (ASCA National Model, 2005; Butler, 1999; O'Brien et al., 2000). Parental and familial involvement are considered crucial components to the development of adolescents, their academic success, and have also been known to serve as a buffer that deters adolescents from negative behavioral decisions and outcomes (Butler; Edgerton et al., 2008; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Kolbe et al., 1993; Portes, 2008; Mayberry et al., 2008). Bogart et al.'s (2007) study with ($N = 1871$) adolescents suggested that adolescents with strong family ties were more likely to be involved in school and less likely to have mental health issues. Donenberg,

Emerson, and Mackesy-Amiti's (2011) study with ($N = 266$) African-American girls between the ages of 12 and 16 reported that the strength of the relationship between mothers and daughters were related to the daughters' behavioral choices. In other words, adolescents who had strong relationships with their mothers were less likely to engage in risky sexual activity that leads to health issues.

Theoretical Framework

To understand how multiple cultures interact to affect the experiences of 12th-grade UB students, it is important to examine the culture of UB through the lens of a cultural framework. Prior UB literature consisted mostly of reports and program evaluations, and few of these studies used any theoretical or conceptual framework. A few prior studies relied on resiliency theory, critical race theory, social justice theory, and self-determination theory (Anderson & Larson, 2009; Bounds, 2014; Kimbrell, 2013; Vega, Moore, & Miranda, 2015).

The researcher considered multiple frameworks that examine culture, such as Cognitive Science explanatory framework, Cultural Historical Activity Theory(CHAT), Organizational Culture Theory, and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984; Brettel, Chomik, & Flatten, 2015; Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Engestrom, 1987; Evans & Kim, 2012; Lane, 2015; Lau & Ng, 2014). Due to the task of remaining culturally sensitive while accurately representing the complex interactive organizational components that exist to create a holistic view of a culture that influences the persons interacting with the organization, the researcher selected Gill and Boote's (2012) theoretical framework, which emphasizes the interactive components that elicits a culture. This enabled the researcher to extensively review the multi-faceted components from an in-depth analysis that signified a meaningful representation of UB's

culture, especially since culture could evolve based on changes with personnel and participant dynamics, as well as organizational changes. Gill and Boote argued that previous researchers assumed that culture does not change and inferred culture was “immutable and resilient to all change” (p.38). Analysis also presents data that illustrates that although the foundation of culture may be established, difficult to change, and has a residue that lingers (Gill & Boote), and that the current interactivity between cultural relationships (e.g., change in technology, curriculum) may produce an evolving cultural shift that is inclusive of the dominating and/or founding culture.

There is a complex interplay that constructs a culture, and multiple sources contribute to its developmental and maintenance. Within this structure, previous scholars have indicated that cultural representations are inclusive of the individual, interactivity influences, and collective interconnections (Gill & Boote, 2012). Therefore, in order to answer the research questions regarding culture, data analysis was conducted by using Gill and Boote’s theoretical framework (2012). Gill and Boote incorporate five aspects of culture, which interacts to develop a prominent organizational culture. These five aspects are: (a) language, (b) values, (c) materials, (d) standard practices, tools, and equipment, and (e) recurring problems.



Figure 1. Gill and Boote’s Framework: Relationships Between the 5 Aspects of Culture

Gill and Boote’s (2012) conceptual framework, titled Relationships Between the Five Aspects of Culture, enabled the researcher to analyze the data by examining the diverse interactions that influence UB culture, as well as the culture of 12th-grade UB students as they progress and transition from high school into adulthood. More specifically, Gill and Boote’s framework was used to “examine how the aspects of culture reinforce each other and how they resist aspects alien to the cultural system” (Gill & Boote, p. 9).

The research question looked at the culture of a Midwestern UB Program in particular grades and how the 12thgrade culture of UB influenced participants’ adult transitions. Recurring Problems, Language, Values, Materials, and Standard Practices are the five interactive relational components of Gill and Boote’s Framework that were utilized to present the UB culture and the culture of 12th-graders. Recurring Problems, provided insight regarding culture “values, standard behaviors, and language use” (Gill & Boote, p. 20). The Language of UB and the Language of 12th-grade participants helped to understand their Values (attitudes, beliefs, rituals, behaviors). Materials were indicators of how the values and/or problems of UB and 12th-grade participants

influenced time usage, which was emphasized through routine activities. Lastly, Standard Practices included traditions, weekly routines, and information about communication patterns.

Conclusion

Chapter 2 discussed literature pertaining to UB and the population UB serves. This includes information about the history of UB, the development of UB's existence, its programming, and demographic stratifications and considerations for the population that UB serves. Additionally, it provides information regarding the theoretical framework used to examine the culture of UB and how it influences participant adult transitions.

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

Introduction to the Chapter

Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology used in this study, including research design, participants, data collection, instrumentation (i.e., protocol, demographic survey), research questions, analysis procedures, and ethical considerations (i.e., IRB). Additionally, this chapter discusses the advantages of the selected research design in relation to the research question, as well as how they both align with the selected conceptual framework that guided the process of data collection and analysis.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to examine the culture of 12th-grade UB students as they progressed through senior year and approached adult transitions. Previous studies pertaining to school culture (Brotman & Mensah, 2013; Gullatt & Jan, 2003) indicate that the cultures within schools play a significant role in shaping students' development and their perceptions regarding their life trajectories, thus inadvertently impacting their decisions and life outcomes (Murray, 2009; Rovai et al., 2005; Trostel, 2010). While there are numerous quantitative studies about UB and similar TRIO programs, and some qualitative studies about program designs, little is known about the culture of those programs and how they interact with the cultures of participants or help to shape major life decisions (Grimard & Maddaus, 2004; Gullat & Jan, 2003; Perna, 2002, Perna et al., 2008; Rogers, 2012). Additionally, Byrne's (1993) "snark syndrome" also speaks to the importance of using qualitative research for a more in depth evaluation of the interactions that influence outcomes. For instance, the repetition of previous data sheds light on the difficulty that programs have when utilizing data to make programmatic

modifications that promote continuous growth and further destitution of disparity gaps within the participants' population. In fact, UB's federal reporting criteria appears to promote the repetitive cycle of reporting numbers from generation to generation, rather than focusing on growth and/or improvements from year to year. Reports illustrate that UB students were doing well. However, due to the reports of quantitative data, it is highly likely that the averages reported may enmesh data to the extent that the results of high-achieving students and/or non-participating students may overshadow areas of improvement and thus supports needed for students who may be underperforming or simply not meeting the government standards. This confirms the need for qualitative research in order to not only gain an understanding of the interactive cultural components that were contributing to their success, but also to ultimately provide meaningful data that can inform plans for improvements and program modifications, thus increasing effectiveness. Though the design of the UB program is intended to level the playing field and promote the academic success of underrepresented groups, there continues to be a gap in academic achievement, smooth transitions, health, and the retention of low-income and first-generational-college students and their counterparts. This continued gap is likely perpetuated through the emphasis on quantitative data reports that generally provide similar numbers on how students are performing. A number of students are not meeting the standard criteria, but UB reports have generally remained the same rather than focusing on student performance and/or program performance from year to year. It is necessary to account for the needs and demands of 21st century students in a progressive, technological society.

The purpose of UB was to address cultural gaps among academically able students (i.e., first-generation college, low income) who came from groups that does not have a strong presence in postsecondary education and are underrepresented in professional careers and even

less so in STEM careers. The benefits and opportunities for STEM includes the high demands of the field, recruitment of underrepresented populations, large financial supports, and other long-term benefits (Atwater, Freeman, & Draper-Morris, 2009; Bounds, 2014; Kimbrell, 2013; No Country Left Behind, 2010; Radcliffe & Bos, 2011; Rovai et al., 2005). However, research on UB and TRIO programs tends to focus mainly or exclusively on outcomes and rarely on the processes through which students are developing, making decisions, and learning how to be successful (Perna, 2002; Rogers, 2012). Studying the culture of 12th-grade students from an ethnographical approach is significant, because there is a gap in the literature pertaining to the culture of 12th-grade students and the ecological systems that interact with the transitions of older adolescents.

The researcher conducted an extensive search of databases (ERIC, Anthro Source, ProQuest, Ethnic News Watch, EBSCO, SAGE, PsychINFO, Web of Science, JSTOR, and Science Direct) from 1965 through 2014 using numerous search terms, such as culture, disadvantaged youth, youth in transition, Upward Bound, TRIO, transition programs, twelfth grade, seniors, and college preparation. No ethnographic studies examining the culture of 12th-grade at-risk students or 12th-grade UB students as they related to the cultural, emotional, and interactive supports and stressors of their developmental progression and/or transitions were located. Specifically, the researcher only found one ethnographic study by Beeman (2012); however, this study did not discuss the cultural interactions that existed between UB, 12th grade students, and the existing cultures that may contribute to the culture, progress, and transitions of these students. Previous literature did report on the importance of having positive relationships with UB students (Powell & Marshall, 2011; Ruiz, 2008), but literature on the process and culture of 12th-grade at-promise students and UB seniors in relation to the cultural, emotional,

and interactive supports and stressors that interact with their developmental progression and transitions was non-existent. Therefore, the researcher conducted an ethnography to address the research question below.

Research Question: What is the culture of this Upward Bound Program, and how does it influence 12th-grade participants' progression and transitions from high school into adulthood?

Methodology

In consideration of the guided research questions, the researcher conducted an ethnographic study to examine the culture of participating 12th-grade UB students in a Midwest Program that partners with three school districts in the county. Twelfth grade students were defined as students who attended their 4th year of high school and/or students who were documented to graduate in 2015.

Ethnography is the most suitable approach for this research study due to its emphasis on cultural sensitivity, as the culture being studied is a marginalized group based on their SES and high propensity to be ethnic minorities. Ethnography addresses the culture from the emic and etic perspectives, extending beyond self-reports of how people communicate their experiences, but it still allows the researcher to observe the students' experiences and triangulate data to gain a deeper understanding of their values and how they apply meaning on different levels (i.e., rituals, language), situations, and interactions (Creswell, 2007). The primary perspective used by the researcher was the etic approach, which provides a semi-focused and organized manner with which to approach the data. The etic approach also guides the organization and conceptualization of meaningful constructs that can be used for cross-cultural comparisons across context and people

(Banks, 1998; Morris et al., 1999).

Although the researcher utilized an etic perspective and an emergent approach to maintain an ethical and valuable ethnographic study, which also strengthens the trustworthiness of the study, the researcher has taken into account the assertions pertaining to researcher bias when entering the field as a participant observer in some instances and non-participant observer in other instances (Banks, 1998; Headland, Pike, & Harris, 1990; Kerstetter, 2012). Despite this, it was pertinent and beneficial to remain cognizant and open to the voices and experiences of participants as well as the cultural data that was meaningful to their culture. Therefore, some components of the ethnographic study can be viewed as an emic supplement to the etic approach. Emic pertains to ensuring that the researcher remains open to disconfirming evidence through the meanings delivered from the participants' perspectives. The emic approach also acknowledges preconceived notions while considering all data that would accurately paint a clear picture of the culture being studied, even if this meant reconsidering the initial theoretical framework for analyzing the data (Kerstetter).

Ethnography “describes and interprets the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group” (Creswell, 2013, p. 90). According to Creswell, “Ethnography is appropriate if the needs are to describe how a cultural group works and to explore the beliefs, language, behaviors, and issues such as power, resistance, and dominance” (p. 70). Essentially, an ethnographic study captures the systematic meanings behind a culture, the crux of what’s missing from a holistic perspective that empowers those involved, as well as informing stakeholders and researchers who are in a position to make a difference and promote growth (Creswell; Gall et al., 2007). Therefore, when reporting primary data, a form of critical ethnography will be used to empower the voice of adolescents who have not been heard and potentially advocate for up and coming 12th grade students.

Ethnography is the most appropriate method for describing the culture of 12th-grade UB students because ethnographies examine the culture of pre-existing groups. This Midwest program has been in existence for numerous years, and the students in the cohort studied have been in the program for a minimum of one year. UB students meet the criteria for a culture-sharing group because they have been together for the period of time necessary to establish a culture (Gall et al., 2007; Hays & Woods, 2011). Ethnography allowed the researcher to describe the culture through descriptive visuals and from a holistic perspective, which includes the “groups history, religion, politics, economy, and environment” (Creswell, p. 71). The concept of culture “consists of what people do (behaviors), what they say (language), the potential tension between what they do and ought to do, and what they make and use, such as artifacts” (Creswell, 2007, p. 71). It is “a flexible, ongoing process of transmitting and using knowledge that depends on dynamics both within communities and at the interface between ethno-cultural communities and institutions of the larger society” (Kirmayer, 2012, p. 155). More specifically, this ethnographic study approached the study of 12th-grade UB through Gill and Boote’s conceptual framework of the five cultural relationships. This framework aligns with ethnography because they both focus on culture, and ethnography also encourages the collection of triangulating data through comparing data sources to observe patterns of cultural behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs (Creswell; Greene & Buell, 2000; Fetterman, 2010).

Therefore, the researcher was immersed in the culture and was primarily a participant observer, which provided the opportunity to elicit the depth of information needed to paint a portrait of the primary participants’ culture (Creswell, 2010; Fetterman, 2010). The researcher’s role as a non-participant observer occurred primarily when the researcher conducted classroom observations at the public schools, and it sometimes extended to observations conducted at

program and community events. The researcher's role as a participant observer during data collection was evident during focus groups, observations, and at some points during the observations conducted in the community and at UB program events.

Research Settings

The primary facilities where research was conducted included the following: (a) a local community center, (b) three local high schools (one of the four high schools used in this study did not have any 12th-grade UB students), and (c) the local university.

High schools. The researcher conducted this ethnographic study with a Midwest UB Program. The design of this program incorporates four county public high schools located in three school districts. However, there were two UB seniors who attended schools outside of the four public high schools, which were classified as alternative schools and/or non-traditional public schools. The program resides in a county that has a total population of approximately 205,000 persons (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). The four public schools are well-established high schools that offer AP courses, athletics, and extra-curricular activities. Some of the high schools included have received awards, undergone a consent decree or No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policies for restructuring, and incorporated programs such as Response to Intervention (RTI) and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID).

Housed university. The Midwest UB Program studied has been housed on campus since the 1960s. This university hosts approximately 45,000 college students, approximately 33,000 of which were undergraduate students in 2014. The university was ranked in the top ten for its region, and its admissions guidelines indicate that it had a "highly selective" process when following the general admissions process for admitting applicants. The university has a very high

retention rate for both the 2009 cohort, graduating in five years, and the 2008 cohort, graduating in four years.

Host university and UB public school demographics. The cost to attend the host university is fairly expensive without specific financial supports or a strategic system for recruiting and retaining local UB students or local students from similar backgrounds. This is a critical juncture, because according to the 2013-2014 state report card, the three school districts with four public high schools (and a roster that includes two alternative schools) served by this Midwest UB program had an average of 56% of students who identified as low income, and the range amongst the four schools is 47-64%.

High school demographics. Additional demographics for the four public high schools served by this program were averaged together and represent the following: (a) 87% graduation rate, (b) 41% of students are considered college ready (i.e., ACT Composite Score of 21 or higher), (c) 12% of students have a disability (5-20 range), (d) 4.5 counselors, (e) 1146 enrolled students, (f) 90% attendance rate, and (g) 16.5 student mobility. The average ethnicity for the four schools accounted for by the Midwest UB program is as follows: (a) White 47%, (b) Black 33% (c) Hispanic 9%, (d) Asian 6.5%, (e) Multiracial 5.5%, and (f) Pacific Islander 1%.

Students anticipated college transitions. The majority of the students transferring from high schools served by this Midwest program plan to enter postsecondary education, with slightly over half planning to enter community college. Moreover, the local community college was often misinterpreted as an automatic two-year pathway to transferring into the local university. In 2014, the UB's host university enrolled approximated 13,000 transfer students (739 White, 104 Asian/Pacific Islander, 66 Black, and 100 Hispanic), and only 14% of the transfer students were from the local community college (which includes students from high

schools outside of the local community). In 2013, only 13% of the university's transfers were from the local community college, which enrolls approximately 20,000 students per year. In addition, 14% of the students who transferred from the local community college into the local university in 2014 were from high schools from around the world, and the probability of students from community high schools that transfer from the local community college into the local university is significantly lower than 14%.

Projections for research settings. The aforementioned information is reflective of current partnerships and the potential opportunities available for community-school-university partnerships to cultivate, prepare, and support successful transitions into university. Hence, it behooves each institution to arrange appropriate preparation and supports by collaborating with institutions and/or organizations that are in the system in order to serve students prior to their entrance and during their departure. It is important to remove divergences and barriers that intentionally discourage students from pursuing post-secondary degrees and push them through a tracking system that perpetuates the continuation of underrepresented groups in higher education institutions and insinuates the expectation of limited growth, creating an external ceiling that communicates that there are limits to how far students can reach and what they can achieve. This is a notion that has been addressed in issues related to social justice on multiple levels and has been implemented in various sectors. Appropriate accommodations to support a student with disabilities and supplemental classes or simulations are used to help with advanced courses, especially as they pertain to the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC). There is also a need to address the needs of students with minimal supports, who encounter cultural challenges that affect their access to and successful navigation through postsecondary institutions and higher-level employment positions.

Participants

The researcher utilized purposive sampling, which aligns with qualitative research and provides the foundation for conducting an ethnographic study (Creswell, 2010; Hays & Woods, 2011; Hunt, 2011). The participants involved in the study were categorized into three groups: primary, secondary, and tertiary. The researcher collected several forms of data on the primary and secondary participants, while tertiary participants were included in focus groups and/or individual interviews. There was a total of ($N = 70$) primary, secondary, and tertiary participants.

UB reported 27 students on their current 12th-grade roster, and it was reported that the previous roster for this graduating class had an additional five students who were removed from the current roster due to three students relocating out of the area and the two others graduating a year early, after completing three years of high school. Hence, UB reported 27 students who were listed as UB seniors. These students were expected to graduate with the current class, and the researcher obtained 21 written consent forms from the primary and secondary participants who agreed to participate in the study. After deciphering which students were eligible to participate as primary and secondary participants, the researcher's primary group consisted of 14 participants and the secondary group included seven participants.

According to application submissions, 79% of primary participants met the criteria for first-generation college and low income, while 21% met low SES status. Eight-six percent of the secondary participants met the criteria for both first-generation college and low SES, while the other 14% met the first-generation college criteria. In addition to meeting program criteria, 100% of the primary and secondary participants were African-American, while no Caucasian or Hispanic UB students agreed to participate in the study

Male to female primary participants were proportionate, however, the number of male

participants in the secondary group was significantly lower than females. Additionally, the sample included a disproportionate number of female tertiary participants (i.e., UB staff, parents, community leaders, and school personnel), while tertiary male participants were less represented. Due to attending alternative schools, early graduation, or delayed graduation status approximately 40% of students were classified as non-traditional UB 12th graders. While there were limited instances of overlapping roles, tertiary participants (UB alumni, parents of UB participants, community leaders, and/or experiences in schools served by UB) demographics varied in age, education, ethnicity, and years of experience.

Descriptive data results. In this section, the researcher will present participant demographics, as well as discuss the constructs and preliminary steps used to guide data collection and analysis.

Table 1. Twelfth Grade Background and Entrance Paperwork

UB Midwestern –Application	Primary		Secondary	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Both SES & 1st Gen	64%	14%	27%	13%
Low SES Only	7%	14%	0%	0%
First Generation Only	0%	0%	6%	0%
Primary Senior GPA Average & Range	Average: 2.5 Range: 2.8 – 4.2		N/A	
Sent Transcripts to Colleges	Ranged 0-12		0-6	
Schools Applied to	Public, Private, & HBCU’s in diverse states			
12th grade school attendance	11.5 Absences (excused/unexcused); 13 Tardies		13.6 13.3	
Committed to UB until 12th grade graduation	100%	100%	100%	100%

Age of primary and secondary participants. The primary and secondary research participants were between the ages of 17 and 20. The researcher selected adolescents based on the desire to gather data on a specific group of 12th-grade students and their particular culture. This is a critical age in their development, in which they may make decisions that greatly impact their present and functioning and well-being (Belfield, 2010; Helms, 2003; Milne & Plourde, 2006). The researcher considered the developmental capacity of selecting appropriate participants through research studies and literature that discussed the relationships between one’s life stages, human development, and ability to provide data and participate in groups (Gladding, 2012; Gredler, 2005). The age of the participants was also selected based on the population being studied: 12th-grade students. This age group is said to be capable of the cognitive development, developmental maturity, social experiences, and social influences that enable them to efficiently participate in a focus group by communicating their thoughts and feelings during interviews

and/or observations (Gladding; Horner, 2000; Norris, Aroian, Warren, & Wirth, 2012; Wyatt, Krauskopf, & Davidson, 2008). Additionally, conducting an ethnographic study with participants between the age of 17 and 20 was deemed appropriate by the researcher. The researcher first reviewed previous qualitative research and literature that discusses the cognitive level and processes of conducting focus groups with adolescents including children as young as pre-school age and counseling groups with children as young as age of five (Gladding; Norris et al.; Wyatt, Krauskopf, & Davidson).

Description of primary participants. Primary participants consisted of 12th graders who self-reported and/or were reported by UB staff to have participated in two or more UB sponsored events (i.e., fourth year of high school, last year of high school until graduation, or third year of high school with the documented senior credits needed to graduate with the current graduating senior class) during their 12th-grade academic year. The two UB sponsored events criteria, excluded UB visits to students' schools during lunch. The researcher considered primary participants as active 12th-grade UB participants. In addition to primary participants having had met the criteria for attending a minimum of two UB events during their 12th-grade year, the researcher required primary participants to also have had participated in UB at least one year prior to entering their last year of high school completion.

The primary participant sample was together for longer than the minimum 16-week requirement for a group to develop a shared culture (Creswell, 2010). The researcher sampled 14 12th-grade seniors as primary participants, with gender and ethnicity representative of most UB programs. UB program staff reported 27 12th-grade UB students on their senior roster; however, only 16 were eligible to participate in the primary group, with 14 agreeing to participate in the study. Hays and Woods (2011) state that ethnography researchers are not limited to selecting a

specific sample size, but given the relatively small size of this group, it was appropriate to include all of the participants that were present and meet the participation criteria for evaluating the culture. Therefore, the researcher used all 14 12th-grade active participants who both met the criteria for participating in the study and agreed to participate (Hays & Woods, 2011), which is sufficient to code for saturation of themes (Guest et al., 2006). According to Guest et al., including 12 or more participants in qualitative studies provides the foundation needed for researchers to adequately code through the saturation of themes. Using the sampling method described above was appropriate for the chosen ethnographic methodology.

Description of secondary participants. The secondary participants sampled included inactive 12th-grade UB students who participated in UB for a minimum of one year prior to entering their senior year. The researcher classified secondary participants as inactive students if they met the following criteria: (a) participated in the studied Midwest UB Program for a minimum of one year prior to their fourth year of high school, (b) did not attend a minimum of two UB sponsored events beyond a UB staff's attempts to contact them at school lunch visits, and (c) currently attending their fourth year of high school. Secondary students either self-reported or were reported by UB staff to have attended fewer than two UB sponsored activities during their fourth year of high school. Although 27 students were identified by UB as current 12th-grade UB students, there were only 11 who met the criteria for participating as a secondary participant. Of the 11 students eligible to participate as a secondary participant, seven agreed to participate. Hence, the secondary participants consisted of the seven students who agreed to participate in the study. The students in the secondary sample provided insights as to why high school students chose to withdraw from actively participating in the program.

Non-participating eligible 12th-grade UB students. Twenty-one of the 27 seniors classified as UB students agreed to participate in the study. Of the six who did not participate, only two were reported to have attended a minimum of two UB events during their senior year, and their UB participation discontinued in the Fall of 2014 and did not continue during their second semester of high school. The other four non-consenting students were not present during recruitment at UB events and were reported by UB and/or study participants as students who did not participate in UB events during their senior year.

Tertiary participants. In addition to the primary and secondary students, the researcher incorporated ($N = 49$) tertiary participants. All tertiary participants were adults (18 years of age or older) who had knowledge of the local UB program and/or have interacted with UB 12th grade students. These individuals included the following persons: (a) UB alumni, (b) Parents of 12th graders on the UB roster, (c) parents of UB alumni, (d) past and present school personnel (counselors, teachers, administrators, hall monitors, psychologists, social workers, high school volunteer coordinators, athletic coaches), and (e) past and present stakeholders (i.e., UB employees, community leaders). Tertiary participants participated in focus groups and/or individual interviews. For the sake of the focus groups, these participants were grouped according to participant availability and their relationship to the program. The majority of tertiary participants were eligible to participate in more than one focus group according to their classification. For instance, a participant may have been alumni, UB employee, parent of alumni, and a community leader. However, they each only participated in only one eligible focus group of their choice (see Appendix D for a description of tertiary participant groups).

Sampling Procedures

The researcher conducted an ethnographic study with 12th-grade UB students from a Midwest UB Program. The primary participants in this ethnographic study were active 12th-grade UB students who had participated in a Midwest UB Program. The primary participants participated in UB prior to 12th grade and attended a minimum of two UB sponsored events during the academic year of their senior year. In addition to collecting data with primary participants, the researcher collected data on secondary (12th-grade non-active UB participants) and Tertiary participants (parents of 12th graders and alumni, past and present school personnel, community leaders, UB alumni). Similar data had been collected with secondary participants (observations, documents). However, the researcher primarily used individual interviews with secondary participants, whilst one secondary participant participated in the focus group with primary participants. Secondary participants did not participate in multiple focus groups, as was requested for primary participants. Tertiary participants were included in either the focus groups or individual interviews.

The researcher collected data from January 2015 to April 2015. Data collection procedures included securing meeting spaces, utilizing communication resources (email listserv) to recruit participants, gaining consent forms from primary participants, as well as gaining permission to conduct research and/or collect data on the universities UB program and school districts.

Response Rate

The response rate for participants (active 12th-grade UB students) included 14/16 eligible primary participants. The secondary participants (non-active 12th-grade UB students) included

7/11 eligible participants. Therefore, there were 70 total participants, which included 12th graders ($n = 21$) and tertiary participants ($n = 49$) (See Appendix B for a description of participants).

Response to all data instruments. The data instruments included semi-structured protocols for interviews, focus groups, and observations. The researcher was able to retrieve 100% of the school records (GPA, transcripts, assessments, attendance, discipline, & list of sent transcripts) on primary and secondary participants, whereas, the retrieval of UB program data for students varied. Although UB provided copies of participant school records, the data response for UB participants' attendance, application, and entrance materials varied. In particular, the data response for primary participants' applications and entrance materials was 88% and it was 47% for secondary participant application and entrance materials. Attendance data reports varied based on tutor sheet reports, sign in sheets, and computer generated attendance reports.

The primary participants had a high response rate in regards to data that was collected from observations, interviews, and focus group semi-structured protocol. The semi-structured observational protocol was collected on 18/21 students, whereas students who were not present for observational data collection were secondary participants with differing circumstances. Semi-structured interview data was retrieved from 10/14 primary participants (9/14 participated in focus groups and 1/14 participated in an individual interview as a non-key participant). Of the seven secondary participants who provided data, six provided semi-structured individual interview protocol data and one provided data by participating in a focus group. Additionally, data had been collected from the semi-structured interview protocol from 11 tertiary participants, while the remaining 38 tertiary participants provided data during focus groups.

Efforts to increase response rate. In effort to increase the response rate, the researcher

used Dillman Taylor's Method of following up with written communication, as well as used the IRB consent forms and district student record release forms in order to obtain student records (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). The collection of student documents and assistance with recruitment was assisted by providing written request and/or arranging meetings to request UB and school districts assistance with recruitment and/or communication, as well as to inquire about their protocol and/or the necessary organizational forms for collecting data, obtaining student documents, and communicating with potential participants. For instance, the researcher attended and presented at a UB staff meeting, met with district and school personnel, presented research information at a UB parent-student meeting, as well as accompanied UB staff to invited school lunch visits to present information.

Recruitment

In an effort to recruit the 12th-grade participants listed on UB's roster, the researcher communicated with UB employees regarding the program calendar and dates that the researcher planned to accompany UB employees to school lunch visits. During school lunch visits and observations, the researcher was able to collect and request school artifacts. Next, the researcher sent emails to principals and/or principal-designated school personnel with a request to observe specific classrooms on different dates, which proceeded as planned unless teachers emailed to provide opportunities to reschedule if a substitute was scheduled for the suggested date. This was followed by the researcher emailing UB employees to email fliers, as well as providing paper fliers to employees to provide to seniors and to school personnel to distribute to students through school mail. In accordance with Dillman's Tailor Design Method (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009), the researcher distributed a minimum of four written forms of communication in order to

follow up with potential 12th-grade UB participants. This form of communication was modified by using electronic methods (i.e., listservs), as well as school and UB mail procedures for following up with potential participants. Dillman Taylor's Design Method was also used for recruiting tertiary participants through listserv communication.

The researcher forwarded a brief email announcement and attached a prospective participant letter to be sent to prospective participants through listservs or group emails. The researcher requested prospective participant emails be forward through a community email listserv, the local BGSA e-newsletter, UB employees email contact lists, and through high school employees' group emails. Hence, tertiary participants were be recruited by way of forwarded emails distributed through UB's database server, as well as forwarded emails through the Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA) and a forwarded message sent to the community e-newsletter, which posts community events on an online newsletter that sends updates through an email listserv. Correspondence requested the participation of UB Alumni, parents of UB Alumni, past and present school personnel, and stakeholders (UB's past and present employees, community leaders) familiar with the UB program and its participants.

Furthermore, the researcher carried business cards and a contact form (potential focus group category, name of potential participant, email, and phone) that allowed the researcher to exchange contact information and follow up, by providing them to interested persons. For the purposes of maintaining confidentiality of study participants, the researcher did not send thank you emails, but instead communicated through community listservs, school districts, host facilities, and the Midwest UB program to distribute a general thank you at the end of the study to all those who participated.

Throughout the duration of this study, the researcher conducted school observations, UB

observations, and observations of community events. The researcher also conducted individual interviews and focus groups with primary, secondary, and tertiary participants, while collecting documents for analysis (See Appendix E for a more detailed description of the data collected).

This ethnographic study employed an emergent research design, so it was not possible to predict all of the secondary and tertiary participants in advance. Therefore, all primary and secondary participants were required to complete an informed consent form and received a copy of this form. Tertiary participants were adults (18 years of age and older) who received a hard copy of the explanation of research form. Prior to engaging in data collection with primary, secondary, and tertiary participants, the researcher gained their consent, as well as discussed the purpose of the study, the consent process, and potential risks and benefits of participating in the study. Prior to conducting focus groups and lunch interviews with secondary participants, the researcher purchased the necessary items, food, and beverages that were promised. Incentives included food for semi-structured focus group participants and secondary participants who participated in interviews during their lunch hour. The importance of external incentives or addressing the needs of this population was supported by a study conducted by Landmark, Ju, and Zhang (2010). Landmark et al. conducted a meta-analysis of 29 documents that examined the best practices of transition plans for students with disabilities and found the most impactful practices were “paid or unpaid work experience, employment preparation, family involvement, general education inclusion, social skills training, daily living skills training, self-determination skills training, and community or agency collaboration (p. 170)”. Therefore, research regarding how paid internships and work-study in their fields of interest may influence their skills, program retention, college performance and success may be beneficial.

Data Collection and Instruments

This study was an ethnographic study. Instruments used in data collection included semi-structured interviews and observation protocols. In order to gain a better understanding of the interactive relationships and processes that shape 12th-grade college preparatory students' culture and influences their future decisions (i.e., program attendance, high school completion, high school transitions), multiple data sources were gathered. For instance, primary participant data was gathered through observations, semi-structured individual interviews, semi-structured focus groups, and document analysis (Creswell, 2010, Gall et al., 2007; Hays & Woods, 2011). This data was used to understand the cultural processes and meaning that was cultivated through 12th-grade UB students' cultural interactivity. Specifically, researcher collected data pertaining to participant attitudes, values, self-perceptions, language, and behaviors (Creswell, 2007; Kirmayer, 2012).

The primary data collection focused on the culture of the primary participants (active 12th-grade UB students in a Midwest program). Data collection of primary participants began with observations, which were followed by semi-structured focus groups and unstructured individual interviews with three 12th-grade UB students who were categorized as key informants based on their consent, their level of involvement in the UB program, and their extra-curricular activities. The researcher was able to identify these three key informants by conducting initial observations and focus groups in which students shared their insights regarding the interactive functions of the UB program and its constituents. Secondary data collection with primary participants incorporated document analysis and artifacts, such as student school records, students UB program records, program and school district artifacts representative of UB's structure, rules established through the program, participants' culture, and various cultural

interactions. Primary and secondary data with primary participants provided information on the culture of 12th-grade UB students and the culture of the program

Furthermore, the researcher strengthened the research by collecting data from the diverse perspectives of UB stakeholders, thus enabling the triangulation of data (Creswell, 2010; Gall et al., 2007; Hays & Woods, 2011). Essentially, the researcher included secondary and tertiary participant data, as those participants served to provide different perspectives. The data collected with secondary participants (non-active 12th-grade UB students) included observations, audio recorded interviews, focus groups, and documents (individualized school records and UB records). The data from tertiary participants included semi-structured video and/or audio-recorded focus groups and interviews.

The researcher collected secondary data sources by conducting individual interviews and recording focus groups with the following tertiary participants: (a) 12th-grade parents, (b) UB alumni, (c) parents of UB alumni, (d) past and present school personnel (counselors, teachers, administrators, hall monitors, psychologists, social workers, volunteer coordinators, athletic coaches), and (e) stakeholders (UB's past and present employees, community leaders).

Several tertiary participants had a number of affiliations with the UB program, thus overlapping and creating the potential of participating in various focus group categories. For instance, one tertiary participant was a community leader, school personnel, and parents of UB alumni. Another tertiary participant was an UB Alumni, parent of an alumni, a past UB employee, and a community leader. Ultimately, the information received from secondary data strengthened triangulation and supported the interpretation of the primary data.

Interview and focus group instruments. Semi-structured interviews and focus group questions for primary and secondary participants included demographic information, as well as

open discussion topics about their experiences. Throughout the 20-60 minute interviews and focus groups, the researcher prompted interviewees to expand upon meanings behind the information that had been observed or shared at the time, while the last two focus groups for primary participants focused on memberchecking (see Appendix C for sample interview questions).

Individual interview structure and participants. The researcher conducted six audio-recorded semi-structured individual interviews with secondary students, which lasted approximately 60 minutes. Additionally, the three primary participants selected by the researcher as key informants participated in individual interviews. Key informants were selected by the researcher and agreed to participate in unstructured interviews that were recorded through researcher field notes and memos. Unstructured interviews with key informants served to strengthen data collection during this ethnographic study by providing an in-depth analysis of the students' cultural experiences, interactions, and interpretations.

In addition to the individual interviews that were conducted with secondary and primary key informants, the researcher conducted 11 audio-recorded semi-structured individual interviews with tertiary participants. Tertiary participants who participated in individual interviews included four parents of UB alumni, retired TRIO administrators (UB directors, UB assistant directors, TRIO directors, TRIO assistant directors), UB alumni, UB employees, parents of primary participants (current 12th-grade UB active students) and parents of UB alumni. However, most tertiary participants had dual roles (school personnel, past UB employee, parent of alumni).

Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted with primary, secondary, and tertiary participants.

Primary participant focus groups. Primary participants were asked to participate in three to four audio and/or video recorded semi-structured focus group interviews that lasted approximately 60 minutes each. Focus group participants were asked questions pertaining to their experiences with the UB program, their experiences as a 12th-grade UB student in transition, their group roles, and their interactions with others.

Structure of primary focus group. Focus group data supported themes that elicited additional responses and data (Creswell, 2010; Hays & Woods, 2011; Patton, 2002). All focus groups contained 12 or fewer primary participants. Due to having a total of 14 primary participants, as well as anticipating and observing absences, primary participants were not separated into different primary focus groups. In accordance with the recommendation for focus groups in regards to the maximum number of participants to include, the researcher compiled data by conducting primary focus groups that had fewer than 12 members each (Gladding, 2012). The researcher conducted a total of six primary focus groups and two member-checking focus groups with primary participants.

The majority of primary participants participated in a minimum of three focus groups. The highest number of primary participants that attended a primary focus groups was eight, while the lowest number of primary participants that attended a focus groups was four. The average number of primary participants at primary focus groups was 5.4. Following the initial five focus groups conducted with primary participants who were asked to participate in three to four focus groups, the researcher asked all primary participants to attend at least one of the last two focus groups designed for memberchecking, in order to ensure the accuracy of the collected

data. However, some students elected to participate in both memberchecking sessions. Due to the nature of primary focus group attendance, the researcher also incorporated a form of memberchecking and checked for interpretations of what had been observed and/or discussed during each focus group. In order to validate findings, the meaning perceived from collected data, and include participants final remarks in the analysis, the researcher used memberchecking to check the accuracy of what had been recorded and/or interpreted from previous focus groups, interviews, observations, and document analysis (Creswell, 2010; 2013).

Change from anticipated primary focus group structure. It was anticipated that the number of focus groups conducted for primary participants would be dependent upon the number of 12th-grade active UB participants. For instance, if there were 20 participants, students would have been split into two focus groups due to the suggested number of groups (Creswell, 2013; Gladding, 2012). Each group would have met two to four times, which would have included the initial focus group and two to three additional follow-up focus groups to conduct memberchecking. There were challenges when differentiating who was active and inactive, including challenges with having 12th-grade participants correctly self-identify as a primary or secondary participants, and because of this one secondary participant participated in a primary focus group. Initially, the researcher intended to separate 12th-grade participants into two different focus groups. However, due to the students' availability, the researcher held one primary focus group that all UB primary students would attend together. This may have served to be beneficial to the data collected by providing more authentic evaluation of the students' culture rather than a dynamic that may have simply developed by grouping them into two separate groups.

Secondary participant focus group modification. Initially, the researcher planned to

conduct a focus group for secondary participants; however, the attendance and attempt to schedule participants for the focus group was unsuccessful. Therefore, with approval from co-chairs and the consent of secondary participants, the researcher adapted to the participants' requests and conducted semi-structured individual interviews with secondary participants at a time and location that was convenient for them.

Tertiary participant focus groups. Focus groups were conducted with the Tertiary Participants based on the following categories: UB parents, UB staff, community members, school personnel (counselors, deans, hall monitors, registrar, social worker, volunteer coordinator, coaches), and active 12th-grade UB students (primary participants). The researcher conducted seven focus groups with tertiary participants. This included two date options for the following participants to attend one of the following groups: (a) UB employees (past and present) and community leaders, and (b) school personnel. The second date was provided as a makeup date due to the high number of participants who had stated that they were planning to attend, as well as from the feedback from potential participants who were unable to attend the first scheduled tertiary focus groups. All other focus groups with tertiary participants were conducted as one group each. Due to the number of potential participants, the researcher categorized focus groups, using categories such as diverse ages and time of UB affiliation. The researcher also grouped past and present UB employees with community leaders due to their high propensity to share dual roles in those areas (see Appendix D for a description of Tertiary participant groupings).

Observations

Primary and secondary participants were included in observations. Research participants

were observed at 12th-grade events such as UB, school, and relevant community events. The researcher utilized unstructured field notes, as suggested by Creswell (2007). The researcher observed the behaviors, conversations, rituals, practices, program curriculum, structural setting, and images in the environment. Observations included high school events, UB sponsored events, WIA events, and extra-curricular activities in school or the community (see Appendix E for a description of data). The researcher observed the behaviors, conversations, rituals, practices, program curriculum, structural settings, and images in the environment. Several observations were guided by semi-structured observational protocol, which was primarily used when the researcher was a non-participant observer during school observations. The researcher primarily used field notes during their role as a participant observer. Additionally, observations of program events and extra-curricular events open to the public were video recorded and/or photographed when unrestricted. The total number of observations was 38; this included 16 UB students (including two WIA functions and lunch observations), 15 school observations, and 6 non-UB community observations.

Class observations. The researcher conducted a total of 13 classroom observations in 12 classrooms, which were located in five different schools (three public schools and two alternative schools). However, there were 11 classroom observations that took place in primary public school settings, which included 10 different classroom settings. A minimum of two observations were conducted in each of the three public schools attended by 12th-grade UB students (non-consenters, primary participants, and secondary participants). For instance, the researcher observed two courses in a school that only one 12th-grade UB secondary participant attended, and they conducted a minimum of four classroom observations in the additional two schools attended by primary and secondary participants. Courses observed in the three primary public

high schools included two observations of the same AVID course on different days (one day tutoring and one day seminar) as well as coop 2, Spanish (year three), geometry, English (creative writing, strategic literacy, writers' workshop, and literature and composition), math (applied math), and academic support. Additionally, the researcher observed one classroom at each of the two alternative schools where 12th-grade UB students (one primary and one secondary participant) were enrolled. The courses observed included science and personal finance (on-line computer course). However, the secondary student was not in attendance during the observation of the science course.

Document Collection

The researcher strengthened triangulation and research reliability through the analysis of artifacts. Artifacts included students' school records (attendance, class schedule, discipline, grades, transcripts, standardized test scores, and transcript request list), student UB records (attendance, class schedule, program application, entrance paperwork), as well as documents (i.e., brochures, fliers, programs, websites, school profile, calendars, curriculum handbooks, standard based grading guidelines) from UB, schools, and the community. Documents collected concerning individual primary and secondary participants included attendance, school schedule discipline, transcripts, standardized test scores, transcript request list, UB application, UB attendance, UB interview materials, UB entrance materials, and UB summer schedules. Document analysis was used to gather information on documented rules, 12th-grade rituals, organizational practices, and behaviors, such as attendance, intent to pursue post-secondary institutions, college choice, academic performance, and the culture of the environment that may influence and interact with the decisions and behaviors of primary participants (see Appendices

E, F, L, and D for more information about the sources of data collection and retrieved documents).

Procedures

Prior to starting the study, the researcher gained approval from dissertation co-chairs, committee members, and UCF's internal review board (IRB). During this time, the researcher also began meeting with individuals who would need to provide permission to proceed, such as the director of the Midwest program, the Midwest program IRB representative for TRIO, and the district representatives (superintendents, assistant superintendents, principals) of the schools that students attended. Meetings were formed to discuss the study, request access to students and facilities, retrieve the program and school calendars, and discuss protocol and procedures for conducting research with UB students, which would include classroom observations and extra-curricular school activities within school buildings. The researcher also met with the Director of TRIO and UB to discuss the potential implementation of the study. Additionally, the researcher spoke with UB's director and assistant director in order to obtain the number of 11th grade students who attended UB the previous year and the number of seniors they anticipated attending UB the year after the study was to be conducted. Following UCF's IRB approval, the researcher printed and completed the research site university TRIO online IRB form with the appropriate signatures, contacted and met with the site university's TRIO IRB representative, and provided an official research statement of purpose to the university's TRIO and UB director.

Procedures Following IRB Approval

Following preliminary procedures while distributing and gaining IRB approval, the researcher met with the UB program director to discuss meeting dates to attend meetings (i.e., UB

staff meeting, UB meeting with students and parents). The researcher also requested the use of campus facilities to host focus groups, requested assistance with retrieving documents for analysis, and asked for emails to be forwarded through their listserv to recruit primary, secondary, and tertiary participants (past and present UB employees and UB alumni) for focus groups. After meeting with the program director and being granted approval to move forward with the study, the researcher attended UB's staff meeting to discuss the research, needed items, and assistance that would be requested from the program, as well as to answer any questions that staff may have had regarding the study. During UB's staff meeting, it was determined that the researcher would present at UB's Spring Parent Meeting and only be allowed to interact with students in the presence of UB staff until the researcher obtained consent forms from study participants. Once TRIO's representative IRB and the Director of TRIO and UB cleared the researcher's UCF IRB submission and approved the IRB form and research statement, the researcher approved the university's desire to conduct a background check with TRIO. After gaining approval to proceed with the study from the university's TRIO director, the researcher contacted the designated school district principals and assistant superintendents who approve district IRBs and provided them with a copy of the requested UCF IRB form and informed consent forms for the 12th-grade participants.

The researcher was scheduled to present their research at UB's parent meeting, where they discussed the research's purpose, incentives, and what would be asked of participants while also requesting the parents of 12th graders to sign up to participate in focus groups by providing their contact information for participation in the study. The parent meeting also allowed the researcher to distribute and collect completed student research consent forms and their corresponding school district's release of information forms.

After receiving consent forms and district release forms from participants, the researcher provided a copy of both documents to the UB program, as well as a copy of the district's release of information to the district office and/or high school where participants attended. At this time, the researcher again requested UB and school documents and scheduled dates to retrieve them. School documents were retrieved as scheduled, and the districts provided students' class schedules prior to providing additional student records in an effort to assist with scheduling school observations. The researcher then created a tentative timeline and calendar for conducting observations, focus groups, and interviews. Additionally, the researcher contacted the director of the community center to secure dates for using the facilities for focus groups and interviews. Once dates, locations, secured locations, agreed upon observations, meetings, and data collection were approved, the researcher proceeded to conduct focus groups, interviews, and observations, and continued collecting documents relative to 12th-grade culture. Additionally, the researcher conducted memberchecking for the recorded interviews. Data were collected over a 13-week period.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, participants were verbally informed of their rights, as well as reading them on the consent forms approved by the University of Central Florida Internal Review Board (IRB). In compliance with IRB, the information collected during the research and the identity of the participants were kept anonymous. Participation was voluntary throughout the duration of the research, and participants could choose to withdraw at any time without penalty. The researcher obtained the written consent of 12th-grade UB participants as well as that of the parents of all participants who are under the age of 18. Twelfth grade UB participants who chose

not to participate in the study were not in the vicinity during observations; however, if they managed to be present, the researcher planned on not collecting or recording their data. Written consent forms for primary and secondary participants included information pertaining to the study, recorded data collection, and permission to access school and program documents.

Tertiary participants who were 18 or older were provided with a copy of the Explanation of the Research Consent Form.

Potential Risks

There were no significant risks, as the risks associated with this study were no more than what participants would have experienced in daily life. The study was voluntary, participants were able to discontinue their participation at any time. While there is a small risk of anxiety if confidential information shared with the researcher was to be made public, the nature of the data collected was not especially sensitive. In addition, the researcher has taken several steps to ensure that the data remains confidential and explained their role in maintaining confidentiality. The following were also explained by the researcher: (a) participants do not have to participate and may withdraw at any time, (b) what is shared during data collection will be up to the discretion of participants, (c) the researcher will provide a resource list (local mental health services) to participants in the event of a need or desire to seek professional counsel, and (d) confidentiality amongst participants, while discussing the possibility that group members may not uphold that request.

Data Analysis Procedures

In this ethnographic study, 12th-grade UB students were embedded in and interacted with diverse cultural systems, which had reciprocal affects that perpetuated cultural norms and

influenced the participants' perspectives, engagement, decisions, and outcomes. Data analysis combined an inductive and deductive approach, which moved from deductive to inductive analysis. Including both deductive and inductive methods of analysis helped the researcher substantiate themes, strengthen trustworthiness, and remain open to disconfirming evidence.

The inductive approach consisted of identifying themes that emerged from the data, which was followed by a deductive analysis within the scope of Gill and Boote's Conceptual Framework: Relationships Between the Five Aspects of Culture (Creswell, 2010; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Gill & Boote, 2012; Hays & Woods, 2011). The deductive analysis guided the development of themes, memoing, coding, chunking, charts, and saturation. Following the inductive and deductive analysis of using Gill & Boote's framework to specify particular relational components representing the culture, the researcher compared the emergent themes, which led to corroborating themes that were saturated into overarching themes to include multiple subthemes (e.g., curriculum, human relations).

Additionally, the researcher's analysis included illustrations that show how multiple cultural indicators interact to support and/or resist aspects unfamiliar to the cultural system. To help organize, compare, contrast, and view themes amongst the various types of data, data analysis also included: thorough listening, critical rereading of interviews and observations, and organizing data through a conceptual framework (Gall et al., 2007; Creswell, 2009; Creswell, 2013; Fetterman, 2010; Hays & Woods, 2011; Saldana, 2009; Richards, 2009). This helped the researcher identify stressors, supports, and interactions amongst the culture of the program and how it influenced the culture of 12th-grade UB students. It also provided information directly from participant perspectives as to how cultural interactions may have contributed to their 12th-grade progression, decisions, and adult transitions.

During the data collection process, multiple data types were collected simultaneously. Therefore, the researcher began data analysis and the chunking of preliminary themes that developed throughout the data collection process at the start of the data collection process. This was done by writing potential themes next to the notes when memoing, during observations and interviews, as well as by noting themes for collected documents and purposively capturing pictures related to anticipated cultural themes based on Gill and Boote's (2012) framework. Additionally, the researcher took notes that captured themes during focus groups, and when reviewing the recordings and/or transcriptions in order to discuss preliminary findings with focus groups.

Following data collection, preliminary analysis was also presented and a discussion of these findings occurred in Dr. Boote's ethnography course in the Summer of 2015, as well as at professional conferences. After reviewing the recordings, rereading of transcriptions, and themes, the researcher began to categorize the data and themes within Gill and Boote's (2012) framework. For instance, for Gill and Boote's Language component, the researcher reread transcriptions and memoed notes to identify repetitive language (i.e., words, terms, phrases) used that correlated with additional document and themes to determine the primary representation of language that identified UB's culture. This was done by creating a diagram where the researcher began to organize data based on the five categories and confirm and/or disconfirm themes, while also identifying new overarching themes that had developed from the organization of data (see Figure 3 to review cultural identifiers for each component). Creating overarching themes through the five categories has helped the researcher to focus and narrow data themes.

Trustworthiness

This qualitative study accounted for validity, reliability, rigor, authenticity, and research integrity (Bloomberge & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2010; Gall et al., 2007; Reynolds, Livingston, & Wilson, 2009; Trochim, 2000). Although generalizability cannot be met with qualitative research, transferability of results was strengthened through trustworthiness and remained within the scope of the population sampled (Creswell; Gall et al.; Hunt, 2011). This study utilized the following methods to increase trustworthiness: triangulation, memberchecking, literature review, thick descriptions, a positionality statement, peer debriefing and external reviewers (Bloomberg & Volpe; Creswell, 2013; Hays & Woods, 2011; Hunt, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2010; Moustakas, 1994; Trochim).

Triangulation and integrity were addressed through multiple data sources, such as individual interviews, focus groups, observations, and documents (i.e., student applications, academic grades, discipline records, attendance records). To assist with document analysis and the triangulation of data, the researcher created a summary list of observations and focus group dates with themes, as well as an excel document that synthesized key themes from student records to capture components, such as attendance, GPA, ACT, and application request (see Table 1 and Appendix M for additional information regarding student needs and demographics). As a secondary source for triangulation, the researcher collected documents and conducted semi-structured individual interviews with people who were not actively participating in UB during their 12th-grade academic school year. Focus groups were also conducted with tertiary participants, which included 12th-grade UB parents, school personnel, community members, UB alumni, and parents of UB alumni. Tertiary focus group participants were excited to share in a group setting and hear similar concerns and/or stories from stakeholders. More importantly, the

group with community leaders and UB employees shared that they learned a lot from each other through their communication and discussing misunderstandings. They discussed connecting at a later time to create additional partnerships to better serve students. The tertiary participants and secondary participants also were also eager to provide information about their interactions with UB, the benefits and challenges of UB, and suggestions for improvements.

The aforementioned approach of collecting data, coding, and formulating themes with a review conducted by external reviewers was supported by Creswell (2014) and O'Brien, Harris, Beckman, Reed, and Cook's (2014) synthesis for conducting quality research. Throughout the data collection process and afterwards, the researcher utilized peer debriefing. This included doctoral and master students from both the Midwest Host University (Nandi), as well as from the University of Central Florida. Trustworthiness was also strengthened by the researchers presenting preliminary findings, debriefing, and gaining feedback on the categories of preliminary findings during Dr. Boote's ethnography course in the summer of 2015.

Memberchecking was also used during analysis to promote the design of the research and preserve the essence of cultural sensitivity and accuracy of observations, statements, and the context of documents. This memberchecking was conducted by using a focus group with primary participants. The researcher held five focus groups with primary participants, which were followed by one memberchecking focus group. Throughout each focus group, the researcher provided brief summaries to check for clarity regarding what participants discussed, as well as to clarify the meaning of observations and/or documents that may have cross-referenced with the topic of discussion. After consolidating the findings, the researcher conducted a preliminary analysis and received feedback. Participants were in agreement with the findings and themes that they had shared and seemed to feel a sense of appreciation for being accurately heard, which

might have prompted them to elaborate on the findings. Once the memberchecking focus group proceeded with participants agreeing with preliminary findings, they began to elaborate on their UB experience, discussing conversations that they had been having with parents, and seemed to have more refined plans regarding their adult transitions. During this memberchecking focus group, participants explicitly shared that enjoyed participating in the focus groups and research because as it gave them an opportunity to gather with their peers, feel heard, and feel cared for by having an adult who followed up with them. Primary focus group participants seemed to feel empowered by having the opportunity to share and reflect on their experiences, as well as hear about the experiences and progress of their peers.

Additionally, in order to decrease potential researcher bias and increase trustworthiness, the researcher wrote a positionality statement that communicates the researcher's prior experiences and interests as it related to the topic. This statement is presented below in the section titled, *Positionality Statement*. Presented above (Figure 3), is the lens through which the researcher analyzed and interpreted data (Creswell, 2013; Grbich, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). The researcher intentionally remained cognizant of potential researcher bias while strengthening the trustworthiness and reliability of the data analysis. For instance, the researcher used peer debriefing and two external reviewers, which helped the researcher identify potential blind spots in data reporting.

The two external reviewers included Candice Williams and Courtney Hart. These reviewers both have experience as graduate students, were university employed, and have prior experience with reviewing data. While serving as external reviewers, one of the reviewers was employed as a National Admissions Advisor at a Midwest University and the other was employed with a TRIO program at a Florida university where she was conducting

nanotechnology research, as well as research for a TRIO Program with which she was employed. The reviewers' experiences (i.e., work, data, research) with serving populations that are similar to the students of this study, which may have provided them with insight about the potential culture of students in this study. Their diverse academic backgrounds in science, finance, and/or information technology may have also helped them view the data through alternative lenses.

The external reviewers both participated in the review of data, identified themes, wrote themes, discussed the themes that they had written, discussed how they arrived at themes based on the data, and they then compared their themes to the researcher's themes. By reviewing the data (e.g., transcriptions, summary of documents), the external reviewers corroborated the themes initially identified by the researcher.

The researcher conducted a second process with the second external reviewer, which was similar to researchers' analyses of identifying cultural components through Gill and Boote's framework. The process of using a theory to strengthen trustworthiness (Creswell, 2013; Grbich, 2007; O'Brien et al., 2014) was increased by the second external reviewer identifying themes for each of the five aspects of Gill & Boote's conceptual framework followed by a discussion and synthesis with the researcher.

The second reviewer identified two primary themes further synthesizing the data, as well as additional key concepts during the process of analyzing data within Gill and Boote's (2012) framework. The additional information and themes identified by the second external reviewer were used to confine the subthemes and moved toward narrowing the themes. This process of external reviewers not only corroborating themes, but also identifying additional themes is a process, that Hays and Woods (2011) discussed as being an aspect to strengthen the trustworthiness of a study.

The process with the second external reviewer included further identification and/or confirmation of the researcher's cultural themes through the use of Gill and Boote's (2012) Framework. We then discussed the themes she found by illustrating them on a white board, discussed the themes that we both found, organizing ones that overlapped could be categorized under a broader category, and would be better explained under a separate category. The external reviewer was then asked to review the data by considering the culture and/or theme from Gill and Boote's framework by using a picture on the board with a given example for each category. The external reviewer then referred back to the data to begin structuring it into each of the five categories. They had the opportunity to first process their individual results by writing them in their notebook. This was followed by a discussion of the categories selected, which were placed in the diagram on the board. The researcher then reviewed each of the five categories on the board, placed additional data from their initial themes, and discussed overlapping categories and the categories that were identified by the external reviewer based on restructuring the themes through Gill and Boote's framework. After the information was compiled and discussed, the researcher then reviewed the analysis of themes and further narrowed down the components of UB's diagram. The researcher took into consideration the themes identified by the external reviewer to explain the culture of disregard and how it interacted to influence the 12th-graders' demeanor of viewing their transition as more of an exit to an end rather than an entrance to new beginnings.

Positionality Statement

The researcher's position is for the sustainment, continuous improvement, and investment in promoting the proactive standard of excellence in UB programs due to their experiences as a

prior UB student, employee, and school counselor liaison. The researcher's experience with the UB program and several other programs have contributed to their belief that UB is a beneficial program. However, the researchers' position prompted them to acknowledge the missed value of unidentified structures, undocumented processes, and a lack of interactive structures within UB's system that can greatly influence the culture and promote meaningful relationships. All of these can increase student engagement, habits of mind, discipline, social supports, healthy decisions, the resiliency of students, and most of all the healthy developmental transitions that lay the foundation for maintaining successful lifestyles. Therefore, the researcher's experience as a participant and employee of the UB program could potentially influence her perspective of UB as a beneficial program that promotes college-going behaviors and decreases the likelihood of students to engage in deterrent behaviors. The researcher believes that students in structured activities are less likely to be involved in unproductive or delinquent activities, mitigating predicted at-risk statistics. Furthermore, the researcher's experience as a high school counselor may also influence their perspective regarding the idea that 12th graders experience a state of limbo as they try to discover their place of belonging, plan their transitions, and develop their identities. High school counseling programs are mainly designed to focus on the academics of 12th-grade students and provide brief career counseling, while lacking a focus on the emotional experiences and supports needed for 12th-grade students. Additionally, the researcher believes that students need culturally responsive pedagogy, systemic counseling programs to increase access to opportunities, resources, cultural exposure, and positive caring adult role-models in order to reduce the prejudgment and prejudice (withholding of information) that influence the options that students in transition believe they have, thus affecting their attitudes, behaviors, and decision.

Conclusion

Chapter 3 presented the study's research questions and methodology. It included a discussion of the research methodology by outlining the instruments, data collection process, the analysis of data, as well as appropriate measures taken to strengthen research validity.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The primary focus of Chapter 4 is to analyze the research questions through the lens of Gill & Boote's (2012) conceptual framework: Relationships Between the Five Aspects of Culture. Findings indicate how the culture of UB interacted with 12th-grade UB students (first-generation, low-income) to influence their attitudes and decisions as they progressed and transitioned into adulthood. Data also showed how UB's cultural interaction with 12th graders influenced their development (e.g., emotional security, social interactivity, confidence), matriculation (e.g., academics, motivation, attendance, relationships), and adult transitions.

To understand this culture, it is first important to understand the culture of the program as a whole, which is shaped by the experiences and observations of students during years prior to grade 12. These experiences during grades nine through eleven are then contrasted with the culture of the program during 12th grade. Findings illustrate that culture of UB was structured and were believed to have had positive influences on students, especially in grades nine through eleven. While the cultural strength of UB expectations of excellence, professionalism, and leadership continued into 12th grade, the structured supports to assist with their progression and transitions declined and/or were absent. Specifically, there was a decline in academic support, structure, culturally relevant college preparation, and fun opportunities. Taken together, these concerns are evidence of a lack of culturally relevant curriculum and mentorship during grade 12. The aforementioned components emanate from two overarching foundation, human relations (e.g., mentorship) and culturally relevant curriculum. While some of these concerns may be considered anomalies for this particular 12th grade cohort, data from participants and program documents) illustrate that the primary areas of these concerns (e.g., tutoring, college trips) are persistent features of UB's 12th grade culture. Therefore, signifying a 12th grade culture of

disregard.

While 12th-grade UB participants illustrate desirable progressions and expected transitions (i.e., applying to colleges) this 12th-grade culture of disregard has had conflicting influences on their attitudes and behaviors as they progressed and transitioned to adulthood. The 12th grade culture of disregard has specifically lead to inconsistent motivation and confidence. Many students disengaged or put inconsistent effort toward college going behaviors. This disengagement and inconsistent effort was evident in decreased UB program and school attendance, reduced grade expectations, and their intent to attend colleges that they perceived were more convenient with lower standards.

To answer the research question below, the researcher asked interview questions, conducted observations, and analyzed documents.

Research Question: What is the culture of this Upward Bound Program, and how does it influence 12th grade participants' progression and transitions from high school into adulthood?

Midwest Upward Bound Culture

The analysis of the data suggests that the UB Program has a culture across all four high school grades. There were marked differences between the culture of the program during grades nine through eleven and the culture of UB during grade 12. This section first describes the overall program culture. This is followed by highlighting features that were more prominent in the program during grades nine through eleven, which is later followed by a description of the program differences evident during grade twelve. Findings illustrated that this Midwest UB Program demonstrated their attitude and beliefs of excellence. The culture illustrated that it held

high expectations of participants and believed that students were capable of achieving academic and career success when provided the appropriate supports. UB's culture was representative of optimistic attitudes that portrayed their belief in UB students' capability and potential to achieve academic and career success, especially when they were given the appropriate supports (e.g., resources, exposure, diverse opportunities, real-life experiences, organizational structure, and supervision) and complimented those supports with their own hard work and fortitude.

In order to gain an understanding of the 12th grade UB culture, it is first important to understand the overall culture in UB. The culture of UB in grades nine through eleven is important because it molded the cultural and behavioral norms expected by 12th grade participants. The culture of this UB Midwestern Program in grades nine through eleven was very structured both during the regular school year and during the summer program. During the academic year, the program offered study center (e.g., tutoring services), workshops, and students' performance was constantly monitored. During the summer curriculum and the academic year workshops, UB exposed students to careers, cultural experiences, and volunteer opportunities.

Participants in all three categories reported the purpose of UB to be a program that provided college preparatory services (e.g., tutoring, cultural exposure, college tours, and advocacy) and guidance that helped students excel through high school, as well as access and transition to college. The cultural representation of UB was a program with high expectations for students' academic and career performance and success. While UB's curriculum, program agendas, schedules, and program supervision were provided to promote student success, this Midwestern UB program was also known to hold high expectations for students to enroll in college preparatory courses, earn high grades, apply to colleges, and search for scholarships. UB

also offered programs to assist students. This Midwestern UB Program offered ACT preparation, tutoring, financial aid workshops, and money management workshops. The aforementioned components were evident through the researcher observations at program events (e.g., spring kickoff, workshops, lunch visits), focus groups, interviews, and through the collection of artifacts, such as UB's calendar, application packet, UB's program power point, UB's lunch visit checklist, and school reports (e.g., grade reports, attendance, discipline).

Many of these program features were designed to meet the federal government's expectations of all UB programs, though elements of the program may have differed in recent years. Participants and documents suggested that this Midwest UB Program had changed from a hands-on structured relational approach with workshops, to using more seminars that seemed were designed to simply meet government standards. Upward Bound is under the auspices of TRIO, a federally funded government program. This Midwest UB Program adheres to federal guidelines and regularly submits reports; UB is also responsible for maintaining the funding for programs typically implemented on college campuses. In focus groups with program alumni, they explained that UB was known as a program intended to help youth prepare and go to college by providing supplemental academic college preparatory experiences that offered hands-on assistance, educational opportunities, advocacy, career and cultural exposure, mentorship, parent collaboration, and information not normally afforded to students from the studied demographics. In the past, UB was known to have had competent personnel who fostered positive interactions between employees, students, and stakeholders. As a result, UB students were provided with mature role-models and mentors who were known to initiate positive and caring relationships. These relational and organizational components (e.g., Junior-Senior Support Group) that provided students with hands-on attention and concrete guidance were said

to positively influence 12th graders to successfully progress through high school and promote their healthy adult transitions.

In addition to the academic year component, UB had a very structured and full summer agenda, which included 24-hour supervision. Students were also kept busy with diverse sports and academic subjects. Tertiary participants also discussed the summer component, which served to assist students with structure, and provided consistent adult supervision, as well as academic enrichment. The amounts and types of structure and supervision did not change as students matured. Additionally, UB provided cultural and career exposure, as well as an atmosphere that encouraged social experiences, such as building relationships with peers beyond the students' typical proximity and establishing potential networks.

This UB Midwest Program was reported to have led to a high percentage of students who enrolled in college preparatory and honors courses, graduated from high school, transitioned to higher education, completed 4-year college degrees, and secured careers. This notion is supported by UB reports (see Appendix H for a description of UB report), and tertiary (alumni, parents of alumni, UB employed, school personnel) focus groups and interviews. Essentially, this UB program's reputation was predicated on its enormous potential to influence the lives of its participants.

UB cultural values were analyzed through Gill and Boote's (2012) theoretical framework: Relationships Between the Five Aspects of Culture (see Figure 3). This analysis suggested that the interactions among program components perpetuated UB's culture. The information below describes how the data was interpreted based on analyzing and triangulating data within Gill and Boote's Framework. The values of the UB program were evident in its recurring practices (i.e., traditions) and the language used by members of the group to describe

the culture of UB during grades nine through eleven. The cultural values of UB were indicated in the language of participants and through data collection about UB's patterns of communication. In turn, these cultural values were evident in how UB's time was designated to various program components, in the traditions of the organization, and in the recurring problems that occurred in the program. Data supporting these interpretations included: (a) UB's communication and the language of participants and stakeholders, (b) an agenda (e.g., timetable) of how the program is structured, (c) the materials used to utilize time and perpetuate UB's traditions, and (d) reports from participants about the recurring problems with UB's curriculum organization and interpersonal interactions. These data also illustrates how little time or effort were spent developing specified 12th-grade culturally relevant curriculum to support seniors' socio-emotional, career, and academic development as they progress and transitioned from high school.

The overall values of UB were expressed by secondary and tertiary participants, as well as through the researchers' observations and collection of documents. Documents included observing student attendance at UB events, participating in a UB staff meeting, reviewing the staff meeting agenda and UB calendars that included administrative staff training, as well as through documented observations and collected documents (see Appendices F, G, L, and M). Specific data from participant interviews and focus groups describing the cultural strengths of UB are described in the following sections.



Figure 2. Upward Bound Cultural Analysis

Upward Bounds Ninth through Eleventh Grade Culture

While UB's culture upheld expectations and values of excellence, professionalism, and

educational attainment in all grades, findings illustrate that the culture of UB in years prior to grade 12 demonstrated several strengths that influenced participants' engagement and development. These cultural strengths were noted through the language used by participants, as well as through the materials used to emphasize UB's values. The values of UB were implemented through its standard practices. Standard practices in grades nine through eleven included UB's academic supports, college preparation, mentorship opportunities, and an atmosphere that supported peer interactions and supports.

The cultural values of UB were reflective of the programs strengths. The strengths of the program were represented by participants' quotes (language), documents (materials), and some observations (standard practices). The strengths of the program included structure, some fun activities, academic support, college exposure, social interactions (e.g., peers, role models), high expectations, and encouraging students' motivation for high academic achievement and college transitions. Observations and documents that were representative of this UB programs strengths, especially as it pertained to grades nine through eleven, were UB's calendars, the observation of UB's Spring Kick-off slide presentation with parents, UB reports, orientation packets (i.e., a commitment contract, UB's Handbook, and UB's Fact sheet and Application).

Expectation of Excellence

This Midwestern UB program illustrated its cultural values by holding high expectations for students to enroll in college preparatory courses, earn high grades, apply to colleges, and search for scholarships. UB also expected students to strive for excellence and professionalism by demonstrating self-respect, respect for others (UB, peers), and characteristics of a leader. Participants shared that in addition to the expectations UB held about students' academic

performance and pursuit of college, UB also held high expectations about their behaviors and empowered character. Quotes pertaining to UB's expectation for participants to demonstrate self-respect, serve as a leader, and contribute to the group and/or UB's cultural reputation are listed below.

Academic excellence.

School Personnel FG 1 Hilary: "In choosing their classes, if they weren't taking something that wasn't as challenging as it might be, all the counselors had to say is what would UB have to say about that? And they would change it to an appropriate college bound class."

School Personnel FG1 Linda: "They talk about going to college. They really see that as what they're going to do."

Self-respect.

School Personnel FG1 Katie: "Just speaking about the students I met in UB. They were taught about how to carry themselves, a lot of self-respect."

School Personnel FG1 Katie: "I think it's interesting to hear our students that have had this UB experience talk about other students and their UB experience...they would fuss about having to dress...but in the long run it taught those students how to tie a tie, how to properly dress...be respectable...again they learned that by their senior year, but earlier it was a struggle for them."

School Personnel FG 1 Katie: "The exposure, positive self-image, and a positive peer group."

Group representation.

Pagiel: "They hold you to a certain standard of how you represent the group.....how you

represent the program.”

Leadership.

School Personnel FG 1 Katie: “Sometimes 12th grade was harder because you were expected to do more and carry more weight. I know that some of them had leadership roles. I do not know if it was super senior, job, or big brother. It was there job to help coach along those Freshman and Sophomores and teach them how the program goes and the expectations.”

Eliza: “If there’s not a TA or something you have to like take charge and keep everyone in line.”

In addition to UB’s ninth through eleventh grade culture that supported their expectations of excellence, leadership, professionalism, and consideration for ones’ self and others, UB previously provided curriculum (i.e., college exposure, curriculum preparation) opportunities to promote the expectation of excellence.

College Exposure and Curriculum Preparation

UB’s college exposure and preparation consisted of college visits in grades nine through eleven, its 6-week summer program where students were housed in campus dorms, workshops (FASFA, college entrance exam preparation, and College Readiness) and its summer classes held at the host university. UB also provided students with academic support through tutoring services. The aforementioned components were evident through the researcher’s observations at program events (e.g., Spring Kick-off, workshops, lunch visits) and through the collection of artifacts, such as UB’s calendar, application packet, program power point, and school lunch visit checklist, as well as school reports (e.g., grade reports, attendance, discipline). Students’ appreciation and value for these experiences was also evident through the language used during

focus groups and interviews. Quotes illustrating the cultural strengths of UB in grades nine through eleven and how students believed they had been supported (e.g., academic, encouragement, college preparation) by UB's curriculum can be viewed below.

Alumni FG 1 Maalik: "Always beneficial....tutors....fun summer."

School Personnel FG 1 Terry: "Whenever you hear students talk about UB it's positive...It influences or motivates them to do what they need to do in school....you hear kids talk about it a lot, so they're motivated to be a part of something positive."

Alumni FG 1 Crissy: "Takes them to college visits and helps them see and motivates them to know this is what they want to do...that exposure is critical."

Alumni FG 1 Sebastian: UB "prepared me without me even knowing they were preparing me."

School Personnel FG1 Linda: "There seems to be better awareness of them (UB students) to what is required to get in college."

UB Employed Interview Asha: "I definitely feel like upward bound is still relevant and important and significant...there are a lot of different constraints but definitely a much-needed program."

Maalik and other UB alumni echoed sentiments regarding their appreciation for UB providing direction and exposing them to colleges and preparation such as ACT's and expressed that they had not received guidance or support prior to UB.

Additionally, tertiary participants discussed the benefits UB had on alumni historically, and contrasted the historical strengths of UB with UB's 12th-grade culture in more recent years. Participants reported that alumni were better supported and guided. They conferred that

previously, students had an idea of the expected study time of a college students because during Junior-Senior Workshops students were required to sit and calculate the number of study hours needed based on a set number of credit hours for each semester, write essays, and complete college applications.

Diverse college exposure and encouragement. In prior years, UB participants were exposed to diverse college campuses and were encouraged to increase their opportunities for college selection by applying to various colleges. Participants also discussed the benefits of having college trips in earlier years. They believed these trips were extremely valuable, and looked forward to them. Participants exclaimed that exposure to diverse colleges in previous years influenced their decisions to apply to and/or attend certain colleges.

Secondary Interview Winona: “The strengths are staying in the dorms, the trips.... We went to a lot of colleges in Chicago, and we went to a college in Ohio. We spent the night there. It was a lot of fun going out of town with them....and even on the college tours they forced us to learn. We did worksheets, we had to ask questions, I learned a lot about the school. It was really fun.”

Alumni FG I Martin: “helpful...even HBCU’s I didn’t know until UB, Mississippi, Atlanta.”

Alumni FG I Maalik: “Without UB I wouldn’t have made it...it steered me to an all-black college.”

These sentiments were echoed by past and present UB employees, parents of alumni, and school personnel who shared that they were glad UB encouraged students to apply to several colleges, as they did not receive admission into every college to which they had applied.

Structure

Quotes illustrating participants beliefs regarding the benefits of UB and their appreciation for a program that provided an avenue for them to leave the house and engage in positive activities are below.

School Personnel FG 1 Hillary: “Strengths to me are the structure, the support, and the tools to help kids.”

Alumni FG 1 Maalik: “structure helped me get in school and stay focused.”

Secondary Interview Winona: “Giving kids something positive to do during the summer.”

Patrick, 12th-grade participants, and alumni echoed their appreciation for UB’s structure in grades nine through eleven.

The structure of UB in years prior to 12th grade was illustrated through UB’s summer schedules and calendars with workshop offerings aimed at grades nine through eleven. This was also noted by students’ full summer schedules that began at 6 AM and ended at 11 PM. The section below provides a detailed description of the program sequence from grade nine through eleven.

Ninth through eleventh grade academic year and summer component. During grades nine through eleven, UB participants experienced a highly structured and repetitive program. This program provided extensive support and mentoring in grades nine through eleven. This was seen in both the UB Summer component and the activities during the academic year. During this time, UB’s academic program included tutoring-study session, college tours, volunteering, ACT preparation, and some workshops led by UB staff (see Appendix L for a description of UB academic year offerings).

The yearly summer structure of UB typically consisted of students residing in residence

halls for six weeks with weekends designed for time at home with family or college visits (see Appendix K). The program provided students with three college tours in the summer of 2014 and cultural exposure. Students attend courses Monday through Friday. Students are eligible to start UB after they have completed eighth grade, and, therefore, start in the summer prior to entering 9th grade as a high school freshman. These students are considered rising ninth graders. The summer schedules for rising ninth graders through rising 12th graders included the following subjects: English, math, science, and reading. In addition to the four core subject areas, students were assigned to additional courses based on their grade level.

For instance, the summer schedule for rising ninth graders included English, math, science, and reading; however, these students were also assigned to Test Taking Strategies and Computer Science. Sophomores were assigned to speech, and rising juniors and seniors were tentatively scheduled to take Latin. Additionally, staff reported that students were assigned to one internship each summer and rotated annually to career areas, such as engineering, medicine, education, computer science, architecture, and agriculture. The time allotted for internships can be seen in their summer schedules (see Appendix K). Following internship, students proceeded to their assigned recreational activity for that week, which were intended to expose students to various sports. Recreational activities included basketball, golf, group fitness classes, tennis, and volleyball and/or outdoor exercises.

The standard practices of UB's ninth through eleventh grade culture provided a structure that cultivated participants' social interactions with peers and adults.

Social interactions

In addition to the curriculum and material resources used to support students' academic

achievement, college exposure, and high expectations, findings illustrated that UB students had a high desire and appreciation for the social interactions provided through UB's ninth through eleventh grade culture. Participants shared that UB's values of excellence extended to social opportunities where students had opportunities to build social skills, engage in conflict management, obtain peer support, as well as have opportunities to expand social networks and gain potential mentors. Quotes illustrating participants' appreciation for the social benefits of UB's ninth through eleventh grade culture and what they believed to be the strengths of the program are below.

Pagiel: "I tend to try to help others....but at the same time if someone needs to talk to someone. I can definitely hold a conversation....I did that a few times this Summer. A lot of people's spirits got up, got some new numbers in my phone, met some new people...I'm a people person. Everybody loves me...I joke a lot."

Secondary Interview Winona: "I like to be comfortable but being around a whole lot of people... I feel the need to get to know all of them."

Eliza: "It's completely different from going to high school because in school it's like if you have a problem with that person in class it stays at the school, but in Upward Bound you have to go back and be with that person...so it's going to turn into a bigger problem, or you're going to have to learn to get over it."

When asked how 12th graders interact with peers, parents shared that they interacted well especially when interacting with UB students who had similar interests. UB students also had a reputation for supporting their peers.

12th Grade Parent FG Lenaya: "Especially the upward bounders. To learn. They're there for the same reason."

School Personnel FG 1 Katie: “How they support each other...and peers saying you know we have to have these essays done....just those reminders from their peers and that support system really benefited them where others may not have had.”

School Personnel FG1 Terry: “I would see them remind one another of things they should or shouldn’t be doing. While not all their peers have that same experience.”

While students gained social skills through peer interactions and were encouraged to support one another through peer mentorship (e.g., positive interactions, reminders, and accountability), participants clearly valued the positive adult interactions they had in grades nine through eleven because they generally led to networking opportunities and mentorship relationships.

Opportunities for mentorship. Participants valued competent employees who were able to serve as role models, as well as demonstrated qualities such as care, interpersonal skills, compassion, and patience. Social interactions extended to what students had expressed they had experienced in years prior to 12th grade. Crissy, Martin, and Indy also pronounced the benefits of having quality UB employees who were mature, caring, and firm.

Secondary Interview Winona: “Mr... he acts like my sister, so I was comfortable around him. He was super outgoing, funny, but he still knew when to bring everyone in line.”

Alumni FG 1 Maalik: “Good teachers pushed us too.”

Participants further discussed their appreciation for adult relationships. They shared the benefits, excitement, and influence of these relationships, as well as the process of how they identified and established role models, mentors, and positive adult relationships.

Pagiel: ‘Frat people, mentors, academic advisors... I meet a lot of people through Upward Bound.’

Alumni FG I Martin: “College RA’s and tutors. It wasn’t always book work while you were sitting there talking.”

School Personnel FG I Katie: “When they talk about who helped them in the program, even though more stern...they were the people that truly pushed them to go further.”

Alumni FG I Crissy: “Getting on a personal level with studentsnot just strictly academic all the timesocial emotional needs to be dealt with as well.”

Crissy shared that an older UB employee had personal conversations to help prepare and guide her decisions. She expressed her excitement for gaining a mentor and shared that the conversations were initially uncomfortable, but were well appreciated especially as she transitioned into adulthood. Several alumni and tertiary participants echoed the benefits of past UB employees who were caring and went beyond their required job duties.

Alumni FG I Crissy: “my senior year we became the best of friends. She talked to me about birth control...it felt like, you’re all in my business, but it was nice to see her take a personal interest in me. When you go to college, it is not always about academics. You’re faced with a lot of social interactions that you never dealt with before. Her being a college student and Black female...this is what it’s going to look like, so make sure you respect and protect yourself.”

These were sentiments echoed by program Alumni. Alumni shared the benefits of having UB employees that were graduate students and/or served in dual roles beyond UB, such as schoolteachers, school counselors, and/or university professors.

These findings of UB’s ninth through twelfth grade culture were represented by its standard practices and use of materials, which supported participants to feel equipped with the appropriate curriculum and relational components to meet expectations of excellence.

Conversely, the culture of UB's 12th grade program primarily signified Gill and Boote's, *Recurring Problems* category due to the absence and/or decline in ensuring 12th graders had developmentally appropriate supports to sustain UB's expectations of incessant excellence.

The Culture of the Twelfth Grade Program

To understand how UB's culture interacted with its 12th grade participants, the researcher examined UB's 12th grade culture using Gill and Boote's (2012) five components of explaining culture. The preliminary, deductive analysis illustrated that recurring problems were the most evident facets of the 12th grade culture. Subsequently, the researchers' inductive analysis using Gill and Boote's framework displayed how these recurring problems interacted with other aspects of the 12th grade culture.

To understand participants' perceptions of the problems they experienced during 12th grade, it is first important to understand how the program's structure and activities differed from what participants had experienced in grades nine through eleven. During 12th grade, the culture of UB continues to illustrate its educational values and expectations of excellence, professionalism, leadership, and philanthropy. While these expectations continued for 12th graders, the cultural strengths (supports) experienced in ninth through eleventh grade declined and/or were, absent during senior year. UB's cultural strengths prior to grade twelve were exemplified through the language used to communicate its values, the recurring practices (e.g., tutor study sessions, seminars, college tours, school lunch visits), as well as through the materials (e.g., fliers, structured summer calendars) used to communicate its values. The cultural patterns established during grades 9 to 11 influenced 12th graders to expect similar program supports, catalyzing many of the frustrations expressed by the primary and secondary participants.

However, the data illustrate that 12th grade participants were likely to have fewer peer supports (e.g., academic) and opportunities for mentorship (e.g., positive adult interactions, lunch visits, school monitoring, employee' retention). Most participants expressed concerns related to the following: (a) organization of the program, (b) UB personnel, (c) UB's strict structure, (d) communication issues, (e) yearly routine repetition, (f) staff boundaries and professionalism, (g) funding issues, as well as (h) optimum resources, time, and stable staff who were available to excellently serve and meet the needs of a population likely to require a holistic program.

This culture of disregard that consisted of a decline in curriculum and relationships were unfortunate because 12th-grade transitions are critical and stimulated a plethora of emotions while students were faced with making important decisions. UB, school structures, and adults in their lives were observed and/or reported to have 'backed off', adopting a more hands-off approach. Seniors felt this lack of support from the program and adults (parents, school staff), who often had expectations that contributed to 12th-grade UB students friction and wavering confidence regarding their adult transitions. This was evident during focus groups where 12th graders, parents, and other tertiary participants questioned what UB was doing and/or their focus to work as a team to serve students. This stemmed from participants' awareness that 12th graders were struggling with college essays, finding meaningful scholarships, efficiently completing financial aid, and what it meant to follow up with their college application process and make sure their intent to attend specific colleges were secure (e.g., housing fee, financial aid, tuition, enrollment, orientation).

Primary, secondary, and tertiary participants expressed a desire to see improvements in non-repetitive activities, fieldtrips, and the level of strict supervised monitoring by UB personnel. They also wished for more flexibility in their attendance and summers schedules and

more activities that foster social interactions to support students to persist through the program.

Peer relationships and mentoring

Data illustrate that 12th grade participants experienced a significant lack of mentoring, support, and role models in the program to assist them with college and adult life. Data from focus groups indicated that primary, secondary, and tertiary participants believed the program could better meet the needs of 12th graders by having mature adults to serve as mentors, providing direct hands-on supports, developmentally appropriate interactions, and relevant activities (curriculum, new experiences).

Limited mentoring and positive role-models Participants exclaimed that they expected role-models and guidance but had minimal opportunities to interact with role-models and establish mentorship relationships. Students expressed that they desired relationships with adults who were caring, down to earth, fun, yet mature and authoritative. Twelfth grade primary participants shared that their current relationships with staff were nonexistent and/or weak. Based on their experiences, they found primary staff to be rude, condescending, and unapproachable. They felt the program was more concerned with them as a number rather than who they were as a person.

Minimal care and strained interpersonal connections.

Pagiel: "They just care about their numbers....I feel that by him saying that it's about his numbers. They want their numbers to be up there cause they know their numbers are declining slowly."

Heratio: "At first I thought she was genuinely trying to help, but then she brought up funding and like, it made me upset, like am I important to you or am I just like the money for

you? Be real with me.”

Secondary Participant Primary FG 2 Daniel: “Mr...you can tell they don’t care how you feel because he steady trying to get me to sign it, my little cousin just died.....and he stayed there....I just signed it so he can get out my face....If y’all want people to come, treat them like ya’ll want them to come.”

Sentiments regarding students feeling uncared for by staff and the feeling that program staff were more concerned with numbers and stats than what was best for the students were echoed by 12th-grade parents and participants. Nadezhda also discussed a greater need for relational support. She noted that it was important for students to be viewed as a whole person, while sharing that the lack of relational support, mentorship, and connections influenced students’ decisions to withdraw from the program and their discomfort with attending a 4-year university. Nadezhda’s perception regarding her limited access to program staff and desire for mentorship and UB employees’ engagement is noted below.

Secondary Interview Nadezhda: “I got a 4.8 out of 5.0....If I fall back, UB... I don’t know if they’re going to be there. It’s like the program is keeping us not the actual relationship between me and Ms...”

Participants continued to speak of their need for mentorship and caring adults who would go beyond the minimum requirements and consider their needs holistically. Therefore, participants often spoke to what they viewed as a lack of 12th-grade mentorships, which was coupled with students’ interpersonal conflicts with staff and/or observed conflicts that included UB employees. Participants often referred to existing staff as rude, uncaring, and/or disconnected.

UB staff conflicts and mentorship decline.

Secondary Interview Winona: "Sometime it's like we wouldn't even speak. She was a little rude. she didn't care I've never seen her nice side" It was the way she carried herself with...I can talk to ...I can't bond. But with her she was like this is the program and that it's just you are just in it. I feel like she think she's better...or more superior."

Patrick: "She don't like us...She said she didn't like us."

12th Grade Parent FG Elaine: "I have a problem to with the way they talk to the kids, but not only how they talk to the kids, but the way they talk to adults.... You're here to uplift these children and to be a support for their parents. I don't' even half want to talk to you. How do you expect us to be responsive to you because a lot of times they do that and that's what I don't like."

Additionally, students spoke of some negative interactions with staff and how these interactions and tense climates discouraged UB participation. Participants shared that the negative interactions 12th graders had with some UB staff often led them to interact less with staff, decrease their UB attendance, and provoked them to feel like they lacked UB mentors and role models.

Secondary Participant Primary FG 2 Daniel: "Ms....., with me she like me one minute, the next minute she don't like me, next minute she's damn near my sister, next minute she hates me to the guts. Then she talks behind people back. Like all the time.... I was in the office and she didn't know I was in there and she was talking. She was talking about everybody. I was just sitting there. I think she was about to say something about me, but I walked in and mean-mugged her and left, And that's when I quit....if you don't like us, why are you here."

Eliza, Patrick, several FG 2 participants echoed these sentiments.

Employee turnover and interpersonal connections.

In addition, participants shared the difficulty of UB's high employee turnover, as well as negative occurrences that students had with staff who were viewed as inconsistent, disingenuous, immature, and lacking empathy.

School Personnel FG 1 Katie: "The staff and I understand that entry level fill those positions, but that can be hard on the students because they develop relationships with certain case manager or certain person they feel like they have to start all over again....that transition is tough for them."

Pagiel: "A lot of the staff they choose not to come back."

Eliza: "There's new staff every year."

Data illustrate that UB participants believed that the unprofessional behaviors and/or boundary lines with employees often diminished their relationships with staff and ultimately affected their decisions. This included their attendance, interactions with staff, and practiced coping behaviors with authority, which inadvertently affected the time in which they may have engaged in college-going behaviors and participated in discussions informing the decisions and practices related to their preparation for adult transitions.

Perceived maturity of UB employees and interpersonal interactions. Participants shared how the disconnect and tensions between the UB students and some UB staff influenced participants interactions with UB staff, their UB participation, and could potentially negate students from asking UB employees for help, if warranted.

Secondary Interview Winona: "They would forget that they work there, and they were the adults."

12th Grade Parent Elaine: I feel like you're an adult and a role model there, you should not be acting as like you are one of the children.

Secondary Interview Winona: [my friend] "didn't do the program last year, cause she didn't really like her....You don't know what's going on you shouldn't treat people like that".

Elaine (12th grade parent) and Eyvette (alumni parent and past employee) shared how they witnessed a UB staff initiate rude interactions with their child and how this was concerning because they believed it would deter their child from trusting UB staff or asking for help if a serious event arose. Winona and 12th-grade participants echoed similar sentiments as it pertained to witnessing UB employee's rude interactions with students and how it discouraged UB participants' interactions with staff and UB participation. Similar sentiments were echoed by Winona, Eyvette, and primary participants.

Primary participants wanted respect and suggested adults consider their approach during interactions with them, by being nonjudgmental, professional, and clear boundary setters as it pertained to confidentiality and transparency, as well as being genuine, caring, and trustworthy.

Relational request for clear boundaries and confidentiality with UB staff.

Eliza: "I just feel like if the staff are going to act like staff they need to act like staff all the time and if they're going to act like your friend and we're all equal they need to act like that all the time.....but when you come to them and you tell that one person something, every single staff member knows about it."

Pagiel: "They don't really have a clear boundary and they try to be cool....I don't really have a problem with but if you do it the right way not the wrong way because it causes more problems....Don't change when authority figures come around....I want you to act the same the whole time....I have clear boundaries."

The lack of clear boundaries, confidentiality, and positive interactions led students to not trust staff, feel uncared for, disconnect, and/or hesitate to safely trust and look to staff as role-models and mentors.

Curriculum

UB's continued to hold seniors to high expectations (e.g., excellence, academic achievement, 4-year college transition), and offered general programming (college entrance exams for juniors, seminar topic overviews) for the entire body of students. However, 12th graders experienced a decline and/or an absence of culturally and developmentally appropriate curriculum (e.g., tutoring, academic supports, college trips) tailored to their needs (i.e., the anticipation of graduation, the college application process), which was illustrated through the language used to convey their frustrations, the lack of time spent directly addressing the transitional needs of 12th graders, as well as through the recurring problems discussed by participants, observed by the researcher, and supported through UB documents.

Frustrations with UB's Twelfth Grade Cultural Structure and Culture of Disregard.

This particular group of 12th-grade seniors appeared to experience a heightened lack of support that increased as they progressed through the program. Many students shared that the absence of tutoring in fall semester and the new tutoring structure, in which they had to make a request for tutoring ahead of time was not conducive to their social needs or academic lives as high school seniors, because they may not have known whether they needed tutoring until that day. Whereas, the absence of tutoring during semester one was considered an anomaly, the cultural development of advanced scheduled tutoring and seminars presented by the organization was a recurring movement adopted by UB's culture, along with all other components related to

minimal UB curriculum and mentorship supports. Students shared that they preferred study session where they could collaborate with peers and have access to tutors by signing up for a time slot to meet with them at some point during study sessions. The total absence of tutoring for a semester, and the lack of planned fieldtrips and college tours was not typical for this Midwest Program, however, the repetition and decline in college fieldtrips was common. As mentioned above, during participants' senior year, tutoring was not available until spring semester. General workshops were provided for all grades and facilitated by outside services, and an academic calendar indicated fewer scheduled college tours, while the one college tour and/or field trip that was planned to take place was cancelled due to weather conditions.

In addition to seniors' frustration with UB's decline in tutoring services, college tours, and fieldtrips, students were not happy about the lack of specified 12th-grade curriculum that may have provided them with new learning experiences. Students also shared their frustrations about needing tangible working workshops and their dislike for repetitive workshops that were general in nature, rather than geared towards their specific needs. Further, they demonstrated disregard for being thrown in with underclassman to observe workshop presentations conducted by non-UB staff. Data collected from participants and documents, such as calendars, supported the determination for hands-on activities, college exposure, and experiences specifically designed for 12th-grade students. While students were exacerbated by the anomalies that took place during their 12th grade year, their frustration with the absence of the support was combined with what they knew was customary of UB's 12th-grade culture, which included repetitive curriculum, lack of exposure, and minimal structured supports, as it pertained to opportunities for mentorship.

Decline and/or absence of support and relevant twelfth grade curriculum.

Participants were reluctant to engage in repetitive UB activities and disliked irrelevant curriculum. Participants expressed their need and expectation to receive hands-on guidance; however, they were presented with generic workshops that were similar to previous years. This repetition often led students to withdraw and/or limit their attendance.

Repetitive activities.

School Personnel FG 2 Sadi: Some of them see it [UB] as another year of the same thing.”

Malcolm: “We see the same places every year, like the Indiana trip, places I’ve seen a dozen times already.”

Eliza: “It would be workshops that weren’t necessary. It may be necessary for some people....time management, it wasn’t necessary but the way they were trying to teach it was. I went to one and I was like I’m not going to another workshop. Don’t put workshop in the email or I’m not going to show up anymore.”

Heratio: “For 12th graders we’re like grown people, so a lot of the workshops it’s not like we haven’t heard it at least one time before so it’s like. To me, it kind of annoys me when I know what you’re going to tell me over and over again since a freshman.”

Heratio, Patrick, Nadezhda, Winona, and tertiary participants expressed how UB’s decline in services, repetition in colleges visited, and scripted seminars that were not engaging or helpful had a negative influence on their motivation to engage. Specifically, participants explained that the 12th grade culture of disregard discouraged UB participation and/or stifled their learning and ability to make decisions due to their limited exposure to the same colleges. UB participants shared that they would like to have input on 12th-grade curriculum and

programming, and they believed their input would be beneficial to UB and participants.

Participants noted their frustration with a lack of 12th-grade curriculum and discussed their frustration with feeling like they were not being respected as seniors. They believed this to have negatively affected students' attendance and engagement in UB and their 12th-grade process and transitions. The researcher observed the lack of UB attendance. Eliza, 12th-grade students, 12th-grade parents, UB employed, and community leaders also discussed how the lack of 12th-grade curriculum, occasional disregard for their 12th-grade needs to be treated as respectable young adults, and the students' need to be provided with new opportunities to grow subsequently influenced their attendance and attitudes about UB's culture.

Heratio: "Some people didn't come back."

Malcolm: "I was one of them. They treat us like two-year olds. Like holding our hands, walking down the street."

UB's curriculum preparation. While participants discussed their need to be respected and have opportunities to engage in 12th-grade curriculum, data also support that this Midwest Program may consider aligning their 12th-grade curriculum with schools' curriculum to help better prepare students for their academic courses.

School Personnel FG 2 Sadi: "they say [students] I've already done geometry or I've already done physics in the summer and supposedly they had some kind of introduction to it in the summer, but I'm not seeing those kids being well prepared to go into those classes and it's my impression is that is what the summer program would be...to give them a jump start so they'll know some concepts and vocabulary....From what I'm seeing from grades, hearing from teachers, I don't know if that group is coming back here any better prepared than a group of kids that did not have that., but I think the kids come back thinking they have been prepared"

School Personnel FG 2 Sadi: "I would like to see them prepared to go into the classes they're going to be taking. I have they ever talked to the teachers about what chapters they're going to be covering."

Curriculum excessive structure. Participants expressed that the overall culture of UB was primarily beneficial, they also shared their frustration with believing certain components of UB were over structured to the point where it was not developmentally appropriate and conflicted with supporting a feasible plan to manage their time and maintain excellence as they persisted as 12th graders. Participants' frustration with the recurring practice of UB's excessive structure and unspecified curriculum was evident through the language used by participants, as well as through observations, and documents that showed their attitudes and decisions to decrease attendance and engagement in UB. Students often spoke of how the absence of their need for autonomy, as well as their desire be treated like respectable young adults deterred their motivation to participate in UB.

This over-structure led students to feel restricted and rebel against UB. Specifically, students disengaged from this 12th grade culture of disregard with most seniors' time being engrossed in alternative engagements, such as increased social activities, employment, and/or multiple programs. Quotes illustrating students' desire for freedom, attitudes about UB's excessive structure with a lack of curriculum, and the influences it had on their behavior are below.

Malcolm: "Like kindergarteners, you got to go to bed at this time."

Patrick: "They treating us like adult daycare."

Secondary Interview Nadezhda: "They expect us to stay all the way from out of school until like 8 o'clock...It's too long."

Secondary Interview Winona: "I would have went back but I kind of want to be more free. As to do what I want to do when I want to do it. Like if I want to go out to lunch with one of my friends I can do that."

Heratio: I don't get it because when you're like a freshman or sophomore you don't get it, mentally, but the restrictions but when you get to be like a senior. Like our age. You definitely need freedom. You don't want to be restricted. Gradually give kids freedom and least let us work towards it."

Considered options and behaviors to gain more freedom.

Lacy: "That's why some kids sneak around and get their own freedom; you're not giving us freedom. So they're just going to go around sneak and get it."

Pagiel: "They tell you to go to your room and you're not ready to go to your room so you'll literally go to your friend's room, sit there and just conversate (imitated door knock on table). They're like go back to your room. And when it doesn't happen. It be the small stuff like that they take away from you that you have to risk getting in trouble for just having a conversation."

School Personnel FG 2 Sadi: "Some of them see it as intrusive to their life and they're tired of having those people tell them what to do sometimes. I tell the kids maybe you want to do ... It's not as intrusive and not as heavily monitored."

Malcolm, Patty, Pagiel, Heratio, school personnel (Maalik), 12th-grade parents, alumni parents, and community leaders echoed sentiments regarding the need to reconsider the freedom and social time that they allow for seniors during their 12th-grade academic year and summer.

In addition to suggesting UB provides more freedom, Eliza, Patrick, Betty, Winona and several 12th-grade participants suggest adults utilize a scaffolding approach that gives students

more freedoms as they progress toward adult transitions. Quotes regarding students' beliefs and attitudes regarding the potential success of 12th-graders who have not been encouraged to maintain a sense of autonomy with developmentally appropriate supervision and guidance are below.

Secondary Interview Winona: "They have to like let me go now. It's about that time. I'm a senior now, I'm about to be done being a senior...and when I do go off to college, they won't be able to hold me down so much. So they should like to practice it now."

Eliza: "Senior year, your parents should give you more freedom...so when they go off to college they don't act stupid...get kicked out of school, get into some trouble, or they're just going to be like I need to come back home...Let people off their leash or it's not going to work."

Twelfth grade increased social involvement. Seniors' movement from consistent college going behavior to more social activities often included UB, senior night with various sports, prom, post-prom, senior day athletics, graduation, senior night (sports award ceremonies), college visits, school clubs, and additional leisure activities, senior skip day, cotillion, Open Mics, and performances.

Secondary Interview Winona: "parties...Senior trip, senior prank, senior skip day, we do as much as other schools do. They will do like post prom, They have themes from their bleachers. They are really close like that. We are more separate....A lot of the seniors I don't think do anything, but I wish I could have done a fun sport, not like the serious team but just for fun."

Arionna, Patty, and 12th-grade primary and secondary participants' echoed sentiments related to their social activities and engagement with sports.

Upward Bounds Cultural Influence

The 12th grade culture of UB activated students to feel that they were left to their own devices without having the developmental structures needed to optimally support their progression and transition to adulthood.

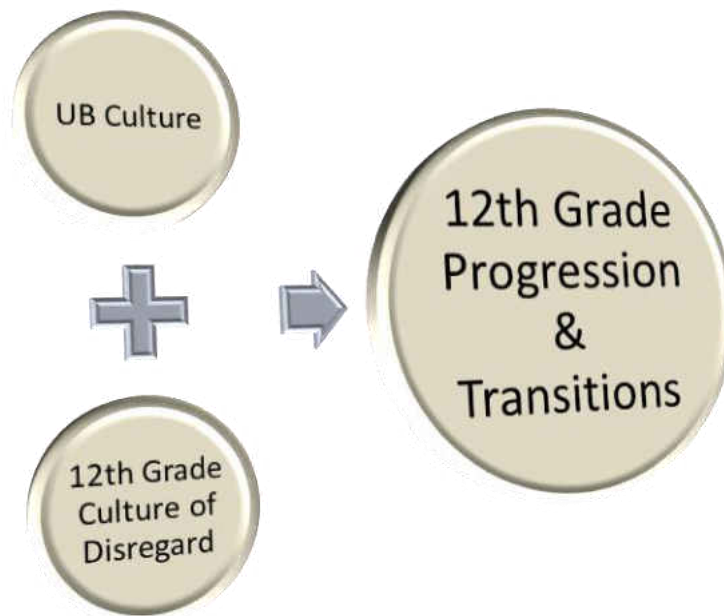


Figure 3. Influence of UB's Cultural Interactions

Specifically, the decrease and/or lack of curriculum supports and social interactions that lay the foundation for mentorship to occur influenced the attitudes, beliefs, and decisions of 12th graders. UB's 12th-grade culture triggered students to question their confidence during a time when they were experiencing diverse emotions related to their transition and identity development. Particularly, this decreased program structure (e.g., academic and social supports), hence, this 12th-grade culture of disregard led seniors' to disengage and decrease their UB and school attendance (i.e., early graduation, shortened school schedules, alternative schools), hesitate and procrastinate about the college application and scholarship process, and decreased

their standards, efforts, and grade performance. Meanwhile, early graduation meant that they were usually cut off from most program supports (e.g., academic monitoring, lunch visits, peer support).

Decreased peer support in the program meant that they were less likely to participate and could have potentially missed some UB opportunities, such as FASFA. This also meant that they were likely to attend other programs simultaneously, try out other 12th-grade college preparatory programs, and/or turn their attention to more non-academic, social extra-curricular activities. Data illustrating 12th-grade cultural influences on participants' progression and adult transitions was supported by interviews, observations, and documents (See appendices F, G, I, & K). Data illustrating the disengagement of some seniors is below.

Secondary Interview Winona: "I saw that some of the seniors didn't go to class much, and they would be sleeping. I feel that they just went for the money and not the education. So during the education part it was a joke to them. Since they were already out."

Little Curriculum Support for Twelfth Grade Progression and Adult Transition

Twelfth graders received minimal support for their transitional needs as it related to the direction and the guidance needed to approach the overwhelming and unknown details of the college application processes of their 12th-grade transitions. Twelfth graders explicitly reported how they struggled and reaped the repercussions of having difficulty keeping up with the organizational process related to prioritizing deadlines and confirming college applications were complete, while lacking some sort of structure as to how to approach this journey for the first time.

An illustration of how the attitudes of participants influenced their progression and

transitions were led by the attitudes based on their interactions with the program. Participants felt that the needs of seniors were not being met through culturally responsive curriculum. How this lack of support interacted with seniors' emotional confidence, and how UB can strengthen supports to better support their progression and transitions are below.

Betty: "To me, I may not happen to know the return dates, and stuff like that. I'm not really good with stuff like that. But trying to get everything together."

School Personnel FG 1 Katie: "They [students] don't know the questions to ask."

Patty: "Some of the stuff on there [applications] you don't know...They ask questions you don't know even know the answers too.... They were like, I'll be right back to help you. I was sitting there for an hour and a half."

School Personnel FG 2 Saul: "I would want to know what exactly they focus on with the students the 12th-grade year. Lots of kids that will come in and ask for help with essays."

Pagiel and a number of 12th graders alluded to the frustration related to having time restraints to complete obligations and meet deadlines while feeling pressure to spend time focusing on schools that were not of interest to them. School personnel, such as Sadi supported students' disinterest in spending time applying to numerous colleges and articulated that students should spend their time focusing on applying to schools that are a good fit.

Students expressed their need and UB's lack of support with organization and prioritization of meaningful tasks, which included selection of colleges, timelines with application deadlines, narrowed and organized scholarship lists that were likely to match their 12th-grade culture as UB students. Quotes illustrating their expectation and need for culturally relevant curriculum that participants believed would help with organization and prioritization are below.

Patty: “Or even having someone say if you had this question asked of you ...what would respond with or how would you respond?”

Secondary Interview Nadezhda: “UB needs to be more one-on-one with every student.”

Betty: “If you can sit down with someone and go through the process it’s way easier. It takes off so much weight and if they can actually help you with finding scholarships.”

Betty: “If they actually sat down and helped individualized the stuff we’re supposed to do for the people who cared. But for like the people who care, I think that they should like find the time, individualize it, help find scholarships, you know, help us fill it out, help us write our personal statements, essays all that.”

Students communicated their need for reminders, displays of simplified versions of deadline dates for colleges commonly applied to, conversations about spending time applying to appropriate colleges, narrowed scholarship lists that fit their population, and individual monitoring. These support systems may help students follow through, filter through information, and organize their college planning process. Primary participants continued to discuss their frustrations and need for help. The lack of support often discouraged students, frustrated them, and provoked overwhelming feelings. Quotes representing the pressure seniors felt due to transitional preparation and minimal supports are below.

Pagiel: “Overwhelmed, pressure to do a lot of stuff. Like apply to schools you don’t want to apply to....the time that you spend investing in what they want you to do, you can be putting that time into something you already did and following up on some more stuff with schools you’ve already been accepted to.”

School Personnel FG 1 Linda: "12th grade is really stressful and hard to manage....you might want to go to college but you really have no idea how to do that. It's hard to go into a counselor.....They really don't know where to begin.....stressed, but really stressful when you don't have that."

In addition to the complicated process of navigating 12th grade and the emotional aspects associated with students' lack of curriculum and mentorship, an illustration of seniors' disengagement and early graduation from this process is presented below.

Disengagement and early graduation. The culture of 12th-grade disregard generally led students to graduate early or to disengage in UB and/or their senior year. Twelfth grade students described 12th-grade year and activities as irrelevant, to have had less relational guidance, and a lack of opportunities preparing them for college, and, therefore, were likely to pursue early graduation. Twelfth grade UB students had a tendency to graduate early (see Appendix I for a description of early graduation). The researcher can infer that early graduation may decrease opportunities for 12th-grade students to use some resources for enriching their academic development in order to increase their likelihood to feel prepared for college and succeed as they matriculate through their undergraduate programs. Students do not feel connected to the 12th-grade process, nor do they feel that senior year is relevant or guided by the intentional curriculum to help them progress and succeed as they transition into adulthood. They do not foresee any additional supports, guidance, or opportunities being provided if they remain engaged in their entire 12th-grade process (UB, school). When asked about their views on the purpose of senior year and its relevance, participants made the following remarks:

Patty: "There's no need to have me in school 8 hours a day when I need two classes."

Pagiel: "The only one I need is American Govt. It's stressful. They try to stress all these points, say it's important, it's not really. The only thing that really matters is your junior year."

Twelfth grade UB participants felt that they were not being properly guided during the 12th-grade planning stage to transition into adulthood, nor do they see the benefit or potential advantages of remaining in school (applicable courses and curriculum). By the first semester, students were likely to have completed all graduation requirements and participated in approximately three senior meetings sponsored by school counseling departments. The decisions of 12th-grade students to disengage partially or fully from UB during senior year, college going behaviors, and traditional activities were influenced by a 12th-grade culture of disregard. This 12th-grade culture of disregard encompassed a lack of a specified curriculum, structural supports, and new exposure to opportunities for learning. As a result of the amalgamation of seniors' interaction with a 12th-grade culture of disregard, 12th graders were inclined to disengage, partially and/or fully withdraw from their senior year of UB and school. Based on this 12th-grade culture of disregard, it was difficult to convince parents and students that it would be beneficial for students to progress through their entire senior year and/or that additional college preparation was needed or would be provided if students spent additional time in high school and UB. Therefore, regardless of the actual performance and preparation needed for adult transitions, several 12th-grade UB students not only decreased their UB and school attendance but some opted to transfer to alternative schools (non-disciplinary) and/or graduate early.

Several primary and secondary students graduate early, attend Nzingha Community College during their senior year or have a shortened school schedule, and thus are not registered to attend classes beyond their lunch period. Furthermore, parents and school staff support the

student' decision without critically examining, improving, explaining, and/or providing counsel as to how transitions, such as alternative schools, could affect their adult transitions and goals (see Appendix I for a description of 12th-grade participants and their anticipated transitions from 12th-grade).

Additionally, there are tertiary participants, such as Aliah's mother, Layla, who supported Aliah's (primary participant) and her eldest daughter's (UB Alumni) early graduation. Layla shared that she not only supported Aliah's early graduation, as she did not see the point in Aliah continuing school when she's already completed the requirements, but also that she saw early graduation as a preventative to unnecessary conflict or potential disciplinary issues that could result from Aliah being bored and unengaged, thus hindering her high school graduation. In other words, Layla viewed her child's continuation in high school as a potential problem, rather than a benefit:

12th-Grade Parent Layla: "She's done with all her credit [She said she did not want her to experience the following]trouble from being bored in class."

The interactive processes of seniors as they progressed through their senior year and transitioned towards adulthood required an amount of preparation and structured guidance that 12th graders believed was inappropriately removed once they entered 12th-grade transitions. However, 12th graders believed they needed guided supports from what could be considered a scaffolding approach in order to negate what they felt was a culture of disregard from having been left to their own devices to figure out information with little and/or no direction. The cultural interaction that propagated when UB participants became 12th graders exemplifies the recurring problems of UB's culture for 12th-grade students.

Twelfth Grade Cultural Strengths and Challenges

It was evident that UB's *Recurring Problems* had undesirable consequences for program retention, deterred most students' from continuously striving for academic excellence (grades, college-going behaviors), while also allowing socio-emotional concerns to fester due to the lack of support. However, despite the challenges of UB participants and their need for additional support, many of them were able to hold on to a sense of hope and demonstrate some form of resilience. It can be inferred that the ability for 12th graders to maintain a sense of resilience was buffered by a combination inclusive of their prior UB experiences, UB's expectation of excellence and philanthropy, and the values that stemmed from participants demographic cultures.

Twelfth-grade students have both strengths and challenges that were likely acquired from their demographics and the cultures to which they belong. Many of these cultures have served as a strength and/or challenge as they persisted in life and play a part in their 12th-grade culture as it pertained to students' thoughts and behaviors as the progress through senior year and transition toward adulthood. Twelfth-graders' values are reflective of what they noticed to help them navigate and build resilience in areas that they believed presented challenges. The other cultures to which 12th grade students belonged produced challenges that were not always addressed by the program. Twelfth-grade students often incurred stratifications and challenges related to the demographic groups to which they belonged. Challenges included stigma, barriers, fewer resources, more responsibilities, and less institutional support. Many of these led to 12th-grade participants' concerns and/or served as a pressures or stressors.

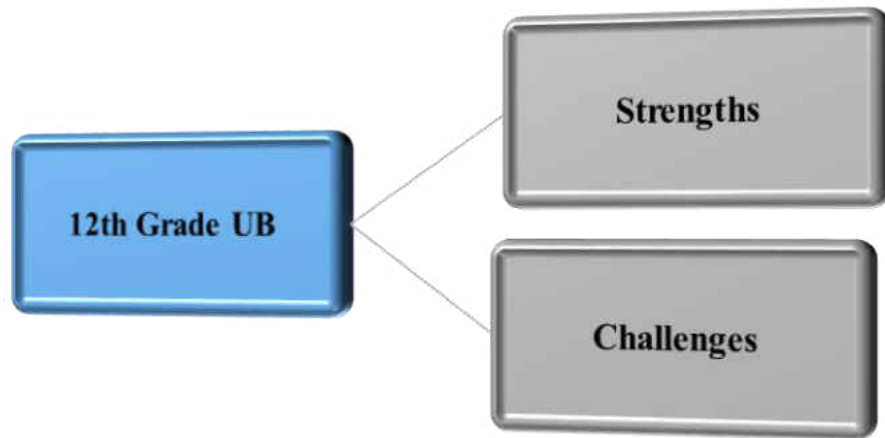


Figure 4. Twelfth Grade Strengths and Challenges

Their strengths and challenges are often influenced by participants' background, while many of their challenges (e.g., financial) and/or experiences are associated with early adult roles (e.g., independence, employment, caretaker) and responsibilities. These challenges have also been seen as a barrier culminating in fear. They have also been known to contribute to students' maturity, as well as serve as motivators that help developed persistence, character (e.g., tolerance, resilience), and skills (e.g., work ethic, interpersonal).

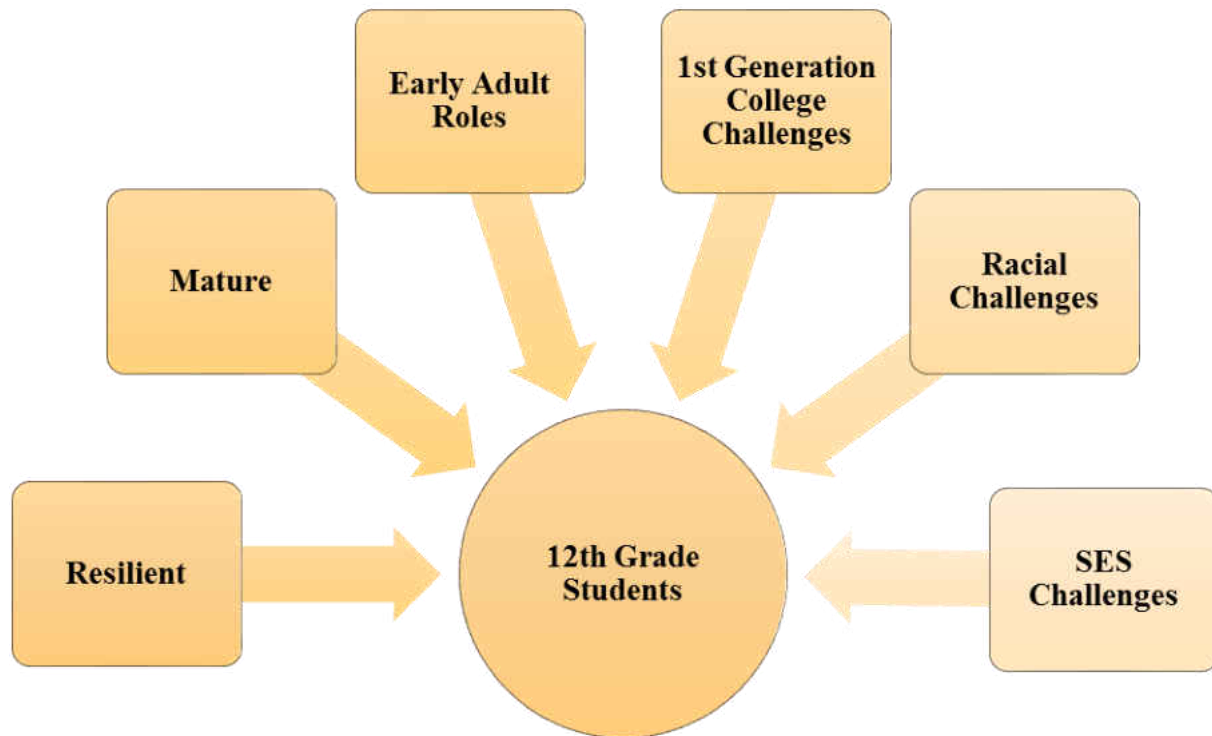


Figure 5. Characteristics of Twelfth Grade Strengths and Challenges

Twelfth grade cultural strengths. The cultures that 12th grade UB students belong to have been known to be beneficial to their skills and positive characteristics. For instance, 12th grade UB students were more likely to take on early adult social roles, have a sense of maturity, as well as engage in independent activities and personal advocacy at earlier ages than their counterparts. These early adult roles have often led to a better work ethic, an increased likelihood to adapt to new situations, a high tolerance for stress, an ability to multitask, and the ability to fluctuate between independent and group functioning and autonomy, as well as a desire to overcome poverty and give back to individuals who may have fewer resources and/or supports. These strengths were represented by the number of students who graduate early, how many UB alumni apply and transition into college, as well as through quotes from participating alumni,

parents, and those who had been employed by UB regarding the success of UB alumni.

12th Grade Parent Elaine: “A lot more wisdom in the 12th grade and maturity where they are more selective of their friends. While when they’re younger they were more inclusive and more likely to assimilate....She’ll look at different groups and be like that one ain’t right.....and started implementing different things that Bishop talks about such as writing your own eulogy. She [daughter] said I could talk about the things that I overcome and my milestones and my challenges....she remembers the lessons she learned”

Twenty of twenty-one 12th-grade UB participants were scheduled to graduate on time or early while only one non-active 12th grade secondary participant is being expected to repeat the 12th grade and attend year five of high school. Primary and secondary participants who fall into at-risk (low- income, first-generation) categories have demonstrated, expressed, and have been reported to have had many successes as it pertained to performance outcomes and post-secondary comparisons made between UB participants and non-UB participant national reports. These students often have skills and determination that have developed from their background experiences and interactions with the culture of UB, although these positive idiosyncrasies often go unnoticed and/or are undervalued within the larger society. These skills and values have served them and have contributed to the success of many students when opportunities to access, knowledge, and support were cultivated and/or made available to them.

According to data, UB reports, as well as the literature on UB students, these students are at-promise and the students in this study were not engaged in delinquent behaviors as predicted by their class, race, SES, and parents’ educational attainment. Contrary to popular belief, 12th-grade UB students can be classified as at-promise students with the appropriate guidance and supports put in place (see Appendices H and I to view students’ progress). As stated above, UB

participants have high graduation rates and several of them graduate early and transition to postsecondary institutions (community colleges, 4-year colleges). This UB program typically meets the criteria for meeting the U.S. Department of Education program standards. However, the number of students who are successful and surpass minimum standards may increase with the inclusion of appropriate improvements and increased documentation of 12th-grade culture when students face critical decisions affecting their future. This is especially true as it relates to supports that increase the number of students who transition to postsecondary institutions, graduate from postsecondary institutions around the time intended, and have increased performance on standardized testing.

This Midwestern UB program exceeds the majority of the U.S. Department of Education minimum standards for program performance. It also surpassed the expectations for graduation rates and post-secondary transitions when compared to non-UB participants from other backgrounds (see Appendix H for a summary of this Midwestern UB Report). The UB program meets U.S. minimum program objectives, except for having 39% of participants who have a 2.5 GPA or higher. Ironically, UB programs and students are meeting objectives and moving through the system, but in reviewing the performance data, the question remains as to how to assess UB's support and influence on students' growth. For instance, although 100% of 2013-2014 UB seniors graduated from high school, from programs that were considered academically rigorous, only 29% of seniors met proficiency standards in reading and/or math. In addition, the 2008 senior UB cohort had 50% of students who earned a bachelors (generally 4 years) or associates degree (generally 2 years) within six years. These data, together with data from alumni, suggest that the culture of the 12th-grade UB program may not be adequately supporting students' high school progression and college retention.

Conclusion

Chapter 4 discussed the findings from conducting an ethnographic study that studied the culture of a Midwest UB program and how the culture of 12th graders interacted to influence their high school progression, decisions, and transitions to adulthood. Data were analyzed through Gill and Boote's (2012) conceptual framework. Findings were conveyed through the perspectives of research participants and supported by the researcher's observations, document collection, as well as through the sentiments of secondary and tertiary participants. The major findings were that the culture of UB provided academic and college exposure and supports for participants in prior years. However, the supports for 12th-grade students were limited, because of UB's approach to serving their needs and failure to provide non-repetitive, specified curriculum that was culturally relevant to the students' development and demographic backgrounds. Therefore it would behoove UB to take into account the cultures to which students belong in order inform program improvements. The 12th-grade culture of disregard (e.g., lack of developmentally culturally responsive curriculum) was particularly evident with this group of participants as they experienced an exacerbated lack of support due to fewer opportunities to attend college tours, access tutoring resources, and engage in hands-on workshops particularly geared towards seniors. Essentially, the findings captured the essence of UB's culture, what is working to support 12th graders, components that may be counterproductive to their progression and transition, as well as elements that were underdeveloped and/or lacking.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Chapter 5 discusses the findings illustrated in Chapter 4 and how these findings corroborate and/or oppose previous research studies. The chapter also addresses how this ethnographic study contributes to existing literature, presents the conceptual framework guiding the study, discusses limitations of the study, implications for UB and Counselor Education, as well as provides suggestions for future research.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to better understand the culture of an Upward Bound College Preparatory Program in the Midwest and how it interacted with the culture of 12th grade UB participants. In particular, the study examined how these cultures influenced students' decisions, progression, and adult transitions

Concise Review of the Study

Theoretical Constructs Investigated

Gill and Boote's (2012) Conceptual Framework was used to describe UB's culture and how it interacted to influence 12th grade progressions and transitions. Ideally, Gill and Boote's five-component framework examines language, values, recurring problems, materials, and standard practices that interact to illustrate an organizations culture. The primary constructs observed were participants' behavior and language, each providing a meaningful indication of the participants' thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes towards both the UB Program, and the 12th-grade culture. Said culture was developed from a combination of UB's culture and the other cultures to which 12th graders belonged. Considering the constructs used to guide this study,

selected methodology, and the analysis used to identify the interactive cultures using Gill and Boote's Framework, it is important to note how the constructs of this framework embodies the social learning theory and constructivist theory (Bandura, 1977; Kellie, 1955; Vygotsky, 1934), to examine the culture of UB and how it interacts with 12th graders to influence their progression and adult transitions.

Participants

This ethnographic study included ($N = 70$) participants in the Midwest. Participants included ($n = 14$) active 12th-grade UB primary participants, ($n = 7$) non-active 12th grade UB secondary participants, and ($n = 49$) adult tertiary participants. Tertiary participants were the parents of 12th graders or UB alumni, community leaders, current and former Midwest UB personnel, and school personnel from districts that this UB Midwestern program served.

Reasonable care was taken to select appropriate participants for the study based on research related to groups (inclusive of focus groups and functional group size) and human development (Creswell, 2013; Gladding, 2012; Horner, 2000; Norris et al., 2012; Wyatt, Krauskopf, & Davidson, 2008). To this end, it was important for the researcher to select participants who were mature and likely to display appropriate social and communication skills in groups.

In keeping with the ideology presented above, primary and secondary participants were 12th grade students ranging from 17-19 years of age. Twelfth-grade participants were African-American with a proportionate number of females and males who participated in the study. The diversity among Tertiary participants was also well represented with participants' membership including a variety of ethnic backgrounds, ages, genders, and educational degree statuses.

All primary and secondary participants met UB's eligibility requirements: being from low-income households and/or being a first-generation college student. UB students' participation has varied enrollment, which may begin at different grade levels during their high school experience. Seventy-nine percent of primary participants were first-generation college students and classified as low SES, while the other 21% were classified as low SES only. Eighty-Six percent of Secondary participants were both first-generation college students and low SES, while the other 14% only met the first-generation college criteria. Additionally, 100% of primary and secondary participants' entrance scoring forms indicated they had post-secondary potential and needed academic assistance. Students' need and potential for post-secondary education were based on GPA, personal statements, academic program/school schedule, counselor recommendations, academic performance, counselor to student ratio, and standardized exams. Approximately 40% were classified as non-traditional 12th-grade UB students based on attending alternative school status, early graduation (junior year, December, prior to 12th-grade academic year ending), and those not on target to meet their expected graduation date.

Data Collection

Data collection consisted of observations, interviews, focus groups, and relevant UB documentation.

Discussion

This investigation of a Midwest Upward Bound Program corroborated with some of the findings from previous research about UB programs reviewed in Chapter 2. However, this study is one of only a few to use qualitative research methods and the only one to date to undertake an ethnographic analysis of 12th-grade culture in a UB program. As such, the findings from this

study add several new perspectives on the challenges that high school seniors may face when transitioning to higher education and adult life in general.

Review of the Results

Research Question: What is the culture of this Upward Bound Program, and how does it influence 12th grade participants' progression and transitions from high school into adulthood?

The overall culture of UB and its curriculum encouraged students to pursue post-secondary education and engage in college-going behaviors. The culture of this Midwestern UB program encompasses values, beliefs, and attitudes, which are derived from the program's communication with its constituents. These communications discussed several aspects of UB, including organizational structure, traditional practices, use of materials, utilization of time, and the reoccurring problems (e.g., funding, the 12th-grade culture of disregard, institutional barriers, and logistics). Overwhelmingly, the culture of the program encouraged students from marginalized communities to develop the abilities for academic achievement and post-secondary success (e.g., college access, degree attainment). It did so by providing students with college, career, and cultural exposure, as well as the academic supports necessary to promote college-going behaviors. This was evident through UB services, such as academic support (e.g., tutoring), diverse cultural experiences (e.g., sports, fieldtrips), career development and exposure, informative seminars (e.g., Preparation for college entrance exams, FASFA), and college tours that helped to prepare and encourage UB participants' transitions to post-secondary institutions. Taken together, the culture of the program resulted in many students who felt empowered by UB support systems and resources. The culture of the program reinforced that students had the skills

and ability to pursue post-secondary opportunities. These students demonstrated greater self-efficacy beliefs about their potential to be successful in post-secondary education and adult life.

The UB program as a whole met its goals of promoting resilience, diversification of experiences, and college preparedness. However, the culture of the UB program did not consistently reinforce these attributes for the duration of the 12th grade year. The breakdowns observed in the 12th grade culture of the program impaired student engagement, participation, retention, decision making, and successful adulthood transitions. For instance, participants reported (and the researcher observed) that the program quality, depth of resources, and promised exposure was limited and/or non-existent as they completed through the program. Participants reported that the quality and quantity of services were less evident as they progressed to their senior year. Students felt their hopes and 12th grade expectations were not met due to a lack of differentiated curriculum, creativity, and new opportunities. Seniors were animated and excited to talk. They exclaimed that they noticed a significant decline in UB's infrastructure, as well as in the supports students witnessed during their previous years (e.g., the experiences of UB Alumni). For example, the culture encouraged mentorship and adult relationships. However, mentoring and adult relationships were inconsistent or absent during year 12. This inconsistency negatively influenced (positively or negatively) 12th-grade participants' decision-making, attitudes, behaviors, and engagement with the program and/or high school.

Twelfth grade participants also expounded upon the expectation of quality services received in previous years as promulgated with the programs reputation, which included a balanced level of support, engaging curriculum, and extra-curricular experiences appropriate for seniors. Essentially, seniors were frustrated with disorganization, and impaired communication

about events and expectations, as well as repetition and the decline in UB's 12th-grade programming (e.g., curriculums, fieldtrips, college visits, tutoring, seminars). Discouraged with UB's practices and current culture, 12th graders active engagement and attendance wavered as they approached their senior year. While students shared their frustration with UB's 12th grade culture, they also explicated their needs to have opportunities. They needed opportunities that would enhance and challenge their knowledge base and skills for adult transitions, hold them to high expectations with appropriate supports, demonstrate respect and a level of freedom that allowed them flexibility and opportunities to socialize, and most importantly, mentorship from caring and competent adults. The observations, Secondary and Tertiary participants, and program documents corroborated participants' insights.

The culture of the program enabled most students to thrive. These students did so despite considerable odds, predicted risks, and stratifications of students who were classified as first-generation, low SES, and of African-American decent. The strengths illustrated by participants evolved from the programs' culture during grades nine through eleven (e.g., high expectations, academic achievement, social skill development) and the other cultures to which the participants belonged. Participants' cultural experiences ultimately strengthened their ability to acquire certain characteristics, including a positive work ethic, adaptability, and a high tolerance for stress when engaged with multiple responsibilities. These cultural experiences included work and family responsibilities, early adult responsibilities, challenges (i.e., SES, first generation college), and situational adversity. Further, the participants' cultural responsibilities improved their ability to demonstrate resilience and perseverance. While 12th-grade participants demonstrated a sense of fortitude, they also struggled because of other cultural experiences related to demographics, associations, and interactions. These sometimes served as potential

elements of fear, deterrents, and/or motivators that influenced their attitudes and behaviors as they progressed and transitioned into adulthood.

Upward Bound

In the sections below, the researcher discussed how the findings of this Midwest UB Program commensurate with prior UB research. Previous research and UB descriptive statistics were typically in the form of reports or were conducted as quantitative studies prior to 2002, and data were generally generated using longitudinal data sets (e.g., NELS) (Bounds, 2014; Mathematica Policy Research Inc., 1999; Burkheimer, 1994; Burkheimer, Levinson, Koo, & French, 1976; Casey & Ferguson, 2002; Burkheimer, Riccobono, & Wisenbaker's, 1979; Walsh, 2011; Zulli & Frierson, 2004). UB qualitative studies were generally conducted more than a decade ago and included interventions and/or interviews with participants following their high school graduation (Muhamad, 2007; O'Brien, Bikos, Epstein, Flores, Kukstein, & Kamatuka, 2000; Pitre & Pitre, 2009). Most studies investigated participants' achievement, transfer to post-secondary institutions, and college degree completion (Owens & Johnsons 2009; Rodriguez et al., 2014).

The findings from this ethnographic study corroborates with much of the prior research pertaining to UB. This study's findings corroborate with literature that presents information about the positive features of UB's culture, which provided students with experiences to influence their decisions, progression, and adult transitions (Burkheimer et al., 1976; Pitre & Pitre, 2009). When compared to their counterparts, UB participants were more likely to graduate from high school, pursue college, and complete college degrees (Anderson & Larson's, 2009; Casey & Ferguson, 2002; Burkheimer et al.; Pitre & Pitre; Walsh, 2011). Similar to prior

research, this study's findings illustrate that UB resources and interventions prior to 12th grade contributed to students' high school progression, participation, decisions, and adult transitions (Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2013; Higgins, Roney, Crowe, & Hymes, 1994; Lewin, 1935; O'Brien et al., 2000; Muhammad, 2007). UB resources and interventions that influenced participants included high expectations of students, tutoring, career education and/or exposure, college exposure (e.g., fieldtrips), and interpersonal interactions and/or social opportunities. However, in contrast to earlier studies, these findings also showed that many of the resources known to benefit seniors diminished for 12th grade participants.

Upward bounds influence. Casey and Ferguson (2002), and Burkheimer et al. (1976) longitudinal studies supported these findings and found that UB students were comparably more likely than non-UB students from similar backgrounds to meet eligibility for college and transition to post-secondary institutions. Pitre and Pitre's (2009) study also showed similar findings to this study in respect to data collected from 12th-grade students about intended colleges. They found that primary participants were even more likely than secondary participants to have submitted transcript requests to colleges they were applying and were also more likely to have applied to more colleges, which was represented by the data indicating where students requested college transcripts to be sent. Data were generated by the 12th grade participants' request for schools to send transcripts for college application submissions, as well as through 12th-graders' self-report (see Appendix I). Mathematica Policy Research Inc. (1999) longitudinal study with students ($N = 2700$) also reported that UB had a positive influence on students' ($n = 1500$) pursuit towards college when compared to non-UB students ($n = 1300$). Walsh's (2011) examination of the 1998 National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) investigated UB's effectiveness at promoting the college attendance rates of underrepresented populations and

found that UB and Talent Search (TRIO Program) positively influenced low SES students' college attendance and increased their opportunities for higher SES, with UB having a significant ($p < .05$) benefit on African American and Hispanic students.

Contributing services and interventions. Findings from this study corroborate with previous researchers about the ability of resources and interventions (e.g., high expectations, interpersonal relationships, mentorship, tutoring, career education and/or exposure) to have a positive influence on students' decisions, participation, progression, and transitions to adulthood. Pitre and Pitre's (2009) study supported the notion that TRIO students' were positively influenced by their ability to participate and interact with UB resources and therefore, were likely to graduate, attend 4-year universities, and complete bachelor's degrees than non-TRIO students from similar backgrounds. Findings from this study illustrated that 12th grade participants' career exposure and/or lack thereof influenced their decisions about college and careers (Rodriguez et al., 2014). The findings of this study are similar to what O'Brien et al., (2000) concluded from conducting a study with UB participants ($N = 34$) that found that career exposure and education influenced students and their decisions. O'Brien et al.'s study (2000) specifically investigated the influence of students participation in five two hour groups had on students decisions about careers and found it made a difference on students self-efficacy and the number of careers that they considered, with the intervention having a small effect size (efficacy $d = .25$; occupations $d = -.08$) on the decisions of students. Findings from this study were also similar to Muhammad's (2007) study that investigated the effectiveness of TRIO with high school students ($N = 70$) and found that TRIO interventions and resources (i.e., tutoring, college preparation, exposure) influenced students' decisions to pursue college. The findings of this study also corroborated with Burkheimer et al's. (1979) longitudinal study that found UB

participants had high expectations about their college pursuits, which was likely to influence their college going behaviors.

Owens and Johnsons' (2009) study investigated the stages of UB Summer Bridge students' trust of educational organizations with urban high school graduates ($N = 20$) from Western University, and it found that interpersonal interactions can influence their level of trust and the programs initiation of rapport and interpersonal interactions influences how they respond to a give-take relationship. The data presented mainly focused on student's processes pertaining to how students contributed to UB (i.e., provided feedback, assisted peer, recruited participants) and/or took (engaged in opportunities provided by UB) from the program. Similar to this study, Owens and Johnsons' study illustrated that students were influenced to contribute to the program based on their level of trust. Meanwhile, this study showed similar connotations with regards to the importance of trust based on participants' comments, observations (e.g., UB events, school, community), and documents (e.g., pictures, attendance) that illustrated students' decreased engagement and frustration. Specifically, these frustrations developed because of how the students perceived that the program did or did not care about them and support their needs, as well as from their interpersonal interactions with program staff. The findings of this study are consistent with Anderson and Larson's (2009) case study that found that student achievement outcomes and engagement are influenced beyond the isolation of viewing them as students and providing academic opportunities. Participants from this study and Anderson and Larson's study pronounce the need for students to be viewed, as holistic beings that have socio-emotional needs beyond their academic ones, and found that students' socio-emotional needs interacted to influence their decisions, engagement, and academic outcomes. In continuation with findings that corroborate students' holistic needs (e.g., socio-emotional) to be addressed through the

culture of UB, Daniels' (2013) study conferred the need of the program to consider the cultural identity of students and how it interacts with their processing and ability to navigate various systems. Therefore, it would be beneficial for UB to integrate culturally responsive curriculum to teach participants healthy coping strategies for dealing with marginalization and microaggressions (Burnham, 2009; Sandler, Freud, & Freud, 1985).

Influence of interpersonal interactions and cultural demographics. Findings corroborates with prior research regarding the importance of UB to consider holistic programming that incorporates the socio-emotional needs of students in order to create positive interpersonal interactions and a feeling of being cared for through relational supports (Lewin, 1935; Maslow, 1954; Rheinberg, 2008; Schattke, Brandstätter, Taylor, & Kehr, 2014; Zunker, 2010). TRIO programs and the interpersonal interactions that occurred with participants have been reported as beneficial to students' high school progression and college transitions (Balz & Esten, 1998; Owens & Johnson, 2009; Walsh, 2011). Consistent with Anderson and Larson (2009), who reported UB's 1/3 retention rate, findings from this study also represented UB's ability to retain students throughout the duration of their 12th grade year could improve its current attrition of approximately 40%. Further, several secondary participants communicated that this greatly influenced their decision to withdraw from UB. Additional studies also discussed UB's influence on retention and participation. Findings from this study and previous UB studies, such as Owens and Johnsons also discussed how interpersonal interactions between students and staff influenced students' decisions to participate in UB. Mathematica Policy Research Inc. (1997) also found that the employment obligations of UB participants (e.g., low-income) conflicted with their UB attendance. Similarly, the researcher's conclusion of the data (observations, participant reports, and attendance) also concluded that UB participants' decisions

to engage and attend UB were influenced by UB's culture, which included interpersonal interactions with UB stakeholders.

While UB's challenge of retaining students is a concern, especially evident among 12th-grade students in this study, findings from this study corroborates with previous research regarding the influence culture can, and was believed to, have had on participants' progression, decisions, and transitions. Data supports that a positive culture and/or an environment with positive interpersonal interactions with adults and peers can lead to program retention. Prior research specifically presents information about the influence of supportive cultures and climates, and/or demonstrates how positive interpersonal interactions influences retention, student achievement, and decisions (Botman & Mensah, 2012; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Gullat & Jan, 2003; Hubbard & Mehan, 1999).

Adolescent Development, At-Promise Students, and Transitions

The findings from conducting this ethnographic study with 12th-grade UB students corroborates with prior research, suggesting that the transitions experienced by older adolescents are at a critical time when these young adults face important life decisions. In turn, these life decisions are intertwined with issues around identity development, and students' need for balancing freedom and independence with nurturing guidance (Cleary et al.; Bedolla, 2010). These findings corroborate with previous research regarding transitional challenges, which can aggravate an emotional upheaval without guidance (Bussolari & Goodell, 2009; Cleary et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2013). Additionally, stressors are likely to influence participants' progression and transition to adult life (Benner, 2011, Bussolari & Goodell, 2009; Young, Marshall, Foulkes, Haber, Lee, Penner, & Rostram, 2011; Thompson, Kuruwita, & Foster, 2009). Findings

continue to demonstrate the socio-emotional challenges and needs of students in transition, especially those who are classified as at-risk because they are likely to have fewer supports (McElroy & Armestro, 1998; Muhammad, 2008; Oakes & Rogers, 2006; Rogers, 2012; Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2014). Similar to previous research, 12th graders, alumni, and other tertiary participants noted that these challenges influenced student's development, transitions, college attrition, and academic, career, and personal success (Corey & Corey, 2012; Evans & Kim, 2012; Gladding, 2012; Ivey & Zalaquette, 2011; Landmark, Ju, & Zhang, 2010; Perkins & Graham-Bermann, 2012). Hence, the life trajectories of adolescents were influenced by how well they were equipped with the appropriate skills and knowledge to handle situations. Findings illustrate that participants also believed that they experienced additional stigma because of their at-risk classification. This stigma often dampened their support and opportunities, and generated additional barriers, which created further frustration (Huynh & Fligni, 2012; Ward, 2006). The reported challenges and barriers that were experienced by this population were consistent with previous research regarding the SES, 1st generation, and racial culture of participants (Corey, 2013; Gredler, 2005; Ratts et al., 2016; Sue et al., 1992).

In addition to typical emotional challenges encountered by high school seniors, most of the Primary and Secondary participants in this study were at a high propensity to have experienced some form of trauma, instability (e.g., homelessness), or grief often related to their cultural identifiers (e.g., first-generation, low-income) (McElroy & Armestro, 1998; Muhammad, 2008; Oakes & Rogers, 2006; Rogers, 2012; Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2014). Challenges included the need to care for themselves (i.e., living on their own), early need to step into adult roles, loss of loved ones, and changes in their home situation (e.g., children and family services; change of households, or guardians). In fact, these experiences were so common among

participants in this study that they were rarely thought to be worth mentioning. Although change is inevitable and can be challenging even when it is for the good, the structure and curriculum of this UB Midwest Program did not support the varied emotional encounters of 12th graders.

In corroboration with previous research regarding transitions and the college application process, 12th graders expressed that their transitions as seniors prompted a mixed array of emotions. Many of these feelings were negative and included being overwhelmed, fearing the unknown, questioning their college acceptance, worrying about adequacy of their academic preparation, and uncertainty in their ability to navigate post-secondary educational bureaucracy. However, 12th-grade participants also expressed many positive emotions related to the greater freedom of being on their own, anticipating academic success, the fun associated with being high school seniors, and the joy from receiving college acceptance and scholarship offers. Students expressed desires for positive adult relationships (especially with parents and/or guardians) that included reassurances that they would be okay, as well as consistently support and love.

Mentorship, Adult Support, and Program Support

Interviews, observations, and program documents corroborated that UB supports for 12th graders declined during their senior year, which may be characterized as a culture of disregard. As a result, 12th graders had to adjust to meet developmentally inappropriate expectations, overcome stigmas, and endure a lack of guidance. Participants remained optimistic about UB improvements due to previous exposure and communication about the previous reputation of the program, but their engagement fluctuated.

Prior UB research discussed how mentorship opportunities and support can positively influence student transitions from high school to adulthood (Bowers, Rosch, & Collier, 2016;

Osterling, & Hines, 2006), which was also supported by tertiary alumni participants. However, data from this study indicates UB's culture of disregard, as well as lack of provided opportunities for students to have mentors and/or positive role models during grade 12. A few participants were able to identify role models within the UB program. They served as role models and mentors who challenged and disciplined them in prior years. They did so by being inviting, initiating hard conversations that may not have been initially desired, and by demonstrating how to appropriately deal with conflict and interpersonal relations. However, most of the 12th-grade participants felt that it was difficult to identify current UB role models. Twelfth-grade UB participants also received occasional and informal supports and guidance, including personal, academic, and career counseling. When this happened, their confidence to consider college as a viable option greatly increased, and their motivation and engagement were evident. These occasional and informal interactions increased their likelihood for successful adult transitions.

This finding corroborates that older adolescents from marginalized cultural backgrounds are better able to successfully transition from high school to adulthood when they have adequate supports, buffers, guidance, and developmentally appropriate curricula (Huynh & Fulligni, 2012; Taylor et al., 2013). As students transition into adulthood, inevitable life circumstances activate defense mechanisms and prompts individuals to use learned coping methods (Burnham, 2009; Sandler et al., 1985). The home culture of the 12th-grade UB participants contributed to their strength, grit, and resilience. Nonetheless, it is imperative that adolescents have role models and opportunities to be guided, trained, and informed about how to approach life circumstances in a healthy manner (Bandura's, 1977, 1986; Bowers et al., 2016; Knight, Dansereau, Becan, Rowan, & Flynn, 2015; Osterling & Hines, 2006).

Participants discussed that the ways that people build rapport, as well as the influence it

had on their learning process, motivation, retention, and engagement influenced their decisions, level of participation, 12th-grade progression, and transitions. Supports included the following: (a) establishment of caring relationships, (b) mentorship, (c) organized and timely communication between the program and its constituents, (d) culturally sensitive interactions with compassionate adults, and the (e) the inclusion of culturally relevant pedagogy based on their cultural associations. These findings support previous literature that discussed the need for students to have authoritative interactions with caring adults. Specifically, students need adults who would maintain developmentally appropriate high expectations, as well as provided affirmations, cultural exposure, and constructivist approaches (e.g., hands on experiential activities, internships) to help students critically think and engage through simulation activities, such as role-play (Edgerton et al., 2008; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Gredler, 2005; Kolbe et al., 1993; Portes, 2008; Mayberry et al., 2008). In other words, rapport, constructivist learning approaches, and culturally sensitive learning environments can contribute to students' optimistic attitudes, decisions, successful progression, attendance, and engagement (Zulli & Frierson, 2004). Establishing rapport with students can motivate learning and create a positive culture because it encourages students' development, growth, and learning (Helms, 2003; McCauliffe & Eriksen, 2002; Ravitch & Riggins, 2012).

Findings also corroborate with literature that argued that a lack of adult attention and engagement leads students to seek attention elsewhere or increase their risks of engaging in unhealthy behaviors, as well as in unhealthy relationships (Belfield, 2010; Bogart et al., 2007; Botman & Mensah, 2012; Mayberry et al., 2008). Similar to previous research, these findings illustrate that adolescents need social interactions and desire for adult relationships and encouragement (Coneal, 2002; Hubbard & Mehan, 1999; Taylor et al., 2013). Participants shared

that although they were moving toward independence, they still needed guidance and support. They wanted to establish new socioemotional dependence with loved ones that they felt were appropriate. Support and relationships are highly valued among this population and influenced their emotional stance about transitioning to adulthood and college.

The findings in this study corroborated with prior research that discussed the benefits of students having a safe place to attend and/or engage in structured activities. Access to those activities increased students' likelihood to engage in positive behaviors and meant they were less likely to engage in delinquent behaviors (Murray, 2009; Pitre & Pitre, 2009). Finally, these data suggest that prior to grade 12, the curriculum of the program provided a foundation for students to remain optimistic. However, the program culture during 12th grade led to stagnant productivity. The program lacked a 12th-grade curriculum that focused strategically on students' needs and was adapted to their needs to transition to adult life. This lack of a developmentally or culturally appropriate 12th grade curriculum appeared to contribute to several participants feeling under-supported, under-prepared, and caused the emotional discord discussed above. This was evident in participants' behavior as well as their withdrawal in attention and attendance.

Cultural Acknowledgement and Supports

Findings support that students wanted positive learning environments and cultural climates with authoritative adult interactions. In general, adolescence is an important stage of identity developmental, during which young adults strive for a sense of independence, respect, and a desire to feel free to choose (Eriksen, 1959; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Gullat & Jan, 2003; Murray, 2009). Their need to belong and feel connected was also supported by findings related

to discussions about their fears and their requests to remain connected to their parents and peers, as well as be remembered once they transition from high school.

In addition, their need to belong is also an expression of traditional African-American collectivist viewpoints, as they struggled to synchronize an appropriate balance between their personal desire for independence as adolescents and traditional collectivist views of their African-American culture. In addition, findings supported the performing arts' interest in these African-American students, as they sought to connect, build rapport with, and support students' learning process, growth, and development (Corey, 2013; Gredler, 2005; Gladding, 2012; Sue et al., 1992). African-American cultures generally thrive in a more collaborative group setting, are empowered by strong relationships, appreciate collectivism, have high interest in performing arts, demonstrate a strong work ethic, and value fortitude and perseverance.

Participants discussed the importance of instructors and program staff who took an interest in who they were, their cultures, and how they were motivated. Seeing this interest increased their engagement. This notion is supported by Bandura's (1977, 1986) research about the influence that culturally relevant pedagogy, interactions, and experiential exposure can have on engaging students, increasing program efficacy, and aiding the learning process. Data illustrated how the culture of UB influenced the decisions, behaviors, and attitudes of 12th-grade participants who were not reported to have been involved in self-defeating behaviors. This is consistent with Siapoush et al. (2013) social control theory, which discussed how engagement, relational care, and faith decreased the likelihood of deviant behaviors.

Students were also less likely to become distracted by cultural barriers when their basic life's needs were met, especially money, food, relationships, and transportation. According to Maslow's (1954) motivation and hierarchy of needs, "human beings aspire to meet their basic

needs, and seek to successfully aim to achieve higher needs and thus become self-actualized” (p. 1). Data supported that incentives such as food, relationships, and money were important for 12th-grade UB students as there was a massive improvement in their attendance when they knew food would be provided. In fact, several of them spoke of the importance of WIA funding and the potential complications with attending UB programs if financial support was no longer provided, because of having financial obligations related to their senior year, as well as their intent and pressure to save money for college expenses. Twelfth graders shared that due to seniors’ need to have money and pay for college, removing the financial stipends would influence students to not participate, dissolve UB, and encourage seniors to attend other 12th grade college preparatory programs that offered WIA stipends as an incentive. Landmark et al. (2010), Lewin (1935), Rheinberg (2008), and Schattke et al. (2014) support the notion that tangible and relational incentives can motivate positive behaviors and outcomes, such as engagement and interest.

Research findings corroborate with previous literature pertaining to how interactions with organizational structures (e.g., environment) and persons influence outcomes. Particularly, this study illustrated that primary participants’ interactions with adults, the culture of UB, and frictions from growing disorganization influenced their decisions and behaviors. For instance, UB students reported that these interactions influenced their UB participation, efforts in class, motivation to engage in college going behaviors, and/or served as a deterrent for their interaction with adults whom they perceived as uncaring. While UB provided opportunities that participants may not otherwise be exposed to, this study also shed light on questions regarding growth over time as it relates to retention and improvements, by adequately addressing the needs of 21st century participants (Wolanin, 2003). This is especially the case with 12th-grade older

adolescents who undergo specific stressors related to transition (Cleary et al., 2011; Landmark et al., 2010), and are less inclined to remain engaged in UB throughout their senior year.

Approach Avoidance and Resilience

Understanding participants' emotional turmoil and cultural experiences has important implications for how we understand 12th-graders progression, transitions to adulthood, and decision-making skills. These students were often in a place of emotional and cognitive limbo, and were experiencing conflicting feelings about their impending transition to adulthood while being unsure how to handle this transition. Approach Avoidance Conflict (AAC) (Lewin, 1931) is a way to theorize this experience of conflicting positive or negative emotions. As participants approach their anticipated transition to adult life and all of its expected joys, they also experience increasing anxiety about the associated challenges and dangers. These exchanges may evoke feelings that ultimately affect their motivation to act on their career goals and take healthy risks toward goal attainment, by aligning their behaviors with their values. However, AAC can also lead to resistance that deters efforts to progress based on fears related to undesired outcomes, including fear of failure, additional responsibilities, and potential consequences (Bandura, 1986; Higgins et al., 1994; Schattse et al., 2014). Lewin (1931) also makes clear that these AAC experiences are the result of certain cultural expectations and an individual's interactions within that culture.

It is also important to understand participants' life challenges and emotional turmoil, because these challenges and turmoil yielded young adults who were rather mature in some areas of their lives. These data show the culture of this Midwest UB Program as a whole seeks to promote resiliency and refute a deficit approach. Evidence of this resiliency was evident among

the 12th-grade UB participants who desired increased support, encouragement, and reassurance. When talking to each other (and with the researcher), participants did not habitually agitate fear among their peers, or focus excessively on failure or additional responsibilities, but rather leveled potential vicissitudes with optimistic grace. In these ways, the positive culture of the UB program in grades nine through eleven were perpetuated during 12th grade. However, participants who were not attending as frequently or at all were less likely to experience these positive conversations.

Similar to Regulatory Focus Theory, participants' motivation was high when they focused on promotion, success, and benefits of individuals' interests, goals, and values rather than focusing on a fearful and/or a preventative approach to avoiding failure. Lewin's (1931) AAC evolved from a holistic perspective. Lewin's AAC approach proffers that the environment influences culture (e.g., language, performance, behavior, expression) and that an environmental change may promote or stagnate performance. Therefore, it is imperative to explain a strength-based approach for supporting and maximizing student motivation and engendering positive outcomes through the consideration of culture (e.g., value, relationships) (Forster, Grant, Idson, & Higgins, 2001; Higgins et al., 1994; Katz, Catane, & Yovel, 2016). This approach may encourage a positive mindset enhancing emotions and performance (e.g., socio-emotional, academic, career). Frankl (1996), Katz et al., and Huppert and Baker-Morissette (2003) discussed the importance of incorporating and aligning one's values to motivate performance, which is commonly used with cognitive behavioral approaches. Therefore, a holistic approach incorporating values, positive encouragement, and high expectations extends to one's moral barometer resulting in self-regulation and motivation (Bandura, 1986; Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2013; Higgins et al., 1994; Lambie, Hagedorn, & Ieva, 2010; Lewin, 1935; Zunker, 2010).

Research Contributions

Taken together, the findings and discussion of those findings suggest several ways that this ethnographic study of 12th-grade culture has contributed to our understanding of one Upward Bound program in the Midwest. The most important is a greater theoretical understanding of the socioemotional challenges faced by 12th-grade students, who are facing their transition into adulthood and need to be guided and cared for in developmentally and culturally appropriate ways. The focus of prior research has been on the need and significance of preparing students prior to 12th grade (Belfield, 2010; Radcliffe & Bos, 2011). The findings of this study corroborate that the support that students receive prior to 12th grade is critical to their successful transition; however, this study suggest that what happens (or does not happen) during 12th grade is also critically important.

Very few prior studies have examined the actual supports, needs, and processes that occur with 12th-grade students, even within the high school and college programs that are intended to serve students (Cleary et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2013). This study underscores the value of learning about 12th-grade culture and the strengths of older adolescents (Bedolla, 2010). A lot has been assumed about the culture of 21st-century 12th-grade students, while developmentally inappropriate expectations have often been placed on them, preserving a culture of disregard for cultures in which students interact. More often than not, the negative, deleterious labels and stigma that have been overemphasized and placed on older adolescents, potentially preserve a system where 12th-grade students are ostracized (Huynh & Fuligni, 2012). Thus, such a system carries the danger of decreasing students' potential for supports and culturally responsive interventions. The aforementioned problem has often led to cultural disconnects and the underdevelopment of holistic programs (community, school counseling) that truly know the

culture of these students. Said holistic programs could ultimately lead to efficient services and interventions that are strategically implemented to increase positive outcomes (Munn-Joseph, & Gavin-Evans, 2008; Zunker, 2010).

Counselor educators, Professional School Counselors, UB stakeholders, and other counseling professionals may utilize these findings to increase their understanding about the interplay among cultural dynamics, an individuals' developmental level, and cultural motivators when serving clients with similar backgrounds. Therefore, comprehensive school counseling programs can be improved through 12th-grade curriculum design, reconstruction of appropriate personnel-to-student ratios based on students' needs (e.g., at-risk) and time, the implementation of accountability measures, as well as proactive supports for staff working with high need at-promise youth to maintain a healthy work-life balance, which could negate professional burnout.

Methodological Contributions

Conducting an ethnographic study has provided a deep understanding of the culture of UB and 12th-grade UB students and may serve as a basis for future research and interventions. This ethnography provides insights about the importance of cultural competence and pedagogy as it pertains to external and internal evaluators, program curriculum, programming, mentoring, and interpersonal interactions.

In decades past, there were several UB reports and quantitative studies conducted by internal reviewers that mostly highlighted the strengths of UB. Qualitative studies, such as ethnographies, conducted by external researcher to explore the culture of UB or to examine the culture of 12th-grade students who are at-promise, have been rare. Program reviewers generally reported on the strengths of the program without addressing the areas in need of improvement, in

order to best assist this cultural population. External reviewers generally depended on program employees to help guide their review because they believed their ability to appropriately evaluate the program was limited by their personal cultural competence with UB and its population.

This was implied by a discussion of external auditors who insinuated their discomfort with being multicultural competent. These auditors, therefore, depended on internal reports and endorsed the stance of previous research that assumed that simply hiring personnel that matched the race of students would automatically lead to personnel who were empathetic to the students' needs and would serve as role models. Contrary to these prior studies, findings from 12th-grade UB participants and observed interactions refuted the previous research that assumed that simply sharing the same race increased ones' ability, to care, empathize, mentor, demonstrate professional behaviors, serve as a role-model, maintain high expectations, and be competent with working with this population of students.

Findings for 21st-century UB 12th -grade students opposed this notion; sharing the same race may have served to be initially comforting, especially with alumni, but race was not an automatic factor that equated to a person's ability to serve as a role model for current participants. Findings discussed how some participants felt like some of the current African- American personnel, as well as the non-African-American school personnel were not able to relate or empathize with them. In fact, findings indicated that 12th-grade UB participants were more concerned with simply having supports available and emphasized the importance for these adults to have certain characteristics that included interpersonal skills, as well as knowledge of students' developmental level and multicultural backgrounds.

Findings suggest that without in-depth knowledge of cultural intricacies and their function in actual practice, it is likely for programs to look great on paper, but not necessarily in practice.

Many programs overpromise in theory and under-deliver when observed. Furthermore, emphasis placed on reporting appeared to drive the focus of programs and decrease the emphasis being placed on what worked in the past. For instance, findings show that the undocumented processes reported by alumni have contributed to students' resilience and success, and have served to encourage the optimistic attitudes among primary participants that are not valued and/or notated in required program reports. These previously undocumented processes ranged from the type of personnel who were hired, informal and individual adult relationships, psychoeducational conversations, and supports beyond academic career curricula, and personalized mentoring beyond the employees and students time in UB.

Although the researcher grants that quantitative research can provide supplemental information for presenting data on programs, quantitative methods are not an effective method for evaluating UB programs without also including qualitative modalities that provide a wealth of information to support increased impact. UB complies with reporting measures of tracking and reporting all UB students. Therefore, UB reports are said to include in-active UB participants in the reporting process, which may alter the data and not present a clear picture in reference to the students who are actually being served. This reporting process has also contributed to disadvantageous reputation of the programs.

Furthermore, quantitative reporting requirements may have not only contributed to assumptions regarding UB's effectiveness, but they may have also affected how this UB program operates in terms of classifying UB participants. However, UB's current system was assumed to have served all students who entered UB, even though they may not be active. In-active UB students are perceived as active UB students, which may lead school personnel and others to believe they are being served by the program and represent the outcome of the program. This

often influenced the perceptions of school personnel, the reputation of the program, and may have affected the degree to which others served or referred in-active UB participants to potential services and programs.

Moreover, the current method of quantitative reporting includes active and in-active UB participants. These reports claim that the program has successfully assisted 94% of UB students' transition into colleges and universities (Helms, 2003). However, findings illustrate that this percentage may be questionable, because some students may have been delayed or detoured based on their inactivity or lack of supports during grade 12.

Limitations of the Study

The researcher provided thick descriptions to explain the culture of the UB program and the culture of UB participants, which included how these UB cultures and the other cultures of which UB participants were members interacted to influence 12th-grade UB participants program attrition, decisions, progression, and adult transitions. In an effort to address limitations associated with qualitative research, the sampling method, and research instrumentation, the researcher included practices known to strengthen the study through several methods to ensure trustworthiness and transferability of the study.

Qualitative research focuses on generalizing to theory especially within the realm of ethnography. The use of purposive sampling is inherent in ethnography, where the researcher focuses on the culture of a specific group. Studying the culture of a single population or program through a theoretical lens serves as a strength of ethnographic research. However, an extension of this research can be done by replicating this study with other programs, which can lead to the ability to generalize to other populations.

Implications for UB

Studying the culture of UB enabled the researcher and UB stakeholders to increase their knowledge regarding the programs culture and the culture of 12th grade UB participants. It also provided an in depth understanding of the interactive processes and dynamics that were contributing to the culture, decisions, and transitions of the 12th graders in a Midwest UB Program. These findings can help improve stakeholders' understanding of the interactive cultures that contribute to the culture of 12th-grade UB participants, their decisions, progression, and transition. Thus, these findings aid in a greater understanding of areas that need to be strengthened and valued in order to cultivate learning and successful transitions. There were two primary themes that developed from the expectations of 12th-grade participants that they would receive the structured supports and opportunities that were provided in years prior to their 12th-grade experience. The two overarching themes consisted of culturally relevant curriculum and human relations that affected their mentorship opportunities. The researcher recommends UB provide curriculum (e.g., college tours, seminars, structured workshops) that is developmentally and culturally sensitive to the needs of 12th grade participants, as well as improve human relations, hiring, and retention of mature staff, who possess the necessary interpersonal skills for serving and connecting with UB adolescents.

For the purposes of this study, curriculum encompassed the content delivered, the method of delivery, available activities, resources, and the need for a balanced level of supervision and support. The aforementioned recommendations emerged from findings that illustrated how negative interactions with employees influenced 12th-graders attitudes and decisions to attend UB, trust or interact with adult staff, and therefore not view staff as role models or mentors. Additionally, findings illustrated there was a decline in the 12th-grade curriculum (e.g.,

seminars, tutoring, fieldtrips) and a structured services that met their needs. Limited opportunities for a guided and culturally relevant 12th-grade curriculum conducive to students' needs influenced their desire and behavior to disengage, as well as their attitudes about the benefits of participating in UB. The lack of 12th-grade opportunities also influenced participants' attitudes, beliefs, and decisions about their perceived support and preparation for adulthood (e.g., college), which in turn influenced their 12th-grade disengagement (e.g., attendance, early graduation), anticipated college choice (e.g., local community college), as well as decreased the amount of time and efforts spent engaging in college-going behaviors (e.g., conversations).

Recommendations are supported by prior literature that discussed the importance of cultivating the holistic development of 12th grade at-promise adolescents as they transition to adulthood. It is said that these transitions can be supported through cultures that support developmentally and culturally relevant programming curriculum (e.g., available workshops, delivery method, resources, fieldtrips, career opportunities), as well as throughout adult interactions and mentorship (Edgerton et al., 2008; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; O'Brien et al., 2000). While UB can engage in recruitment practices, UB policy makers can assist with this process by considering funding that supports the hiring and retention of quality staff who can serve as mentors and implement developmentally relevant curriculum.

Human Relations Engenders Opportunities for Mentorship

It is imperative that UB personnel receive professional training, ongoing professional development, and work to collaborate and create partnerships with other stakeholders serving students. Additionally, it is important to support the well-being of UB personnel by providing professional development, a structured environment, and manageable role responsibilities, which

may promote positive employee behaviors, interpersonal interactions, and retention, while simultaneously discouraging burnout and the associated risks of stress. Essentially, supporting the health of UB employees may result in increased employee effectiveness, and personnel who model professional behaviors that contribute to a positive cultural environment conducive for student learning and, ultimately, increased work performance. The recruitment of personnel may also include releasing job announcements through school districts and community listserv. This could potentially serve to recruit UB staff with previous experience and knowledge of the public school curriculum while working to cultivate a better understanding of the students' culture. That can, in turn, help bridge relationships between UB students and school personnel, as well as increase school-community communication and partnerships. Tertiary participants supported this notion as they shared sentiments about how they valued and benefited from ongoing relationships and mentorship with mature adults who served in dual roles as UB and school personnel.

Partnering for Culturally Responsive Curriculum and Mentorship Opportunities

The recommendation to meet the curriculum programming for 12th grade UB participants may be addressed through partnerships with the host-university, schools, and business to promote their investment in UB through services (e.g., career internship opportunities, mentorship, tuition discounts). Partnerships may be accomplished by strengthening communication between parents, schools, and the community. These partnerships may include school faculty presentations, attending similar professional workshops, inviting school personnel to shadow the program, and scheduled debriefing and/or update sessions regarding student and program progress. The benefits of including family with this population

are supported by the Landmark et al.'s (2010) and Vega, Moore, and Miranda's (2015) studies. It may also be beneficial for UB to include personnel who are professional school counselors, as well as to design a UB position that promotes transitions and monitoring for freshman college students. This would entail duties such as designing prior networks, mentors, contingency (how to) plans that address potential challenges (e.g., socioemotional, organizational), and a resource list that may be helpful to their freshman experience. It may also be helpful to create a mentor protégé program that includes the universities' TRIO programs and graduate recipients, such as McNair Scholars and a Junior-Senior two-week summer exchange program. The Junior-Senior two-week summer exchange program would consist of students participating in a UB summer program at the locations where they want to attend college following a one to two-year virtual mentor-buddy program where they communicate with a designate person from that university on a monthly basis. Even more important is designing a culturally appropriate curriculum for 12th grade UB participants that removes barriers, and challenges to participation, such as meeting their basic nutritional needs as they typically do not reach home until after seven in the evening.

Findings illustrated that 12th grade students believed they had more opportunities for mentorship, structured supports, and appropriate curriculum and services (e.g., fieldtrips, ACT Preparation, Tutoring) that were engaging and relevant in years prior to grade 12. Thus, they were more likely to attend UB, school, and engage in college going behaviors. Therefore, it is also important to consider restructuring UB's four-year curriculum by using a scaffolding program to include exposure to different colleges, activities, and careers that provides developmentally appropriate freedoms and/or responsibilities each year the cohort progresses. This would also include the utilization of paperwork required by UB or tracked by UB personnel, which could assist in partnering with mental health services, advocating for students'

academic needs (e.g., special education testing or resources), as well as advocating, partnering, or providing efficient career counseling and internships based on students' areas of interest.

Adults, programs, and counselor educators can provide creative interventions and unorthodox groups to promote the utilization of services amongst underutilized populations by offering non-traditional group counseling.

Furthermore, in addition to partnering for 12th graders healthy progression, with the expansion of UB personnel to assist with transitions and tracking beyond the 12th grade program, it may be helpful for UB to collaborate with university housing, the housing authorities, businesses, and university donors. Such collaborations may establish partnerships that provide affordable housing, income-based housing, or a continuation program for TRIO students. This would include TRIO Freshman Approved Group Housing that's income-based for low SES students, which requires an approved residence to engage in certain activities, such as group counseling, a campus based registered student organizations (RSO's) of choice, paid internships (e.g., work study) related to their careers, and financial management seminars.

Emerging Developmentally and Culturally Relevant Curriculum Program

Findings illustrate 12th graders have a desire and need for socio-emotional supports, coping, and career guidance. These were noted to have influenced their attitudes, decisions, and behaviors about transitioning to 4-year universities, confidence about successfully transitioning into adulthood, and time spent engaging in college going behaviors (e.g., efforts to maintain grades, engage in class). Incorporating socio-emotional curriculum to connect with the needs of 12th graders, as well as integrating additional career structures, have been beneficial to cultivating the academic and career transitions of students. Exposing students to diverse careers

(e.g., STEM, performing arts, social sciences, education) and connecting with their interests may improve engagement and motivation. Older adolescents in transition have a high propensity to have encountered grief or crisis of some kind. It may be beneficial for UB to hire counselors, collaborate with mental health services to promote special programs, and provide psychoeducational workshops for parents and students. Diverse topics would include grief, coping, anticipated challenges with transitions and change, and diverse careers (Bounds, 2014; Corey & Corey, 2012; Evans & Kim, 2012; Gladding, 2012). Participants shared their interest in exploring diverse careers, receiving guidance, handling financial concerns, as well as the importance and learning benefits of hands-on experiences (Kimbrell, 2013; Rodriguez et al., 2014). While the U.S. continues to lag behind in science and math, and also have fewer degrees in math and engineering, the ASCA national model speaks of the importance, benefits, and influence that professional school counselors may have with students exploring and being introduced to diverse scientist and STEM related fields (ASCA, 2012). Therefore, integrating a modified version of UB's math and science program curriculum into this Midwest Program's culture may provide for a structured approach to support the career exposure and trajectory for students to see themselves in STEM-related fields (Bounds; Kimbrell).

Implications for Counselor Educators and Counselors in Practice

Counselors have ethical duties and legal responsibilities to adhere to including ASCA (2005) standards, NCLB mandates, and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which charges them advocate to decrease achievement gaps, while enhancing the educational aspirations of low income, marginalized, and first generational students (U.S. Department of Education, 2015; Crosnoe, 2009). The expectation is for school counselors to be trained to help schools meet

mandates to perform their leadership responsibilities and collaborative duties through the acknowledgment, partnership interventions, and balanced frameworks that produce positive outcomes with at-risk populations (Gonzalez, 2003). Therefore, counselor educators' ability to exhibit educational advocacy and consultation designed to enhance the understanding of marginalized groups and cultures through relevant teaching, learning, and behavioral practices are vital (Butler, 1999). It is important to understand students' culture, in order to be proactive when working with students or training future counselors. It is important for multicultural competent counseling to exist, and this is evidenced in well-balanced school counseling programs and programs serving at-risk students. The emotional needs of students are considered priority, especially when working with 12th grade UB students who have a high propensity to face several challenges along their pursuit to success (Bennel, 2012; Coneal, 2002).

This ethnographic study regarding the culture of 12th grade UB students deemed at-risk and how their culture influences their progress and transitional decisions may help counseling professionals expound upon multicultural competencies and broaden the view of how diverse persons are viewed within the scope of their interactive cultures. Therefore, leading stakeholders to better make informed decisions that influence ethically sound counseling practices, culturally competent behaviors, effective interventions, comprehensive counseling programs, and beneficial partnerships. It is essential for counselor educators to engage in research that enhances the cultural competence of counselors, as that may encourage the counseling supervisory relationship, student and teacher relationship, as well as the therapeutic relationship with clients through the removal of barriers that deter clients from seeking help or continuing counseling (Helms, 2003; Hoffman & Cleare-Hoffman, 2011; Powell & Newgent, 2011). Through data-driven multicultural teaching practices, supervision, and counseling, counseling professionals

can inadvertently increase the utilization of counseling services used by marginalized or non-dominant groups, as well as promote diversity, maximize recruitment, and retain diverse individuals within the counseling profession (ASCA, 2012; Ratts et al., 2016).

Improving Twelfth Grade Culturally Relevant Curriculum and Human Relations

This research study may serve the design of culturally relevant program models, curriculum, and evaluation tools. These models, curricula, and tools may increase the productivity of seniors in transition, program retention, government savings, inform hiring processes, and, ultimately participants' contributions to society.

Importance of Multicultural Competent Counselor Educators and Counselors

Multicultural considerations are important, because the U.S. includes diverse cultures with a prediction that minority populations, such as African-Americans will become the majority (Holcomb-McCoy & Chen, 2007; Sue, 1990; Wasow, 2005). The population studied consisted of 12th-grade African-American students who were first-generation college and/or low-income. Counselors must understand students' cultures, so that they can guide and support a balanced program for at-risk students in transition, including their emotional needs (Hoffman & Cleare-Hoffman, 2011; Portes, 2008; Swank, Lambie, & Witta, 2012).

Multicultural competence may help decrease barriers in the working relationship and client participation. This multicultural competence should include recognizing and understanding micro-aggressions, bias, myths, and potential detriments from overpathologizing marginalized groups based on their cultural expressions and differences from the mainstream culture (Hoffman & Clear-Hoffman, 2011; Ratts et al., 2016; Sue, Arrendendo, & McDavis, 1992; Swank, Lambie, & Witta, 2012). Enhanced multicultural competence should also lead

professionals to intentionally search for strengths in those they serve, which leads to rapport, positive attributes, nonjudgmental attitudes, unconditional positive regard, and validation. In alignment with social cognitive theory, it is more important to focus on the positive components leading to psychological functions and productive behaviors in order to utilize the information for effective interventions (Bandura, 1977; Maddux, Brawley, & Boykin, 1995).

Moreover, cultural competence is necessary in order to develop the rapport needed to facilitate the counseling process. It is also necessary to adequately diagnose, empathize with and conceptualize the client, and design effective treatment plans (Arrendendo et al., 1996; Arrendendo et al., 2005; Hoffman & Clear-Hoffman, 2011; Powell & Newgent, 2011; Sue et al., 1992; Swank, Lambie, & Witta, 2012; Trepal, 2014). Neurobiological research, suggests a combination of CBT, narrative, motivational interviewing, and solution-focused approaches, as they may be beneficial to reinforcing positive brain connections, through positive thoughts, stories, stress management techniques, and coping strategies (Ivey & Zalaquett, 2011). This is particularly the case as it pertains to the influence that an individual's thought processes has on his or her decisions, behavior, and educational and career outcomes.

Training and Strengthening Multicultural Competencies. It is important to provide professional developments that offer continuing education units (CEU) to establish a counseling program curriculum that addresses the needs of 12th-grade students in transition. The curriculum should include a focus on the socioemotional challenges evident in at-risk teens.

Psychoeducation, guidance lessons, and group counseling could include a plethora of topics experienced and/or challenges that students struggle with because they were not addressed prior to 12th grade year. Psychoeducational topics and counseling sessions may include defense mechanisms, coping strategies, grief and loss, stigma-related test anxiety and challenges, career

counseling beyond career exposure, experiential economic training, and proactive transitional family counseling (Bounds, 2014; Kimbrell, 2013). Topics may also address challenges with university transitions and strategies to reduce these challenges: mentors, available resources, and/or registered student organizations.

Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher found that prior research focused on program evaluation and relied on perceptions about the program; as such, there is information supporting the impact that the UB program had on students' growth and development. The study found that several primary and secondary participants felt discombobulated regarding the minimal amount of preparation, guidance, and balanced support they received as it pertained to their expectation and experience as 12th-grade UB students in transition. The researcher recommends additional research to address these issues.

To this end, it is recommended that future research utilize a mixed-method approach including growth models, pre-and post-tests, and demographic surveys (e.g., cultural background, educational background, needs assessments, family history). Surveys may include entry, mid-point, and exit surveys to help follow-up with alumni, which include their permission to track them using government data including FASFA and the IRS.

In addition to a mixed methods approach, future research should include multiple UB sites representing each region. Such data would strengthen research generalizability. Such data would also allow for comparative studies of the effect of organizational structures on program culture. Finally, such data would provide information about regional differences on program cultural differences and effective interventions. Future research should include a team of

researchers, a coding team, and an external reviewer in effort to decrease researcher bias. Additionally, future research could also study the design and implementation of culturally appropriate curriculum, research instruments, assessments, and research-based interventions (Zulli & Frierrson, 2004).

It is especially important to study the effectiveness of psychoeducational interventions. Professionally trained counselors should conduct intervention groups that include psychoeducational and interpersonal counseling sessions with students. Researchers could then study the effects and effectiveness of these interventions. Finally, researchers should examine the transitional needs of students, the effectiveness of transition plans, and how student preparations affect their transition outcomes (Landmark et al., 2010).

Research may include the following: (a) training and interventions to navigate stigma and microaggressions, (b) academic, social, and career preparation for students in transition, (c) strategies to support program-school-family partnerships, as well as (d) curriculum and training for UB staff and school counselors (Vega, Moore, & Miranda, 2015).

Conclusion

This Midwest UB Program has been in existence since 1965 and has experienced various changes, including past directors who were highly esteemed according to the responses of participants from all categories. This program has served as a safe haven and outlet for several generations of students to feel like they have a structured place and goal-oriented program to attend, which provides a balance between home, work, and/or school. Many participants spoke to their appreciation for having the opportunity to socialize and network outside their school silos with peers across districts, and this notion was supported by observations, interviews, and focus

groups.

Findings contribute to the literature by providing insights regarding the interactive cultures of 12th-grade UB participants and the role that UB's culture has on influencing the decisions, progressions, and adult transitions of 12th-grade students. The researcher emphasized the interactive components and their relationship to interpretations, attitudes, behaviors, program services, and curriculum that ultimately affected the services rendered to students, and thus influenced their 12th-grade processes. The core of UB's 12th-grade culture interacted to influence 12th graders progression and decisions affecting their adult transitions. Findings are relevant for counselor educators, counselors, and UB stakeholders alike, especially identifying the needs of 12th-grade UB participants and the effectiveness of the programs. The study suggests several important implications for high school counseling programs, UB programs, and colleges who hope to assist with the retention, growth, and healthy development of students.

APPENDIX A: OPERATIONAL TERMS

Culture – “Consists of what people do (behaviors), what they say (language), the potential tension between what they do and ought to do, and what they make and use, such as artifacts” (Creswell, 2007, p. 71). It is “a flexible, ongoing process of transmitting and using knowledge that depends on dynamics both within communities and at the interface between ethno cultural communities and institutions of the larger society” (Kirmayer, 2012, p. 155).

Engestrom’s Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) – CHAT originated from the psychology movement and examines the interactivity of embedded systems, consisting of an object and actor, which initiate and mediate purposeful action (Engestrom, 1987).

Ethnography - “describes and interprets the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group” (Creswell, 2007, p. 90).

Multicultural Counseling Competencies – the attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and skills of counselors to work with diverse cultural groups (e.g., SES, Gender) (Arrendendo et al., 1996; Arrendendo et al., 2005; Constantine, 2001; Ratts et al., 2016; Sue et al., 1992).

Pluralism – “Two way learning and adaptation process in which both the organization and entering members from various cultural backgrounds change to some degree to reflect the cultural norms and values of the other(s). Pluralism emphasizes interdependence and natural appreciation among cultures and the importance of preservation of micro culture group identity” (Cox, 1993, p. 167).

Self-regulation - The interaction of one’s goals, standards, self-evaluation, self-efficacy beliefs Bandura, 1977; Barone et al., 1997).

Senior or 12th Grade Student - 4th year in high school and/or scheduled to graduate with current 2015 seniors due to documented eligibility according to school and program records (one student is graduating after completing 3 years, one student has attended 4 years but is not

expected to graduate due to insufficient credits).

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT CHART

	UB classification	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Previous Year UB Roster (2015 Graduating Class)	32 (3 relocated; 2 Junior Grads)	X	X	X
Current UB Senior Roster	27	16	11	X
Research Participants		14	7	49
Note; X = Data not applicable				

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How many years have you been associated with the program and in what capacities?
2. Describe your experiences with the UB program and UB participants?
3. What's the purpose of the UB program?
4. What influenced your decision to participate in UB?
5. What commonalities (values/practices) have you noticed over the years?
6. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program?
7. Can you describe how UB interacts with parents, the community, and students?
8. What support systems are in place to help seniors complete the year they transition into adulthood?
9. What are your goals and plans after high school?
10. What does it mean to be a 12th grade UB student?
11. What types of extra-curricular activities or programs do you engage in as a 12th grader?
12. What are the expectations of 12th grade UB students (what can one expect to see, hear, and observe)?
13. What topics do you discuss with your peers, parents, program staff, mentors, and others?
14. What are the challenges of 12th grade UB students?
15. What issues or concerns do 12th grade UB students raise as they go through the program?
16. What are the fears and concerns of 12th grade UB students?
17. How do 12th grade students interact with their peers, parents, and staff?
18. What encourages students to participate in UB during their 12th grade year?
19. What deters students from participating in UB during their 12th grade year?
20. What are the expectations of 12th grade UB students (attitudes, behaviors, conversations, stressors, coping)?
21. Does UB address the needs of 12th grade students?
22. How can UB help seniors as they matriculate through senior year and transition into adulthood?
23. Who and what experiences have contributed to where you are today?
24. What programs are in place through UB or the school to address the socio-emotional needs of 12th grade UB students?

25. What school supports, resources, and structures are in place for 12th grade high school students?
26. What are the commonalities and differences between 12th grade UB students, and other 12th grade students?

APPENDIX D: TERTIARY PARTICIPANT GROUPS

- Group 1: Parents and/or guardians of 12th grade UB students (1 Secondary parent attended)
- Group 2: Parents of UB Alumni
- Group 3: UB Alumni
- Group 4: District Personnel (Group A)
- Group 5: District Personnel (Group B)
- Group 6: UB past and present Employees and Community Leaders (Group A)
- Group 7: UB past and present Employees and Community Leaders (Group B)

APPENDIX E: DIRECT DATA COLLECTION MATRIX

	Focus Group	Observations	Individual Interviews
Primary	5 focus groups & 1 membercheck		Continuous interviews with 3 Key informants
Secondary	0		6
Tertiary	7	0	11
a) Parents of 12 th grade UB students	1		
b) Parents of UB Alumni	1		
c) Alumni	1		
d) Past/present UB employees & Community leaders	2		
e) Past/present school personnel	2		
Primary & Secondary		38	
WIA (2)		1 WIA sponsored Seminar	
		1 WIA parent-student Meeting	
UB (13)		3 UB sponsored seminars (1 seminar included 1 TRIO partnership; all 3 facilitated by outsource organization)	

	Focus Group	Observations	Individual Interviews
		1 UB parent-student brunch meeting	
		2 Study Centers	
		1 Individual tutor session	
		6 UB school Lunch Visits	
Schools (16)		2 School events	
		13 Classrooms	
		1 Athletic Practice	
Non-UB College Preparatory Community Programs (3)		2 In-State College Tours with partnering programs	
		1 Volunteer Training	
		1 Seminar with in-state University admissions representative	
Community Events (4)		1 MLK Scholarship Ceremony	
		2 University sponsored Music event	
		Cotillion	

APPENDIX F: COLLECTED DOCUMENTS

Community	Program	Schools	Students
University TRIO Brochure	UB Calendar	Standard based grading guidelines	School Transcripts
		Notice of completing graduation requirements early	ACT scores
Universities Mom's Day Music Program	UB fliers of events	Bell schedule; curriculum handbook	School list indicating where students requested transcripts to be sent
Universities Music Symposium Program	Staff Meeting Agenda with 2013- 2014 UB & UB Math-Science Programs Individual Prior Experience Pointes Report	Handbook and calendar; guidebook for talking to teens about drinking	February and/or March Progress Report; April Progress Reports
Spring Parent Meeting Power Point	Minority Student Affairs Flier	Community Fliers: West Point Military Academy; Community college placement test preparation workshop	School Discipline Report
2014 Summer Schedule & overview	Tutor Training Agenda	Flier to sign up for senior text message reminders	School February and April attendance reports
	UB Fact sheet and application	Transcript release form; counselor recommendation letter request supplement,	School class schedule
	UB Prescreening evaluation form; intake interview checklist; student intake questions;	Community Fliers: County Amateur art show; Universities Latino youth	UB Documents: Application, entrance materials and/or interview materials;

Community	Program	Schools	Students
	sentence completion;		UB attendance; WIA Assessments;
	Student Interview & Needs Assessment	Conference; Farmworkers employee opportunities; court diversion services; college zone; ACT prep class	WIA attendance; 2014 Summer Schedule
	UB Student Handbook	Fliers: AVID; ACT dates; ACT fact sheet; Tutor schedule & services; summer course;	
	Orientation packet (commitment contracts)	District brochure; district scholars flier	
	Summer form packet (medical, emergency, needs assessment)	Dual credit program application; school profile	
		Community fliers: runaway & homeless youth; Jostens senior checklist; preparing for success; community college office of disability	

**APPENDIX G: TWELFTH GRADE PARTICIPANTS DEMOGRAPHIC
INFORMATION**

- Low Income
- First generation college (parent's don't have a bachelor's degree)
- African-American (all primary and secondary participants)
- Current or prior employment
- 20/21 Scheduled to graduate (1 retained)
- Several early Grads
 - 6/21 Scheduled to graduate earlier than graduating class
 - 1/6 graduating junior year
- 2/6 transferred from public high schools to non-behavioral alternative schools
 - Anticipated transition: Local community college (3 plan to attend 4 year universities; 2 public in state and 1 public out of state HBCU)
 - Additional extra-curricular activities (sports, community programs, college preparation programs)
 - Didn't report and appeared to refrain from delinquent behaviors (e.g., drugs, alcohol, crime, gangs)
 - Family Structure: Single parent homes, mixed families (step parents, siblings), grandparents, aunts, or DCFS affiliation
 - Transitions or changes in family household structure, such as
 - Moved to live with different parent/guardian
 - Parent/guardian marrying (adjustments with step-guardian)
 - Parent divorced or separated from long-term boyfriend
 - (2 secondary participants live on their own)

- DCFS involvement/separation from parent
- Mixed families and those in single parent homes
 - typically described minimum interactions with the non-primary custodial parent
- Myriad of household changes at different points in time; raised (in house) with cousins, family friends, foster, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, mom and/or dad
- Location, housing, or school relocation beyond school promotions
- Challenges (e.g., Death of close family member living in the home, parent surgery, independently living without guardian, immediate family member with mental health concerns)
 - Siblings, parents, and/or family members that participated in UB

APPENDIX H: UPWARD BOUND PROGRAM STUDENT REPORT

2013 – 2014 UB performance Points for serving 102/102 anticipated	90% Required to meet U.S. Department of Education Objectives
99% secondary school retention and graduation rate	85%
100% senior graduation rate	85%
29% (6/21) seniors served met state proficiency for reading and math	38%
86% enrolled in postsecondary	86%
50% completed postsecondary	50%
Academic Performance: 74% (58/78) of students funded and reported to have been served had a GPA of 2.5 or higher	70%
50% (5/10) 2008 cohort who earned an associate or bachelor degree within six years	50%
21/21 seniors were said to have a rigorous program of study	X
Note; x = data not available	
50% (5/10) 2008 cohort who earned an associate or bachelor degree within six years	50%
21/21 seniors were said to have a rigorous program of study	X
Note; x = data not available	

**APPENDIX I: TWELFTH GRADE PROGRESSIONS AND ANTICIPATED
TRANSITION.**

Primary and Secondary Work Experience and Transition Plans

- Employed outside WIA: 15 Primary and Secondary participants have been employed WIA Program: 9 Primary and Secondary Research Participants
- Early Grads: 6 (2 Primary and 4 Secondary)
- Early Grads planning to attend college: (4 plan to attend 2year college; 1 plan to attend 4-year university)
- Unknown – 3
- Military – 1
- Local 2 year – 6 primary; 5 Secondary
- 4 year – 5 primary; 1 Secondary Local 4-year University – 0
- *Students plan to work while in college
- *Several have shortened senior schedules (no classes after lunch)/only 2 classes perceived as relevant or needed for graduation

APPENDIX J: EMPLOYEE REPORTED BRIDGE SUMMER SCHEDULE.

- 8am Math UB Alternate Days
- 8-10 Periodic college survival class with assistant director
- 11 am Composition (previously took course at community college until 2009)
- Students: Community Employment or UB Internship (Teaching Assistant; TRIO Administrative Assistant)
- UB Career Internships
 - Summer 2014 Met once a week in (college of applied sciences; started this past summer 2014) Monday and Wednesday 3 - 4:30; All participated excluding 2 that shared work took priority
- OMSA and Career center Activities
 - Bi-weekly OMSA Lecture dialogue (equivalent of college 101)
 - Career Development: Worked on Career portfolio at Career Center (once a week)

Source of Information: Assistant Director, Online Matrix, UB Alumni, Primary Participants, and other personnel

APPENDIX K: SAMPLE MIDWEST SUMMER SCHEDULE

TRIO Upward Bound College Preparation Academy 6 Week Daily Summer Schedule				
TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
6:00am-7:00am	Wake Up & Dress	Wake Up & Dress	Wake Up & Dress	Wake Up & Dress
7:00am-7:30am	BREAKFAST	BREAKFAST	BREAKFAST	BREAKFAST
8:00am-9:10am	Geo, Algebra I/II w/Trig or Pre-Calc	Geo., Alg I/II w Trig or Pre-Calc	Geo., Alg I/II w Trig or Pre-Calc	Geo., Alg I/II w Trig or Pre-Calc
9:15am-10:25am	Grammar & Composition	Grammar & Composition	Grammar & Composition	Grammar & Composition
10:30am-11:40am	Molecular and Microbiology or Physics	Molecular and Microbiology or Physics	Molecular and Microbiology or Physics	Molecular and Microbiology or Physics
11:55am-12:40pm	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH
1:00pm-1:50pm	Reading Comp. & Literature or Spanish I/II	Reading Comp. & Literature or Spanish I/II	Reading Comp. & Literature or Spanish I/II	Reading Comp. & Literature or Spanish I/II
1:55pm-2:45pm	Reading Comp. & Literature or Advanced Spanish	Reading Comp. & Literature or Advanced Spanish	Reading Comp. & Literature or Advanced Spanish	Reading Comp. & Literature or Advanced Spanish
3:10pm-4:30pm	*Agriculture, Education, or Engineering Internship OR Test Taking Strategies or Speech Communication	*Agriculture, Education, or Engineering Internship OR Test Taking Strategies or Speech Communication	*Medicine, AHS, or Architecture Internship OR Test Taking Strategies or Speech Communication	*Medicine, AHS, or Architecture Internship OR Test Taking Strategies or Speech Communication

TRIO Upward Bound College Preparation Academy 6 Week Daily Summer Schedule				
4:50pm-5:15pm	Preparation for Health & Fitness Activities	Preparation for Health & Fitness Activities	Preparation for Health & Fitness Activities	Preparation for Health & Fitness Activities
5:15pm-5:50pm	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER
6:15pm-7:25pm	Health & Fitness Activities	Health & Fitness Activities	Health & Fitness Activities	Health & Fitness Activities
7:45pm-10:00pm	Homework & Study Skills	Homework & Study Skills	Homework & Study Skills	Homework & Study Skills
10:00pm-10:30pm	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time
10:30pm-10:50pm	Prepare for Bed	Prepare for Bed	Prepare for Bed	Prepare for Bed
11:00pm	LIGHTS OUT	LIGHTS OUT	LIGHTS OUT	LIGHTS OUT
<p>*INTERNSHIP PROGRAM: Students will be assigned to Internship Activities: Agriculture, Applied Health Sciences (AHS), Architecture, Education, Engineering, or Medicine.</p> <p>Students will be assigned to two groups for Internships: GROUP A – Agriculture/Education and Engineering Cluster, GROUP B – Medicine/AHS and Architecture Cluster Students will rotate between the Internship Program and Computer Science or Speech Communication Classes every day.</p> <p>HEALTH AND FITENSS ACTIVITIES: Students will be assigned to Students will be assigned to groups that will rotate weekly through the following activities: Basketball, Golf, Group Fitness Classes, Tennis, and Volleyball/Outdoor Exercise</p>				

APPENDIX L: ACADEMIC YEAR CALENDAR

Mondays and Wednesdays 4-6:30	Tutoring
Tuesday	Junior ACT Preparation
Biweekly	Biweekly lunch visits to four schools
January	TRIO FASFA Workshop
February – March	5 Junior ACT Preparation Events
	Taking the Tough Classes and Getting Involved (selecting rigorous high school courses)
March	Universities Engineering Event
March	Seniors Only Workshop: Headed to College and Managing College Cost
April	College knowledge Jeopardy

APPENDIX M: UB APPLICATION AND ELIGIBILITYASSESSMENT

Pre-Screening Evaluation for Interview	Primary						Secondary					
	Female			Male			Female			Male		
	Both	SES	1 st Gen	Both	SES	1 st Gen	Both	SES	1 st Gen	Both	SES	1 st Gen
Met minimum acceptable score for post-secondary potential (40/70) {GPA, PSC rec, academic program, Personal statement}	100 % met Mean=53 Range = 43-57 N=9	100% Mean=58 range 58-58 N=2	0	100% Mean 60 range 56-65 N=2	100% Mean=52 range 51-53 N=2	0	100% Mean= 27 range 47-68 N=4		100% Mean=56 range 56 N=1	100% Mean=40 range 40 N=2	0	0
Met acceptable range for academic need (40-70/80) {counselor rec, academic performance, counselor ratio, standardized scores}	100% Mean=59 Range 45-67 N=9	100% Mean=60 Range=60 N=1	0	100% Mean 69.5 range 41-57 N=2	100% Mean range 54-68 N=2	0	100% Mean=35.5 range 43-59 N=4	0	100% Mean=43 range =43 N=1	100% Mean=56 range 56 N=1	0	0

APPENDIX N: IRB LETTER

University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html



Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1 FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Neffisatu Jamila Dambo**

Date: **December 12, 2014**

Dear Researcher:

On 12/12/2014, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Exempt Determination
Project Title:	The Culture of 12th Grade Upward Bound
Investigator:	Neffisatu Jamila Dambo
IRB Number:	SBE-14-10812
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#). On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Muratori".

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 12/12/2014 08:03:56 AM EST IRB Coordinator

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