

The Role of Community-Based Organizations in the Movement
of Young Men of Color into Postsecondary Studies:
A Qualitative Case Study

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Abstract

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This paper takes place in the context of a “leaky” pipeline whereby proportionately few young men of color make it into and through postsecondary studies. A qualitative interpretive study is used to explore the roles two Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), dedicated to college access and success, play in enrolling and graduating young men of color from college. The investigation concentrates on students supported by Opportunity Scholars (OS) and Success Academy (SA) and interested in attending the University of Washington (UW). The main findings suggest that, while the educational pipeline for young men of color is indeed “leaky”, there are clearly ways that movement through this pipeline can be greatly facilitated. CBOs seem to provide a particularly good vehicle for building networks of relationships, translating these into specific supports, and developing social capital in the process. The study helps reveal how many different relationships are part of the networks CBOs build, and suggests how all of them together, as well as each of them, plays a role in guiding young men of color through the system. What is happening in this process is a particular response to

“achievement gap” practices. In effect, the CBOs are modeling and embodying achievement gap-closing practices.

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the intangible elements that define our experience.

Chapter 1

Introduction: The Research Problem and Study Focus

Community-based organizations (CBOs) dedicated to supporting college access and success have sought to address barriers to quality and equal educational opportunities and outcomes for students who continue to face systemic barriers to their learning and academic advancement. The United States has a long history of conflicting perceptions about the potential of different groups of students. This conflict has born itself out in ways that mirror the divergent perspectives of its population. In *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court ruled that segregation in public education is illegal, because it's disadvantages Black students. However, as late as 1994, the *Bell Curve* book was put out, suggesting that certain ethnic groups, including Black and Latino students, did not have the same intellectual capacity as White students, reflecting a dominant attitude that students of color and students of poverty did not deserve the same access to resources. In the face of extraordinary barriers, CBOs were established to expose students to a new kind of belief system, one in which adults acknowledge and leverage the skills and talents they see in students, and provide those students with the support and resources they need to be successful in their movement from primary schools through college.

In their *Be The Dream* (Simons, 2003) essays, former students from some of New York City's most impoverished communities share stories of how the CBO, Prep for Prep, advocated for their acceptance into some of the country's best independent schools and helped them navigate and graduate from the nation's most selective colleges and universities. One student recalls being at Harvard when two of the University's professors, Herrnstein and Murray (1994), published *The Bell Curve* and "feeling

adequately prepared [by Prep for Prep] to withstand and oppose the racist miseducation embodied in the book” (Bloodworth, in *Be The Dream*, 2003, p. 53). Prep for Prep and other CBOs like it were founded on the belief that,

ultimately, it is an individual’s ability, drive, initiative, spirit and determination that renders success attainable. Notwithstanding this firm belief, however, the second pillar of Prep is the conviction that, as things now stand in our society, a great many children, including many of our nation’s potentially ablest students, lack access to the types of experiences and opportunities that enable the best that is in a child to come to the fore (Simons, 2003, p. xvii).

As an admissions officer at a selective liberal arts college, I would come to know many of these organizations and students. One would admit to me that he might not have made it past his first semester had it not been for the support, guidance, and encouragement he received from Arkansas Commitment, a CBO serving Black youth and youth of poverty in Little Rock, Arkansas. After graduation, the student soon went to work at PriceWaterhouseCoopers, an opportunity that was made possible by an Arkansas Commitment alumnus.

Prep for Prep and Arkansas Commitment have helped thousands of underrepresented students find their way to and through this opportunity called higher education. CBOs have improved the lives of many young men of color, and in doing so have changed the discourse in the classrooms and on the quads of many colleges and universities. Still, we know relatively little about what exactly is working or not—and exactly *how* it is working—in the CBOs’ process of providing resources to this segment of the college-going population.

In general, CBOs probably track how many students they send to college and where they send students, but relatively few track how many graduate from college. Many CBOs might not understand in a comprehensive way the mechanisms through which their work enabled student success. More to the point, colleges and universities appear to be unaware of the reasons why students drop out. However, measures along the lines that I am describing are difficult and costly to develop, and many CBOs do not have the necessary investment capital. In spite of these limitations, it remains that in the broadest sense of access, persistence and success, CBOs are the especially prominent players. They have done much to change the lives of deserving youth, who, without the CBOs, would not have seen, let alone attended, Harvard and other selective colleges' campuses (Simons, 2003). Building upon the CBOs' established models may be the most logical next step. For those working in CBOs that address college access, the small successes are monumental accomplishments. In many cases, failure and heartbreak abound, because there is so much that impedes the success of the students and families they are serving. Although the CBOs must acknowledge this reality, that does not mean they must accept current reality as permanent. A key contribution this research can make is to identify, in a more systematic way than the CBOs can, what it is they do that makes the difference, particularly for young men of color.

Young men of color, a group projected to be the most marginalized yet fastest growing population in the United States (Lee & Ransom, 2010), face a daunting array of barriers in moving from primary schools through postsecondary education. Uneven academic preparation and uneven access to information (related to the myriad of opportunities afforded by U.S. colleges and universities) in K-12 schools often limit their access to higher education. Gaps in opportunity, achievement, and attainment between

students of color and their White peers expand over the academic and career life-courses. The scarcity of family and community resources (material, investment, etc.) and the often impoverished environments in which students are raised further disadvantage them. The multiplying effect of these forces disrupts the connections critical for academic achievement and can lead to a lifestyle outside the margins of the mainstream social, cultural, and economic systems (Lee & Ransom, 2010). Though a college education has become an increasingly important factor of earning potential (Becker, 1992; Holdaway & Alba, 2009; McDonough, 2004), the barriers to enrolling and succeeding are greater for young men of color, creating a situation in which “those individuals who have the greatest need of returns to higher education are often the ones with the fewest opportunities to tap into them” (Louie, 2007, p. 2224).

In facing these barriers, Black and Latino males, in particular, are especially prone to ending up on the “wrong side” of a longstanding “achievement gap”, in which their education performance and attainment systematically and persistently lags behind that of their White counterparts, and that of young women of any racial and ethnic background. Attention needs to be given to disparities in expectation and opportunity between male students of color and White students and how these disparities have expanded over the academic and career life-courses in the contemporary educational system in the United States.

Despite the barriers noted above, my experience as a former admissions officer suggests that a growing number of students who are ill-prepared for further education are nevertheless determined to pursue college. Even many who are high-achieving remain unaware of their options for college and financial aid, and are poorly equipped to navigate the college admissions process to find suitable institutions where they can

pursue higher-level studies. In these settings (and as we have seen above) the potential support of other agents outside of the formal school system may become vitally important. Students who are able to attain membership in Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) dedicated to supporting college access and success may be able to receive a variety of resources such as informational, social-emotional, and, in some respects, financial supports. These supports can make all the difference in students' continued movement into college.

This paper presents thesis research that attempts to explore the possible roles CBOs play in helping young men of color enroll in and graduate from four-year colleges and universities, in the context of a “leaky” education pipeline. I will pursue this goal by examining closely the strategies employed by two Community-Based Organizations dedicated to supporting young men of color through their postsecondary studies, and also the experiences of a selection of students participating in these organizations. To explain the study’s focus, I will first discuss some of the background and context that set the stage for the movement of young men of color through the educational pipeline, and then identify the study’s focus and main research questions, along with the rationale for trying to answer them. Following that, the paper presents a conceptual framework, and a research design for answering those questions. The paper concludes with a review of the findings and what they say about movement through the educational pipeline and the role that CBOs can play. I also offer implications of this research and how the research might inform current practice, especially in school systems, and in their collaboration with CBOs.

Barriers to Access and Success in the Educational Pipeline and Responses to These Barriers

The movement of young men of color through the education pipeline needs to be understood in light of various explanations advanced over the years for the existence and persistence of the achievement gap. The achievement gap on which I will focus is the systematic difference in achievement between Whites and people of color, with particular attention to young men of color. These explanations for the gap are based on inequitable educational practices and school structures, differential investments of educational resources, institutional racism and furtherance of racial disparities, and internalized responses to being denied access and opportunity.

Inequitable Educational Practices and School Structure

Scholars and reformers have offered various, specific explanations for why achievement gaps exist, and how race and or class might influence the gaps. One set of explanations sits squarely within the educational system. For the past several decades, K-12 education has been highly criticized for its inequitable educational practices and school organization. From this perspective, scholars illuminate the effect differential treatment by administrators, counselors, and teachers have on student achievement. In observing that White students were concentrated in higher-level tracks while students of color tended to be in the lower-levels, Oakes (1985) reminds us that “it is never equitable to have any group of students to be systematically offered less when it comes to educational quality” (p. 62)—the point being that schools have the power to decide what and how young people will learn, and tracking is a way to differentiate the instruction and content of courses exposed to different students.

Referencing the schooling experiences of Mexican youth, Angela Valenzuela (2005) points out that schools have a “subtractive” element whereby they often strip

away a student's culture through assimilation, especially in the context of linguistic diversity, although not only there. She further emphasizes the point that "teachers expect students to care about school in a technical fashion before they care *for* them, while students expect teachers to care for them before they care about school" (p. 83).

Valenzuela's (1985) point is that this breakdown in cultural expectations leads to unfavorable treatment of students, especially those whose home cultures differ from the mainstream. Ultimately, teachers play a considerable role in preparing students for their roles in society. When students receive differential instruction, this can result in their being tracked towards different levels in the workforce. By implication, because tracking in school often concentrates young people of color in lower tracks, these students are especially likely to move down life pathways that lead to an early exit from the education pipeline, less skilled occupations, or no jobs at all.

Differential Investment of Educational Resources from Community and Out-of-School Factor (OSFs)

Other explanations beyond the schoolyard point to different forces and conditions that may be contributing to uneven opportunities and limited access to academic success. These conditions, often called Out-of-School Factors (OSFs), are likely to reflect intertwined racial and economic dynamics, which lead to inequitable investment in schools, due to the impoverished home and community environments in which students of color often live. OSFs contribute to who is academically successful and who is not. There are factors at work in homes that play a role in how students are able to engage in the schooling process. For example, students of poverty are impacted by prenatal influences, food insecurity, and environmental pollutants that impact how students show

up to school each day (Berliner, 2009). In addition, students of poverty tend to be more mobile, due to the lack of affordable housing (Rothstein, 2004), which means they are constantly adjusting to new school environments. There are social implications due to mobility, but the academic implications can be debilitating. "Teachers with mobile students are more likely to review old than introduce new material, and less able to adjust instruction to the individual needs of unfamiliar students" (Rothstein, p.46), which impacts how students are able to engage in instruction and whether or not they are prepared to benefit from the rigorous coursework necessary to graduate from high school and prepare for college.

All of these Out-of-School Factors are exacerbated by how resources are allocated to schools. Yaffe (2008) confirms that students of poverty and students of color receive fewer resources in school and are more likely to have less access to preschools, quality school facilities, and skilled teachers, despite often having the greatest need. Indeed, "one needs only to visit such a school to be convinced that the nature of the community largely determines what goes on in the school. Therefore to attempt to divorce the school from the community is to engage in unrealistic thinking" (Conant, 1961, p. 20). In a nation that ties funding to local taxes, a situation is created where schools in poor communities are asked to battle social issues that arise in their communities with limited funds and resources (Payne & Biddle, 1999). Lack of resources and educator expertise impact the trajectory of the students these schools serve. The cumulative nature of these influences over time, and across the movement of students through an "education pipeline", illuminate how a long history of race-influenced social arrangements, beliefs, and interactions make it likely that the quality of education afforded people of color, and

hence their educational outcomes, might be systematically lower than those of White student populations.

Institutional Racism and Furtherance of Racial Disparities

The presence of a disparity shows not only the presence of inequality and stratification, but may also suggest the existence of bias in the system. In each explanation of the so-called achievement gap, certain groups are consistently at the top, while others are always at the bottom. Specifically, families of color are disproportionately represented in the lowest-SES, while White families are over-represented in the highest-SES. Bonilla-Silva (2003) reveals the fact that “racially based policies such as slavery, the removal of Native Americans from their lands and their banishment to reservations, the superexploitation and degrading utilization of Mexicans and various Asian groups as contract laborers, Jim Crow, and many other policies were part of the United States’ “liberal” history from 1776 until the 1960s” (p. 27). His point is that “this history of exploitation and degradation of people of color have always been part of U.S. policy and life” (Bonilla-Silva, 2003, p. 27), and has continued through the post Civil Rights era.

In fact, Whites today acknowledge that racism is present (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). But, many often do not believe it remains a major barrier for people of color, despite the fact that racial disparities between Whites and people of color, Latinos and Blacks, in particular, remain steady across indexes of education, wealth, and others; and in spite of the fact that Black and Latino males are more likely to be incarcerated and given longer prison sentences than their White counterparts for the same or similar criminal offenses

(Alexander, 2012). Even the most well-intentioned and liberal Whites minimize the role of being White in their success. Consider as a consequence of the larger entrenched views of what a successful tech company looks like, entrepreneurs of color who want to break into the Silicon Valley startup community are often forced to hire a “White guy” to present their business ideas to investors, according to Professor Wadhwa in talking about the culture of Silicon Valley in *Black In America* (Soledad, 2011). Bonilla-Silva (2003) supports this reality when he reminds us that “the principle of equal opportunity, central to the agenda of the Civil Rights Movement and whose extension to people of color was vehemently opposed by most [W]hites, is invoked by [by Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. and other] Whites today to oppose affirmative-action policies, because they supposedly represent the "preferential treatment" of certain groups. This claim necessitates ignoring the fact that people of color are *severely* underrepresented in most good jobs, schools, and universities and, hence, it is an abstract utilization of the idea of “equal opportunity”” (p. 28). If racism is present and schools are in a position to reproduce existing social structures, then it is reasonable to believe that racism may be perpetuated by and in schools and within society and the broader culture itself.

Considering the abovementioned explanations, it is clear that a number of barriers are erected at various levels of contemporary society that impede the educational advancement of young men of color. In the contemporary educational system in the United States, inequitable instructional quality and tracking stem from differential investments in resources, which originate in a history of discrimination, and all of these explanations together combine to reinforce the intergenerational social reproduction to which we continue to bear witness.

Internalized Response to Being Denied Access and Opportunity

In response to being denied equal access and opportunity to succeed in mainstream society, a further, internalized barrier can develop, as young men of color try to protect their legitimacy “in opposition to” (Ogbu, 2004) an often unwelcoming or even hostile world. Therefore, a countercultural language is adopted by these young men which repudiates mainstream society, perpetuating the myths and creating an even more vulnerable existence for these young men. The extreme example is gangs and their unique oppositional cultural and linguistic expressions. Examples are in many inner-city communities, such as Los Angeles and Chicago, where gangs have been around for three to five generations. When the lack of productive support systems creates a vacuum, a channeling will occur, and in these cases, the support of a gang is preferable to no support at all. For those who do not make it to high school graduation and cannot go into the military, the rigors of street life invariably lead to a sort of institutionalized rejection of society from behind the bars; that is, if they are lucky enough to survive their violent lifestyles. It is no wonder that many young men of color are highly critical of society, believing that the larger economy undermines male aspirations and noticing that the government spends eight to ten times more to hold them in jail than to educate them (Lee & Ransom, 2010).

The only evidence I have seen of strong forces to combat existing social realities is the development of CBOs whose purpose is to provide young men of color with role models, mentoring, community, and the support necessary to persist and thrive in the education system. Hopefully, with a more careful study of what elements of these organizations are most effective, these elements and their impacts can be more broadly replicated to allow more young men of color to experience academic success.

Focus for Research and Research Questions

As there has been relatively little research on the impact that membership in CBOs has on college access and success for minority students from low-income backgrounds, as well as the mechanisms by which CBOs achieve these impacts, I have designed this thesis study to investigate:

1. In what ways are CBOs able to support aspiring and promising young men of color in their movement through the educational pipeline?
 - a. What kinds of networks of relationships do CBOs help young men of color build during their K-12 schooling years?
 - b. In what ways, if at all, do the CBOs support college aspirations, application, and access?
2. What are the prospects for CBOs to continue to support young men of color and even expand their impact on this segment of the potential postsecondary population?

Ultimately, in answering these questions, I wish to understand better the role of CBOs in helping young men of color to enroll in and graduate from four-year colleges and universities.

Rationale and Study Contributions

Society has adopted a myopic view in response to many social problems, a highly individualistic stance of “me and mine have what we need, so others are on their own.”

Community-based organizations understand the conventional American belief that individual effort can triumph over circumstance. Every single one of us knows or has heard of someone who has surmounted, or is surmounting, difficult circumstances. Why, then, do we allow the drawing of an ideological line in the sand that perpetuates the neglect and wholesale abandonment of segments of our population? Why do we participate in “adverse selection” or the neglect of people groups? Why do we support practices that result in a market failure benefitting those few who are investing in the building and maintaining of an ever-expanding prison system and straining social programs, forcing more people to rely on government assistance to feed and house themselves?

It seems that we willfully starve public education of critical funds and instead direct those funds to incarcerate the uncooperative and “dangerous” poor. Remaining is the docile, uneducated population of “Second America” (Lee & Ransom, 2010) who are forced to work for non-living wages. Having to work longer hours to make ends meet, this service class is left exhausted and without representation in decision-making venues, as this systemic failure cycles through and becomes generational. Meanwhile the elite class makes more money, influences policy more to that end, to privatize the prison system for example, and on it goes.

As I write this, those on Wall Street are experiencing record profits, while working class people grow poorer and more desperate. This reality will further erode the sense of “freedom” for far too many. How free are we as a nation when our neighborhoods are afflicted with young men who have so few choices and such poor guidance that they end up in gangs?

If we can identify and explain all the elements that contribute to young men of

color successfully completing the college process with the support of a CBO, we can help other CBOs or school buildings replicate the strategies and see an increase in college attendance and a decrease in the kinds of behaviors and outcomes that are currently the norm. Along the way, we will also further counter the myth that young men of color are not as capable as their more advantaged White counterparts. Since there is currently little research on this topic, the implications for the future are significant. Imagine a closing of gaps as fewer young men of color drop out and greater numbers enroll in and complete college. This study offers some insight into what might work for young men of color.

Chapter 2

Conceptual Framework

Given the potential that CBOs appear to have for helping young men of color move through a “leaky” education pipeline that is filled with obstructions and barriers, we need a better conceptual framework for understanding both the movement of the average young man of color through the education system and the ways CBOs may alter this young man's movement through the pipeline. We need to move beyond the metaphor of a “pipeline” to a more nuanced set of ideas that capture the processes at work more effectively. The following main ideas seem central to the framework:

- A working conception of the “educational pipeline,” especially as it is experienced by young men of color.
- The meaning and dynamics of “leakage”, as a way of operationalizing what “achievement gap” may mean in the lives of these young men.
- The principal sources of the “leaks” at particular stages across the pipeline, but especially in the transition from K-12 schools to postsecondary institutions. The sources of these leaks will include a variety of social processes, some specific to the educational system and how it operates day to day and others traceable to larger social forces affecting the world in which the educational system sits.
- The means by which young men of color may persist in the education pipeline, through resilience, the development of social and cultural capital, and academic experience.

- The role agents supporting young men of color to develop social and cultural capital, resilience and persistence (e.g., CBO).

The conceptual framework discussion will walk through these elements one at a time, noting how they operate, connect to each other, and address the default dynamics that create and sustain a very “leaky” pipeline for young men of color.

The Leaky Pipeline: Movement Through the K-12 System

The differential investment in school resources has implications for how students move through the public education system and determines levels of academic success. Race and socioeconomic background are critical factors in how communities access resources. For example, in schools where there are primarily Black students, those students earn lower test scores and are more often tracked than in schools where there is greater diversity (Gadsden et al., 2009). Furthermore, “Blacks and Latinos are systematically disadvantaged by these inequities” (Gadsden et al., p.24) and often experience less rigorous course work and teachers new to the profession. In addition, these schools also tend to have more teachers teaching outside of their endorsement areas, which means these students don’t have access to high quality instruction, even though there is evidence that “instruction mediates the relationship between resources and achievement” (Gadsden et al., p.25).

The reality that districts and administrators make the decisions about which adults stand in front of which students means those in positions of power could choose to do something different but do not. Administrators are enabled to make decisions that negatively impact students with impunity, often because parents don't have the social capital or the English language skills to speak up and ask for more, for better, so school

systems are enabled to continue practices that disadvantage students who are most vulnerable (Espinoza-Herald, 2003). When parents are unable to advocate and don't engage frequently in school activities, the children's lack of academic success is often blamed on the deficiencies of family, community, and culture, with no consideration for what school practices or adult decisions are contributing factors (Espinoza-Herald, 2003).

Poor test scores are not the only concern that must be noted as students of color move through the K-12 system. There are many other ways students are deprioritized or devalued in the K-12 system. Those students who are willing to assimilate and use "middle-class speech" are rewarded by the school; those who choose to use "working class coded speech" are often perceived and treated as less intelligent or capable (McLaren, as cited by Espinoza-Herald, 2003, p.12). To diminish students and their potential, to require assimilation for success in public schools, strips away what social capital students do have. Finally, students of color are often exposed to teacher-centered instruction and taught by teachers with low expectations. In fact, those educators who do make an effort to advocate for these students are often disempowered by administration (Espinoza-Herald, 2003). These instructional practices and attitudes reproduce students who merely have access to jobs in the labor market, much like their parents (Espinoza-Herald, 2003).

The final nail in the coffin of inequitable education is the practice of tracking. Tracking places students with less access to resources and support in the most basic of classes and students with more social capital in more rigorous coursework. In *Keeping Track*, Oakes (1985) addresses the reality that there are disparities along racial and ethnic lines in public schools. White students are disproportionately placed in higher tracks, whereas Black students are placed in much less rigorous coursework, especially when

courses are elective and not standard. Students who are exposed to more rigorous coursework are taught to be critical thinkers, unlike students who are in more basic courses where there is a focus on rote memorization and repetition (Oakes, 1985). This differential exposure to rigor has implications for whether or not students are able to access college and, consequently, higher-paying employment opportunities.

The Leaky Pipeline: Navigating Transitions to and Through Postsecondary Institutions

Many students and their families struggle at some point just trying to make sense of the different parts of the “education pipeline”, let alone how to successfully move from one level to the next. To better understand the impact of transitions in public education, consider the 2003 National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) report. According to this report, although most children in the U.S. attend school through the middle grades, increasing numbers of young men of color do not complete high school by nineteen.

Transitions in High School

Therefore, a first key transition happens early in high school; a key measure of it is the proportion of ninth graders in high school who complete their high school diplomas. Unfortunately, according to Lee and Ransom (2010), although on-time graduation rates have increased, the rates for students of color are still much lower than those of White students:

In the course of two decades (1987–2006), for example, Hispanic[/Latino] high school graduation rates increased almost 10 percent. These rates at 68 percent,

however, are still far below the rates for Whites. Similar troubling data can be seen elsewhere. [Black] American high school graduation rates have been essentially flat at 84 percent since 1986 (p. 20).

To further illuminate the challenges facing young men, Lee and Ransom (2010) compare them to their racial and ethnic counterparts. Across the board, young women are outperforming young men with respect to high school graduation rates. White women perform 4 percentage points better than white men, while [Black] American and Hispanic[/Latino], Native American and Asian women outperform the men in their ethnic or racial group by 9 percentage points, 9 percentage points, 7 percentage points and 2 percentage points, respectively.

Transition from High School to Postsecondary Education

While college is an attendance-elective decision, a rapidly changing global economy has increased the economic and social benefits of higher education for individuals and society. Thus a second key transition measure is the proportion of recent high school graduates who enter postsecondary education.

It is true that [Black] American college participation rates jumped 10 percentage points over the same two decades, while Hispanic[/Latino] rates increased more than 7 percentage points, but these college enrollment rates began at just 22 and 18 percent. With regard to college attendance, enrollment rates for young [Black] Americans (18-24) increased from 22 to 32 percent, while Hispanic[/Latino] enrollment rates increased from 18 to 25 percent” (Lee & Ransom, 2010, p. 20-21).

There remain disparities, however, between men and women in their enrollment in college. That Black women earn two-thirds of the degrees awarded to Black students only emphasizes the problem. For Natives, Asians and Hispanics/Latinos, the number is about sixty percent (Lee and Ransom, 2010).

Persistence in College

College persistence is another issue that must be addressed. Fewer than half of those entering postsecondary education as first-time, full-time students in the U.S. complete a baccalaureate degree at the institution they entered within six years. Research also tells us that, in general, the greatest point of attrition in postsecondary enrollment is the first year of college (Tinto, 1987). Therefore, the third key transition measure is the proportion of entering first-year postsecondary students who enroll for a second year of study. Although experiencing some amount of college does result in economic benefit, the acquisition of a baccalaureate credential clearly delineates populations with respect to income (Carnevale & Rose, 1998). Thus, a fourth key transition measure is the proportion of students enrolled in college who promptly earn a degree.

Transition from College to the Workplace

Finally, we must consider the transition from completion of college into the work force. The principal policy objective in building an educational pipeline is to enhance the stock of educational capital. However, a final consideration is the ultimate impact of such investments on the workforce. A key outcome measure is, therefore, the proportion of individuals with a college credential in the young working-age population (those between the ages of 25 and 44).

Successful Movement through the Pipeline: The Role and Sources of Social Capital

A community's ability to access resources, quality instruction, histories, language, and rigorous coursework are a reflection of their access to social capital. Social capital in this context refers to the "network of reciprocal social relations" (Putman, 2000) that enables individuals and societies to accomplish their goals, make their lives more productive, and potentially "derive institutional support, particularly support that includes the delivery of knowledge-based resources" (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995). Bourdieu (1986) elaborated a theory of social capital as a feature of dominant class institutions that maintains inequality through unequal access to resources based on race, class, and gender (Dika & Singh, 2002). Scholars drawing on Bourdieu's framework have focused on forms of social capital that can be particularly important for marginalized communities. Bourdieu's conception of social capital also acknowledges power differences in relationships and communities that can have important consequences for marginalized students (Dika & Singh, 2002), which can determine the ability of students to move through the education system, from K-12 through higher education. This social capital will determine whether students have the opportunity to eventually access quality, high-paying jobs, which lead to changes in family investment resources and opportunities, which could ultimately change the dynamic of a community.

For young men of color college-going information may be less available within family and community networks. As a result, access to networks and information may require membership in community-based organizations. Access to information is a key factor in the eventual transition to college, particularly during the time between 10th and

12th grade, when students are in a “search” phase, which involves gathering information about potential colleges, financial considerations, and application requirements and procedures (McDonough, 2004). Much of this information is not formally taught in high school classes, and although most schools have school counselors who theoretically should provide this information, the national average ratio of students to counselors is 490 to 1 (Hawkins, 2003). Furthermore, in my role as an admissions officer, I observed this ratio in certain buildings to exceed 1000 students to 1 staff person. Information about college requirements, applications, financial aid, and other processes may be available at home for some students, particularly middle to upper income students whose parents or guardians attended college themselves. For students of poverty who are the first in their families to attend college, CBOs become an important source of the social capital necessary to access the information and support to complete the college process—an example of a CBO’s impact on schooling.

Membership in CBOs with supportive adults can help prevent students from falling into academic failure by raising the level of their preparation and readiness for postsecondary work (Croninger & Lee, 2001; Stanton-Salazar, 1995, 2010; Suárez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Marton, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999; Swail & Perna, 2000). Young men of color, who are among the fastest growing but lowest level of educational attainment population in the country, continue to experience the lack of role models representing academic achievement and success in their communities (Lee & Ransom, 2010). Put another way, the past and contemporary schooling experiences of young men of color may have denied and limited their educational attainment. Relationships with individuals in social institutions, such as CBOs, outside the formal school system, can be influential sources of social capital. Drawing on Bourdieu’s framework, Stanton-Salazar and

Dornbusch (1995) found that institutional agents, in this case CBOs, play gatekeeper roles, so that relationships with these agents constitute more “bridging” social capital that can provide students access to unequally distributed resources, opportunities, or information related to success in school. My own experience in admissions suggests that the students who have access to such relationships are the ones who often earn private scholarships, in addition to the traditional government financial aid. In these cases, CBO counselors are often the ones acting as agents providing access to institutional resources and knowledge vital to student success (Stanton-Salazar, 2001, 2010).

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methods

To answer the research questions, I use qualitative data and analyses, set in a “basic” interpretive research design (Merriam, 2009). My data analysis is based on interviews (mostly) and documentary sources that offer differing vantage points on the experiences of young men of color who have membership in CBOs as high school students. The interviews include a mix of high school students from each of two CBOs dedicated to supporting students of color and poverty in their movement from K-12 schools through college. I also interviewed key staff members in these organizations who oversee the college-going process.

This study utilized a modified qualitative case study research approach, with the CBO treated as the focal “case” and the primary unit of analysis. A case study is a qualitative research method in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a student, a staff, an organization, etc.) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., interviews, documents, etc.) and reports a case description and case-based themes (Creswell, 2007, cited by Merriam, 2009). Researchers value case study design for its ability to capture complex conceptions (e.g., “the achievement gap”, “equality”), perception, and interpretation by focusing on a particular phenomenon in a particular setting (Merriam, 2009). The design is also a very effective means of considering practical problems, such as policies (e.g., inequitable school investment) and practices (e.g., inequitable instruction) in particular schools and situations (e.g., “the achievement gap”) arising from everyday practice and determining how things get to be the way they are (Merriam, 2009).

The bounded system (e.g., a CBO) within which to consider the practical problem is critical (Merriam, 2009). In a case study with a bounded system that includes multiple subjects, participants are purposively sampled to provide strategically differing vantage points on the case-based problem under study (Merriam, 2009). Knowledge gained from a case study is more contextual than that provided by other research methods, because experiences are rooted in the particularities of the subject of investigation and case setting (Merriam, 2009). The knowledge acquired from a case study is distinguishable from the abstract, formal knowledge derived from many other research designs (Merriam, 2009). Case studies provide a means of considering complex social units involving multiple stakeholder groups and their interactions as a means to understand a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). Case study knowledge is further developed by reader interpretation, because readers bring to a case study their own experiences and understandings, which lead to reader-constructed “generalizations” when the “new data” they bring to the case are added to old data (Merriam, 2009). Consider that the educational strategies employed by a particular CBO can be examined to better understand the impact that this and potentially other CBOs may have on the schooling experience of young men of color.

Since the CBOs I have selected (see below) have different initial intervention levels (middle and high school), the multiple case study approach I have adopted allows focusing on multiple themes (access to resources, support strategies). The approach is easy to implement and straightforward to describe and report (Creswell, 2009). Lastly, exploratory design is largely for qualitative study (Creswell, 2009), and is particularly useful because its primary focus is to initially explore a phenomenon (Creswell, 2009).

Sample Choices and Rationale for Them

I have purposely selected a set of Seattle-based CBOs working closely with one of the Pacific Northwest's most prominent public universities that offer related but different vantage points on the pipeline support issue. Within the two CBOs, I have targeted a sample of staff and students for in-depth interviewing.

Sample of CBOs

Drawing on documentary sources, I was able to identify two CBOs in the Seattle area (referred to hereafter by pseudonyms) that have concentrated their efforts on helping young men (and also women) of color aspire to, apply to, and succeed in college.

According to the website of the first CBO:

- Opportunity Scholars (OS) is dedicated to making college admission and graduation possible for talented, motivated, and economically disadvantaged students. Specifically, OS serves (1) students from a low-income background based on qualification, or near-qualification for, the Seattle Public Schools "Free/Reduced Lunch" criteria; and (2) students must maintain a minimum of a 2.0 GPA. OS staff and volunteer coaches provide additional individualized and group support to OS students during their junior and senior years of high school and help students navigate the college application process—from identifying colleges, to preparing for tests, to applying. When an OS student is accepted to college, OS staff members ensure they have an understanding of their financial aid packages, help in making a choice about where to attend, and guide them through following up on that choice and having a plan for living and expenses for the fall. OS help them choose the right school, create*

sustainable habits, and prepare for the transition away from family. Our intrepid youth enter college with the tools they need to prosper, as well as the enthusiasm and internal resilience required to surmount inevitable challenges.

A second CBO puts a somewhat different emphasis on its work with potentially college-bound youth, as it states on its website:

- *Success Academy (SA) come from those groups most underrepresented on college campuses—including African Americans, Hispanic Latinos, Native Americans, and first generation Asian Americans. The organization recruits those students who have the greatest number of barriers to a college education. More than 80 percent of our scholars qualify as low-income. More than 85 percent come from households where they will be the first in their family to earn a college degree. Its motto is closing the opportunity gap, 60 minds at a time. Each spring, we invite 60 promising students of color to embark on an 11-year, life-changing journey. It demands hard work and commitment. In exchange, it offers invaluable opportunity. The 11-year program model is divided in four distinct phases—Academic Enrichment, Academic Counseling and Support, Leadership Development and College Support. Comprehensive support is provided through middle school and high school with a primary focus on college readiness and leadership development.*

In short, these two CBOs are particularly useful for this research study because they are dedicated to college access and success for young men of color and other students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are apt to face substantial barriers in getting to and succeeding in college.

Specifically, the CBOs are alike in that they provide support to students through the college application and financial process. They differ in the scope of their attention to the K-12 years: OS intervention happens only in 11th and 12th grade and SA in 6-12th grade. They further differ in the focus of their approaches. OS, while it may provide tutoring for students, the focus is on the college application and financial process. In addition to doing this, SA also supplements students' learning in the writing, literature, history, math, and science disciplines. In short, while both provide informational support about colleges and financial aid, only OS provide academic support, which has implications for the selectivity of the college or university to which a student might be admitted and the amount of financial aid he receives.

Participant Sample

Within the “pipeline” created by these organizations and the University support office, I purposively selected a set of staff and students for focal interviews. At each CBO, I interviewed the staff member who is overseeing the college-going process to gain a sense of those themes that are consistent across CBOs, as well as exploring their chief points of difference in philosophy, approach, and supportive practices. I interviewed an individual who is able to speak to the history (or the evolving mission) of his or her CBO.

On the University's end of the pipeline, I decided not to interview staff members, preferring to concentrate this study on the steps CBOs take before students apply to college. From the staff I have also learned a bit about the strategies each CBO uses to support students once they have enrolled on campus, including how they engage with the University. I interviewed 5 participants in the two CBOs.

I selected several student participants from each CBO, based on their sex (male),

race/ethnicity (Black and Latino) and interest to attend the University. Black and Latino boys are apt to face substantial barriers in getting to and succeeding in college.

Data Collection

The data came from the following sources: (1) interviews with staff in the CBOs, (2) interviews with students (seniors) in the CBOs, (3) and documents and other archival sources. In sum, I interviewed five participants: two high school private high school students and one staff from Success Academy; and one public student and one staff from Opportunity Scholars.

Interviews with CBO Staff

I collected data through one-hour case study face-to-face interviews and documents from the CBOs. This includes interviews of staff members from each CBO in a semi-structured manner (Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2009) points out that this approach to interviewing is especially appropriate for this a study of this sort because it allows the researcher control over the line of questioning and option for audiotaping and thus more reliable transcribing of the interviews. These interviews sought out historical and strategic information that may be telling of the CBOs' successes in dealing with the CBOs, however defined by the CBOs. Ultimately, interviews have given some insights into strategies that may be able to improve the effectiveness of CBOs and how they work with the University, including ways that the organizations and institution can better partner to ensure student success in the admissions process, transition from high school to college, and movement into and through higher education. I conducted these interviews April through May.

Interviews with Students Affiliated With The CBOs

As with the staff, my interviews with students were conducted in a one-hour face-to-face “semi-structured” mode, for similar reasons. This approach allowed me to probe the students’ responses and draw out information that is unique to each individual. This was important since students sometimes have different experiences resulting from cultural norms within racial and ethnic groups. In other words, the interviews necessarily seek out themes, which informed the way supportive resources are allocated to students of color. These illuminated the information and services that students receive through their CBOs and ultimately those supportive offerings that have enabled young men of color in particular to be successful. I did these interviews in April and May after interviewing the CBO staff.

Documents and Archival Sources

The documents I collected from the CBOs emerged from conversations with CBO high school students and staff members. These include the following:

- “College enrollee” and “college graduate” lists
- Supplemental course offerings and summer programs
- Counseling and mentoring support information
- Information about colleges’ and universities’ admissions and financial aid
- Support services descriptions—(ACT and SAT-related expense, tutoring)
- Information about family background (“unusual” circumstances, college generational status, citizenship status)

- High school profiles (for academic program offerings, college counseling, high school SAT or ACT average)

These documents highlight CBOs' approach to college counseling. These documents allowed me to compare the "college guidance" students receive from the CBOs in which they have membership and the high schools they attended. The information helped illuminate the role CBOs play in addressing the K-12 schooling experience of young men of color that derail or limit their college access and success, as well as the role they can take in helping to improve support systems that might improve enrollment and persistence in higher education.

Data Analysis Approach

I analyze the data collected from the abovementioned sources in the following ways, and in this sequence. First, I transcribed the qualitative data from both sets of the interviews, being careful to code the identifying names in these transcripts, so that individuals could not be identified from the analysis and reporting (Creswell, 2009). Reading over the transcripts, I did a first examination of them to get familiar with the data, and to do an initial "open coding" reference of them, to surface possible themes, meanings, or other (Creswell, 2009). Second, based on the open coding, I did a more "focused coding" process, by creating analytic codes to apply systematically to all interviews (Creswell, 2009). These codes identified segments of data that were especially pertinent to emerging themes (Creswell, 2009). Third, based on an initial round of focused coding, and informed by what I learned in the open coding phase, I wrote theme statements and briefly summarized evidence emerging from interviews related to these statements in one or more analytic memos (Creswell, 2009). This process was repeated

several times, until I got a set of claims about my data and summaries of the evidence supporting them (Merriam, 2009).

Fourth, I went through the documentary sources, taking field notes on their contents (selectively—only regarding the portions that had clear relevance to my analytic goals), and then briefly summarized their contents in another analytic memo.

Finally, I combined analytic memos into a working draft of qualitative findings.

Design Limitations and Positionality

This study is designed to learn from well-established support organizations and students who are already involved with, and generally successful in, these organizations. The study yielded a provisional picture of how these organizations provide support and what effects that support appears to have. However, having set up the study this way meant that I still do not know much or anything about some other facets of the overall support story. For example, my design did not permit me to learn much or anything about:

- Young men of color who do not become involved in CBOs, and why they do not.
- How a young man supported by a CBO changes over time (to do that, I would have to follow individuals over time).
- The experience of the young men of color who left or were dismissed from the CBOs.
- How the full population of young men of color served by these two CBOs varies in their support experience.

- What other units in the University of Washington do with and for young men of color that might support them or inhibit their progress through college.
- How other universities might respond to young men of color.

My position in this research, as the investigator as well as also the “research instrument” both enables and limits the design. As a qualitative scholar notes:

Particularly in qualitative research, the role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions and biases at the outset of the study. The investigator’s contribution to the research setting can be useful and positive rather than detrimental (Locke et al. 1987, as cited in Creswell, 2008, p. 196).

My perception of college access and success has been influenced by my own experiences. I am a Black, male, first-generation college student who attended large, under-resourced public schools. I worked full-time while a full-time college student, and graduated from college eight years after first entering due to economic circumstances. I led a college workshop at a youth prison. I worked closely with CBOs while working in selective college admissions. Due to my own background and previous experience working in selective college admissions and closely with CBOs, I bring certain biases to this study. Although every effort will be made to ensure objectivity, these biases may shape the way I view and understand the data I collected and the way I interpret my experiences (Miller 1992, as cited in Creswell, 2008). That I enter this study with firsthand experience of the role community-based organizations play in the movement of students of color and students of poverty enables the design of this study.

Chapter 4

Findings: How CBOs Enable Young Men of Color To Seek and Attend College

CBOs have been a primary source of information about the process of seeking, and succeeding in, college for most low-income, first-generation college students. This study focuses on Success Academy (SA) and Opportunity Scholars (OS) and how they have been able to successfully move young men of color through the college process and encourage these students and campus communities to think bigger and to reach further. Research shows that there is a vast array of information associated with the college-going process, and that on the receiving end, students need to both access and process this information in particular ways—from developing sufficient awareness about the wide variety of colleges to determining the coursework and tests that must be taken to qualify for college admissions; to understanding the role of federal, state, and institutional policies; to recognizing the variety of colleges to which one could apply and why the selectivity of college matters in student outcomes. The findings show how information about the college process is transmitted to students through relationships, how those relationships translate into varying types of support, and how the combination of information, relationships, and support are developing students' social capital, which may have not only helped students complete the college-going process but has the potential to disrupt economic realities in their homes and communities.

Relationships Developed Through CBOs

There are several kinds of relationships that are developed in the context of CBOs—families with the CBO, student with student, student with adult/educator, CBO with high school, and CBO with college/university. These relationships will determine whether or not students have access to information and are able to process information to make effective choices about colleges. While the two CBOs approach their work through different program models, the relationship dynamics are very similar between the programs.

Family-to-CBO Relationships

The relationship between the family and CBO is critical to the SA model, although past practice was very different. According to the current director of college counseling, “I would say it was on more of an informal basis until about three years ago...when we really started hitting hard with the parents...about making sure that the student is on the right track.” For example, “[w]e talk a little bit about the application components...just so that they know it’s not just that you write a paragraph essay and fill out an application and then you apply to colleges, it’s way more complicated than that.” She has four years to build strong relationships with families. Many of the students’ families are new to the country, so her role is to “introduce the parents...to the American college system because some of our families are immigrant families and they don’t understand the American college system.” The goal of the workshops is for “parents [to] understand the complexities of the admissions process and how hard it is to determine who gets admitted, who gets waitlisted, and who gets denied.”

Unlike SA, where there is a focus on building relationships with both students and their families, the focus of OS is on supporting high school students through the college process. Although there is currently no programming for parents, according to the program manager, “We are in the process of developing a stronger program/strategy for engaging parents. That will be launched over the next two years.”

Student-to-Student Relationships

SA helps students develop strong relationships with one another, so they are able to support each other through the college process. The two boys interviewed are students at an elite private high school, where they are “both leaders of the Latino Club,” says one of the boys. The other student adds that they “are really great friends, especially since the school year and second summer of [Northwest High School].” The director of counseling doesn’t ever explicitly discuss the role of student-to-student relationships in her interview, though she speaks about the cohort model used during the academic enrichment phase—a period of intensive instruction that happens with groups of students beginning the summer after 6th grade. By sending students through training together in middle school, this gives them the opportunity to bond. These “bonding” relationships help the boys build the community they need in order to successfully complete both high school and college.

Relationships between students are also critical to OS, although much of what we learn about the role of student-to-student relationships is from what the student interviewed is not getting in his school environment. “I think I’m the only Black kid in my class, I think maybe 4 out of 5 of my classes.” The student repeats that he is the “only” two other times, suggesting that this is a difficult reality for him. The OS program

manager describes a new peer-to-peer model that is being developed. This new development reflects the need this student expresses—to be connected to those who share common experiences and values. The program manager describes this model as a “peer-to-peer component where we have our seniors...that then mentor the juniors in our program.” The peer relationships that students are able to experience have implications for how students proceed through the college process.

Student-to-Educator Relationships

Student - teacher relationships. In different ways, there is also emphasis placed on developing relationships between students and adult staff. Classroom teachers are important adults in the school building, and the potential for a positive relationship with them clearly exists but is not always realized. One of the boys from SA appreciates the “more one-on-one communication between the student and teacher.” He adds that both the program and the private high school he is enrolled in (because of the CBO) have, “small classrooms where you can reach out to teachers more easily.” The student from the OS model does not feel at all supported by the classroom teachers in his high school as he proceeds through the college process. But other adults in the school and outside of it also matter, among them the counselor and CBO staff.

Student - counselor relationships. Another group of adults involved in supporting students through the college process is the high school counselors. One of the young men from SA describes the role of counselors, “We have...a college counselor that gives us a list of colleges. After we talk with them and meet with them a couple of times, they give us some colleges that they think we should look into.” The counselors are the experts in the college process for these students. The young man, in speaking about the

collaboration between the counselors from NHS and the counselors from SA, adds, “The college counselor for SA and for NHS, they work together to make sure that they don’t have any clashing ideas.” This collaboration is important, ensuring students are not confused and have access to the correct information about the college process.

Student-CBO Staff Relationship. In OS there are a variety of adults who work with students—AmeriCorps staff, college persistence staff, and a program manager. Although the student interviewed doesn’t feel supported by the staff in his high school, he feels differently about the staff in OS—“That’s what I love about OS, that’s what it’s there for. It’s really there to help you get through the [college] application in one piece, without you feeling lost or confused.” Due to the increase in the numbers of students being served, they have had to change a “service model.” The program manager describes the new model as a

high-touch model...near-peer...where the AmeriCorps members are close in age to the students... We require that they all have a college degree so they’ve been through the process of graduating from college, but a majority of them are right out of college.

Adults who are close in age to the students have a clear memory of the emotions and experience of the college process and are able to build more effective relationships with students in order to ensure students get the necessary support to complete the college process.

CBO-to-High School Relationships

Both OS and SA have strong relationships with high schools, although these relationships are experienced in different ways. The SA program does not take place in a

school building, but according to the director, there are opportunities to “[partner] with the school—the high school or the elementary school or middle school]” to get “support services.” She now “visit[s] students, juniors and seniors at their high school to begin the college search and application process.” The counseling staff at SA also communicate with the counseling staff at the school, says one of the boys, “they get along pretty well...They try to talk beforehand just to know what the other one has talked about.” SA is very intentional about how it builds relationships with high school staff to create strong channels of communication through which support can later be provided.

OS has the advantage of being located within a school building, where they are able to develop strong relationships with a variety of stakeholders. These relationships are important for student advocacy and also allow OS free use of classroom space in the buildings to provide workshops for students. According to the OS staff person,

the counselors are probably our biggest advocates with assistant principals, the principal, [and] teachers. We use classrooms after school or the computer lab and so there are some teachers that offer their classroom and we have strong relationships with them.

Building-based relationships are critical channels for information and resources. Working together, the school and the program are able to better serve students. Using relationships with staff in the building to increase numbers is also critical. Typically, there are higher numbers of girls turning in paperwork on time. The director describes her plan to leverage the relationships she has within the school to engage more boys in the program,

We talked with the principal and the counselors there around strategies.

Could we have the coaches, male leaders already that these students are

connected with that they've known their freshman year or their sophomore year, have the message come from them.

She suggests the AmeriCorps members partner with these adults with whom the students have already built strong, trusting relationships. Trust is a huge factor in the process for first-generation students and students of color. They need to know they can trust that the adult has their best interests at heart before they will invest in the program. This is why it is critical to find adults who understand and care about them to serve as the conduits for information. OS has invested in relationships with staff at schools in order to lay a foundation for students to be able to connect with those who have critical information and supports related to the college process.

CBO-to-University Relationships

The relationship SA has with UW is critical to ensuring students complete the college process and receive the support they need on campus. The SA director doesn't believe there are

any challenges of me working with UW. There is often a challenge to help my students understand that they have to identify themselves as a SA and I don't know if UW has changed their application or will change their application to reflect working with a community-based organization.

She is hoping she can give her students a leg-up by helping the admissions office associate each SA student with a set of experiences and supports, which should make the students more attractive to the institution.

Furthermore, the director recognizes that strong relationships with faculty on campus provide SA students with access to special programs. For example, she has a

connection with a faculty member, who is “in charge of the Honors Program [within Undergraduate Affairs]. He may have cycled out very recently but for the past, I’d say probably 4 years, we’ve worked with [him] to help recruit more students to apply for [UW] Honors.” Much like the relationships described earlier, SA is developing a web of connections with individual people on the UW campus, so students will have access to additional advocates as they progress through the college application process and then the degree completion process. The director of OS describes a fairly robust relationship between OS and the community college campuses, where they have developed a special “orientation for OS students...we're partnering with [the colleges],” and they are “doing a OS college student panel How to realize your goals and Self-Advocacy Skill Building and Financial Literacy 101.” The OS director would like to have an office on campus at the UW, in order to be more available to students, although now her staff work with professors “much like navigators. It’s not that [the OS staff] know everything about the engineering department,” but they help students build the kinds of relationships with UW staff that help them get what they need.

In some way each of the CBOs provide access to critical relationships that are necessary for students as they move through the college-going process, although each engages relationships in different ways and with different levels of intensity. SA devotes more time to ensuring student-to-student relationships are strong early in their academic careers. Both programs develop strong relationships with staff in buildings—SA by communicating regularly with counselors and OS by locating themselves in a high school building. These strong relationships build trust, which is the foundation for students being able to access the supports they need to successfully complete the college process and attend the colleges that best match their profiles and professional goals.

Support Provided by CBOs

Membership in a supportive social structure, such as a CBO, has been shown to build trust between students, parents, and CBO staff and aid in effective communication of the benefits of college while understanding the implications of various financial aid decisions (Honig, 2006). The students who receive support from CBOs are the ones often earning private scholarships and accessing traditional state-based financial aid, such as the State Need Grant, provided by the WA State DREAM Act. Unlike many public school counselors, staff from CBOs are often providing support for the academic and social-emotional needs of students, as well as what is necessary to complete the college application process in a way that high school counselors cannot. SA and OS both provide these supports, although each may be prioritized and provided in different ways, based on the program's model.

Academic Support for Success Academy Students: Support in Middle and High School

At SA, academic support is the primary focus, in a way that is uncommon for CBOs that support the college process. "A lot of CBOs don't necessarily get into the academic preparation" (SA Director). At SA, during the academic enrichment phase,

The students are in classes five days a week for about eight hours a day for two summers in a row and then during their sixth grade year they're in class every Wednesday afternoon and every Saturday (SA director).

During that time, students at SA receive

more than 700 hours of additional instructional time and more than 300 hours of homework in Science, Math, Literature, and History. This phase...ensures scholars not only survive, but thrive in college preparatory settings” (SA Website).

According to the boys in SA, “I think just what we learned is that Success Academy really prepares us for the experience that we’re going to be facing in high school.” SA offers academic support throughout the program, from high school through college (SA director). There are continual conversations about the importance of taking the right courses. The director's response to whether they are addressing issues of tracking in high school—

We are, and I would say it was on more of an informal basis until about three years ago. Three years ago is when we really started hitting hard with the parents as well as the students but especially the parents about making sure that the student is on the right track.

SA contracts with an outside tutoring company to help students in math and writing and to provide some SAT prep, although they “do an SAT prep in-house as well” [SA director]. All this support ensures that SA students move through the K-12 system and into college prepared to successfully complete a degree program.

Apart from direct academic support, SA provides significant support to ensure students are socially and emotionally prepared for the college experience. Beyond the academic enrichment phase of middle school, an academic counselor “meets with [students] about once a month to ensure that the student is succeeding academically, socially, emotionally, physically, that they’re taking healthy risks, that they’re participating in class” (SA director). One of the students describes the support he

received with the academic work when “it was too hard and...I couldn't do it...my mom was always really positive and encouraging...and also the support from Success Academy and all the friends that I made here.” The other student is impacted by the program’s results. “There’s definitely people behind us that they’ve already helped out and they've already made a great decision to go to college... The experience that they have is also really great.” These kinds of supports set students up to believe they can be successful in school, even when things are difficult.

Support Through the College Application Process

SA supports students in the area of understanding and completing the college application process. As claimed by the SA director,

there are very few community-based organizations who have well trained college counselors, and by well-trained, I mean people who have served either as a college counselor in a high school setting or worked in college admissions. Many of the college access programs hire people from AmeriCorps and maybe they’ll go to a conference or two but the training lacks significantly.

Having a staff person with extensive experience in the college application process is critical to the success of SA. For work with parents,

There's always some financial aid component. Whether it’s saying you need to memorize...expected family contribution...You need to know what the Free Application for Federal Student Aid [FAFSA] is...what does cost of attendance mean. By the time the spring of junior year and really the fall and winter of senior year they understand what the CSS profile is and where the FAFSA actually goes. That it doesn’t go directly to the college, it’s a federal form... The rising seniors

and their parents have had the benefit of going to [parent] meetings and understanding a lot more than our older cohorts about the financial aid process.

This is another conversation that happens with OS students and parents at the beginning of high school,

One of the big messages that we deliver to the 9th grade...is the courses that you choose now and the grades that you earn now will affect the kind of college you are going to be admitted to and ultimately the kind of financial aid that you receive.

These support staff “also help [students] renew their financial aid paperwork when they are in college support phase” (SA director). In addition to the FAFSA, SA also addresses the WAFSA, a new pot of money available to undocumented students. “It was a little nebulous this year, the...WAFSA but our students did it and they were recipients of state aid and that is going to greatly impact where they can enroll in the future.” In fact, one of the students interviewed, who is undocumented, has now been given a full-ride into arguably the most selective college in the state. All students, whatever their individual needs, receive the support they need to complete the college application process.

Social-Emotional Support in College

SA does not see its responsibility ending when students arrive at college, but rather extending throughout the students’ years in higher education. Specifically, the program offers both social-emotional support and a more general kind of assistance to navigate life on campus. The director of SA refers to the kinds of social-emotional support students receive on the UW campus. Once students are on campus, college academic counselors “do monthly check-ins with each applicant...and they do social

rotations as well, where maybe they'll go out and play a game of pool. It's frequent that our staff is in touch on a formal basis with those at UW" (SA director). Moreover,

someone from the college support staff...physically goes to the campus and spends...half a day with the student. That's supplemental to the monthly check that we're doing with students all over the country. We also help them renew their financial aid paperwork when they are in college support phase.

SA is intentional about providing the kinds of social-emotional support colleges are not set up to provide, to ensure SA students feel confident at every level and are ensured to complete a degree.

Social-Emotional Support Provided by Opportunity Scholars:

Support in High School

Unlike SA, OS takes students as juniors in high school. OS knows it has been successful in providing the kinds of social-emotional support necessary for students because "The results are showing students are getting into college" (OS program manager). Even though most OS students are "low-income students and students with as low of a GPA as 2.0 and majority of them are first in their family," they are "completing the college application, completing the FAFSA. All those components are really successfully in getting students into college." The kind of support students receive is "high intensity in the school. It's just that we are physically present in the school, full-time, and available to students. We have that near-peer model. We have students officially that can be in our program with as low as a 2.0 GPA" (OS program manager). OS students receive the face-to-face time necessary to make sure they receive the social-

emotional support they need to complete high school and enter the college process prepared for success.

Support Through the College Application Process

The work of the OS staff is “checking the boxes of completing the college application, completing the FAFSA” (director). OS provides, “workshops with essays, personal statements, getting through the actual application” (student). In order to be employed by OS, staff must “all have a college degree, so they’ve been through the process of graduating from college, but majority of them are right out of college.” This allows the staff to be able to not only walk through the different elements of the college process but also to identify with the struggles students might have during the process. “[Each] AmeriCorps member has 35 official students. Those 35 students, they are reaching out to them, calling them down during lunch or after school, making sure that they have done every check and balance along the way.” This high-touch model ensures that each OS student completes the process successfully.

Social-Emotional Support in College

The OS staff realized students needed something more once they entered college, so “[a]bout two years ago, [they] implemented [the] college persistence program, knowing that it’s not enough to just get [students] into college but what they [need] to support them in college” (OS’s manager). “I think that’s pretty unique about our program that we’ll start with them junior year...up to six years in college and the two years in high school” (OS’s program manager). There are “over 16 events happening in the summer for our seniors that are going into college.” In fact, OS works with the UW Office of

Minority and Diversity Affairs to help students who choose UW to get support immediately. “When we find out who got into UW, we set up a campus visit...[to] get them on campus. They each [have] their own individual appointment, [we get] them signed up for TRIO, g[e]t them signed up for an early orientation so they can get early class selection.” What’s more, the OS program manager speaks about the work they do to get students “as much support on campus that they can get using our relationship” to get “students well supported before they even step foot on that campus.” Once students are on campus, “they help students navigate challenges with professors around being late on something or they had a family situation...come up. How do you navigate through that to not have it impact your grade or have you lose your financial aid or things like that?” (OS program manager). In addition, “if a student really needs tutoring support or writing help, then [the college persistence staff member] connects them to the writing center and just gets them connected to what is already there. They don’t need to be that writing tutor for them.” Through many years of helping students go through the college process, OS staff recognized the need to be a bridge to support the emotional and social needs of students. The OS staff are on campus meeting with students individually. They have a strong [emphasis] on FAFSA, renewing the FAFSA, finding scholarships.” The OS staff person shares about the “monthly newsletters that go out. We also will email them...monthly [alerting them to various] scholarships.” They want to ensure they are not duplicating services on campus but connecting students to other services that are already there.

Although there are many opportunities for support through SA and OS, those support pieces are much more effective when strong relationships have been developed that allow students and their families to trust those who are providing support. Those

relationships become the foundation for effective support of students in the college process.

Social Capital as the Vehicle to Complete the College Process

These CBOs provide students with the social relationships and capital they need to access the resources and support necessary to attend and finance colleges that match their academic profiles and interests. SA and OS take the information that is available about the college process and deliver that information through strong relationships they build with students based on trust. Students have many relationships with adults that influence their decisions about the future. The strong or “bonding” (Coleman, 1998) relationships in students' lives will replicate whatever information the adult has. Both SA and OS make sure the adult relationships these students have are bridges to the information they need to gain entry into and, especially, to ensure students and their families are able to finance college.

CBOs help leverage what students can get through FAFSA completion and encourage students who have the appropriate academic profile to apply to schools where money will not be a problem. These CBOs give students access to scholarships such as the Husky Promise at the University of Washington and the Washington State Opportunity Scholarship (WSOS)—which provides help to students in families. The presence of a CBO may be one crucial element in a difficult and often poorly understood financial aid situation that often is the greatest barrier to students from underserved populations accessing selective colleges.

Social Capital Developed Through Success Academy

In the case of the boys in SA, both their involvement in the organization and attendance at an elite private school give them the social capital they need to successfully complete the process. For one young man,

without [SA], if I hadn't applied to [SA] or been a part of [SA], I would have never known about [NHS] or really been thinking too much about getting into a college or anything because it's just not something that they stress too much in public school.

Unlike wealthy students who grow up with college as the expectation from every message and model they see, this student was not given access to the information he needed from the adult relationships he had prior to SA. SA becomes this message and model for students of what is possible. "[SA] really helped me out to actually acquire some knowledge of what's going to happen, instill even more to go to college and forge that idea and, actually, make it possible" (SA student). In the end, because of the efforts of SA, this undocumented, first-generation student earns a full-scholarship to the most selective college in the state, which lends to the argument that highly individualistic support of CBOs in the realm of financial aid guidance is necessary. SA becomes the proxy for the social capital these young men need to earn admission and finance college.

Social Capital Developed by Opportunity Scholars

In the case of the OS student, his relationships with his teachers and parents are not able to provide him with the kind of information he needs to get to college. In the case of his mother, he said,

before coming Seattle and before actually coming to America, she just had a high school education and then she came here and tried to do community college for a little bit but then I feel like my older siblings get in the way of that. She had to take care of them by herself at the time, so that stood in the way a lot.

She is unable to provide him with the knowledge or support to go to college.

Furthermore, at his school, he noted—

Up until my sophomore year I've been told how important college is and how everyone should apply, and even up until this point I'm still being told the importance of college, attending higher education, pursuing it, but it's not really talked about in the classrooms or anything. There's no really hands-on sort of application process in the classrooms. It's more of... It's all talk, no action, really. All the teachers, all the staff, faculty, they'll tell you, yeah you should apply for college and everything, but they won't really like give you the guidance or help to really get you through the process.

However, “what I love about OS, that's what it's there for. It's really there to help you get through the application in one piece without you feeling lost or confused.” The CBO becomes the proxy for social capital, the vehicle to help students get exactly what they need to get to the right college.

Potential for Continued Success

Both SA and OS have built very strong relationships with students, faculty, and the universities at which students will eventually study. These relationships can only become stronger over time, as more students go through the programs, complete college,

and return to give back to the organization that has given them new opportunities. Both programs seem willing to adapt and adjust as the need arises. In the case of SA, the director realized they needed to implement more intentional programming for parents in order to have greater impact. Parent programming “was on more of an informal basis until about three years ago. Three years ago is when we really started hitting hard with the parents.” Now she meets with parents several times a year to inform them about the importance of coursework taken and preparing for the financial aid process. In the case of OS, the program staff recognized they could not effectively support students beyond high school, so “About two years ago, we implemented our college persistence program, knowing that it’s not enough to just get them into college but we need to support them in college.” As long as the program directors from both CBOs continue to be reflective and willing to adapt, there is no limit to what is possible.

Success Academy Opportunities for Expansion

Both of the young men interviewed are second language learners who speak of English being their second language and of that being part of the reason they are drawn to careers that focus on math and science. This may be an opportunity for the program to provide more explicit instruction for students in reading and writing. SA provides students with intense support from just before 6th grade to just before 8th grade, there is limited support from 8th grade through college. There seems to be an opportunity here for more intense academic support as students transition from middle to high school, since this is the place many, especially boys of color, struggle the most. As the boys speak about their college lists, it comes up that one hasn’t considered any out of state colleges, partly because of the expense to visit those colleges. There is potential here for

SA to provide resources for students (and their families) to visit out-of-state colleges, since some may offer significant scholarships.

Opportunity Scholars Opportunities for Expansion

Although the student doesn't speak intentionally about academic support, it is obvious from his conversation that the content of his Government class at school is important to his success as a Black young man. He believes every Black male should know about his rights and the Constitution and speaks about his concerns about recent events regarding the treatment of Black men, specifically Mike Brown, Jordan Davis, and Trayvon Martin. This class has become a place where he feels empowered to know how to respond to current events. One area of growth would be that CBOs could provide opportunities for young men of color to engage in learning about their history and discussing recent events that affect how they think about their futures. Similarly, OS could engage students more in activities that reflect their culture and connect them to other students from similar backgrounds. On his own the student participates in an organization hosted by the UW Business School, which allows him and other students of color to have access to what it is like to be in the business world. He learned about this program through another program he attended, which provides students of color with exposure to other college attendees who share similar backgrounds and cultures. Another place where the student interviewed sees opportunity for growth is in how OS could provide insights about what classes look good on college applications.

Ultimately, SA, OS, and UW could benefit from there being more intentional identification of SA and OS students. In the Common Application, students are able to identify the CBO with which they participate, and this allows schools to have a broader

sense of the experiences of the students applying. However, according to the director of SA, UW

doesn't have a place for that, at least they didn't as of last year. Even though I work very closely with my students in their application process it may fall through the cracks that they're identifying as a Success Academy.

Since there are so many students from SA and OS attending UW, there could be great benefits from following grade and graduation trends to determine how these students perform. If these first-generation students outperform other students from similar demographics, their CBO status could become an asset that is weighted in the admissions process.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Implications

There were three key findings in this case study. The first finding is that information about the college process is only successfully transmitted to students through relationships. The second finding is that relationships are translated into the kinds of support students need to complete the college process. The third, and most important finding, is that the combination of information about the college process, relationships between students and adults, and the resulting support are what provide students with the social capital they need to both complete the college process and to disrupt the economic realities in their homes and communities and ultimately the social reproduction of inequities in society. These findings address the purpose of this research, in order to determine how to ensure that more students of color, particularly males, have access to a quality and equal K-12 schooling experience and are successful in their transition into and through college.

What The Main Findings Say About the Educational Pipeline And CBOs' Role Within It

While the educational pipeline for young men of color is indeed “leaky”, there are clearly ways that movement through this pipeline can be greatly facilitated. CBOs seem to provide a particularly good vehicle for building networks of relationships, translating these into specific supports, and developing social capital in the process. The study helps reveal how many different relationships are part of the networks CBOs build, and suggests how all of them together, as well as each of them, plays a role in guiding young

men of color through the system. What is happening in this process is a particular response to inequitable teaching, institutional racism, and other barriers, identified earlier—in effect, the CBOs are modeling and embodying achievement gap-closing practices.

The Community-Based Organizations' Response to the Achievement Gap

Community-based organizations (CBOs) play a significant role in eliminating the achievement gaps by providing our most vulnerable students with access to quality instruction and rigorous coursework, by providing these students with access to the opportunities their wealthier peers get from family or school environments. These CBOs also disrupt institutional racism and challenge the stereotypes students often internalize based on how the larger society and education institutions represent and treat them. For the purposes of this study, inequitable educational practices and school structure; differential investment of educational resources and out-of-school factors (OSFs); and institutional racism and furtherance of racial disparities help explain why the achievement gap exists and what its existence means for society. These theories highlights forces, dynamics and conditions, often intertwined, that are at work in affecting the quality and equality of education in our country.

Response to Inequitable Educational Practices and School Structure

There are factors and attitudes that have contributed to the ways school is structured that create inequities in how different students, particularly boys of color, experience school. For instance, in the widely circulated and articulated “Bell Curve hypothesis”, Herrnstein and Murray (1994) claims that “low intelligence means a

comparatively high risk of poverty” (p. 135), suggesting that all people who are poor, including people of color, are poor because they are less intelligent. The implications are that intelligence is fixed and there is nothing school could do to change a student’s intellectual ability, which perpetuate beliefs about who “should” receive access to rigorous coursework. Beliefs that only certain groups of students have the intellectual capacity to benefit from rigorous academic programs have allowed schools to continue practices that disadvantage students of color and students of poverty. This creates a closed system based on the false idea that those who are capable will automatically have access, a meritocracy which at its center is skewed, completely dismissing the fact that the entire framework is false, not just the idea of intelligence and ability always meeting neatly with opportunity. Knapp et al. (1996) question the legitimacy of the “Bell Curve hypothesis,” calling the work *The Assault on Equality*, stating that Herrnstein and Murray misused statistics and misleadingly understated the role environment plays in achievement. Unfortunately, the K-12 system continues to replicate the inequitable practices suggested as justifiable by the “Bell Curve hypothesis”. However, CBOs have arisen, across the nation, to disrupt these patterns both responding to and exposing the glaring holes which have been accepted, until recently, as the norm in education.

Opportunity Scholars (OS) addresses the inequitable practices of school, and school structure specifically, by providing students with the personalized attention around the college process that they would not receive in their public schools. Whereas the teachers in the public schools talk about the importance of attending college, the student shares that no one is “really helping all that much.” Unlike the staff in schools, OS ensures that all students, starting junior year of high school, understand the process of selecting and applying to college. These students have access to adult staff every day in

their school buildings. In addition, the college support staff provide students with access to afterschool and weekend workshops to learn about the process and to complete certain aspects of the process. Only first-generation, students of color from low socioeconomic backgrounds qualify for this program, which creates a cohort affect that allows students to be surrounded by those with similar background with similar dreams for the future.

Success Academy (SA) addresses inequitable practices in a very intentional way. High-performing 5th grade students are recruited and then provided with 6 weeks of instruction for two summers, in addition to mid-week and weekend instruction during the school year. With the recognition that public schools are not providing students with the same access to rigorous coursework and personal connection, high-performing SA students are encouraged to attend private high schools, where they will be exposed to college-prep curriculum from teachers, who will be able to give them personalized instruction. One of the boys interviewed speaks about the intensity of the work they were asked to do, stating that at the time he “didn't think that it really had a point to it,” but once he got to his elite private school, he realized it was “similar to what we do in high school now.” Furthermore, students in SA are intentionally placed into cohorts with other students from similar cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, which creates an environment in which students can feel comfortable and supported expressing their cultures while also becoming college-ready.

Response to Differential Investment of Educational Resources in Community and Out-of-School Factors

What happens in the school setting is critical for students. However, there are other out-of-school factors (OSFs) that contribute to achievement gaps. In the case of this study, all students served by CBOs are the first to attend college in their families, are

often recently emigrated to the United States (meaning English is also not their first language (ELL)), and are low-income—all factors from outside of school that impact how students experience school. Since schools are funded by real estate taxes, there are huge implications for how schools in communities of poverty are resourced. Schools in low-income communities have staff who are not certified in their content areas and have access to less content materials. A further complication is that students of color and students of poverty, wherever they attend school, are also given fewer opportunities for rigorous coursework. Each CBO addresses the impacts of these OSFs in different ways.

Opportunity Scholars (OS) addresses OSFs and inequitable investments in educational resources specifically by providing students with access to adults with knowledge about the college process. OS places adult staff on high school campuses who are full-time staff members. All AmeriCorps staff who serve are required to "have a college degree so they've been through the process of graduating from college" and therefore have specific knowledge about the process and recent experiences that make their support and advice much more accessible to students. These staff members also have time to give students the kinds of counseling and support necessary to complete the college process, unlike what is available in their school buildings. In addition, OS provides students with access to college fairs and free college visits, something schools are not providing. Once students get to campus, they are provided with additional support which could include tutoring, if necessary, a cohort of students from different high schools for community, and help in finding scholarships and completing financial aid paperwork.

Success Academy (SA) addresses OSFs and the lack of investment in educational resources in a variety of ways. All the intensive academic instruction students receive is

provided for free. Furthermore, students are not left to “fend for themselves” with whatever public school is in the neighborhood. SA staff are intentional about providing students with information about local private schools, as well as scholarships, so families are able to afford to send their students to the best schools, not the worst. Access to private schools not only provides students with opportunities for more rigorous instruction but they are also then embedded in a community in which attending college is a norm, not just a dream. Students are then surrounded by other students on the same journey but also by teachers who are helping students develop the skills necessary to be successful in college, and with college counselors who have access to the most up-to-date information about the college process. In addition, SA works alongside the college counselor to ensure students receive adequate financial aid in order to afford to attend college. Beyond high school, SA students are provided with individualized support.

According to the director,

college support staff...physically goes to the campus...supplemental to the monthly check that we're doing with students all over the country. We also help them renew their financial aid paperwork.

SA ensures that finances are not a barrier for students and their families.

Response to Institutional Racism and Furtherance of Racial Disparities

There are ways schools replicate social and economic status. Two examples are “the existence of increased variety and abundance of teaching materials in the classroom and increased time...spent by teachers on preparation” (Artiles et al., 2009, p. 24) in higher income communities than lower income communities. Artiles et al. (2009) also acknowledge that learning opportunities are inequitably distributed across racial groups.

Students from White, high-income families have access to more rigorous coursework (e.g., Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, honors courses) than do students of poverty and students of color. CBOs seek to provide those students who are most impacted with access to more rigorous curriculum and the social capital (networking opportunities, skills in self-advocacy, etc.) that they might not get at home or in school. CBOs serve to produce new social capital through educational and economic mechanisms—access to quality, rigorous educational experiences leading to improved economic status.

Opportunity Scholars addresses institutional racism and racial disparities by intentionally reaching out to students of color and students of poverty (often overlapping realities) and providing them with the support they need to enroll and complete college. Whereas the numbers of students of color attending college are low in many places (surprisingly so for students with strong academic profiles), OS creates a new norm. OS walks students through the application process, and also provides the kind of support students need while “in the system” to ensure they graduate.

SA also responds to the realities of institutional and racial disparities by intentionally engaging the most marginalized students—students of color and students of poverty. These students not only receive the support they need to apply to college. SA makes sure these students have been exposed to rigorous curriculum, so they qualify for entrance into the best colleges and for significant academic scholarships. The director of SA shares about her greatest challenge in getting her low-income, first-generation students access to the most rigorous colleges, which also happen to be very expensive:

About a third of our families or our students are able to gain admission to those 40 colleges... That leaves two thirds of our families who need to find an affordable 4-

year college option.

She is able to do the legwork necessary to ensure all of her students find the proper placement, a service the public high school doesn't have staffing to provide. In addition to supporting students through the process of selecting and financing college and disrupting current trends in attendance, SA also trains parents in how to understand the college process and advocate for their children. There are implications for this that reach beyond one child attending college. Providing both students and their families with this knowledge and ensuring students graduate from college also has the potential to change economic realities for families, and eventually, whole communities.

For many students of color, particularly young men, negative stereotypes regarding their potential are internalized at a young age, as they watch their White and female peers access more educational opportunities and receive more affirmations. When the language and culture of boys of color is not embraced, and they become aware that the expectations are different for them than for others, it is common for them to give up any hope to benefit from public education. Both OS and SA are set up to create a new narrative, to provide the kinds of supports and belief systems young men of color need in order to benefit from higher-education. OS creates a visible support system in a high school building. Students have regular contact with staff who believe in their potential and with other students who have similar aspirations. SA creates a support system earlier in a student's career, although this support system is not located in the school building the student attends. As students move into high school, if they are privileged to attend a private high school together, they are able to access support right in the building from one another but also with visits from the SA director. Students in SA must learn to self-advocate and draw from what they have learned through SA programming to empower

them through the high school experience. Once students have matriculated to college, both OS and SA create safe spaces for students to ensure they know they are surrounded by those who care about and believe in them.

As CBOs provide supports and give access to new resources, they are, in effect, creating a parallel “pipeline” of sorts, that bypasses, rather than fixes, the fundamental barriers that exist within the K-12 system. There is no doubt that for a small and select number of young men of color, this pipeline is making a huge difference. Furthermore, the CBOs, by engaging with the high schools their students attend, are able to subtly nudge the existing system to pay closer attention to the young men of color they teach and stay better connected with institutions of higher education, which could have implications far beyond the numbers of boys they are serving.

Unanswered Questions and Further Inquiry

While the study helps to get specific about what these CBOs are doing to support young men of color in their pursuit of higher education and successful lives, there are many things the study does not and cannot reveal about the process, the work of these institutions or other similar organizations, and the experiences of students who participate in them. For one thing, I was unable to follow students over time, to learn about their college experiences, and to watch the way social capital develops and to document this process unfolding. Because the CBOs’ response to the leaky pipeline is such a long term developmental process, it would be important for research to get further inside the process, noting how and where the CBO encounters its own issues and complications and how it resolves them. Also, it would be important to do so for a wider range of students than those I tapped for this research. I am unable to determine if the CBOs had as great

an impact for only certain participants or with all of them. That said, might there be groups of students (e.g., Black males) for whom the programs do not appear to work as well. In addition, it is apparent from both organizations that the leader is critical. It would be interesting to note whether or not the systems in place depend upon the leader or key staff people or whether the systems in place are embedded enough that even with a leadership change, the organizations would be able to sustain and even improve upon their respective successes. The two CBOs studied are fairly different in their methodology. Are there elements from each that would benefit the other? How are organizations able to embrace new strategies to be even more successful? Is there a way to learn things from these CBOs that could be applied to the K-12 system?

Implications for School Systems and Student Support

In summary, these three findings represent important steps school systems and other CBOs could take in order to ensure more qualified students are able to access college. In some cases the work of college advising needs to be done differently in school buildings. In other cases, this work could be done in collaboration with a community-based organization to ensure greater impact, and as such school systems would do well to seek out relationships with these organizations and support their efforts in any way possible. First, the evidence suggests that students with the best academic profiles need strong relationships with the adults close to them. Second, in order for these adults to have the greatest impact, it appears that they need to have more exposure to the kinds of support students need in order to complete the college process and must be committed to providing those supports. Third, schools could use some help to figure out how to combine the right information about college with the right relationships and the right

support, in order to ensure students have access to the social capital they need for a lifetime of success.

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