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ABC: A Better Chance or A Better Culture?



First ABC Class, at Dartmouth College, 1964
Photo courtesy of A Better Chance, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

Each year millions of individuals leave their native lands and travel to America in hope of securing a bright future and becoming upwardly mobile. Although there is no secret formula for upward mobility, many have looked to education as being one of the salient factors that enable individuals to move up. Over the years, scholars have become enamored with why some individuals move up and why others remain stagnant. They have conceived an array of theories to explain this phenomenon. Some have contended that dysfunctional cultural values and morals keep individuals poor, while others have cited systemic inequalities and a lack of inherited wealth as the major factors perpetuating poverty (Shapiro 2004). Both the government and a number of private institutions have created programs and initiatives with an alleged primary mission of reducing poverty.

A Better Chance was one of the first of these compensatory education programs. ABC was created in 1963 and its main intention was to increase the number of students of color in elite preparatory schools. The program hoped to provide capable minorities with a chance to rise to positions of leadership by equipping them with them with superior educations and resources. For some 34 years, ABC has provided an “elite passport” to opportunity for more than 10,000 minority youths, mostly black and poor, from back-roads, barrios, reservations, and public housing projects (Domhoff 2003). ABC has been their ticket from poverty and powerlessness to access and achievement. Alumni of the program include doctors, lawyers, investment bankers, and politicians. Some of them include Jesse Spikes, a Rhodes Scholar from rural Georgia now a lawyer and Senior Partner at McKenna Long & Aldridge; Tracy Chapman, a Grammy Award-winning folk singer from the slums of Cleveland. Others consist of Francisco Borges, the

Connecticut State Treasurer who grew up in New Haven's impoverished Hill section; and Bill Lewis a graduate of Andover and Harvard and now an investment banker and Managing Director at Morgan Stanley, his yearly salary is estimated to be between \$2-3 million a year (Domhoff 2003).

It is evident that many ABC graduates have experienced tremendous gains. Several of them have gone on to become financial giants, political leaders, and social activist. Nevertheless this paper will examine a different question: how have former ABC students described the program's impact on their lives, and more importantly to what extent do they believe the ABC program culture has helped them to become successful? This paper will argue that the majority of students will report that their participation in the ABC program was both positive and worthwhile, however some will argue that the program had little effect on their lives. Furthermore, most students will also argue that the resources and education that they received while being ABC students were instrumental in their upward mobility.

Today it is not uncommon to hear about programs that transport poor minority students from urban ghettos to lavish prep schools that are great distances away from their native homes. However, in the early 1960's when ABC was first created, racial segregation heavily dictated where most students went to school. The notion of transporting poor urban black youth to an elite institution such as Choate Rosemary Hall was first seen as ludicrous. However, many headmasters realized that the times were changing and they would eventually have to become inclusive, thus they took the opportunity to use ABC to begin desegregating their schools. Because students were taken from such a radically different circumstance and put into a lavish and plush lifestyle there are going to be some cultural differences that are going to be instrumental in understanding the program's impact on the ABC students.

Unfortunately, very little research has been done on compensatory education programs such as ABC. Over the years, this program has helped to send over 10,000 students of color to elite high schools and colleges. It is interesting that we have not identified the elements contributing to the success of these programs and instinctively modeled our public schools after them. For this study, narratives of ABC participants were analyzed to understand how former ABC students describe the program and its role in helping them become upwardly mobile.

A more comprehensive study of programs such as ABC is needed; all that matters to most supporters of the program is that the students of the ABC program are extremely successful at sending large numbers of minorities to highly selective high schools and colleges. What is not clear is what these students have to go through to become successful.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE & THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

What have popular theorists said about education as being a mechanism for upwardly mobility? Why are some individuals poor in the first place? Before we can begin deciphering ABC student experiences and the role ABC's program culture has played in the mobility of past students, we must answer these two questions to become acquainted with what past research has concluded.

One of the most important theorists who began analyzing issues of poverty in the 1950's is Oscar Lewis. Lewis' seminal work, *Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty* (1959) argues that the burdens of poverty faced by the poor have led to the formation of an autonomous subculture (Lewis 1959). In his work, Lewis (1959) cited over seventy characteristics that indicated the presence of the culture of poverty. Some of these characteristics include the belief that poor parents are more permissive in raising their children, less apt to defer

gratification, and less interested in formal education. Lewis argues that the above characteristics enable the poor to adapt to poverty. Lewis' ideas have not gone uncontested; nonetheless, they continue to provide the foundation for many public policies. For example, while the Moynihan report (1965) on "the Negro family" suggested that systemic inequalities were the cause of poverty among blacks, the solution to poverty put forth in the report ultimately concentrated on the characteristics of the black family, suggesting that it needed ideological revamping rather than a more equitable social system. Half a century ago, Lewis contended that children were socialized into behaviors and attitudes that prevented them from escaping the underclass. Today, his ideas still find widespread support, as evidenced in the works of Ruby Payne.

Ruby Payne, contemporary educational theorist and author of *Framework for Understanding Poverty* has turned Lewis' ideas into touring workshops and a series of profitable books. Payne, like Lewis, argues that poverty itself is a cultural system with specific values, rules, and ideologies that are passed down from one generation to the next. Payne suggests that children who grow up in poverty fail to rise because all they know are lower class values, and that they do not know the "hidden rules necessary to become middle class." Ruby Payne is an extremely popular speaker; she meets with about 40,000 educators a year, and has sold more than 1 million copies of her self-published book *Framework for Understanding Poverty* (Bohn 2006). She estimates that she and others in her company, Aha! Process Inc., have worked with staff from 70 to 80 percent of the nation's school districts over the past decade. She lectures these educators on the culture of the poor and details how one can enlighten this population about the "hidden rules of the middle class" (Bohn 2006). As stated earlier, although Payne and Lewis' ideology remains popular, many scholars have and continue to contest their ideology.

The main critics of the culture of poverty theory have generally been structural functionalists. Structural functionalist theory can be defined as a study of all the interdependent parts of society and how they work together to ensure societal sustainability (Hoult 1969). For instance, whereas the structuralists define “deviant” as any deviations from the norms of society, the functionalist recognizes the utility of breaking norms. Flouting norms plays a large role in solidifying group identity; conformists cannot be conformists if there are no deviants (Hoult 1969). The functionalists see poverty in this same way: in their eyes, it is more than a subculture; it has become a necessary part of society.

William Ryan, one of the earliest critics of the culture of poverty theory, produced his findings in the book, *Blaming the Victim* (1971). Ryan claimed that the culture of poverty hypothesis focused on differences caused by inequality and prejudice. He further argued that poor people’s culture was no different from that of the middle class, but that they had been denied comparable resources and wealth. Therefore, the living conditions of the poor vary from those who are not poor and have privilege. For Ryan, poverty continues to exist because the structural disparities that created it have not yet been addressed. Ryan finds that individual level differences would not exist if the underlying structure itself were more equitable.

Scholars Patrick Mason (2007) and Thomas Shapiro (2004) also cite structural problems as the root cause of poverty. Mason evaluates the claim that family values are intergenerational using statistical data and analysis. The findings presented in Mason’s article suggest that both childhood family values and class status have an effect on intergenerational mobility and interracial inequality, with parental class effects carrying more weight than parental value effects. Ultimately, Mason argues that wealth and class are the most significant variables when

considering interracial inequality. Mason's findings parallel Ryan's abovementioned arguments; both critics identify lack of wealth as the fundamental cause of perceived cultural differences.

Thomas Shapiro's conclusions parallel Mason and Ryan's work. Shapiro (2004) finds that the minuscule amount of wealth poor blacks possess is what really propagates their poverty. Shapiro asserts that a lack of wealth is not due to any poor black cultural practices. Shapiro declares that poor black culture is a product of discrimination and public policies that have led to black subjugation. Ryan suggests the cultures of the various classes are not fundamentally different. Poor people have just been denied the resources and privileges that middle class and upper class people possess.

Today, theorists continue to look at issues of education and inequality, but some have devised theories that differ from that of the structuralists and culture of poverty theorists. For example, sociologist Annette Lareau has studied the values and child-rearing practices of poor and middle class families. Lareau's findings, suggest that the poor have distinct child-rearing practices that differ from those of the middle class. She finds that middle-class parents, whether black or white, engage in a process of "concerted cultivation" designed to draw out children's talents and skills, while working-class and poor families rely on "the accomplishment of natural growth" (Lareau 2003). This latter group leaves the child's development to unfold on its own, as long as basic comforts, food, and shelter are provided (Lareau 2003). Lareau differs from Lewis and Payne because she argues that poor and lower class parents do value education, however the way they express it is different. She argues that lower class culture is not valued in schools and teachers often mistake low-parental involvement for parents not valuing education. She further argues that teachers often do not realize the constraints that lower class parents have on them because of their economic conditions. Lareau's ideas differ from structural functionalists because

she is not solely attributing the low educational attainment and lack of mobility among the poor to structural issues. She is arguing that it goes beyond a lack of wealth. In her eyes, there needs to be a cultural appreciation on the part of teachers. Ultimately, she believes this will force teachers to understand and respect the environments that their students hail from.

METHODS

It is not easy to link an experience and a change of environment to success and upward mobility. Given this hurdle, this study examines interviews provided by student participants in the ABC program. These narratives have been examined to identify instances when students described the ABC program as teaching life skills that could have possibly lead to their success. For the purposes of this study, *culture* will be defined as socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought (Hoult, 1969). *Upward mobility* will be defined as a change in class status generally characterized by an increase in education, wealth, and income beyond that held by a previous generation.

The ABC program operates in both public and private institutions; therefore, two separate sets of samples were used. To examine elite private schools, G. William Domhoff and Richard Zweigenhaft's study was be used. Domhoff and Zweigenhaft used snowball sampling to gather interviews from over thirty-eight graduates of the ABC's first graduating class from 1966. The interviews took place between 1986 and 1988; the interviewees were approaching forty or were already in their forties. A second round of interviews followed ten years later when the interviewees were approaching fifty. Zweigenhaft provided me with the original interviews he

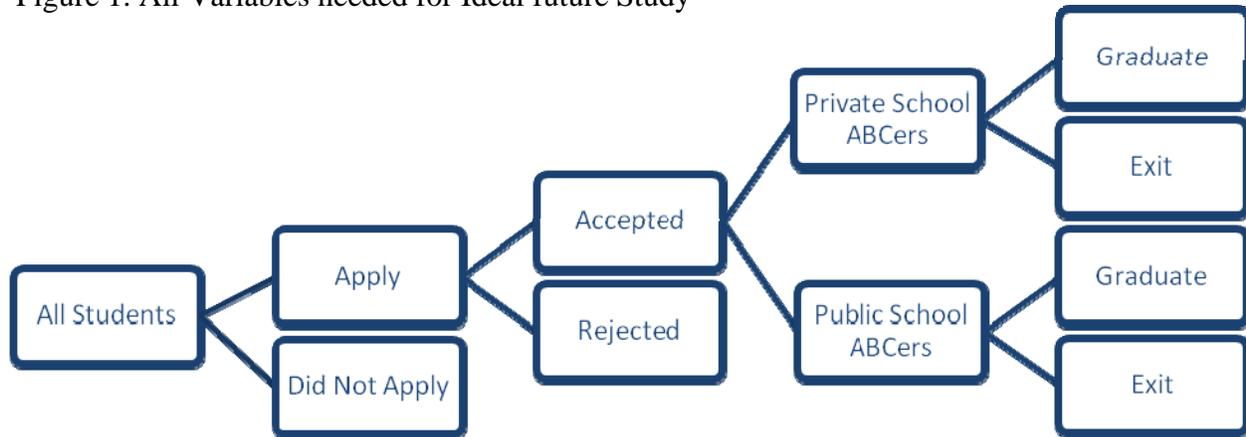
and Domhoff used in their book *Blacks in the White Elite*. Although these interviews were collected by Zweigenhaft and Domhoff, they were analyzed to specifically approach and answer the research question advanced in this paper.

Mandy Palladino (2001) of Colgate University conducted interviews with public school ABC graduates. Palladino, like Domhoff and Zweigenhaft (2003), used snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a technique employed when a list of the total population is not available, preventing one from generating a random sample. Palladino, Domhoff, and Zweigenhaft relied on informants to lead them to people who would be suitable for their respective research project. Palladino interviewed twelve graduates of the Clinton, New York ABC program. Palladino's sample, unlike that of Domhoff and Zweigenhaft, consisted of graduates who participated in the program at very different times. She interviewed individuals who participated in the program as early as 1976 and as late as 1996. The varying times of participation were useful in examining patterns of re-culturing. Both narratives were used to see if students felt like they were being taught a new culture and the extent to which that culture made them successful. Zweigenhaft also provided with Palladino's interviews. She contacted him on an earlier occasion regarding her own research project on ABC. She gave him a copy of her interviews and with her permission; he was to duplicate and send me a copy of her transcriptions.

Both sets of interviews were reviewed carefully looking specifically for student discussion of their overall experience with the program. The interviews were also reviewed for student discussion regarding the role the program's culture play in helping them to become upwardly mobile or in some case stagnant. The graphic below illustrates the additional types of

information that would be ideal to ascertain more information on the program and its effects on student participants.

Figure 1. All Variables needed for Ideal future Study



First, since the interviews were conducted at different times, there is no way to compare the ABC students interviewed with those who were in regular schools. There is no information on those who did not apply, and there is very little information on those who did apply. Domhoff & Zweigenhaft mention that in a typical year, 16,000 students are invited to apply. There is no information on those who are rejected. As far as ABC programs in public school and private school, there is enough information in the form of narratives to begin looking how students describe the notion of cultural transformation as a means for upward mobility. In this study, those who left the program before completing it are extremely important because if they still became successful then they serve as proof that culture is irrelevant. Although there are many limitations to this study, valuable information can still be abstracted from available narratives; one just has to be careful about generalizing this study's conclusion to all ABCer's. The

information provided in the narratives provided rich accounts of student experiences in the program as well student perceptions of the usefulness of the program.

FINDINGS

Cultural Transformation: Fact or Fiction?

The first portion of this research was to examine how ABC students described the program's impact on their lives. Many ABC students describe the social life at the prep school as being the most influential. This is not surprising because of the circumstances that a lot of the participants came out of. It makes sense that it would be weird to be educated among the rich and powerful if all you know revolves around being poor. The ABC program was aware of the cultural differences and tried to address in a number of ways.

As revealed by Domhoff and Zweigenhaft (2004), students who participated in the program in the early years of its existence were required to attend a summer orientation program. Here, students received their first lessons about preparatory school culture. Domhoff and Zweigenhaft describe the summer program as being the linchpin of the ABC program, a crucial transition period that helped guarantee the program's success.

One headmaster claimed the summer program existed to "help correct what were thought to be social, as well as academic deficiencies" (Domhoff 2003). Another headmaster supporting the summer program stated, "They couldn't come to Andover or Northfield from Harlem in September and fit, because many of them didn't know a knife from a fork (Domhoff 2003)."

There was a conscious intent to systematically re-culture the students. Domhoff & Zweigenhaft note, "The staff purposely chose activities that were common to prep school but that the ABC

students were unlikely to have encountered. Every student received swimming instruction almost daily, and soccer, volleyball, canoeing, and rock climbing were the other athletic activities” (Domhoff, 2003).

In this summer program, students also were required to attend weekly dinners with faculty, a guest speaker, and administrators. The weekly dinners can also be seen as being part of the re-culturing process. Zweigenhaft and Domhoff note, “For these meals the males students wore jackets and ties, and the females students wore dresses (Domhoff 2003).” In addition to wearing “proper” attire, students were expected to follow the examples set by their faculty and resident advisors, which included such behaviors as using the proper silverware at the proper time and politely asking for things to be passed rather than reaching across the table (Domhoff 2003).

The re-socialization process also can be identified in testimony given by students. One student, Bobette Reed Kahn who graduated from the MacDuffie School (Class of 1970), Williams College (1974), and the Harvard Divinity School describes her summer transitional program:

They did all kinds of things. Had I ever heard of field hockey? No. We all had to learn how to swim, took ballet, they took us out to dinner and we had to order for ourselves. Most of us had never been to a restaurant, let alone order. We had one meal a week with dress-up, and afterwards we had demitasse- I’d never had coffee, let alone had demitasse- and we would learn how to hold the cup.

Kahn here describes the etiquette training she received in the ABC summer transitional program.

As the headmaster stated earlier, ABC students were thought to have been socially deficient. It is interesting that no one ever actually questioned why these students “lacked” these skills. Perhaps, racism, discrimination, and a lack of wealth prevented individuals like Kahn from going to luxurious restaurants where they would learn these social skills.

Palladino's interviews reveal results and evidence of re-culturing similar to that discovered by Domhoff and Zweigenhaft. Mark Patrick Hill (Class of 1980) describes his time with the Clinton ABC program saying:

Going there [Clinton High School], when I first went there I dressed in comfortable clothes, baggy clothes and then that ?. I think it lasted about two years. What else, yeah I think the way I spoke changed too. I spoke more English I guess. I ? even more sweet. ? and I, our freshman year were talking about it and were ?

Hill describes his transformation as more of an informal process that occurred as he spent a long period at Clinton High School. Unlike the prep school students, public ABC participants did not attend formal summer programs; thus, they did not experience that aspect of the re-socialization process.

The re-culturing process that occurred between the recent public school and original private school ABC programs differed greatly. In the public school narratives, there was hardly any talk of etiquette training or a focus on needing to have proper decorum. As Carlo Williams (Class of 1990) recalls:

I guess I was able to develop an understanding of how to interact with other people who are very different from me in terms of how we look or our backgrounds, or even how we think. So, I think I'm the kind of person who is tolerable. I do not think I am too bad to tolerate anyone because of who they were and how they were. Just because I was exposed to more people or other people, at an early age, but being in Clinton. Now of course, I can't compare that to the range of diversity that I had in College. I believe it got me started to get used to other people.

Another student described his experiences stating:

ABC taught me to be aware that there are different things going on, on earth in general and not being stuck in one little neighborhood, one little culture. But that's the culture, this, and that. Now when I do job interviews, it's real easy for me. I guess I learned how to act in job interviews from that experience from Clinton because I am able to take this person, even though he is different from me, I am able to communicate with him or tell him what I feel about things and what I want for my job.

The above narratives exhibit some of the changes that ABC students underwent. Many of the changes reported by students can be attributed to being in a new environment; however, as stated earlier, the program also purposely exposed students to cultural and social events they were normal to middle and upper class individuals. Although one witnesses a cultural transformation in both programs, it is interesting that ABC focuses more on etiquette and decorum in the prep school programs, while this is almost non-existent in the narratives of those in the public school program. It is not evident whether the differences in acculturation among the public and private schools are a result of different times or if they simply represent the preexisting class structures that students were inducted into. ABC's conflated mission can elucidate these differences: on the one hand, the elite prep school programs are molding and constructing individuals to join the elite, thus they need to be privy to accepted norms. On the other hand, in the public school program, upward mobility takes many forms. In describing his experiences with ABC Clinton Trevor T. Jennings (Class of 1980) states:

My dress stayed the same. In fact, it got better. My goals and stuff, they started drifting more out for me. I actually believed that I was going to be able to go to college and do some of the things that I wanted to do, which I didn't see before because some of my friends are still down at the same places they was doing.

Many students in the public school program described their re-culturing process as one of adjustment. Trevor Jennings notes the differences in his goals and expectations about college after going to Clinton. Unlike the prep school group, he was not being subjected to formal training and molding like many of the prep students. Mark Patrick Hill (Class of 1980) describes the cultural change as an adjustment process, noting:

Yes, it changed quite a bit actually. Going there, when I first went there I dressed in comfortable clothes, baggy clothes and then that. I think it lasted about two years. What else, yeah I think the way I spoke changed too. I spoke more English I guess. I? even more sweet. ? and I, our freshman year were talking about it and were?

Hill describes his change as taking two years. Although he does not explicitly describe how the change came about, he does not say that ABC encouraged him to change in any particular way, instead it appears that as he became more acquainted and acclimated with Clinton, his values and cultural disposition changed. Although there was strategic re-culturing in the prep school ABC program, prep school participants are also products of their school environment. Domhoff and Zweigenhaft suggest this saying:

Those black ABC students who survived the prep school crucible were not the same people when they graduated that they had been when they arrived. They were not only two, three, or sometimes four years older, and the recipients of excellent secondary school educations. Most had adopted the styles that prevailed in their schools; they dressed like prep school students, they liked the music prep school students liked, and they spoke like prep school students.

Domhoff and Zweigenhaft's above statement suggests that most students adhere to the norms set by their schools.

A Better Family: The Role of Host Parents

Unlike the ABC prep school students, the Clinton ABCer's all lived together in a house located on the Hamilton College Campus and attended a nearby public school. The students spent their weekdays with a family, the student's "resident family. The primary purpose of the resident directors was to serve as surrogate parents to the 12 residents. In addition to resident directors, each student also was assigned two sets of "host families." The students alternated between host families each weekend and returned to the ABC house on Sunday nights. The role of the host family was to provide a quiet and relaxing escape for these boys, away from the 11 other students. Weekend activities included day trips, family dinners, movie outings, theme parks, and many other family-oriented events.

The presence of the host families provided a crucial support network that many students utilized and greatly appreciated. Students generally reported that they benefited significantly from having host families. Some of the students felt it brought normalcy to their lives and others valued being able to get away from ABC house. Mark Patrick Hill (Class of 1980) describes what he calls an everlasting relationship with his host family, recalling:

They provide an everlasting relationship. To this day, I keep in touch with my host parents. I call the Morgan's, Bud Morgan and wife, I call them Mom and Dad. As a matter of fact, I'll be calling Dad Sunday for Father's Day and did call Mom Sunday, but I think they were on the road, so didn't really get to talk with her and then I talked with them a few months ago. And the Mobil's, Rob Mobil and his wife, yeah I loved them very much very important of my life. Yes, it really helped because I got to go to Church with them on Sundays. Back during that time, I had two host parents, the Morgan's and the Mobil's as the Mobil's as I would alternate going over the different families houses every Sunday. Within my second and final year there, I basically was just the Morgan's every Sunday. I got to know their kids and stuff like that, and grandkids and it was a blast.

Trevor Jones (Class of 1990) also remembers how important the host families were to him:

It would be real different because then you had no escape from the house. Sometimes the house was like prison. You wanted to go somewhere and then you go with the host families and they was like "Okay, here we are, we got this 6-7 hours" and the host family is like "okay, lets do something fun." I'm like "alright, good." I get to places I ? for. I get to do things like miniature golf. I never did it in a while but in Clinton, until recently I did it down in North Carolina. It's like little things like that. I never got to go and do it before, so white people play soccer, you know, I ain't mention no name, so I played soccer myself. Okay, it's doing all those little things. Those are the real important things and the things you hold onto, as you get older.

Most students described their experiences with their families as crucial and important. As stated earlier, the families provided support networks and helped the student's transition into suburban life. The families also filled voids that existed in many of the ABC students lives, many of them came from single parent homes. Living with two-parent families was an experience that was unfamiliar to many of the ABC students.

Securing a Promising Future: The Role of ABC

It is clear from the narratives that students gained valuable lessons from the ABC program. However, it is still not clear if these new skills were a major factor in the upward mobilization of these students. A closer look at the ABC program and its selection process has revealed some interesting variables that can easily be directly correlated with the high success rates of the participants.

The students selected to participate in the ABC program were not just randomly selected students of color from low-income backgrounds. All students who apply to the program must be invited; ABC staff travel all across the country looking for potential applicants. Domhoff and Zweigenhaft report that students are accepted based on their grades and test scores, the recommendations of teachers and counselors, and their written applications (Domhoff 2003). They also state that in a typical year, the program hands out over 16,000 applications winnow that list to about 800, and then selects between 360-380 students. The high-selectivity of the program can be seen as one factor in students' success.

Although many students attribute their success directly to ABC, many others reported feeling as if they would have been successful even without the ABC program. For example, when Carlo Williams (Class of 1980) was asked if he would be in the same place without ABC, he responded:

I think so. Let's see. The program, any program like the ABC program definitely has its merits and I think that it is good to have and it should still exist. Definitely, it is needed. What I think the people that benefit from it should be more the people who are maybe on the bubble or up in the tiers. People who are obviously more, or whatever, are worthy of the opportunity. But don't have the support at home. Whereas I had the support at home and because I had the? as well. So, a person like me, I don't think it mattered where I

went, I think I would have gotten the point, to some point if I didn't have the ABC program. But for someone who maybe had the abilities that any of them who went to ABC Program but didn't have or don't have the family support, you know the having of the family structure that's in place to help them along. I think that the program should be meant for those people. People who would make it, but probably because of some problems in their environment which I think is the model on the ? for the ABC program. It's a gift people but to take ? and put them in the schools where it is more academically inclined, or in an environment where it is more academically inclined. And so I was already in an environment that was inclined academically, so I would have made it anyway.

Williams believes that that because he had access to familial support and other resources, he would have done well even without the ABC program. He realizes that there is a need for programs like ABC to help those who are disadvantaged, but since ABC is so selective, many students who really need the help wind up falling through the cracks. Another student, Trevor Jones (Class of 1990) who was asked the same question responded similarly:

Sure, I would, because I believe in that. I believe that no matter where I would have gone, I would, not saying that I'm everywhere right now, I believe ?, but I can truly say that there is no way also that I can downplay the significance of education. I mean, really education is important. It helps to equip you to be, to have the skills or ability to do certain things in the future. So, even if you don't have specific knowledge, I mean it?. It also teaches you to learn, to be able to learn and be teachable, so but I can honestly say that it was definitely a plus for me.

The student above believes that he would have been successful with or without ABC as long as he received a good education. This narrative is important because it depicts a student who is saying that all the additional things that come along with being part of ABC, namely cultural transformation, are not more important than receiving a good education.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research reveal that most students did feel as though the program was useful and it provided them with them with the impetus to secure positions of leadership and power. However, a small number of students also reported that the program played a very small role in their lives and their overall outcomes. As stated earlier, although students may have described the program as being crucial in their paths to success it is not clear that this is true because of a lack of data. There are many other factors that can be attributed to the high numbers of successful ABC graduates.

The ABC participant's success can easily be attributed to the excellent secondary education they received. The students attended some of the finest institutions of learning in the country, both public and private. Disregarding any cultural changes, attending a school with more resources and more opportunities is an advantage for any student, especially some of the best of the brightest. ABC scholars also had access to remedial programs and tutoring whenever they felt like they needed it.

ABC participants were also able to build networks with extremely influential individuals that could have potentially helped them in the future. Not only were their fellow students' families very powerful, but also the ABC participants had access to a long list of successful alumni from the ABC program itself.

In conclusion, over the years programs similar to ABC have continued to grow and flourish. However, research on the experiences of students has continued to be minimal. In an effort to produce political leaders and powerful executives, we have neglected to examine how

the students have been affected on a psychological and social level. Advancement and progression is not always a completely positive transition and we must take this into account when removing students from poor urban ghettos and putting them into elite public and prep schools.

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