

BOYS TO MEN: REFLECTIONS ON BUILDING RESILIENCE IN
YOUNG BLACK MALE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Boys to Men: Building Resilience in Young Black Male Students

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The main purpose of this research was to help identify persistence as reported by Black male college students who were the inaugural graduates of the Class of 2011 from a predominantly Black, all-male Charter High School in the Mid-Atlantic region. Examining this population of students was significant because too often Black male educational choices have been examined through the lens of deficit models. This study adds to the growing body of data which has begun to identify positive attributes of Black male role models at the secondary and postsecondary level. Identifying relevant factors which helped Black male students successfully navigate through high school despite these traditional challenges and achieve academically, has the potential to give educators strategies to help increase the likelihood of more Black males attaining higher educational achievement.

One of the ways young Black males countered the toxicity of negative influences and expectations was through persistence. Thus, despite the fact that these young Black males often had to navigate through a history of racial discrimination in this country, challenges in family structure, low income, and in many cases, extremely violent neighborhoods, communities and schools, they had still experienced positive supports and maintained positive attitudes that carried them through to positive academic achievement. Central to this persistence and positive attitude was trust. In order to create more positive educational outcomes, it is critical to examine why some young Black males succeed in the face of adversity while many of their peers do not.

This study was conducted qualitatively through interviewing ten graduates of a predominantly Black, all-male charter high school in the mid-Atlantic region of the country. Interviews focused on subjects background experiences growing up, their high school experiences while at DuBois Charter High School (pseudonym) and their experiences either currently attending or formerly attending college. A group interview with two key administrators, the CEO and the College Counselor at DuBois Charter high school also took place. These interviews provided contextual background information on the participants' high school experience.

The significant actors who helped these young Black males achieve and attain positive academic outcomes are threefold; parent(s), peers who attended their high school, teachers and administrators of their high school. Some of the actions these mentors took to help them achieve college attendance included; teaching them how to seek academic assistance when needed, helping them become self-advocates, showing them how to learn from setbacks and move forward, helping them to present themselves in a manner that was both authentic to their culture, as well as to their academic abilities, teaching them to rise above perceived expectations of what it meant to be Black and male, and guiding them through the navigation process in a new, unfamiliar environment and being successful.

Conclusions drawn from this study included;

1. Trust was essential to overcoming perceived and real structural inequalities. Educational resilience can only be demonstrated when institutions are willing to provide a safe, nurturing environment which allows for failure to contribute to positive growth.
2. Seeking academic and social assistance from peers and adults was constructive in contributing to increased positive academic achievement.

3. Cultural capital and exposure to an expansive array of experiences can help minimize the negative effects of poverty if done purposefully and reflectively.
4. Family, peers, and individual agency were critical in sustaining persistence throughout the identity development which resulted in the demonstration of resilience.
5. Understanding and nurturing the social-emotional, racial and gender identity of young Black men was an essential component to positive academic and social achievement.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all the Black boys who have been told that they would never amount to anything. To those who were told that their lived experiences did not matter and would not get them anywhere but right where they were.

I would also like to acknowledge those who were told that being smart and curious was seen as a negative. This work is also for those who, either in the White House, South Africa, the South Side of Chicago or South Central Los Angeles, survived through the struggle and achieved. Not through acquiring fame or notoriety, but achieved in the face of adversity and became successful – regardless of their position in life.

They succeeded because they dared to do what many believed wasn't possible.

Finally, this study is dedicated to my son, who is growing up in a much different world than those who looked like him in earlier generations. May he never hear the unkind and deficit words Barack, Malcolm, Mandela and so many other Black boys heard too often during their eras.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Young Black males in America have traditionally been viewed as a high risk population. A significant number of Black males dropout of high school, are (or have been) in the penal system, in gangs or have died a violent death much too young (Ferguson, 2001). Thus, a considerable amount of public discourse and literature has focused on Black boys through a lens of pathology or deficits (see: Brown & Donnor, 2011; Ferguson, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Noguera 2008). Correspondingly, much of this historical scholarship concerning Black males in American education has permeated the public domain, research, and, perhaps most importantly, the perceptions of educators. This study sought to add to the burgeoning discourse which has focused on positive Black male academic achievements.

The history of public education in America is one of a constant tension around the definition and purpose of public education. In the mid-1800s, Horace Mann founded the “common schools” to educate the masses. Prior to his approach, schools were primarily for the elite, and education was for the “thinking man” (Spring, 2013). Mann and others believed that educating the masses was the best way to promote America to newly minted immigrants from Europe and indoctrinate them into the civics of the country. In American culture, Black students have historically struggled to become educated. From the founding of slavery and laws banning teaching slaves to read, through the punitive and restrictive doctrine of “separate but equal,” there have been few educational opportunities for Black persons in this country. To counter this experience, the creation of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were created, which helped to raise the educational level of many of the elite Blacks of the 18th and 19th century. For K-12 education, it was not until the compulsory school laws began in the United States in 1852, that many young Black children even began attending school (Eisenberg, 1988).

Based on this history, the education of Black children has consistently been problematic in this country.

Since the landmark civil rights case of *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) which ended the doctrine of “separate but equal,” public schools have been trying to resolve the issue of how to best educate Black students. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 helped codify the *Brown* decision in public schooling, but there were still pockets of resistance to Black students being integrated throughout the country, not just in the south. In the 1970s and early 1980s, bussing for integration became a mechanism for trying to achieve better educational outcomes for Black children (Fluehr-Lobban, 1990). Recently, since the signing of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002, there has been a heated conversation surrounding accountability and preparing all students to be “college ready” (Duncan, 2012).

It is through the lens of this historical knowledge of the American educational landscape that the most common perspective through which to view Black children has been to measure their education through an examination of their deficits. Black children have been perceived as more of a “problem,” as “less than” and have traditionally and unfairly been compared to their White counterparts rather than seen as an independent collection of students with their own unique educational strengths (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

In the past few decades, however, we have seen a significant increase in scholarship surrounding Black males make a transformational shift in thinking from the deficit model to a more positive lens of focusing on the positive attributes of Black males (e.g. Darling-Hammond, Noguera, et al. 2007; Davis & Jordan, 1994; Davis, 2003; Giroux & Schmidt, 2004; Baldrige, Hill & Davis, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2006; and Noguera, 2006; 2008). Increasingly, this

scholarship has begun to transform the discourse and policy proposals surrounding Black males and public education (Dancy, 2013; Davis, 2013; Harper, 2012; Strayhorn, 2013; Warren, 2013).

Darling-Hammond (2007), Ladson-Billings (2006) and Noguera (2008) articulate forcefully how the prevailing notion found in the literature from earlier eras surrounding the study of Black males in education focused on students' deficiencies rather than positive achievements. This notion of deficits has crippled policy makers, educators and in many ways, Black males themselves, into believing their deficits were too great to overcome and that the criticisms surrounding them were accurate. Thus, a self-fulfilling prophecy has reinforced that there seems to be little hope of attaining positive academic achievement for this group.

This study complements the growing literature which is shifting towards a more positive discourse surrounding Black males and positive academic achievement by examining the experience of ten Black male participants and the various academic, social and internal factors that helped contribute to their acceptance and attendance in college. The participants all graduated in 2011 from a predominantly Black, all-Male Charter High School in a large Mid-Atlantic city. For the purpose of this study, the high school will be identified as the pseudonym "DuBois Charter High School¹".

Statement of the Problem

In the current climate of American public education, there has been a significant debate surrounding increased accountability. Urban public schools, districts, administrators, teachers and, most importantly, students have all been under the microscope of intense high-stakes expectations and a desire for higher academic outcomes. What is problematic, is that even though there has been increasing accountability placed on public schools for positive student

outcomes, there has not been a significant rise in the number of Black male high school students graduating high school and attending four year colleges and universities (Mincy, 2006).

Traditional Deficit Model Research on Black Males

There is mixed literature on the progress of Black males in education over time. This often depends on the way that comparisons and analyses are examined. Although there has not been a significant rise in the graduation rates of Black males as compared to their White counterparts, we tend to examine these statistics from a comparison with the wrong group. Instead, the comparison of graduation rates of Black students relative to earlier decades shows a positive increase in educational trajectories within the population themselves (Harper, 2012). There is further confusion in college attendance rates. While the Journal for Blacks in Higher Education reported in 2011 that for those Black males who do graduate high school, even fewer are attending and graduating from college. However, there is recent data showing significant increases in the number of Black's who hold a bachelor's degree from 4% in the 1960 to 21% in 2012 (NCES, 2013). Thus, although the data are often reported in different ways, it is clear that at least some educational progress is happening for Black males, even when the negatives continue to be highlighted. The most often misquoted citation that exemplifies the pervasive deficit thinking concerning Black men, is the fallacy that there are more Black men incarcerated than there are enrolled in college (Toldson, 2009).

Since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, students at low-performing middle and high schools in large urban areas around the country have been under intense scrutiny through accountability measures, punitive disciplinary policies, and high-stakes testing from the federal government, state and school districts (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Ravitch,

2010). There is a continued focus on Black males and their lack of achievement academically, and as such are singled out in disproportionately high numbers as “at risk,” placed into Special Education or counseled towards seeking academic or social remediation (Ferguson, 2001; Harry & Anderson, 1994; Noguera, 2008). In this uncertain period in public education where accountability is increasingly significant, it is important to ask what policy makers and educators can do to help increase positive student outcomes such as high school graduation, college attendance.

In light of statistics from the Department of Education and the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) from the National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES), a significant number of measures quantify the plight of Black males as having been bleak for decades. In many large urban school districts in this country, Black males are graduating from high school at or near 50% (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2012). There are many reasons for this discouraging number, but what can be concluded from this statistic is that if only half of the Black boys in high school are graduating from their high schools within in 4 years, their prospects for future education are greatly reduced, if not impossible (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2012). While acknowledging this statistic, changing the discourse from a negative to a positive, we can conclude approximately half of Black male high school students are graduating. While this number has increased incrementally, the Schott Report notes that the numbers are significantly less than ideal, even though the gap with their White counterparts has closed in the past 10 years (78% vs 52%). What is necessary, is to make certain the discourse focuses on not only the ones who do not graduate, but also the ones who do.

As the Schott Foundation for Public Education Report (2012) concludes, at the current rate of increase, it would take 50 years for the “achievement gap” to close between White and

Black students. For those Black males who are not graduating, it has been noted that too often many of them are placed into remedial, lower level courses, or special education, even though tracking is no longer the norm (Noguera, 2008; Oakes, 1995). They are also more likely to be disciplined, suspended or expelled from school, identified as having a learning disability, and are less likely to be exposed to Advanced Placement or honors courses (Conchas & Noguera, 2004). Finally, for those that do attend college, there is a significant increase in the number of students who need remediation once arriving on college campuses. Statistically, only 9.3% of Black males who enter college every fall are considered academically prepared for college (Harper, 2013).

Positive Paradigm Shift around Black Males

The statistics concerning educational outcomes for Black males has been consistently inconsistent across the country for decades. Since the 1990s, almost two times the number of Black females were receiving bachelor's degrees in comparison to their Black male counterparts (NCES, 2010). In addition, as of 2006, Black females outnumbered Black males on college campus' 64.3% to 35.7%. The plight of Black males graduating high school was so dire that the Black Star Project in 2010 posted on their website that "America has lost a Generation of Black Boys." It is critical to both acknowledge and offer solutions to this "crisis." In the wake of the Trayvon Martin tragedy in 2012, and the ensuing increased focus on highlighting the plight of Black males in this country, identifying even a small number of potentially relevant factors that helped Black male students successfully navigate through high school despite these statistics and achieve academically has the possibility of giving educators and scholars strategies to help

improve the likelihood more Black boys are striving for and attaining higher educational achievement.

Rather than focusing exclusively and persistently on the high school dropout rate, and a multitude of both internal and external stressors, there is a substantial number of Black males who continue to succeed against seemingly insurmountable odds. These young men succeed oftentimes away from the glare of the spotlight and without much fanfare. Trying to balance both noting their achievements, while expecting them to occur is difficult.

There are also many reasons why some of these Black males may be more comfortable being away from the focus of attention. Their positive academic achievements can sometimes provide negative reactions from their peers and in some cases their communities (Almond, 2012). Many of these academically successful Black boys bear the same toxic stressors of their academically unsuccessful young Black male counterparts; low educational outcomes, low expectations of educational achievement within their culture, and poor schooling choices. It is imperative that, even if some prefer to remain in the darkness of anonymity, we not forget their stories when examining the overall educational landscape in this country for the group (see: Dancy 2012; Davis & Jordan 1994; Ferguson 2001; Harper 2012, 2013; Noguera 2008; Strayhorn 2013; Toldson 2011).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand how young Black males perceive their character, education and socio-cultural resilience through the lens of their family background, peer encouragement, academic mentoring and self-identity. Through an examination of these areas, this study seeks to articulate how the participants lived experiences positively contributed

to their social and academic resilience as epitomized by their college attendance. Repeatedly, researchers, policymakers and educators have focused on the negative aspects of Black males (gangs, drugs, poverty, crime, etc.) and viewed this population from a deficit lens, rather than focusing on those students who have put their heads down and silently achieved academically right under our noses in what some researchers have called “war zones” or “dropout factories” (Balfanz & Legters 2004; Levine & Nidiffer, 1996, Harper, 2013).

This study contributes to the changing discourse on Black males and achievement and is significant because there is a growing trend towards a positive paradigm shift in academic research and public perception of Black males. However, much of the literature still does not focus on identifying positive young Black male role models in academic achievement at the secondary level.

Thus far, the terms “Black boys” and “Black males” have been used interchangeably. This study, when talking about the participants in this study, will adopt the protocol of much of the current literature, which uses the term “Black male(s)” when describing the students in both their high school and college setting. While these males have reviewed their experiences in the transition from being boys to men, they were all men at the time of their participation in this project.

Research Questions

This study examined Black males who had been accepted to college and were either currently enrolled or had spent at least one semester in college. Specifically, this study focused on an exploration of factors and attitudes that helped participants attain college attendance. The

research questions examined the influences Black males attributed to their academic motivation and their desire to be academically successful. Specifically this study explored the following:

1. What personal skills or environmental supports did students perceive as most influential in their college attendance?
 - a. How did contextual supports (peers, parents, and community) assist in students' college attendance?
2. What were the specific institutional practices of Du Bois Charter High School that most contributed to students' college attendance?

In light of the historic and continued examination of Black males in education through the lens of pathology and deficits, it is important to add to the burgeoning discourse of highlighting positive Black male academic achievement. This is important not only in the greater structural policy debate, it is also crucial for the Black males themselves. Seeing more positive examples of peers succeeding in the face of similar adverse conditions has the potential to improve and inspire their own academic achievement and persistence. Thus, while it may be difficult to transform structural inequalities, it is quite possible to transform how individuals respond to those external negative stressors.

This study identified five key factors which contributed to the participants' positive academic achievement and college acceptance.

1. Trust was essential to overcoming perceived and real structural inequalities. Educational resilience can only be demonstrated when institutions are willing to provide a safe, nurturing environment which allows for failure to contribute to positive growth.
2. Seeking academic and social assistance from peers and adults was constructive in contributing to increased positive academic achievement.

3. Cultural capital and exposure to an expansive array of experiences can help minimize the negative effects of poverty if done purposefully and reflectively.
4. Family, peers, and individual agency were critical in sustaining persistence throughout the identity development which resulted in the demonstration of resilience.
5. Understanding and nurturing the social-emotional, racial and gender identity of young Black men was an essential component to positive academic and social achievement.

These five findings are important to help to advance the development of a transformation of thinking for policy makers and educators on the “plight” of young Black males. Each of these findings demonstrated that while there was no one singular way to achieve positive academic outcomes and college acceptance, there were some important components which helped to increase the likelihood of more Black males attending college. Perhaps the most essential element was the caring and purposeful intent of the school site. It was knowing when to push towards higher expectations and discipline while at the same time nurturing and addressing the social-emotional realities of what it meant to be a young Black male in a society. Being able to build intelligent, social, high achieving Black males in the toxic environment that plagues many urban areas is difficult, but when all stakeholders work in concert with one another, this study shows, it is possible.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

There are many lenses through which to examine the academic experiences of Black males in public education. While acknowledging the other various lenses and their merit, this research focused on both individual and contextual factors that formed the foundation of educational resilience. For the purpose of this study, educational resilience was defined as the capacity of an individual to achieve college attendance despite adverse risk factors, life challenges and historical barriers. According to the literature, children demonstrate resilience when they experience one or more traumatic events but succeed in spite of the obstacles (Bryan, 2005; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg 1994).

The intent of this study was not to identify a singular characteristic which led to a person's resilience, but rather focus on the multitude of variables which interact to support Black male positive academic outcomes. The variables contributing to each individual's college attendance include trust (as it relates to their self-agency and identity), as well as trust in their environment (family, school, peers and mentors).

Individual Factors Supporting Educational Resilience

Among Black males, self-agency is an especially important concept, as there are several unique external stressors in their lives that Black males must overcome. When faced with consistently negative expectations based on stereotypes, discrimination and racism, an individual has a choice to either develop a sense of powerlessness in the face of these assaults, or reject these beliefs of others and maintain their own sense of self-worth (being resilient).

Self-agency and strong individual identity also allows individuals to contend with what Allen (2013) defines as “racial resiliency.” Racial resiliency is defined as the ability to overcome racial microaggressions and maintain self-identity and worth. Thus, being able to both maintain one’s identity and adapt in an environment that is unfamiliar or unwelcoming (either perceived or actual) is an aspect of self-agency that is a key component to the growth and positive academic achievement of Black males in public education.

Ginsburg (2011) highlights several individual qualities that are often associated with resilience; easy going temperament, strong intellectual capabilities, positive outlook on life and for the future, self-efficacy, self-esteem, sense of mastery, sense that the world is good, social problem-solving skills, sense of mission in life, high level of commitment to school, coping mechanisms, humor, autonomy, and spiritual development. While it is not necessary for every individual to possess all of these characteristics, having more factors appears more likely to lead to better academic and social outcomes. While some have begun to try to quantify individual qualities leading to resilience (see: Duckworth “Grit Scale,” 2009; Tough, 2012), it is difficult to ascertain a specific prescription of how to accumulate these characteristics. However, when examining the influence of individual factors on educational outcomes for Black males through qualitative means, there is the potential to illuminate some similarities among those Black males who have achieved positive educational outcomes and perhaps discuss how to develop these qualities in more Black males.

Contextual Factors Supporting Educational Resilience

Contextual factors supporting resilience include those external supports that do not alter or insist on changing the individual to survive, but instead support the individual's growth, and assist in nurturing them on how to adapt to negative societal pressures. These factors can include parents, teachers, peers, or mentors, who are interested in the positive growth of an individual, and helping that person achieve their goals. Bernard (1995) discussed the concept of autonomy and the development of resilience, which she articulated as "refusing to accept negative messages about oneself." It is imperative that institutions such as schools help to develop this skill.

The supportive external forces which can contribute to positive academic achievement include (but are not limited to); consistent caring relationship with an adult or family member, extended support network, positive family environment, and positive community networks and participation in said community (Cooper, 2011). Keck and Sakdapolrak (2013) discussed several factors that increased resilience including; adaptability in being able to learn from past experiences and make the necessary changes to their public actions, and the ability of institutions to shift to increasing individual agency and malleability. Thus, how Black boys articulate their experiences with family relationships as it relates to their schooling, as well as their experiences with schooling itself is an ideal background to examine their individual agency and its effects on their social and academic achievement as it relates to college attendance. In order for resilience to manifest itself in positive academic achievement and college attendance, students must first feel as if they are valued participants in their academic careers.

For Black males, the educational process is unique, and building trust in self and others, is especially critical to their positive academic achievement.

Unique Challenges to Self-Agency and Academic Identity for Black Males

In overcoming obstacles and adversity, it is important to note that many external stimuli affect self-agency. For example, some would argue that growing up in an impoverished neighborhood is a significant adverse factor, as is overcoming poor educational experiences to achieve college attendance (Spencer, 2006). The most significant aspect of building self-agency among Black male students is the ability to see failure and learn from misfortunes (whether academic or otherwise) in a positive light (Bryan, 2005).

When discussing Black boys and positive educational outcomes, it is important to acknowledge the history of racial discrimination in this country, family structure (or lack of structure), and in many cases, extremely violent neighborhoods, communities and schools. In short, Black boys for decades have had to grow up in an environment and culture which has thrust low expectations on them and contributed to the perceived notion of a lack of motivation, intellect and lower academic performance (Ogbu, 1990). Yet, despite all of these obstacles and stressors, there are students who not only succeed, but thrive academically. It is critical to understand why some Black boys achieve positive academic outcomes despite such circumstances, while many of their peers do not. It is critical to note that no matter how much self-agency or strong identity one possesses, institutional structures must also work to develop policies and practices that promote these qualities as well.

Reivich and Shatte (2003) suggested that the main obstacle to positive academic achievement is not genetics, childhood upbringing, or lack of financial means, but rather is in our cognitive thinking style. In other words, the way one looks at the world and interprets events as children affect one's ability to persist.

The intersection between internal and contextual factors that support resilience lies in students' ability to trust in themselves, and in the process of institutions to solicit their trust.

Relational Trust

Bryk and Schneider (2002) define relational trust as “the social exchanges of schooling as organized around a distinct set of role relationships: teachers with students, teachers with other teachers, teachers with parents and with their school principal.” Most important to relational trust is the amount of exertion teachers and other stakeholders are willing to commit to the efforts of creating a successful school climate and school improvement. It is critical to note how students, administrators, teachers and parents begin to build this type of trust. Trust is a critical variable in establishing effective systems (Longstaff and Yang, 2008).

Schools in impoverished areas serve a “captured market,” meaning parents and students have no choice but to attend the local public school and receive whatever they are given (Noguera, 2008). Historically, parents and Black male students have believed that low academic achievement was the normative expectation (Bryan, 2005). Consequentially, a lack of trust in urban school districts around the country has been built up over time, is pervasive and has become an unfortunate occurrence in the educational narratives of too many Black male students.

Bryk, points to leadership as being an essential element of the five essential supports for creating good schools which he articulates as; (1) leadership driven change, (2) strong parent-

community-school ties, (3) professional capacity, (4) student-centered learning climate, and (5) coherent instructional guidance systems. Without strong principals who understand the historical mistrust of community members towards school leadership, then the cycle of mistrust is likely to continue. Principals need to learn about the community in which the school resides as much as parents need to be willing to give new administrators a chance to earn their trust (see Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Fruchter, 2007; Noguera, 2008).

Contractual Trust

As opposed to relational trust between two individuals, contractual trust is between a person and an institution (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Thus part of educational contractual trust is the unwritten contract between schools and parents. This complex contractual partnership between parents and schools is not necessarily sufficient to ensure student learning. Teachers cannot make a guarantee that each student will improve. There is also no guarantee that a school will assist in getting their students to college. In many academically low-performing underserved areas, the belief that schools will deliver on their promise to provide positive, safe, academic challenging environments, has been eroded through years of public schools failing to achieve these outcomes (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Noguera, 2008). This erosion of trust has led many in urban areas to completely abandon traditional public schools all together for other alternatives – namely charters schools (Ravitch, 2010). For those who do have a modicum of trust in their public schools, it usually found at the grade school level and declines as students reach middle and high school (Noguera, 2008).

It is critical to note that the same prescriptions advanced by Bryk for grade schools have the potential to be replicated at the high school level. There has been an absence of literature

surrounding trust and positive student outcomes at the high school level. It is important that we advance beyond K-8 schooling to what is taking place in regards to increasing positive outcomes at the high school level and like Bryk, articulate the linkages and indicators which highlight where there is a disconnect between the transition from middle to high school, and the transition from high schools to college. Colombatto (2013) notes that the real obstacle is not seeking to identify the “best institutions,” but rather understand why individuals tolerate mediocrity and continue to support institutions (in this case public schools) that continue to deliver their “expected results.”

Institutional Processes to Elicit Trust

In a chapter in *Educating African American Males* (Brown, Dancy & Davis eds., 2013), Brown highlights three books that have contributed significantly to shifting the discourse surrounding Black males in public education from the exclusive perspective of the students’ agency to the importance of other stakeholders and institutions. He notes the books; Freire (1998) *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare Teach*, Brown and Davis (2000) *Black Sons to mothers: Compliments, Critiques and Challenges for Cultural Workers in Education* and Dancy (2012) *The Brother Code: Manhood and Masculinity among African American Men in College* all highlight how educators, schools, and support staff all contribute to “influence the possibilities of the African American students they serve” (Brown, Dancy, & Davis, 2013, p. 166). This work helps to place the onus of increasing positive academic achievement not just on the shoulders of Black males, but the collective “village” which helps to mentor, nurture and educate Black males.

Herbert (1999) studied 18 high achieving, culturally diverse students, and found that central to their positive academic achievement was the presence of a strong sense of self-identity, family support, experiences with extra-curricular activities, a network of positive achieving peers, and strong academic expectations. Central to the manifestation of these outcomes was trust.

In multiple studies, Shaun Harper has demonstrated the explicit need to transform the discourse surrounding Black males from that of a deficit to one looking at stories of positive academic achievement. Critical to the changing of the discourse is a discussion of the institutional barriers which exist which inhibit positive student academic achievement. In addition to institutional barriers, cultural and self-identity barriers are also critical to a greater likelihood of resilience. In a 2010 study, Harper examined the experiences of high achieving college undergraduates and found that in stark opposition to the ‘acting White’ phenomena (students who feel achieving positive academic achievement is racially aligned with being “White”), peer support for these high achievers was significant. Harper also found in this study that the student’s own self-identity and persistence (exhibited through positive self-esteem, high goals orientation, and strong Black identities) helped them achieve academically. Harper’s (2013) most recent work focuses on Black and Latino male high school and college students who graduated from 40 New York City public schools. The study found: demonstrated and consistent high expectations from parents and family; important mentor relationships with teachers and other educators in their school who helped foster a college-going culture; strong desire to rise above poverty; and the ability to not be influenced by negative external factors (i.e. the streets). This work demonstrates the importance of both persistence and strong self-identity among Black students in order to achieve positive academic outcomes. It also highlights the importance of the

strength of the school as well as from peers to help maintain a positive focus and not be swayed by the multitude of external stressors and influences that are present in many urban neighborhoods.

In addition to simply identifying the structural, institutional, identity and cultural problems surrounding Black boys, Howard (2013) focused on how the historical literature from the past decade or so focused on the idea of how to “fix” Black males. His study raised questions on how to “fix” the structures (i.e. schools) that serve the academic needs of Black students. Thus, there is an emerging wave of research that centers on demonstrating that Black boys can positively achieve academically in the classroom, and in college attendance. Collectively, these studies have the potential to have a positive effect on improving the image of Black males, overall (Spencer, 2006; Conchas & Noguera, 2004).

In changing the discourse from the perspective of structural inequities and negative aspects of Black males’ experience to exploring what has led to their positive achievements, several questions remain about what makes them succeed despite the overwhelming statistical odds, how they are able to navigate through the maze of poor performing schools and end up successful, and what types of intestinal fortitude some students possess which allow them to acknowledge cultural expectations, but overcome those expectations nonetheless.

Three of the most important areas that help to shape both self-agency and increase positive academic outcomes for Black boys are the teacher (or mentor), the family, and culture of expectations (Ferguson, 2001; Levine & Nidiffer, 1996; Matsen, 1994; Noguera 2008). Several studies have drawn the conclusion that it only takes one adult in the life of a child to serve as a mentor and as someone who cares for them in order to improve academic outcomes (Spencer 2010, 2003; Wang & Gordon, 1994). Sometimes that adult is a teacher; other times it is a

mentor, family member or peer. What is important, is that successful students have allies who help them navigate through the milieu of obstacles that young Black males face; community issues, violence, poverty, lack of resources, and lack of expectations.

Structurally it is imperative that schools build relationships between not only students-student, teachers-students, parents-teachers, but also between the school and the community (Bryan, 2005). Without school-family-community support, the messages received by the Black male students in one arena would not resonate as strongly. When students are given consistent messages about positive academic achievement and college attendance, they are more likely to achieve the desired positive results (Noguera, 2008). Desimone (1996) notes that the significance of parent involvement is critical in this equation and that mixed messages between the school and students when given to minority students, so much so that if the school culture is pervasively negative and has low expectations of students, it is more influential than parental aspirations and expectations for their children. Thus the messages given by institutions such as schools are critical in assisting in positive student achievement and trust is an essential component of a student's willingness to persist towards the stated goal of college attendance.

Influence of Family Background of Students

There is significant literature that states the importance of family background on positive academic outcomes for students (Almond, 2012; Johnson, 2001; Kao & Tienda, 1998; Liou, Antrop-Gonzales & Cooper, 2009; Scott, Taylor & Palmer, 2013). Historically, much of the literature that focuses on the Black family examines the negative aspects of what is not being done by them to help their children achieve positive academic outcomes (Lewis & Kim, 2008). What is absent in the historical research, and is emerging from new scholarship, is the acknowledgement of parental agency and the skills they do possess. Thus, a transformation from

a deficit model of parental roles to one of a more positive examination of what they are doing correct is also slowly being added to the literature.

What is often also ignored by the traditional deficit literature on Black males is the community cultural wealth they bring when they come to school (Yosso, 2005). Community cultural wealth refers to the knowledge that students of color gain from their families and communities and bring into their educational experiences. Traditionally, these two settings are considerably different, and students must navigate the differences, and interpret school-based lessons and information through the lens of their unique experiences. Instead of looking at this lens as a deficit, it is important to understand the breadth of exposure that these children experience as a benefit and testament to their resilience and ability to adapt to different cultural contexts.

Familial Capital

Familial capital is the capital families contribute to the academic and social development of their children. It can incorporate family mores, traditions and cultural experiences. Often it is seen as a negative characteristic when discussing Black males and urban environments. In their work on ways in which students of color respond to negative structural and institutional barriers placed upon them regarding college-going culture, Liou, Antrop-Gonzalez and Cooper (2009) assert that familial capital is important in helping to overcome negative cultural and academic expectations. Specifically, they conclude that the role of mothers is essential to students gaining agency and resilience in achieving positive academic outcomes. Further, this aspect of both students of color and parents of color is a characteristic which goes largely unnoticed or discussed.

Another aspect of familial capital is the role that parents (oftentimes mothers) play in the educational choices of their children. In regards to parents choosing charter schools over their neighborhood public school, May (2006) noted a “perception gap.” Parents believed that the charter school would enrich the educational experiences of their children. Further, parents defined “quality of education” as personalized classes, more prepared teachers, teacher relationships with students, positive culture of the school, discipline with love, and supportive staff and educators. While May (2006) articulates that there is a negative correlation between parents perceptions of academics at their children’s charter school and the actual high academic achievement, based on the reported experiences of the participants in this study, the same conclusion cannot be drawn. What May notes in her study was not a finding at Du Bois Charter. As reported by their sons, parent’s academic perceptions were exactly what Du Bois Charter delivered. Joe and Davis (2010) note that parents who energetically discuss academics with their Black boys increase the likelihood of them demonstrating positive academic outcomes. Finally, it is important to note that as Reid & Johnson (2001) concluded, it can be inferred that the parents choose to send their child to Charter Schools because of the perceived failings and unsafe environment of their local traditional public school.

Concerted Cultivation

Annette Lareau (2003) advanced the term “concerted cultivation” to highlight the differentiation between middle class and working class parenting traits. In her study, Lareau examined three types of parents by spending time in their homes. She found that middle class parents “cultivate” their children and have a parenting style that is different than their less economically well off peers. This type of parenting includes involving children in organized extra-curricular activities, teaching their children to advocate for themselves and ask for

assistance, and teaching their children to be able to adapt to multiple social and academic situations. In contrast, working class parents tend to cultivate children who participate in minimal amounts of organized extra-curricular activities, are instructed to follow directions and instructions explicitly, and are dependent on institutions in which they do not advocate for themselves, but are rather subservient to their employers or those in charge (Lareau, 2003).

Lareau's work added to the work conducted by Hart and Risley (1995) who studied close to 50 families from birth to examine children's language acquisition. What they found was that lower class parents (and more often than not, those with minority status), had children who had lower IQs and academic performance because fewer words were spoken to them prior to age three. In contrast, those children who were spoken to (which generally included "professional parents"), had higher academic achievement in grade school. Thus, they concluded that there was a class difference in the amount of words spoken and academic achievement in early schooling.

Another study by Duncan and Brooks-Gunn (2000) focused on aspects of parent poverty and children's academic outcomes. They found that child-rearing styles matter. Parents with lower socio-economic status tended to have children who performed less successfully academically than those parents who have a higher socio-economic status and a more positive approach to child-rearing. It is proposed that these outcomes are perhaps an indication of parental expectations as well as child-rearing styles.

It has further been suggested that cognitive learning begins in the home (Durkheim, 1961). In lower income families, however, the prevalent argument is that many parents never believed college was an attainable goal for themselves, and cannot understand how it could be an option for their children (NCES, 2008). Freeman (1998), notes that despite public perception of

Black educational aspirations, academic achievement has always been a valued commodity in the Black community, since the days of slavery. What is problematic, Freeman points out, is that there has not been enough scholarship on the specific role or influence Black families possess in navigating the academic achievement of their children and whether or not aspirations equal college participation or attendance.

There are many hypotheses as to why some families encourage discussion of college from an early age, while others believe that college discussion is not in their child's best interest. In their groundbreaking study, Fordham and Ogbu (1986) examined a high school in Washington DC where they found that students feared being labeled as "acting White" by their peers. This fear caused them to exhibit social behaviors which manifested themselves in low academic performance regardless of their true academic ability because of a fear of being ostracized by their peers, and perhaps their families. Lareau and Horvat (1999) added to the discussion of students "acting White" by explaining the role of Black parents feelings towards their children's White teachers academic expectations and how students perform race in school. Thus it is not just the perceptions of Black male students and their peers, but also the phenomenon affects the academic experiences of parents and their relationship with teachers and the school culture. Gerardi (2006) has shown that positive attitudes about college among minority and low income students has been shown to be an indicator of academic success. Thus, it appears that for many low income families who do not believe that college is a feasible option; positive messages from school can be influential on students' ultimately achieving academic success. Reid and Moore (2008), found that the expectations of college attendance by the school, parents and peer groups are important factors for students own expectations of whether or not college attendance is a realistic goal.

Poor families are also sometimes unaware of or unable to access the potential resources available to them within their communities. Socio-economic status (SES) has been shown to predict postsecondary choices (Trusty, Robinson, Plata & Ng, 2000). While parents may have high expectations for their children's academic achievement, knowing how to help their child actualize that achievement is more difficult. Parents must understand the factors most important in college acceptance (in addition to grades), navigate the preparation, testing and application process, identify financial resources to attend, etc. Even while families hold high expectations, there is further skills and knowledge needed to make college attendance a reality.

There is a relationship between aspirations, parental involvement, and strong family ties and improved academic achievement among immigrant youth (White & Glick, 2000). In their study, White and Glick examined whether human and social capital characteristics combined with racial and cultural differences between American born students and immigrants was associated with academic achievement. They concluded that despite poor academic backgrounds and human capital, in general, immigrant students were more determined to succeed in high school. Thus, with extended familial and community networks, children increased not only their access to academic support, but also the likelihood of receiving encouraging and positive message about the importance of and their ability to obtain a college education. Central among the increased likelihood of not just receiving encouraging and positive messages is the implementation and execution of the type of relational and institutional trust described earlier in this chapter.

Taken together, these studies suggest that minority parents (which includes, but is not limited to those of lower socio-economic status) can achieve concerted cultivation when placed in environments in which they are able to demonstrate their ability to determine what is

academically beneficial for their children. Gaps remain, however, in understanding how the families of academically successful Black males conceptualize and actualize their children's college attendance. This study will specifically examine how a group of college-attending Black males demonstrated their parents' educational expectations, and level of support in the process of going to college.

Cultural Capital and Community Cultural Wealth

Pierre Bourdieu (1977) suggested that the knowledge gained from specific “high cultural” (i.e. theater, fine arts, classical music, fine dining) external sources that contributed to positive academic achievement could best be defined as cultural capital. For many Black males, the articulation of the capital they possess and bring to such settings as school is often viewed as deficient. In contrast, more recent literature has examined the cultural knowledge and experience that students of color bring into school as a unique benefit to these students. This concept of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) places value on what students learn outside of the classroom in their neighborhoods, homes, and in other racial and ethnic environments to help illustrate that Black students do not need to exclusively achieve academic benefits from what is perceived to be “high culture.”

There is a conflict within both the literature and practitioner application of what should or should not be valued in a public school. Much of the literature (including Lareau, 2003), places an emphasis on middle class values of cultural capital, which are seen as more desirable attributes for Black male students to possess. This infers that these students do not come to school possessing these traits and must be taught how to act, behave and learn to fit within this specific mold. There has been traditionally a lack of acknowledgement of student's experiential

knowledge and use of their base knowledge and experience to foster a more productive learning environment. The concept of community cultural wealth highlights the importance of all knowledge and experience, even if it diverges from middle-class White standards. Allen (2010) examined middle-class Black male students and their experiences navigating schooling. He concluded that their lived experiences were different than their White counterparts and that the daily microaggressions articulated by his study's participants needed to be both acknowledged and addressed for students to have successful academic experiences.

As with the overall evaluation of Black males in the literature, the research on cultural capital and community cultural wealth has similarly shifted the discussion from what was deficient in Black males to their inherent strengths. The current study continues to explore the inherent strengths brought to school by these high-achieving participants to further this discussion of student strength and resilience.

Influences of School Culture

Historically, young Black males have been branded “problems” by public schools more often because of behavioral issues than any social-emotional or psychological concern (Noguera, 2008). Bryan (2005) notes that this perception of low-minority achievement is the normative behavior for many educators. The negative statistics on drop out, failure, and even imprisonment have been often repeated. The question posed by those who advocate an anti-deficit model of examining academic achievement of Black males is well-articulated by Pedro Noguera who states, “why don't we do more of what works...instead of wringing our hands and saying ‘why are we losing these students?’ (Noguera, 2008a).” Harper (2008) notes that our efforts in examining academic underachievement has been misplaced. What we have previously reported

only tells part of the story. While acknowledging the importance of understanding the social, structural and historical implications surrounding the treatment of Black males and their academic experiences, it is also critical to examine how young Black males' self-identity and emerging agency assist in positive academic achievement in spite of the aforementioned external obstacles. Trust is an essential component of the manifestation of positive academic achievement and college attendance. Without trust in the institution of school and the agents of the school (e.g. the teachers, administrators and staff), Black male students are less likely to demonstrate persistence and resilience towards their desired goal of college.

Peer Influences and Positive Academic Achievement

Characteristics of a good student are often viewed in contrast with what many view as the perceived expectations of Black males in academic environments. Black males who run contrary to popular perceptions of low achievement and instead "perform" what is perceived as "good" student traits (answering questions in class, being respectful, wanting good grades, college aspirations, etc.) have sometimes been considered by peers and others to be "acting White" and abandoning their own culture (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Horvat & Lareau, 1999; Horvat & O'Connor eds., 2006). However, several scholars, including Tyson (2011) suggest that the "acting White" phenomena is not as influential as some earlier work suggested. Tyson suggests that "oppositional peer culture" has an ability to effect students' positive academic achievement, but that it does not completely deter their focus on striving for achievement, challenging coursework and academic success. Oppositional peer culture is defined as peer's response to institutional, cultural and structural stimuli. An example would be how students

respond to peers who do not do their homework. Conversely, peers who do turn in their homework and encourage others to do the same is seen as a positive example of peer culture.

Allen (2013) notes ways in which Black male students find strategic ways to infuse both their home and school cultural expectations with peer cultural expectations. When pressed with these conflicting expectations, Black males are often stressed concerning the choice between cultural expectations and school rules. In other words, the performance of race (Goffman, 1963), or acting as culture expects them to (e.g. negative behavior in school), puts them at an advantage with peers, but solicits disapproval by teachers. Consequentially, Black males who do succeed in gaining approval and success in school, do so in the face of overcoming many decades of historical, structural, and cultural barriers. This was not always the case. Prior to the landmark Supreme Court *Brown v Board of Education* (1954), Black students were segregated into their own schools. As such, they were not in direct competition with their White counterparts at school. Consequentially, the perception of being intelligent was not seen as a “Black thing” or a “White thing” but as a way to advance through a society which had significant structural barriers in place limiting the possibility of positive academic and social achievement for Black males (Buck, 2010, Neckeman, 2010)

Recent scholarship has addressed how students in today’s society have achieved positive academic outcomes while living what W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) described as a sense of “double consciousness” academically. Graham and Anderson (2008) examined the academic lives of three high achieving “academically gifted” Black boys. The researchers found the importance of teacher expectations, racial identity, and mentors/guidance in contributing to positive student outcomes. Thus, there is emerging scholarship which stands to challenge the theory that one has to give up their identity in order to be academically successful (Brown, Dancy & Davis, eds.

2013; Harper, 2010; Harper 2013; Strayhorn, 2013). This study adds to that growing body of research by looking at the social and academic identity of Black males and how they rationalized their experiences in education within their culture.

Institutional and Educational Expectations

One way to examine student academic persistence is to examine how Black male students responded to being challenged by administrators and teachers, and what were their specific response to those academic challenges. Creating a positive academic culture and one which raises expectations of all students has a constructive effect on positive student outcomes (Reed & Moore, 2008). In the decades after the integration of public schools, what began to take place was the transition from exclusively Black teachers teaching Black students to an increasing number of White teachers teaching Black students and students of color (Ferguson, 2001, Buck, 2010). Thus, Black students began to react socially and academically to the perceived cultural differences of teachers prior to desegregation as compared to their White counterparts.

Post-integration, not only were Black students looked at as socially deficient, they were also seen as academically deficient (Neckeman, 2010). They were no longer compared to one another, but to White students, who were considered the standard within society. This notion of Black student inferiority relative to their White counterparts began post Brown, continued through the 1965 Moynihan Report's assertion of "the tangle of pathology," the 1983 "A Nation at Risk" Report, and is still deeply entrenched in the No Child Left Behind era. These beliefs have contributed greatly to public schools and society's negative expectations of Black students in general, and particularly Black males.

Fortunately, the more recent literature highlights positive educational experiences and outcomes for Black males. As an example, Knight (2003) examined 25 working class freshman and sophomore Black and Latino(a) students in an inner city high school to study their perceptions of college going culture. Her findings showed three interrelated student strategies to achieve academic success within the current educational system: (1) challenging negative perceptions and expectations of urban youth, (2) “passing” academic coursework, and (3) connecting high school and college testing cultures. Thus, even while receiving messages from society about the negative expectations of students who look like them, some students are able to challenge these perceptions, and see themselves as potential college students. Conquering these negative perceptions of Black males at an early age by increasing the positive messages about students who do achieve can help reinforce students’ self-worth and self-efficacy and could potentially lead to more students to explore post-secondary options.

Reed and Moore (2008) highlight the need for high teacher expectations about college to begin in middle school. Specifically, they focused their study on 13 male and female first-generation college students who all went to the same urban high school. According to Reed and Moore, the emphasis on first-generation college students is important because many are at a disadvantage when it comes to entering college because of a lack of social capital, cultural capital, educational expectations, and academic preparation. Many students of color who aspire to be first-generation college students are disproportionately in schools where academic encouragement is not something that is oftentimes explicitly taught and focused on by their high school teachers (Conchas, 2006; Noguera, 2008). However, it is critical that high school educators, especially in low-performing urban high schools, develop a certain amount of empathy for and high expectations of their students (Ladson-Billings, 2006). One can conclude

that is it important to raise expectations for all students, regardless of color, students in low-performing schools so that they are in a position to continue along the path towards positive academic outcomes.

Jackson and Moore (2008) assert that the discourse surrounding expectations of Black males and positive academic outcomes continually focuses on the negative aspect and that little research literature has been created which assist in transforming the discourse to those who are succeeding in spite of the types of significant obstacles cited throughout this literature review.

Other research has noted that there is a strong need to examine the student-teacher relationship in regards to increasing positive academic achievement, in addition to the high expectations of their teachers. Howard (2012) emphasizes how important the relationships between teachers and students is to positive academic achievement. In his study, he examined eight high school students and sought to determine their perceptions of masculinity and interactions with adult men in their school. This research suggests that there is a need not only for high expectations, but for teachers to have an overall “an ethic of care” for their students. This “ethic of care” includes having high expectations, mentoring and encouraging students by telling them that they can succeed, and establishing a positive trusting relationship with the student, so that the student can believe in this mentorship. Howard suggests that this “ethic of care” is essential to not only soliciting a feeling of educational resilience, but also in achieving positive academic outcomes.

Finally, the school culture is important not only to supplementing teacher expectations, but also to provide a safe, nurturing environment for students to feel comfortable failing in order to succeed (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Two studies specifically highlight characteristics that contribute to positive school environments to help Black males achieve positive academic

outcomes. Almond (2012) discusses five attributes that contribute to what she defines as successful Black charter schools; (1) a clearly defined mission statement that emphasizes academic goals, (2) a pervasive culture of high expectations, (3) a college-going or college-preparatory focus, (4) the use of data and assessments to drive the school curriculum, and (5) a longer school day and year. Similarly, Scott, Taylor & Palmer (2013) highlight four attributes that contribute to a successful school culture for Black male students; (1) highly effective and culturally relevant teachers, (2) high expectations and academic exposure, (3) mentorship, and (4) familiar culture and community involvement. There is clearly some overlap in key points (i.e. both papers mention high expectations prominently in their lists), and some points where they diverge. While all of the attributes sound reasonable and important, it remains unclear which points are essential to help students of color succeed. Looking at a group of Black males who have succeeded in attending college, can help take a retrospective look at their high school experience and highlight which of these factors they felt were most influential in their experiences to getting them into college. In addition to building student relational trusts in peers, teachers and the school in general, it can be concluded that Du Bois Charter High School emphasizes all of these characteristics. However, it is difficult to quantify specifically to what degree these traits influence the college aspirations and positive academic achievement of the student body.

College Readiness and Attendance

Although there are many studies that examine high school students and college going culture (e.g.: Carter, 2005; Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Howard, 2010; Levine & Nidiffer, 1996), few results have focused on the positive discussions of college before and during the high school

years, how these discussions effect students' overall impressions of schooling, and the probability of the students attending college.

College Choice and Black Males

Strayhorn (2013) discussed the possibility of teaching “grit” to students to help them achieve positive academic outcomes. Grit, refers to a quantitative scale measure created by Angela Duckworth at the University of Pennsylvania which can predict how much perseverance one possesses. Strayhorn studied Black students at a predominantly White research university and found that those who were “grittier” had higher grades than other Black males in the study. However, what is absent from Strayhorn’s analysis is the amount of “grittiness” students displayed by simply attaining college attendance at a prestigious research university, as well as what social factors accompanied student’s grit in getting them there and supporting them once they were in college. Carl Ahlgren, a college counselor at a prestigious high school in Baltimore, noted in a 2011 presentation to the Potomac & Chesapeake Association for College Admission Counseling’s annual conference the distinctions between “transitional counseling” and “traditional counseling.” In traditional counseling, the high school’s “job” was finished when the student was accepted to their respective college and graduated from high school. This type of counseling has served as the traditional model regardless of type of school, or more importantly, the type of students. In contrast, transitional counseling, in which the end result is to assist in student persistence during the four to six years it may take for the student to graduate college, was suggested to be needed for students from “underrepresented families.” Mr. Ahlgren also noted that counselors need to “talk up” students and their families so that the student attends colleges which best suit their academic abilities and are prepared for the rigors and uncertainty

which lies ahead during college. Alhgren used the term “talk up” to mean educate parents and students about college and college culture.

What is clear from the data is that early educational expectations matter, even before high school. Some Black males who do achieve college attendance experience what researchers describe as residual negative effects of their K-12 schooling expectations (Davis 2003; Davis & Jordan 2004; Harper, 2009; Noguera, 2003; Toldson 2008). This notion stems from a low level of academic expectations from predominantly White female teachers who exhibit high expectations for academic inferiority, poor classroom behavior and a lack of interest in schooling from Black males. Rather than succumbing to a self-fulfilling prophecy, those students who do achieve college attendance demonstrate significant persistence, but may need even longer supports through college to fully attain their educational goals.

In addition to the discussion surrounding expectations, student engagement and agency is also a critical component to college choice and attendance. Some students experience what Gupton, Castelo-Rodriguez, Martinez and Quintanar (2009) describe as a “culture shock” when arriving on campus. They are often given the freedom to explore their academic interest and have agency in their college choices. For some, this transition to both academic and social independence is difficult. For others, they thrive in having the freedom to choose. What is believed, is that regardless of how students feel about their freedom, most scholars note that for first-generation, low-income Black males, they are oftentimes less academically prepared (see: Allen, 2013; Davis & Jordan, 1994; Davis, 2001, 2003; Fine, 1991; Noguera, 2008; Oakes, 1995). This reality does not diminish their academic achievement, but suggests that there needs to be programs on campus that assist in mentoring these students both academically and socially. Gupton et al (2009), also emphasized the importance of students possessing social capital and

link the likelihood of their possessing social capital to their “concerted cultivation” in high school and higher education. They suggest that institutional assistance in building social capital and concerted cultivation is needed in helping provide a greater likelihood of positive academic achievement.

Harper (2009) highlights the need not just for student engagement, but also institutional engagement of Black males on college campuses. He notes the relationship between Black men who start college and their six year college completion rates as being related to disengagement among this population of students. Thus, programs that help retain Black male students are needed on college campuses to increase the graduation rates of Black males. However, it is important to note that both student engagement and institutional engagement is necessary in order to achieve the desired positive academic outcomes.

In addition to race, gender has a considerable influence on the experiences of Black males in education as well. Davis (2013), suggests that masculinity plays a significant role in the positive academic achievement of Black males on college campuses. Regardless of the formal structure of the institution (predominantly White institution, HBCU, or all-male), Black males are challenged to perform what is described by Majors and Billson (1992) and Allen (2013) as “cool pose” (defined as performing a certain aspect of Black male masculinity) on campus. Cool pose includes behaviors like exhibiting masculinity by maintaining cool under pressure and appearing detached from any microaggressions which transpire both in an academic or social setting (Majors & Billson, 1992). This ties into not only the expectations of race, but also gender, and adds to the negative expectations Black males experience not only through K-12, but through their college experiences as well.

This study looked specifically at a group of college-attending Black males, and asked about their development of racial, gender, and academic identity (both in high school and college). Questions were posed about their experiences of internal and external factors contributing to their positive academic achievement, and the source of what these Black males believed themselves had assisted in their considering, applying, and ultimately attending college. This study builds upon existing research by adding to the relatively new field of positively-focused analyses on how some Black male students are demonstrating and accomplishing positive academic achievement in the face of adverse circumstances.

CHAPTER 3

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using qualitative interviews of ten participants who graduated from the same high school (DuBois high school) and were accepted to various colleges and universities in the Northeast portion of this country. These participants were examined qualitatively because this method had the benefit of being able to delve more deeply into an analysis of the narratives of subjects on how and why they were able to attend college rather than simply examining the fact that they attended (Wolcott, 2009). The importance of qualitative research is that it is a method of inquiry which places the observer in the world to be studied and helps to make sense of that world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Further, as Lareau and Schultz (1996) highlighted, this method of inquiry was a holistic approach which examined subjects over a period of time and placed a focus on the culture, context and perspective of the participant. Examining the lives of stories that are not often told has a benefit not only to researchers, but also to those who affect public policy, particularly education policy and reform. The overall purpose of this research was to identify resilience factors that helped to influence Black males' college decision (both to go to college and where to go). Through this examination, it was possible to begin to identify themes which were pervasive among college accepted Black males. These data suggested criteria for future research and practices to improve the numbers of Black males graduating high school, being accepted to, and attending college.

This study examined the lives of Black males from both their own perspective, as well as the perspective of their high school administrator, and college counselor. To obtain the perspective of the males themselves, semi-structured interviews were conducted with

participants from the Class of 2011 from Du Bois Charter High School who were in their second year of college. DuBois high school was a predominantly-Black, all-male Charter school in a major urban city in the Mid-Atlantic. The interview focused primarily on participants' background experiences (both growing up as well as their high school experiences) while at DuBois Charter as well as their college academic environment. To obtain the perspective of school personnel, an interview including the CEO and the College Counselor at DuBois Charter High School was also conducted. These interviews provided background information on the participants' high school experience and helped to contextualize the participants' responses. According to Levine and Nidiffer (1996), using a small sample size for a qualitative study lends itself the opportunity to explore the research subjects more in depth rather than breadth. Accordingly, while it is impossible to make large overarching statements from the small sample size in this study, it is possible to identify several themes within the group, which can help to better understand the academic and social lives of Black males.

The following research questions were examined:

1. What personal skills or environmental supports did students perceive as most influential in their college attendance?
 - a. How did contextual supports (peers, parents, and community) assist in students' college attendance?
2. What were the specific institutional practices of Du Bois Charter High School that most contributed to students' college attendance?

Selection of Research Site and Participants

Du Bois Charter High School was founded in 2007 in an economically impoverished neighborhood of a major urban city in the Mid-Atlantic. The neighborhood [Rose River, a

pseudonym] had a population of approximately 40,000 people of whom over 96% classified themselves as Black (U.S. Census, 2010). It was one of the largest neighborhoods in the city. The median income for the area was \$22,000 and 25% of the population was below the poverty line. Many in the area fell over 200% of the poverty line and the unemployment rates were at 12.2%, over twice the average rate for the overall city at 6% (U.S. Census, 2010).

Du Bois Charter High School described itself as a college preparatory high school which “serves qualified boys of diverse backgrounds, and a self-selected group of young men who value academic success, hard work and the development of their intellectual, moral, social, creative and athletic potential” (Du Bois Charter High School website, 2013). It was one of 108 charter schools to open during the 2007-08 school year in the state (National Alliance for Charter Schools website). It was one of a select few schools in the country that were a single sexed public charter school. According to the National Alliance for Charter Schools, as of 2010, all charters in the United States enrolled only approximately 30% Black students. Unfortunately, the Alliance did not aggregate out the data to include how many students were male or female, but there were only a handful of all-Black, all-male charters in the country. Du Bois Charter was chosen for this study because of the high percentage of students going to college, as well as having over 99% Black male student body. This school was also an ideal foci to draw participants because the 2011 graduating class were the first graduates from the school. The fact that all of the participants of this study were graduates of the same high school was important to put into context their a priori lived social and academic experiences. As the first graduating class, they had a shared experience, which had the potential to allow for a unique perspective on the school and its effects on their social and academic selves. Anecdotal evidence from the College Counselor also suggested that the majority of the Class of 2011 was still attending

college after two years. Finally, DuBois Charter was selected because the demographics of their students reflected the neighborhood in which it resided.

According to their Mission Statement, Du Bois Charter emphasized single sex schooling because "...statistically speaking, boys are far more likely to have problematic academic experiences and are 30% more likely to drop out of school. Teachers in an all boys' school can teach effectively in ways which reach boys and appeal to their learning style. This allows a young man more ease in developing his full potential" (Du Bois school website, 2013). In comparison, according to a local publication which documents school district statistics in the city, DuBois Charter resides in an area where the local neighborhood comprehensive high school in 2010 had a state test score of 16% proficient in math and 2% proficient in reading. Further, the 2010 four-year graduation rate of the neighborhood school, was 42% and the college attendance rate was 25%. In comparison, DuBois Charter graduated 99% of their senior class and had a 2011 college acceptance rate of 96%. These students reflected the community around their school, with 78% of their students receiving free or reduced lunch (Title I), but still achieved significantly better educational success than their public school counterparts. This is significant because most of the males who attended Du Bois Charter High School resided in the neighborhood and would have likely attended their local public high school if they had not attended Du Bois.

DuBois Charter High School had a code of conduct, a pledge of responsibility (which was recited in both English and Latin), as well as a requirement to perform community service and mandated participation in extra-curricular activities. Although 96% of the graduating class of 2011 was accepted to college, the year before (2010), they were found to be only 21% proficient in math and 9% in reading on the state proficiency exam. These scores were

comparable to students in the two comprehensive neighborhood high schools in the area for that year. It appears, however, that the test scores were not reflective of the students' academic potential and even the Principal/CEO of Du Bois discussed how this test did not determine academic performance at DuBois.

It means nothing to the kid(s). My son told me that after he took the [state test] I'm just I'm serious you've probably heard this story. I got mad at him for saying it, he says the test means nothing to me. And I'm going like you want to start a fight with your father here? But he said look, I know it helps the school but nobody is going to ask me about this. And he said I should have known this but he told me this...And listen we've got guys in 125 different colleges so far? Okay not one of them ask about a [state test] score not even the...state colleges. So yes I do believe there should be some type of type of test instrument to determine progress in school and even through high school I have no problem with that. But if you're going to tell me that that test should be the be all or end all of how a student is judged, somebody's teaching career, a principal's leadership I mean money how much money goes in that puts a lot of big decisions into a meaningless test. – Interview with Mr. Simmons, 7/24/13

When you walked into Du Bois Charter High School you were greeted by a security guard, just as you would be in many urban public schools. Du Bois did not have a metal detector at the doors, but there were two sets of doors to enter. Security was friendly and there was a sign-in sheet for visitors to fill out. The outside of the school on the west side of the building was a vacant lot with weeds and grass in disrepair. The outside of the building was a typical brick building that belied its Catholic School origins (the entranceway was arched with a cross at the top). However, once inside the school, there was a beautiful open space, where students usually congregated outside of the main office. On the walls were murals, college banners, famous quotations, as well as the Du Bois Charter High School Pledge, in English and Latin. The hallways were clean and well maintained. The rehabilitation of the building made the school look as if it was perfectly set in the 21st century, both in terms of the amount of technology and the overall openness of the space.

Students walked down the hallways in their blue blazers, White buttoned down shirts, blue and maroon ties, and khaki pants. Controlled chaos and noise existed, and the teachers stood outside their classrooms to help shuttle students to their next class. The cafeteria was small, but animated. There, students were more comfortable engaging in lively conversation. Overall, the school was an inviting place that was a casual environment while still maintaining a clear structure and rules. Very little of the outside noise and atmosphere were felt once inside of Du Bois.

The first year (participants' freshman year at DuBois Charter) of the school was not held in this renovated building. Principal Simmons had wanted to get a quick start to the school once their charter was approved by the state in 2007, so they spent the first year in trailers in the parking lot while the rest of the school was remodeled. Based on the participants and administrators description, the trailers were small moveable buildings containing two classrooms each. Each classroom held approximately 20 students per class. Students described the experience as being in "close quarters" and having bonded significantly because of their proximity and shared experience in helping to develop the community culture of the school. After the first year, the school had been renovated, and all students moved into the main school building described above.

Selection criteria for study participants was recommendations from two administrators, the CEO/former Principal and the college counselor. Central to the selection criteria was a broad range of students from high academic achievement to academic persistent and overcoming both academic and/or personal difficulties. In contrast to identifying difference, a selection of students who lived within lower socio-economic neighborhoods was important because there was a desire

to have as much similarity in background as possible to same aged students who attended the local public schools near Du Bois Charter High School.

From the initial class of 80 graduates, 16 participants who fit the aforementioned criteria were initially identified by the administration (CEO/Principal and College Counselor). Both the CEO/ Principal and the College Counselor were extremely familiar with each of the graduates' backgrounds, and were able to identify potential participants who met each of these criteria. Information about the study was mailed to all 16 eligible participants. This informational letter is included in Appendix A, and both explained the study, as well as provided all contact information for the study investigator (address, email, phone number, etc.). Greater detail about the steps of recruitment and enrollment of each participant is discussed in the data collection portion of this chapter.

Once recruited, all of the participants demonstrated significant persistence and resilience simply by graduating high school and attending college. However, what was discovered during data collection was that some students demonstrated social persistence in overcoming adversity while others demonstrated academic persistence. This was important to note when drawing conclusions about institutional trust and how the school site assisted in positive academic achievement.

Data Collection

Once the list is of potential participants was created by the CEO/Principal and the College Counselor, sixteen potential participants received a standard mail letter sent in December 2012, introducing the research to the potential participant and asking them to contact the researcher if interested in participating in the study. The home addresses of potential participants were

obtained from the Administrative Assistant at Du Bois Charter School. Several days after the initial letter was sent, the study investigator received three phone requests to participate in the study. A fourth potential participant replied via e-mail. Interviews were scheduled with the two participants when they would be home during winter break in January 2013. A third interview was scheduled for March, 2013 when the investigator would be in the area of the participant's college in the Mid-Atlantic. The fourth potential participant who initially contacted the investigator via e-mail did not return e-mails or text messages until March, 2013. The interview date was finally set via text message for April 1, 2013.

In early January 2013, the investigator contacted the school staff for information on how to contact the remaining students who received the initial standard mail request. Neither the Administrative Assistant nor anyone else at the school knew how to contact members of the Class of 2011 through e-mail. The Administrative Assistant did have phone numbers of a few students and she made follow up calls introducing the investigator to them and encouraging them to send an e-mail or phone call if they were interested in participating. Several potential participants contacted the investigator in March, 2013 and four additional interviews were arranged because of those phone calls.

After two months, when there were no more responses from the initial 16 potential participants who received the initial postal letter request responding, a staff member at Du Bois Charter, using purposeful selection, contacted eight more alumni to seek out potential participants via phone calls, e-mails, and teacher recommendations. One more participant contacted the study investigator as a result of these contacts. In concert with the staff member using purposeful selection, the eight participants already interviewed were asked to recommend any classmates from 2011 who might be interested in the research study. One additional student

then contacted the study investigator as a result of these student to student contacts. All ten interviews were conducted in person, either on the participant's college campus or a public space (usually a coffee shop) familiar to the participant. Quick or simple follow-up questions were asked via text message or email (i.e. did both of your parent graduate from college? Are you back in college, etc.). Each of the ten participants received a \$25 online gift card to the store of their choice. The \$25 was supplied by the Board of Directors of Du Bois Charter who also paid for travel expenses to and from the interviews conducted on the respective college campuses.

Table 3.1: Du Bois Charter High School Class of 2011 Participants in Study (Names are pseudonyms)

First Name	School	In School	Interviewed	Approx. Length of Interview
Andre	Ursinus College (PA)	Yes	March 14th	60 min
Antoine	Goucher College (MD)	Yes	January 18th	65 min
Aston	Cheney University (PA)	Yes	March 29th	45 min
Bill	Worcester Poly Institute (MA)	Yes	March 24th	75 min
Delvon	Colby-Sawyer College (NH)	No (CC summer)	March 28th	50 min
Duval	Delaware County CC (PA)	Yes	March 29th	75 min
Rashid	Benedict College (SC)	No (Fam)	May 30th	65 min
Talib	Penn State (PA) Berks	Yes	May 21st	65 min
Todd	North Hampton CC (PA)	Yes	April 1st	75 min
Tyrone	Juniata College (PA)	Yes	January 16 th	75 min

Each interview began with the consent process. All participants were over the age of 18 and able to provide consent for their own participation. The consent form was read through together, and then participants were asked if they had additional questions or concerns about the study. All participants who scheduled an interview completed the informed consent document. Consent was obtained for study participation overall, as well as to audio and video record each interview. Although the initial six interviews were videotaped and audiotaped, the technology to videotape the interviews became difficult with travel and public environments. Thus, the remaining four interviews were only audiotaped.

Demographic information for each of the participants was collected during the interview. Prior to the formal interview, there was a brief discussion about the structure of the interview, sports, their college and other information to put the interviewee at ease with the interviewer. The initial interview consisted of an approximately 50-75 minute semi-structured interview focused on learning about the participant's family background, educational experiences prior to high school, their high school experience, and their collegiate experience thus far. The length of each interview varied on the depth of response from the interviewee. All questions were asked of all participants.

Through the nature of qualitative research, it is the intent to seek to understand the "other" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The length of the interview is important so as to create a familiarity with the subject and to create a comfort level which will allow for in-depth analysis and a thorough, accurate representation of their lived experience. Semi-structured interviews are also effective in allowing subjects to tell their own stories as

opposed to the researcher imposing their beliefs onto the subject (Hesse-Bieber & Leavy, 2011).

As the participants became more comfortable, they began to share more specific details of their lived academic and social experiences. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It was also important to make the subjects as comfortable and forthcoming as possible about their lives so as to reduce the influence of what Siddle Walker calls “euphoric recall” which is the positive nostalgia of remembering an event without remembering the difficult or negative aspects of the event (Walker, 1996). The semi structured interview protocol for the participant and administrator interviews can be found in Appendix B.

School Leadership Participants

The interviews conducted with the former Principal/current CEO and College Counselor were conducted at DuBois Charter School after all of the participant interviews were conducted. The interview was held in July 2013 and lasted approximately one hour and thirty minutes. Prior to the formal interview, there were several informational discussions with both participants between 2011 and 2013. These initial consultations took place at Du Bois Charter High School and were invaluable in setting the structure and tone for the research. It was clear through these initial meetings with the school administrators and Administrative Assistant, that they were very familiar with their students and their backgrounds. Mr. Simmons repeatedly cited specifics about each potential participant, and as such was instrumental in identifying the resilience characteristics of his students. In addition, the interviewer attended the Class of 2011

graduation in June of 2011, off campus at a local university to see the tone of the culture of the school and observe their traditions and rituals.

The interviews were digitally recorded. The digital audio was uploaded into a computer program which converted the file into an MP3. The first interview conducted was transcribed by the investigator in order to better understand the process of transcription and listening to the tone of an interview via MP3. Once the interview was transcribed it was uploaded into AtlasTi. Each subsequent interview was transcribed by Speechpad (an online transcription service) and reviewed for accuracy, then uploaded into AtlasTi.

Data Analysis

An iterative process of coding interviews was conducted to ultimately obtain themes across participants. To develop these codes, each interview was reviewed independently to identify key ideas presented by each individual. For example, in the first interview, the participant mentioned the importance of his mother in pushing him to achieve academically, and attend DuBois Charter. The importance of parents, and specifically mothers, was then noted to examine future interviews for similar ideas from other participants. As others similarly mentioned their mothers as key figures in their academic achievement, the number of students mentioning parental and maternal influence were documented, and the different ways that participants discussed their mothers were compared. A final theme of the role of single Black mothers emerged as a result of this process.

After a few interviews, certain common characteristics were being repeated by the majority of participants. Those characteristics were written down and then translated into succinct codes based on the research questions. After coding a few interviews, three central themes surrounding the codes began to emerge, character development, socio-cultural development and academic development. These major themes were then color coded into code families. These code families served as the basis for organizing the codes thematically based on commonality. Thus codes which discussed schooling were placed into the academic education family. Codes discussing students' persistence or overcoming obstacles were placed into the character education family. Finally, codes discussing family background, race or identity were placed into the socio-cultural family. Once all of the data was analyzed, an examination of how these codes and families related to the research questions took place.

To answer the first research question, themes around the external influences on Black males' experiences leading them to college were compiled and categorized into each of the three code families. Internal attitudes about the importance of college, motivation, and perceptions of their own abilities were examined to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER 4:

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter is organized into three major timeframes, the participants Pre-Du Bois experience, their Du Bois experience and their College Experience. Some of the subthemes which emerged from the 10 interviews with each of the students included; academic and family background, influence of Du Bois Charter school, College readiness and attendance, and participants perceptions of persistence, trust and identity. The five key findings from the study include: (1) Trust was essential to overcoming perceived and real structural inequalities. Educational resilience can only be demonstrated when institutions are willing to provide a safe, nurturing environment which allows for failure to contribute to positive growth, (2) Seeking academic and social assistance from peers and adults was constructive in contributing to increased positive academic achievement, (3) Cultural capital and exposure to an expansive array of experiences can help minimize the negative effects of poverty if done purposefully and reflectively, (4) Family, peers, and individual agency were critical in sustaining persistence throughout the identity development which resulted in the demonstration of resilience, (5) Understanding and nurturing the social-emotional, racial and gender identity of young Black men was an essential component to positive academic and social achievement.

Participant Profiles

The following are brief biographies of the participants in this study. Each of the participants were interviewed for approximately 45-75 minutes. These biographies were compiled from those interviews and from follow-up clarifying text messages with participants. All of the names of the participants are pseudonyms.

Tyrone

Tyrone was a young, intelligent 20 year old sophomore at Juniata College. He was roughly 6'1", lanky and fairly bookish in his appearance. When he arrived at the bookstore coffee shop for the interview, he was extremely polite and engaging. Being a part of the first graduating class at DuBois Charter, he articulated that he was comfortable talking about anything, since he had been interviewed several times. The field notes for this interview described first impressions of him as forthcoming, self-reflective and insightful, not to mention funny. He was very open about his upbringing, noting that his father, who had met his mother when they were in middle school, was in and out of his life, and that he primarily he grew up on the North side of a major mid-Atlantic city with just his mother and brother. He described his mother as being raised in a "broken home," but also spoke extremely highly of her skills in raising him and his brother virtually alone. Tyrone viewed his mother as one of his first mentors and an inspiration.

Tyrone was extremely comfortable being around older people and was a self-described nerd. Before attending DuBois Charter, he attend several catholic grade schools where he described that he was oftentimes bullied and harassed for his being "different."

Tyrone described his experiences at DuBois as immediately feeling like a “family.” He described the first year experience in the trailers when the school building was being remodeled to house the high school as a primary source for forming a “brotherly love for each other” among the students at DuBois. Tyrone seemed to be a student who thrived in this type of school, where he was no longer seen as an outcast or different. He believed that his peers in middle school felt like he was the “Whitest Black that they’d ever known.” He mentioned his friend Malik who had been integral in his maturation, and it seems, helped navigate his positive transition into his teen years and early adulthood. It is probable that Tyrone would have succeeded in becoming a college attendee regardless of what high school he attended, but DuBois really helped him form a sense of identity and community.

At the time of the interview, Tyrone was entering his third year at Juniata College, a small liberal arts college in a rural setting in the mid-Atlantic portion of the United States. The 110 acre main campus was home to over 1600 undergraduate students. There were approximately 43% males and 57% females. According to Forbes.com, the racial makeup of the college was 79% White, 3.0 Latino, 2.0% Black and 16% other. US News and World Report cited the 2012-13 tuition at over \$35,000 and total cost at \$47,000 per year. Academically, approximately 95% of its students graduated in four years with an overall first year student retention rate of 85%, and the average high school GPA is 3.75. The SAT scores ranged from 520-640 in Critical Reading, 540-650 in Math, and 520-610 in Writing. US News and World Reports ranked this college a most selective liberal arts college.

Antoine

Upon meeting Antoine, it was noticed quickly that he was extremely polite, cordial and friendly. When not in college, he volunteered around Du Bois Charter doing a bit of everything. Everyone around the school loved him, even two years after he graduated. The Administrative Assistant was the one who helped arrange the interview after the initial request letter was sent to student homes.

Field notes on this participant indicated that his appearance was one of a very athletic looking young man. He was dressed like a “typical” college student, jeans, t-shirt and headphones around his neck. He was rushed and in a hurry to finish the interview, but he wasn’t rude. He had worked all day at Du Bois and was scheduled to meet a friend from college after work.

Antoine was born into a family of seven children. He was the fifth of seven kids and the first in his family to go to college. He grew up with just his mother around and his father not in his life. One of his brother’s was incarcerated and as such, he mentioned that he was more like “in the house,” meaning he believed that the best way to stay safe and out of trouble was by staying inside off the streets. It appeared that his early schooling was fraught with discipline issues and lack of structure. He attended middle school in his neighborhood and had good grades but was “cutting school, disrespecting teachers, but still graduating on honor roll. Just A’s and B’s.” When asked if that was an indictment of him or his school, he felt it was a combination of both. He did just enough to get by, but didn’t overtly feel as if he was academically exceptional. He repeatedly mentioned that he “didn’t care” when it came to his

schooling, which seemed to indicate that that he felt he was being influenced more by his peers than by his teachers.

When he was in middle school, he mentioned that he was “being bad for no reason.” He had a Therapeutic Staff Support (TSS), so he felt that he had carte blanche to do anything he wanted. He knew he could work the system and be as bad as he wanted to be because he had the TSS and felt that the teachers did not care or support him. When pressed about exactly what he did that was so “bad,” he wouldn’t go into specific details about his middle school experiences. However, when he talked about the differences between his middle school and what brought him to Du Bois Charter, he mentioned his mother as the one who directed him towards Du Bois. Antoine seemed to be hesitant to leave his old ways behind, and even though he mentioned that he was excited about the laptop all students received upon acceptance into Du Bois, he didn’t seem ready to give up the “distractions” of girls and his peers. Antoine mentioned that he got into a heated discussion with Mr. Simmons (the Principal) which seems to have been an academic and life changing turning point. From this point on, it appeared something clicked in Antoine and he decided that he would take advantage of the opportunities afforded him by his school. As the literature mentions, it only takes one mentor to change the life of a child (Noguera, 2003). However, if that experience was not positive, or if the individual was not receptive, then perhaps that change does not come. Fortunately in this instance, the transformation from middle school Antoine into high school Antoine stuck. He felt for the first time that someone had given him a chance, had “vouched” for him. This type of support helped Antoine not only at Du Bois, but also in his even considering college as an option for his future.

Another influence in Antoine's life outside of his mother and Mr. Simmons was his experience with Upward Bound. He went on a three-week program to North Carolina when he was a sophomore in high school. He cited this experience as being influential in opening his eyes to the bigger world and in his gaining a more compassionate outlook about others. One of the requirements of Du Bois Charter was that students must participate in extra-curricular activities. So, in addition to his Upward Bound experiences, Antoine was also one of the first members of the school's crew team.

Antoine's college application experience was difficult, which is typical of many first generation college students. Fortunately, unlike in many urban schools, he had a great college counselor. Ms. Carter the college counselor, took many of the first graduating class at Du Bois, (on her own time) to visit many mid-Atlantic and East Coast colleges. The college he was attending was not his first choice, but as he said, he did an overnight at another institution and did not like it. When talking about his college, he mentioned that one of the "downfalls" of the college was its costs. For decades, it had consistently ranked as one of the more expensive colleges in the country. However, Antoine had received significant financial assistance from his old school and from his employment. He seemed to be as concerned with the financial aspects of college as much the academic or social aspects. He appeared as if he did not want to let anyone down, and was pushing himself to succeed in spite of the financial burdens.

According to US News and World Report, the 2012-13 tuition for Goucher College was \$37, 640. It was a small suburban liberal arts college in the northeast and sat just outside a major city. It was home to approximately 1400 students, of which 33% were male and 67% were female. The average SAT composite score was 1740. It was

considered a selective college. The racial composition of the college was 54% White, 9% Black, 4% Latino and 2% Asian.

Andre

Andre was the first interview conducted on a college campus. He was extremely cordial and had reserved a quiet room on campus for us to talk. His appearance was the antithesis of what a Du Bois student looked like in high school. He had on a do rag, baggy hooded university sweatshirt and sweat pants. If he were not on a college campus he would have looked, to some, like a stereotypical Black young man on the streets. He was a football player and was built like a lineman, except he was roughly 5'7" or so. Imposing, but not menacing.

Andre was raised in a matriarchal home with both his mother and grandmother. He had a younger brother who was 11 years younger than he was, and was in middle school at the time of the interview. Prior to attending Du Bois Charter, he attended a small Roman Catholic grade school in his neighborhood. His middle school was pretty good academically compared to the neighborhood public school. He was heavily recruited by other Catholic and traditional public high schools to play football, both in the city and around the state. He was drawn to Du Bois Charter School by his mother who asked him to "look at it and research it yourself." At an early age, he was given a choice - to attend a high school that had the potential to be academically beneficial, or to attend a traditional football powerhouse high school where oftentimes academics come second. Either way, it appeared that Andre was on a trajectory of

attending college. The question he was faced with was whether he would be academically prepared for the rigor of college in the high school he chose.

While at Du Bois, Andre established himself as more than just a football player. He was an avid member of the chess team, was on the stage crew for their theatrical performances, was in the Latin Club, and participated in the weight lifting club. Upon graduation, Andre was one of the most academically decorated members of the class of 2011.

Andre felt that Du Bois did a good job preparing him for college both academically and socially. Andre's school, Ursinus College, was a small liberal arts college in the suburbs of a major metropolitan city in the Mid-Atlantic. There were 1650 students from across the country and approximately 20% minority enrollment, of which 6% were Black. In addition, the population consisted of 47% males and 53% females. The college boasted on its website that it had one of the most nationally renowned first year programs, which unfortunately did not help to bolster its graduation rates which after 6 years, were at 81% overall, and 65% specifically for Black students. The overall cost was an astronomical \$55,000 per year, which accounted for why 98% of students were on some type of financial aid.

The school was noted for its intersectionality of science and society. Academically, Andre took on the challenge of being a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) major. Specifically, Andre was focusing his studies on Exercise and Sports Science (ESS). Being a football player and a Black male on campus taking these difficult courses had been challenging for Andre. He was often the only or one of the few Black students in his class. When pressed as to how he built his drive, resilience and grit,

he felt that his experiences playing sports had helped him mentally prepare for the rigors of the classroom. He had grown into an outgoing, intelligent young man in part based on his experiences not only at Du Bois Charter High School, but also on the gridiron.

Bill

The interview was conducted on the beautiful campus of Worcester Polytechnic Institute near a Northeastern city where rolling hills were the norm. Bill was already at the Library at the allotted time for the interview and had arranged a private conference room for the meeting.

When first meeting Bill, the impression was that he was a bit uneasy. His reserved nature wasn't assuaged after a few jokes and the perfunctory introductions and descriptions of how he had arrived at such a prestigious campus from Du Bois Charter School. As the consent forms were signed, he seemed cautious as to who would be finding out about the information he was about to speak of and his apprehensions did not seem to ease during the interview.

Bill grew up with his mother, cousin and maternal grandmother in his home. He knew his father, but had been estranged from him off and on throughout his life. Bill noted that he spent some time getting to know him better when he was in high school, but they had some issues – which he did not elaborate upon. At the time of the interview, he said they were “cool,” and their disputes seemed to be a thing of the past. He also grew up around his uncles and as such had other male influences in his life. His middle school was a violent place and he insinuated that both he and his friends were frequently bullied and beat up. He did not mention himself in the fracas, but from his demeanor, it seemed

like he was closer to the fray than he let on. Bill emphasized that his mother took notice that he was in a violent school, and also wanted him to be highly educated. After moving him to another middle school, she decided to look into charter schools for high school. Her decision was made easier when there was a shooting at Bill's neighborhood high school the spring before his freshman year. Bill went to Du Bois Charter High School looking for an academic challenge, as well as a safe environment.

Once he arrived at Du Bois, he said he found both quickly. He immersed himself in the culture, felt at home being smart and found a mentor in the Information Technology assistant who helped him and Andre throughout high school. Bill also acclimated to the discipline of the school, even though he did not like the dress code and "hated wearing Black socks." He felt in retrospect that the discipline at Du Bois was a contributing factor to his being accepted and attending a highly selective college.

Bill did exceedingly well at Du Bois Charter High School academically. So much so that he was named one of the top students of his graduating class. At the time of the interview, Bill was completing his second year in college. According to the US News & World Report rankings, his university ranked number 64 in the National Universities category and was considered more selective. It was one of thirteen colleges in a college town about 35 miles outside of a major metropolitan city in the northeast. There were just under 4000 students on campus and the yearly cost of the University was approximately \$43,000. One of its more popular programs was known as M.A.S.H which stood for Math And Science Help for those students who needed assistance. It was extremely diverse with all fifty states represented and over 64 countries. Post interview, Bill was entering his third year of college and was on track to graduate in four years.

Delvon

Delvon grew up in a family with his mother, father and three sisters. Being the only male in the family was a challenge for him, and he expressed that his parents tried to protect him from many of the negative aspects of growing up in an urban environment. He attended a charter school for his eighth grade year, and as such was acclimated into the culture of a charter school before he entered Du Bois Charter High School. His previous years in grade and middle school were fraught with behavioral issues and he described himself as a “rowdy” student who would sometimes act out violently when provoked.

When he was contacted for an interview by the Staff Assistant at Du Bois Charter, he was excited to sit down and talk about his experiences, despite being home taking time off from college because of a failed grade in the fall semester of his sophomore year.

Delvon entered Du Bois Charter High School because he was encouraged to attend by his mother who worked at the School District. She thought that the discipline and being away from the distraction of females would serve as a catalyst for better behavioral outcomes. She seemed to be correct. Delvon went from a troubled middle school student to the Student Council President while at Du Bois Charter. In addition, it appears that his middle school behavior was indicative of boredom and seeking attention more than academics. He recollected that his parents had a “no Cs” rule in their house and that he could not watch television often. He also discussed that his parents were pleased with the goals of Du Bois Charter and their emphasis on college. Delvon felt that between the encouragements he received at home and at school, and without the distractions he had in his earlier schooling, that it helped him achieve college attendance.

However, he was quick to note that while he did grow up in a two-parent family, he did not feel as if he had a “leg up” because of his stable home environment.

Delvon applied to several small colleges in the area, but his main focus was on going to Colby-Sawyer, which he was attending when he was asked to take time off. He received a full scholarship offer and was flown to the quaint northeast town where his college resides. His college ranked number 20 on the US News & World Report rankings of Regional North Colleges. The tuition for the college was just over \$35,000 and was considered least selective. It was home to just over 1400 students, of which over 61% were female. According to their website, 11% of the students self-identified as minorities, although there was no formal statistic on the website.

At the time of the interview, Delvon was registering for courses at a local community college. During the summer, he enrolled in three courses and received a 3.0 GPA which garnered him readmission back to his home institution, where he began classes in the Fall of 2013.

Duval

Duval was the only non-American participant. He was born in Trinidad/Tobago and came to this country when he was six. He grew up in a family with his father having to travel back and forth to the Islands once his family moved to the United States. His father was an influential presence in his life, so even though he spent more time growing up with his mother, it would not be accurate to describe his upbringing as a being raised by a “single” mother. Because of his education experiences on the Islands, when he came to the US he was placed in the third grade rather than beginning with first grade.

He spoke of his parents challenging him to always do his best in his academics. He also expressed that his mother had concerns that he was becoming too “Americanized” and acclimated into the culture because he was “slacking off” in middle school.

Consequentially, Duval notes that she was looking for an environment for her son that was challenging academically and was a more positive influence socially. Du Bois Charter School fit both criteria.

While at Du Bois, Duval articulated that he was accustomed to acclimating and rising up to challenges because that is what he had been doing throughout his schooling since coming to the US both socially and academically. Talking to his mother about being a Registered Nurse instilled in him the desire to enter the medical field. From entering Du Bois Charter High School, his focus was on attending a small liberal arts college, and majoring in pre-med. While at Du Bois, he was a founding member of the track team, which was created in his sophomore year and served as a leader in the sport as well as in his Outward Bound excursion.

Duval applied to a small number of schools that had good pre-med programs and were close to home, but in a rural environment. He was accepted and attended for his first two years the same college Andre currently attends. However, he left after the fall semester of his sophomore year and began attending a Community College in the area, where his interview took place. He said that the central reason for his leaving was an “F” he received in one of his courses and that he felt the major was not nurturing enough, but was rather a weeding out program for pre-med students. While he understood that the process should be rigorous, he felt like he needed a stronger background in some of the hard science courses before he began to focus on pre-med entirely. Consequentially, he

enrolled at the Community College, but was hoping to matriculate into a different major University in the spring of 2014.

Aston

Aston's interview was conducted on the campus of Cheyney University, a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in the northeast. The interview took place on the first floor of his dormitory in a common area with a TV, couches, chairs and several tables. The room was extremely dark even with the lights on. When trying to find a suitable place for the interview, one of the table legs that was propped up, fell down. The interview was the shortest interview overall. Aston provided several insightful comments, but was just very succinct and straight to the point. He did not elaborate on many questions and when prompted, did not respond in great detail.

Aston grew up with both of his parents and his two brothers. Since fifth grade, he attended an "older" (founded in 1997), charter school in the city which, just like Du Bois Charter High School, had a college preparatory mission. He became aware of Du Bois Charter because of his mother. He also emphasized that his grades were dropping at the charter school where he attended and that he also wanted the opportunity to play football in high school, something that his previous charter did not have.

While at Du Bois Charter, Aston was a standout football player. He was locally recruited to play in college and felt that even though he was a football player, his studies came first. This mantra was instilled in him, as he recollected, by both his parents and Du Bois.

Aston was attending an HBCU located about 20 miles from the downtown of a major urban city in the northeast. According to US News & World Report, the school ranked least selective and enrolled approximately 1200 students. The most noteworthy statistic on the US News site was that it only graduated 10% of students in 4-years. At the time of the interview, Aston was on track to be one of those 10%.

Todd

Todd was born on one side of town in a major urban city but grew up on the other. The significance of this is that he was born in a predominantly Black neighborhood, but grew up as one of the few Blacks in a majority White and immigrant area. Todd was raised by his mother and had a younger brother who was in high school. After attending schools which were majority White, Todd saw transitioning to Du Bois Charter as a challenge. He was encouraged by his mother to attend the school because of the discipline and fewer distractions (i.e. “girls”). Ultimately, Todd felt very comfortable fitting into the environment.

While at Du Bois Charter it took him a while to acclimate socially, but academically he noted that he was a good student, even while in middle school. He found Du Bois challenging but felt that it was a task he was excited about undertaking. Before he attended Du Bois, he was in the mentally gifted (MG) program at his middle school. Consequentially, he was academically prepared for the rigorous college preparatory curriculum. His major extra-curricular participation at Du Bois Charter was as the manager of the Basketball team.

Todd applied to many local colleges. He was accepted to a major school in a large urban city in the northeast, but decided to attend Northampton Community College instead. Todd felt both comfortable and weary at his college. He enjoyed the environment, but felt as if he was one of a few Black students in his major. As such, he felt that he had to explain a lot about Black culture, as well as urban cultures, since most of the students at his Community College came from a rural environment. Todd's major was unique. When he was at Du Bois Charter, he expressed an interest in mortuary science. Mr. Simmons alerted one of the Board Members, and Todd was able to have an internship in which he learned about the practice and decided that he wanted to major in the discipline in college. He felt that a 2-year program was just as beneficial as a 4-year program within this discipline, which was a determining factor in his attending a Community College. At the time of the interview, he was just completing his second year on campus. The Community College was one of a few that had a dormitory, which is where Todd lived, and where the interview took place. He was a few credits shy of graduating and was on track to finish either in December of 2013, or in the spring of 2014.

Talib

Talib grew up as a twin and with his two sisters in his family. His brother was also a graduate of Du Bois Charter High School. He grew up with his mother, and was in contact with his father but did not grow up in the same home. Talib grew up in a persistently dangerous part of town, but attended K-8 at a prestigious school in a higher socio-economic area which bordered his neighborhood. He was introduced to Du Bois

Charter High School because his family was friends with the CEO Mr. Simmons. Talib felt that he was up for the challenge of attending Du Bois Charter High School, and saw it as an opportunity to succeed. He also used the term “lab rats” to describe his graduating class, as they were the first students of the school, and saw the building of the school as a “fun” struggle and as a blessing.

Unlike many young Black males, he saw high school as a “stepping stone” rather than an end point. As such, he took his studies very seriously. He was a very serious young man. His demeanor was such that he was continuously articulating that even though there were challenges at Du Bois, especially in being a part of the first graduating class, he always saw those challenges as learning opportunities and through a positive lens. While at Du Bois Charter High School, Talib grew into a leader. Much in the same way that Duval was instrumental in starting the track squad, Talib was a catalyst in bringing soccer to Du Bois Charter. While they went winless their first season, he attributed his perseverance and practice as the key to moving the team from cellar dweller to respectable, winning the Public League, in only four years. He felt that his extra-curricular activities in soccer and Outward Bound helped him academically. He did confide that he sometimes experienced self-doubt about his academic abilities, but he noted that his friends helped him overcome them, as well as his teachers who knew that he was more than capable of completing the work. Another thing Talib highlighted was that he did not understand the animosity he felt when traveling from his neighborhood to Du Bois Charter High School’s neighborhood. He recalled countless experiences on the subway where he was harassed and as he described it as a “war zone.” Nonetheless, Talib endured and ended up attending Pennsylvania State University Berks campus.

His brother followed him to college. While in college, Talib saw that some of the preparation he received at Du Bois did not prepare him fully. He noted that the school did the very best it could do, and he appreciated the “assertiveness” they instilled in him and his peers. When pressed, he stressed that he did not mean assertiveness in a negative way, but in a more positive perspective – for example, asking for help when needed, and being confident in his academic abilities. Talib’s university had just over 2400 students. When asked if he wanted to transfer to the major campus, he said that he preferred to be on the smaller campus. At the time of his interview, he had completed his second year in college. He was majoring in psychology with the intention to help others.

Rashid

Rashid was a very outgoing and forthcoming young man. He was humorous and respectful. Rashid was also going through tremendous stress. He was home from Benedict College, having come home at the end of his first semester because his father was ill. He attended the local Community College for a period of time before ultimately taking time off. Rashid felt that he needed to be home to help assist his family instead of off in college at a HBCU down south. Rashid spoke very candidly about a host of topics, but his family and his father’s illness was an area where he went into greatest detail.

Rashid grew up in a two-parent household and went to public school for K-8. He attended local schools near his home, in the same neighborhood as Du Bois Charter High School. His father did not want him to attend the local high school because he felt that he would not be as successful there because of distractions (namely girls and the negative influences of the streets). He professed that he too was not excited to attend public high

school, and when the opportunity came for his family to attend an information session about Du Bois Charter, he was excited about the opportunity.

While at Du Bois Charter High School, Rashid grew into a leader. He claimed that he was not as “book smart” as many in his class, but he did acknowledge his leadership skills, which he said were honed through his Outward Bound experience and being on the football team. Rashid, while claiming not to be a successful student, was persistent. He continually sought out his teachers to ask them for assistance. He was extremely appreciative of their efforts and acknowledged that they contributed greatly to his being able to be prepared for college.

Rashid drove down south with his father to begin college. He expressed that he had family in the area near his college and was excited about the opportunity. Once he started classes, he realized that he was not as challenged as he was at Du Bois Charter. He stated that he had never had anything higher than a “2.5” GPA in his life, and during his single semester down south, he had a 3.4. His college, in addition for being on YouTube for hallway fights, was a least selective HBCU with just over 3,000 students and was 99% Black.

Shortly after Rashid’s interview took place, his father passed away. It was unclear if Rashid would be returning to Community College in the spring semester, but he did intend to return to higher education at some point in the future.

Pre-Du Bois Experiences

Most of the young Black males interviewed for this study grew up in families which can best be described as having strong mothers. Four classified themselves as having grown up in an extended family environment, with one parent and one other (usually dad) around some of the time, or another relative, oftentimes their grandparent, living with them. Additionally, another four of the participants grew up in traditional households with both parents in the home. One of the participants who grew up with both parents in the home lost his father to cancer during the interview process. Only two of the participants grew up in homes with an exclusively single parent (mother).

When the participants were asked “who was the first person who spoke to you about college and when,” most responded that it was their mother. The average age was in middle school. Three of the participants were not asked about, nor did they think about the possibility of attending college until they reached Du Bois Charter High School. For those who were exposed to the idea of college at a relatively normative age, most of their mothers had either attended or graduate from college. Those mothers articulated to their sons that college was a “process.” For those who were exposed to the idea of college relatively “late” (i.e. in high school), they all knew about college, but didn’t feel that it was an option to them either for financial reasons or because they were not “smart enough.” Rashid noted that once he gained the confidence from his teachers at Du Bois, that he’d “give it a chance.” In contrast, Talib, who is a first generation college student along with his twin brother, felt college was part of a complete educational process and saw college as the next “stepping stone.” What is interesting to note is that all of the participants parents who had attended college in some regard,

expressed that it was important to their sons. What is equally interesting is that for those participants whose parents did not attend college, they placed their sons in a position to achieve academically (either in middle school, or by virtue of attending Du Bois) regardless of their own academic experiences. Thus, what can be said for the role of parental influence is that consistency and persistence was important in helping guide their sons to positive academic achievement. What is not known is how those students internalized those messages and gained the trust and persistence to follow through and achieve college attendance.

Family and Academic Background of Students

Each of the participants K-8 schooling was fairly common for young Black males growing up in urban environments. Six of the students attended a traditional public grade/middle school (a few attended several different schools), while two attended catholic schools and two attended charters, even before coming to Du Bois Charter High school.

Tyrone highlighted how his mother felt like she had explored all other options in regards to his schooling. He had gone to a public school to start his education, then went to a Catholic school when that did not work out and then yet another Catholic school for middle school. So as he states, his mother felt like “Hey, we’ve put you in Catholic schools all your life, why not try Charters.” Tyrone was eager to undertake the challenge of attending Du Bois Charter as well. He felt like Catholic schools received positive accolades but were never challenged for some of the negative things that occur in their schools.

Most people believe Catholic schools have certain moral codes and upstanding. Catholic schools are plagued with the same things as public schools; there are still bullying, there's fighting, still sex and drugs happening in Catholic schools, even in middle school and elementary which is kind of disconcerting sometimes.
 – Interview with Tyrone, 1/16/13

Since coming from the Islands as a child, Duval's parents were concerned about him becoming more "Americanized." Duval was one of the only participants interviewed who did not reside in the city limits, living in an adjacent suburb just 2.8 miles from downtown. However, the racial statistics were quite different from the neighborhood where Du Bois sits. Duval's suburb was 27.5% Black, while Rock Mill [pseudonym] where Du Bois was, was 65% Black, and the median income was \$10,000 less in Rock Mill than where Duval resided. As such, Duval's immigrant parents had instilled in him a different expectation about his schooling. He noted that his mom did not enjoy the "melting pot" too much because she felt that it was affecting his schoolwork. If what she saw from their neighborhood in grade school and middle school was indicative of what she was going to see from him in high school, she "did like what she (saw)."

Yes, everything was cool. That was in elementary school in [Lake Forest] Park. I went all the way through [Lake Forest] Park and I did very well. I did very well in [Lake Forest] Park. Middle school was [Shore] Hills Middle School. That was only because we lived in that county... We went to [Shore] Hills and that was an experience because that was like a little taste of what the true kids of America act like.... I will elaborate. There was a bundle of kids that didn't go to that elementary school. I'm expecting everyone from [Lake Forest] Park to just go to the same school. They did but then there was a whole bunch of new kids coming from a whole bunch of separate elementary schools.

That was an experience, meeting flavors of people that were from [the city] and people that were from the suburbs and stuff, and interacting with them. That was fun because it was truly the beginning of the melting pot. From there it was like high school... OK. Most of the kids were Black but I didn't hang out with all the Black kids. What she saw was my grades were at a point in elementary school and in middle school they weren't at that point. She saw procrastination that came with it. It wasn't just the

characters I was with, my charisma was changing. She didn't like that. She just wanted to take me out of that school system.

– Interview with Duval, 3/29/13

These two participants are just an example of the diverse reasons why participants and their families thought Du Bois Charter High School was a good choice for them.

Family Influence on Du Bois Attendance

In regards to the participants' family socio-economic status, all participants self-identified as working class, or as Antoine described "low-income." What was similar among all of their stories, beyond family income, was the strong sense of personal responsibility, importance of education and racial identity instilled in them from their parent(s). Tyrone, described what many of the student's articulated different ways. His mother told him that he was responsible for what he does, often saying to him: "You are a young Black individual from age (whatever age)...you have to keep your nose clean. You have to make sure you have a certain amount of education, or you're not going to make it in this world. Because everyone is going to judge you by that..." – Interview with Tyrone, 1/16/13.

In addition to preparing their young Black boys for what it means to be Black and male in this society, some of the parents were also concerned not just for their educational opportunities, but also the safety of their child. Bill commented: "...my mom really looked for me to be more educated and actually be safer too. Mostly for the safe part, but also educational wise, too..." – Interview with Bill, 3/24/13.

While Bill's mother was wanting him to be safer in school, some of the students interviewed were not concerned about school safety, and were instead the ones causing

havoc in their middle schools. Antoine knew how the system worked in his school. He was given Therapeutic Staff Support (TSS) because of behavioral problems and as such felt that he could do anything he wanted.

...actually during my eighth grade in another school I was actually being bad, knowing I cannot get kicked off of the trips so I was just being bad for no reason. Other kids would get kicked off so I was like I got special privileges. Maybe that was only because I had a TSS record in middle school, so it was really, I couldn't get into trouble. It was like to my advantage...most of the teachers thought I was just like...we know we can't take this trip away from him so we're going to let him be... – Interview with Antoine, 1/18/13

Antoine was raised in a large family, the fifth of seven kids. One of his brothers was incarcerated. Before coming to Du Bois, he seemed resigned to a fate other than college. However, his mother was so exasperated with his behavior that when they were looking for high schools, she saw a flyer for Du Bois and attended the meeting where Mr. Simmons convinced her that her son could succeed academically. Antoine described how he was convinced Du Bois was a better option for him than his neighborhood high school, and wanted to have more options available to him than his brother.

Delvon, a self-described “rowdy student” was also attracted to Du Bois because of his mother. She was an employee at the school district and saw a flyer announcing this new charter school. Delvon attended another charter school for his eighth grade school year before attending Du Bois, and was raised by both his mother and father who instilled in him that attending a charter school would make him “more focused” and potentially more disciplined. He articulated; “When they (his parents) found out about the all-boys school, they were like, “I’m pretty sure they’ll teach you discipline and how to be a man and everything else.” – Interview with Delvon, 3/28/13. Despite having acted out by

being a class clown, “rowdy,” and according to his own admission somewhat “violent,” Delvon was very interested in his academics and pleasing his parents.

Rashid had heard about Du Bois from his parents, both of whom were employed, but still lived below the poverty level. Neither of his parents had graduated from college, and Rashid, being their only child, was strongly encouraged by both of his parents to do better academically. When he mentioned how he came to be in the inaugural class of Du Bois Charter, he emphasized that his father did not want him to go to public school and neither did he. He had a sense that he would not only be distracted socially, but not challenged enough academically to achieve his desire to attend college. More importantly, Rashid and his parents felt safer attending a charter school which was just starting out, than attending his local public high school.

...my father, he didn't really want me going to public school. And I didn't want to either because like at the time - I was never no bad child, but at the same time I knew stuff was going on in public school, so I wanted to take a better route and be smarter and I wanted to better myself. I seen what my old friends were going through, I wasn't into that...

– Interview with Rashid, 5/30/13.

Most importantly, when it came time to attend an informational meeting about Du Bois Charter School, his mother made him attend. Having some trepidation, his father, upon seeing the presentation Mr. Simmons and the rest of the future Administrators and Board Members of the school proposed, Rashid conveyed that;

And Mr. (Simmons) put up this slideshow on the wall and he was showing the rates of Black Americans in high school and what the chances of graduating and going to college and so forth. So going to that meeting, my dad loved me, because like he put it out there like he will actually, you know, provide and try to help your son. And my dad is the type of father that he won't put his trust in every man. Because like, a lot of guys, you know, they're not men of their word... – Interview with Rashid, 5/30/13.

It was because of his father's faith in Mr. Simmons that Rashid felt comfortable with him and the school. Rashid and his family believed that Mr. Simmons and Du Bois Charter would deliver their son to college, or at least keep him out of the type of harm that was taking place at several high schools in their neighborhood.

Bill was raised in a household with his mother, grandmother and a cousin. He would occasionally see his father, but they had a contentious relationship during his pre-collegiate years. His early schooling was fraught with turmoil and violence. He first attended his neighborhood middle school, which he described as "the worst middle school you could go to." After a particularly violent incident (that occurred during his high school application process) at the public high school he was slated to attend, his mother began looking at charter schools. He had already been a witness to and a victim of violent incidents while in middle school, and was afraid of attending another violent high school;

So basically what happened is that one of my friends, or a couple of my friends were like being involved and getting beat up at school. And I even - I was lucky enough to not be a part of that, especially since before I even went there, I got jumped once by people that went to the school, and I was still only in 5th grade.... – Interview with Bill, 3/14/13.

Thus, safety was a very real concern when it came time for Bill to choose a high school. Being raised in a household without a male figure, his mother and grandmother both imparted to him the need to be both academically successful as well as safe. "...my mom really looked for me to be more educated and actually be safer too. Mostly for the safe part, but also educational wise, too..." – Interview with Bill, 3/24/13.

Although Rashid and Bill never explicitly stated why they and their parents were worried about safety surrounding their schooling when they were applying to high

schools, it is a theme that permeated many of the interviews. In addition, along with personal safety, trust was a critical issue as well. All the participants had to have a strong trust in an organization that did not have a history, reputation, building, incurred protest and almost a lawsuit because of its single-sexed structure, and had never graduated a single student, much less gotten anyone into college (Interview with Mr. Simmons, 7/18/13). The amount of trust shown by these students and by de facto, their parents for sending them to Du Bois, demonstrated a strong desire for educational change. If parents were willing to put their trust in a school that did not even exist over a school that had a brick and mortar building and had been “graduating” students (perhaps even the parents themselves) for decades, speaks volumes about the strong desire these mothers had for their Black boys to academically achieve.

Reflection on the Du Bois Charter Experience

Many of the participants noted in their interviews that Du Bois Charter High School was an environment in which they felt comfortable being themselves both socially and academically. Before they even began their inaugural academic year, they spent time bonding as individuals. Considering the physical environment of being in extremely close proximity to one another by virtue of spending their freshman year in what they called “the trailers,” it was inevitable that this served as a bonding experience (either positively or negatively) for the boys and helped them to create a camaraderie that perhaps might not have occurred in a more expansive environment.

Self-Identity Development at Du Bois Charter

The culture of intelligence and mentorship went beyond just students to staff members as well. Two of the Du Bois students felt a common bond with the systems administrator at Du Bois who were kind enough to mentor Bill and Andre about computers.

I'd like to thank Mr. Jordan, he works in the computer department at (Du Bois). After and during school, during my lunchtime I would go and hang out with him because there I was the IT assistant during the summer and when I worked for (Du Bois) during that time and he inspired me...he's been telling me and the knowledge that he's been giving me, and he tells me to go research on this...And that's the one thing that he always tells me and my friend that I'm going to give you this information...I want you to come up with your own view about it...I thank him for that and he's been one of my role models to this day. – Interview with Andre, 3/14/13.

Social Identity, Peer and Mentor Bonding

An important component of attending a school with such strong academic goals and structure was the impressions of outsiders. This was especially true of the first graduating class. Setting high expectations and exceeding expectations were two very real obstacles facing Du Bois Charter High School. While there were many positive news stories about the school, some of the negative publicity which took place centered on the social identity of the students. Specifically, the uniforms that Du Bois Charter school young men wore identified them as different from their neighborhood public school peers. As such, there were instances of outside peers questioning everything from their “Blackness” to their alleged feelings of superiority.

For a brief time during their senior years, there were a series of incidents which occurred near the Du Bois campus that involved one of the neighboring high schools. These three fights escalated into a major incident on the local subway in which six

students were “slashed” by a student from the other high school. According to one of the “victims” (who is also a participant in this study), the local news reported that he said “they attacked us and we had to defend ourselves...It was nothing major though.”

In response to this specific episode and other aggressions, instead of hiding their identity while traveling on public transportation to and from their high school, the participants reported feeling a sense of pride that they were doing something different and were willing to endure any external strife that took place. An example of this psychological resilience demonstrated how, from an early stage, these males were conditioned to withstand the academic and social pressures placed upon them. Tyrone discussed another incident that took place right outside of the school.

Even when something would happen, for instance when someone would come and harass one of the students, people had their back. For instance, one of the kids was jumped right in front of the school and I had to like shoo away the people trying to fight him. And Mr. (Simmons) and Mr. (Smith) and others on the staff at (Du Bois) were so good about it. They would help the kid out. They would also make sure that there was action taken and not just like, oh, it’s just boys being boys. – Interview with Tyrone 1/16/13

Tyrone internalized this incident as not a typical example of the violence which plagued too many urban schools and neighborhoods, but rather as a bonding experience which helped to solidify trust not only among his peers, but also trust in the administrators and teachers.

Coming from Bill’s negative experiences in middle school concerning violence, he indicated that even while traveling to and from Du Bois he felt anxious. Bill’s recollection of how he felt about the dress code and his safety seemed to be one of resignation.

...I did feel a bit more aware or a little bit anxious because around the time the school was recognized as being for one thing, an all-boys school, so the general

stereotype was like, oh, they're all boys. They're weird or something like that. That type of deal. I was like, well, what am I supposed to do? I can't not go to school and I can't really dress this way or else it'll take me longer to get to school because I'd have to dress this way just to be unrecognized. But I kind of got past that... – Interview with Bill, 3/24/13.

Talib was one of the few students interviewed who did not live in close proximity to the Du Bois Charter neighborhood. Consequently, he had to travel from the other side of town and navigate two train lines to get to school. In regards to his school uniform and the perceptions of what it meant to be a Du Bois Charter young man, Talib explicitly noted;

It was like a war zone. The kids who weren't going to school, you had to worry about them standing on the corner, making little smart comments. We even got into fights or whatever every week or three days out of a week. It was challenging...In the end it was worth it because like I said. I would rather go to (Du Bois) than go to a public school and have to travel to school and then be in school with the people I had to travel to get away from... – Interview with Talib, 5/21/13

Academic Identity, Race and Masculinity

Academically, many of the interviewees felt that at Du Bois, they could be their true academic selves for the first time. Several participants felt more comfortable there because they realized that they finally would not be ridiculed for their academic abilities. Tyrone felt that if it wasn't for Du Bois, he would have given up academically. He had grown weary of being ridiculed for his intelligence. He even went so far as to imply that he would have fallen victim to the streets if it hadn't been for Du Bois;

...I was almost about to give up and fall in the same things that a lot of other people, other people of my statistics fell into...Because everyone was against me. They were saying, oh you think you're so smart, you're so better than everyone. I constantly, I'm thinking I'm actually the dumbest kid in the class. Even though my grades were quite good...
– Interview with Tyrone, 1/16/13

During the first few years of Du Bois, there was a search for the identity of a Du Bois student. Both the students, as well as the administrators, described struggling with this identity formation. While the focus had always been on a college going culture, what that meant could be articulated in many different ways by students. Mr. Simmons noted that even before the students began, during the initial information sessions he stressed the importance of college and that “guys who fail ninth grade have a harder time graduating from high school...we really wanted to make sure that the parents make an intelligent decision, the correct decision.” Consequently, from the beginning of the school the insistence that college was the goal was the standard. Thus, not only was being smart necessary for students to achieve this goal, persistence and trust were critical as well. However, as with the case for any endeavor, especially one involving young people, not everyone was 100% on board, or were not 100% sure about their own abilities.

For example, Duval was able to describe students who were more focused on their academics and college. As such, he decided to align himself with those who he perceived as moving along towards this shared goal;

You kind of saw the students that were trying to go for college and you saw the ones that were slacking off. That’s pretty much in any school. Instantly, I kind of grouped myself with those that wanted to go to college. Those were my friends; those were the ones that were seeking higher opportunities. They didn’t want to accept where they were...

– Interview with Duval, 3/29/13.

Du Bois also offered exposure to academic opportunities that may not have been afforded to these students if they attended their neighborhood public high school. Bill felt that once he found out that a couple of his friends were going to go to Du Bois, he seemed to warm up to attending himself. In addition, he and his friends were very interested in computers and technology. Not only did every incoming freshman receive a

laptop for their academic work, Bill also stressed that he could possibly learn about computer science.

...And at the moment, you know, just being like, laptop, you know, I could get a laptop? Okay, that's fine. And the thing is, I was always interested in computers and stuff like that, too. So I was like, maybe I'll learn about going into the field of computer science or something like that. So that kind of had me on the wagon, too...

– Interview with Bill, 3/24/13.

Racial Identity at Du Bois Charter

Andre, who was a big imposing presence on his college campus both because he was a football player, and because he was one of the few Blacks, was one of the participants who expressed an acute awareness of his racial identity. He reflected on his high school experiences and some of the backlash he experienced from the neighborhood for attending a charter school that was all boys, had a dress code, spoke Latin, and was perceived by the neighborhood kids to be “better” than they were. Andre shielded himself from this backlash in several ways. He first;

...put myself around friends that have the same mindset as myself and want to succeed and be successful and hopefully open their own businesses and do things with their lives...I never really had a group a friends that were around my neighborhood, but I did know a few of the guys there. They knew who I was, but there always was some hostility to the [DuBois Charter} students because we wore a shirt and a tie and a blazer...

- Interview with Andre, 3/14/13.

Andre believed that in order to achieve, he had to associate himself with peers he perceived to be positive and who were on a different trajectory than some of his peers in the neighborhood. Rather than being upset by the hostility exhibited by some in the neighborhood, he seemed more perplexed. He articulated an excellent analysis of this issue by saying;

[I] always felt as though there was little hostile situations walking around our neighborhood. Oh, who is he walking around with a suit and blazer on going to school and coming from school? I think because they want the same opportunity as I have and they just can't get the same opportunity. I think that's one of my reasons and the other reason is that, you know how growing up back in the '80s and '90s the saying of, you're wearing a shirt and tie and everything you're like a geek or you're basically looked down upon. And I think . . . I will say because of the influence of the media and the portraying of Black culture. And seeing how they never had the opportunity to do things and once you see a Black person trying to do something with themselves, with their life, you always have that other person saying, "You're not going nowhere with your life. You don't need to be doing that." I think that's the reason why the guys were acting that certain way when I'd see them going to school and coming from school because they want that same opportunity, but they just can't get it at the time...

– Interview with Andre, 3/14/13.

Thus to Andre, the media played a role in how some of his peers at other schools in the neighborhood responded to those who were on a different academic track. In response, when it came time for Andre to look at colleges, he wanted to leave the city and not be around an urban area. At the same time, he did want the diversity that was prevalent in his urban area.

Influence of Cultural Capital on Academic Identity

Another component of the peer mentorship and encouragement that occurred within the Du Bois Class of 2011 took place both inside the classroom and on the fields of play. As part of their graduation requirements, Du Bois Charter students had to participate in extracurricular activities. According to their website, the list of possibilities included; Mock Trial Team, Robotics, Chess, Crew, and Debate in addition to the usual football, baseball and basketball. However, with the Class of 2011 being the first graduating class, not each of these extracurricular activity were available from their

freshman year. Some of the students expressed an interest in an activity and were encouraged to find support from adults. Other extracurricular activity were created specifically to highlight or augment the academic focus of the school. Crew was one such activity.

Antoine was one of the first members of the Du Bois crew team and his experiences on crew were extremely influential in his transformation from a borderline troubled young man into a college bound individual. He was proud that he “did Crew my 10th grade year and we made history being the first African-American team on the water in over 50 years, I believe. We had to get up at four o'clock in the morning and get there on time...”

According to the local newspaper, Antoine and his colleagues on the water were encouraged by Mr. Simmons and the coach.

“Crew demands a lot of time, preparation, conditioning, teamwork, and when you plop that down into a rigorous high school program, it really forces students to be organized and efficient with their time in order to make it all work,”
– Interview with Mr. [Simmons], 4/27/09, Local Newspaper.

In addition, Mr. Simmons reiterated how crew initially came about at Du Bois Charter School. One of the Board Members strongly encouraged Mr. Simmons to pursue crew as an outlet for the students. He believed that it would expose the students to a multitude of challenges they may not have otherwise faced. More importantly, it would give the students an opportunity to participate in a sport that was in dire need of minority representation and perhaps could serve as an avenue to a college scholarship. Mr. Simmons recalled a story from before the school was open. He was seeking advice from coaches and others in the area and noted that in one exchange with a coach he was told;

...every five years in [major city] somebody comes along with the idea we're going to have crew for the inner city kids and they raise a lot of money, and they make a whole lot of newspaper articles, and in six months they are no good. He said if that's what you're going to do let me know because I don't want to be a part of it. I said you're our guy I feel the same way I get that and I think and it always reflects poorly on the children never on the people who let the program fold, they always blame the kids right? So I get that so I what he told me was kind of how were baby steps meaningful baby steps to developing a real crew program. And that's what we followed his advice and he has been very helpful and [Board Member] has been very generous as have been our board members for the crew program. So we're fortunate the crew is an expensive sport when you talk about dollars per kid it's more expensive than football...

– Interview with Mr. Simmons, 7/18/13.

Mr. Simmons also clearly articulated his intentionality about the relationship between crew and academic performance.

Look, if you could demonstrate resilience in one place then we can try and transfer that resilience in another place. And we don't care where the first place is. Maybe the first place is on the basketball court or on the football field; maybe it's on the step team it's got to be something we've got to see you... – Interview with Mr. Simmons, 7/18/13.

Many of the participants concurred about their activities outside of the classroom influencing their efforts inside the classroom. Andre emphasized that his activities on the football field helped him to “sit down and concentrate and focus and strategize...So you better be focused and on your A game.” Andre was not alone. Delvon stressed that his participation on the baseball field was contingent on his doing well in the classroom. The school emphasized that he was a student athlete not exclusively an athlete. He noted that this was not the case with some of his peers at other schools and noted that the only way that some of his peers elsewhere were exposed to the idea of college was through their athletic endeavors; “...I've seen schools where their only chance of like going to college is depending on athletic scholarships.” Delvon also stressed that his baseball activities helped him “self-discipline” himself.

Another aspect of the extracurricular activities which were intentionally created and offered to Du Bois students was Outward Bound. On their website, Outward Bound described their program for inner city youth as, "...Our award-winning programs for struggling youth and troubled teens provide real life challenges in a structured environment and are recognized for their ability to foster positive development and well-being for troubled teens..." One of the Board Members was associated with the program and from the beginning, Du Bois Charter sent students on wilderness excursions as a means to help prepare them for a variety of experiences. This exposure helped many of the participants see things in themselves that they otherwise may not have seen if they had exclusively stayed in their urban environment. For example, a few of the participants who participated in Outward Bound found themselves to be leaders. Despite his not liking the types of food many people ate when they are camping, specifically "hummus," Rashid felt he grew from his 3 week excursion into the woods of North Carolina.

And then when I was in Outward Bound, I just felt like, it didn't seem like it, but it was like, I was a leader. People looked up to me because at a certain point in Outward Bound, our instructors could help us find where we had to go, like to our base. But it gets to a point where you've got to lead your team on your own. So if we're walking 20 miles backwards the wrong way, that's on us. We've got to go turn back around. And we got through that. And then the last week, the last couple days before I left, I was just real thankful that, you know, I missed a little bit of football camp, but I was just thankful that I did it because even though it was a crazy experience, it just pulled a lot of stuff out of me. Because mind you, you can't use your cell phone. Only thing you can do is write letters to people. It's like you're in jail. But it's a helping experience...

– Interview with Rashid, 5/30/13.

As far as leadership and exposure to a diverse range of individuals and cultures Rashid noted;

I felt like I could lead. I was like, actually that experience, my own personal vision, perspective of things, got better. Like, alright, I'm going to look at it from

– because like when you working with a team you got look at it through everybody's perspective. So it's like you've got to look at it from the way he felt, you've got to look at it from the way she felt. So it's like, and I was with people from different states and cities. It was me and my homie, Samantha. She's from North [city]. I had my homie from DC, my friend from Colorado, my homie from [Anytown], PA. My friend from Michigan, two people from Seattle, Texas. Who else? ... When you meet different people, you don't know how it is, but they just clicked, they just clicked so much with me. I'm like damn. If they can click with me like that, what people can I help out there? So I'm still trying to find that out myself. But anytime something will happen, I'm just thankful...

– Interview with Rashid, 5/30/13.

Another participant, Duval, also described his physical and emotional strength and leadership skills as a result of Outward Bound. His mother noted that Duval had grown, physically, from the strenuous workout of hiking daily. However, Duval was able to see his maturation and growth as a leader as well.

It even built me up more. I went there looking so skinny and when I came back, my mom was like, "That shirt was bigger on you." I was like, "Yes. "You are carrying 20 pound backpacks with pots and stuff and our clothing. It was awesome getting to pitch my own tent. My favorite memory or one of the two favorite memories was, I think it's called a free day or something, where the instructors give us like a plot. They just send us out. They say "All right, that's your boundary, that's your boundary, that's your boundary, and that's your boundary. This right here is your camp site. I will leave you here for a day? What I know right? People are always like "huh?" By that time we had learned so much from them that we were prepared to do it. I pitched up my tent in like two seconds, setup the fire and just chilled back. Then my instructor came by to check on me and she was like, "Okay, I see you are good here." I was like "Yes, you taught me everything, so I was prepared." I just watched up the river that was next to my camp site and just wrote down in my journal what I was doing. It was fun...

– Interview with Duval, 3/29/13.

Todd spoke succinctly about his Outward Bound experience. "Yeah, that made a lot of us respect each other and gain friendships...It's weird to say, but yeah it did. It made a lot of us get to know each other..."

In addition to their extra-curricular activities off-campus, there were a few participants who expressed how their international experiences added to their academic and social resilience. In addition to participating in Outward Bound, Delvon participated in Summer Search, an enrichment program whose mission is "to find resilient low-

income high school students and inspire them to become responsible and altruistic leaders by providing year- round mentoring, life-changing summer experiences, college advising, and a lasting support network” (Summer Search website). Delvon’s Summer Search experience was the opportunity to travel to West Africa.

I mean, it definitely helped my academics. It gave me a greater appreciation for my type of academics because I went to both, like, the poverty part and like the well-off part of Africa. I saw both sides and it just, like, overall, it just shows me, like, what I had here, I should take advantage of... the fact that I just spent 42 days in a different country. I think I [can] do a couple months, just a couple hours away... – Interview with Delvon, 3/28/13.

Tyrone also attended several summer enrichment trips through Summer Search as well. He went to Maine as well as Peru. Commenting about his trip to Peru and how it influenced his conversations with his brother once he returned back home:

I went to Peru to help build a church for the people during the Summer Search thing. We were supposed to build a hospital, but the people said we’d rather have that. You’d never, through these different things I learned more about different cultures, different peoples, which really got me into wanting to work with people as a profession. Because, seeing these people, you’d never expect the family bond that they have down there. Ingenuity, these people have. They don’t have a lot of the different technology that we have that easily applied to our land that we can just throw up a building within three weeks. They have to build the bricks out of mud, reeds, and all sorts of things. You’re just like, “I never thought you could build a structure like that?”

I feel as though the whole world is a part of me. Whatever comes into my life better molds me to be a better person. When I would come home from my different adventures,

I would always explain to my little brother, there’s a bigger world out there beyond our little fishbowl. And we would constantly talk about these things. I would talk on what I’ve learned about people, about actually, what I learned on boats and other things, so that he’d be better be able to apply them. Real big think tanky things, we’d bounce things off, in order to better supply ourselves with knowledge and other things to get, combat with the world... – Interview with Tyrone, 1/16/13.

Tyrone and Duval were two examples of the positive benefits of the types of enrichment programs students at Du Bois Charter were given. In addition, these opportunities clearly had a positive effect on their academic and social resilience.

Another positive result of offering a diverse range of extracurricular activities at Du Bois Charter School was the idea that many of these activities would not otherwise be afforded to students attending an urban school, or particularly offered to Black males. Andre noted that it was a great thing for Black males to be exposed to the many things available to him in high school.

“I think it's great for Black males to come to [Du Bois] and go through experience with those different extracurricular activities that [Du Bois] offers. Like before I was never interested in chess or anything of the sort. Like I say chess, I always player checkers, but chess, like no, there's too much to go with the game...” – Interview with Andre 3/14/13.

In addition to his comment about race and exposure, he was also someone who took advantage of the opportunities at Du Bois. It was one thing to offer a wide array of extracurricular activities to students, it was quite another for those activities, particularly those with whom many do not have prior direct exposure, to have active participation and engagement. Andre modestly noted that he was one of “the best chess players” in the school and in addition to football and chess he was active in “the weight lifting club. I worked with the arts department and coming up with plays as the stage crew manager and everything...I did a lot of things at [Du Bois]...” A few important honors Andre did not mention during the interview was that he was one of the most highly decorated academically in the first graduating class, received a citizenship award, was the Captain of the football team, and won the coaches award his senior year. Andre was an individual who took full advantage of every opportunity and as such felt because of the “hours [he] put in prepared [him] for how busy [he] was going to be” in college.

Another participant who took full advantage of the opportunities available to him in high school was Andre’s friend, Bill. Bill was able to recall he participated in:

After school clubs, I tried the chess club, the math club, I also tried this one club called the electric train club, which is interesting. The electric train club was in 9th grade. The other two clubs I just mentioned were in 9th grade. The Latin club I went into and saw what that was. And I think it was in maybe chess, too. But besides that, I tried those clubs in tenth grade, electric train club. Then I tried something called the computer building club, which really got me into making computers at least, or just wanting to know more about it, because the thing is the IT guy at my school was like the teacher or whoever for the club. And after school between lunch, during, or after lunch or whatever, I would go talk to him for a little bit and then go to class. Then I started to know more about computers. As the club progressed more, we ended up building a high-end computer for that time. A really high-end computer, like one of Intel's highest CPUs and stuff like that. It was pretty cool... – Interview with Bill, 3/24/13.

Just like his friend Andre, Bill received high honors while attending Du Bois. He was entering his junior year at a prestigious technical university in the Northeast. Because of his exposure to computers, Bill had perhaps found a career. Even if he ended up doing something professionally outside of computers, at the very least he found a passion.

Rashid explicitly saw the relationship between what he was doing outdoors during his summer experience and his work in the fall at Du Bois.

Actually with school, it motivated me to be prepared for harder things. Say, for example, one day we had to take a 10 mile hike. In the back of my mind, I'm like damn. So like when I get to school and you've got to do a 10 page paper, it's like, damn, but you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to take my time and I'm going to get through it but it's going to take a little time and patience. I got patience for myself. And I'm an impatient person. I can't wait but for so long. So it's like when that happened, it showed me the type of person I was like bringing out the good and better things as well...

– Interview with Rashid, 5/30/13.

Rashid saw how participating in extracurricular activities at Du Bois and off campus helped to build his persistence that converted well in the classroom. This exposure and opportunity helped guide many of the participants towards college and helped them learn the discipline and perseverance they needed not just on the fields of play, but in the classroom as well.

Academic Mentors and Institutional Trust at Du Bois Charter

One of the things that proponents of Charter schools contend separate them from their neighborhood public schools is the idea that because of fewer bureaucratic obstacles, they have a greater chance of assessing student academic needs and quickly responding in the most appropriate manner rather than the uniform manner of an entire district. As such, it is essential that the administrators and teachers at a charter school be adequately trained and prepared to assess their student population. In interviewing Mr. Simmons and the students at Du Bois charter it was clear that the message of serving the students' needs was something that was taken very seriously, as was the notion of building both relational and institutional trust with the students and parents.

Many of the participants interviewed praised Mr. Simmons as being an influential person in their schooling. In fact, if it wasn't for Mr. Simmons, Antoine might not have graduated from Du Bois Charter School.

One day I disrespected Mr. [Simmons], believe it or not. And it's like, bring your mom up the next day. My mom came up and she's like, "Please do not start this again." And I was like, "Mom, he was disrespecting me and I don't like the way he talked to me." And she's like "You're going to have to deal with it." I believe she talked to Mr. [Simmons] saying I came a long way. Which I did because I got sent away a couple times when I was younger so it was like I came a long way and I'm ready for a new beginning and he gave me another chance. So, after that, me and Mr. [Simmons] have been very like good. He's been like a mentor to me throughout high school. I think for him to give me a second chance, [was] him seeing something in me. After him giving me a second chance I was just like [let that] be my P's and Q's... – Interview with Antoine, 1/18/13

Because Mr. Simmons trusted in Antoine and gave him an opportunity to rectify his behavior as opposed to kicking him out of school because of his infraction(s), Antoine in turn began to trust himself and want better for himself both academically and socially. Mr. Simmons confirmed that Antoine was a discipline problem in middle school.

However, because Antoine was given an opportunity to rectify and improve his behavior, he ultimately became a model student. Not only did he become a model student, he had given back to his alma mater each summer until this year when he went on a trip to South Africa sponsored by his college.

If we had to make a decision based on academic ability we would have sat [Antoine] at the door. [Antoine] has outperformed any God given talents that he had. [Antoine] has long out performed those. [Antoine] is my miracle child here because [Antoine] was a piece of work in middle school he had a disciplinary file that thick. And [Antoine] never had a problem here except in class when you were disrupting the class and he was trying to do his work he'd get a little testy then, and I don't blame him for that. I'd never get mad at a kid who's upset because somebody disrupted the class...

Yeah you see that he's back he's working at a school. Now here's the other thing for his first two years in college he worked here, this year he didn't have to work here. He let me know hey I've got something down in my school and he's got friends down there and I miss him. He came back every year for summer but you know what baby is growing up I loved it I'm proud of that... In the first class the only person I can think possibly is [Antoine]... [Antoine] wants to, he wants to. – Interview with Mr. Simmons 7/18/13.

Another student who was on the precipice of losing trust in school was Tyrone.

Tyrone knew that he had the academic potential, he just felt that because of his experiences in middle school, both socially and academically, that he would be misunderstood through his high school years as well. Tyrone articulated that he felt that Mr. Simmons had faith in him from even before the first day of school.

Mr. [Simmons] saw that, saw something in me and from day one...even before we got into school, he invited me to a special lunch with a certain amount of people who he thought would eventually come to make something of themselves. And throughout that time he constantly, would be “hey Mr. [Tyrone], whatcha doin’ here?” and he would constantly mentor me, telling me what I should be doing in order to get better at this...

– Interview with Tyrone, 1/16/13.

The trust Mr. Simmons displayed to Tyrone had continued into his collegiate years. As an alumni and member of the first graduating class, Tyrone testified at the

School Board hearing when Du Bois applied to expand their charter to include middle school. Tyrone had become far more social and academically successful because of his experiences with Mr. Simmons and at Du Bois Charter School.

In addition to the administration (as exemplified by Mr. Simmons), there was also a considerable amount of trust between students and the teachers. The Du Bois students interviewed all felt that their teachers cared about not only their academic well-being, but also about them as individuals. Rashid both explicitly and humorously noted;

They put they self out there first. They don't know me from a can of paint. The first day of school, 9th grade, I'll never forget it. The trellis was right there, over there. Coming up the stairs... and the old security guard. He's like, you ready for school? So I put on my ID. Get my schedule. I go to class...and she's like, Hi, my name's Sarah, I'm your 9th grade teacher, dah, dah, dah...The whole vibe was she's supportive. She's going to help me...A lot of these teachers like would tell me, [Rashid], you've got potential. But, you know, at that age, it's like, I know, but I don't see it yet. I still got it, I just don't – my dad says, [Rashid], you've got to get it. I just don't see it yet. One day I am going to come across and see it and I am just going to take it... – Interview with Rashid, 5/30/13.

Tyrone grew as a student not just because of his trust in Mr. Simmons, but also in his teachers, much like what Rashid noted;

I didn't trust the teachers until high school actually. [Du Bois] teaching is what made me regain trust in teachers. Because...as I said, Mr. [Simmons] came and in and said “like this is what we're gonna do.” And from that lunch, then whenever I got in there the teachers actually cared. They made sure to give you their cell phone numbers, they would stay late to help you. Whenever I didn't understand something in math, they would sit there and help me and would go out of their way. And they weren't just like, “Sit down, shut up, sit in this chair, here is this textbook read it...They actually came and said, “hey, I'm Mr. so and so” and would sit there and would talk to you, actually learn more about your family aspect, about who you were so that they could better teach you and come around...certain teachers would actually come visit you at your home and stuff. These teachers at [Du Bois]...really cared about you which helped me um, trust them a lot more. - Interview with Rashid, 5/30/13.

Thus, the Du Bois ethos was one of assisting students to be successful in the classrooms, and on a personal level. While many educators might find it problematic to give out their

personal cell phone numbers and be so open and available to their students, this was commonplace at Du Bois Charter School. However, there were a few instances in which some of the teachers just did not work out. Tyrone told a story of one of his history teachers who did not acclimate to the climate at Du Bois well.

And there was that one history teacher, who actively gave us...was one of the worst teachers ever. She came in and was basically like "sit down, shut up, I'm here to teach you..." And would like put papers on our desk and held a nasty attitude whenever she came in. She basically looked down on you. And if you did something wrong, even if you were getting an A in the class she still would come and be like "how dumb can you be that you can't understand such and such a thing..." And you wouldn't expect that at [Du Bois], this is one of the very few exceptions of teachers that are, were at [Du Bois]...she left after the first year. Because they noticed "this just ain't working..."

– Interview with Tyrone, 1/16/13.

What was noteworthy was that not only did the school respond quickly regarding this particular teacher, but the student was also aware of what the expectations were regarding a Du Bois Charter School teacher, and could articulate the lack of respect that he felt in this classroom in relation to all of his others.

Several other participants mentioned one teacher in particular, an English teacher Mr. Rhoads. Five of the participants interviewed singled him out as an academic inspiration, as someone who helped shape their writing and who helped prepare them for college. Antoine, who understood that in college there would be a strong need to be able to articulate oneself through papers, saw his English teacher as both a blessing and a curse.

I just focused on my studies a lot. I would say my English teacher in 11th grade. He was the one who gave me C's on every paper and was like, "This is not good. This is not good. This is not good." I was like, "What am I doing wrong?" He said you're going to college, they're just going to give you an F for that. He said you're not ready. I just kept writing and writing and writing. I think my overall grade was a B. He was like, I see an improvement in your writing. And if you keep writing and writing over again and reading and things like that, your vocabulary

will expand and things like that. So me just studying a lot and reading over my work, that's what got me prepared...
– Interview with Antoine 1/18/13.

Instead of seeing the bad grade as a negative, Antoine saw his writing as a work in progress. This was a very high level order of thinking. Most high school students and teachers, see grades as the end result on progress and improvement. Mr. Rhodes pushed Antoine to do better with the knowledge that he may never see perfection in his classroom, but that the work Antoine put into improving his writing would show dividends in college.

Delvon also saw the reward of patience and practice benefiting his writing once he got to college. He noted that Mr. Rhodes helped him;

Also, surprisingly, my old AP English teacher, Mr. [Rhodes] he was real strict on me and a lot of his lessons and stuff didn't sink in until I got to college. Like, he would never accept any excuse for late work or missed work and he would always say, "When you get the college," etc., etc... – Interview with Delvon, 3/28/13.

What is noteworthy in both examples is that not only did the students believe that they would achieve college attendance, so did the teacher who was pushing them while also encouraging them by using words such as “when” and “I see improvement.” This positive encouragement as well as having high expectations for students paid off greatly for both Delvon and Antoine.

Mr. Rhodes also instilled a drive in the students to strive to do better. Sometimes this can border on an obsession for the “perfect” paper and constant revisions. Duval believed through this process that he was never going to measure up. However, it also taught resilience to the students in the face of being told their work was not acceptable. Instead of giving them false expectations for the future, Mr. Rhodes was honest, but kind.

He showed respect and high expectations for his students' work, and they responded by continually improving and seeing opportunities to improve in their future work at college.

He started off his teaching with a very strange but powerful motto, I am teaching you to become rulers of the world. I was like is this man trying to make us take over the world? That was his statement; I want you guys to rule the world. It never really clicked until college when I was doing a paper and it was about finished and one of my studying partners he was doing the exact same topic...well not the exact same topic but for the same class. I asked him if he could go over my paper. He did and he said so this your final draft. I was like "Nah dog, that's just like brain storming." He was like "Nah, this is really good!" I was like, "OK, cool, well I still need to fix it up probably like two more times." It was probably the habit of him saying ok so repeat, and repeat, and repeat, and repeat...
 – Interview with Duval, 3/29/13.

It is quite admirable that these students took the lessons of this one teacher to heart so much so that they recall him fondly and see, at an early age, the benefits of Mr. Rhodes' high demands. In addition, the relational trust built was reciprocal. The students trusted that the "pain" being inflicted upon them in the short run was going to pay dividends in the long run. The students were also extremely appreciative of the hard work and dedication their teachers demonstrated.

Many of the participants discussed the patience and openness of their teachers. In addition, the students also felt comfortable enough to be able to approach their teachers and seek out help and assistance, when needed. Talib noted that he felt their dedication to their craft, as well as to a cultural understanding of their students.

Yes, I think they prepared me (for the diversity and rigor of college) because the different diversity of the teachers. The teachers came from many different backgrounds. Caucasian, Asian, and also African American. Yes, because their different teaching styles made us see how different people from different backgrounds think, how they think and how they learn. Or different experiences they went through during their life...They felt basically where we came from and they felt our struggle...Being as though they were so warm and kind and engaged. They went out of their way. Some teachers were also coaches and you could see those two different sides. They were two different sides but at the same time they

were similar because they put love and passion in the teaching field and also on the playing field... – Interview with Talib, 5/21/13.

Talib was not the only participant to be grateful to his teachers for helping him and being more than just teachers, but also mentors and role models. Rashid, in his humorous way, really articulated how Du Bois felt like family. Not only did the teachers push him academically to be successful, they also helped him to grow into a man. They were patient, caring, knowledgeable about events taking place in their lives, and, perhaps most importantly, diligent and persistent. They did not give up on him or any of his peers.

I actually started staying after school more with my teachers and actually working with them. Even my teachers before that, like the ones that was here. They wasn't my grade, but I could still like, say, for example my senior year, I went hard, I went and I said, alright, I did better things with my writing. I like to write, but it has to be about a topic I like. So like they say for example my teacher, they give us questions that got to be up to about a two page paper. I was like damn, I don't want do it. But I would go back, work with people and be patient and see the little things I need to do. So that's how it was. So with the Outward Bound experience of being patient and then coming back to school being patient, it helped me out a lot...I don't like none of them. Psych, no. Psych, no. I can't stand them. Psych, no. Seriously, the one person that influenced me the most, I can't even name this. Even the ones that aren't even here. The previous ones. Even when you come in here, the ones that are still here who know me or the new ones, they supportive. Like, I ain't going to hold you. They really supportive. Like, you can call them up like 12:00 at night...Like they know my situation in my life. They are always there to talk. They're very, very caring. It's not just about school like that. Like when they say to you you're family, like they're really your family. You can go back to them, talk. It doesn't even got to be about school. Just come up and just talk to them...

– Interview with Rashid 5/30/13.

As a result of the family atmosphere, high academic expectations, social and peer mentoring and the opportunity to participate in a multitude of extracurricular activities, when it came time for the Class of 2011 to prepare for college, they were prepared for the undertaking. Another individual who participated greatly in their college journey was the college counselor, Ms. Carter.

Ms. Carter came to Du Bois Charter during the second semester of the participants' junior year. Despite not starting Du Bois Charter with the students from the beginning, she was quickly accepted into the family. Ms. Carter had experience serving as a college counselor at a prestigious all-girls independent school in the Northeast and had a close relationship with many of the colleges in the area from her experiences as a professional and as a student, both as an undergraduate and as a graduate. Thus, when Ms. Carter came to Du Bois, she had a track record of having her students accepted to prestigious colleges and universities. However, Ms. Carter did not have experience in navigating low-income Black males through the college process. Ms. Carter felt that this was a challenge she would be able to meet considering the head start the school had given her with such a strong emphasis on discussions about college.

I didn't come until January, 2010. So I came when the first class were halfway through their junior year. Okay so there wasn't anything that I did before that. I think that as a culture and a school a lot of that was happening. I think teachers were talking about college a lot much more than you would find at an average school. And probably more than you'd find at your average private school because I think it was just very much expected that they were going to go to college and everybody wanted to talk to them about it. But I didn't come in until halfway through junior year.

So I kind of did what I normally would have done my background was being a college adviser at a private school. And I working in a private school I rarely talked to younger students or dealt with younger students at all because they were kind of brought up in the culture of college you didn't need to hammer that home with them. And so I would just start working with them halfway through junior year so I was kind of working the same schedule that I had always worked in past with them. And I just started meeting with them one on one when I got here... – Interview with Ms. Carter 7/18/13.

After another college counselor did not work out, Mr. Simmons was extremely pleased that he had her in his school.

We had another college adviser who talked a good game but didn't do the work and it was very obvious with [Anne] that she knew the whole college game cold. And that you could see right away that she came in and had a methodical approach to getting the work done where you could see that there was going to be a good outcome from it. So it didn't take long because quite frankly when we hired her we were desperate. But we realized what we had... – Interview with Mr. Simmons 7/18/13.

Ms. Carter was able to immediately notice some distinctions between her all-girls experience and her new experience working with all-boys. She also highlighted some of the differences between the charter school environment and working in an independent school.

Definitely it was definitely an adjustment I mean it's a big adjustment before I worked with girls and working with boys is a huge adjustment. And then working in a public school versus a private school is a huge adjustment. And working with mostly first generation kids is a huge adjustment. I mean some of the things that it was very easy to get the girls in the private school to do for you and enforce if they didn't do for you. It's been a much bigger challenge just getting them to fill out a questionnaire. I would give students a questionnaire to fill out and I'd get them all back maybe I would have to like follow up with a couple of girls to get them in on time.

Now I give students a questionnaire and I get 25 percent of them back by the date that they were supposed to come back. And then I'm working to get the next 50 percent in and then the last 25 percent I practically have to sit on them to get that done. I mean it's really different I always had set deadlines you have to if you're going to apply for a college with a November 15th deadline you have to have the application done and in to me by a certain time. And that has not been something I've been able to do here even though I have hopes for trying to enforce that a little bit more next year. And I think that there's a lot of different reasons for that. I was at a boarding school before so I didn't have parents for the most part who were right there with the girls at night enforcing things. But they were constantly getting the message of you just do your college stuff it has to be done this is really important. And I don't really know that these guys are getting that same message at home...

- Interview with Ms. Carter 7/18/13.

The students were quick to see Ms. Carter's passion for assisting them in their college process as much as Mr. Simmons had noticed. None of the students had experiences going through the college process and many of them were the first in their

family to even apply, much less desire to attend a four-year college or university. They knew the importance of college, and that it was needed in order to become successful in our society. However, the steps necessary to achieve college attendance was something completely foreign to them. Because of their teachers and the school's emphasis on college, they were conceptually prepared to go through the process, but very few actually knew what that entailed. They quickly grew to build relational trust in Ms. Carter based on their institutional trust of Mr. Simmons and others in the school.

Since very few of them grew up in an environment in which many people had experiences either attending college, or even visiting a college campus, the role of college counseling was a crucial next step in their maturation from high school boys to college men.

Tyrone clearly articulated the challenges young people face in terms of job prospects and college.

College, in our society now...with the factories and the different things closing. Once upon a time, college wasn't needed. You could go out and and go, hey, I'm going to work at this factory and make shoes all my life. And you'd be able to live off that. You'd be able to wait tables at a certain place, and be able to make a certain amount of tips and live off of that. But with the growing...how businesses have become more automated, you don't need workers in the factories anymore. You don't need people to sit at cash registers, because you can basically have them pay for it themselves.

We're in such an automated world now a days that a lot of these jobs are being cut out. That's why things like teaching are becoming harder too, because people are now starting to think, online, let the computer teach them. But then they forget that you also need that social aspect of school. And what college, college teaches you so much. It's not just learning for your job, it's the social aspects. You get to learn about people, you get to learn about rapport that will help you find internships, that'll help you basically get along in life. People, who don't go to college, miss out on that aspect. Along with actually getting a degree which is beneficial in all sorts of ways. Even at McDonalds they look. Do you have a degree? On every application, do you have a degree? If you have a degree, it puts you in a better standing in any job... – Interview with Tyrone, 1/16/13.

Consequentially, Tyrone knew, as someone who is not outgoing and a self-described “nerd,” that he’d be competing during the college application process against what he perceived as peers who possessed better social and perhaps academic skills. The challenge for Ms. Carter was to find a school that would meet the needs of someone like Tyrone, as well as the rest of the Class of 2011.

One of the things Ms. Carter did, above and beyond many college counselors, is to physically expose the students to college settings. Ms. Carter spent countless weekends driving Du Bois students throughout the East coast to various colleges and universities. In addition, she also took groups of students to the numerous local area colleges for visits as well. For students who had only been away from their neighborhood or city a few times, if any, these trips were invaluable. Not only did the students begin to understand what their teachers were explaining to them about college rigor academically, they also were being exposed to a hint of what the social aspects and the college experience on campus would entail.

Beyond DuBois: The College Experience

One of the most difficult things for a parent to do is to let their child leave home. Leaving their comfort zone and traveling hundreds of miles away is difficult for both parents and students. For low-income parents this is especially difficult. Even if their sons resisted succumbing to negative peer pressures in their home urban environment, they then become faced with a new test of navigating another challenging environment. Regardless of the type of higher educational institution, their demonstrate resilience and adaptability were important variables to their academic and social success. Another

difficulty surrounding many low-income, first generation college attendees, is being able to navigate through the complexity of the financial aspects of college. Finally, an essential component to college success is comfort. Part being comfortable in a new challenging environment is entering as prepared as possible both academically and socially. While the participants' families and high school prepared them as well as they could for this new experience, some of the participants in this study did continue to struggle in a multitude of ways in their college environments.

College Overview

Of the ten participants in the study, eight were enrolled in college during the time of their interview. Of the two who were not enrolled, Rashid was taking courses at a local community college until a family emergency suspended his academic career, while the other student, Delvon, was asked by his college to take the semester off after having academic difficulties in one course the previous semester.

Two of the participants attended a Historically Black College or University, including Rashid who was not enrolled at the time of the interview. Six attended predominantly White institutions that were four year colleges or universities, all of which were in rural or suburban areas, including Delvon, who was not attending at the time of the interview but returned in the fall of 2013. Finally, two participants, at the time of their interview, were attending Community College.

Participants articulated several reasons for choosing their college, among the reasons included distance from home, whether they felt accepted on campus, and financial aid.

Financial and Social Expenses of College

Being able to pay for college was often a significant barrier for participants to attend college. Antoine recalled a story in which his eighth grade teacher was telling him about college. She mentioned that it costs money and thus, Antoine quickly dismissed the notion of ever attending college.

To be honest, I wasn't even thinking about college until . . . well I remember having a talk with my teacher about college and she was telling me the costs. This was in eighth grade and I was like college costs? I thought education was free. And she's like no, college is expensive. I said, well I won't be going to college then. And she was like, I guess you won't. And it didn't really mean anything. . . I just left it at that because it didn't really mean anything to me because I was like, college costs. . .

– Interview with Antoine 1/18/13.

Antoine went from thinking that college was cost prohibitive to actually wanting to embark on the challenge of attending college. Once he began attending Du Bois Charter, he had a difficult time making the transition from his old negative behaviors to the new expectations of Du Bois. After repeated infractions, rather than kicking him out of the school, Mr. Simmons repeatedly gave him chances to improve his behavior. Antoine's mother recognized this and sought to give Antoine a goal. She wanted him to go to college. Antoine, rather than dismissing this challenge, took it head on.

After my mom had a talk with the school off the phone saying she wanted me to go and after I completed the session, Mr. [Simmons] said something about young Black men. How there are many stereotypes out there saying we can't do it where we can do it. That right there was like, I want to go to college and even though it might cost, I'm willing to go for the challenge. . . – Interview with Antoine 1/18/13.

After applying to about ten colleges, Antoine was rejected from his first choice. Rather than feeling dejected, he felt more inspired to attend college. He was accepted to eight

schools, and finally settled on Goucher College because of the financial aid package he received.

I got accepted into about eight of them. My first college letter was denied letter. So that broke my heart... But now Goucher is so expensive. And I feel like it's one of their downfalls in the college. Because I had a hard time paying for it. They gave a good financial aid and I got help from other private lenders and things like that. Mr. [Simmons] got other people to help me to get scholarships and things like that... So I look back at it and I'm proud to be where I'm at. – Interview with Antoine 1/18/13.

Rather than feel dejected over being told by his eighth grade teacher's that college costs, Antoine went from not thinking higher education was a possibility to actually applying and attending college within less than five years. This is a noteworthy transformation which exhibits his persistence and resilience. Even more impressive was that Antoine also understood that even though scholarships and financial aid were available, it was important to choose a college that made him feel comfortable. After being rejected from what he thought was his first choice for college, Antoine visited Goucher College and; “as soon as I set foot on the campus, I was like I really like the environment here.”

Feeling comfortable in a new environment was a necessary component to doing well both academically and socially. Another component of feeling comfortable on campus was the racial makeup of the campus and the openness to diversity.

Experiences of Self and Social Identity on College Campus

Transitioning from a homogenous racial and gender high school to a diverse college was not an easy conversion for any student. In particular, coming from an urban environment in which many of the participants had infrequently left the comforts of home, one would expect some apprehension and trepidation in setting out to attend

college. All of the participants interviewed were in majority White institutions that were located in suburban or rural areas. Consequentially, it would appear that racial and cultural diversity would seem to be something that each of the participants would want to seek out in determining a college where they would be most comfortable. However, some of the participants expressed that diversity on their college campus was not an issue, or relevant to their decision to attend a particular college. What was reported as important was how they felt on their college campuses and the challenging academic environment.

Diversity on Campus –Identity Development

For some of the participants the demographics of their college was not a significant in their decision to attend. Bill felt;

Diversity wasn't too important, I just thought about maybe it should be a little diverse, but I just wanted to see how everything would be, even though when I came here, it was strange. I'll be honest, it was strange coming here because you'd just see this one person, for just some strange reason, he's dj'ing outside. I'm like, really? So as I'm walking around campus, I'm like, you know what, this is a pretty cool school. And the thing is, hopefully I don't mind, you know, like all of the other races and ethnicities and stuff like that, like it's something I can get past, because I'm also always willing to explore other people's cultural background... – Interview with Bill, 3/24/13.

Antoine highlighted something interesting. Not only did he feel as if diversity was not an issue, he felt that he would be challenged more and exposed to a stronger academic environment if he attended a predominantly White college.

No, actually once I went there were more Black people. And I was like oh, I'm seeing so many Black people. But once I actually visited, it was Black people around campus. Once I got there, I was like okay where did everybody go? But I actually like it like that. I didn't apply to any HBCU's only because I know how minorities get when we are together... You have to be better than or there's always competition with one another and that's one thing I didn't like...I felt I would get a

good education but I also felt that there would be some [roadblocks]... – Interview with Antoine 1/18/13.

Perhaps Antoine's feelings stemmed from social pressure to perform in a certain manner around his peers when he was in a school of all Black males. Or perhaps Antoine felt like he'd be challenged more by continuing to try to overcome new challenges in an unfamiliar environment. Finally, Antoine's perspective may also stem from the knowledge that he might be exposed to different opportunities if he attended a predominantly White institution that he might not have been afforded if he attended a HBCU.

Antoine also discussed an experience in which his clothing was viewed as a hindrance to his perceived academic ability. Another Black student challenged him for wearing his hoodie in class because of the negative perceptions surrounding that particular type of clothing.

This year when I was in my psychological imagination class. One day I came in with a hoodie on and the hoodie was not over my head but it was up to here, where I usually have my hoodies [up to his neck]. This one girl, she's my friend, but she's White too and she was like, you should take off your hood. I don't like you to have your hood on. I said well, I'm going to keep my hood on. I don't care. [Another student in the class] He's a basketball player and to me he has an identity crisis. But he was like you should take off your hood, you see all these White people in here and it was four Black people in the class, and I said I'm keeping my hoodie on. So I kept my hood on the whole class and after the class he was like I'm mad that you had your hoodie on because White people look down on us. I was like to be honest with you I don't feel like anybody was looking down on me. White people have their hats on in class and they have their hoodies on in class, why can't I have my hoodie on in class. He said well are you trying to be like them? I said I'm not trying to be like nobody, I'm just trying to have my own identity...and we went to [Professor] who is the head of the education department who is also Black. I went and told her how I felt and she was like if you felt like you should keep your hood on, keep your hood on. But there are some White people that look down on us because of that...– Interview with Antoine 1/18/13.

Antoine demonstrated both his burgeoning identity formation and his strength against peer pressure. Rather than succumbing to peer pressure, much in the same manner many of the Du Bois students spoke about when traveling on public transportation in their school uniforms, he took pride in his ability to demonstrate who he felt he was. He wasn't trying to be anyone else but himself.

Diversity on Campus – Perceptions of Race

While some of the participants felt uncomfortable in their new environments, they viewed the opportunity as a challenge rather than an obstacle they could not overcome. Delvon expressed how being a Black male on campus was both a negative and a positive. He felt that "...it's two perspectives on that. It's pretty good. It's nice. I mean, we're [his college] not very diverse. You kind of know, like, all of the Black people and to be one of them, is like, you kind of stand out, but in a good sense. Like everyone knows you..." - Interview with Delvon, 3/28/13.

The two participants who attended or were enrolled in an HBCU both demonstrated an interest in attending a college which mirrored their high school environment. Aston articulated pride in attending an HBCU and being around Black people.

I feel proud. I mean, proud. Black male, it's mostly Black people here. The majority here is Black. There's nothing too different. It's not my first time just being around all Blacks. I've been around a lot of different races. There's actually some White people that go here, different, Spanish, Mexican... – Interview with Aston, 3/29/13.

Rashid, when he was in enrolled in a HBCU down south, integrated himself socially into the community through sharing and by being friendly to everyone. While

nervous about being away from home, he felt that he would acclimate into the college life quickly.

See, the thing is, I was nervous for the school part. But see, like I said before, like, I'm a people person. I don't try to start people, I don't like, don't insult people. I'm not that type of person. Everybody I know says I'm a lovable guy. Cool, silly, goofy, honest guy. So that really wasn't a problem, socializing with people, because I'm a talker. I like to have fun. I meet people down there. They are like, what's up [Rashid]? And I'm cool. I'm not a selfish person. When people, if I had like 100, like, in my closet, I used to have nothing but oodles of noodles, like the ramen noodles, top ramen. Cases from the time you open my closet, a whole wall. Everybody came in and checked, nothing but oodles of noodles. That's all I wanted because I knew there was going to be a time where I'm not going to be able to eat. So I had my little microwavable bowl. The guys down there, some didn't have any. Some people was really broke down there, so like days they were dumb hungry, and I would be like here. And that's how friends come along. You wash my hand, I'll wash your hand. I was just one of them guys that was real cool...

– Interview with Rashid, 5/30/13.

Rashid, through his faith, believed in serving others and working hard. Even though he was nervous, he demonstrated a high level of trust and persistence in attempting to go to college some 600 miles away from home while his family struggled with his father's illness.

Both Aston and Rashid mentioned the excessive time on their hands and feeling isolated while being at college.

Aston noted; "I realized that you have a lot of time on your hands. That's the first thing you realize after you finish unpacking and everything. You sit there and say dang, that's a lot of time..." While Rashid expressed fear and apprehension;

I felt the pressure of being scared in a way of going to school. Again, yes but no. The fear of leaving for school was that, like, I'm not going to be around because I'm going to school down in Columbia, South Carolina, so it was like the only time I come home is in an emergency, and that's a 13 hour ride on a train or a 15 hour ride on the bus and a couple hundred dollar flight to go back. So I'm like, alright, once I leave this city, once you get down there, there ain't no turning back. So once you're down there, you've got to turn it up. You've got to get

yourself situated. Before my dad, you know, the last day, like, the day they unpacked my stuff for the dorm when they left, it was just that, alright, they left. Like, what do I do now? What do I do? I just hope for success? Me and my roommate got along like that... – Interview with Rashid, 5/30/13.

Thus, each felt prepared academically and socially, but also expressed a sense of apprehension about how to spend their free time and allowed a bit of self-doubt to creep into their psyche. Not enough to deter them, but enough for them to pause and take notice.

Andre, was one of a number of participants who articulated that they wanted to go against the grain of the prevailing perception of Black males and higher education.

I always felt it was a little something that I could do. I always knew there was limited space for, there wasn't a whole lot of African-American males in college. So I wanted, after I found that out, I said I wanted to be that guy to say, I'm adding to the statistic saying that there are more Black males in colleges around the country...

– Interview with Andre, 3/14/13.

In terms of pressure to act in accordance with Black male stereotypes, Andre articulated what it was like being one of the few persons of color on campus. As a member of the football team, he also encountered the stereotype that he was only on campus because of his athletic prowess and not his academic abilities. What may have been problematic about being covertly challenged about his academic abilities was his receiving numerous academic and social awards while in high school. It is unclear if he felt attacked by peers because of his physical appearance (including race), dress, or participation in football.

Andre, while perhaps feeling accepted by his home racial community, expressed frustration over being a minority on campus.

Minorities on the campus is pretty difficult because it's a majority of a White campus. So you're looked at as a minority. You're basically looked down upon. You're looked at as oh, you're going to steal something or you're going to beat up somebody... Yeah. People have told me that we can easily pick out who the

football players are because of their size and their build and everything. And I've known a few people that said, they were pointed out to me, that Black guy goes here because of football, that White guy goes here because of football. And I said that's not true because I didn't join the football team until my, into my freshman year, my second semester of my freshman year. I wasn't here for football. They weren't even looking at me from [Du Bois] to play football for them...

– Interview with Andre, 3/14/13.

Being socially integrated into the culture on campus was a strong component to feeling comfortable on a college campus, especially for those who were far from home. Tyrone suggested that even though he felt uncomfortable, he had to push through towards adapting in his new environment;

Throughout my life I've been currently tossed into situations, my mom believed that being stagnant is the worst thing that can happen. A lot of people in my...society, different people around me who live in [my neighborhood]...stagnate, just sit on the porch and just sit all day. And that's the worst thing that can happen to you. You don't learn anything; you don't grow as a person. Growing as a person is the best thing you can have. So whenever I went to Maine, I was able to associate with different people who weren't of my same ethnicity. So a lot of...I was thrust into that situation.

I was uncomfortable, but I had the skills and tools to be able to use it to my advantage thanks to my friend [Malik] and my mom teaching me these things. And after this it allowed me to do, I was thrust into other situations like Peru and go on boats and things of that sort, and management positions I've been thrown into. Every time I've used the skills that were used before, just tweaking them so that they become better and better so that whenever I came to college the social aspect wasn't a problem. I've...I actually go, walk around campus. People go "hello, [Tyrone]." I'm like "I don't know you..." I leave...but now I've learned how to leave such a lasting impression on people that people will be willing to help me, and I don't even know their name...

– Interview with Tyrone, 1/16/13.

Duval attended a regional satellite campus of Pennsylvania State University at Berks Campus. He reported that his high school experiences helped inform his expectations of college and felt comfortable attending the smaller Berks Campus (enrollment 2700) versus the larger main campus (enrollment 39,000). Duval highlighted a significant finding relating to diversity. He said that while there was very little

diversity, if any, in his peer group in high school that the diversity of the teachers helped him feel comfortable and prepared him for the diversity he was seeking to experience in college.

...I wanted to branch out and associate myself with people of all different nationalities, races and what not just to get used to being around different people so in the future it wouldn't be something that was new to me...I think they [Du Bois] prepared me because the diversity of the teachers. The teachers came from many different backgrounds. Caucasian, Asian, and also African-American...their different teaching styles made us see how different people from different backgrounds think, how they think and how they learn. Or different experiences they want through during their life.

– Interview with Duval, 5/21/13.

Those teachers who taught him about diversity, also taught him about being assertive. He stressed that what he meant when describing his assertiveness was not being mean, rude or obnoxious, but rather he meant assertive as being an active participant in his academic achievement. Thus when he arrived at Berks, he felt comfortable seeking out what he identified as “common ground” with both his same race peers, with whom he felt comfortable being himself, as well as his non same race peers.

As far as his impressions of race on campus and his being a Black male on a predominantly White campus, he felt exactly how Du Bois (the scholar) articulated when he noted the concept of “double consciousness.” Talib noted;

I feel as though I am a sore thumb sticking out but at the same time, everyone, me being put out here, I have an equal opportunity, the same equal opportunity as the next person. But I feel as though sometimes I am looked at as different...Sometimes it brings not necessarily anger but that's just the way of this world right now. It has been like that for years or whatever. People are castigated or they are looked at as unequal because of the color of their skin but like I said everybody has equal opportunity. That is just the obstacle that you have to look past. You can either ignore it or find a way to remedy the problem. But maybe personally, I feel as though I have the potential to be as great as the next person...

- Interview with Talib 5/21/13

Talib also reported an interesting finding when he was discussing how he felt living in these two worlds. He noted that he felt that the people he thought were “cool” growing up were not so cool now. Talib demonstrated his resilience through his profound acknowledgement of both the transference of diversity from his teachers to his peers and from his realization that he was living a “double consciousness.” Understanding that his identity feelings of being a “sore thumb” in terms of his racial identity were significant. Coupled with his acknowledgement of how he felt when he arrived on the campus of Berks, where he expressed he could “be my relaxed self,” and that he “didn’t have to look over (his) shoulder 24/7” indicate that he was prepared for the challenges of being away from his home environment and was able to demonstrate both positive academic and social outcomes.

Diversity on Campus – Identity and Belonging

In addition to perceptions of race in terms of internal identity, Todd expressed how he experienced microaggressions and other challenges of being a minority on campus, but felt up to the task.

Sometimes it's frustrating, but sometimes you use it, like, for fuel for fire. You've got to kind of like roll with the punches. I don't let the little stuff get to me, though, because I've noticed that if you let all the stuff get to you--like, the little stuff--you'll be stressed out up here. And there's nobody you can really go talk to, because everybody you talk to, they really won't understand...So, like the way that I deal with it is I just like, like, when it first started happening the first few times, it used to make me real angry. But I kind of like saw that being angry would just make me stressed out, and I wouldn't be able to focus on other stuff, like academically. Like, I wouldn't be able to focus on--like, if I had a test on Friday, and I'm just always thinking about what people are doing, like throwing subliminal racist stuff out there, or stuff like that, it would just mess with me. And I could tell that I would do worse on a test if I would sit around thinking about that kind of stuff. So, I would just kind of get away from it. But I feel like it did. I feel like I am more prepared... – Interview with Todd, 4/1/13.

In spite of his feelings, Todd felt that diversity was not a determining factor in choosing which college he wanted to attend.

“So, diversity, it really didn't matter to me. I mean, I really wasn't too particular on diversity. It didn't matter to me. I just really wanted to go to school; it didn't matter who was there, or what...” – Interview with Todd, 4/1/13.

Another challenge Todd faced, both academically and socially was being a Black male on a predominantly White community college located just under 100 miles away from the nearest major city.

Being a Black male on campus here--it's like most people are, most people are intimidated by you. Right off the bat they're intimidated. And they ask you why you don't smile. If you don't; if you look at people and you don't smile, they ask you, "Why don't you smile?", and stuff like that. I kind of feel like people are intimidated by me. Not in, like sometimes it's in a bad way, but sometimes it's in a good way. Some people; it just keeps a lot of people, like a lot of the negative stuff away from you. When people can see that you don't really play games all the time. You're really not up for the B.S. You're like, I'm trying to go to class; I'm trying to go get something to eat; and I'm trying to do some work at the library. People really stay away from you; they don't really bother you like that. Being Black here, it means a lot, because people look at you different. A lot of people are judgmental up here...When most people meet you up here, that's what they see you as. Before they know you, they see you as a thug...If you don't talk, dress and act like them, then they think you're a thug. Really, what my whole goal is, is to just change that. So, it's like I can dress and talk the way I want, but . . . There has been classes where, I'll be in class; most of the classes I'm in is like one or two Black people in there. So there'll be classes where I'll get higher test grades than everybody who sits around me. And they'll all be looking at me, like, how the hell did he do that? What was he doing that we didn't do? Or something like that... – Interview with Todd, 4/1/13.

Much like Aston and Rashid, Todd also felt some self-doubt creep in during the solitude of silence after the rush of being on campus, setting up his dorm room and saying goodbye to family ended.

Yeah, but it's like, different. Your first semester when you get up here, after they help you move in, and stuff, and they're like, "Bye," and everybody's crying and

stuff, and they leave you. You're just sitting in this room by yourself. You're like, damn, man! I'm just here by myself; there's nobody! I can't just say, yo, where you at? But then it's bad, because when you're bored you have nothing to do. You feel isolated; you feel like there's nowhere, there's nobody you could just go--like normally I'm real close to my grandmom. I'm used to just being able to call her and talk to her. I still can call her and talk to her, and whatever, but it's not like I can go drive to her house and just go talk with her and chill with her... – Interview with Todd, 4/1/13.

Todd was about 100 miles away from his family, but even though the distance is great, they were never too far away from his core values and who he was. He continued to try to make them proud while being in college and working towards a professional degree. While he does acknowledge the new challenges of being alone in college without his normal external supports, he still felt the social support of his family from afar.

Duval, came to America as a young child from Trinidad. His family instilled in him the importance of high academic expectations. When it came time for him to apply for colleges, he applied to several highly selective colleges and was accepted to a more selective college. After attending for several semesters, he felt the pressure of being pre-med and transferred to community college so that he could raise his grades and then reapply to a more selective college in the future. As someone from another country who grew up with a peripheral knowledge of race relations in America, Duval has a unique perspective on his experience of race in college.

It's people fearing what they don't understand you know? It's understandable because if I don't fully understand one race's like cultures habits and stuff then I am probably going to fear it. Sometimes it goes negatively such as race wars and stuff like that. I was very young. It's understandable and important to keep in mind that you are judged by the color of your skin... I think that is because I'm from the islands. I don't really see the color, I don't. If other people do, you might as well recognize it for what it is and keep moving on... – Interview with Duval, 3/29/13.

Academically, because of his family upbringing, Duval was very hard on himself.

Grades were good and I was doing a lot of extracurricular activities along with sports. Then when you hit this level I was like, "OK, so, is the problem with me?" First of all I just started blaming myself. I was like am I studying hard enough? Am I doing group study enough? I was talking to my professors so I did all of that and then started cramming my studies. I started reducing my time of being on my track team and stuff because I started blaming that. I'm doing track too much and I'm supposed to be concentrating on my studies, and so I basically became a machine or a bookworm.

I'm just like I need to get this information into my head and then I didn't see any dramatic changes. If I made a dramatic change on the outside I should see a dramatic change in my test grades and I didn't, so it obviously wasn't me...—

Interview with Duval, 3/29/13.

In a follow up text message with Duval, he articulated that he was still enrolled in community college, but was on track and planning to transfer to a major university the next semester.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted key components of the participant interviews and demonstrated the context by which these ten participants have experienced and demonstrated their trust in institutions and themselves to achieve persistence and educational resilience in their academic and social lives culminating in their college attendance. While this first graduating class of Du Bois Charter School demonstrated a tremendous amount of resilience in their college aspirations, it is noteworthy that the school continued to increase the selectivity of colleges and universities their students attended in subsequent years. In addition, while most of these participants attended colleges in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic parts of the country, the ensuing graduating classes have expanded beyond the East Coast to as far west as Oregon and California and as south as Texas. This study will hopefully assist Du Bois in highlighting even more ways to continue building relational, and contextual trust in their Black male students.

This qualitative examination of the maturation process of these participants from boys to men and their demonstrated persistence in the arc of their college experience is something that needs to be promoted in the discourse of education reform and the debate surrounding public education and Black males. While these young Black males do not represent the multitude of educational experiences of all Black males in public education in this country, there are some conclusions we can draw from their stories. By examining these individuals through the lens of their pre-high school experiences, their high school experiences and their early college experiences, we can articulate positive characteristics which permeated throughout their narratives. It was intended that this research help to inform future initiatives seeking to improve educational opportunities for Black males from the perspective of trust and persistence rather than the more commonly used deficit model.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

“I'm not sure if resilience is ever achieved alone. Experience allows us to learn from example. But if we have someone who loves us—I don't mean who indulges us, but who loves us enough to be on our side—then it's easier to grow resilience, to grow belief in self, to grow self-esteem. And it's self-esteem that allows a person to stand up.” – Maya Angelou

Highlight of Key Findings

There are five key findings from this study that this concluding chapter explore in greater detail. In summary they include;

1. Trust was essential to overcoming perceived and real structural inequalities. Educational resilience can only be demonstrated when institutions are willing to provide a safe, nurturing environment which allows for failure to contribute to positive growth.
2. Seeking academic and social assistance from peers and adults was constructive in contributing to increased positive academic achievement.
3. Cultural capital and exposure to an expansive array of experiences can help minimize the negative effects of poverty if done purposefully and reflectively.
4. Family, peers, and individual agency were critical in sustaining persistence throughout the identity development which resulted in the demonstration of resilience.

5. Understanding and nurturing the social-emotional, racial and gender identity of young Black men was an essential component to positive academic and social achievement.

As reported by respondents in this study, each of these five components were critical in the process of individuals demonstrating positive academic achievement through college attendance.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

Three of the significant factors contributing to persistence and self-identity; family, schools/educators and peers were critically important in helping Black males build and nurture the self-resilience and confidence needed to achieve positive academic outcomes. While each of these were found to be noteworthy in and of themselves, and worthy of discussion individually, what can be concluded collectively is that while there is no singular prescription or formula for achieving resilience in Black males, each of these three components contributed to the greater likelihood of positive academic and social achievement. Most importantly, trust and strength in their own identity seemed to serve a significant finding and necessary component in all aspects of attaining positive academic achievement and college attendance for these young Black males. As reported, each of these participants, to varying degrees, possessed numerous protective factors which assisted in their positive academic outcomes as exemplified by their resilience in attending college. Those who, at the time of the interviews, were either experiencing or had experienced hardships (e.g. not being enrolled in school, family crisis, or other external situations) all demonstrated significant persistence in their ability to marshal a

plan of attack for how they were going to bounce back from adversity and regain their positive trajectory towards college graduation. In the face of adversity, none of the participants were stagnant or content to stifle their drive towards achieving their goals. Thus, it is important to note that all of these students were incredibly resilient as demonstrated by their college attendance. Therefore, an overall discussion of what made these students persist was included to look at the factors that positively contributed to all of these efficacious Black males.

Family Experience

The family structures of these young men mirrored those of much of their urban Black community, with the exception that only two participants came from an exclusively single-parent home. Statistically, the number from Kids Count (2011) showed that nationally the number of Black single-parent families is 67%. In the state, however, the number was 72%. Four of the participants identified that they had relationships with their fathers or another family member who was sometimes present in their home. If we include those individuals as single-parent families officially, then this study was closer to the national average. Even though there has been much written that maligns the decay of the Black family and the erosion of structure in the absence of a male figure in the home, this did not appear to hold true for the students in this study. All participants discussed the importance of the messages they received from their families about educational priorities, much more than the configuration of their family unit.

The role of parental agency and expectations was something that was extremely significant for these participants getting into and attending college. Whereas these young

Black males all came from various parts of the city (all except one from an underserved area), they all received the same message. Education was critically important.

Historically, there are a multitude of structural, institutional and cultural barriers that continually communicate to Black males the message that they cannot achieve. These messages can increase the likelihood that Black males internalize these ideas and ultimately fulfill them. Oftentimes, these barriers, which have been erected for decades, preventing Black male positive academic achievement, are the cause of poor academic outcomes. However, sometimes students have simply not received the tools to overcome adversity, rejection, racism and disrespect. There were many instances where these participants could have given up or succumbed to negative pressures, but they persevered and demonstrated their resilience to achieve their ultimate goal of college attendance. What is critical, is to highlight that there was no singular event, entity or lesson learned that exclusively led each individual to obtain or foster their resilience. What was essential was their relational trust that was built while attending Du Bois Charter High School.

Parents (in particular mothers), in many instances in this study, encouraged their sons to attend Du Bois Charter High School, believing that they would be afforded more opportunities to succeed academically than at their comprehensive neighborhood high school. This was a clear indication of the participant's parental agency, where parents did not accept the ordinary education that their child would receive from their local public high school, but sought out an unproven alternative, learned how to navigate admission, and convinced their child to attend. Ultimately, all of the students felt that Du Bois was where they wanted to be, but often noted the positive messages received from their

family as a key to their persistence and academic achievement. Positive messages were both consistent and needed from parents and their educational institution to combat the negative societal messages suggesting they could not achieve.

Another critical component that began in the familial setting was each student's sense of identity. Student's racial identity and personal feelings of autonomy over their educational abilities also began with the messages received by their parents and peers early in their lives. While the participants noted differences in their comfort level and experiences being in predominantly Black or predominantly White colleges, they all ultimately articulated feeling comfortable with who they were and proud of what they had achieved.

Reflections on the Du Bois High School Experience

In addition to the impact of students' familial experiences, their preparatory education clearly supported their academic success in college. Since most of their early schooling choices were made by their parent(s), this was an important indication of not only parental expectations, but how also how parent(s) manifest those expectations in their trust in a school that did not exist prior to their entrance. Prior to attending Du Bois Charter High School, six of the participants in the study attended neighborhood public schools, two attended Catholic schools and two were enrolled in another charter school for part of their K-8 schooling. What was similar, regardless of their earlier schooling, was the sense of parental engagement in their child's education, and the emphasis on doing well academically. Another critical element mentioned by some students in the study was safety at school. While one participant specifically mentioned that we should

not conclude that Catholic schools were the safe havens people believe them to be, the more general take away from participants was that they (or their parents), believed that being in a new charter environment was safer than their comprehensive neighborhood high school.

When the students felt safe, they were able to perform better academically and to develop a positive level of trust in the school, with their teachers, and their peers beyond what they had felt prior to high school. The feelings expressed by the participants of gaining trust was exemplified in their focus and discipline at school, and manifest itself in their college attendance. Students performed well in coursework, participated actively in extra-curricular programs, became leaders in areas of interest, and discussed feeling close and comfortable with their teachers. Although students initially expressed trepidation at attending an all-male school with uniforms, they reported quickly feeling that it was well worth it for their aspirations of positive academic achievement.

As Mr. Simmons noted, those who felt as if the sacrifices of wearing uniforms, speaking Latin or the rigorous college-preparatory curriculum were too great, perhaps Du Bois Charter was not the right school for them. During the first year, the school accepted all comers and there were no entrance requirements. Much of the negative aspects of charter school literature focuses on the controversial aspects of “cherry picking” and “creaming”, thus suggesting that schools select only the best students from minority groups, so that when they succeed, the school can highlight how well they work with students of color. Although that was clearly not the case for the students attending Du Bois in its first year with no entrance requirements, there was definitely a bias in self-selection, where only students who were willing to go through the rigors described by

Mr. Simmons would have even considered attending. It is important to consider the demonstrated persistence of the students who signed up for this demanding college-preparatory high school as coming in with a good amount of determination and belief in their own abilities. What the school appeared to do once they got there, though, was to create a culture of high expectations, excellence, achievement and academic and social success.

While the achievements of these participants could not completely be attributed to their attending a charter school, what could be concluded was that their high school was designed to help level the academic playing field and contribute to minimizing the “achievement gap” in their urban neighborhood. The structure of the school, and the significant trust and “buy-in” from the students, teachers and administrators all helped to narrow the “opportunity gap” (Royal, 2013). Du Bois offered a multitude of not just culturally relevant opportunities, but culturally expansive opportunities as well. Students repeatedly noted their initial apprehensions being quickly replaced by an articulation of having strong feelings of accomplishment at participating in and ultimately succeeding in experiencing new academic and social endeavors.

Finally, while critics of single-sexed schooling contend that there is a certain level of essentialism and antiquated notions of gender, in actuality, Du Bois Charter High School was one example of providing how trust, high expectations, and college preparatory curriculum increased positive outcomes for Black male students while also reducing the number of dropouts, suspensions and students identified as special education. Thus, while the structure of Du Bois may not be a perfect model, or one that is able to be replicated universally, it does provide an alternative to traditional public

schools and some of their historical institutional problems surrounding the education of their Black male students.

School Culture

Participants reported that for the first time in their schooling, they felt comfortable socially and academically at Du Bois Charter. They expressed that there was a strong culture of intelligence, working together and mentorship. This feeling of camaraderie may have been accelerated by their being in such close proximity to one another in the trailers, which were their classrooms for the first year of their schooling at Du Bois. It is perhaps an unintended (albeit indirect), consequence of the school building being rehabilitated after receiving their charter instead of before. As such, the students became conditioned to reach out to one another and withstand the pressures placed upon them as a group. The ethos of working in concert with teachers and peers in their pursuit of high academic achievement was articulated by their daily school Pledge. Both participants and the school administrators spoke to the importance of the Pledge and mission of Du Bois charter, and how it helped remind them of their purpose each day at school. All of the factors contributed greatly to the students' level of relational trust with their school peers as well as the institutional trust built up from their interactions with teachers and administrators.

The student buy-in to the ethos and culture of the school manifested itself in several ways. For one, the students who mentioned hating to wear their uniforms and considered not attending Du Bois based on that reason alone, all defended their uniforms and school identity in the wake of external pressures such as bullying or other physical

harassment in the neighborhood and on public transportation. The participants expressed extreme pride and respect for their school by wearing the uniform in areas which could potentially be physically harmful, making themselves targets for peer harassment. In addition to the negatives they received from wearing their uniforms off campus, they also reported the joy they felt from the elders in the community who acknowledged them in positive ways for wearing their uniforms. Thus, the uniform served as catalysts for camaraderie with each other (against opponents in the community) as well as with proponents (who could then see and support the students' efforts).

Responses to Academic and Perceived Peer Pressure to Achieve

Another example of the students grounding themselves in the culture of the school was their responses to the academic pressures placed on them by the administration and teachers. While some had experienced such expectations in their earlier schooling, many of the participants had not been pushed beyond their academic comfort zone or positively challenged by teachers prior to coming to Du Bois Charter. Consequentially, they could have responded negatively to their teachers' insistence on redoing an assignment or staying after class to go over homework. Instead, the respondents reported that they wanted to do well for their teachers and for themselves. They were told and acknowledged that the hard work they put in academically would pay off in positive academic outcomes, perhaps even being accepted to college. Thus the students exhibited their high levels of trust by listening, enacting and persisting when teachers and others encouraged them to be able to do so. Finally, academically, they reported that they were encouraged by their peers to work hard and do well and sought out those in their class

who they knew shared similar goals. Several participants had mentioned feeling uncomfortable being smart or doing well in their previous schools, and Du Bois offered the opposite type of environment; a safe, trusting atmosphere that valued students.

In addition to academic pressure, teachers also did a tremendous amount of encouragement and mentoring of these participants. As Rashid mentioned, the teachers didn't know him from a "can of paint" but yet they contributed greatly to the positive academic outcomes of not just the participants in this study, but for the entire class of 2011, as demonstrated by their 99% graduation rate and 96% college acceptance rate. Whether it was inside the classroom assisting students in writing their papers over and over again, or on the athletic fields, many of the adults in the school building did everything they could to make sure that the students were in the best position to succeed. In order for this to occur, there had to be a tremendous amount of reciprocal trust and respect between teachers and students to belief that the teachers were guiding them (sometimes through hard work) towards a positive academic goal.

Importance of Trust

It was one thing for the student's parents to put their trust in Mr. Simmons and Du Bois Charter High School, however, it was quite another for their sons to hold that same trust in their teachers; many of whom did not share their racial identity or even gender. The students who came to Du Bois from across the spectrum of educational structures, all recalled holding a certain level of distrust or apprehension of authority. Whether it was messages received about lower academic expectations, racialized or gender stereotypes about Black males, or unsafe academic environments, most of the students reported

having at least some sort of difficulties during their K-8 schooling. While Du Bois Charter had some teachers of color and an unusually high number of male teachers in comparison to traditional public high schools in this era, students who entered Du Bois Charter School had already built up residual scars from their K-8 schooling which could have resulted in completely mistrusting teachers and the institution of school. However, as this study demonstrated, they not only trusted their teachers, they sought them out as mentors outside of the classroom as well. Further, they acknowledged that some of the teachers were “hard on them” but not only did they not succumb to the pressure, they understood why those teachers pushed them to do better academically and were then seeing the fruits of their labor in college.

While acknowledging being pushed academically, some of the students did report that they wish that they had had more academic resources – for example, a better science lab and an African-American studies course were two specific things mentioned. The students acknowledged that Du Bois Charter School was an emerging school and realized that although they may not be enrolled in the school when it received a new science lab or be able to take increasingly challenging academic courses, they were building a foundation for future generations. This type of forward thinking is exemplary and something that can only be attributed to the culture and the trust created in the school between the adults and the students. Given the concerns of financially under resourced public schools, it should also be noted that it was not the amount of monetary resources that students received at Du Bois Charter that made them feel prepared for college or successful in their academics. Most participants attributed their positive academic

achievement to the culture of trust and respect between students and teachers, and the dedication of teachers to helping them attain college attendance.

Cultural Capital and Persistence

Du Bois challenged students to go beyond their comfort zone, and engage in enriching opportunities that provided incomparable experience to cope with new future endeavors. Rather than simply start a football, basketball, and baseball team, the school pursued the students' interests and accommodated them with a multitude of co-curricular educational opportunities which stretched not only the student's exposure to otherwise unavailable activities, they also helped to contribute to the external impression of Du Bois Charter High School both in the city and elsewhere through their frequently being written up in the local newspaper and on local television. As Mr. Simmons noted, their demonstrated persistence on the playing fields, both intellectual and athletic, helped students be challenged, sometimes fail and learn how to ultimately achieve positive results. As a result, students reported that they were less likely to give up on a tasks, sought out assistance and were not afraid to acknowledge when they did not know something.

For participants who had been ridiculed for their nerdiness, their school uniforms or for attending an "all-boys" school (as an insinuation of their masculinity), being successful not only on the fields of athletic play, but also the fields of intellectual play was a confidence booster which helped build their academic and social persistence. This was the intent of Mr. Simmons and others who purposefully put these young men in situations in which they may otherwise not have been exposed. The intent was to

demonstrate to the Du Bois students that they could achieve anything they set their mind to, and that once they left Du Bois Charter, that they should be able to feel comfortable in any environment.

College Preparation at Du Bois

When it came time for the first graduating class of Du Bois Charter High School to begin their college application process, it was something that student were prepared to undertake. Most of the participants had been told about college from an early age, a majority of them before entering high school. When asked “who was the first person who told you about college,” many of the participants responded that it was their mothers. One responded that he had seen another family member attend college and was inspired by his attendance. In short, unlike what occurs in many urban public high schools, where there is an overabundance of students per counselor, these participants were conditioned to a college-going culture and atmosphere upon entering Du Bois in 2007. Thus the critical role of college counselors in students’ college aspirations cannot be ignored (Bryan, 2005).

From the first day of their high school careers, the class of 2011 was being to be prepared to attend college. Teachers repeatedly linked academic strategies like the revision process in writing to what students would need to do in college. Despite this preparation, some of the students were first generation college aspirants, and did not know what sustained persistence and the college process specifically entailed. The college counselor, Ms. Carter, was essential in the process, to not only walk students through paperwork, but to show them the true picture of what it meant to go to college.

She discussed the realities of finances, work ethic, social lives, and living situations with the students, and helped them prepare both the physical applications, as well as the mental readiness to attend. Ms. Carter never had to convince the Class of 2011 that college was an option, perhaps even a necessity. One of the things that she did do that was exceptional, however, was to take groups of students on field trips to various colleges along the East Coast.

Rather than simply giving them a virtual tour online, or having colleges come to campus for recruitment, Ms. Carter knew that for these students, many who were first or second generation college attendees, being on a college campus, away from home was an important social experience. As such, she logged hundreds of miles, and sacrificed her weekends for these students to be exposed to colleges individually. Her efforts helped pave the way for a 96% acceptance rate and a 74% enrollment rate for the Class of 2011. In subsequent graduating classes, those numbers have continued to increase. More importantly, in interviewing these participants, nine of them were currently enrolled in higher education, two years later, and most were on track to graduate on-time (meaning within 4-6 years). Coming from a high school which did not exist prior to their freshmen year, the “toxic” environment that is the neighborhood where Du Bois resides, the low expectations of Black males in general and the abysmal graduation and college attendance statistics of the District, this is an exceptional feat. While entering college for many was an accomplishment and a demonstration of their resilience, it was not the end game. The end game for most of the participants is college graduation. For these ten participants, 90% of them are on track to achieve this goal, with only one who may take longer as a result of the loss of his father. This is in stark contrast with the 21% college

graduation rates for Black males reported by NCES for this population (NCES, 2013), and shows the differences in pre-collegiate experiences on not only college attendance, but hopefully college graduation as well.

The College Experience

In terms of their experiences once arriving onto their respective campus,' each of the participants expressed different feelings concerning being on campus. What was common across all participants, was that they felt a sense of belonging and felt academically prepared for the rigors of their classes as well as the new social environment.

Diversity on Campus – Identity Development

Participants who discussed identity development were able to successfully adapt to many types of social situations before college, and purposefully sought out challenging higher education environments in which they felt contented in their a new environment. Students who expressly articulated strong racial identity, may have assisted in serving as a protective factor when in a predominantly White environment. Antione showed his strength of identity when facing one of his collegiate peers concerning the wearing of his hoodie in class. While there were many negative perceptions of this type of “hip-hop” clothing, Antoine felt that he should be evaluated on the merits of his abilities rather than his clothing selection, and maintained his clothing choice that he felt best represented himself. He felt so strongly in the face of peer pressure to be more conforming (and

perhaps perceived as less threatening) that he sought out help from an adult faculty member who expressed that she agreed with his assessment of his wearing his hoodie.

What this example demonstrated, was that even in higher education, there were still those who internalized the external negative messages about Black males in society as a whole. Antione showed the significant strength in his self-identity to ignore these messages instead of internalizing them, and instead wearing the clothing in which he felt most comfortable and genuine. While Antoine's Black male peer who confronted him about his clothing may have potentially felt as if he was shielding, or educating Antoine about the normative expectations on their college campus, it became a much more important issue and incident for Antione to reflect upon his own internalized views.

By approaching a faculty member, Antione illustrated not only his comfort with his identity, but also his comfort talking about difficult topics with important adults at school. While many students do not make personal relationships with professors in college, his relationships with his teachers at Du Bois helped him to feel comfortable approaching his professors without being intimidated. Teachers, professors and mentors had then become accessible resources, which was invaluable to him when struggling with academic material. Du Bois strongly developed student's agency which potentially helped assist them in their likelihood of college graduation by teaching them that professors were, on the whole, accessible people who cared about the social-emotional development, and academic growth of their students.

Diversity on Campus – Perceptions of Race

What was notable from some participants concerning their racial identity was that they reported that they experienced racial microaggressions and challenges while on campus. These participants felt as if they had “too much” free time and spent significant time thinking about what was going on at home. They also reported feeling isolated and apprehensive about being so far away from home and their familiar environment. Of note, Rashid, the participant who left college just before he lost his father, was one of the participants who fell into this category. It was not surprising to find that these highly persistent students felt like they were not challenged enough academically at their colleges. While in high school, they had experienced an extremely rigorous curriculum, and were continually challenged with new academic activities. However, some students reported that this was not the case in college.

For those who expressed concerns about their perceived racial identity on their college campus, they also seemed to lack the confidence in their abilities to achieve in the same manner as they did in high school. Perhaps this self-doubt can be attributed to their lack of institutional and relational trust in their college and potentially seemed to be the cause for their academic troubles. Two of the students, Delvon and Rashid, were no longer attending their colleges at the time of the interviews, and the third, Aston, felt extremely challenged by his coursework and deadlines, but said he was determined to just get it done.

Delvon was ultimately suspended from his college after failing a course. However, in the process of the course, he actually did several things well to ensure that it was a suspension instead of a dismissal from school. First, he immediately reached out to

his professors to ask for help. He documented emails and meetings with professors, as well as tutoring on an ongoing basis throughout the course. He felt that his performance in this class was poor because of test taking skills, and reported that the professors even though he knew the material, but would perform badly when it came to the exams.

Delvon noted his fear of the rigors of college going in, and it seemed that this fear was ultimately realized the first time he was truly challenged. What is noteworthy is that his persistence paid off. After taking courses during the summer of 2013 after being interviewed, he was accepted to return to Colby-Sawyer College in the fall of 2013.

Rashid felt that he was extremely challenged in high school, and maintained a 2.5 GPA. He had continually heard about the rigors of college, and said he was worried about things getting even harder than they had been. He was surprised when he earned a 3.4 GPA in college his first semester, and realized that perhaps he was better prepared than he had thought. He felt focused on his academics, but did not feel challenged by the teachers or material. Unfortunately, his father's illness distracted him from his studies, and he ultimately felt that it was more important for him to return home. He had not lost his desire to complete college, however, and intended to apply to a school closer to home in the near future.

Aston was still in college at the time of his interview, and said he had chosen his school because he did not want to be close to the potential negative influences of old friends closer to home. He did feel challenged by the materials, but he was pragmatic in his approach to classes, and simply felt like he needed to "get things done." He did not view himself as especially successful, but felt like he could complete college at the HBCU he had chosen.

Interestingly, Rashid and Aston had both attended HBCUs and alluded to a feeling that it was different than their predominantly-Black experiences at Du Bois. In these colleges, they felt more pressure to be (or at least appear) less academically successful in front of their peers, while recalling their feeling of the culture at Du Bois promoting intelligence strongly.

While all three of these students had strong social persistence and protective factors (supportive families, a challenging high school preparatory curriculum, etc.), their confidence in themselves waned once they left Du Bois. They continually doubted their abilities, and let these doubts interfere with their performance. Additionally it may be noted that their lack of trust in their college environments contributed to their self-doubt and perceived academic problems. For students who come from such strong relational and institutional trust environments, once they reach college, there may be some additional encouragement and supports needed for students such as these who have the skills, but doubt their own abilities.

Another faction existed concerning racial identity; those who in fact, were concerned with racial identity on campus. Andre strongly and intentionally wanted to change the perceptions of other racial groups about what it meant to be Black and in his case, a Black athlete, on a predominantly White campus. While all participants held the same experience of attending a predominantly Black high school, some respondents reported experiences concerning their overall desire to prove their identity to others may suggest that they did not feel as comfortable with their own racial and social identity. In addition to wanting to alter negative perceptions of Black males on predominantly White campuses, other sentiments that participants expressed included; frustration and isolation

on campus, fear of being stagnant and or misunderstood by others, and dealing with negative perceptions of academic inferiority. It could be suggested that their perceived level of persistence in high school may have been an indicator as to whether or not these individuals possessed an immaturity their personal identity development that made them more vulnerable to and fearful of external negative influences.

What was important to note, was not that these students articulated what many students of color and Black males have expressed for decades while attending predominantly White institutions of higher education, but rather that these students expressed these concerns and issues in the face of continuing to, as Talib said, “suck it up and just go with the flow” and keep pushing forward. Thus, while they may have still been struggling to feel comfortable in their surroundings, and in asserting their own identity, these students still persisted in their work ethic and achievement in college despite these challenges. This conclusion could be attributed to their learned skill of reaching out to adults for assistance and in their relational trust both with peers and adult mentors.

Diversity on Campus – Identity and Belonging

For those participants who articulated that they felt external pressure both academically and socially being a Black male on campus, the notion of a strong sense of belonging still was present for them on their respective college campuses. They wanted to transform the pervasive and persistent negative stereotypes and perceptions of their predominantly White counterparts concerning Black male students. As they reported, the wanted to negate what they perceived others as feeling as if they were “intimidating.”

Duval reported that he had a strong racial and ethnic identity being from Trinidad, but simultaneously spoke of how he tried to hide his accent so that others could understand him. He felt high academic expectations from his parents, but ended up at a less selective community college after leaving a more selective college because he failed a course in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) program. It appears that he may not have full confidence in either his racial identity or academic ability. While he left the more selective college where he was initially accepted, he showed significant persistence and resolve in his motivation and determination to transfer first to a community college, and then, his desire to attend a different 4-year college, instead of dropping out altogether.

Todd had chosen his discipline (mortuary science) before he selected his college. His personal experiences with a dying relative led him to a passion in this area, and he found the most pragmatic path to getting to his goals. Overall, it appeared that even those who appeared to have identity concerns, they demonstrated persistence in being able to persevere through the challenges they encountered and ultimately be in a position towards college graduation.

Conclusions on Findings

Throughout this research, several key themes have been illuminated. The role of the family, school, peers and self-confidence all played a role in how individuals constructed their self-identity and persistence towards their desired goal of college. These protective factors were essential to providing individuals with not just one possibility of learning persistence but being able to construct a more sustainable and

malleable persistence. It is important to note that the role of family, specifically in this study, the role of the single Black mother, was instrumental regardless of how much economic capital one possessed. Their influence over the academic choices of their sons was a vital finding. While being able to afford opportunities for your child financially is important, knowing how to put your child in the best situation for them to achieve positive academic outcomes is equally, if not more important. As this study helped to demonstrate, parental expectations and messages about the importance of education were key – especially in the face of adversity.

In addition to the role of family, the role of the school, in this instance Du Bois Charter High School, was also an essential component to helping foster persistence. Both educators and peer mentors played a critical role in these individuals demonstrating an essential element of positive academic achievement, trust. Specifically, educator's built trust by being approachable to their students. Allowing students to feel valued and respected in high school, with closer personal relationships with their teachers, allowed these same students to ask for help when struggling in college. Additionally, the school requirement to participate in extra-curricular activities during the school year exponentially increased student exposure to new and challenging situations as well as increasing students' confidence in leadership roles. Thus structural trust was an essential finding in student's demonstrated resilience in achieving college attendance.

Finally, in the college setting, the two primary protective factors – the family and the high school environment continued to help students continue their development of a strong sense of identity. While participants showed different levels of comfort and confidence in their identity, all students showed a base level of confidence in who they

were that was sufficient to demonstrate their resilience in attending college, and help them establish themselves independently. Lastly, all of these students were clearly persistent, and most likely to ultimately reach their academic goals.

Implications for Educational Policy

In any study, there are several key findings which have the potential to effect more than just the participants in the study. It is impossible to generalize findings from a qualitative study of this magnitude to the broader educational arena and literature of Black male academic achievement in a vacuum. In concert with the emerging work of such young scholars as Dancy, Harper, Howard, Oeur, Strayhorn and others who have begun to shift the narrative concerning Black males from one of deficit thinking to one of more positive examinations, this work sits well within this new literature as a piece of a larger puzzle.

Perhaps the most important implication regarding this study is the issue of single-sexed, single-race public education. Gary Orfield (1999), has been very vocal in contending that charter schools and the current educational landscape can best be described as a “resegregation” of American public schools. Critics of Orfield would contend that there is a difference between structural racism which segregates schools by race versus separation that is by design (Oeur, 2013). While this study cannot suggest any overarching policy implications, the participants who attended Du Bois Charter High School did not appear to suffer from being in a predominantly-Black single-sex school. In fact, the participants themselves often noted the ways they felt that they were able to

thrive in this environment because of a lack of distractions (girls), a common identity and most importantly, institutional and relational trust.

Another area of note was the role of building sustainable and meaningful trust relationships between stakeholders in the educational career of a child. There needs to be serious discussion at both the Federal and District level surrounding how best to build bilateral trust between schools and teachers, schools and parents, parents and students and students and teachers in this tenuous, divisive political era. Warren (2012) noted that perhaps empathy, not sympathy, could be a path to a more accommodating educational landscape.

Ravitch (2010; 2013) is perhaps one of the biggest advocates of the proposition that poverty is the greatest inhibitor to student success. An implication from this study concerning poverty is the examination of persistence and its role in helping to eliminate what Payne (1995) described as the “hidden rules of poverty” and what Lareau (2003) described as “concerted cultivation.” The role of education in this equation is a very pertinent and necessary implication for education policy makers. This study examined a sample of low-income Black males and demonstrated how positive education outcomes can occur when high expectations, trust and persistence are present in the school environment despite their family income level.

Finally, for education policy makers, it is important to ask how the quantification of resilience, grit and character education can help increase positive academic achievement. Is it possible to use Duckworth’s (2012) analysis of the “Grit” scale to assist in raising student achievement, or is the scale something that, as Paul Tough raised

in *How Children Succeed* (2012), a mechanism that can be “gamed” by parents and students much in the same manner as test prep or any other type of coaching or training?

Suggestions for Further Research

After completion of this study focusing positively on these Black males and their resilience as it pertains to their college attendance, there are several possibilities for future research. The scope of this study was purposefully small so as to delve deeper in the some of the underlying causes of what helped to build these participants’ persistence. However, if given proper funding and time, this study could be replicated to included dozen of students over a longer period of time. It remains unknown how these students would do in the long-term once they graduate from college. Thus, it is planned to follow these ten participants longitudinally over the next several years to see how their early educational and collegiate experiences influence their professional career and life choices.

There are several implications for future research as a result of this study. Using the same methodology of this study, except examining the results through a different theoretical lens such as Critical Race Theory, Anti-Deficit Achievement Theory, Charter Schools, or Single-sexed schools. Choosing any one of these theoretical lenses could potentially yield different findings, and would be excellent theoretical frameworks through which to view this population of high achieving Black male students.

Another suggestion could include a broader inclusion of students who did well in high school but did not go through the college application process or who were not accepted to college. Looking at the population of students who attended Du Bois, and

received similar messages but did not feel as if they were comfortable or ready to attend college either directly upon graduating high school or a few years later, could potentially explain some of the differences in the degrees of persistence students' exhibit regardless of similar social experiences.

An examination of students (male or female) who attend a persistently dangerous, underperforming co-educational neighborhood high school but are persistent enough to attend college is another study that would likely yield interesting findings. It would be perhaps advantageous to do both, examine male relative to female students in two different types of schools. It would be interesting to know if students hear the same educational messages, and explore how they respond to them.

An important finding from this study that needs consideration in greater detail is the role of trust in public education as it relates to parental involvement and teacher expectations; Examining the role of single-parent families and academic persistence. For example, Anthony Bryk (2002; 2010) has explored the role of trust in schools and education reform, but a greater examination of the role of parental involvement and teacher perceptions is an interesting area of study. In addition, there needs to be more scholarship on relational trust in regards to high school aged populations.

Finally, in recent scholarship, there has been a significant increase in the number of scholars who have begun to examine the issue of how children succeed despite such seemingly "insurmountable" odds. This body of literature that identifies factors which contribute to academic, social and cultural "success" is being identified as Character Education. Included among character education are a person's grit, perseverance and resilience (Duckworth et al., 2007; Strayhorn, 2013). A potential study could examine

the role of specific Character Education curriculum as it relates to possible Black male college success.

Final Conclusions

This research has continued to highlight the need to reframe the discourse surrounding the role of single mothers and their academic aspirations for their children. While most of the families in this study can best be described as working class, all of the families wanted their sons to have a positive high school experience and ultimately to attend college. While some of the participants articulated their family struggles for finances as being an obstacle to their college attendance, none indicated that their parents felt like they were not academically capable of attending college. Their parents also believed that Du Bois Charter School was the best option for their child to achieve college attendance. Their demonstrated trust in Du Bois to accomplish what they set out to do – graduate their students and have an overwhelming majority of them attend college, speaks volumes about the current state of the overall public education landscape in this particular neighborhood. When their local high school was graduating their senior class at an average rate of 18% each year, these single mothers put the fate of their sons in an unproven commodity, Du Bois Charter High School, over the known commodity in their neighborhood that has continued to fail substantial numbers of students of all races and genders, particularly young Black males, year after year.

The participants' contributions to their own academic persistence was also of critical importance, especially in the wake of the negative historical stereotypes and perceptions of Black males and education. While the prevailing narrative in the public

discourse has been dominated by the statistics surrounding the number of Black males who do not graduate or drop out of high school, are perpetrators or victims of violence, are in special education (correctly or incorrectly) and other malaise, this research contributes to the increasingly new narrative highlighting positive examples of Black males and the ways that they achieve.

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APPENDIX A: Recruitment and Consent Materials

College of Education
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

Dept. of Educational Leadership & Policy
Studies
Ritter Hall, 2nd Floor
1301 Cecil B. Moore Ave.
Philadelphia, PA 19122-6091

phone 215-204-5631
web www.temple.edu/education

December 10, 2012

«AddressBlock»

Dear «First_Name»:

My name is Stuart Rhoden and I am conducting research on the Class of 2011 from [Du Bois Charter High School]. Mr. [Simmons] recommended you as a person who might be interested in helping me with this project.

I am looking to interview students who graduated from [Du Bois] in their first graduating class and are now sophomores in college. I would like to interview you at least once in person on your college campus (or if you are home for the holidays) and, as need be, a follow up interview either online (via Skype or Google Chat) or e-mail. The initial interview shouldn't take more than one hour or so of your time, and can be arranged at your convenience around your class schedule.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. For your participation, you will be compensated with a \$25 gift card for Target or a restaurant of your choosing in your area.

I am excited to get to meet and talk with you. I am available via e-mail at Sarhoden@temple.edu or by cell at 267-275-5839 to schedule a time when it would be possible to come to your campus, interview you while you are at home over break, or answer any questions or concerns you may have about the project. Finally, I have set up a Facebook Group for this project which you can find at – XXXXXX. I am looking to start this project ASAP, so please respond as quickly as you can.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Take care and good luck with the rest of the semester.

Stuart Rhoden, Ph.D Candidate
Temple University

Consent Forms

Permission to Videotape

Investigator's Name: Will Jordan, Stuart Rhoden
Department: Urban Education, College of Education
Project Title: Resilience in Black Male College Students: An Analysis of the Journey of 12 Young Men from An All-Black Charter School to College

Subject: _____ Date: _____

(Choose one)

I give Stuart Rhoden permission to videotape me. This videotape will be used only for the following purpose (s):

CLINICAL

This videotape will be used as part of my treatment. It will not be shown to anyone but my treatment team, my family, and myself.

EDUCATION

This videotape may be shown to education professionals outside of for educational purposes. At no time will my name be used.

RESEARCH

This videotape will be used as a part of a research project at . I have already given written consent for my participation in this research project. At no time will my name be used.

MARKETING/PUBLIC INFORMATION

This videotape will be used to promote _____ to educational or health professionals, referral sources, and/or the general public. At no time will my name be used.

OTHER

Description:

WHEN WILL I BE VIDEOTAPED?

I agree to be videotaped during the time period:
to _____.

HOW LONG WILL THE TAPES BE USED?

I give my permission for these tapes to be used from:
to _____.

(Include a statement that data will be stored for three (3) years after completion of the study. If you wish to store longer, than permission must be received from the IRB.)

WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND?

I understand that I can withdraw my permission at any time. Upon my request, the videotape(s) will no longer be used. This will not affect my care or relationship with _____ in any way.

OTHER

I understand that I will not be paid for being videotaped or for the use of the videotapes.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If I want more information about the videotape(s), or if I have questions or concerns at any time, I can contact:

Investigator's Name: Will Jordan

Department: Urban Education, College of Education

Institution: Temple University

Street Address: 1301 Cecil B. Moore Avenue Ritter Hall 469

City: Philadelphia State: PA

Zip Code: 19122

Phone: Office 215 – 204-3793 Home

This form will be placed in my records and a copy will be kept by the person(s) named above. A copy will be given to me.

Please print

Subject's Name:

Date:

Address:

Phone:

Subject's Signature:

(Or signature of parent or legally responsible person if subject is a minor or is incompetent to sign.)

Relationship to Subject:

Subject cannot sign because:

but consents orally to be videotaped under the **conditions described above.**

Witness Signature

Date

Witness Signature

Date

Permission to Audiotape

Investigator's Name: Will Jordan, Stuart Rhoden
 Department: Urban Education, College of Education
 Project Title: Resilience in Black Male College Students: An Analysis of the
 Journey of 12 Young Men from An All-Black Charter School to College

Subject: _____ Date: _____

I give Stuart Rhoden permission to audiotape me. This audiotape will be used only for the following purpose (s):

(Choose one)

CLINICAL

This audiotape will be used as part of my treatment. It will not be shown to anyone but my treatment team, my family, and myself.

EDUCATION

This audiotape may be shown to education professionals outside of for educational purposes. At no time will my name be used.

RESEARCH

This audiotape will be used as a part of a research project at . I have already given written consent for my participation in this research project. At no time will my name be used.

MARKETING/PUBLIC INFORMATION

This audiotape will be used to promote _____ to educational or health professionals, referral sources, and/or the general public. At no time will my name be used.

OTHER

Description:

WHEN WILL I BE AUDIOTAPED?

I agree to be audiotaped during the time period:
to _____.

HOW LONG WILL THE TAPES BE USED?

I give my permission for these tapes to be used from:
to _____.

(Include a statement that data will be stored for three (3) years after completion of the study. If you wish to store longer, than permission must be received from the IRB.)

WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND?

I understand that I can withdraw my permission at any time. Upon my request, the audiotape(s) will no longer be used. This will not affect my care or relationship with _____ in any way.

OTHER

I understand that I will not be paid for being audiotaped or for the use of the audiotapes.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If I want more information about the audiotape(s), or if I have questions or concerns at any time, I can contact:

Investigator's Name: Will Jordan

Department: Urban Education, College of Education

Institution: Temple University

Street Address: 1301 Cecil B. Moore Avenue Ritter Hall 469

City: Philadelphia State: PA

Zip Code: 19122

Phone: Office 215 – 204-3793 Home

This form will be placed in my records and a copy will be kept by the person(s) named above. A copy will be given to me.

Permission to Photograph

Investigator's Name: Will Jordan, Stuart Rhoden
 Department: Urban Education, College of Education
 Project Title: Resilience in Black Male College Students: An Analysis of the Journey of 12 Young Men from An All-Black Charter School to College

Subject: _____ Date: _____

I give Stuart Rhoden permission to photograph me. This (these) photograph(s) will be used only for the following purpose (s):

(Choose one)

CLINICAL

This (these) photograph(s) will be used as part of my treatment. It will not be shown to anyone but my treatment team, my family, and myself.

EDUCATION

This (these) photograph(s) may be shown to education professionals outside of for educational purposes. At no time will my name be used.

RESEARCH

This (these) photograph(s) will be used as a part of a research project at . I have already given written consent for my participation in this research project. At no time will my name be used.

MARKETING/PUBLIC INFORMATION

This (these) photograph(s) will be used to promote to educational or health professionals, referral sources, and/or the general public. At no time will my name be used.

OTHER

Description:

WHEN WILL I BE PHOTOGRAPHED?

I agree to be photographed during the time period:
to _____.

HOW LONG WILL THE PHOTOGRAPHS BE USED?

I give my permission for this (these) photograph(s) to be used from:
to _____.

(Include a statement that data will be stored for three (3) years after completion of the study. If you wish to store longer, than permission must be received from the IRB.)

WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND?

I understand that I can withdraw my permission at any time. Upon my request, the photograph(s) will no longer be used. This will not affect my care or relationship with _____ in any way.

OTHER

I understand that I will not be paid for being photographed or for the use of the photograph(s).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If I want more information about the photograph(s), or if I have questions or concerns at any time, I can contact:

Investigator's Name: Will Jordan

Department: Urban Education, College of Education

Institution: Temple University

Street Address: 1301 Cecil B. Moore Avenue Ritter Hall 469

City: Philadelphia State: PA

Zip Code: 19122

Phone: Office 215 – 204-3793 Home _____

This form will be placed in my records and a copy will be kept by the person(s) named above. A copy will be given to me.

Please print

Subject's Name:

Date:

Address:

Phone:

Subject's Signature:

(Or signature of parent or legally responsible person if subject is a minor or is incompetent to sign.)

Relationship to Subject:

Subject cannot sign because:

but consents orally to be photographed under the **conditions described above**.

Witness Signature

Date

Witness Signature

Date

APPENDIX B: Interview Protocols

Subject Interview Protocol Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Pre-collegiate experience

- 1) Tell me about your family background? In what type of family were you raised? Where did you grow up? Where did you attend school?
- 2) Tell me about the first person who spoke to you about college? At what age did you have this conversation? Did you think based on this discussion that you would be able to go to college? Why?
- 3) Where did you apply to college and why? Was the amount of diversity on campus a consideration in choosing your college? Why do you think it is important to attend college? How did you determine whether or not you were going to apply to college?
- 4) Did you participate in any enrichment programs? In middle school? In high school? If you did, tell me about your experiences in the program. If you did not, were there opportunities for you to participate but you chose not to participate?
- 5) What specific things did you do to prepare yourself for college? What types of activities did you do outside school? Did these activities help or hinder your academic progress?
- 6) What educational experiences (inside or outside school) helped in your academic progress? What type of learner are you? How did you view yourself, academically, socially, in relation to your peers? What types of courses did you take? Who decided your course selection?
- 7) Tell me about your favorite and least favorite teachers? Why? How did they help/hinder your academic progress?

College experience

- 8) What were your first impressions of your current college your first day on campus? What did you do to prepare for your coursework during the summer before your first year? Did you participate in any “bridge” programs or other programs aimed specifically for Black students?
- 9) How do you perceive yourself academically and socially now? What have been the biggest influences in this view of yourself? How has your perception of yourself changed over time?
- 10) Do you feel as if your professors treat you in a similar or different manner than your high school teachers? How so?

DuBois Charter School Officials Interview Protocol
Semi-Structured Interview Questions

- 1) Tell me about student's daily lives at this school?
- 2) When/how do you talk to the students about college?
- 3) When/how do you talk to students about setting and achieving academic goals?
- 4) What are your goals for your students by the time they graduate?
- 5) What is similar/different about your school than other local area schools?
- 6) How do you think the requirement to participate in extracurricular activities helped the students' academic achievement?
- 7) What specific things did the school do to help prepare students for college?