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## THE RESILIENCE OF TRIO UPWARD BOUND STUDENTS

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THE RESILIENCE OF TRIO UPWARD BOUND STUDENTS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

to the faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

of

THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

at

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

New York

by

Kemoy Briscoe-Morris

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE RESILIENCE OF TRIO UPWARD BOUND STUDENTS**

Kemoy Briscoe-Morris

This phenomenological qualitative study examined the intersection between TRIO Upward Bound participation and resilience theory to determine how participation in TRIO Upward Bound impacted the resiliency of its at-risk youth participants. Accordingly, the participants of this study are alumni of the federally funded TRIO Upward Bound program, a pre-collegiate initiative designed to increase the enrollment and persistence rates of at-risk youths by helping to prepare them for success at post-secondary institutions. The researcher examined the construct of resilience to provide an alternate measure of the efficacy of these programs. The researcher used artifacts, photo-elicitation, and interviews to gather data. Thematic analysis was employed to generate themes and subthemes that captured the essence of the participants' experiences. The findings of this study conclude that TRIO Upward Bound provides participants with significant academic, environmental, and social-emotional support that enhances their resiliency levels and promotes their overall development as young adults. This research adds to the literature on pre-collegiate programs and resiliency theory. The results of this study aid in our knowledge of effective strategies for developing and implementing pre-collegiate and out-of-school programs.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicated this work to Joshua and Aliyah Morris. May you always have faith in yourself and the God of your creation to persevere in whatever challenges life sets before you and to follow the desires of your heart. I love you to the ends of this earth.

- Mom

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

In recent years, educational research has shifted from quantitative academic outcomes (grades and test scores) to examining psychological constructs, such as self-efficacy, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and their impact on academic performance (Masten, 2018). Research demonstrates that psychological or non-cognitive skills are strongly related to student academic success (Komarraju et al., 2013; Sparkman et al., 2012). Sociologists Bowles and Gintis (1976) introduced the term *non-cognitive skills* to focus on factors other than those measured by academic (or cognitive) exams; it refers to the behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, and personality traits that foster success and includes constructs such as self-perception, motivation, perseverance, self-control, resilience, and coping (Farrington et al., 2012; Gutman & Schoon, 2013).

Historically, academic achievement was the focus of the examination of pre-collegiate, college preparatory, or out-of-school programs. Due to funding requirements, college preparation programs often highlight and report programmatic outcomes, such as the number of participants served, grades and test scores earned, and the number of students who enroll in and complete post-secondary education (Dortch, 2020). As such, reporting outcomes focused on highlighting the participants' academic achievements, not the social, cultural, or psychological capital gained by the participants. There is minimal research on these programs' impact on their participants' psychological development. Subsequently, this qualitative study examined a pre-collegiate program to see how it impacts students' psychological or non-cognitive skill development. Specifically, it aimed to explore how the pre-collegiate program TRIO Upward Bound built students' resiliency. This phenomenological qualitative study explored the students' lived

experiences who participated in a TRIO Upward Bound program based at a large university in the northeastern United States. The goal of this study was to shed light on an alternate approach to measuring the success of pre-collegiate (or college preparatory) programs.

### ***Upward Bound Profile***

In general, the design and intention of college preparatory programs is to promote a college-going culture among the pre-collegiate population (Knaggs et al., 2020). The creation of these programs aimed to help students understand the college process and close the achievement gap between minority and majority populations. Cities, states, and the federal government sponsor various types of programs with this objective. Well-known federally funded college preparation programs include TRIO Upward Bound, Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), and Talent Search (Knaggs et al., 2020).

TRIO Upward Bound is a federally funded pre-collegiate intervention designed to increase enrollment and persistence rates of at-risk populations by helping to prepare them for academic success at post-secondary institutions (Cahalan & Curtin, 2004; Dortch, 2020). The establishment of Upward Bound was a part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's *War on Poverty*. President Johnson believed higher education was a cornerstone for helping to reduce poverty within the United States (Cahalan & Curtin, 2004). Upward Bound (UB) was the first TRIO program established under Johnson's *Economic Opportunity Act of 1964*. This Act authorized the establishment of 18 pilot UB programs in the subsequent year (Cahalan & Curtin, 2004; Dortch, 2020).

TRIO Upward Bound's aim is to foster the skills and motivation necessary for enrollment and success in education beyond high school (Economic Opportunity Amendments of 1967, Public Law 90-222,). The program's goal is to increase the academic performance and motivation of eligible participants so that they may complete secondary school and successfully pursue post-secondary education programs. Upward Bound (UB) targets a unique population of students, specifically low-income and first-generation college students (Economic Opportunity Amendments of 1967, Public Law 90-222,). According to federal mandates, two-thirds of UB students must be low-income (defined as taxable income less than 150% of the United States poverty line) and first-generation college students. The definition of a *first-generation college student* is a student whose parents have not completed a bachelor's degree. The remaining one-third of participants must be low-income, first-generation college students, or at risk of academic failure (Dortch, 2020). A participant who is at risk for academic failure is defined as an individual who has not met proficient levels on state assessments in reading, language arts, or math, has not successfully completed pre-algebra or algebra by the beginning of the 10th grade, or has a grade point average of 2.5 or less (on a 4.0 scale) for the most recent school year (Dortch, 2020).

Furthermore, federal guidelines stipulate that UB students must be between the ages of 13 and 19, have completed eight years of elementary education, and intend to attend college. Students are generally recruited for participation in UB through the high schools they attend (Dortch, 2020). Typically, the basis for selecting participants relies upon recommendations from their school counselors, teachers, and social agencies (Cahalan & Curtin, 2004).

Upward Bound programs have historically served predominately minority student populations (Cahalan & Curtin, 2004). In 2004, the United States Department of Education published *A Profile of the Upward Bound Program 2000-2001*, prepared by Cahalan and Curtin of the Research Triangle Institute. It is the only publication of this kind about the program to date. The profile revealed that 45% of Upward Bound participants in 2000–2001 were Black or African American, 25% White, 19% Hispanic or Latino, 5% Asian, 4% American Indian or Alaska Native, 2% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 1% of mixed race. Among this population, the most cited reasons for the need for services for Upward Bound participants were those related to low grades, low achievement scores, and low aspirations. The second most reported reasons for needing services included lack of opportunity, support, and guidance to take challenging college preparatory courses, followed by being a member of a “predominately low-income community” at 17.6% (Cahalan & Curtin, 2004, p. 32).

### **Purpose of the Study**

Examining educational support programs like TRIO Upward Bound is critical to the functioning and developing of the educational system and structures that support our youth. These add-on programs must be studied to determine “if they prevent or facilitate the cycle of ‘at-risk-ness’ that adversely affects development and learning” (Wang et al., 1994, p. 12). Are they doing what they are designed to do? Educational resilience is a critical framework that helps us understand why some students are more successful than others and also determines the effectiveness of educational support programs. More importantly, research on resilience informs our understanding of how to help struggling students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The federal government established TRIO programs to ensure equal educational opportunity for all Americans, regardless of race, ethnic background, or economic circumstances. The fact that UB programs continue to primarily serve minority students shows that President Johnson's *'War on Poverty'* has not been won. Black and Hispanic students continue to experience disproportional disadvantages by living in distressed neighborhoods with reduced accessibility to employment opportunities, formal and informal social supports, high-quality schools, and community service (Brooks, 2006). For these reasons, programs like Upward Bound remain crucial to the aspirational educational goals of the United States, and why making sure these programs are successful is vital.

Accordingly, this study aimed to expand existing knowledge and research on TRIO programs, specifically TRIO Upward Bound. This study examined the intersection between TRIO Upward Bound participation and resilience theory to determine how participation in a federal TRIO Upward Bound program impacts the resiliency levels of at-risk youths. This study specifically explored how students who participated in a TRIO Upward Bound program at a large northeastern university describe the program's impact on their development of resiliency. The researcher examined the construct of resilience to provide an alternate measure of the efficacy of this program.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of resilience research guided this study. Resilience research emerged from medical and developmental psychology (Masten, 2018). The field now encompasses many disciplines, including anthropology, social work, criminal justice, and education, and there are varying definitions of resilience across these fields

(Cassidy, 2015). The traditionalist view of resilience is strength in the context of challenge or risk.

Masten et al. (1990) described resilience as the “capacity for or outcomes of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances” (p. 425). Wagnild and Young (1993) described it as the ability to cope successfully with change or misfortune. However, others define *resiliency* as the factors and processes that limit negative behaviors associated with stress and promote adaptive outcomes in the presence of adversity (Wolin & Wolin, 1993).

In education, Alva (1991) defined the academically resilient student as an individual who sustains high levels of achievement, motivation, and performance despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly in school. Wang et al. (1994) defined *educational resilience* as “the heightened likelihood of success in school and other life accomplishments despite environmental adversities brought about by early traits, conditions, and experiences” (Chee, 2017, p. 46). Ahern et al. (2006) defined *resilience* as a personality characteristic that moderates the negative effects of stress and promotes adaptation. In sum, across the fields, resilience is seen as the ability to overcome adversity despite the persistent presence of challenges (Cassidy, 2015; Fenzel & Richardson, 2019; Yeung & Li, 2019).

For a student to be considered resilient, they must be at risk for negative outcomes (Cassidy, 2015; Chee, 2017; Fenzel & Richardson, 2019; Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997; Yeung & Li, 2019). TRIO Upward Bound students are at risk for academic failure due to the stress associated with poverty and economic hardship, minority status, racial discrimination, and having parents who are unfamiliar with the higher education system



within the United States. As previously noted, most TRIO Upward Bound participants are low-income or first-generation, with the majority being both. Studies have shown that low socioeconomic status (SES) is strongly and consistently associated with lower academic achievement (National Research Council, 1993; Yan & Gai, 2022). Youth of low SES are likely to live in low-SES neighborhoods characterized by poor housing conditions, inadequate public and social services, and schools that lack sufficient funds to provide a high-quality education (Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997).

Furthermore, statistics on the achievement gap reveal that youth from low-income households are more likely to struggle academically as a result of exposure to persistent poverty (Ladson-Billings, 2006). According to Ward (2006), “the literature is replete with studies, articles, books, and commissioned reports that have established the negative effect socioeconomic status has on educational outcomes for low-income minority youth” (p. 51). Low socioeconomic standing is the risk factor that places a significant proportion of Upward Bound students at risk for adverse outcomes (Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997).

In summary, resilience theory examines how some individuals are able to adapt positively and thrive despite the presence of adversity (Benard, 1991; Brooks, 2006; Cassidy, 2015; Chee, 2017; Fenzel & Richardson, 2019; Rodriguez-Fernandez et al., 2018; Yeung & Li, 2019). Upward Bound programs by federal mandate must serve students exposed to risk, in this case, young people from low-income backgrounds who have experienced inadequate schooling. This study examined the intersection of Upward Bound services and resiliency theory. The overarching question examined was: How do the services provided by TRIO Upward Bound programs coalesce to increase students’ resiliency levels by virtue of increasing resiliency resources?

## **Significance of the Study**

The federal government has a long history of supporting programs designed to address issues of educational equity and access to higher education specifically for socioeconomically disadvantaged and underrepresented minority groups (Biden, 2021; Dortch, 2020;). Each year, federal, state, and local governments, as well as colleges and universities, invest in out-of-school college preparation programs for students at risk of dropping out of school or for groups historically underrepresented in the collegiate environment based on race or socioeconomic backgrounds (Dortch, 2020; Rumberger, 2011; USDOE, 2022). The design of college preparatory programs like TRIO Upward Bound focuses on helping students develop the skills, knowledge, confidence, and aspirations they need to enroll in higher education (Dortch, 2020). However, historically low high school graduation rates and disparities in the academic achievement of minority student populations call into question the efficacy of our education system and its various support programs for minority and underrepresented students.

Although graduation rates have been on the rise in the United States, what remains concerning about U.S. graduation rates is that the academic achievement gap continues to persist between minority and underrepresented students and their White counterparts. The 2019–20 adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) for American Indian/Alaska Native was 75%, 81% for African Americans/Blacks, and 83% for Hispanic American public high school students, below the United States national average of 87%. In contrast, the ACGRs for White Americans was 90%, and for Asian/Pacific Islanders, it was the highest at 93%, with students ranking above the U.S. average (NCES, May 2023). The statistics shared are the latest data from the National Center for

Education Statistics (NCES) at the time of the study. The formula for calculating the ACGR is identifying first-time ninth graders in a particular school year, adding students who transferred into the cohort after ninth grade, and subtracting students who transferred out, emigrated, or died. The ACGR reflects on-time four-year high school graduation (NCES, 2023).

Furthermore, while the national dropout rate has declined, the status dropout rate for underrepresented populations remains significantly above the national average. The status dropout rate reflects the number of 16- to 24-year-olds in the United States who are not enrolled in school and have not earned an alternative credential, regardless of where or when they last attended school (NCES, 2013). In 2021, the Hispanic (7.8%), Black (5.9 %), and American Indian/Alaskan natives (10.2%) status dropout rates remained higher than the White (4.1%) dropout rate. As such, the high school completion rate of students of color continues to be a matter of national concern (NCES, 2023).

In addition to the fact that 13% of the population does not graduate on time each year, the above statistics highlight the potential need for out-of-school programs and the need to examine their place in the educational landscape remains important (NCES, 2023). Do out-of-school programs make a significant difference in students' educational outcomes, and, as such, are they worth the substantial monetary investment placed in these programs? Should federal, state, and local governments and school boards focus on improving instruction and access during the school day instead? Answering these and other related questions is challenging, given the varying programs and strategies within each program across the country. This study sought to add to the research literature on

out-of-school programs and address some of these questions by examining the pre-collegiate program TRIO Upward Bound.

This study contributes to positive educational practice changes by providing educators with a better understanding of how pre-collegiate programs support the educational development of at-risk students. Studying educational resilience can provide important insight for policy intervention and educational practice. Understanding non-cognitive factors that influence academic performance will provide a better directional approach to target ways to improve student outcomes. The study of resiliency may help address the achievement gap between successful students and those at risk for academic failure (Cassidy, 2015).

While resiliency research is extensive, a neglected area of resilience research is the influence of extra-curricular activities on developing competence and other correlates of resilience, such as optimism (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). To date, few studies have examined the role resilience plays in predicting students' academic or career success (Strayhorn, 2014). This study addresses the gap in the current research literature. It further aims to examine the pre-collegiate program Upward Bound through a different lens, through that of resilience. This study determined how participation in a federal TRIO Upward Bound program impacts the resiliency levels of at-risk youths.

### **Research Design and Research Questions**

The goal of this phenomenological qualitative study was to examine the relationship between participation in TRIO Upward Bound and student resiliency. The purpose of this study was to explore how participation in the TRIO Upward Bound

program increases students' psychological capacity by raising their level of resilience.

The researcher explored the following questions:

1. What are the motivating factors that influence students' choice to participate in the program?
2. How did TRIO Upward Bound shape or develop participants' resiliency?

### **Definition of Terms**

*Academic performance:* the measurement of students' achievement on standardized examinations. In TRIO Upward Bound, it is the percentage of participants scoring at or above the proficient level on state standardized tests in reading/language arts and math (Dortch, 2020).

*Academic resilience:* "reflects the students' resilience in the field of learning" (Yan & Gai, 2022, p. 2). It relates to those factors that allow a student to achieve and persevere toward degree completion despite non-academic obstacles that interfere with academic success (Debb et al., 2018). It is the ability to achieve positive education outcomes despite having a disadvantaged socioeconomic background (Yan & Gai, 2022).

*Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR):* is calculated by identifying first-time ninth graders in a particular school year, adding students who transferred into the cohort after ninth grade, and subtracting students who transferred out, emigrated, or died. The ACGR reflects on-time four-year high school graduation (NCES, May 2021).

*Afterschool program:* Includes education, arts or recreation-based programs that occur outside of school hours (<https://youth.gov/youth-topics/afterschool-programs>). In the United States, this is traditionally after 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and on the weekends (<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/>).

*At-risk*: is often used without being qualified. The Glossary of Education Reform defines at-risk students as those considered to have a higher probability of failing academically or dropping out of school (<https://www.edglossary.org/at-risk/>). At-risk students face circumstances that can jeopardize their ability to compete in school, including homelessness, health challenges, and domestic violence (<https://www.edglossary.org/at-risk/>). For this study, at-risk includes students from low-income households or are the first in their families who intend to enroll in college as defined by the requirements necessary to participate in the TRIO Upward Bound program institutions (Cahalan & Curtin, 2004; Dortch, 2020; Economic Opportunity Amendments of 1967, Public Law 90-222,).

*College preparatory*: these programs have existed in the educational landscape of the United States for many years (Knaggs et al., 2020). While they differ to some degree, many share the common aspects of providing academic support through tutoring, test preparation, advising, mentoring, college and personal counseling (Knaggs et al., 2020). In this study, the terms *pre-college*, *pre-collegiate*, and *college preparatory* programs were used interchangeably and referred to any out-of-school K-12 programs designed with the intention of better preparing students for the collegiate experience.

*Educational resilience*: the likelihood of success in school and other life accomplishments despite environmental adversities brought about by early traits, conditions, and experiences (Mampane, 2020).

*First-generation college student*: an individual whose parents did not complete a baccalaureate degree (Dortch, 2020).

*Grade Point Average (GPA):* a calculated cumulative mean measure of students' academic performance based on their grades in all courses where they are matriculated (Merritt, 2016).

*Low-income individual:* an individual from a family whose taxable income for the preceding year did not exceed 150% of an amount equal to the poverty level determined by using criteria of poverty established by the Bureau of the Census (Dortch, 2020).

*Motivation:* the intrinsic and extrinsic incentives that propel students to choose to matriculate, persist in, and graduate from post-secondary education. As defined by Davidovitch and Dorot (2023), "motivation is the forces that drive a person and propel them to achieve their goals and behave in a certain way in a given situation" (p. 117).

*Out-of-school program:* out-of-school time programs occur before or after the regular school day or outside of the regular school year (The United States Department of Education, <https://www.ed.gov/ost?src=rn>). Furthermore, these programs can include a wide range of activities, including after-school and enrichment programs (<https://www.ed.gov/ost?src=rn>). In this study, out-of-school programs fell within this category and refer to any education, arts, or recreation-based programming outside of the traditional school day. This includes after-school programs that occur directly following the end of the school day, Monday through Friday.

*Resilience:* for the purpose of this study, resilience is the ability to adapt positively to one's environment despite the presence of adversity (Benard, 1991; Brooks, 2006).

Moreover, resilience is the trait of adaptability in the presence of risk.

*Student engagement*: the effort in time and energy that a student exerts in activities that further their educational achievement, knowledge base, and personal growth (Delfino, 2019).

*Students' resilience*: the odds that a student does well academically despite their disadvantaged background (Yan & Gai, 2022)

*Student success*: the online Cambridge dictionary defines success as the achievement of results wanted or hoped for (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/success>). Accordingly, in this study, student success is a student's achievement of his/her educational and professional goals.



## CHAPTER 2

### **Introduction**

The construct of resilience has been studied for over five decades by psychiatrists, psychologists, other mental health professionals, and, more recently, educators.

Resilience theory originated in psychological literature with studies that examined how patients who suffered the same trauma recovered differently (Masten, 2018). Resilience research began with a focus on identifying resilient children's characteristics and attributes. Over time, research shifted to focus on identifying protective factors that foster resilience. This chapter provides a review of resilience theory and research to give context to the present study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Resilience as an academic concept emerged from the clinical sciences during the 1970s (Kim & Kim, 2017; Masten, 2018). Pioneering psychologists and psychiatrists at the time drew the attention of scientists to the coping skills of children at risk for psychopathology and problems in development due to genetic or experiential circumstances (Kim & Kim, 2017). Initially, resilience research focused on the negative consequences of adversity and was conceptualized primarily in terms of risks for psychopathology, dysfunction, breakdown, and other problematic outcomes (Masten, 2018). In time, resilience theory and research came to explore and elucidate the dynamic processes encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity (Yang & Wang, 2022).

As summarized by Masten (2018), early investigators included Anthony and Cohler (1987), Garmezy (1983), Murphy and Moriarty (1976), Rutter (1979b, 1987), and

Werner and Smith (1982). These researchers were concerned with the effect of adversity on mental health and development and sought to understand the origins and etiology of mental health problems (Masten, 2018). They recognized the variation in adaptive functioning and life course of young people considered “at risk” due to their genetic history, exposure to trauma, or poverty (Masten, 2018). Initially, the description of the phenomenon included the terms *invulnerability* or *stress resistance*. Eventually, scholars settled on the term *resilience* to refer broadly to the study of capabilities, processes, or outcomes denoted by desirable adaptation in the context of risk or adversities (Masten, 2018).

As noted above, the earliest *related* findings on resilience are the works of Norman Garmezy (1973). Garmezy (1973) was a clinical psychologist who studied schizophrenia and how adversity in life affected mental illness. Garmezy (1973) investigated the reasons why some children who were predisposed to risk and developing mental illness failed, while others who met the same circumstances persevered. Garmezy’s work formed the basis of resilience theory, setting the foundation for additional research studies that focused on protective factors and how these factors are developed and cultivated within at-risk populations.

Richardson (2002) chronicled three waves of resilience theory in his study, “*The Metatheory of Resilience and Resiliency*”. Richardson (2002) noted that the resilience theory emerged from the phenomenological identification of characteristics of survivors living in high-risk situations. The first wave of resiliency inquiry examined the characteristics or qualities of individuals who thrived in the face of risk or adversity. The second wave of resiliency inquiry sought to identify the process of attaining resilient

qualities. The third wave of resiliency inquiry focused on how resilience is the motivational force that allows individuals to grow despite disruption and adversity (Richardson, 2002).

According to Richardson (2002), the foundational study cited in most resiliency literature is the work of Emmy Werner and her colleague Ruth Smith. Werner and Smith (1992) conducted a 30-year longitudinal study of 700 at-risk youths in Hawaii from birth to adulthood. The study began in 1955 and examined a multiracial population of children designated to be at high risk as a result of perinatal stress, poverty, daily instability, and serious parental mental health problems. Werner and Smith's (1992) findings revealed that despite prolonged exposure to adverse conditions, 30% (or 200) of the children raised in distressed environments persevered and had positive outcomes. Werner and Smith categorized the subjects with positive outcomes as resilient (Werner & Smith, 1992). Werner and Smith noted that a caregiving environment inside and outside the family helped young people thrive in the face of adversity (Richardson, 2002). Werner and Smith's study concluded that children have the capacity to grow into caring, compassionate, successful adults despite being raised in challenging environments. Werner and Smith's findings further revealed that resilience is a universal capacity innate within all populations and promoted through direct interventions and positive interactions within their environment. More importantly, this study eliminated the premise that individuals who faced multiple risk factors were destined for negative outcomes (Werner & Smith, 1992). The work of Werner and Smith (1992) and researchers to follow documented the phenomenon of psychosocial resilience in diverse, at-risk populations, including children. These populations had family histories of mental illness, divorced

parents, exposure to high levels of maternal stress, neonatal stress, drug addiction, born at medical risk, poverty, neglect, family violence, war, physical handicaps exposure to family violence, exposure to early parental death (Wang et al., 1994).

Early research focused on identifying the characteristics and attributes of resilient children. However, over time, research shifted to focus on identifying protective factors that foster resilience. In defining resilience, what is consistent in the literature is that those who are resilient have been 1) exposed to risk, 2) have protective factors that guard against risk, 3) adapt and persevere despite the exposure to risk (Benard, 1991; Rodriguez-Fernandez et al., 2018; Yang & Wang, 2022; Yeung & Li, 2019) Accordingly, resilience theory focuses on protective factors that contribute to positive outcomes despite risk (Brooks, 2016; Chee, 2017; Neal, 2017; Yang & Wang, 2022; Yeung & Li, 2019).

Within the field of education, researchers found that just like children who endured psychological traumas and “beat the odds,” children from challenging communities and low-socioeconomic backgrounds also had high achievement gains despite coming from impoverished families and communities with multiple adversities and few resources (Wang et al., 1994, p. 30). In education, resilience theory and resilience research focus on the factors that prepare students for success. For this study, the researcher adopted Benard’s (1991) definition of resilience, which defines resilience as the ability to adapt to one’s environment despite the presence of challenges or adversity. In other words, resilience explains how some individuals are able to overcome challenges and succeed in the face of adversity. The resilient learner “can overcome

stress and retain high mental strength regardless of difficulties” (Yang & Wang, 2022, p. 2).

In recent years, researchers have recognized resilience as a framework from which to understand why some students become successful in school while others of similar socioeconomic backgrounds and circumstances have not met the same success (Yan & Gai, 2022; Yang & Wang, 2022). Resilience studies allow educators to focus on the predictors of academic success rather than academic failure. Resilience is now recognized as an essential intervention framework in promoting skills and characteristics associated with student success in school (Waxman et al., 2004; Yang & Wang, 2022). The education community has adopted resilience as a strength-based or solution-based approach. In education, Waxman et al. (2004) claimed that resilience is not a fixed attribute but an alterable process or mechanism that can be developed or fostered.

In reviewing resilience research, Brown (2001a) noted that educational research centered on a deficit model for several decades. The focus was on factors contributing to students’ academic failure or potential withdrawal from school. As previously mentioned, a slow conceptual shift began in the late 1970s. Brown (2001a) cited Werner, noting that approximately 70% of young people living in the worst conditions learn to overcome many of their fiercest challenges and thrive. Rather than focusing on the impact of students’ shortcomings increasing their risk of academic failure, resilience theory attempts to identify factors that account for success.

Accordingly, educational resilience research now focuses on protective factors within students. Protective factors are traits or abilities (or influences) that reduce the impact of adversity and promote positive outcomes. Brooks (2006) categorized protective

factors as external (environmental) or internal. In a review of the protective factor research, Benard (1991) identified several character traits of resilient children. Resilient children are socially competent, problem-solvers, autonomous, and possess a sense of purpose and a future. Resilient children are environmentally responsive, flexible, empathic, caring individuals with strong communication skills and pro-social behavior. They also tend to have more positive relationships with others. As problem solvers, resilient children can think abstractly, reflectively, and flexibly. Additionally, they are able to attempt alternate solutions for cognitive and social problems. Furthermore, research shows resilient children have a strong sense of their own identity and an ability to act independently and exert some control over their environment (Benard, 1991).

Benard (1991) found that among the most powerful predictors of positive outcomes for children raised in challenging environments are attributes of healthy expectancies, goal-directedness, success orientation, achievement motivation, educational aspirations, persistence, hopefulness, hardiness, belief in a bright future, a sense of anticipation, a sense of a compelling future, and a sense of coherence. Studies have also found that a sense of coherence, purpose, meaning, hopefulness, and a belief or feeling of confidence that one's internal and external environment is predictable and that things will probably work out as well as can be certainly expected are found in resilient children in direct contrast to "learned helplessness" consistently found present in individuals experiencing mental and social problems (Benard, 1991, p. 9). Benard (1991) cited Newcomb and Bentler (1986), noting that educational aspirations are an even more powerful predictor of high school graduation than actual academic achievement.

Benard (1991) also found that most resilient children had the opportunity to establish close bonds with at least one stable, caring adult from whom they received adequate and appropriate attention. Benard (1991) found this type of attention, particularly during the first years of life and having caring and supportive relationships, is the most critical variable throughout childhood and adolescence in developing resiliency. Benard (1991) also found that high expectations within the family community and school community are crucial to positive self-development. Benard (1991) stated, “Research has identified that schools that establish high expectations for all kids- and give them the support necessary to achieve them- have incredibly high rates of academic success” (p. 15). The characteristics of successful schools include an academic emphasis, teachers’ clear expectations and regulations, a high level of student participation, and many varied alternative resources. These resources include library facilities, vocational work opportunities, art, music, and extra-curricular activities (Benard, 1991). Benard (1991) summarized,

Individuals who have succeeded in spite of adverse environmental conditions in their families, schools, and/or communities have often done so because of the presence of environmental support in the form of one family member, one teacher, one school, one community person that encouraged their success and welcomed their participation” (p. 22-23).

### ***On Grit and Growth Mindset***

Work focusing on non-cognitive or psychological skills has led to the emergence of other distinct yet related concepts (Cassidy, 2015). In recent years, popular research in internal constructs has focused on the works of Dr. Angela Duckworth and Dr. Carol

Dweck. Both Duckworth and Dweck have provided significant contributions to the field of academic resilience through their work on “grit” and “mindset” (Cassidy, 2015, p. 2). According to Yin (2009), it is critical for a researcher to be aware of the full range of theories that might be relevant to her study and to anticipate and enumerate rival explanations. As such, the following paragraphs briefly review these two related theories and explain why this study focused on the senior theory of resilience.

Duckworth and colleagues coined the term *grit* to describe what they define as persistence and passion toward long-term goals (Von Culin et al., 2014). In the literature, persistence and grit are synonymous (Chien et al., 2012; Shechtman et al., 2013). It may also be argued that grit and resilience are synonymous in many instances. In a 2013 report titled *Promoting Grit, Tenacity, and Perseverance: Critical Factors for Success in the 21st Century*, the U.S. Department of Education defined *grit* as “perseverance to accomplish long-term or higher-order goals in the face of challenges and setbacks, engaging the student’s psychological resources, such as their academic mindsets, effortful control, and strategies and tactics” (Shechtman et al., 2013, p. 3). Resilience, on the other hand, is viewed as the ability to overcome adversity despite the presence of persistent challenges (Benard, 1991).

The United States Department of Education has combined Duckworth’s definition of *grit* and *resilience*. This combination of terms is understandable, as there are clear overlaps between academic resilience and the constructs proposed by Dweck and Duckworth (Cassidy, 2015). However, the defining factor in resilience is that resilience, as a construct, is built on the underlying assumption that an individual has undergone an experience of significant involuntary external adversity to which they have positively



adapted (Horman, 2018; Mampane, 2020; Yeung & Li, 2019). Adversity must be present before identifying a child as resilient (Diers, 2020; Mampane, 2020; Yeung & Li, 2019). Neither grit nor growth mindset requires the experience of prior adversity over which one has no control over before accomplishing the tasks one has set out to achieve. TRIO Upward Bound students must overcome the challenges associated with poverty or limited income, first-generation status, and potentially racial or education disparities. Duckworth's initial hypothesis and study on *grit* focused on highly qualified high achievers, such as West Point cadets, undergraduate students at the University of Pennsylvania, and finalists in the Scripps National Spelling Bee (Duckworth et al., 2007). Her initial studies did not take into account background environmental factors such as income status or childhood psychological trauma. At its core, grit focuses on the motivation behind pursuing long-term goals (Duckworth et al., 2007). Duckworth maintains that *grit* differs from other related constructs, such as conscientiousness, because it specifies effort and interest toward long-term goals (Duckworth et al., 2007; Park et al., 2020).

Additionally, *jangle fallacy* could negatively impact grit. The *jangle fallacy* is the belief that two concepts are different simply because they have different names (Kelley, 1927). Is grit distinctly different from conscientiousness, need for achievement, or resilience? Duckworth et al. (2007) acknowledged and addressed this concern by stating that grit “overlaps with achievement aspects of conscientiousness but differs in its emphasis on long-term stamina rather than short term intensity” (p. 1089). Duckworth et al. (2007) stated that grit differs from the need for achievement in that those high in grit

*deliberately* set extremely long-term objectives for themselves and do not waver from them.

Furthermore, researchers have called into question the construct validity of grit, suggesting the construct largely functions because of the perseverance of effort facet. For example, Crede et al. (2017) found a correlation between grit and the Big-5 constructs of conscientiousness at  $r=0.84$ ,  $N=18,826$ . Crede et al. (2017) argued there is a need for more research to examine the relationship between grit and other psychological constructs.

Similar to grit, the construct of a *growth mindset* also contributes to positive adaptive cognitive and behavioral outcomes (Park et al., 2020). In 1975, Carol Dweck published her seminal work on the role of expectations and attributions in alleviating *learned helplessness* (Spenner, 2017). In short, Dweck found that if children believed a failure to be about their ability or out of their control, they continued to fail. This was termed *learned helplessness*. Dweck's work led to the research and development of what is known today as mindset theory (Li & Bates, 2019; Spenner, 2017). Dweck's work became popular in 2007 with the publication of her book *Mindset, the New Psychology of Success*, and her subsequent TED talk in 2014 (Spenner, 2017). The theory stipulates that individuals with a *fixed mindset* tend to think of their intelligence as unchangeable.

Consequently, the outcome of any work done is predetermined (failure or success is inevitable). Individuals with a *growth mindset* assume that with effort and intention, they can change their intelligence, and as a result, the outcome of their work is unknown; consequently, they are willing to try (Spenner, 2017). Moreover, children's beliefs about whether their basic ability is stable (fixed mindset) or can be changed substantially

(growth mindset) have a causal impact on their cognitive performance and educational attainment (Li & Bates, 2019).

In short, mindset theory posits that one's beliefs about one's intelligence profoundly impact one's effort and achievement (Li & Bates, 2019). Mindset theory explains how children cope with challenging material and significant challenges (Li & Bates, 2019). There have been challenges to Dweck's work. In their examination of mindset theory, Li and Bates (2019) cited five subsequent studies that tried to replicate Dweck's 1998 paper on mindset manipulations that yielded mixed results between mindset and academic achievement. Furthermore, prior to their study, Li and Bates (2019) noted that there were no replications of Dweck's hallmark 1998 study on mindset manipulation. In their attempt to replicate Dweck's work, Li and Bates (2019) found no evidence of any effect of children's mindsets on their performance on moderate items, and they found support for a harmful effect of a growth-oriented mindset on more challenging items. Additionally, Li and Bates (2019) found no evidence that growth mindset promotes higher grades or higher cognitive ability scores. Moreover, they found no association between children's mindsets and cognitive ability scores. The mean ability scores of children with a growth mindset did not differ from those with mixed or fixed mindsets.

In addition, studies have shown that grit and growth mindset are positively correlated (Park et al., 2020). Duckworth proposed that growth mindset leads to grit (Park et al., 2020), or grit could be developed by having a growth mindset (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015). In a longitudinal study of adolescents aimed to uncover if grit and growth mindset are concomitantly related (mutually reinforcing) constructs, Park et al.

(2020) found grit and growth mindset to be moderately correlated. Furthermore, grit and growth mindset reciprocally predicted each other's developmental trajectories (Park et al., 2020). Growth mindset is a specific mental skill set. A review of the literature reveals that resilience is a psychological attribute encompassing several skill sets that can be said to include growth mindset. For example, the work of Benard (1991) revealed that the most resilient children have healthy expectancies; they believe in a bright future and that they can exert some control over their environment. This researcher has not found a past study that specifically examined the correlation between mindset and resilience, and as such, this relationship is the subject of future studies.

### **Review of Related Literature**

The following section provides a review of recent related literature. The researcher used several databases, including Proquest, EBSCO Host, and Google Scholar to conduct a comprehensive review of peer-reviewed research-based articles on resilience in education, focusing on articles published in the last 10 years. Keywords included *resilience, academic resilience, educational resilience, education, students, high school, college prep, pre-collegiate, TRIO upward bound, and out-of-school*. The most applicable studies are summarized below. The researcher found no studies on TRIO Upward Bound programs and resilience. Accordingly, the following studies examine educational resilience in other sub-group populations.

Pardon et al. (2014) examined the classroom learning environments of 1,295 seventh and eighth-grade middle school minority students. Using an adapted version of the My Class Inventory, they looked at resilient, non-resilient, and average students to determine if there were differences between resilient, average, and non-resilient urban

middle-level students on their perceptions of the classroom learning environment in reading. In their study, they randomly selected 1,295 seventh and eighth-grade students from three middle schools in a major metropolitan area in the south-central region of the United States. The students came from predominantly minority populations and received free or reduced lunch. Teachers categorized students into resilient, non-resilient, and average groups. Using a 50-item questionnaire adapted from the My Class Inventory base, the authors found statistically significant differences between resilient, average, and non-resilient students. Resilient students had an above-average to slightly-above-average perception of their classroom learning environments. Resilient students also had higher average means in self-esteem in reading, perceptions of equity, and cohesion. Furthermore, resilient students reported missing fewer days of school, skipping fewer classes, and being late for class less than non-resilient and average students.

Examining the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS88), Pardon et al. (2014) found that twice as many non-resilient students are held back in school than resilient students. Students' self-reported grades indicated that 87% of resilient students reported mostly As and Bs, while 75% of non-resilient students reported mostly Cs, Ds, or Fs in their reading grades. Students reported data on time allocation showed resilient, average, and non-resilient students spending nearly equivalent amounts of time doing homework and watching television. However, resilient students reported spending twice as much time reading two or more hours per week than non-resilient students. Eighty-one percent of resilient students said they would graduate from college or attend graduate school compared to 46% of non-resilient students. Eighty-two percent of resilient students said they were "Very Sure" of graduating high school, compared to 43% of non-

resilient students. Their results revealed that resilient students perceive their classroom environments more favorably than non-resilient students. Resilient students also have higher perceptions of satisfaction, teacher support, cohesion, equity, and self-esteem in reading than average and non-resilient students.

In a multi-level study, Yavuz and Kutlu (2016) investigated whether school attachment, perceived social support, cognitive flexibility, and gender can predict resilience in economically disadvantaged seniors in high school. Their multiple regression analyses revealed that cognitive flexibility and perceived social support significantly predicted the level of academic resilience of economically disadvantaged high school students. The authors saw cognitive flexibility as the awareness that in any situation there is more than one option or alternative available and the willingness to be flexible and adapt to any situation. The authors concluded that this correlation existed because students with high levels of cognitive flexibility are able to find solutions for problems and believe that they will be successful if they make considerable effort.

In contrast to previous studies, Yavuz's and Kutlu's (2016) study showed that school attachment did not significantly predict the students' level of resilience. Furthermore, academic resilience and gender were significantly related. Yavuz and Kutlu (2016) stated that female students are generally more successful in education and tend to have higher academic resilience than males.

Chee (2017) used critical discourse analysis to analyze how students who overcame adversity told stories of failure, success, and resilience to achieve high scores on the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination and gain entry into college. Chee (2017) examined media discourse on academic adversity and resilience in

17 major Hong Kong newspapers; 453 articles published between 2005 and 2014 were selected and analyzed. Examining how resilient students articulated their adversities, the authors found that they perceived their risk factors differently.

In alignment with prior research on resilience, the study revealed that students exposed to similar risk factors can have very different interpretations of their circumstances. Some students saw their adversity as a negative, unfortunate circumstance and struggled to overcome the stressful barrier. Furthermore, other students accepted difficulty as a part of life; they did not see themselves as unfortunate but saw adversity as a part of life that everyone had to face. Paradoxically, others used their challenges as a positive driving force to help push their limits. In summary, the study showed that what is a risk factor for one person may be a driving force for another. Accordingly, risk and resilience are all about perception. The question that remained for the authors and further research is why different students perceive similar adversities differently.

Focusing on examining South Africa's inclusive education policy, Mampane (2020) conducted semi-structured interviews of student participants at two educational opportunity centers in Pretoria, South Africa. The study's findings revealed that when teachers create a safe space for learning, which supports students' academic resilience, these environments promote the creation of positive relationships. Study participants viewed positive relationships with teachers as a key and necessary "platform" to experience safety and being included and acknowledged in their school. Key among their findings is the study participants' ability to identify strengths within themselves, which they attributed to their ability to identify and utilize the resources available to them. Participants indicated that they were self-driven with an internal locus of control. The

resilient student believed they had the power to influence events in their environment and that their behavior rather than fate, luck, or external circumstances generated their outcomes. Furthermore, a key determinant of their academic resilience is their self-efficacy (self-assurance to complete academic tasks and flourish based on past performance). Third, community social support programs supported the education resilience of students where the school was not able to do so.

Cassidy (2015) investigated the association between academic self-efficacy (ASE) and academic resilience. In this study, the researcher exposed 435 undergraduate students to adverse situation case vignettes describing personal or vicarious academic adversity. ASE was measured pre-exposure, and academic resilience was measured post-exposure. The study's results showed positive correlations between ASE and academic resilience for all groups. Additionally, ASE was associated with and was a predictor of academic resilience. Furthermore, students exhibited greater academic resilience when responding to vicarious adversity than personal adversity.

Yan and Gai (2022) found that the factors that play a critical role in academic resilience include intrinsic non-cognitive ability and external social factors. Yan and Gai (2022) used structured questionnaires and academic test results to examine what internal and external protective factors are conducive for students from low-socioeconomic status families to become high-achieving, resilient students. Their study included 46,089 students from 303 primary schools in grade six, 55,477 students from 256 junior high schools in grade nine, and 37,856 students from 66 high schools in grade 11 from a city in northeast China. In this study, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) (2018) definition of resilience guided the thematic report. They



defined resilient students as students whose family socioeconomic status was in the lowest quarter of the city and whose academic achievement was in the highest quarter of their city. Multivariable logistic regression analyses revealed a significant difference ( $p < 0.001$ ) between resilient students, disadvantaged average achievers (those students whose achievement difference was in the lowest quarter of the city and the lowest quarter of the family socioeconomic status), and disadvantaged low achievers (those students whose achievement difference was in the middle half and the lowest quarter of the family socioeconomic status). Resilient students had significantly higher academic achievement than disadvantaged average achievers and disadvantaged low achievers, whether in grades 6, 9, or 11.

Yan and Gai (2022) found that intrinsic protective factors for resilient students included a higher proportion of academic importance identity; that is, students from low socioeconomic status families who expected to complete higher education significantly ( $p < 0.001$ ) to be resilient than those who did not expect to complete higher education in grades 6, 9 and 11. Moreover, academically resilient students had a higher proportion of achievement motivation, longer-term future educational expectations, and more positive academic emotions compared with non-resilient students. Additionally, extrinsic protective factors included parents' higher proportion of positive expectations for their children's future development and more harmonious peer and teacher-student relationships.

Looking at another subgroup of at-risk students, Neal (2017) examined how successful foster youths transitioned out of care and furthered their education at an academically rigorous institution. Foster youths can experience high levels of stress and

developmental challenges as they cope with extreme emotional turbulence due to being displaced from their homes and other issues, including child abuse, neglect, parental incarceration, or death (Neal, 2017). Accordingly, this group is another prime example of a subgroup of students facing adverse outcomes they must overcome, particularly as it relates to their educational pursuits, and as such, must be included in any educational study regarding resilience. Utilizing survey and interview data, Neal (2017) discovered four major themes of similarity in the foster youths. First, the supportive adults in their environment perceived intrinsic characteristics as the reasons for the students' academic success and enrollment in college. These intrinsic characteristics included being goal-oriented, disciplined, and having high academic aspirations: "resilience, fortitude, and tenacity were all common traits identified by adults" (Neal, 2017, p. 244). Second, Neal (2017) found that fostering students' motivation for academic success sometimes comes from the negative space of resistance. That is, they found ways to resist their environments by proving people wrong or not ending up like their biological parents. The students used school and the pursuit of a college education to escape whatever situation they found themselves in (Neal, 2017). Neal (2017) found that the determination to be different and to change the course of their future to be critical in fostering youths' resilient behaviors. Third, Neal (2017) uncovered that organizations and extra-curricular programs provided protective structures to support growth and academic success, which helped to boost the students' self-esteem. Extra-curricular involvement provided positive outlets and methods for coping with stress. Close to half the survey respondents (47%) shared that outside activities were a means to persist through the stressful times they faced during high school. It is critical to note that fostering students' participation in

extra-curricular activities highlighted their ability to seek resources that had a constructive impact on their overall well-being (Neal, 2017). Fourth, developing relationships with caring adult supporters was critical for the students in supporting their efforts to go to college. The students believed that their trajectory to college would have been different if it had not been for the caring adults who provided guidance, emotional support, and stability (Neal, 2017). The author concluded that the study confirmed a prominent connection between academic resilience and care. Accordingly, while students had intrinsic characteristics that led to their success (resilience), the care from an emotionally responsive adult was critical to students' academic persistence. This study adds to the literature stating that intrinsic characteristics drive student success.

In a qualitative study that explored family migration, educational experiences, aspirations, and ethnic identity development of Central American youth, Coronado and Paredes (2018) dissected the testimonies of first- and second-generation immigrants ages 17 to 25 years. Four dominant themes emerged: the young adults had a significant level of cultural awareness; participants believed that society in general had negative stereotypes about Central Americans and expressed that stereotypes affect their lives in a negative way; students lived with trauma due to constant need to push through systemic and racist barriers; students demonstrated a high degree of resilience. The goal to achieve the American dream motivated students to thank their parents for the sacrifices they made. It was common for first-generation college students to feel like they were the *abriendo caminos* (opening pathways) for siblings and other family members. Their parents' sacrifices served as an inspiration. There was a deep understanding that a college

education is the road to empowering their communities and the tool for creating a positive change in the world.

In 2002 Bill and Melinda Gates created Early College High Schools (ECHS) (Calhoun et al., 2018). They targeted first-generation, low-income households and students of color (Calhoun et al., 2018). As such, they have a similar demographic of students as TRIO Upward Bound programs. Using qualitative case study methodology, Calhoun et al. (2018) found educational resilience to be the underlying factor that accounted for success among the participating students. Students attributed their success to their internal assets and those available to them (teachers, peer relationships, family support) in the ECHS environment (Calhoun et al., 2018). Internal assets included seeking help from teachers and peers, mindfulness and time management, self-determination (self-starters), and motivation. Students acknowledged that the environment created by ECHS fostered or strengthened their internal assets or resilience. However, the most significant finding of the study was that the students built and then leveraged relationships with peers and teachers as a way to cope with and adapt to the demands of an ECHS. In sum, the ECHS environment provided them with the supports that, together with their individual assets, helped them persist (Calhoun et al., 2018).

In a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews, Fenzel and Richardson (2019) analyzed the experiences of 37 Black and Hispanic male graduates of a Nativity Miguel school. The Nativity Miguel model, similar to TRIO Upward Bound programs, provides tutoring and enrichment programs for urban middle school students academically at-risk because of a lack of access to quality elementary schools (Fenzel & Richardson, 2019). Examining the graduates' perceptions of the extent to which the

schools contributed to their academic and career success, Fenzel and Richardson (2019) found that the schools supported the development of resilience by creating a culture of respect and care and providing an academically challenging environment. Students reflected that the program enhanced their academic self-competence and developed within them a strong work ethic. The work ethic provided them with the tools and confidence needed to succeed beyond their childhood expectations and to overcome their early low levels of hope and academic expectation; this was in addition to helping them resist the lure of the street life with high levels of drug activity and violence, characteristic of the urban contexts where the majority of them lived (Fenzel & Richardson, 2019). The program changed their negative self-perceptions and aspirations to those of confident young men with high self-efficacies committed to leadership and service (Fenzel & Richardson, 2019). The study provided additional evidence that educational support programs create opportunities to build resiliency and reduce vulnerability among at-risk populations.

In a study exploring the effectiveness of a resilience skill intervention program entitled the “Resilience Builder Program (RBP)” on the academic functioning of students from economically marginalized communities, Brendan et al. (2022) found significant positive correlations between resilience skills and improved academic functioning. The Resilience Builder Program (RBP) is a manualized group intervention designed to improve resilience-based skills in youth with difficulties in social competence and self-regulation. In their study, Brendan et al. (2022) administered RBP in five elementary schools (three public, one private, and one charter) serving economically marginalized communities. Utilizing the survey instruments, including the Behavior Assessment for

Students - Second Edition (BASC-2), Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents (RSCA), and the Academic Competence Evaluation Scales (ACES), this study involved students, parents, and teachers. Specifically, elementary students in grades four to six (N = 169) who were determined to have social-emotional difficulties were randomly assigned to participate in RBP immediately or following a semester delay. Based on criteria provided by researchers, school personnel (counselors and administrators) referred students to the study. Inclusion criteria included the presence of prominent social or emotional impairment. They excluded students with severe disruptive behaviors or autism. Participants were randomly assigned to participate in the intervention immediately or after a one-semester delay using a random number generator. Participants, their parents, and teachers completed a battery of questionnaires at two time points: prior to randomization and directly following the intervention or delay period. RBG participants engaged in a 12-week semester-based group cognitive-behavioral-based interview in small groups of 4-7 participants led by a licensed psychologist, school counselor, or doctoral student, all trained in the program. Students and teachers completed the RSCA, the BASC-2, and the ACES.

The study's results revealed a significant positive correlation between resilience skills and enhanced academic functioning (i.e., engagement and motivation) (Brendan et al., 2022). RBP participants, their parents, and teachers reported significant increases in resilience compared to the delay group. Teachers reported significant increases in students' study skills, academic engagement, interpersonal skills, and academic motivation compared to the delay group. Furthermore, RBP participants reported significantly improved study skills and academic engagement compared to the delay

group. The findings indicate that school-based RBP effectively promotes resilience skills and academic functioning in children who often face significant barriers to accessing mental health care (Brendan et al., 2022). Identifying ways to develop resilience skills is perhaps more critical than simply identifying resilient students. The study provides empirical support to the theory that resilience skills of self-efficacy, positive relationships with others, and self-regulation contribute to improved skills associated with enhanced academic functioning.

Diers (2020) conducted narrative interviews and explored the perspectives of young adults on their lives “in order to identify the development and relevant process which promote or hinder resilience” (p. 132). Specifically, Diers (2020) aimed to answer the question: “How do young people who have grown up at high risk recreate the social support received from teachers in their narrative, and what role does teachers’ social support play in living at high risk and for strengthening resilience?” Diers (2020) analyzed 22 autobiographic interviews of young people between the ages of 18 and 30 who experience adverse childhood conditions and risk factors, for the purpose of the published article, Diers summarized Maria’s story. Maria’s example revealed that a trusting teacher-student relationship correlates with a higher involvement in school. Furthermore, it promotes and facilitates a “creative metamorphosis of biographical identity,” transforming the risk condition into a resource or assuming responsibility (Diers, 2020, p. 134). The assumption of responsibility is a protective factor that allows the individual to “regain biological legal capacity” and is, therefore, able to envisage “achievable biographical aims’ (Diers, 2020, p. 135).

Kim and Kim (2017) found that resilience was critical in helping second language learners overcome critical difficulties in the long-term learning process (Kim & Kim, 2017). Kim and Kim (2017) used a survey questionnaire to examine the relationships among second language learners' (L2) resilience, motivation, and L2 foreign language achievement. They found that persistence as a resilience factor is significantly related to learners' motivation and language proficiency. Kim and Kim's (2017) exploratory study aimed to examine the factors that constituted second language (L2) learners' resiliency, and how these factors are related to their learning by investigating what relationship resilience may have on motivating behavior and proficiency in English learning. A total of 1620 secondary school learners of English from 11 schools in Korea participated in their questionnaire survey. The researchers first examined resilience factors, motivated behavior, and L2 proficiency. In analyzing the quantitative data, the researcher extracted five resilience factors: perceived happiness, empathy, sociability, persistence, and self-regulation. They found that all the relationships proved to be statistically significant and positive.

Furthermore, confirmative factor analysis using AMOS proved these five factors are distinctive constructs. Among the factors, Kim and Kim (2017) identified persistence as the most influential role in L2 learning. Persistence showed the highest correlations with, and the most significant explanatory power for, motivated behavior and English proficiency. This study confirmed the act of persistence despite adversity or discouragement is a factor that contributes to academic resilience (Kim & Kim, 2017).

Rodriguez-Fernandez et al. (2018) conducted a study that examined the relationship between resilience, subjective well-being, and academic achievement (school



engagement and perceived performance). They found that resilience directly predicts subjective well-being, and it indirectly predicts school engagement and perceived academic performance. The researchers used the Conner-Davidson Resilience Scale, the Spanish version of the Satisfaction with Life Scale, Bradburn's Affect Balance Scale, and the Brief School Adjustment scale to perform regression analyses. The scales were administered to 945 Compulsory Secondary Education students from Basque Country (425 boys and 520 girls) of medium socio-cultural level, between the ages of 12 and 17 (median age = 14.40, SD = 1.82). The study's findings provide evidence in favor of the influence of resilience and subjective well-being as decisive psychological variables in predicting school engagement and perceived performance.

Rodriguez-Fernandez et al. (2018) found resilience to have a predictive power of 65% for subjective well-being. Moreover, they found that subjective well-being directly determined school engagement ( $B=0.510$ ,  $P > 0.01$ ), which predicted perceived academic performance ( $B = 0.697$ ,  $p > 0.01$ ). The authors concluded, "perceiving oneself as being able to cope successfully with adverse situations has significant impact on young people's personal and school related adaptation" (p. 169). Furthermore, they asserted that the results of this study highlight the need to foster education of resilience and subjective well-being to improve academic achievement among adolescent students.

The theory of resilience posits that a resilient person will adapt and thrive in the presence of risk or challenge (Benard, 1991; Brooks, 2006; Cassidy, 2015; Chee, 2017; Fenzel & Richardson, 2019; Rodriguez-Fernandez et al., 2018; Yeung & Li, 2019). The summarized studies revealed that students demonstrating the skill of resilience perceive their environments positively and consequently are able to achieve higher levels of

success in contrast to non-resilient individuals. Mampane (2020) revealed that the resilient students believed they had the power to influence events in their environment and that their behavior internally drives the outcomes as opposed to fate, luck, or external circumstances. Pardon et al. (2014) found that resilient minority seventh and eighth-grade students from low-income backgrounds (defined by free and reduced-price lunch status) had above-average perceptions of their classroom learning environments. These students missed fewer days of school and had fewer latenesses. Pardon et al. (2014) also found that resilient students also had higher perceptions of satisfaction, teacher support, cohesion, equity, and self-esteem in reading than average and non-resilient students.

Yavuz and Kutlu's (2016) study showed a substantial correlation between cognitive flexibility (awareness that in any situation, there is more than one option and the willingness to adapt to the situation) and resilience for economically disadvantaged high school seniors. Chee's (2017) study also revealed that risk and resilience are all about perception; some resilient students accepted difficulty as part of life, again revealing an adaptability trait. Kim and Kim's (2017) study showed that the second language learners persisted despite challenges. Looking at students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, Yan and Gai (2022) found that resilient students had significantly higher academic achievement than disadvantaged average and low achievers. Furthermore, the resilient student had higher degrees of achievement motivation, longer-term future educational expectations, and more positive academic emotions.

Significant to the study of TRIO Upward Bound and other pre-collegiate programs, studies in resilience and education have revealed that the social support of

teachers, administrators, and other educators can be a significant source in promoting resilience in at-risk students (Diers, 2020). Pardon et al. (2014) found that resilient students have higher perceptions of teacher support and perceive their classroom learning environments more favorably than non-resilient students. Yavuz and Kutlu (2016) found that perceived social support significantly predicted the level of academic resilience of economically disadvantaged high school students. Mampane (2020) showed that resilient students viewed positive relationships with teachers as crucial and necessary to experience safety. Additionally, Neal (2017) uncovered that developing relationships with caring adult supporters was critical for students in supporting their efforts to go to college. As Neal (2017) noted, there is a substantial connection between academic resilience and care. Calhoun et al. (2018) found that students attributed their success to the supports available to them, including teachers, peers, and family support. The students of Early College High Schools leveraged relationships with peers and teachers to cope and adapt to their environments (Calhoun et al., 2018). Additionally, Fenzel and Richardson (2019) showed that educational support programs create the space and opportunity to build resilience by enhancing students' academic self-competence and developing their work ethic.

### **Relationship between Prior Research and Present Study**

Prior research has shown that effective schools and educational programs are powerful and influential environments that can foster resilience in children. Students can acquire resilience in educational environments that foster psychosocial development and competency in achieving learning outcomes.

The design of pre-collegiate programs like TRIO Upward Bound provides students with additional environmental support to foster social, emotional, and academic growth. Many pre-collegiate programs have built-in counseling or mentoring models that support building caring and supportive relationships that are critical to building resilience. According to Morgan (2002), TRIO Upward Bound programs operate on the premise that “if you improve self-esteem first, academic performance will follow” (p. 2). Therefore, the resiliency theory informs TRIO pre-collegiate programs in that these programs were designed to assist individuals who have faced barriers to education.

As the first established TRIO program, Upward Bound was found to help economically disadvantaged students persist in school. The United States Department of Education mandates that at least two-thirds of TRIO Upward Bound participants be low-income remains today. The United States Department of Education reported that during the 2000-2001 academic year, 79% of TRIO Upward Bound students were low-income (Cahalan & Curtin, 2004). Accordingly, having to overcome the challenges associated with economic hardship and other environmental adversities to succeed in both education and life, TRIO Upward Bound students are the classic population for studying resilience. TRIO Upward Bound’s purpose is to provide students with resources to help them achieve, thereby providing them with supportive environments. As Benard (1991) pointed out, it only takes one teacher, one school, or one program to make all the difference between quitting or preserving through adversity.

Resilience is a skill that is developed and fostered. The programming provided by Upward Bound complements the resilience process in that it allows students to connect with individuals and higher education institutions that encourage students to

meet their academic potential. This study explored whether the TRIO Upward Bound program is making that difference.

## CHAPTER 3

### Introduction

This chapter outlines the planned methods and procedures used in this research study and the justification for those methods. The purpose of this study was to ascertain how participation in the TRIO Upward Bound program impacted students' resiliency. The primary research framework used in this study is phenomenology. This approach was selected because phenomenology focuses on "describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75). In this study, the phenomenon studied was the TRIO Upward Bound Program. In a phenomenological study, the researcher collects data from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon and develops a composite description of the essence of the experience for all the individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Phenomenology looks at both "what" the participants experienced, and "how" they experienced it (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75).

Furthermore, this approach was selected because often, the success of academic programs is evaluated based on quantitative results (i.e., the number of participants, retention rates, grades, graduation rates, and college matriculation). The aim of this study was to give students a voice on their perspectives on the meaningful impact the TRIO Upward Bound program had on their lives. It aims to reveal how students in this pre-college program reflected on and described their life experiences while participating in this program. Thus, phenomenology was the preferred approach because it seeks to understand and describe "lived experiences to gain deeper insights into how people understand those experiences" (Ho & Limpaecher, 2022, p. 1). Accordingly, what

follows is a phenomenological study of a specific pre-collegiate program serving high school students at a particular school, with the goal of providing academic skill development and motivation.

The following sections discuss the proposed research design, restate the research questions, and outline of the methods and data collection procedures followed. The chapter concludes with the executed data analysis approach, an examination of the trustworthiness of the design, research ethics, and the role of the researcher.

### **Research Design**

A research design is “the logic that links the data to be collected (and conclusions to be drawn) to the initial questions of study” (Yin, 2003, p. 19). The following section describes the methodology employed, why the researcher chose this method, data collection, and analysis process.

The researcher chose a qualitative research methodology because this research was designed to focus on students’ perspectives with the aim of developing a composite description of their experience within a specific context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As defined by Creswell and Poth (2018), a phenomenological study “describes the common meaning of experiences of a phenomenon (or topic or concept) for several individuals. In this type of qualitative study, the researcher reduces the experiences to a central meaning or the ‘essence’ of the experience” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 314). Furthermore, the phenomenological approach provides insight into the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of a particular group of individuals who share a common experience (Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Phenomenological research seeks to understand the experiences or phenomena from the context of the participants’

perspectives and the personal meanings constructed from these experiences (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2002). This researcher believes that students' perceptions of their experiences and the process facilitating their development cannot be effectively captured by quantitative means alone. Questionnaires and checklists cannot gather adequate data to give voice to economically disadvantaged and first-generation college students. Qualitative research provides a deeper understanding through interviews and observations made by the researcher. For this study, phenomenology provided the most appropriate methodology to hear the participants' voices.

In this study, artifacts, photo-elicitation, and semi-structured interviews provided the sources of data. Artifacts and photo-elicitation interviewing were used as a method to gain insights into the worldview of the study's participants through documents, objects, and images they selected. The semi-structured interview design permitted the interviewer to ask specific questions while allowing room for conversations to take place and allowing interviewees to explore areas they consider relevant to the questions. Furthermore, in-person interviews allowed the interviewer to observe and ask questions, noting body language and responses. The interview instrument was employed to gather students' perceptions of the program's impact on their resilience skills. Interviews were conducted virtually by the investigator to increase the ease of participation and maximize the potential pool of participants.

The researcher employed a purposive sampling method in this study. The study participants were graduates of the 2021 high school cohort of a TRIO Upward Bound program located in the northeastern United States. Additionally, all interviewees were



participants in TRIO Upward Bound for two or more years during the full academic year (September - June).

### **Research Questions**

As previously noted, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the motivating factors that influence students' choice to participate in the program?
2. How did Trio Upward Bound shape or develop participants' resiliency?

The researcher intended this study to be an initial examination of resilience, at-risk students, and pre-collegiate programs. This study was built on the premise that TRIO Upward Bound students are resilient based on their profile. The majority of TRIO Upward Bound participants are economically disadvantaged and first-generation college students by federal mandate. Furthermore, most TRIO Upward Bound participants come from a racial minority and are academically at-risk (Cahalan & Curtin, 2004; Dortch, 2020). To explore the extent to which TRIO Upward Bound programs are successful because of the services they provide or because of the students who self-select to participate in them, the researcher explored the first question of the study: What are the motivating factors that influence student's choice to participate in the program? To address the overarching question of the study: How does TRIO Upward Bound build resiliency? The researcher explored the second question of the study: How did TRIO Upward Bound shape or develop participants' resiliency?

To explore the intersection of pre-collegiate programs and resiliency, the researcher examined a specific pre-collegiate program and its students. The researcher

employed a phenomenological qualitative methodology to provide an in-depth analysis and maximize data collection, focusing on the experience of seven student participants.

## **Methods and Procedure**

### ***Setting***

In this post-pandemic era, the researcher used technological advancements to gather data. Participant interviews took place remotely via WebEx conferencing. The WebEx conferencing platform allowed participants to participate in an environment that was comfortable for them. It also allowed the researcher the ability to record interactions, both voice and body language, to later analyze and review.

### ***Participants***

The researcher used a purposeful sample to obtain a sample that is uniquely suitable to the intent of the study. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a researcher uses purposive sampling when they rely on their judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in the study. The design of purposive sampling is to intentionally sample a group of people who can best inform the research topic. Fraenkel and Wallen (1996) defined a purposive sample as one selected because prior knowledge suggests it is representative or because those selected have the needed information. The group purposively selected for this study were students from a specific graduating class of a pre-selected TRIO Upward Bound program who participated in the program for two or more years.

The target participants of this study were former students of a TRIO Upward Bound Program housed at a large northeastern university in the United States of America. This Upward Bound program operated under a United States Department of Education

(USDOE) grant from September 1, 2017 through August 31, 2022. USDOE funded this program to provide academic support services through the TRIO Upward Bound Program Grant to 63 students for the grant cycle from 2017-2022. The researcher requested voluntary participation in this study from the 2017-2021 graduating class cohort. The researcher emailed information about the study and participation consent forms to target students.

In this study, the researcher used two criteria for participant selection. The criteria are as follows: (a) participation in the TRIO Upward Bound program for at least two years, (b) regular (monthly) attendance or participation in the TRIO Upward Bound academic year (September-June). These criteria ensured that participants were enrolled in the program long enough to benefit from it due to increased exposure to the people and services. Consistent or regular participation in the program enabled the program to have a significant impact on the students' development. The researcher emailed students who were eligible to participate and who met the criteria information regarding the study and consent forms. The email and consent form made clear that participation in this study was completely voluntary, and participants could withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions.

### ***Data Collection Procedures***

Creswell and Poth (2018) remind us that in qualitative research, we collect “a variety of sources of data, including information in the form of ‘words’ or ‘images’” (p. 52). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the four basic sources of qualitative information are interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts. This study utilized

five data sources, a Google interest survey, two semi-structured interviews, and two participant-generated artifacts.

The researcher invited potential study participants to participate in the study via email invitation (see Appendix B). Interested participants completed a Google Interest Survey providing background data to confirm eligibility (see Appendix C). Once eligibility was confirmed, the researcher sent each participant follow-up information, including consent forms, and then interviews were scheduled accordingly. Each participant participated in two interviews and provided two or more participant-generated artifacts for discussion. The researcher discussed artifact elicitation in detail in the next subsection.

The researcher invited each participant to partake in two semi-structured interviews to gain deeper insight into the students' perceptions and experiences. The researcher designed the first interview to explore both research questions. The second interview was used for member checking to validate the data, to gather additional information through follow-up questions from the first interview, and for participant-generated artifact elicitation discussion.

***Artifact and Photo-Elicitation.*** Participant-generated artifacts and photographs were valuable data sources in this study, and the researcher discusses their significance here. The researcher used the participant-generated artifacts to prompt discussions during the interview, allowing for unconstrained student-generated reflection and providing a level of detail that cannot be expressed in structured interviewing. The second interview allowed students to member check the data collected in the first interview by reviewing the transcript of the first interview. Furthermore, the researcher asked the participants to

bring two artifacts of their choosing that represented their time in TRIO Upward Bound. The researcher informed participants that artifacts could be any audio or visual object or instrument used or created when they were participants of TRIO Upward Bound or are representative of that time. Artifacts could include official correspondence received from the program, an award received, personal documents (including reflective journals, diaries, essays, or poems written during or after the program), or even clothing (such as an Upward Bound sweatshirt); it is any collection of items that holds meaning for them and triggers memories (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Furthermore, photo-elicitation was a special type of artifact collection instrument. As summarized by Harper (2002), photo-elicitation involves the insertion of a photograph in the research interview. Photographs were used as an interview stimulus. Participants are shown pictures of their own or ones taken by the researcher and asked to discuss the content of the pictures (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), visual representation through the use of photographs provides insight into participants' perceptions of an experience. Photo-elicitation was employed in this study as an instrumental data collection method to obtain a more detailed perspective of the participants' experiences.

Photo-elicitation is not a new research technique but a strategy applied in a wide range of studies for sociology, education, communication, and anthropology (Harper, 2002; Zhang & Hennebry-Leung, 2023). Photo-elicitation as a research technique was first named in a paper published by photographer and researcher John Collier (Harper, 2002). Collier and his multi-disciplinary team from Cornell University found "photos

sharpened the informants' memory and reduced the areas of misunderstanding" (Harper, 2002, p. 14).

Photo-elicitation is an alternate data collection method that offers a visual dimension to data collection and enables the researcher to elicit unobservable experiences, feelings, and thoughts (Zhang & Hennebry-Leung, 2023). The method of photo-elicitation interviewing assumes that "the parts of the brain that process visual information are evolutionarily older than those that process verbal information," and, "images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words" (Harper, 2002, p. 13). Thus, photos were incorporated into the second interview to trigger deeper latent memories and to elicit participants' knowledge, thoughts, and emotional responses (Harper, 2002). Summarizing Standen (2021), Zhang and Hennebry-Leung (2023) pointed out that photo-elicitation interviewing has the potential to address the complexities of educational issues and generate meaningful results that could inform teachers and teaching practices in education.

Furthermore, Harper (2002) posited that photo-elicitation may overcome some of the difficulties posed by in-depth interviewing because it is anchored in an image that is understood, at least in part, by both parties. Harper (2002) described photo-elicitation as an "ideal model of research" with two or more individuals discussing the meaning of an experience through an image fostering a collaborative process (p. 23). Harper (2002) indicated that photo-elicitation promotes reflection from study participants, aids in developing conversation, and provides an understanding of values and perspectives in ways other data collection methods may not.

According to Plunkett et al. (2013), photo-elicitation (or photo voice) is an effective research method to gather rich data about lived experiences researchers seek in phenomenological research. Not only does photo-elicitation create spaces for individuals to express elements of their lived experience from their perspectives, but it also allows for additional data that can complement qualitative interview data (Plunkett et al., 2013). Plunkett et al. (2013) suggested photo-elicitation, which they termed *photovoice*, as one way to promote a higher degree of authenticity in phenomenological data by creating opportunities for “study participants to provide data that is most meaningful to them” (Plunkett et al., 2013, p. 58). In photo-elicitation/photovoice, participants control the nature of the data. As such, “not only does photovoice create spaces for individuals to express elements of their lived experience from their own perspectives, but it also allows for additional data that can complement narrative interview data” (Plunkett et al., 2013, p. 58).

In a review of photo-elicitation interviewing as a qualitative technique in educational studies, Zhang and Hennebry-Leung (2023) informed us that photo-elicitation interviews (PEI) provide us with a visual dimension to elicit lived experiences, feelings, and thoughts in real educational contexts; this enhances the researcher’s understanding of educational practitioners’ and students’ experiences in authentic classroom and community settings. Reviewing 117 studies published between 2002 and 2022, Zhang and Hennebry-Leung (2023) analyzed 34 studies that utilized photo-elicitation as a primary technique in educational settings. Of the 34 studies, 29 investigated students’ lived experiences, while five explored practitioners’ perceptions in

diverse education settings. Zhang and Hennebry-Leung (2023) summarized the use of photographs in research studies can:

- “stimulate participants’ hidden memories and elicit extended personal narratives, tapping into submerged feelings and potentially open up new avenues for discussion” (p.4),
- provide a more “equitable” research agenda for those (i.e., young children) who have verbal communication difficulties (p.4),
- “provide a visual dimension and an archive of the events that participants experience” (p.4),
- and “sharpen participants’ memories and uncover emotional reactions, thus promoting extended and more detailed narratives about participants’ experiences” (p.5).

According to Zhang and Hennebry-Leung (2023), photo-elicitation offers an alternative observation of the multi-dimensional human presence at a particular time and space and thus potentially enhances our understanding of the research phenomena.

Zhang and Hennebry-Leung (2023) also emphasized that photo-elicitation helps to mitigate researcher bias by placing control in the hands of the participant. Zhang and Hennebry-Leung (2023) noted that photo-elicitation empowers the participant and promotes participant agency in interviews. Photo-elicitation opens the opportunity to involve the participants and not limit their responses in interviews (Zhang & Hennebry-Leung, 2023).

There are three main categories of images used in photo-interviewing: participant-driven, researcher-driven, and pre-existing images (Zhang & Hennebry-Leung, 2023).



For the purpose of the study, participants produced participant-driven images. In researcher-driven photographs, the photographer-researcher has a say on what is photographed, and the situation photographed. Pre-existing images are published photos or pieces of art that exist independently of the researcher. It is essential to note that from Zhang and Hennebry-Leung's (2023) review of the 34 educational studies that used PEI in the last decade, none used participant-selected pre-existing photos generated by high school and older students. Consequently, the following study adds to the body of literature that utilized PEI as a research methodology. It is important to note that "there is no common theoretical framework that education researchers can apply to instruct the analyses of photos and elicited narratives" (Zhang & Hennebry-Leung, 2023, p. 10). In this study, the researcher used photo-elicitation as a means of data collection, stimulating memory and eliciting deeper reflections to gain a greater understanding of participants' overall perceptions.

Researchers rarely use photo-elicitation as a data-gathering technique in education. For example, an EBSCOhost search using the terms *photo-elicitation* and *education* published in the past five years, at the time of this study, produced just over 400 results. These results included the work of Weng and Troyan (2021), who used photo-elicitation as a reflection technique for TESOL teacher education to explore the connection between emotions and language teacher identity. These results also include the work of Moran et al. (2022), who used photos captured by participants to examine how the implementation of Common Core learning standards impacted the daily lives of students and teachers. An EBSCOhost search with search terms "photo-elicitation" education and resilience produced only seven results. Craig et al.'s study (2021) is related

to this study. They used photo-elicitation to explore risk, resilience, and identity intersection that impact vulnerable sexual and gender minority youth.

To summarize, photographs used in photo-elicitation can be from various sources. These sources may include photographs taken by the researcher, photographs from the press, historical photographs, or photographs taken by study participants (Harper, 2002). Photo-elicitation is not a new form of data or artifact solicitation; however, it is not widely used. In this study, before the interviews, the researcher asked participants to identify photos, either actual photos of themselves or publicly available online images, which represented and associated with their experiences in TRIO Upward Bound. During the interviews, the researcher asked participants to reflect on the meaning of the picture they selected.

**Interviews.** In the phenomenological approach, Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend the collection of data from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon by using “in-depth and multiple interviews” (p. 79). The interview protocol includes subject or topic description, instructions for the participants and the proposed questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interview protocol for this study can be found in Appendix J.

The interview is a common method in qualitative research used to uncover participants’ interpretations of the worlds they belong and to elicit rich, complex insights into their experience and perspectives on the research phenomenon (Zhang & Hennebry-Leung, 2023). The interview as a data source was best suited for this study because interviews allow for deep exploration and understanding of research participants’ experiences in the phenomena studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Photo-elicitation

interviewing provided a means to facilitate the expression of ideas, retelling, and making of meanings related to lived experiences; it is a methodology that “has played an essential role in giving voice to the teaching and learning beliefs and experiences of a wide range of stakeholders” phenomenon (Zhang & Hennebry-Leung, 2023, p. 4).

The interviews provided detailed insights into students’ perspectives on their experience of TRIO Upward Bound. Seidman (2006) purported that in-depth interviewing provides researchers access to the context of students’ lived experiences and a way to understand the meaning of students’ behaviors. Interviewing provides an optimal avenue of inquiry to examine students’ subjective understanding of their experiences (Seidman, 2006).

The researcher designed the first interview to allow each participant the opportunity to reflect on their experiences in TRIO Upward Bound. The researcher conducted the second interview to allow students to confirm and clarify information shared in their first interview and reflect on their chosen photographs. Pseudonyms were assigned to participants to protect their identity. The researcher created an interview protocol consisting of open-ended questions to ensure that all the study participants were asked the same questions (see Appendix J). The questions were open-ended to allow participants to share their individual perspectives and perceptions. Interviews were video-recorded, and the researcher kept notes in an interview journal. The researcher used an interview journal to note her observations of non-verbal cues, including participant disposition, body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, and other non-verbal data. The semi-structured interviews lasted 40-60 minutes on average. The researcher sent the participants who volunteered to engage in this study a follow-up email requesting their

availability to share their experiences. A researcher set a date and time convenient for both participant and researcher to meet via WebEx. The interview questions can be found in Appendix J.

Following approval from St. John's University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct this research, the researcher prepared and finalized her interview instruments. Instruments included a Google Interest Survey, email invitations, recruitment flyers, consent forms, interview questions, and protocol (See Appendix J). Once IRB approval was granted (see Appendix A), the researcher sent email requests to eligible students.

The researcher sent invitations to all students who met the study's criteria to maximize study participation. The researcher sent an introductory email specifying the intent of the study and a request for participation to the purposive sample of students. The initial email explained the purpose of the study, the researcher's expectations of participants, and the researcher's contact information for follow-up. The researcher sent a follow-up email containing the informed consent document to students who expressed interest in participating in the study. The informed consent email explained the level of risk involved in participating in the study, how the confidentiality of information will be maintained, and how students can remove themselves from the study without any repercussions. The anticipated level or risk for participants was low as they only provided perceptions and reflections of their past experiences and events.

After obtaining informed consent from participants, data collection began. The researcher scheduled virtual interviews with the students at dates and times convenient for both parties. This study used an open-ended interview format. Each interview question addressed one of the two research questions. Interviews were recorded and

transcribed. Interview transcripts were then coded thematically for the purpose of data analysis.

The researcher was the only person involved in contacting and interviewing the participants. Interviews took place via WebEx conferencing. Upon agreeing to the interview by submission of the appropriate consent forms, the researcher once again explained the following to the student prior to beginning the interview: the intent of the interview and the study, the expected length of the interview, confidentiality, the expected risk and benefit, and the recording of the interview. These five points were reviewed with each participant to ensure understanding of the intent and the acknowledgment of the study's process. According to Janesick (1998), it is essential to establish trust and rapport at the beginning of the study; this enables the researcher to better capture the nuance and meaning of each participant's life from the participant's point of view. This rapport also ensures that the participants would be more willing to share their experiences.

### ***Data Analysis Approach***

Harmonizing the approaches of Creswell and Poth (2018), Saldana (2013), and Braun and Clark (2006), the researcher took a thematic analysis approach to analyze the data of this phenomenological qualitative study. As recommended by Creswell and Poth (2018), the researcher collected and investigated multiple sources of data and developed themes and subthemes from the information gathered. Information gathered from artifact elicitation and interviews provided the sources of data analysis for this research study. Data triangulation from these sources provided convergent evidence to support the themes and subthemes developed. The researcher used first and second-cycle coding to

organize the data (Miles et al., 2014; Saldana, 2013). The researcher used Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis approach to synthesize and present the data findings. The researcher provides details on the analysis of each data source below.

Participant-generated artifacts were a unique data source used within the interview setting to promote memory recall (Harper, 2002). During the second interview, participants were asked questions including: Describe the artifact you have chosen. Why did you choose this artifact? Explain what is happening in this photograph? What does this photograph mean to you? How does this photograph represent the impact TRIO Upward Bound had on you? The researcher included an analysis of artifacts in the overall interview analysis described in the next section.

Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend analyzing qualitative data by reducing the information to significant statements or quotes and then combining the statements into themes. The qualitative researcher is looking for "code segments that can be used to describe information and develop themes" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 186). This coding may include information they anticipate finding prior to the study based on the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that guide the study and unexpected information uncovered during the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Creswell and Poth (2018) further recommend the following steps when conducting a phenomenological data analysis. First, the researcher develops a list of significant statements by going through the data and highlighting "significant statements, sentences, or quotes that provide, and understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 79). Second, the researcher groups the significant statements into broader units of information; "The researcher develops

clusters of meaning from these significant statements into themes” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 79). Third, a textual description of the experience is created; “the significant statements and themes are then used to write a description of what the participants experienced” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 79). Fourth, a structural description is generated describing the context or setting that influenced “how” the participants experienced the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 80). Fifth, a composite description of the phenomenon is written, “from the structural and textual descriptions, the researcher then writes a composite description that presents the “essence” of the phenomenon, called the essential, invariant structure” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 80). This passage focuses on the common experiences of the participants. The researcher then presents the understanding of the essence of the experience in written form.

Braun and Clarke (2006) asserted that qualitative analytic methods can be divided into two camps. The first camp aligns with a particular theoretical or epistemological position (i.e., conversation analysis, interpretative phenomenological analysis, discourse analysis, narrative analysis). The second camp includes methods independent of theory and epistemology and applied across a range of approaches. Thematic analysis falls in the latter camp. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), through this “theoretical freedom,” thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool that can potentially provide a rich and detailed, and yet still a complex account of data (p. 78).

Similar to Creswell and Poth (2019), Braun and Clarke (2006) defined *thematic analysis* as a method of identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (or themes) within data. Thematic analysis “minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Additionally, it frequently goes further to interpret various

aspects of the research topic. In qualitative data analysis, a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clark, 2006).

Braun and Clark (2006) provide six steps for conducting thematic data analysis that align with Creswell and Poth (2019) and provides procedural steps for the novice researcher. Accordingly, data from this study was analyzed using the procedural steps provided by Braun and Clarke (2006). Specifically, the research will:

- (1) familiarize herself with the data through transcription, reading and re-reading, and noting initial ideas,
- (2) generating initial codes by coding interesting features of the data,
- (3) sorting the codes into potential themes,
- (4) reviewing and refining themes to make sure they work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set,
- (5) define and further refine themes to identify the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about, and
- (6) provide a final analysis and written report.

### ***Trustworthiness of the Design***

For qualitative studies, the researcher must address matters of construct credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability to maximize the trustworthiness of a study’s design. In the cases of qualitative research, Merriam (2009) defined *internal validity* as credibility. To improve the credibility of qualitative research, Merriam (2009) recommends the strategies of triangulation, member checks, adequate engagement in data collection, and reflexivity, or “the process of reflecting critically on



the self as research” (p. 219). The researcher used these recommended strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of design.

The method of triangulation, or the use of multiple methods or data sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena, is often used as a validity measure in qualitative research (Carter et al., 2014). Triangulation by multiple data sources was a primary strategy in ensuring the trustworthiness of this qualitative study. Triangulating various data increases the validity of a research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2009). The researcher employed triangulation by cross-referencing students’ results from a Google Interest Survey, two semi-structured interviews, and two participant-generated artifacts.

In addition to methods of triangulation, self-reflection and research reflexivity were an integral part of this analysis. Researcher bias has been identified as a threat to trustworthiness of design. Consequently, Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend engaging in researcher reflexivity as a strategy for validation in qualitative research. Maintaining a high level of self-awareness allows for separation and clear distinction between the researcher’s self and her role as the researcher when interpreting data and controlling biases during data analysis. Moreover, during the interview process, the researcher clarified to the participants the distinction between her role as a researcher and her previous administrative role in the program in which they participated.

Member checking, or seeking participants’ feedback, is another validation strategy outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018). Member checking provides the opportunity to mitigate the researchers’ subjectivity in analyzing data and reporting findings, thus increasing the validity of the data (Zhang & Hennebry-Leung, 2023). The

researcher conducted member checks, allowing participants the opportunity to confirm or modify the interview transcripts to represent each participant appropriately. This process also allowed them to add to the data collected. Furthermore, the researcher explained the risks and benefits of participation in this study to participants. There was no anticipated risk or benefit for participants in this study for the students. This study did not impact their academic standing, and there were no direct benefits or adverse consequences. As such, the researcher did not expect nor note any bias in their responses to the interview questions. Participants' responses were contemplative and thoughtful to the questions asked.

Where appropriate, the researcher shared interpretations of the data with participants and provided them with the opportunity to discuss and clarify interpretations during the second interview, thereby utilizing member checking to strengthen the trustworthiness of the study design. Furthermore, the researcher's mentors reviewed the study and its preliminary findings to avoid bias during this study. This provided the opportunity for experts in the field to offer alternate interpretations or explanations for results.

### ***Research Ethics***

The researcher conducted this research ethically, following St. John's University Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines. The researcher ensured she received IRB approval prior to proceeding with the data collection. After receiving IRB approval, the researcher sought informed consent from potential participants, as outlined above. Additionally, participants' confidentiality was maintained by not publishing any personal

identifying information. The researcher gave participants pseudonyms. All data collected was password-encrypted and will be secured for a maximum of three years.

The researcher sent participants an introductory email informing them of the study and requesting voluntary participation. It was made clear to students that they may withdraw from the study at any time by contacting the researcher by phone or email. Each participant received the consent form via email as a pdf document and the researcher asked the participants to print, sign, and scan the document back to the researcher before the interview. The consent form can be referenced in Appendix H. At the start of each interview, the researcher took the time to explain her previous role as an administrator in the program the students participated in and her current role as a researcher to help in reducing potential bias. In the review of the data (including videos, interview transcripts, and reflexive journals), the researcher found no indication of biased responses. Participants' reflections were contemplative and thoughtful to the questions.

The researcher informed all participants that their identification and personal information would be kept confidential, and they would remain anonymous as a pseudonym would be assigned for identification purposes. The researcher informed participants that there was no anticipated harm or stress from participating in this study and they could stop participating at any time they felt uncomfortable.

### ***Researcher Role***

James Banks (1998) described the positionality of the social science researcher. According to Banks (1988), "the biographical journeys of researchers greatly influence their values, their research questions, and the knowledge they construct. The knowledge they construct mirrors their life experience and their values" (p. 4). Banks (1988)

emphasized that while researchers should strive for objectivity, they must acknowledge how subjective and objective components of knowledge construction are interconnected and interactive. He contended that complete objectivity is an unattainable idealized goal. In his work, Banks (1998) described four types of roles researchers take (indigenous-insider, indigenous-outsider, external-insider, and external-outsider) and how participants in their studies and society perceive them. He pointed out that it is crucial that the researcher understands that their lived experiences, both personally and professionally, influences their positionality, how they conduct their research, and with whom.

Creswell and Poth (2018) posited that qualitative researchers need to identify their positionality in relation to the context and setting of the research. The researchers should explore their experiences with the studied phenomenon and how these experiences shaped interpretations of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To minimize the researcher effect, the investigator engaged in reflexivity or self-understanding about biases, values, and experiences that could have influenced the interpretation of the study. Consequently, the researcher was mindful and continuously engaged in bracketing throughout the data collection period. As encouraged by Creswell and Poth (2018), bracketing is when “investigators set aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination” (p. 78). During data collection, the researcher focused solely on the participants’ experiences and did not bring herself into the picture (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As the only individual responsible for data collection and analysis, frequent periodic reflections of personal bias, opinions, beliefs, and values regarding the researcher, the students, and the program were done to

minimize research bias. The process of reflection helps to facilitate the identification of any bias, as recommended by Banks (1998) and Creswell and Poth (2018).

To this end, the researcher acknowledges that she is a former TRIO Upward Bound program director. Consequently, the risk of research bias is present. Furthermore, like many UB students, the researcher comes from a low-income, first-generation, minority background. As a student, she participated in programs similar to UB. This history fuels her interest in this study. Her interest in this study began with the question, are programs like Upward Bound successful because of the service they offer or because of the students who join the program? Because many of the students who join pre-collegiate programs do so voluntarily, she wanted to know how many do so out of a mission to succeed despite their circumstances like her? She recognized this bias, and she found in the related literature thus far that it is all very intertwined.

Another factor the researcher must be mindful of is managing the balance of power. Creswell and Poth (2018) posited that researchers and participants co-construct knowledge. To facilitate the co-construction of knowledge, the researcher will attempt to manage this potential power imbalance by continuously reflecting on her position, expressing a genuine interest in participants' contributions, and encouraging open dialog. The semi-structured nature of this study allowed the researcher to focus on the pre-designed questions and the participant responses, further allowing for mitigation and potential elimination of bias.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter presents the research method and data analysis procedures for this study. The results of the study were compared to existing research to add to the literature

on resilience and pre-collegiate programs. A thorough analysis of the participants' interviews and artifacts provides both context and results of this study. In the following chapter, the researcher describes the results of the research study.

## CHAPTER 4

### **Introduction**

This qualitative phenomenological study presents the lived experiences of seven TRIO Upward program alumni. Through participation in semi-structured interviews, the alums told their stories from their perspectives on the impact that participation in the TRIO Upward Bound had on their lives as students and their development of resiliency. This chapter presents the key findings obtained from 15 semi-structured interviews, outlining the themes that emerged. The researcher presented a description of each participant with emergent themes and subthemes from their interviews, followed by an analysis of each theme. The researcher provided direct quotes to allow the readers of this study the ability to hear the participants' voices and not just the researcher's interpretations.

The researcher addressed the following research questions in this study:

1. What are the motivating factors that influence students' choice to participate in the program?
2. How impactful was TRIO Upward Bound in building students' resiliency to matriculate into Higher Education?

The following sections provide a review of the methodology employed to analyze the data collected and a presentation of the findings.

### **Data Collection**

A phenomenological qualitative methodology was employed, focusing on the experience of seven former TRIO Upward Bound students to provide an in-depth analysis. The researcher chose this qualitative research methodology because the goal of

this study focused on students' perspectives with the aim of developing a composite description of their experiences within a specific context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To that end, the researcher used purposive sampling to obtain a sample uniquely suitable to the intention of the study. The group purposively selected for this study were students from the 2021 graduating class of a pre-selected TRIO Upward Bound program who actively participated in the program for two or more years. Emails were sent to 26 graduates of the selected TRIO Upward Bound program from the 2021 graduating class (See Appendix A). Eight respondents completed the Google Interest Survey. However, one responded did not enter a follow-up email address. The researcher followed up with the remaining seven respondents by email and phone to schedule semi-structured interviews.

In this study, participants generated artifacts, and semi-structured interviews provided the necessary data for analysis. Artifacts and photo-elicitation interviewing were used as a data gathering method to gain insight into the worldview of the study's participants through the objects and images they selected. Interviews were conducted virtually via the WebEx online videoconferencing platform to increase ease of participation and for flexible scheduling.

### **Data Analysis**

The data was analyzed in multiple stages, integrating Saldana's (2013) two-cycle coding method with Creswell and Poth's (2018) recommendations for analyzing qualitative, and Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis, focusing on Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic approach. In qualitative data analysis, a code is a researcher-generated construct that translates the data and attributes interpreted meaning



to each datum for the purpose of pattern detection, categorization, or other analytic processes (Miles et al., 2014). Miles et al. (2014) stated, “Saldana (2016) divides coding into two major stages: first cycle and second cycle coding” (p. 64). During the first cycle, coding initial codes are assigned to the data units. During the second cycle of coding, the researcher groups data from first-cycle coding into summarized segments or categories (Miles et al., 2014).

Each interview went through multiple cycles of coding from which themes across the data were derived (Miles et al., 2014). The researcher used the interview transcriptions to manually generate codes from the data, from which she created an analytic memo to organize the codes. During first-cycle coding, the elemental method of In Vivo coding was used for this study: “In Vivo coding uses words or short phrases from the participant’s own language in data record as codes” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 65). In Vivo coding honors the participants’ voices, which is of utmost importance to this research project as the researcher sought to reflect upon and analyze the students’ lived experiences (Miles et al., 2014). During first-cycle coding, the researcher highlighted or underlined words or phrases repeatedly used by the participants, such as “homework help” and “safe space.”

During the second-cycle coding, the researcher engaged in pattern and concept coding. Pattern coding is a way of grouping the summaries found in first-cycle coding into a smaller number of categories, themes, or concepts (Miles et al., 2014, p. 79). Furthermore, reflecting on what the codes had in common, they were organized into categories or concept-coded (Miles et al., 2014). The researcher noted the most promising codes that emerged in an analytic memo. The researcher then placed this list of codes

onto a text editing page, and the researcher grouped them into categories using Microsoft Word's text editing functions (Saldana, 2013). In summary, when the researcher conducted the first coding cycle, she clustered the codes according to commonality, and then categorial themes were constructed to organize the codes.

Moreover, Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of thematic analysis guided the researcher's engagement with the data. First-cycle coding occurred during stages one and two of Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of thematic data analysis. Second-cycle coding took place during stages three and four of the thematic analysis. The researcher followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process by taking the following steps:

- (1) *Familiarization with data*: The researcher familiarized herself with the data by reading and re-reading the participants' individual stories, becoming familiar with their content and overall experience.
- (2) *Generating initial codes*: The researcher generated initial codes by noting reoccurring words and phrases from each story in the margins of the transcripts, which the researcher then transferred to an analytic memo.
- (3) *Searching for themes*: The researcher searched for themes by grouping individual participants' codes according to similarities of responses. In doing so, the researcher noted four broad categorial themes that related to the research questions and existing literature.
- (4) *Reviewing themes*: The researcher reviewed the themes to ensure that they encapsulated the stories and experiences shared by the participants.

(5) *Defining and naming themes*: The researcher reviewed initial themes and categories, recategorizing as needed to fit the data best and tell the participants' stories.

(6) *Producing a report*: The researcher presents the synthesis of the findings below.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the above steps align with Creswell and Poth's (2018) recommendations for analyzing qualitative data. As a core text in many qualitative data courses, Creswell and Poth (2018) informed the researcher's understanding of qualitative research design thus facilitating her understanding and engagement with data.

### **Description of Research Participants**

Table 1 (below) summarizes each participant's general information and similar characteristics, including gender, college enrollment status, and immigration status. The researcher used pseudonyms to remove anything that might identify the participants from the narrative to protect their identity. The researcher employed member checking at each stage of the data collection process. Participants had the opportunity to validate the information collected and add or make changes to the information collected.

As shown in Table 1 below, seven TRIO Upward Bound alumni participated in this study. Three were women, and four were men. All participants were from the same 2021 graduating class and 20 years of age at the time of this study. Five participants were enrolled in college full-time, one enrolled in college part-time, and one dropped out of college after his first year to pursue a career in aviation full-time. Four participants were immigrants. Two participants are first-generation Americans. As TRIO Upward Bound students, the participants of this study were potential first-generation college students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. All participants of this study identified as first-

generation college students. The researcher did not discuss income status due to the sensitivity of the topic. Six participants participated in the TRIO Upward Bound program for four or more years, and one participated for three years. At the time of the study, all six college students were enrolled in college in their home state.

**Table 1**

*Research Participants Demographics*

Pseudonym	Gender	Years in UB	Participation Level	Academic Standing	First Gen. college student	Immigrant status
Adam	Male	4	Weekly, Academic Year & Summer	Enrolled in College	Yes	1 <sup>st</sup> generation Pakistani-American
Rocky	Male	4	Moderate. “I came most of the time”	Enrolled in College	Yes	1 <sup>st</sup> generation Bangladeshi-American
Ricardo	Female	4	Weekly, Academic Year & Summer	Enrolled in College	Yes	Guyana
Pumpkin Spice	Male	3	Moderate, Academic Year Only	Enrolled in College	Yes	Bangladesh
Dinosaur	Female	4	Weekly, Academic Year & Summer	Enrolled in College Part-time	Yes	Suriname
Aviator	Male	4	Weekly, Academic Year & Summer	College drop-out	Yes	India

Pseudonym	Gender	Years in UB	Participation Level	Academic Standing	First Gen. college student	Immigrant status
Sapphire	Female	4	Weekly, Academic Year & Summer	Enrolled in College (Junior)	Yes	1 <sup>st</sup> generation Hattian-American

*Adam.* Adam was the first participant in this study. He is a first-generation Pakistani American. At the time of this study, he was enrolled in his junior year of college, majoring in computer science. Adam learned of the TRIO Upward Bound program during his freshman year of high school through an informational leaflet that informed him of a meeting in the high school auditorium. Adam attended the meeting and was immediately intrigued by the “homework help” the program provided. Adam participated in afterschool homework help in middle school and knew the benefits of getting additional assistance with academic work from that exposure. Adam was a frequent participant in TRIO Upward Bound, participating in both academic year and summer programs for all four years of high school, including the summer after graduating. He thought the program would be so beneficial that he encouraged his sister and cousin to join, and they did: “I would say I was the most involved. Me, my sister, and my cousin...we would be the ones that would jump to every trip, every meeting. We just showed up every time.” The themes that emerged from Adam’s interview included: “homework help,” environment, friendship, connection, academic help, exposure, resources, guidance, social competence, self-discipline, opportunity, and freedom.

**Rocky.** Rocky was a junior in college and was studying accounting at the time of this study. He joined the TRIO Upward Bound program during his freshman year of high school to “make new friends.” He learned about the program through a flyer he received and was an active participant in the program all four years of high school, missing only one summer. Rocky was born in New York, but his parents are from Bangladesh. The themes that emerged from Rocky’s interview included friendship, connection, college readiness, academic help, resources, self-discipline, and environment.

**Ricardo.** Ricardo is a 20-year-old college junior studying human services and community justice. She is a self-described over-achiever and lover of teddy bears. Born and raised in Guyana, Rocky migrated to the United States at the end of middle school. He learned about the TRIO Upward Bound program through a notice sent to her home. Ricardo joined the program because of the services that it provided. She stated,

No one influenced my decision. I just genuinely wanted to do it because having mentorship and having help with college at the end. I felt like it was very important, while at the same time, I could be making money going to school and doing what I’m supposed to do.

Ricardo was a very active participant in the program all four years of high school, including the summer after graduating high school. He said,

My frequency was basically every single day, every week. They said that you could come during the day, and we could just go to them and check-in; I did [that]. I participated in everything they had, down to summer activities. So, I did both the weekly for [the] academic school year. Then, when the academic school

year was finished, I did the summer activities they had. So, I participated with them from the start all the way to the end.

Themes that emerged from Ricardo's interview included academic help, resources, college readiness, mentorship, social connection, friendship, community, confidence, self-esteem, guidance, and financial aid.

*Pumpkin Spice.* Pumpkin Spice moved to America at six years old from Bangladesh. He and his family spent two years in New Jersey before moving to South Carolina for five years and then returned to New Jersey. Unfortunately, he experienced racism and severe bullying in middle school that led to court hearings and the suspension of one perpetrator from school for several months. That is why, the "safe space" provided by TRIO Upward Bound was very critical for him. He only participated in TRIO Upward Bound for three years during the academic year. He learned about the program through direct classroom recruitment: "I believe [the] Upward Bound program was going room-to-room for recruiting students to join them." He joined for homework help: "At first, I really didn't think much of it, but one thing that really stood out to me was the afterschool program for homework help." He stayed not only for the help but for the environment, community, and connection:

I stayed more because it had amazing vibe. When I did join, not only did I receive a lot of help with my homework and everything, I also made a lot of connections, and their program was amazing. The benefit of the program was passing my grades, of course, but also actually learning things, new things. Every week, we used to do something different.

Pumpkin Spice was moderately active in TRIO Upward Bound: “I only joined when I needed help.” He was more active in another support program at his high school called Global Kids: “I actually spent more on Global Kids than Upward Bound.” The Global Kids program was embedded into his high school and provided services similar to those that Upward Bound program provides. Pumpkin Spice participated more in Global Kids. He explained, “I think it’s because I made more connections in Global Kids.” At the time of this study, Pumpkin Spice was enrolled in college part-time, studying finance. The themes that emerged from Pumpkin Spice’s interview included homework help, community, connection, friendship, safe space, college prep, exposure, and resources.

***Dinosaur.*** Dinosaur is from Suriname. She came to the United States at six years old. She does not remember how she learned about the TRIO Upward Bound program, but she joined with a few of her friends. She joined for homework help, but she “was always the type to be down for any afterschool activities.” She actively participated in the program all four years of high school. She stated, “Oh, me and my peoples, we made sure we was [*sic*] over there every day. We was [*sic*] there weekends...we made sure we didn’t miss anything.” Dinosaur is a home health aide and personal care assistant. At the time of this study, Dinosaur was enrolled in college part-time with the goal of becoming a medical assistant. She originally wanted to become a lawyer, but the lessons she learned in TRIO Upward Bound regarding physical and mental health influenced her to change her major. When asked, “In what ways did your participation in Upward Bound influence your personal, academic or career goals?” she responded, “It changed my career goal because I wanted to be a lawyer first. But then, I changed my course to do medical. I’m about to become a medical assistant because, like I said, [UB] taught us health and



mental health, and our physical health [came] first.” The themes that emerged from Dinosaur’s interview included homework help, safe space, guidance, environment, community, mental health, friendship, connection, exposure, consistency, and resources.

**Aviator.** Aviator found out about the TRIO Upward Bound program through a flyer sent to him, inviting him to an auditorium presentation. He thought the program was interesting, and it helped that some of his friends were joining. Aviator is from India. Consequently, one of the features he appreciated about the program was its diversity:

In middle school, I was very shy because I just came in from India. So, in high school, especially with Upward Bound, I was able to relate to many other students because those students were not born in the U.S. Their families migrated, so I was able to share the connection with them.

He participated in the program all four years of high school. Aviator shared, “I would say I was a very frequent participant. Basically, after school I had nothing to do. I would just hop in. We would do study sessions, and we always had fun little activities planned after we were done studying.” Aviator enrolled in college immediately after high school to study aviation but dropped out after a year and a half to pursue a private pilot license. The themes that emerged from Aviators interviews were opportunity, socialization, friends/hip, connections, guidance, exposure, academic help, and resilience.

**Sapphire.** At the time of this study, Sapphire was a college junior majoring in social work and minoring in criminal justice and Black and Caribbean studies. She was president of the Caribbean Student’s Union and a member of the cheerleading team. Additionally, she worked at the Early Learning Center on her college campus. Sapphire is

a first-generation American with a Haitian background. She shared the following regarding being of Haitian descent. She reflected,

I definitely feel like being of Haitian background impacted me because not only do I come from an immigrant family, but also we are Black. So, I feel like just like having to work like ten times harder in, like, anything that I do has really, like, that's has really been like a lasting impact.

Sapphire joined TRIO Upward Bound in 2017 as a high school freshman because a friend of hers who was in the program encouraged her to join:

A friend of mine was in the program, and then one day in class they told me, 'I am in the program, and I really think you should join. It's so fun. It has good opportunities...they do everything.' So, then I was like 'Okay, I'll think about it.' I went to the office. I met everybody. I learned more about the program, and it started from there.

The themes that emerged from Sapphire's interviews included safe space, friendship, homework help, opportunity, guidance, family, financial aid, confidence, environment, self-esteem, community, academic development, encouragement, growth, perseverance, and success.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Fifteen subthemes emerged from the data after using multiple cycles of coding. In reviewing the subthemes, it was crucial to consider that resilience research focuses on protective factors contributing to positive outcomes (Brooks, 2006). The researcher organized the subthemes into three broad categorical themes of support: academic, environmental, and social-emotional support. The researcher reviewed and refined the

themes to ensure they were coherent, consistent, and relevant to research questions. The researchers further reviewed the themes to ensure they were grounded in the data and supported by multiple examples from the transcripts.

The researcher triangulated the data by examining the data from two interviews (three in the case of Dinosaur) and artifacts and photo-elicitation. The photographs and other artifacts provided a tangible representation of the participants' experiences and perspectives. According to Harper (2002), artifacts have the ability to evoke powerful emotional reactions, adding depth and richness to participant responses, and that was the case in this study. In this study, the photograph or artifact was not the focus but rather the meaning or significance the participant ascribed to the photograph. The photographs allowed participants to recall experiences they then shared with the researcher that exemplified the impact TRIO Upward Bound had on their development. Photographs are not shared in this publication to maintain the participants' anonymity and protect their confidentiality.

***Research Question 1:*** What are the motivating factors that influence students' choice to participate in the program?

To explore the extent to which TRIO Upward Bound programs are successful because of the services they provide or because of the students who self-select to participate in them, the researcher explored the first question of the study: What are the motivating factors that influence student's choice to participate in the program? All participants indicated they were self-driven to participate due to interest in the services that the program provided, including homework help and college prep. Two shared that friends influenced them to join the program (Aviator and Sapphire). No participant

indicated that a school counselor, administrator, teacher, or parent influenced them to join the program. The researcher summarized the participants' responses for why they joined the program in the table below.

**Table 2**

*Motivation*

Participant	Motivation	Influence
Adam	Homework help	Self: "I just saw how it had homework help"
Rocky	Friendship, Tutoring	Self: "I was just trying to make new friends"
Ricardo	Homework help, Mentorship	Self. "No one influenced my decision."
Pumpkin Spice	Homework help	Self: "I realized, hey, I need help with homework."
Dinosaur	Homework help	Self: "afterschool buff... I would be joining any afterschool I can."
Aviator	Academic support, Social Support	Friends: "My friends were joining" Social: "I was able to meet new people."
Sapphire	Academic/Homework help, Social	Friends. Social: "I can be more with my peers."

*Note.* This table summarizes the factor(s) that motivated participants to join TRIO Upward Bound.

Adam joined TRIO Upward Bound because he believed it would help him academically due to prior participation in a homework assistance program in middle school. He shared,

I just saw how it had homework help for afterschool, and that caught my interest. They [gave] out information about the help, [and] they would give and other resources. We could come to them if we need help in any other area of like high school. So, then I said ‘Okay’.

He had no concerns before joining the program, and others did not influence him:

Previously in middle school, I had an afterschool program, so I knew it was beneficial to join afterschool program with homework help because it helped me a lot in middle school, so that’s why I joined in high school.

Rocky joined TRIO Upward Bound to build friendships and for tutoring: “I was just trying to make new friends since I started high school, trying to see who [*sic*] I got along with.” He thought: “Clubs, that’s how you find friends.” He attended club fairs, and TRIO Upward Bound “stood out.” Rocky explained,

Other programs were more physical, and I didn’t want too much [*sic*] physical activities...and then tutoring was also helpful, so I decided to hang out after class.

We [he and his friends] got a spot, so Upward Bound fit the description.

Accordingly, Rocky was also self-motivated to join. Like Adam, he influenced others to join. Rocky said, “I felt like I influenced other people to join because I am like, we can hang out after school, and I really liked Cycling Smarts. It was a way to bond with people more better [*sic*].”

Ricardo also joined TRIO Upward Bound for homework help and mentorship. She learned about the program through “a mail sent to my house. It detailed how it can help, how it could help us in our future along with [college] as well. So, because of that, and it did provide mentors, homework help, and these things, I decided to do it.” She expressed, “No one influenced my decision; I just genuinely wanted to do it because having mentorship and having help with college at the end, I felt like it was very important.”

Pumpkin Spice joined TRIO Upward Bound for academic support. Initially, he did not have much interest in the program, but then he needed help with chemistry. He reflected,

At first, I really didn't think much of it, but one thing that really stood out to me was the afterschool program for homework help, and studies, and other programs. They were also teaching English and history and science stuff, and I didn't think too much of it. Later on, I realized, 'Hey, I needed help with homework', and I realized I had chemistry that I needed help with and didn't understand.

Dinosaur did not remember how she first learned about the TRIO Upward Bound program. However, she remembered an encounter in her high school hallway with one of the program's administrators who shared the opportunity with her and piqued her interest with the offer of homework help. She stated,

I actually stopped and spoke more to her, and she told me about the program she was doing. And I said, 'Why not? It sounds fun', and it was after school, so I didn't have nothing really important to do, so I had tried 'cause they said they were going to help us with homework, which I thought was good.

Family, peers, or teachers did not influence Dinosaur to join the program. She explained, “I was the type to be down for any afterschool activities.” She was a self-described “afterschool buff.” In our second interview (and through member checking), she shared, “Like I said, I would be joining any afterschool I can.” Dinosaur stated that her goal in joining TRIO Upward Bound was “new experiences, meeting different people, [and] doing different things I never did before.”

Both the social and academic support of TRIO Upward Bound Aviator drew Aviator to the program. Like Dinosaur, he did not have much to do after school, and the TRIO Upward Bound program provided academic help and the opportunity to socialize. He said, “I heard about UB from a flyer that was sent to me. My friends were joining as well. It seemed like a good opportunity to become more social and more academic.” After learning more about the program through a presentation at his school, he shared that he became “interested because, first of all, I didn’t have anything to do after school, and it was interesting. I got to make some money while learning more and meeting other people academically.” When asked, “What about the program appealed to you?”, he responded,

Basically, the program was academic, [but] at the same time, it focused more on the social aspect as well. A couple of my friends were joining, and basically, I was able to get to meet new people. It was, like, academic-wise, and also to become social with people.

The social aspect of the program was vital to Aviator because he is from India, and English is his second language: “Before high school, I wasn’t very social. I came in from India and basically, I had very few friends.” Aviator shared that the TRIO Upward Bound

program helped him become “more sociable” and helped him “become more proficient with the English language.”

A friend of Sapphire’s invited her to join TRIO Upward Bound. She then visited her school’s TRIO Upward Bound office to learn more and decided to join. She explained,

I joined Upward Bound in 2017. I believe when I was a freshman. And a friend of mine was in the program, and then one day in class, they told me, ‘I am in the program, and I really think you should join. It’s so fun. It has good opportunities; they do everything.’ So, then I was, like, ‘Okay, I’ll think about it’. So then, I went to the office. I met everybody, and I was, like, ‘Okay, this is something I’m interested in’. So, then I learned more about the program, and it started for me there.

Sapphire stayed in TRIO Upward Bound for the academic help provided. She explained,

Being that I was a freshman, I feel like having a space where I can be more with my peers and be able to learn and meet new people while also getting the benefits of studying and having help with homework and different subjects and regents and everything. I felt like that was a win-win situation. So that’s what kind of lulled me into that direction.

Of the seven study participants, only three mentioned any external influence on their reasons for joining the program. For those three students, the external influences were peers or friends. Even still, Rocky joined to make friends. Aviator joined to be more social; it helped that his friends were also going to the program. A friend invited Sapphire, but Sapphire stayed because she wanted a space to be with her peers, meet new



people, and get help with homework. In sum, all students were driven by an internal motivation or drive. Parents, teachers, or even friends did not guide them. However, the participants' own desire for either peer relationships, academic help, or both were the factors that motivated them to join the program. The fact that the students of this study were self-driven demonstrates an internal locus of control, a protective factor of resilient students that aligns with the research (Benard, 1991; Calhoun et al., 2018; Mampane, 2020).

As indicated by Aviator, these TRIO Upward Bound students possessed resilience traits when they joined the program, and TRIO Upward Bound helped them to develop them further. Aviator in response to the question, "Those character traits being of a positive mindset, being independent and entrepreneurial, were those always a part of you? Did UB influence the development of those traits?" Aviator said, "I would say *definitely* I had those traits. I would say Upward Bound helped me a little bit on that." This attribute is further evident in the exploration of question two of this study, which the researcher explored in the next section.

***Research Question 2:*** How impactful was TRIO Upward Bound in building students' resiliency to matriculate into Higher Education?

The researcher reviewed the data to see how TRIO Upward Bound shaped or developed the participants' resiliency to address the study's overarching question: Does TRIO Upward Bound build resiliency? Fifteen subthemes emerged from the individual interviews. A close examination of these themes shows that they are related and fall into three broad support areas or categorical themes: academic, environmental, and social-emotional support.

The exploration of question one of this study revealed an academic support theme. All participants stated they joined the program for homework help or the “academic aspect” in Aviator’s case. Academic resilience, as reviewed in Chapter One, relates to those factors that allow a student to achieve and persevere toward degree completion despite non-academic obstacles that can interfere with academic success (Debb et al., 2018). Interviews with the TRIO Upward Bound alums revealed that the program assisted in building academic resilience by providing tutoring, mentoring, college financial aid guidance, college prep guidance, and exposure. Accordingly, the first theme to emerge from the data was TRIO Upward Bound, which provided significant academic support to program participants.

*Academic Support*

**Table 3**

*Theme 1: Academic Support*

Subtheme	Adam	Rocky	Ricardo	Pumpkin Spice	Dinosaur	Aviator	Sapphire
“Homework help”	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
College Prep	x	x	x	x			x
Financial Aid			x				x
Guidance	x	x	x		x	x	x
Mentorship			x				
Exposure	x			x	x	x	
Resources	x	x	x	x	x		

*Note.* The above table summarizes the subthemes discussed by each participant under the academic support theme. The x under each pseudonym indicates that the student addressed (or talked about) the subtheme in the left column.

**Homework help.** As mentioned in the previous section, Adam joined TRIO Upward Bound for “homework help.” However, he received significant academic support in the program. He shared,

In junior year of high school, I had chemistry, which was very difficult, and I took a Regents for it. When I took the Regents, I failed it and got a 30 something. And then with [the TRIO Upward Bound Teacher], I did a lot of practice over the summer of Upward Bound, and I managed to retain the information he taught me, and then after I retook the Regents, I passed. And I was one of the few people that passed of the ones who took the Chemistry test. So, I would say that was, like, a really helpful moment.

Sapphire had a similar account to Adam when it came to getting Regents (a state exam) help:

So, in school, I was in geometry. I was taking the class geometry, and I hate math. I hated it. And, I was struggling really hard with it, and when it came time for the Regents, I didn’t pass my Regents. That was really discouraging for me. I wanted to give up really bad. In the summer, we was [*sic*] still working on it, and although it was hard for me. I wasn’t understanding things, but with Upward Bound, I sat with the staff member, and I asked questions, and I was really, like, I wanted to succeed. I wanted to learn, and I feel like every day throughout that summer, practicing and asking questions and inquiring about things I didn’t

understand. I feel like that really helped me not give up and having someone there to help me allowed me to not give up, and then when I took my geometry Regents I passed. That's a specific time.

As with Sapphire, not only was the academic support the TRIO Upward Bound provided crucial but the motivation as well. For Ricardo, TRIO Upward Bound was a great source of motivation to strive and persist academically. She reflected,

When I always used to have a class where it was very hard, when the mentors used to work with me a lot I used to feel so happy, and I used to want to go back to them and be like, 'Hey, I got 100 on this or I got a 90 on this', even though I don't understand it, like 'Hey, I did it.' I feel like they gave me that push, where it's like even though I don't understand a class, I'm having issues, I could still do it. So, they provided me with some academic push when I felt like I couldn't do it anymore...academic-wise and things like that, they pushed me to realize that I can do it, I can pass, I can get these grades, I can do this. It was never - they never gave me the feeling of 'I can't.' It was always I can, no matter what the case may be.

For Aviator, participation in TRIO Upward Bound helped him improve his English skills.

He stated,

I would say definitely becoming more proficient with the English language.

English is not my primary language; with [The TRIO Upward Bound Teacher], I was definitely able to improve my English skills so that I would know what the correct phraseology was and what not.

Pumpkin Spice summarized the help he received as such:

At the beginning, homework help was [the] important thing. One of the most lacking things, the thing I was lacking was chemistry and physics. I was not good in the sciences. So, whenever I came in, they automatically knew how to help me in those specific topics. And the way they help[ed] me was not just giving me the answers. They showed me, demonstrated with examples, make [made] me feel like ‘Hey, I am actually learning this.’

The artifact that Pumpkin Spice shared in his second interview was representative of the academic success he was able to achieve through the support of TRIO Upward Bound. When asked to share an object, photograph, or media that represented his time in TRIO Upward Bound, Pumpkin Spice shared his graduation suit. He purchased a blue dress suit through the stipend funds he received from TRIO Upward Bound. He described the suit as “[It’s] a navy blue suit with matching pants. I also got a navy blue tie and shoes, some black shoes that goes with everything, and I wore it to my graduation. It was amazing.” The suit represents his academic achievement because it was purchased for and worn at his high school graduation. However, for him, it also represented growth and development, including his improvement of style. In responding to the questions, “How is that suit reflective at all? How does it reflect your time in Upward Bound, or represents the impact the program had on you?” he shared,

I feel like when I first joined, I remember, I was just wearing, like, a hoodie, rag-tag hoodie with just like sweatpants, just going in there not know nothing [anything] much about it. And it was just me and my friend, and over the years, after learning a lot of things, going through a lot of hardships, and understanding things. When I graduated, wearing that suit that was supported by Upward Bound

itself was great. If you see the [graduation] picture you would see how happy I was, not just because of the graduation, but I am looking good. Got my hair cut and everything the day before. It was really amazing.

**College Prep Guidance.** Related to academic support is college readiness or building a college-going capital. By design, the TRIO Upward Bound program provided its participants, mostly first-generation college students, with guidance and resources to develop their college knowledge and increase the likelihood that they would go to college. All study participants achieved that goal. Adam reflected,

I had no idea about college, and I feel like [The TRIO Upward Bound Teacher] is a really big help. Because she helped me step by step on how to apply to college, which college to choose and where to go, and what paths to follow, which I feel was really helpful. I know students who were in Upward Bound but didn't take advantage of that, and they were just lost on what to do, and I would've been one of those students, but like I got involved, and I reached out when [The TRIO Upward Bound Teacher] gave the opportunity to apply.

Sapphire shared:

I knew that I always wanted to come [go] to college, but I didn't know that ... I didn't know of the options that were in front of me. Lack of knowledge was definitely where I was standing before Upward Bound, and so I feel, like, knowing that I have this many options really got me really excited about the future knowing that ... I can aim for private school, but even if I don't get into a private school I have so many other options right in front of me.

For Rocky, TRIO Upward Bound developed his college-going capital by providing insight, which he felt made him more prepared for the journey. He stated,

Upward Bound [was] always like steps ahead when it comes to college. Always to be prepared and to, like, since you are in this program, you are able to have more insight of [into] what you are going to do when you're in college. So, I guess I felt like we were more prepared.

Speaking about college prep, Rocky shared his TRIO Upward Bound experience,

[TRIO Upward Bound] showed us what are the requirements, what do they expect of us, yeah. The high school teachers don't really say that. Upward Bound showed me the opportunities of private and non-private colleges. It showed me what colleges would benefit the major that would be suitable toward me, like different types of majors, some probably I haven't even heard of. And then [TRIO Upward Bound] showed me some campuses are big, some campuses are small, or you could go out of the state. As long as you have a scholarship, you should be fine.

The services provided by TRIO Upward Bound helped Ricardo pick her college and her major. Ricardo explained, "They helped me get into certain colleges that have the major I want to do." Ricardo, reflecting on her TRIO Upward Bound experience, realized the guidance she received helped her not to be like peers who ended up changing majors. It set her on the right path for her. She stated,

So, I realized that, and it actually helped my college years go by really fast and smooth because I was able to pick the right major that I want to be in without having to change, and it also help me realize that if I still want to do any major I

see in the beginning, I can just minor in it. So that's why I have a major and I have a minor as well.

Pumpkin Spice said,

I remember when I was doing college applications, I was struggling because I didn't know anything about college. I was just a high school student. Of course, there were, like, teachers who were like, 'Hey if you need help come in'. The thing is a lot of students was [*sic*] going through it, and I remember Upward Bound. When I went there, it was amazing how I got so many opportunities to visit colleges, so it was great. It was really amazing for the future of myself. So, I loved it.

Speaking about receiving guidance from both TRIO Upward Bound and Global Kids, Pumpkin Spice shared:

I think it was my college applications and careers, which is where I got a lot of input on what college to choose and how to choose it. [The] Upward Bound program helped me with that too, but I asked both. You know people - more outlook, more opinions, more better. So, I also had Global Kids. Also, because you know, I, like, went to Boston and visit[ed] a lot of other colleges, they also give me different perspectives.

**Financial Aid.** The knowledge and resources provided by TRIO Upward Bound were significant in Ricardo's going to college. TRIO Upward Bound built her college readiness and college-going capital by educating her on her financial aid options, resulting in her being able to go to college on full financial aid. She reflected,



So, one of the obstacles that were in the way, before I was even able to go to college was money. That was the most biggest [sic] part of it all. But, actually Upward Bound is what helped me get through those obstacles because they helped me find ...they helped me find scholarships, helped me do my FAFSA application. So now I actually don't pay for college, and I go to college for free. Financial aid and college guidance were also critical for Sapphire. When reflecting on the obstacle she had to overcome in high school, she stated,

I feel like the biggest thing was financial. I feel like that was a big obstacle for me and my family, and Upward Bound really helped in that way, being that it's not every day you get to go to different colleges and explore things that are open to you or get help with SATs.

The ability to go on field trips with TRIO Upward Bound removed a substantial financial burden for Sapphire and allowed her to explore her college options fully. TRIO Upward Bound increased her college knowledge.

**Guidance.** All the participants mentioned guidance, support, and resources the program provided. This was most evident in my discussion with Adam, who found TRIO Upward Bound to be a guide, a resource, and a place for mentorship. He explained,

Whenever I had a weakness in any aspect, I would have mentors and friends from Upward Bound that would give me good advice to become better in that certain area. So, there was always someone that I could talk to and ask for help and stuff like that. And it was just such a good resource to have Upward Bound itself.

TRIO Upward Bound provided students with meaningful academic, career, and personal guidance. For Adam, he shared that TRIO Upward Bound helped him “academically and socially”. It helped him become a “better person.” He stated,

I was young, and I was, like, lost. I didn’t know what I should be doing. What I should be thinking for the future. What goals I should have? But I kind of learned a lot about myself while being in Upward Bound. Before Upward Bound, I would just do whatever I wanted. I did have really any set goal. But with Upward Bound, I learned the discipline, and I learned, like, I learned to manage and balance my life.

Aviator felt similar to Adam. From TRIO Upward Bound, he received direction and guidance. He reflected,

Before Upward Bound, I thought I was the only one struggling with this, but when I came to Upward Bound, I could relate to other students. I’m not the only one that doesn’t know what to do with my life right now, or what’s going to be the next step after high school, how am I going to make a career out of myself. So, I was able to listen to other people, what their plan of action was, and then I was starting to develop interest in... I was sort of like becoming more sociable, I was exploring what I would want to do in life, and then [the TRIO Upward Bound teacher] was always helping us out, especially me, since I don’t know what to do with my life. She was, like, ‘Why don’t you try this?’, ‘Why don’t you apply to this college?’, ‘Let’s look at the programs of this college.’, and whatnot. ‘Does it interest you?’ and whatnot.

TRIO Upward Bound also provided Sapphire with guidance. She explained,

I think that I didn't really know what my purpose was. Like, I had an idea of what I wanted to do, but I didn't really know what direction I wanted to go in or the opportunities that were in front of me. I really didn't know anything that my future held before joining the Upward Bound program. And then, after joining Upward Bound, I really got to see so many doors open, and so many options and I was shown so many things, and I was given a lot of guidance. And I feel like that really... it [TRIO Upward Bound] gave me a lot of knowledge, wisdom, everything before. I didn't know much.

Guidance in the form of mentorship was a defining part of Ricardo's experience. He stated,

What really made me stay was the mentors, tutors, and the people who run the program because they not only acted as our source for help when it came to school, colleges, and all these things academic-wise. They also helped us personally. So, if we wanted to talk to them because we were overwhelmed, stressed, whatever the case may be, they were always there and they were always glad to talk to us. They always helped us.

The students reflected on not only receiving guidance regarding going to college but also on career options. Adam shared, "I learned a lot about different career options from everyone in Upward Bound." He expanded by stating,

I didn't really know which area to go into, but then, like I said, I had different mentors who would tell me about different careers and different paths that I could follow. And I explored it, and I chose the one I have today, which is computer science.

Pumpkin Spice reflected on the guidance TRIO Upward Bound provided and stated,

[Trio Upward Bound provided assistance with my] career goal. I was given a lot of information about preparing myself for my future career and college. I didn't take it too much seriously because I didn't know what I wanted to do. But they definitely provided me with a lot of choices. Pineapple University and other colleges and what careers and what opportunity I should go for. It was nice. They gave me a lot of opportunities to explore, what kind of choices I had. They influenced me pretty good with those.

(Note: Pineapple University is a pseudonym for a university.)

When talking about developing his career goals, Aviator shared,

Yeah, Upward Bound did definitely play a part in that. I knew I wanted to get into aviation, but I didn't know what the steps were. So [the TRIO Upward Bound teacher] and I had multiple meetings. We basically researched colleges, and we wrote college essays. And we were, like, 'Hey, you should apply to [a specific aviation] college. They have this pilot program.' And basically, if it wasn't for [the TRIO Upward Bound teacher], I wouldn't be here right now and throughout college, I figured out there was a better path for me, so that's why I decided to pursue the other path.

**Exposure.** Another subtheme that emerged that related to building academic resilience was exposure. For the participants, TRIO Upward Bound provided exposure that fostered cultural education and enrichment. Dinosaur's entire intent for joining TRIO Upward Bound was for the exposure it would provide. When asked, "What was your goal

in joining Upward Bound?” She stated, “New experiences, meeting different people, doing different things I never did before.”

The exposure participation in TRIO Upward Bound provided was best exemplified in Adam’s testimony. He reflected,

Upward Bound took me outside of my comfort zone. I went to different places that I had no idea about. We would go to museums. We would go to parks. It was all very new places...locations for me that I had no idea even existed, and I learned a lot from the field trips.

Adam perfectly exemplified the significance of the guidance, exposure, and college-going capital built by participating in TRIO Upward Bound in the photographs that he shared. Adam shared photographs of the Lincoln Memorial and the Capital building that he took on a field trip with TRIO Upward Bound. These photographs were significant to him. He explained,

Basically, it’s my first-time leaving New Jersey ever with Upward Bound. It took a lot of convincing of my parents, and actually, my aunt came with me because she wanted to. While on the road and visiting the different places, I learned a lot about different areas that wasn’t New Jersey because I am so used to New Jersey. This was way different place. I thought this was a really amazing and new perspective.

For Adam, this trip carried deep meaning. He did not expect to have such an experience from a school program. Adam had only joined for homework help.

I thought it was very crazy that Upward Bound had the ability to bring us here because this is such very far place, and it’s a really nice place, too. And I was

really surprised that I actually came here. I joined Upward Bound just to do some homework, you know. I never thought anything of it. But then I end up coming here with Upward Bound. I went so far.

For Adam, the artifacts he shared held deep meaning. For him, the field trip to Washington, D.C., and the photos he held from that time represented opportunity. He reflected on the most important component of the TRIO Upward Bound and explained,

So, I would say *opportunity*. Because this is the capital of the United States, and everyone comes to the U.S. just for the opportunity and I had the opportunity of coming to this place from Upward Bound.

The exposure provided by this field trip experience was critical to Adam because his parents are from Pakistan, and he stated, “My parents have the mindset everywhere is dangerous, stay in one place and close to home.” The diversity he found in TRIO Upward Bound helped him develop a more open mindset. Adam explained, “Because there was [were] a lot of very diverse people, like tutors, workers in Upward Bound, and they gave me very different viewpoints on their lives and their experience, which I would say open[ed] my mind up a lot.”

For Adam, TRIO Upward Bound pushed him out of his comfort zone. He stated,

I would go to different places and learn new things. And it made me adapt to the world, real world, not just, you know, going to school, coming back home, going to the park, that’s it, you know. I went to completely different places that I never knew even existed.

Adam also shared a jacket he received from TRIO Upward Bound as a graduation gift.

For him, this jacket also represented opportunity. Adam reflected,

The way I was able to get it was because there were students that didn't come; they didn't take advantage of the opportunity for Upward Bound. They missed out on it. It was their money to get this jacket, and it made me realize I should never give up an opportunity, always go for things, always put myself out there.

Adam was able to purchase a more expensive item than the budget given to the TRIO Upward Bound students because some students were missing from the program's event. From this experience, Adam learned not only to preserve but also to seize opportunities. He stated, "Never give up an opportunity; always go for things."

Sapphire also shared a picture taken on the field trip to Washington, D.C. During our second interview, Sapphire talked about her experience visiting the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in Washington, D.C. with passion. For her, the photo artifact and trip symbolized opportunity and community. She revealed,

So, this photograph was [taken] when we went to the memorial for Martin Luther King Jr., and it was just like a group photo of us standing in front of [a] statue. And I chose it because it was, like, very important for us, because that was one of the trips where we went on college tours. And the fact that we were able to go see that, I feel like it just showed like how, you know, how Upward Bound just provided so many opportunities for me and, like, my peers to learn and, like, you know just see what, like, what was held for us outside of [New Jersey], if that makes any sense. And that picture just, you know, captured that to me. So that's why I chose it.

This same photo also represented community to Sapphire. She articulated,

I feel, like, community. I feel like that's also represented in the photo. Because I, alongside my peers, like, we are, you know, we're together. And we are all exploring this new, like, prospect of, you know, like, different locations and new information, like, we're learning things, and I feel like we're learning it together, and that's what definitely shows in the photo. And I like that sense of community, and it definitely represents.

The second artifact Sapphire discussed was a graduation photograph. For her, it represented perseverance, growth, and success. She explained,

So, it's a picture of me and the rest of my Upward Bound peers. And, you know, we're, we are all graduating and, you know, some of us, like, we have our NHS, National Honor Society things on, and our pins, and various different things, and I just feel like it...just I chose it because it just shows how much success and growth of us, like, from freshman year to now as we're leaving to start on this new journey, and the fact that we made it to graduation. Not a lot of people can say that. So, I feel like it's so important.

Reflecting further, she shared the photograph represented,

Perseverance and success. I feel like, I feel like a picture tells 1,000 words, and just being in that cap and gown and being amongst everybody in the Upward Bound and knowing that we completed that, that part of that journey of our lives. And now, we're on to more good things, like no matter, like, where everybody else is going, like college or trade school or whatever, we were able to complete that. That part of our lives. We were able to grow from where we started, and I feel like that's definitely some aspects are represented in the picture.



Table 4 lists the academic support provided by TRIO Upward Bound enabled the students to achieve academic success, which in this case was graduation from high school.

***Environmental Support***

**Table 4**

*Theme 2: Environmental Support*

<b>Sub-Theme</b>	<b>Adam</b>	<b>Rocky</b>	<b>Ricardo</b>	<b>Pumpkin Spice</b>	<b>Dinosaur</b>	<b>Aviator</b>	<b>Sapphire</b>
Environment	x	x			x		x
Community		x	x	x	x		x
Safe Space				x	x		x

*Note.* This table summarizes the subthemes discussed by each participant under the environmental support theme. The x under each pseudonym indicates that the student addressed (or talked about) the subtheme in the left column.

The second theme that emerged from the students’ interviews was TRIO Upward Bound provided participants with significant environmental support. Six participants shared the subthemes of environment, safe space, and community in their reflections. For the study participants, TRIO Upward Bound provided environmental support by providing a “safe space” or “community” or just “good vibes.” For example, when asked, “What kept you coming back to the program?”, Adam responded, “Well, it was the environment. Not only the homework help, it was the environment. Like, after I finished high school, I just go to Upward Bound because I felt comfortable there.”

For Rocky, TRIO Upward Bound provided community. The artifacts he shared exemplified this sense of community. For his participant-generated artifacts, Rocky shared a video clip of his time in the “Cycling Smarts” program within TRIO Upward

Bound. The clip showed pictures and videos of different moments in the program and illustrated Rocky's community of friends in TRIO Upward Bound. From the "Cycling Smarts" program, Rocky learned, "A strong core gets you far," and for him, that not only applied to one's physical strength but one's community as well. Rocky shared,

Yeah, I would say Upward Bound brought us together closer because, as a team, we couldn't, like, we boost each other up, we boost each other's morals. Like, you're so tired, you want to stop and the other persons [*sic*], like, keep going. And then people stay behind for you so you could just keep going. And sometimes you might have a flat tire, and then the whole team stops for you. Nobody goes nowhere [*sic*] until one person gets fix[ed]. So, then a bunch of people come and help you.

Rocky also shared a group photograph. He explained that the photo showed "a gathering where we met up again. It was one day near my birthday, and it was like a farewell for the summer program. So, we all got together." Again, for Rocky, this photograph was a physical representation of his community in TRIO Upward Bound. He reflected that the photograph represented "a great memory, and we all had our shirts on." Rocky summarized the importance of environment, by stating, "The people you surround yourself with affects the way you think."

The community provided by TRIO Upward Bound was also significant in Ricardo's adjustment to his move from Guyana to the United States of America. She explained,

So, it was a lot because at the same time, I am still coming from a brand-new country to a whole new country. It was still hard because I didn't really know if I

fit in or if I didn't, so the fact that one of my mentors is from the same country I was from helped me even more because it was, like, 'Hey, there are other people who did the exact same thing I did and look at them, they are up here too and they are able to do everything I want to do.'

Reflecting even further, she shared,

Upward Bound helped me see that there's people exactly like me. I had two mentors that were from Guyana. I was able to connect with people from my school who are part of the Caribbean. I was able to make a friend who was Haitian. I'm able to make a friend who was from Suriname, and I had a friend who was from Ghana as well. It was like a connection that I never thought I would have been able to have and Upward Bound really helped me there because it opened my eyes and helped me realize that I'm not by myself. And, if I want to talk to someone, there's always someone there to talk to, even if it's, like, a grown adult, like, they still talk, and to help you.

Accordingly, having an environment with individuals from the same country as her and supportive tutors and mentors helped Ricardo to fit in and find her place, or consequently, build environmental resilience. Ricardo's artifacts all reflected this community or friendship and the socialization that TRIO Upward Bound provided. The first photograph Ricardo shared during the second interview was a picture taken during a field trip, and the students were on a bus heading to a boat party. This photograph shows her with two of her close friends. The second photograph she shared was taken in a college dorm during an overnight stay as part of Upward Bound's immersive college experience. This photograph reflects the exposure and experiences that Upward Bound

provided, which built not only knowledge and community but also college-going capital. Ricardo maintained that she is still close friends with the other young ladies in the photographs.

The third artifact Ricardo shared was a video. She explained, We have this video; this is actually within Pineapple University. It was me, [another student], and [another student], we were singing a song. So, we were, all three of us, was [*sic*] walking around on this pavement where there was this little hill on the campus. And we would just be waiting, because we were about to go inside, we were early. So, we just making a video of all three of us at the campus because we [are] genuinely happy, and it's just like nothing. You don't feel negative. You just feel happy because you're with your friends, even if it's in the summer, we're doing schoolwork in the summer.

The video showed the community of friends she developed. She also shared a graduation photograph of her and her friends and classmates. Speaking about the graduation photo, she shared:

It showed that Upward Bound had a very, like, close connection and, like, effect and the impact on us. Because all of us inside those pictures were not friends in the beginning. None of us knew each other. None of us clicked [or] anything. Upward Bound is what brought us together. All of us ended up bonding together, and it's, like, now we all talk to each other perfectly fine. In the beginning, we were not talking like this. Now, we are all talking like we've known each other for, like, six plus years. In that picture, it was a really joyous moment.

She continued, “Whether we realize it or not, this is our family. So, it was like one big family.”

**Safe space.** Safe space was another theme that figured prominently in the students’ accounts of their experience in TRIO Upward Bound. The safe space provided by TRIO Upward Bound was paramount for Pumpkin Spice’s academic learning:

I’ll be honest; I am a shy person; I don’t like asking questions, and I don’t feel comfortable, sometimes, asking specific questions. Of course, I should be asking those questions, I just don’t. So when I do go to Upward Bound program, a lot of the homework helpers, I am much more comfortable there, and it makes me feel like I am safe. And so when I ask those questions, I have no problems or issues asking them, and I don’t feel like I am asking dumb questions and when I do ask questions I have a better answer and comfortable answer and just easier to do. This might be a weird take. I remember I was, like, I am good at math, but I am terrible at taking math tests, and I am not great at it. So, I gave up on math. I remember like math tests, I gave up on it. And it was my lunch period, and I don’t go to lunch as much, so I just go to Upward Bound program’s office, and I just sit there. And I remember some of the homework helpers, and I forgot her name, the lady, she was, like, the main head person, she just came up to me, like, ‘Hey, um, it’s okay if you are going through stuff, this is a safe place,’ and I told her, ‘Hey, I am not doing great with math, and I am not sure what to do.’ Of course, studying and getting better would be good. But she really came and emotionally supported me, and I was, like, ‘Wow, thank you.’ And, at that time, after that, she gave me a hug, it was amazing. And, at that time, I was just not in the right place, the right

mood for a lot of stuff because I think it was, like, my junior year, I think it was around, yea, where it was getting very intense with a lot of stuff, a lot of not just homework but exams and regents and I was just getting frustrated and so yeah, I didn't go to lunch. I just came up to her office all the time, usually all the time, and I would just chill there, and it made me more safe, and I feel like I was able to continue with school.

Pumpkin Spice experienced bullying in middle school, and a safe environment was essential for him. He reflected,

I went to this specific program, also called Global Kids and Upward Bound program. That's why when I went to these programs, I felt safe, and I felt comfortable to talk to people. Because I wasn't the person who used to go and talk to people. I was more shy and introverted. So, these programs really allowed me to feel safe.

As an academically strong student, for Dinosaur, TRIO Upward Bound was "a safe space to go to after a stressful day." Dinosaur articulated,

[Upward Bound] made it a safe space, even if we were going through something. We was [*sic*] able to come and talk to one of [them] about it, and [they] would give us advice or help us out, and then we would go from there and do what we had to do. So, I actually liked that.

When talking about interacting during after school, Dinosaur shared,

We had a communication first that we know what we supposed to do and what we're not supposed to do, and to ask [them] first because, you know, [they] made

us that safe, a safe space for us to do that. [They] also let us be students, and [they] talk to us like [their] own kids more than students.

It was significant for Dinosaur that in TRIO Upward Bound, the staff treated her with respect. She stated, “They [the college tutors also used to speak to us and treat us as, you know, the same and not different, you know, not belittle us because they’re our tutor.”

She shared,

It wasn't like every afterschool, you know, like, they - where they force you. You have to do your homework, or talk to you, like, you know, teachers and students. [The staff] They spoke to us with respect, we was [sic] able to, you know, have jokes and make fun with each other, and even the teachers. They [the staff] made us feel comfortable; comfortable enough to speak to about what was going through so that it wouldn't affect us academic-wise, like, even going on field trips and whatnot. We made sure [that] we became, like, a whole little family. We made sure [that] we had each other back. If somebody didn't have this, another person had it, we didn't mind sharing. Even the teachers and counselors, if somebody couldn't afford [something], they was [sic] nice enough. They wouldn't be, like, ‘Oh, sorry, we can't you know, do this to one of your classmates.’ They would do it out of niceness.

Sapphire echoed the feeling of an extended family found in TRIO Upward Bound and explained,

I feel like being a part of Upward Bound was like a family, and it was... You meet your teachers, day to day, you meet your teacher and other students, but you know, they are like passing; you never know when you’re going to see them again

or if you are going to stay in contact with them. But with Upward Bound, I feel like, genuinely, the bonds that I made there were so genuine, and I talked to everybody still to this day, and I just love that we went there, and although it was mainly about our growth as students and academic help, I feel like the relationships is a big part of why I stay in Upward Bound. Because the people there really believed in me. And they really wanted to see me succeed and, in turn, made me want to succeed even more. It was also just very fun. We got to do a lot of college visits and tours and we got to explore our options. So I think it was a great experience.

***Social-Emotional Support***

**Table 5**

*Theme 3: Social-Emotional Support*

Sub-Theme	Adam	Rocky	Ricardo	Pumpkin Spice	Dinosaur	Aviator	Sapphire
Friendship	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Connection	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Family		x					x
Self-esteem			x				x
Confidence			x			x	x

*Note.* This table summarizes the subthemes discussed by each participant under the social-emotional theme. The x under each pseudonym indicates that the student addressed (or talked about) the subtheme in the left column.

The third theme that emerged from the data was that TRIO Upward Bound provided social-emotional support to its participants. The categorical theme of social-



emotional support featured prominently in the students' accounts, with subthemes including family, friendship, self-esteem, connection, and confidence.

TRIO Upward Bound had its biggest impact on Ricardo, building her self-esteem. Throughout her reflection on her experience in TRIO Upward Bound, Ricardo shared how Upward Bound aided her in bringing out her confidence and giving her the push she needed to go forward in her academic career. Ricardo views herself as a confident person but acknowledges that she has sometimes has self-doubts. She explained,

I am a self-doubter sometimes. So, the fact that I had them [the tutors and mentors] and I saw how they were doing everything, and they always talked to us; they even updated us on their lives. It was, I felt, more of a reassurance, like, 'Hey, if they can do it, I can do it too.'

Reflecting directly on this topic, Ricardo shared,

I would say they helped improve my confidence and self-esteem because I had my own confidence. I always had it; it just I felt like when it came down to everything, Upward Bound helped me realize I could just live in it. I shouldn't really feel ... because sometimes I felt ashamed of it [speaking of her epilepsy], but they helped me realize there is nothing to be ashamed of, be confident, be proud of who you are. So I was always ...It kinda of help[ed] me realize that I am me, and I am, you know, I should be happy that I am me. And they helped me realize that I deserved more and I know what I want, it's just that I like to self-doubt, so it's like, 'Hey, you know what you want, you know that you can do it, just believe in yourself, because you know you can believe in yourself, you've done it before why not do it now?' So, they kind of really help[ed] me realize that

there is more to me and help me realize that I'm just not this one basic person. I am a person who has everything, like everything.

Furthermore, TRIO Upward Bound helped Ricardo realize she was courageous. She reflected,

They helped me realize that no matter what, I should not let my seizures, epilepsy, [or] any of it like, basically control me and consume me and make me feel like I can't do anything because I can do anything I put my mind to. It helped me see that there's like, there's something in me that I never knew. There is this courage and this passion and all these things in me that they seen [*sic*] before I've seen it, and they helped bring it out of me. They helped bring that pushing spirit. They helped me see myself in a different light; see that I am, I am not just any regular person. I'm me. I'm unique, and I'm...especially no one could be me and I should really realize that. You know, it's time for me to love me, and that I'm very intelligent, I'm smart. And that gave me a whole big reason and push to actually get to college, graduate, and everything. So Upward Bound really [like it] helped shape me in a positive way and helped me see that there's more to me, and that I shouldn't let anything even if it's seizures, epilepsy, whatever the case may be, I shouldn't let it stop me from shining and doing everything that I plan to do. Because they knew before I really knew that I can do everything. It's just that I needed to have faith in myself. They have faith in me before I have faith in me. And that actually helped me so much in the long run to the point where I can sit up here and say that, 'Yeah, I'm ready to go help other kids who exactly what they've done for me.' They really, they really helped me view myself in a positive

light and realize that I can really do anything I put my mind to, no matter where I came from, no matter what situation I might be in.

Continuing on the above theme and reflecting on how TRIO Upward Bound helped to build her resiliency through building her confidence, Ricardo shared,

Upward Bound built more resiliency. They did it by always listening to me when I came with any - any problem. It doesn't just have to be school. They helped me realize, like, even if it's personal, they helped me realize that I should have more faith in me and more, like, faith in what I feel like is right for me to do. I shouldn't always have to go to someone to get permission on, 'Hey, do you think I should do this?' I should know for myself that I should do this. And they help instill that in me within the four years of me being inside the program. So, it helped me realize to have more faith in myself and to trust my gut and my instincts because I am an intelligent person and I know what's right from what's not. And if I genuinely need help, I will go get the help. I don't need help for everything because I know how to do it.

For Aviator, he found that TRIO Upward Bound "It helped me improve my confidence and self-esteem." He shared,

In middle school, I was very shy because I just came in from India. So, in high school, especially with Upward Bound, I was able to relate to many other students because those students were not born in the U.S.; their families migrated, so I was able to share the connection with them. And, when I went to college, I wasn't afraid anymore because I had a plan of action, and I was easily able to connect with other people because eventually, as I gained motivation in aviation, it was

easy for me to connect because we had a level of platform we can communicate with.

For Aviator, TRIO Upward Bound developed his resiliency by shaping his mindset. He explained,

I was a little weak in mathematics, especially in algebra and whatnot, and [the Upward Bound teacher] helped with all of these programs. I could have easily decided to give up, but I did not because I had all of these wonderful people supporting me. And after I graduated high school and left the program, that was sort of my mentality as well. I sort of chose to tackle aviation the same way I tackled mathematics in high school. Lots of new stuff needed to be learned, especially in being a private pilot. But I always used my peers. We had Zoom meetings together, and I would go to my teachers whenever I was struggling with something.

For Sapphire, TRIO Upward Bound was an enormous self-esteem builder. TRIO Upward Bound provided her with encouragement, taught her perseverance, and helped boost her confidence. She reflected,

Upward Bound helped me to overcome [my] insecurities and to feel strong in myself. I had no confidence in myself. I was always talking down to myself. And Upward Bound really just created a space for me to grow in that way, and to have that confidence in myself and trusting myself...doing all that.

The researcher asked Sapphire, “How do you think Upward Bound helped you to develop your confidence and self-esteem? What aspects of the program helped you to do that?”

She responded,

Going back to the relationships, I feel like the people that I was surrounded by, they were never talking down on me, or they would tell me things straight up; they would tell me things straight forward. They were honest with me, even in times when I doubted myself; I was always encouraged, like ‘You are a beautiful person,’ ‘You have so much ahead of you,’ [and] ‘You will be successful.’ Like always, being encouraged that I am not what I say I am. Stop talking down to yourself. You are more than you know. And I feel that [the] relationship aspect is what really developed that confidence in me.

Reflecting on the impact that TRIO Upward Bound had on her overall, Sapphire said,

In my final opinion, I believe the Upward Bound program built my resiliency because speaking academically-wise, even when I would say, like, for example, physics, oh my goodness, physics is so hard. I'm not gonna be able to do it. I don't know. I don't understand. I don't want to do this anymore. I'd just give up. In the face of that, Upward Bound was there to help me and say, ‘Keep trying, you know, keep on keep, like, keep working on me. You can get it, like it's, it's, it's gonna be okay, like, don't give up.’ So, I feel like that, like, academic-wise, like, that helped me build that resiliency in myself as well.

For Sapphire, TRIO Upward Bound was a source of motivation. It helped her build her mental toughness and drive to succeed.

TRIO Upward Bound also helped these participants build emotional resilience by providing support and connection. For Pumpkin Spice, TRIO Upward Bound “definitely helped to make connections and open up to people that at first I couldn't.”

Pumpkin Spice shared,

I was always shy, introvertish. But, Upward Bound definitely allowed me to be outgoing and talk to people and be more emotionally exploring. So, it definitely changed me a bit, not like a drastic or extreme amount but it allowed me to be more energetic, be more, like, approachable, definitely, yeah. I realized [that] having a really good connection with someone to help them, like as a student, having someone to look out for me, a mentor, really, really helps you out, even from the slightest bit. Having someone believe in you [and] in what you're doing really helps out. It goes a long way.

Reflecting on the time of the Coronavirus outbreak and resulting epidemic in 2020, Adam shared how significant being a part of TRIO was to him at the time:

Because I still had the connection of friends and mentors and tutors. We had online classes [and] online tutoring sessions, too and we would still talk to each other, so if I wasn't in Upward Bound, I wouldn't have any of that, and I would just have my high school classes.

When asked, "If you had to select one aspect of Upward Bound that helped you the most to get to where you are today, what would that be?" Ricardo reflected,

I will say the mentoring. The mentor is one thing that got me this way because there's a connection with the mentors that it goes beyond, like, just schoolwork. They were here every single day. It's something that even though we're not together anymore, we still have that connection - like they really helped us grow in a lot of parts of our life. They helped us with school. They helped us with any personal things we're going through; if we want to talk to them about something, they're completely fine with it. They'll be like, 'Okay, come on, let's go talk.'

Like, they'll let you cry with them. Anything. It was like having a whole support system that was literally one person, your mentor. And it's something that I feel like any kid, inside high school especially, would really want to have because having a mentor who's not only going to teach you something but actually be like a friend to you and actually hear you and actually see where you're coming from in certain situations and help you. It was like everything you would want in just, like, one person. Even if it was a group of us, they still made time for each and every single one of us. So, we all felt connected.

TRIO Upward Bound helped Ricardo learn to regulate her emotions. Reflecting on her development, Ricardo shared,

Personal things that I have learned in Upward Bound have carried over into today, like my ability to calm down more, my ability to speak better, use my words better, all those things came from the Upward Bound program. And now, it's like as I continue to go on, I am still developing more and more, but that was my starting point.

For Ricardo, TRIO Upward Bound helped him to know himself. He explained,

[Trio Upward Bound was the] starting point in really understanding myself and who I wanted to be. I was able to see myself in such [a] better and different light and realize there was more to me, and I shouldn't just think I am just this one person. I should just explore and do way more with myself.

To reflect on the connection [emotional resilience] and safe space [environmental resilience] gained from participation in TRIO Upward Bound, Dinosaur shared the picture of a cup she received from TRIO Upward Bound. She stated,

The cup, like I said, one - it has my name on it, two - it's something from the person that gave it to me. Like I said, if you remember, in my other interviews, I had respondents, and said like the connections that the teachers made, [Ms. Teacher 1] and [Ms. Teacher 2] how they made us feel. So, the fact that even though I left high school, that high school specifically, even though I had transferred [to another] high school, the fact that [Ms. Teacher 1] she still, like, it was shipped to me. Like, I didn't get to see [her] in person for [her] to give it to me in person. But I mean, [Ms. Teacher 1] sent it to me, and it felt...it gave me like a heartwarming.”

Dinosaur expressed how receiving that cup reflected a great deal of care from the staff of the Upward Bound program. She stated, “I feel like [she] really cared, like [she] cared about me and [she and I] have a connection. [She] made me feel safe and comfortable. The fact is that [Ms. Brown] was able to send it to me, it gave me, like, an ‘aww’ feeling.”

Dinosaur also shared a keychain as an artifact that she received from the program:

For the keychain, I felt like the words that [Ms. Brown was] saying to me, but it was written on the keychain. It's something I could just look back on and be like, this is what really [Ms. Brown] would tell me, ‘Just keep going ahead. If we need time, you could take the time for yourself. If we need somebody to speak to, find somebody that you’re comfortable with.’ [Ms. Brown] taught no matter what even though life is frustrating, you got [*sic*] to get stuff done. If you're not comfortable and you're not ready or not in the right state of mind, you shouldn't do it. Because



you don't want to do something if you're not in the right state of mind, and it's gonna come out another way, knowing you could have did [*sic*] it better.

The keychain also symbolically represented the mental and emotional support she received as a participant in TRIO Upward Bound. It was significant to Dinosaur that the words inscribed on the keychain were not pertaining [to] education, “but it talked more about life.” Dinosaur reflected on how, if you put hot water in it, it stays hot. If you put ice in it, it stays cold. Accordingly, just like the cup, Upward Bound provided her with consistency. For Dinosaur, the little hat on the keychain for graduation showed the academic focus of Upward Bound. However, the words showed that Upward Bound enabled her, strengthened her, and provided resources for the non-academic parts of her, and the emotional and social parts of her. The words on her keychain read: “Whenever you find yourself doubting how far you can go, just remember how far you have come. Remember everything you have faced, all the battles you have won, and all the fears you have overcome.”

Aviator also benefited greatly from the personal connections he was able to build. He shared,

[I had a] more of a personal connection with the instructors. So, for example, [a particular Upward Bound teacher] and I forgot our English teacher's name [a particular Upward Bound teacher], rather than them being in front of the classroom and teaching the whole entire class, it's like they were giving us one-to-one attention; we could ask them for anything. They would go over topics, and after we were done with the topics, they would help us out with other homework

and whatnot. They were available for us if we wanted that. And I think that was the biggest motivator for me to continue to stay in the program.

Aviator believed the social aspect of his program helped him prepare for his current career “because of the social aspect of that program, I think I became a more sociable human being. So that way it was much easier to communicate with my peers when I started my flight training.” Participating in TRIO Upward Bound helped him create meaningful relationships. Aviator stated, “I was able to establish long-life-term connections with my fellow students.”

One of Aviator’s photographs was of him and his friends on a trip to Pennsylvania. For him, the photograph also represented the connection and friendship built in TRIO Upward Bound. It also showed the exposure TRIO Upward Bound provided and the building of college capital. He reflected,

So, this photograph basically means, like, connections and friendship to me. They always took us on trips to expand our knowledge about the world, how the world works. [The Upward Bound staff] made us, like, you know, go and see different things because, like, my parents don't have the luxury for us to travel a lot.

Because they were always busy working. [With Upward Bound] I got to visit different states. I got to see lots of different things.

Another photograph shared by Aviator was taken on a trip to Temple University. It also exemplified the social connections made, the exposure the program provided, and the building of college-going capital. Aviator stated,

So, this photograph was actually sight-seeing college. But it directly relates to Upward Bound because it shows that, like, the connections I made in UB, I still

have those connection. The friendships I made in the program [they] continued, and these are my true friends right here. I believe I can talk to them about anything.

Aviator's photo artifacts represented not only the friendships and connections he made but also the community of support that TRIO Upward developed for its participants, as previously discussed.

Another student who saw substantial emotional growth due to participation in TRIO Upward Bound was Sapphire. For Sapphire, TRIO Upward Bound helped her to let go of people-pleasing. She said,

I was always a people pleaser. I was always doing things to please others. But through Upward Bound and through the staff helping me, through conversation, and even through understanding that sometimes you're going to be wrong or sometimes you're not going to get the top score. Sometimes you will have setbacks but have to keep going within yourself. You have to keep trying. You have to believe in yourself. Not because you want to make others proud but because you have that drive within you, and that's what I really learned in Upward Bound. And if I didn't have Upward Bound, still probably, most likely, 100%, would still be on that people-pleasing path. I wouldn't necessarily be doing things because I want to do them or because I had the drive.

The impact was so great that Sapphire became a more confident student. As a college student, she is more "vocal" and not concerned about the judgment of others. She reflected,

I think I, vocally as a student, I have definitely changed. I am more vocal. I am more inclined to ask questions in class. I am more willing to, if I am not understanding something, I am always pushing to understand, no matter if I raise my hand and I am wrong. I don't really care about my surrounding area and whether people judge me or not, and I feel like that came from Upward Bound. I feel like Upward Bound made me an active student, a more active student.

To summarize, the overall impact that TRIO Upward Bound had on her, Sapphire shared, I feel like the biggest thing was financial. I feel like that was the biggest obstacle, and insecurities as well. Insecurities is my biggest thing as well. I was heavily insecure in myself and Upward Bound really changed the direction of how I felt. I feel like it really helped me keep going, and no matter where my mind went, I always had the encouragement of others and the help of others, and that really built such a self of confidence within myself, for me in college now that I see how the world is.

For Adam, the field trips TRIO Upward Bound provided helped him learn how to navigate the world better. Reflecting on the varied ways TRIO Upward Bound impacted or influenced him, he shared,

Other than academics, I learned how to navigate through [New Jersey] because we would go to field trips and stuff, and we would take coach buses, we would take the [public] trains, we would take the regular [public] buses, and that gave me a lot of insight on how to go outside and what to do and also how to behave because sometimes I would behave like a brat and then I would be told, 'You

can't behave like that way, you are outside and you have to be respectful of others and be aware of your surroundings.' and stuff like that which was really useful.

Aviator's testimony also highlighted the development of social competency made possible through the participation in TRIO Upward Bound. As previously discussed, Aviator came from India and "had very few friends." TRIO Upward Bound, he felt, helped him "became more sociable."

For Ricardo, the social connection and community were pivotal in her decision to remain in the program. She built long-lasting friendships that continue to this day.

Ricardo explained,

What motivated me to stay in the program was the connection I was able to build on a very short notice. When we were all able to sit down inside the room and we were all working together, we all started talking to one another as students. We all started talking. We all started to get to know each other, and everyone started to just vibed out in a sense, like being close and everyone is [*sic*] laughing. Everyone started to take the bus together; we would leave at the same time; we walked to the same buses; we do like almost everything, and with that, I liked that because now you have friends.

As previously mentioned, Rocky joined TRIO Upward Bound to socialize. He was "trying to make new friends" and "trying to see who I got along with." Furthermore, he remained motivated to stay in the program because of "the friends I had."

Additionally, he stated that he "really liked Cycling Smarts. It was a way to bond with people better because you are cycling, and then you get to know them even better and their hardships."

For Pumpkin Spice, TRIO Upward Bound helped him relate to others. He explained,

Like I said, I was very introverted at first. So, when I went to these programs, they allowed me to express myself to different people and really, like, open up my wings. So going into it, I was bullied. So, when I went to these events, I felt comfortable to talk to people, and I felt, you know, maybe I will not get bullied this time.

The experience was similar for Dinosaur. TRIO Upward Bound helped her to develop her voice. She felt the TRIO Upward Bound program “made [it] comfortable enough for everybody to interact. Have a voice, say our opinions, even if nobody agreed.” For her, the TRIO Upward Bound program provided a non-judgmental space for her and her peers to express themselves. She stated, “It was never like a judgmental space, that we couldn't say anything. They [Upward Bound staff] made sure that [Upward Bound staff] said no answer is wrong. And even gave us feedback on our opinions to understand your own opinion, if that's your opinion.”

Aviator intentionally joined Upward Bound for the social aspect. He explained, “It seemed like a good opportunity to become more social.” He continued, “Basically, the program was academic, at the same time, it focused more on the social aspect as well. A couple of my friends were joining, and basically, I was able to meet new people.” Aviator explained,

Back then, I was very shy. I didn't have a lot of friends. I only knew a couple of people, and two of them were going to Upward Bound. I was, like, since I know

these people and I feel comfortable with them, and eventually, I met new people in the program, and I became more sociable with them.

For Aviator, joining Upward Bound paid off with dividends. The researcher asked him, “What is the one thing about you that got better due to your participation in Upward Bound that make you who you are today?” He responded, “I would say the sociable aspect because academic-wise, everything is great, but if you aren’t sociable, especially in aviation, that can cause disaster.” When the researcher asked him, “Did participation in Upward Bound change the student you were or aspired to be?” He said, “Yes, definitely. Less sociable before Upward Bound, now more sociable.”

Sapphire also joined for the social connection. She wanted to “be more with my peers and be able to learn and meet new people.” She further explained, “The aspect of Upward Bound that I felt really helped me was the social aspect, definitely. I feel like people don’t understand how much relationships matter. And the relationships that I built really definitely helped me the most.” The social, emotional, and mental support Sapphire received developed her overall resiliency, enabling her to step up as a leader in college. She shared this account:

Like today and now, I feel like going to school. For example, I go to a private school, and it’s a predominantly White school. And even that, that’s one aspect and I feel like Upward Bound developed my resiliency in that I was able to do things to face the adversity of being in a predominantly White school. Like, me and a few of my friends started back up a Caribbean Students Union on campus so others may have the space to be among people that are like them. So, I feel like that’s something. Also, being the *only*...I feel like it’s not something that is talked

about a lot. Like my cheer team, I am the only person of color on my cheer team. Even, like, wanting to try out, I was still discouraged. I was, like, I'm probably not going to make it. But also facing that adversity and knowing that as long as I try and give it my all, I will succeed. And, if I don't, then on to the next.

Sapphire firmly believed the support and guidance she received from TRIO Upward Bound shaped the strength of her character, resilience, and mindset. She reflected, "I feel that it's a mindset that being a part of Upward Bound helped me to develop." She continued,

I definitely feel like Upward Bound should be something that should be more prevalent in school because it helped me get so far. I feel like I owe a lot of my success to Upward Bound and a lot of my opportunities to Upward Bound. I feel like more schools should have programs like Upward Bound to help students succeed and build up skills they may not have or provide them with that encouragement and confidence. I feel like a lot of our youth, I'll speak for people of color, we are so beaten down by the world, so having a space where people encourage you and build you up at a crucial time in your life is so important for your growth.

### **Discussion of Artifacts**

As outlined in Chapter 3, the collection of artifacts was a significant data-gathering source for this study. In alignment with the phenomenological approach that emphasizes the participant voices, participant-generated artifacts permitted the tangible visualization or interaction with the lived experience. Accordingly, in this study, the participants provided artifacts that they believed represented their time in TRIO Upward



Bound. The meaning that each participant espoused to the photographs or artifacts was shared above. Below, the artifacts are examined from the researcher's lens and in connection to the themes found in this study.

Pumpkin Spice shared and discussed his graduation suit. He did not espouse a meaning to the suit but shared how "great" and "amazing" his graduation was and how "happy" he was. His tone and facial expression reflected the pride he felt in graduating and the joy in the memory of that day. Pumpkin Spice reflected how he started in TRIO Upward Bound wearing a "rag-tag hoodie" but was able to end up graduating in this suit. It was clear to the researcher that this suit represented not only academic success (getting to graduation) but also an improvement in style.

Moreover, going from a "rag-tag hoodie" to a three-piece suit was an outer and physical representation of his growth and development in the program. Additionally, it symbolized how the impact of TRIO Upward Bound went beyond academics. Sapphire's graduation photo artifact also represented academic growth and success and directly related to the first theme found in this study: TRIO Upward Bound provides significant academic support to program participants.

To Adam and Sapphire, their artifacts of photographs taken on a field trip to Washington, D.C., represented opportunity. For Adam, TRIO Upward Bound taught him to "seize opportunities". For both students, TRIO Upward Bound provided opportunities through field trips. These field trips provided both cultural and educational exposure. More importantly, they demonstrated the value of enrichment through the exposure that TRIO Upward Bound provided its participants. These artifacts illustrate the complete investment into its participants provided by the program that goes beyond academia.

From the testimonies of these students, it is clear that TRIO Upward Bound invested in the whole student by providing academic as well as social-emotional and environmental supports. Adam's and Sapphire's artifacts represented all three themes found in this study.

The photo artifacts submitted by Sapphire, Rocky, Ricardo, and Aviator represented connection, friendship, and community to the students. They included a graduation photograph, a celebration photograph, and field trip photographs. Moreover, these artifacts showed community and belonging. As stated by Ricardo, "Whether we realize it or not, this is our family." TRIO Upward Bound created a second family for these students, and that nurturing environment strengthened their resiliency and enabled them to grow and develop as young adults. Dinosaur's artifacts of a cup and keychain best exemplified the environment of care. Dinosaur was really touched that [Teacher 1] was able to send her a cup with her name on it (Dinosaur's given name is unique and uncommon), and it gave her a "heartwarming" feeling. These gifts that Dinosaur received were representative or illustrative of the personalized attention small programs can provide (the TRIO program studied served 63 students) and the impact personal attention can have. These artifacts connected to and represented themes two and three of this study: TRIO Upward Bound provided its participants with significant environmental and social-emotional support.

### **Conclusion**

The stories of these seven TRIO Upward Bound students demonstrate that TRIO Upward Bound built resiliency in students by providing them with knowledge, resources, and exposure. Furthermore, the program built confidence, self-esteem, and social

competence by providing emotional support, guidance, and encouragement. As Aviator stated, “Upward Bound told me no matter the situation, you can never give up, right? You always have to, like, you know, follow your passion. It doesn't matter how challenging it is; you can never give up.” According to Sapphire, “Everybody needs an Upward Bound in their school.”

In this chapter, the researcher reviewed the findings of this study, focusing on the students' accounts of their experience in the TRIO Upward Bound program in their own words. Overall, the in-depth interviews revealed three overarching areas of support provided by TRIO Upward Bound program: academic, environmental, and social-emotional support, which fostered their development of resilience. In the following chapter, the researcher summarizes the findings and examines how they relate to the literature.

## CHAPTER 5

### Introduction

The researcher conducted a phenomenological qualitative study to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of former TRIO Upward Bound participants. The purpose of the study was to ascertain the impact participation in TRIO Upward Bound had on the development of students' resiliency. To that end, this qualitative study explored how TRIO Upward Bound program alums interpreted their experience in the college preparatory program by addressing two overarching research questions:

1. What are the motivating factors that influence students' choice to participate in the program?
2. How did TRIO Upward Bound shape or develop participants' resiliency?

Accordingly, this study explored the intersection of participation in TRIO Upward Bound and the development of resiliency in students.

As explored in Chapter 2, resilience theory and research posited that despite being exposed to risk, resilient individuals adapt and persevere because they possess protective factors that mitigate their risk exposure (Benard, 1991; Rodriguez-Fernandez et al., 2018; Yang & Wang, 2022; Yeung & Li, 2019). Resiliency research in the field of education revealed that students demonstrating the skill of resilience perceive their environments positively, have higher degrees of achievement motivation, and consequently are able to achieve higher levels of success in contrast to non-resilient individuals (Calhoun et al., 2018; Chee, 2017; Diers, 2020; Fenzel & Richardson, 2019; Kim & Kim, 2017; Mampane, 2020; Neal, 2017; Pardone et al., 2014; Yan & Gai, 2022; Yavuz & Kutlu, 2016).

Through multiple cycles of coding and thematic analysis (described in Chapters 3 and 4) of student interviews and participant-generated artifact collection, this phenomenological qualitative analysis found that TRIO Upward Bound students were self-motivated in their decision to join the program and pursue academic support. Furthermore, they were able to develop their resiliency skills through the academic, environmental, and social-emotional supports provided by the TRIO Upward Bound program they attended. In this chapter, the researcher provides an examination of the study's findings in relation to the literature on which the study was based. The researcher offered implications for educators and policymakers and recommendations for future research.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

The first question of this study explored the factors influencing students' choice to participate in the TRIO Upward Bound program. The intent of this question was to examine to what extent TRIO Upward Bound programs are successful because of the students who self-select to participate in them or because of the services they provide. The findings of this study revealed that most of the students who chose to participate in this program did so from a space of internal motivation or drive. Four of the seven participants were self-motivated to seek academic help (Adam, Ricardo, Dinosaur, and Pumpkin Spice), one participant joined to make friends (Rocky). The remaining two were encouraged by friends but also had a self-motivating drive to "be more social" (Aviator) or "be more with my peers" (Sapphire). For these students, academic support and social connection were their driving motivators. Accordingly, it can be interpreted that TRIO Upward Bound is successful in part because of the students who self-select to be a part of

the program. Characteristic of resilient students, the students of this study had an internal locus of control (Mampane,2020) and, as such, intentionally sought academic help or peer connection. If there were no TRIO Upward Bound programs in their school, they would probably have found help from another source. The interpretation of the data suggests that social support is equally important as academic support in pre-collegiate or out-of-school time programming.

The second question of this study examined how TRIO Upward Bound shaped or developed the resiliency of the program's participants. The findings revealed that TRIO Upward Bound has a significant and meaningful impact on developing resiliency in its students by providing them with academic, environmental, and social-emotional support. The study participants believed they grew in confidence and self-esteem due to the encouragement and supports they received from TRIO Upward Bound. They credited the program with providing them with a "safe space" to grow, develop, and mature as young adults. They also credited the program with providing them with cultural and environmental exposure and building their college-going capital. This was all in addition to providing them with academic support in the form of homework help and tutoring that strengthened their knowledge base, persistence, and drive to succeed because they had the resources to do so, all through TRIO Upward Bound.

### **Implications of Findings**

The primary implication of this study is that TRIO Upward Bound impacts its students well beyond improving academic grades and test scores. It develops the resiliency skills of its students as well. Consequently, TRIO Upward Bound remains a crucial component in the landscape of afterschool and pre-collegiate programming.

Accordingly, this program warrants further study on its impact on students' psychological and academic development, particularly an examination of the effective practices of the program. The fact that TRIO Upward Bound has a significant impact outside of academic development also implies that the program merits expansion in both its services and the number of students it serves.

The findings of this study also have implications for education leaders, including school principals, administrators, teachers, counselors, and pre-collegiate support programs that seek to improve the quality of the educational experience for all students. As mentioned earlier, one implication is incorporating student voices into our decision-making. To that end, there should be more qualitative studies conducted in education. It is equally important to focus on school or program climate and culture as it is academic improvement. The participants of this study revealed the importance of the environment, community, safe spaces, connections, and friendship. School leaders must consider these factors when organizing school programs.

The findings of this study are particularly significant as they pertain to the academic success of first-generation, low-income, minority students who are underrepresented in the higher education landscape and various career fields. This study allows TRIO and the pre-collegiate community to examine which services participants see as vital in their development. The TRIO Upward participants of this study highlighted the social-emotional support they received as equally important, if not more important, than the academic help. Accordingly, educational support programs should work to identify ways to build support networks for students. Mentorship was significant for the participants of this study. Thus, policymakers and TRIO staff should explore establishing

formal mentorship programs for their participants as a required part of the TRIO Upward Bound programming structure and model.

Educational support programs should work to ensure that students feel safe in their educational environments. “Safe space” was a strong and recurring theme in the testimonies of this study’s TRIO Upward Bound alumni. A safe space is essential for the obvious reason that no one can learn if they are experiencing a heightened sense of fear or anxiety for their well-being.

### **Relationship to Prior Research**

This study first determined the motivating factors influencing students’ choices to participate in TRIO Upward Bound. The majority of this study’s TRIO Upward Bound alumni were self-motivated to join the program. This finding is in alignment with resiliency theory, which posits that resilient individuals have protective factors that mitigate against risk (Benard, 1991; Brooks, 2016; Chee, 2017; Neal, 2017; Rodriguez-Fernandez et al., 2018; Yan & Gai, 2022; Yang & Wang, 2022; Yeung & Li, 2019). It also aligns with current literature, which has found that resilient students are self-driven with an internal locus of control (Mampane, 2020). The students in Mampane’s (2020) study believed that outcomes are internally driven by their behavior. The researcher found that participants of this study had this internal drive. Five of the seven students interviewed expressed that they were self-driven in their motivation to join TRIO Upward Bound. Furthermore, none of the students expressed influence from a parent, teacher, school administrator, or any other adult.

Similar to Early College High School students, the TRIO Upward Bound students had the internal asset of seeking help when needed that promoted their academic success



(Calhoun et al., 2018). The findings of this study also align with Neal's 2017 study, which found that the participation of resilient foster youths in extra-curricular activities highlighted their ability to seek resources that had a constructive impact on their overall well-being. Data analysis revealed this also to be true of the TRIO Upward Bound students who participated in this study. All the participants independently sought academic help for their direct benefit, whether for homework help or socialization. Furthermore, in his study of foster youths, Neal (2017) noted that the adults in the children's lives believed intrinsic characteristics were the reason behind students' academic success. These intrinsic traits included goal orientation, fortitude, and tenacity (Neal, 2017). Neal's (2017) study found that intrinsic characteristics are a prominent driver of student success. This study echoes that finding.

The answer to question one of this study, "What are the motivating factors that influence students' choices to join TRIO Upward Bound?" is an independent drive guided by academic self-motivation. TRIO Upward Bound students are self-motivated individuals; however, it has been said in various ways that if nature loads the gun, it is nurture that pulls the trigger. In the case of TRIO Upward Bound students, resiliency is their nature, and TRIO Upward Bound provides the nurture or environment to develop it. We find support for this conclusion in the answers to question two of this study, discussed next.

The second question of this study explored how TRIO Upward Bound developed participant's resiliency. The review and analysis of the data from 15 interview sessions revealed three overarching themes (or support areas); TRIO Upward Bound provided academic, environmental, and social-emotional support. The study participants revealed

that TRIO Upward Bound developed their resiliency and increased their college-going capital by providing support and guidance in these three dominant areas of support. Embedded in the theme of academic support were homework help, college prep guidance, exposure, and resources. Environment, community, and safe spaces were embedded in the theme of environmental support. Embedded in the theme of social-emotional support were guidance, mentorship, friendship, connection, family, self-esteem, and confidence. The researcher uncovered themes through the study participants' voices, who also shared artifacts representative of their time in the program and its impact on them.

Resilience theory and current literature support the above findings. The findings expand on scholarly information associated with pre-collegiate programming. In education, resilience is not seen as a fixed attribute but an alterable process or mechanism that can be developed or fostered (Waxman et al., 2004). The participants of this study revealed that TRIO Upward Bound fostered their development of resilience in the three central areas noted above. Furthermore, as summarized by Richardson (2002), the third wave of resiliency research focused on how resilience is the motivational force that allows individuals to grow despite disruption and adversity. The findings of this study support the idea that TRIO Upward Bound provides a motivational force for its student participants to grow, mature, and develop.

For all study participants, TRIO Upward Bound provided significant academic support. All participants discussed how TRIO Upward Bound supported their academic development by providing homework help (see Table 3). With the assistance of the TRIO Upward Bound program, all the participants were able to identify a higher education

institution (college) that fit their needs. The finding that TRIO Upward Bound provides meaningful academic support is not surprising. This support is one of the primary components of the program's design. The confirmation of strong academic support is significant in resiliency research. However, because foundational research shows that educational aspirations are even more powerful predictors of high school graduation than actual academic achievement (Benard, 1991).

Kim and Kim (2017) found that persistence, despite adversity or discouragement, is a factor that contributes to academic resilience. Additionally, resilience is a critical factor in helping second language learners overcome difficulties in the long-term learning process (Kim & Kim, 2017). Aviator was the second language learner in this study who demonstrated resilience in learning the English language through watching cartoons and persistence in getting help through seeking tutoring from Upward Bound teachers. We saw similar persistence in Adam and Sapphire, who shared their stories of getting tutoring help to help them pass their Regents exams.

Another finding of this study revealed that TRIO Upward Bound provided significant environmental support to its participants. TRIO Upward Bound provided a protective environmental structure that supported students' growth and academic success. The familial environment provided by the program was noteworthy in supporting the students' development. This finding aligns with the literature. In her foundational work, Emmy Werner noted that caregiving environments inside and outside of the family helped young people thrive in the face of adversity (Richardson, 2002). As noted by Werner and Smith (1992), resilience is promoted through positive interaction with one's environment. More recently, Diers' (2020) work revealed that a trustful teacher-student

relationship facilitates the development of resilience. Moreover, Mampane (2020) showed a significant positive relationship when teachers created a safe space for learners to develop their academic resilience. Mampane's (2020) study revealed that student participants viewed relationships with teachers as a necessary platform to experience safety. The findings of this study are in direct alignment with Mampane (2020). The TRIO Upward Bound participants of this study found the environmental supports of TRIO Upward Bound, particularly the creation of safe spaces, critical to their academic development and success.

Pardon et al.'s (2014) research showed that resilient students had above-average perceptions of their classroom learning environment, revealing that students' perceptions of their environment are pivotal in their development and academic success. Furthermore, Yavuz and Kutlu's (2016) study found that perceived social support significantly predicted students' levels of academic resilience. The TRIO Upward Bound study participants found their environment to be supportive, fostering a comfortable place of growth both academically and in their social-emotional development.

In alignment with resilience theory, which posits that resilient individuals have protective factors that protect against risk, Benard (1991) noted that resilient students are environmentally responsive, flexible, caring individuals with strong communication skills and pro-social behavior. From this study, we learned how TRIO Upward Bound taught Adam, Ricardo, and Aviator how to communicate better with others; Aviator and Ricardo especially learned pro-social behaviors. All students, through exposure, particularly through field trip participation, learned how to be environmentally responsive. Additionally, Benard (1991) noted that resilient children have a strong sense of their own

identity and an ability to act independently and exert some control over their environment. This was evident in Aviator's story, who changed his career plans to suit his goals better.

Neal's (2017) study of foster students, a sub-population similar in background character traits to many TRIO Upward Bound students, found that extra-curricular programs provided protective structures to support growth and academic success, and this structure helped to boost students' self-esteem. This study supports that finding. Moreover, like the Early College High School, the TRIO Upward Bound students of this study highlighted that the environment created by TRIO Upward Bound fostered or strengthened their internal assets or resilience.

Another prominent theme that emerged from this study involved all participants crediting the program for providing emotional support. Outstanding in the students' accounts were the connections they developed in TRIO UB, the friendships they developed, and the familial environment they experienced. The research shows that having caring and supportive relationships are among the most critical variables throughout childhood and adolescence in developing resiliency (Benard, 1991). Students reminisced on those supportive experiences to maintain their academic fortitude when they felt tempted to abandon their dreams. Sapphire shared when she had difficulty with math, she received not only the academic help but most importantly, the encouragement received from the staff of TRIO Upward Bound. Benard (1991) stated,

Individuals who have succeeded in spite of adverse environmental conditions in their families, schools, and/or communities have often done so because of the presence of environmental support in the form of one family member, one

teacher, one school, one community person that encouraged their success and welcomed their participation (p. 22).

The students of TRIO Upward Bound found this support in multiple Upward Bound staff, particularly their mentors.

Neal (2017) found that developing relationships with caring adult supporters was critical for foster youths to support their efforts to attend college. Fenzel and Richardson (2019) found that the culture of respect and care provided by a Nativity Miguel model (a program similar in design and aim of TRIO Upward Bound) helped to develop students' resilience. The Nativity Miguel students believed the culture and environment of the program enhanced their academic self-competence and confidence. In this study, we found the case to be the same for TRIO Upward participants, particularly in the cases of Dinosaur and Aviator, who had strong relationships or connections with the teachers and administrators in the program that supported their development and drive to go to college. While both Dinosaur and Aviator changed their goal when they got to college, TRIO Upward Bound helped them get there and define their goals. All other participants touted the help of TRIO Upward Bound in completing college applications and providing them with resources. As with the students in Neal's (2017) study, the caring adults provided guidance, emotional support, and stability to the participants, supporting their trajectory to college. Additionally, in alignment with Neal's (2017) study, this study confirms the essential connection between academic resilience and care.

This study also found that TRIO Upward Bound provided significant social support to its participants. TRIO Upward Bound complemented the students' educational journeys by providing them with social capital, which assisted them in building

confidence and perseverance. That development of social competence enabled Sapphire to assume leadership positions on her college campus. In reviewing protective factors research, Benard (1991) notes resilient children are socially competent problem-solvers (Aviator and Sapphire), autonomous (Aviator, Sapphire, and Dinosaur), and possess a sense of purpose (Dinosaur, Aviator, and Adam).

This finding also aligns with Diers (2020), who revealed that the social support of teachers, administrators, and other educators can be significant in promoting resilience in students at-risk. Similarly, Pardon et al. (2014) found that resilient students have higher perceptions of teacher support. The TRIO Upward Bound study participants perceived high social support from the program's tutors, teachers, and administrators to have been instrumental in their educational development. The work of Yavuz and Kutlu (2016) revealed that perceived social support significantly predicted the level of academic resilience of economically disadvantaged high school students. As such, the social dimension of TRIO Upward Bound was also critical in developing its participants' resiliency.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Several characteristics regarding the participant sample limit the findings of this study. The very nature of a qualitative study limits its generalizability to other populations because it involves an in-depth understanding of a small number of individuals. All the participants of this study were students who attended a TRIO Upward Bound program in the same high school and lived within commuting distance of that high school, thereby reflecting a very limited geographical area. Another limitation was the limited diversity in terms of race and ethnicity among the participants. Though not

explored in-depth, all participants observed were of minority status, being of Black or Asian descent.

Additionally, the researcher has a personal history with TRIO Upward Bound program as a former administrator of the TRIO Upward Bound program. Furthermore, the researcher was also a first-generation minority student from a lower socioeconomic background. Accordingly, although the researcher engaged in reflexivity and bracketed her experience to ensure her preconceived beliefs did not impact data collection, it is possible that ingrained biases and preconceptions regarding this study could have affected the analysis.

In principle, the findings from this type of qualitative study cannot be generalized to the students outside of the group interviewed. However, the students' perspectives from this study can inform future program designs that may better align with students' needs. Accordingly, the information gained from analyzing the data from individual student accounts of their experiences has implications for pre-collegiate programs and educational support programs in general.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The recommendations for future research include the need to address and understand the experiences of all students of color in education in the United States of America. All research participants of this study were of Black or Asian descent by the researcher's observation. Accordingly, this study was limited in providing the voices of other ethnic groups. Impactful research supports the perspective of all students. As such, future research should include more comprehensive studies involving participants from



different program sites nationwide and of greater diversity in student demographics such as ethnicity, college enrollment status, and income.

This study gave insight into the perceptions of TRIO Upward Bound alumni who enrolled in college immediately after completing high school. It would be beneficial to conduct a study of those students who did not enroll in college after completing high school. Furthermore, it would be constructive to take note of students who enrolled in TRIO Upward Bound during high school but did not remain in the program. It would be valuable to note why they left the program, what services worked for them, and what did not.

Lastly, it would be meaningful to study at-risk youth populations that chose not to participate in a TRIO Upward Bound or similar pre-collegiate program to determine the factors in their decision-making. Can these students be characterized as non-resilient or possessing low levels of resiliency? Or were these students involved in another out-of-school program that met their needs? It may also be informative to study the entire student body of a school to examine who participates in after-school programming; why or why not? What resources do resilient students seek outside of after-school programming? What resources do non-resilient students seek, if at all? It may also prove beneficial to do a longitudinal study examining students' resiliency levels at their entry into the program and each year until they graduate. Furthermore, how can students who do not presently show resilient traits be supported in developing resiliency? What are the perspectives of the staff of TRIO Upward Bound on building students' resiliency and creating an environment of support? When it comes to educational resiliency, there is still much more to explore.

The findings of this study and the remaining lingering questions show that it is equally important to incorporate qualitative data in the design and development of our educational programs. Incorporating student voices should be a critical data set from which we draw our decision-making on how to work with students, particularly at-risk students. Educators should listen to the students they are serving. If we listen closely, we might be surprised to find they have the answers to what they need.

### **Recommendations for Future Practice**

The results of this study inform our understanding of the impact of TRIO Upward Bound on its participants. The findings of this study suggest that TRIO Upward Bound positively impacts first-generation, low-income students' educational path by providing them with academic and social-emotional support, which increases their academic resiliency and their social-emotional capacity, in addition to strengthening their college-going capital. As such, there are implications for practice and policy to focus on students' academic learning outcomes and their social-emotional experiences. Rather than focusing on attendance numbers, grades, and test outcomes (quantitative data), it is equally important to incorporate qualitative data that incorporates the students' voices.

The continued overreliance on academic outcomes, including grades and test scores, reflects a systematic failure in our educational model. In the United States of America, students traditionally spend six or more hours in public school. In this researcher's opinion, not having systems that specifically address and support social-emotional development, is an injustice to our students.

Furthermore, additional funding and expansion of pre-collegiate programming are recommended for all students. Additionally, these programs should incorporate

programming that caters to students' social-emotional development. This may include a formal mentorship program or counseling groups. Each pre-collegiate program should examine what works best for its students and meets students' needs.

## **Conclusion**

This study explored the factors that contributed to the development of resilience in TRIO Upward Bound participants using a phenomenological qualitative design. Consequently, this study extends the literature on resilience and pre-collegiate programming by exploring the experiences of TRIO Upward Bound participants through their voices. Using resiliency theory, the findings of this study confirmed that college preparatory programs provide students with academic and social-emotional support. Moreover, the findings from this study expand the literature by outlining the most impactful services to participants, including field trips, mentoring, and creating a safe space.

Resilience studies allow educators to focus on the factors that promote academic success rather than academic failure (Waxman et al., 2004; Yang & Wang, 2022). Concurrent with Fenzel and Richardson's (2019) research, TRIO Upward Bound programs create opportunities to build resilience and reduce vulnerability among at-risk populations. In alignment with Calhoun et al.'s (2018) research, this study found TRIO Upward Bound provided students with supports, along with their individual assets, to help them to grow and develop as resilient young adults. In other words, they become more resilient.

The work of Chee (2017), Pardon et al. (2014), and Yavuz and Kutlu (2016) showed that risk and resilience is all about perception. The TRIO Upward Bound students

interviewed for this study believed that TRIO Upward Bound supported their mental, emotional, social, and academic growth by providing a supportive environment, exposure, and resources. The stories of the seven alumni in this study revealed that TRIO Upward Bound developed their academic skills and increased their levels of maturity, confidence, and independence, allowing them to successfully interact in educational environments with peers, staff, and the general public. In the minds of these students, every high school should have a TRIO Upward Bound program, as stated by Sapphire, one of the study participants. The findings of this study support that notion. In summary, this study provides additional evidence that educational support programs have the potential to create opportunities to build resilience and reduce vulnerability among at-risk populations by creating safe spaces and providing social-emotional support structures in addition to the academic supports they provide.

## APPENDIX A IRB APPROVAL



Federal Wide Assurance: FWA00009066

Nov 30, 2023 2:02:47 PM EST

PI: Kemoy Briscoe-Morris  
CO-PI: Barbara Cozza  
The School of Education

Re: Expedited Review - Initial - **IRB-FY2024-120** *THE RESILIENCE OF TRIO UPWARD BOUND STUDENTS*

Dear Kemoy Briscoe-Morris:

The St John's University Institutional Review Board has rendered the decision below for *THE RESILIENCE OF TRIO UPWARD BOUND STUDENTS*. The approval is effective from November 30, 2023 through November 28, 2024.

Decision: Approved

PLEASE NOTE: If you have collected any data prior to this approval date, the data must be discarded.

Selected Category: 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. [45 CFR 46.101\(b\)\(2\)](#) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Sincerely,

Raymond DiGiuseppe, PhD, ABPP  
Chair, Institutional Review Board  
Professor of Psychology

This email may contain proprietary, confidential and/or privileged material for the sole use of the intended recipient(s). Any review, use, distribution or disclosure by others is strictly prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient (or authorized to receive for the recipient), please contact the sender by reply email and delete all copies of this message.

## APPENDIX B E-MAIL INVITATION

Dear TRIO Upward Bound Alum,

You are invited to take part in a research study to learn more about your TRIO Upward Bound experience at St. John's University. This study will be conducted by Kemoy Briscoe-Morris, under the supervision of Dr. Barbara Cozza, as part of her doctoral research in the Department of Administrative and Instructional Leadership at St. John's University, New York. Your decision to participate will not affect your relationship with the program or its members.

As a TRIO Upward Bound graduate, you can provide valuable feedback on the program that can help to improve the program for future participants. As such, you are invited to share your thoughts and perspectives on how Upward Bound impacted your development of resiliency (or drive to succeed despite obstacles faced in life) by participating in two interviews and sharing artifacts (i.e. photograph, certificate, report card) representative of your experience in TRIO Upward Bound.

If you are interested in participating, please complete this Google form <https://forms.gle/4DwCehxDqvr1SNvG9> and additional information will be sent to you.

Thank you for your support of this research. Looking forward to the possibility of speaking to you soon!

Best regards,  
Kemoy Briscoe-Morris  
Doctoral Candidate  
The School of Education  
Department of Administrative and Instructional Leadership  
St. John's University

## APPENDIX C GOOGLE INTEREST SURVEY

Study: "The Resilience of TRIO Upward Bound Students"

Thank you for expressing interest in this dissertation study. Kemoy Briscoe-Morris is conducting this study to gather the perspectives of TRIO Upward Bound alumni on the impact the program had on their development of resilience. Participants will be asked to discuss their experiences by participating in two interviews and submitting photographs and other artifacts that is representative of their time in TRIO Upward Bound. All research will be conducted online via Webex and email. Complete the form (8 questions) below if you would like to participate and Kemoy Briscoe-Morris will contact you to follow-up. *This study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty.*

Email

---

What would you like your pseudonym to be? (pick the name you would like to be referred to during the interview and for research reports to maintain your confidentiality (i.e. Butterfly Queen, Rock Star, Gingerbread Man)

---

What year did you graduate from Upward Bound?

- 2019
- 2020
- 2021
- 2022
- Other

What academic years did you participate in TRIO Upward Bound (select all that apply)

- 2017-2018
- 2018-2019
- 2019-2020
- 2020-2021
- 2021-2022
- Other

Did you participate in any Trio Upward Bound Summer Programs?

- Yes
- No

If you answered yes to the previous question, what years did you participate in the summer program?

- 2019
- 2020
- 2021
- 2022
- Other

Pick the option that applies

- I enrolled in college right after high school
- I began working after completing high school
- I began working and enrolled in college after completing high school
- I enrolled in the military after completing high school
- Other

What is your phone number (optional. Kemoy Briscoe-Morris will contact you via phone to schedule interviews if you prefer this option)

---



## APPENDIX D FLYER 1

# CALLING UPWARD BOUND ALUMNI

## Research Participants Needed



### Eligible Participants:

- graduates of a TRIO Upward Bound
- Participated in UB for 2 or more years

## Let your VOICE be HEARD!

**Kemoy Briscoe-Morris is conducting a research study to gather the perspectives of TRIO Upward Bound alumni on the impact the program had on their development of resilience (or drive to succeed). Participants will be asked to discuss their experiences by participating in interviews and submitting artifacts (i.e. photograph). All research will be conducted online.**

Use this link

<https://forms.gle/4DwCehxDqvr1SNvG9>

or scan the code below to learn more and register to participate:



For more information contact Mrs. Briscoe at [briscoek@stjohns.edu](mailto:briscoek@stjohns.edu)

## APPENDIX E FLYER 2

**YOU ARE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE**

**IN A TRIO UPWARD BOUND STUDY**

**YOUR OPINION MATTERS  
LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD  
YOU CAN HELP IMPROVE TRIO UPWARD BOUND**

Kemoy Briscoe-Morris is conducting a research study to gather the perspectives of TRIO Upward Bound alumni on the impact the program had on their development of resilience (or drive to succeed). Participants will be asked to discuss their experiences by participating in two interviews and submitting artifacts (i.e. photographs). All research will be conducted online. Limited to 10 participants.

Use the link below or scan the code to learn more information and register to participate:



<https://forms.gle/4DwCehxDqvr1SNvG9>

For more information contact Mrs. Briscoe at [briscoek@stjohns.edu](mailto:briscoek@stjohns.edu)

## APPENDIX F FOLLOW-UP EMAIL

Hi [Insert Pseudonym],

Thank you for expressing interest in participating in my dissertation study of TRIO Upward Bound! The study is aimed at understanding how the Upward Bound program impacts students' resiliency (or motivation/drive) to succeed.

Attached you will find a consent form to participate. Please read it thoroughly. If you agree to the terms, please sign and return to me by email. You may scan and return a PDF copy or take a picture and send it as an attachment. Once the Consent Form is received, you will be sent a link to schedule an online interview via Webex.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without consequence to you.

Thank you for your support of this research study. Looking forward to the speaking to you soon!

Best regards,  
Kemoy Briscoe-Morris  
Doctoral Candidate  
The School of Education  
Department of Administrative and Instructional Leadership  
St. John's University

## APPENDIX G EMAIL TO CONFIRM PARTICIPATION

Dear [Insert Pseudonym],

Thank you for returning your consent forms and agreeing to be involved in my dissertation study. I am looking forward to meeting you soon. We will be meeting via Webex and you can use this link to join: [Insert personal meeting room link]. Please complete this Doodle Poll to select best date and time to meet [Insert link].

Alternatively, if you provided a phone number when you completed the interest form, Kemoy Briscoe-Morris will follow-up with a phone call to schedule the interview.

In this study you will be participating in two interview sessions. In the first interview, I will be asking you questions about your experience in the TRIO Upward Bound program. In the second interview, we will review the transcript of the first interview and correct any errors. Also, I would like you to submit a photograph(s) that represents a meaningful time in Upward Bound for you. This photograph can be personal or from the public domain (Facebook, Instagram, Google). Your chosen photograph(s) will be discussed during our second meeting/interview. Additionally, please bring to the interview any item you feel is representative of your time in TRIO Upward Bound and the impact the program has had on you (i.e. award or certificate received, trophy, additional photographs, poem or essay written during the program, clothing, etc.). This process will be explained in detail at the end of the first interview. However, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. You can email [briscoek@stjohns.edu](mailto:briscoek@stjohns.edu) or call [insert phone number]. I look forward to meeting with you soon!

Best Regards,

Kemoy Briscoe-Morris

## APPENDIX H INFORMED CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM



You have been invited to take part in a research study to learn more about the resiliency of students who participate in the TRIO Upward Bound program titled: “The Resilience of TRIO Upward Bound Students.” This study will be conducted by Kemoy Briscoe-Morris in the department of Administrative and Instructional Leadership, School of Education, St. John’s University. This research is being conducted as a part of Kemoy Briscoe-Morris’ doctoral dissertation. Her faculty sponsor is Dr. Barbara Cozza, Administrative and Instructional Leadership, School of Education, St. John’s University. If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to (1) participate in two interview sessions, (2) provide a photograph representative of your time in TRIO Upward Bound and (3) present and discuss an artifact also representative of your time in the program or the impact it had on you. Your interview will be conducted via the online video-conferencing platform WebEx and will be audio and video-taped. You may review these tapes and request that all or any portion of the tapes be destroyed at any time.

Participation in this study will involve one to two hours of your time to complete the interviews. There are no known risks associated with your participation in this research beyond those of everyday life. Although you will receive no direct benefits, this research may help the investigator understand the effectiveness of Upward Bound programs for the benefit of future program design and student participation.

Confidentiality of your research records will be strictly maintained. All records will be saved on a password protected computer and in a password protected file folder. Furthermore, your name will not appear in any publication or presentation. Your responses will be kept confidential with the following exception: the researcher is

required by law to report to the appropriate authorities, suspicion of harm to yourself, to children, or to others.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. For interviews and questionnaires, you have the right to skip or not answer any questions you prefer not to answer. Nonparticipation or withdrawal from the study will not affect your grades, academic standing, and will result in no loss of services to which you are otherwise entitled.

If there is anything about the study or your participation that is unclear or that you do not understand, if you have questions or wish to report a research-related problem, you may contact Kemoy Briscoe-Morris at [briscoek@stjohns.edu](mailto:briscoek@stjohns.edu) or her faculty sponsor, Dr. Barbara Cozza at [cozzab@stjohns.edu](mailto:cozzab@stjohns.edu). For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University's Institutional Review Board, St. John's University, Dr. Raymond DiGiuseppe, Chair [digiuser@stjohns.edu](mailto:digiuser@stjohns.edu) 718-990-1955 or Marie Nitopi, IRB Coordinator, [nitopim@stjohns.edu](mailto:nitopim@stjohns.edu) 718-990-1440.

I have read and understand the "Informed Consent and Release Form" for the "Resilience of TRIO Upward Bound Students" study, and I agree to participated in this study.

Agreement to Participate

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Print Name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

*Please keep a copy of this consent document for your records.*

## APPENDIX I ARTIFACT CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM



**ST. JOHN'S**  
UNIVERSITY

This form refers to artifacts and photographs that you have or will supply to Kemoy Briscoe-Morris as a part of her dissertation study: “The Resilience of TRIO Upward Bound Students,” in which you have agreed to participate. All artifacts and photographs will be securely stored by the researcher. All artifacts and photographs will be kept confidential unless express permission to publish is granted. The researcher would like to use some artifacts (in electronic or print form), in reports, presentations, and publications arising from the project. No submission that can be directly tied to you will be published. With your consent, the researcher, for example, may publish a quote from a journal or essay entry, that is generic in nature and cannot be tied back to you the participant. Please provide consent by signing below to indicate whether you give your permission to use your photographs or artifacts in this project. The researcher will not use any photographs or artifacts without your expressed permission. Participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time without any risk to yourself. Please read and select one option below:

I \_\_\_\_\_ give my consent for the photographs and artifacts I submit to be reproduced for educational and/or noncommercial purposes, in reports, presentations, publications, websites and exhibitions connected to Kemoy Briscoe-Morris’ dissertation study. I understand that real names or images will NOT be published.

I \_\_\_\_\_ DO NOT give my consent for the photographs and artifacts I submit to be reproduced for any purpose in connection to Kemoy Briscoe-Morris’ dissertation study. My photograph and artifact submission is for discussion purposes only, to be used during the interview phase of the dissertation study.

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**Print Name**

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**Date**

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**Signature**

## APPENDIX J INTERVIEW 1 PROTOCOL

### **Introduction/ Speaking Prompts**

Hi [Insert Participants Pseudonym], it is great to see you. Thank you for agreeing to participate in my dissertation study and today's interview. As outlined in the email you received, this study seeks to gather students' perceptions of the impact the TRIO Upward Bound program had on their development of resilience. The interview will be approximately 30-40 minutes during which I will be asking you about your experience in and your specific perceptions of the Upward Bound program.

### **Statement of Consent**

*You completed a consent form, via email, indicating that I have your permission to record our conversation through Webex. Is this still acceptable \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No*

*(If the participant declines) Thank you for your candor. I will only take notes of our conversation.*

*(Ask the participant if they have any questions. Discuss all questions prior to beginning the interview) Do you have any questions before we begin?*

### **Interview Questions**

**Research Question 1:** What are the motivating factors that influence students' choice to participate in the program?

1. First, I am interested in learning how you became involved in UB. How did you find out about the program and why did you join?
  - a. What about the program appealed to you?
  - b. Where there any individuals that influenced your decision to join (parents, peers, school counselor, relative)?



- c. Are there any other factors that influenced your decision to join the program?
    - d. Did you have any concerns before joining?
- 2. For how long did you participate in UB? What years?
- 3. At what level do you participate in Upward Bound, weekly, monthly, summer only?
- 4. You were a part of UB for X years, what motivated you to remain in the program?
  - a. What was your experience like?
  - b. What did you like about UB?

**Research Question 2:** How did TRIO Upward Bound shape or develop participants' resiliency?

Comment: I am interested in your experience of the TRIO Upward Bound program and how it shaped your development of resiliency (or motivation to succeed despite challenges you faced).

- 5. In what ways did your participation in UB influence or impacted your drive to succeed?
  - a. Did participation in UB change in any way your academic motivation?
  - b. Would you say UB helped improved your confidence, self-esteem or resilience?
- 6. In what ways did your participation in UB influence your personal, academic and/or career goals?

- a. How did participation in UB impacted your motivation or drive to persist in your academic career?
  - b. How did participation in UB influence your decision to go to college and/or planned career choice?
  - c. If someone asked you whether or not UB impacted your motivation to matriculate, persist in and graduate from college, what would you say?
7. Did participation in UB changed the kind of student/person you were or aspired to be?
  8. Think back on the time of the corona virus epidemic? How did being a part of UB helped you during that time?

**Closing Questions:**

9. Has there been any way in which UB has affected or impacted you that we haven't discussed? If yes, how? Would you elaborate on that?
  - a. What things have you experienced in UB that has carried over into your life?
10. Do you have any final thoughts or feeling you wish to share with me?

## APPENDIX K ARTIFACT ELICITATION INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I expect the interview to take 30 to 45 minutes. I asked you to submit a photograph and artifact that captures your experience in TRIO Upward Bound.

As a reminder, I will be audio recording the session. The recording will be used by me alone to analyze the contents of our discussion. I will do my best to maintain confidentiality of all participants and to maintain security of the recording after today. Do you have any questions before we get started?

Before we discuss your photo(s) and artifact, I emailed the transcript of our first interview session to you. Did you get the opportunity to review it? Is there anything that needs to be corrected or you would like to provide additional comments on?

1. First, tell me about the photograph you selected for today, explain what is happening in the photo? Why did you choose this photo?
2. What does this photograph mean to you? How does it reflect your time in UB or represents the impact UB had on you?
3. What are some of the critical features that characterize your experiences as a UB student that is represented in this photo?

Questions 4- 6 will be a repeat of questions 1-3 for the second artifact discussion, modified as needed based on the artifact selected/submitted by the participant.

Wrap up questions:

7. Do you have any final thoughts you would like to share about UB and the impact or influence it had on you as a student or person?

8. In your final opinion, did TRIO Upward Bound build your resiliency and if so, how?

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