

**THE PARENTAL INVESTMENT OF FIRST-GENERATION AFRICAN
AMERICAN RURAL COLLEGE GRADUATES IN CULTIVATING
COLLEGE STUDENT SUCCESS**

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

This basic qualitative study examines the parental investment strategies of first-generation African American rural college graduates in cultivating college student success. Extant literature has demonstrated that the role of the family is necessary to support the college student and that the investment of the parent is paramount to student college completion. Although educational attainment is an important goal for African American rural residents, research detailing strategies that cultivated student college completion among this population is needed to fill the gaps in the literature. The objectives were to discuss communication, involvement, and factors of influence to determine how these parents transferred their educational beliefs to their children and supported them through college graduation. These stories of success were told through the eyes of first-generation parents and their second-generation adult offspring.

Research detailing the parental investment strategies toward college completion is necessary to inform parents, educational institutions, and rural college student completion in postsecondary institutions of the strategies necessary to ensure college success in this population. Lieberman's transgenerational theory, along with concepts extracted from parental investment as it relates to education, provided the conceptual lens for the study. Data collected through interviews and documents were analyzed utilizing content analysis. Ten semistructured interviews were conducted with parents and their adult offspring. Interviews gleaned the lived experiences of the participants. Data analysis revealed six themes: (a) Catch Them Early, (b) Set the Tone, (c) Keep Them Busy, (d) Don't Let Them "Break Rank," (e) Encourage Advancement, and

(f) Tell the Generations. The findings support the importance of developing a family investment team, how a return on parental investment occurs, making use of rural extracurricular programming, and transferring positive beliefs regarding higher education.

DEDICATION

To my beautiful daughter, Celeste J. Allen,
who is the reason for my pursuit of this degree

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It is first necessary that I thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for His faithfulness through this process. He has favored me from birth, guided me along this path, and opened doors that no one on this earth could. He has helped me to remain firmly planted every time the storms ensued and the mountains seemed too steep.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The messages that children receive from their parents shape who they become as adults (Neblett, Chavous, Nguyễn, & Sellers, 2009). According to Garvey (1999), “Parenting is one of the most significant jobs a person will ever have” (p. 1). College completion is highly influenced by loved ones and requires a large investment on the part of the parent. College preparation and the establishment of career goals require a series of conversations and a timeline of support, involvement, and influence on the part of parents (Henry, Cavanagh, & Oetting, 2011; Shankle, 2009; Tierney, 2002). However, it is uncertain exactly what specific investments are made among first-generation African American rural college graduates and how these investments affect college success. The relationship between first-generation parent graduates and their educated offspring is worth examining because few studies describe the process that cultivates a college-going family, especially among African American rural populations. It was beneficial to collect these strategies using first-generation graduates whose offspring had achieved college success. The results of this study communicated what conversations, types of involvement, influence, and encouragement, if any, occurred in the homes of this population. This study may inform ways to create more African American college graduates from rural areas.

In this study, student college success is equivalent to college completion. “Research has established that the achievement of postsecondary education positively impacts socioeconomic status, personal growth, and self-esteem” (Britton, 2011, p. 1).

After having children of their own, these parents have the chance to cultivate positive outcomes among their offspring. This study explored the details of parental investment strategies to discover how college success is cultivated in this population through transfer of educational beliefs that were expressed by parents and their adult offspring.

African American First-Generation College Graduates

African American first-generation college graduates (FGCGs) have triumphed through their struggles as students. Gardner and Holley (2011) found these students “more likely to grow up in low-income families, receive less support from their family related to college enrollment, hold a full-time job during college, and spend less time interacting with faculty. . . . First-generation students also take longer to complete their bachelor’s degree and have lower degree aspirations when compared with their peers” (p. 77). Ishitani (2006) found that “the greatest benefits for explaining college success of first-generation students result from thorough examination of both precollege attributes of students and the quality of their interactions with institutions of higher education” (p. 865). However, there is no evidence regarding how FGCGs cultivate these quality interactions with their children.

When these former students become educated parents, they become the first in their family with the knowledge to assist with precollege attributes and college completion. Their personal experiences could inform the parental investment strategies used to cultivate this success. Kärkkäinen, Rätty, and Kasanen (2010) found that children and academically educated parents shared the same educational perceptions. Thus, an African American first-time college graduate could impart the same standards that a

third- or fourth-generation graduate would impart to his or her child. The African American sample in Davis-Kean's study (2005) revealed that parents' educational attainment and family income were related indirectly to the child's achievement through the parents' educational expectations and the dynamics of parent-child interactions. The fact that the parents were educated¹ created expectations and a warm relationship between parent and child, which allowed the expectations of the parent to be well received by the child; however, there was no mention of specific strategies used in the household to link those expectations to achievement. According to Kirk, Lewis-Moss, Nilsen, and Colvin (2011), research is necessary to determine how parental influence and achievement work together over time to affect college-going behaviors of children.

The Rural Population

The rural population has received little attention in the existing literature (Kindell, 2009). This population is often overlooked in the research (Kiyama, 2011). Britton (2011) stated that "postsecondary education offers young people in rural communities an avenue to more opportunities, higher socioeconomic status, and personal growth, but fewer rural students are going to colleges and universities" (p. 1). Therefore, "little is known about the ways in which the over one million rural African American families facilitate their children's academic competence" (Brody, Stoneman, & Flor, 1995, p. 568). Calhoun (2008) found that rural students saw their parents as

¹In the African American community, the term *educated* can be used to give respect to a highly skilled person with a long career in a profession. However, in this study the term is used to refer to college-educated persons.

trustworthy and well meaning in their advice but were less confident in parental influence and ability to provide financial assistance. Research also indicates that rural parents have lower expectations regarding their perceptions that their high school age child will obtain a bachelor's degree (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2010 National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2011). However, Stoneman et al. (1991) found that African American parents living in rural areas named educational attainment as an important developmental goal for their children. These goals are unclear in existing literature. The current study explores the details of parental investment strategies to discover how college success is cultivated in this population through the transfer of educational beliefs. Transgenerational theory (TGT) was utilized to frame the study.

Statement of the Problem

Two research questions were framed to identify parental investment strategies that these parents impart to ensure success of these students.

1. What parental investment strategies did first-generation African American rural parents use to cultivate college success in their children?
2. In what specific ways did these parents transfer their educational beliefs to ensure college completion?

Origin of the Problem

With more African American first-generation college students earning degrees (USDOE, 2010), it is necessary to place the spotlight on how college-going families are created within newly educated Black parental cohorts. There is increasing research on

the family's role and the characteristics of parental investment (Henry et al., 2011). Many Black parents are committed to creating a college-going household (Shankle, 2009; Tierney, 2002), but there is a need to discover the strategies of collective efficacy in making choices about attending and completing college (Kirk et al., 2011). Tierney's (2002) research on parents and families in precollege preparation confirmed that the familial role in educating the child has long been of interest to researchers, policy makers, and practitioners. However, there is no information on this phenomenon where African American FGCGs from rural areas are concerned. The USDOE (2010) reported that African American students were concentrated in cities and suburban areas and Whites were concentrated in suburban and rural areas, with lower percentages residing in cities and towns. That research showed that a relatively small number of African Americans reside in rural areas. As a result, there is limited research concerning this population. Therefore, it is necessary to study African Americans who reside in rural areas.

Unfortunately, there is a specific reason that this information is scarce. According to Kogan, Wejnert, Chen, Brody, and Slater (2010), "Less than 20% of rural African Americans complete postsecondary education programs" (p. 32) and those ages 18-24 that do not attend college have been labeled the "forgotten half" (p. 32). According to Henry et al. (2011), parental investment in the child's education directly affects the child's educational outcomes "at both the individual and school district level among youth residing in rural communities and towns in the U.S." (p. 1164). Finding the missing piece of the puzzle could help to create more rural college graduates and more

stability within these families and communities. FGCGs were once underrepresented and underprepared first-generation college students. How does this graduate-turned-parent prepare the child for college and support the child through college completion? This study explored the details of parental investment strategies to discover how college success is cultivated in this population through transfer of educational beliefs.

Significance of the Research

Parental investment strategies of first-generation African American rural college graduates should be used to shape future research, policy, recruitment, and student affairs initiatives. These initiatives should derive directly from research reporting how college success is cultivated in this population. Discourse, parental involvement, and influence fit within the scope of this investment. Recognizing and analyzing these methods could assist institutions to create an array of programs to assist first-generation alumni with this transition for their children. This research can also help rural parents to incorporate similar strategies of academic preparedness. There is little evidence to support how the once underrepresented, underprepared, or low-income rural African American student-turned-college-educated-parent prepares a child for college. The narratives of these parents should provide thick description of their process of cultivating college success. Researching first-generation African American parents and their adult offspring from rural areas will add to existing literature on parental investment strategies and beliefs of Black rural families about going to college. The narratives of these families should provide thick description of their process of cultivating college success in a very holistic way.

Researcher's Relationship to the Problem

My interest in this topic stems from my intrinsic interest in the problem. As an FGCG with a 4-year-old daughter, I hope to influence her to attend college through a process that involves age-appropriate conversation, involvement, support, exposure, and influence. After graduating, securing my first appointment, and experiencing the benefits of my hard work, I realized the call on my life to promote higher education to others, including my future offspring. Coming from a line of family members who did not finish college, I saw first-hand how the lack of an education creates a permanent glass ceiling. Therefore, I have an intrinsic interest in ensuring that my daughter understands the benefits of higher education to secure her future. Because my daughter is only 4 years old, I hope that this research will provide a timeline of how early to start transferring my beliefs and how to support her throughout her matriculation. I do not intend to pressure her to attend college; rather, I plan to encourage and support her to do so. At the end of her journey, I want her to aspire to teach her children about the benefits of higher education and motivate them as I have motivated her.

I attended college in a rural community in the South, where I mentored middle and high school students through my sorority. These students made me realize then how a college education, positive influence, and support could increase positive outcomes among youth in these communities. I watched several of my mentees go on to college and graduate, many of them becoming FGCGs. Later, my experience as a college recruiter prompted me to seek information about the college-going habits of rural families. Many of the conversations that I have had with parents (educated and

noneducated) from rural areas have yielded mixed ideas about college choice and attendance. Many parents thought education was important overall. Some were concerned about tuition costs and logistics, which propelled their interest toward their child attending a junior or technical college. Others were supportive of their child attending college close to home.

Based on my experiences with rural families, my main assumptions related to this study were that (a) “a college-going family” means that there is a transfer of educational beliefs after a FGCG is realized, (b) total parental investment (parental influence and involvement, parent-child relationship, and discourse) plays a role in whether or not a second-generation college graduate (SGCG) is realized, and (c) a process would emerge from this research to assist other parents in cultivating college success through effective parental investment strategies.

Limitations

Certain limitations of this study are acknowledged. The first limitation is that all family members did not participate in the study. Although the results were successful in addressing the research questions, more strategies might have surfaced if the spouses and other adult offspring had participated in the study.

The second limitation is that the study called for residents of the Posh Valley, Hope Station, and Windsor area, but only Posh Valley residents participated. Based on the demographics of the three cities, there were African American residents present. One participant suggested that there were no responses from the other areas because fewer Hope Station residents were college educated and that Windsor consisted of a majority

of White residents. The lack of participation from the other cities presented a limitation in that new information and strategies might have been discovered, especially if the parents raised in those areas had attended another colleges and had rejected the idea of choosing Freedmen.

The third limitation is that not all adult offspring had children of their own. This limitation made it difficult to predict how the transfer of educational beliefs would occur among these participants. Part of the *family evolution* concept within Lieberman's TGT suggests that the transfer of beliefs will result in a continued transfer of beliefs within a family. The participating adult offspring were positive about transferring the message that their parents had passed to them, which created richer data for this study. This small detail provided tangible evidence of *family evolution*.

This study did not compare other races of first-generation parents. It is as important to uncover current information about the transferability of educational beliefs and compare the conversations of the races to find both correlating and contradicting parental investment strategies. However, this study compared only the views of rural African American first-generation parents and second-generation offspring.

The voices of a few families from rural areas cannot speak for the general African American population. However, it was necessary for the sample to be small enough to capture details surrounding each family's process. Analyses were delimited to first-generation African American rural parents with adult children. Generalizations also cannot be made to all African American first- and second-generation populations in

other circumstances (Young, Miller, Morton, & Hill, 1995). The fact that these parents relied on memory may be considered a limitation in this study.

Delimitations

This study focused on rural residents to add to literature about this population. The study was delimited to interviewing first-generation parents and their children both of whom have at least a Bachelor's degree. FGCG parents who have nurtured a SGCG can offer information regarding how their parental investment strategies led to the success of their offspring. The interest related to this study was in the overall investment—the discourse, parental influences, and involvement by parents—that contributed to the success of their child's college completion.

Operational Definitions

The following terms and concepts are defined as they are used in the study.

Behavioral involvement consists of parents' actions, including volunteering at school, helping with homework, and keeping an open communication flow with the school (Henry et al., 2011, p. 1165).

Black or African American: A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (USDOE, 2010).

Cognitive/intellectual stimulation consists of capturing the extent to which parents expose their children to learning development opportunities, including extracurricular activities, trips to libraries and museums, current events, intellectually stimulating discussions, and learning materials (Henry et al., 2011, p. 1165).

College choice: A complex, multistage process during which an individual develops aspirations to continue formal education beyond high school, followed later by a decision to attend a specific college, university, or advanced vocational training (Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989, p. 234)

College generation status refers to the status of parental and offspring college graduation status (DeRonck, 2007; Hertel, 2002). This study explores the factors that influence college success between first-generation parents and their second-generation offspring.

Discourse/communication is language between a parent and child that occurs in the home to sustain social positioning. These relations occur between participants in face-to-face interaction (Heath, 1997; Hicks, 1995).

External involvement consists of parental interactions with school, such as attendance at meetings and volunteering for school activities, are examples of external or public involvement in education (Valencia & Black, 2002, p. 96).

First-generation college graduate (FGCG): A person with a college degree whose parents have no education beyond high school (Gibbons, 2005).

Internal involvement consists of a more subtle type of involvement that consists of the attitudes and practices concerning school that are initiated by the family and found exclusively in the home itself (Valencia & Black, 2002, p. 97).

Outcome expectations: Beliefs about the results of specific activities related to college-going (Gibbons, 2005, p. 12).

Parental influence: Parents' supervision, strictness, attitudes, and attachment that can manipulate, determine, or affect the decisions, beliefs, behaviors, and characteristics of their offspring (Distefan, Gilpin, Choi, & Pierce, 1998).

Parental investment: Parents' investment in their child's education, with specific attention paid to behavioral involvement, cognitive/intellectual stimulation, and personal endorsement of academic achievement (Henry et al., 2011, p. 1165). Parental investment is also the discourse/communication, parental influences, and involvement strategies that contribute to the child's obtaining a college degree (Henry et al., 2011; Hill & Chao 2009).

Parental involvement consists of parents showing interest in the lives of their students' primary and secondary (K-12) education, followed by involvement in postsecondary education, which includes gaining more information about college, knowing when and how to appropriately provide encouragement and guidance to their student connecting with the institution, and potentially retaining that institutional connection beyond the college years (Wartman, 2008, p. 5).

Personal endorsement is the extent to which parents perceive school as important and valuable, hold a favorable attitude toward school, and have high academic aspirations for their child (Henry et al., 2011, p. 1165).

Rural population: Residents who live in an area that is at least 5 to 25 miles from an urban area (USDOE, 2010).

Second-generation college graduate (SGCG): A person with a college degree whose mother and/or father was the first in the family to earn a college degree (Pike & Kuh, 2005).

Transgenerational/intergenerational: Interchangeable terms used to describe the transfer of ideals, beliefs, communication patterns, and behaviors from generation to generation in a family (Garvey, 1999; Lieberman, 1979; Parks, 1996; Valencia & Black, 2002).

Underrepresented and/or underprepared populations: A designation that includes racial and ethnic minority students who typically identify as African American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, or Other. These populations have historically low enrollment and/or academic performance numbers in educational institutions (Darling-Hammond, Williamson, & Hylar, 2007; USDOE, 2010; Swail & Perna, 2002).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter provides an overview of the literature associated with creating a college-going family once a first-generation college student graduates and becomes a parent. It is first necessary to discuss the academic background of the FGCG. Studies by Anthony in 1964 and Rutter in 1979 found good developmental outcomes in at-risk groups of students who flourished despite their surroundings (as cited in Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005). This is a perfect example of turning negative situations into positive ones. Most of the characteristics of these students are seen within the first-generation college student population and may be transmitted to others (Dennis et al., 2005). These authors labeled ethnic minority first-generation college students, who typically have poorer academic performance, higher dropout rates than other students, poor academic preparation from high school, and lower critical thinking scores prior to college as *at risk*. Long before the study by Dennis et al., Dryfoos (1991) provided detailed characteristics that defined the term. Dryfoos deemed to be at risk students from inner-city, suburban, or rural areas who were functionally illiterate, disconnected from school, and prone to drug abuse and to becoming parents of unplanned babies. Because these students are thought to have limited experience in family life, they are thought to be unable to become responsible parents or adults. While these characteristics ring true in some urban populations, the rural first-generation students in this study did not fit into these categories.

Anthony's and Rutter's studies sparked a later study by Masten and Coatsworth (1998) that called first-generation students "pioneers." These students eventually became productive members of society armed with college degrees. Eventually, they also became parents. These parents have overcome their obstacles to ensure that their children will be upwardly mobile and continue to promote mobility in the family through the generations.

First-Generation College Students

A consideration of the background and characteristics of first-generation college students is important. First-generation college students are those whose parents did not complete college (Cho et al., 2008; Hertel, 2002; Reid, 2007; Stieha, 2009). The experiences of first-generation parents can provide a lens through which children can begin to frame their own goals for success.

Richardson and Skinner (1992) found that, despite reported obstacles and deficiencies in preparedness, some students developed strategies of success in college that fostered positive outcomes. This success was based on the students' perception that a college degree will provide a better life for them. This perception in parents has the potential to manifest in a positive way. Parents can instill in their children the expectation of attending college and can provide encouragement and emotional support (Dennis et al., 2005). Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) developed an ecological theory that suggested that development is the result of an interaction between the characteristics of a person and the environment over the course of the person's life. This interaction presents an inner conflict between values and attitudes of family, home, and the friends

whom the person left behind (Hertel, 2002). The intergenerational cycle of educational-level inheritance showed that family members who prioritized education were most efficient in the success of the first-generation student (Gofen, 2009). However, lack of support from anyone can pull the student away from the college setting (Hertel, 2002).

Further research concerning first-generation students and graduates will augment current knowledge about higher education solutions for this population. According to Nuñez and Cuccaro-Alamin (1998), the education of the first-generation student represents a departure from family traditions. These students were also more likely than peers to come from low-income families and typically had lower achievement and lower overall degree aspirations (Tierney, 2002). The last characteristic helped to coin the 1960s term *talent loss*, which was noted by Hanson (1994) as occurring among teens who demonstrated early academic potential but had lower educational expectations, which either reduced their expectations or caused them to never realize their expectations.

Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, and Nora (1996) found that those students worked more hours and thus took longer to complete their degrees. These students also have lower rates of access, persistence and attainment, and family support and encouragement (Choy, Horn, Nuñez, & Chen, 2000; Ishitani, 2003; Naumann, Bandalos, & Gutkin, 2003; Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998). Despite these obstacles, first-generation students “break the intergenerational cycle where parents convey their educational level to their offspring” (Gofen, 2009, p. 104). Inman and Mayes found that in order to break this cycle, first-generation students must reject their family culture to

obtain their education (Inman & Mayes, as cited in Gofen, 2009; London, 1989). This is the exception in most families, as most children inherit their parents' educational values (Gofen, 2009). However, while there are more studies on first-generation college students, there is no follow-up as to how these first-time graduates transfer strategies of college success that were not passed to them. It was the aim of the present study to explore details of parental investment strategies to discover how college success is cultivated in this population through transfer of educational beliefs.

Noeth and Wimberly (2005) stated that many African American students want to attend college. However, some argue that race plays a role in discouraging college completion. Students of color are less likely to have adults who intentionally help them to shape the college planning process (Farmer-Hinton, 2008). González, Stone, and Jovel (2003) found that students of color did not receive direct guidance about the college process. Astin (1999) noted that time spent away from educational development (due to work, family obligations, etc.) is valuable time lost. Ogbu (2004) suggested that, based on fear of the unknown, the common response in the African American community is to discourage rather than encourage (consciously or unconsciously) participation in institutions of higher learning, perhaps for the purposes of obtaining employment to "help the family."

Farmer-Hinton (2008) disagreed with Ogbu and Fordham and contended that the primary source for encouragement for students of color is parents. Backing this claim, although many parents of color consistently serve as "cheerleaders" to their children despite their lack of preparedness, they promote college attendance in the home

(González et al., 2003; Noeth & Wimberly, 2002). Based on the research, parents of color are encouraging higher education but may not have the necessary knowledge to assist students in actually attending. For this reason, many high schools and universities hold parent-centered events. Most of the aforementioned research is based on studies of disadvantaged populations (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; Clark, 1983). A study of African American first-generation parents from rural areas who have completed their degrees should contribute knowledge regarding how college completion is cultivated. It was the expectation in the present study that parental investment strategies of FGCGs would emerge.

African Americans and Higher Education

It is important to discuss the history of African Americans and their struggles to obtain higher education in order to understand determination within FGCGs. American history is threaded with resistance toward education and upward mobility for African Americans. Specifically, “higher education in the United States has been characterized by its pattern of limited access, particularly for persons of African descent” (Brown, Donahoo, & Bertrand, 2001, p. 553). During the colonial era, towns of 50 or more households were required to hire an educator to teach children to read and understand principles of religion and laws of the country, at the request of local ministers (Williams, Ashley, & Rhea, 2004, p. 6). However, colonialists also viewed education of Blacks as a threat to their ability to control slaves (Gurin & Epps, 1975; Williams et al., 2004). Slave codes were created “to ensure the stability of the slave system” (Klinkner & Smith, 1999, p. 11) and these codes forbade Blacks from gathering in groups meet, especially

for educational purposes (Thelin, 2004; Williams et al., 2004). According to Williams et al. (2004), “It was African Americans who, more than any other group, saw education as the great social equalizer” (p. 3).

Education was a privilege afforded to elite and middle-class White families (Lee, W. Y., 2002; Thelin, 2004; Williams et al., 2004). Feagin (2006) reported that Whites inherited some economic resources and/or significant cultural capital such as good education. However, for African Americans, there was no passing down of resources or cultural capital by their ancestors because of the separation and destruction of families during slavery. Instead, survival for freed ex-slaves and Blacks required employment in many odd jobs, increasing mobility through the workforce (Williams et al., 2004).

According to Roebuck and Murty (1993), from the beginning of American history to the end of the Civil War, “the education of slaves and free blacks was against the law in the South and socially unacceptable in the North” (as cited in Shankle, 2009, p. 9). Although it was socially unacceptable in the North to educate Blacks, it was not illegal; a few managed to enroll in colleges and about 28 graduated before the Civil War (Frazier, 1957; Gurin & Epps, 1975; Shankle, 2009). During this time, the majority of poor White Americans were illiterate; thus, educating this population was a nonpriority until the petition of newly freed Blacks led the government to take notice (Williams et al., 2004).

Organizations such as the Freedmen’s Bureau, the American Missionary Association, and individual African Americans joined the crusade against illiteracy by providing education for newly freed slaves in the South and developing school systems designed for freed people following the end of the Civil War (Brown, 2002; Brown et

al., 2001; Browning & Williams, 1978; Gurin & Epps, 1975; Roebuck & Murty, 1993). Obtaining an education was a major effort that eventually required federal assistance and favorable legislation. The Morrill Act of 1862, named after education advocate and member of the Senate Justin Morrill, marked the beginning of America's concern to provide greater access to higher education by using the proceeds of the sale of land to support colleges (Brown, 2002; Provasnik & Shafer, 2004; Thelin, 2004; Williams et al., 2004). The amendment of this act in 1890 extended this access to African Americans by mandating inclusion of 17 historically Black land-grant colleges (Jones-Wilson, 1996, as cited in Shankle, 2009; Shankle, 2009; Thelin, 2004; Williams et al., 2004). These institutions for Blacks were initially non-degree-granting agricultural, mechanical, and industrial schools (Provasnik & Shafer, 2004). The concept of segregation was alive and well, hindering Black children from being educated, until Black churches began to provide educational opportunities to fill the void (Gurin & Epps, 1975; Thelin, 2004; Williams et al., 2004).

Since then, Blacks have made impressive progress in higher education. There are more than three million African Americans enrolled in higher education today. In 2008, 56% of Black students reported immediate transition from high school to college (USDOE, 2011). In fact, African Americans' participation in college in 2008 was higher than it was more than a decade ago (USDOE, 2010). Black students ages 18 to 24 account for 32% of college enrollment. College completion numbers for African Americans have increased as well. According to the USDOE (2011), "About 29 percent of U.S. adults (25 years of age or older) 20 percent of Blacks had at least a bachelor's

degree” in 2008 (p. vi). Numbers of Blacks are also climbing in advanced degrees. In the 2008-2009 academic year, 70,010 master’s degrees, 6,571 first professional (MD, DDS, and law degrees), and 4,434 academic doctoral degrees were conferred (USDOE, 2011). The future looks promising for African American participation; however, it is necessary to discover how participation can be transferred between generations within the Black family.

Education and Rural African Americans

The Black population represented 12.2% of the total population in 2008 (USDOE, 2010); 12.6% of adult rural residents had at least a college degree, which was lower than the rate among adults living in suburbs, cities, and towns. The present study took place in a southeast Texas rural area, where four African American FGCGs and their adult offspring were interviewed. It is important to note that research is “hampered by the lack of a single uniform definition of *rural*” (p. 1). Rural areas are subdivided into categories of fringe, distant, or remote, according to distance from an urbanized area or cluster. A *fringe* locale is 5 miles from an urbanized area, a *distant* locale is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, and a *remote* locale is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area.

A large percentage of students living in the South are enrolled in rural schools (USDOE, 2007). In 2003, the National Household Education Survey (NHES) reported that a lower percentage of students in 6th through 12th grades had parents who reported participating in school-related activities. It should be noted that the majority of the rural

population is not African American; the numbers of rural African Americans who participated in school-related activities was not determined.

For the purposes of this study, it is important to discuss the educational attainment of rural parents, along with their expectations for their child's educational attainment and college enrollment. The USDOE (2010) reported that "the percentage of school-age children with a mother or father with a bachelor's degree as their highest attainment was lower in rural areas than in suburban areas" (p. 40). In addition, 15% of mothers and 14% of fathers in rural areas (compared to 25% and 23% of parents in suburban areas) had a bachelor's degree. In contrast, a lower percentage of rural parents across all other locales expected their child to obtain at least a 4-year degree. College completion rates were lower in rural areas than the national percentage (13% vs. 17%). Again, African American numbers were not reported. Therefore, it is necessary to seek information from rural African American first-generation parents whose children completed requirements for a 4-year college degree.

College Student Success

The phrase "college student success" is heavily associated with student learning outcomes, critical life skills, core competencies, technical skills, and whether a student can do what the degree implies (Miles & Wilson, 2004). The greatest benefits for explaining college student success "result from thorough examination of both pre-college attributes of students and the quality of their interactions with institutions of higher education" (Ishitani, 2006, p. 865). Degree completion can also be linked to "greater lifetime earning potential, personal and professional networking, exposure to

diverse philosophies, enhanced leadership abilities and opportunities, greater health, and a longer life expectancy” (Yoder, 2008, p. 2). Perna (2003) found that more fulfilling work environment, more informed purchases, and lower probability of unemployment are also benefits of college completion. However, success requires support prior to and throughout postsecondary education (Adelman, 2005).

African American students are no exception. Black family support was the main contributor to Black college student success and African American families viewed education as the “path to liberation and success in the American society” (Barnett, 2004, p. 53). Furthermore, education prepares students for leadership at the community, state, and national levels (Yoder, 2008). In a study interviewing parents and their adult children, Shankle (2009) found that parents influenced, motivated, and supported their adult children in college choice decisions and influenced their academic outcomes. Second-generation graduates receive different types and levels of support for their educational attainment and first-generation students receive less support than second-generation students (Naumann et al., 2003; York-Anderson & Bowman, 1991). However, first-generation students do not always do worse than second-generation students (Zalaquette, 1999). It is important to know the struggles of underrepresented college students to inform improvement but it is also necessary to present the positive outcomes for first-generation college students and their willingness to promote education within their own families.

Despite generation status, it is evident college success depends heavily on the student’s preparation and parental support (Miles & Wilson, 2004). Research “suggests

that college planning and preparation for students from traditionally underrepresented college populations must be more cohesive and focused toward providing access to academic, financial, and social information that is instrumental in the students' transitions to college" (Holland, 2010, p. 111).

This is especially significant when discussing the rural population. According to Yoder (2008), "Rural adults receive a lower per-capita income and rural students receive less guidance regarding preparation for, application to, and participation in higher education" (p.1). This statement demonstrates that college success is not easily attained in rural communities and that more research is required to discover the strategies that cultivate success among this population. These findings also point to a "shortage of individualized, concrete, and comprehensive college planning" among African Americans (Holland, 2010, p. 111). If this topic is explored in more detail, college administrators, parents, staff and stakeholders may have more insight into increasing programs and the overall investment in a student's education.

This study explored the parental investment strategies of educated African American rural families to discover how college success is cultivated through the transfer of educational beliefs. Although a few of the cited studies compared first- and second-generation outcomes and success, it is important to note that the majority of those studies were quantitative and did not explore college success from generation to generation within minority families in an effort to uncover the intricacies of what creates a college-going family. Thus, it is necessary to seek information from these rural African

American first-generation parents and their second-generation children to give a voice to this population from a qualitative perspective.

Educated Parents and College Preparation

It is reasonable to assume that the offspring of educated parents have more educational exposure and opportunities than first-generation college students. “Parents invest both material resources and their time into raising their children” and play a role in the preparation and educational exposure received (Guryan, Hurst, & Kearney, 2008, p. 23). “Parental achievement and involvement influence the postsecondary outcome and success of children (Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, & Perna, 2008). Therefore, the investment made by an educated parent “is one possible mechanism through which economic status is transmitted from generation to generation” (DeRonck, 2007, p. 3; Guryan et al., 2008; Milkie, Kendig, Nomaguchi, & Denny, 2010). This transmission requires a parent-teacher relationship that influences the parent-child relationship. Research is consistent in reiterating the message of strong relationships between students, their families, and school personnel to foster positive postsecondary educational outcomes and traditions (Holland, 2010; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Perna & Titus, 2005; Reynolds, 2009).

Building this relationship also takes effort and time, which could be an issue for parents with a career. Work-life balance comes into play when discussing the level of effort needed to foster and maintain good home and school relationships (Guryan et al., 2008; Milkie et al., 2010). By the same token, noneducated parents can have the same dilemma. Many working-class parents raised their first-generation students while

working excessively to make ends meet (Astin, 1999; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; Cho et al., 2008; Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998). However, educated parents spend more time with their children; for example, mothers with a college education or greater spend roughly 4.5 more hours per week with their offspring than mothers with a high school degree or less (Guryan et al., 2008). “This relationship is striking, given that higher-educated parents also spend more time working outside the home” (p.23). This time spent between parents and children could result in greater skill sets, better opportunities for school activity involvement, and so forth. Therefore, the children of more-educated parents have greater educational potential and greater educational opportunities.

Although the strategies used during educational time have yet to be identified among African American rural residents, the literature is clear that a bachelor’s degree reveals positive individual and societal outcomes in academic engagement, employability, and financial security for all college-bound students (Adelman, 2005; Guryan et al., 2008; Milkie et al., 2010; Perna, 2000). The field of economics also supports the conclusion that marginal return on time invested in children with educated parents could be higher (Guryan et al., 2008).

Parental Investment

Parental investment is a concept that emerged in the 1990s and is derived from attachment theory (Bradley, 1998). It was developed to discover whether parental childrearing had any effect on child outcomes and is heavily related to social, human, and cultural capital (Cacace, 2008; Farkas, 1997; Kim & Schneider, 2005; Lareau & Weininger 2003; Lin, 2008; Sandefur, Meier, & Campbell, 2006; Waldron-Hennessey,

2001). Generally, this concept holds that parents invest both material resources and time into raising their children, which is important in child development (Guryan, et al., 2008).

When a child is born, the parent becomes its first teacher (Lewit & Baker, 1995). Parental investment strategies begin with discourse and communication between parent and child and consist of the organization of the child's daily routine (Cheadle, 2008; Lareau, 1996). It is assumed that this communication is extended to schools when the child enters kindergarten and lasts throughout secondary education. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 suggests that two-way communication involving student academic learning is a key investment in the child. Thus, consistency in communication is necessary to achieve successful outcomes.

There have been controversial debates about what parental investment is and who is doing the investing. One idea is that the parent's socioemotional (personality, emotions, and relationships) investment in the child is important to the child's well-being (Bradley, 1998; Bradley, Whiteside-Mansell, Brisby, & Caldwell, 1997). It also suggests that high parental investment produces altruistic, successful, and productive children, whereas low investment predisposes children to negative outcomes (Waldron-Hennessey, 2001).

From some of these ideas, parental investment theory (PIT) was developed while studying abandoned and fatherless children (Fox & Bruce, 2001). This theory is focused on paternal certitude, differential commitments to children, and the insistence that one's parenting investments be made exclusively in one's own children (p. 397). This theory

posits that the burden of the investing is placed on the mothers, while fathers are neglectful (Hays, 1998).

While the role of paternal investment is a valid and relevant point, this study did not use this theory to isolate or heighten the duties of one parent; rather, it used more recent research on parental investment to discover what two parents invest toward successful educational outcomes. Many fields have studied this concept, including biology, sociology, and economics. However, this study relied on the field of psychology, which separates parental investment into components to include behavioral involvement, cognitive/intellectual stimulation, and personal endorsement of academic achievement. Parental investment as it relates to education is focused on a nurturing parent-child relationship aimed at discovering a parent's investment in the child's education, with specific attention paid to behavioral involvement, cognitive/intellectual stimulation, and personal endorsement of academic achievement (Henry et al., 2011, p. 1165). Parental investment is also the discourse/communication, parental influences, and involvement strategies that contribute to the child obtaining a college degree (Henry et al., 2011; Hill & Chao, 2009). Therefore, the relevance of this study rests in part (the other seeking parent's educational beliefs) on the rare qualitative examination of what strategies are being used and their effect on college success (Kim & Schneider, 2005). Further work to craft a comprehensive definition of parental investment is needed (Henry et al., 2011). Through the data analysis process, a working definition of parental investment emerged for the current study that may contribute to future research. The following sections discuss the components of parental investment in detail.

Parental Investment I: Discourse and Communication

Communication is a social activity that requires rapport and involvement in the message (Heath, 1997). According to family systems theorists, communication is important in intimate human relationships and can be what draws people together or separates them, determined by how they deal with conflicts and intergenerational transmission of these messages (Rothbaum, Rosen, Ujiie, & Uchida, 2002). The communication component under the umbrella of parental investment through what psychologists call *behavior involvement* is important and can be displayed through the parent's actions and words with the child and school (Hill & Chao, 2009). Research on parent-child communication suggests that "numerous factors affect the outcomes of supportive interactions, including aspects of the supportive message, the helper, the interaction context, and the recipient" (Burlison, 2009, p. 23). Other research on parent-child communication posits that opportunities to communicate increase as parents and children do more activities (e.g., religious) together (Madyun & Lee, 2010, p. 296). There is a need to study communication that first-generation African American rural parents used to cultivate college success in their adult offspring (Semke & Sheridan, 2012, p. 21).

Another topic of importance is communication between parents and schools and family involvement, which is grounded in the home-school relationship. "It is a multidimensional construct that recognizes the multiple pathways by which families participate in supporting their child's learning at home, at school and through communications across home and school" (Semke & Sheridan, 2012, p. 22). Hill and

Tyson (2009) found a strong relationship between parent involvement during middle school and educational outcomes. The purpose of this study was to explore the parental investment strategies of this population to discover how college success is cultivated through transfer of educational beliefs. This required parents to recall details of their communication with their child. The details of this communication should fit well within the scope of the emerging process.

Parental Investment II: Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is another characteristic of behavioral involvement. It is an integral part of the educational values that children receive. According to Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, and Weiss, (2006), “This involvement may promote positive feelings and attitudes toward education” (p. 653). Recent studies of parental involvement have focused on younger children, who have developmental needs that are different from those of adolescents (Dearing et al., 2006; Davis, 2009; Kirk et al., 2011). Most of these studies have been quantitative. Parent involvement at home includes help with homework, participation in school activities, discussing the child’s schoolwork and experiences at school, reading to the child, and structured home activities (Davis-Kean, 2005; Hill & Chao, 2009; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Kirk et al., 2011; Lee, J., & Bowen, 2006). Parent involvement at school might include parent-teacher conferences, attending programs featuring students, and engaging in volunteer activities (Lee, J., & Bowen, 2006, p. 194). These are general and predictable categories that can emerge with any family. However, one assumption in this study is that there are more strategies that have not been introduced into the research by first-generation rural college

graduates. Further, the perspectives of the adult offspring will allow a complete narrative of the transfer of these strategies.

Educated parents “are likely to be more aware of the parental investment practices that result in better achievement for youth (e.g., navigating the path towards graduation and postsecondary education) . . . They may also feel more comfortable communicating or intervening with the school” (Henry et al., 2011, p. 1174). Although educated, a first-generation parent with an educated adult child generated an original pattern of parental investment that became a process for college success; this process may have been implemented for their children without deliberately knowing that it was in fact a series of investment strategies that became a process.

Wartman (2008) reported that parents had begun to increase their involvement in postsecondary settings, displaying a heightened level of involvement than had been exhibited in their child’s K-12 years. Parent behavioral involvement is also relevant to the parent-child relationship. Young et al. (1995) asserted that “correlates and predictors of life satisfaction in young people consistently report the importance of the parent-child relationship as the strongest predictor of life satisfaction in adolescent offspring” (p. 813). School involvement is also necessary and can affect the type of school a student attends. The level of parent-child and parent-school involvement affects probability of enrolling in a 2-year or 4-year college (Perna & Titus, 2005). Henry et al. (2011) concluded that “parental involvement with the schools is not a one-sided issue” (p. 1174) and involves high levels of deliberate reciprocal interaction between the student,

community, school, and parents. However, information regarding parental involvement by American Americans is scarce (Reynolds, 2009).

Parental Involvement and African Americans

Research suggests that parents have patterns of educational investment and that these patterns are organized according to socioeconomic class (Cheadle, 2008).

However, it is important to note that these patterns do not explain gaps in Black-White test scores but rather disparate patterns of educational investment. In the case of African American youth, LeCroy and Krysik (2008) found that family cohesion, parental monitoring, and parental support had a positive effect on school attachment and outcomes. In addition, parents of different social classes have different perceptions of their roles in facilitating their children's development of cognitive and noncognitive skills (Cheadle, 2008).

It is assumed that these disparities can alter a child's success, especially at the postsecondary level. Therefore, parental investment is a key component in educational achievement and the transferability of beliefs. It is the center of a child's developmental progress from birth to early adulthood. Further, the parental investment process should include a variety of behaviors, attitudes, and messages that together communicate a philosophy regarding the importance of academic success (Cheadle, 2008; McGill et al., 2011). Social economic status has been named a determinant in the parenting styles that affect academic success (Lareau, 2002). While there is speculation regarding parental investment in certain classes, there stands a gap between minority parents and schools that is arguably as important.

Auerbach (2001) concluded that the gulf between minority parents and schools was wide, “separated by legacies of racism, deficit-thinking and mistrust” (p. 1). While it is unfortunate that a gap exist between minority parents and schools, minority parents have a special obligation to their children to prepare them for both college success and bias. In fact, “preparation for bias was positively associated with school involvement, and home and school involvement were also positively correlated with each other” (McGill et al., 2011, p. 7). Research on the relationship between Black middle-class parents and school officials suggests that equitable and socially just power is necessary to foster a positive educational outcome for the child (Reynolds, 2009). Many middle-class Black families who live in close proximity to poor Black families must navigate being middle class in less-advantaged environments, which may result in different patterns of parental investment (Cheadle, 2008). This may be more relevant in rural areas than in urban areas, given the small community environment. Lareau (2002) suggested that higher-income parents deliberately cultivate cognitive and social skills and lower-income parents rely on natural development. These findings are important because they begin to uncover the details in parenting styles between the urban classes, but there is no information that suggests how the parenting styles of rural educated African Americans influence college success.

Studies examining parental involvement among African American students have focused on the at-risk population, thereby ignoring “the ways in which these families promote successful school achievement and experiences” (Yan, 1999, p. 5). Quantitative research shows a correlation between family background and parental involvement (Lee,

J., & Bowen, 2006). The lack of rich, thick description in these quantitative studies underlines the need for qualitative research to provide more information regarding African American parental investment strategies. There is a need for educators, policy makers, and parents to increase their awareness of cultural differences in parental involvement in a narrative way (Yan, 1999, p. 20).

Carter (2008) took a critical race approach to explore how urban Black students' views of themselves shaped their achievement, ideology, and school behaviors. Findings revealed that a positive racial identity established by parents, teachers, schools, and community members contributed to positive outcomes. In fact, "parents who communicated more frequent racism awareness messages were also highly involved in their children's academic lives at school" (McGill et al., 2011, p. 3). In the present study information was sought from this population in their own words to identify parental investment strategies that these families used to cultivate college success (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002).

Parental Investment III: Cognitive/Intellectual Stimulation

The third component of parental investment is *cognitive/intellectual stimulation*. This component captures the extent to which parents expose their children to learning development opportunities, including extracurricular activities, trips to libraries and museums, current events, intellectually stimulating discussions, and learning materials. This is closely related to Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital in that the building of capital contributes to higher grades and a customized educational experience (Dumais & Ward, 2009). These activities are held in high regard in the education community because they

add to academic qualifications (p. 247). This type of investment might include a parent downloading learning materials online to aid in home tutoring; the parent might take the child to tour the parent's alma mater to expose the child to the collegiate environment or might enter the child in art contests sponsored by a local museum. These investments assist the child cognitively and prepare the child for an intellectually stimulating academic environment. It is evident that students and parents expect quality and a return on their collegiate investment (Broekemier & Seshadri, 1999). What is not evident is the rural perspective on investment given the limited resources in a rural community. However, the educated rural parent can rely heavily on the use of personal collegiate experiences to stimulate the cognitive development of the child. These personal experiences can also influence where the child chooses to attend college.

College choice. Choosing a college can be one of the most important decisions in a student's life, and college life can be one of the most critical times of transition. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) model supports parental involvement based on the parent's knowledge and skills, demands on parental time and energy (i.e., work-life balance), and demands for involvement from the child and school. These authors discovered that modeling, reinforcement, and instruction influenced the child's outcomes, which influenced the fit between student outcomes and parental involvement (given the use of appropriate and developmentally sound strategies of involvement). The outcome of this five-level model suggests that the child develops a personal set of knowledge and skills that connects directly to success in school. Bandura (1989) contended that the more self-efficacy one has, the more commitment one has to meeting

self-determined goals. Therefore, first-generation African American rural college graduates could build this self-efficacy in their children through effective parental investment strategies to help their children choose the best collegiate environment.

Broekemier and Seshadri (1999), Hossler and Stage (1992), and Dixon and Martin (1991) agreed that parents are the primary influences relating to college choice. The most important characteristics that parents and students seek in a college are excellent teachers, teacher availability, areas of study, academic reputation, and reasonable cost (Canale, Dunlap, Britt, & Donahue, 1996). *Quality* seems to sum the preferences of parents' and students' desires when searching for the right college (Broekemier & Seshadri, 1999). References to quality are ubiquitous on college campuses and in the discourses of individuals who are concerned about higher education (Litten & Hall, 1989). Cognitive and intellectual stimulation support the parents' approach in determining activities that lead to positive and successful outcomes (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Noeth and Wimberly (2005) reported that 63% of mothers and 43% of fathers in their study were the most influential factor in the college planning process. It is clear that "the college choice process involves a complex weighting and ranking of multiple individual preferences and institutional characteristics for most students and their parents" (Cho, Hudley, Lee, Barry, & Kelly, 2008, p. 97). However, minority students make choices based on different principles.

African American parents and college choice. While there is little research on parental investment strategies of rural African American FGCGs, general research is increasing on the influences that minority parents have on the college choices of their

children. Research suggests several influencers for college choice, especially among certain populations. “Low-income, rural, and female students, regardless of their academic ability, achievement, and expectations, are more likely to choose less selective institutions and demonstrate greater sensitivity to institutional factors such as size and location” (Cho et al., 2008, p. 96). Shankle (2009, p. 5) found that “the way in which African American families influence their children’s college-choice is noteworthy.” While nonminority students and their parents are concerned with the quality of the education, minority parents and their children, regardless of generation status, are more concerned with institutional characteristics, psychosocial factors, location of the college, size of the student population, and financial ability (Cho et al., 2008; Kim, 2004). Involvement by African American parents who attended and completed college could arguably be one of the most important factors in making such a life-altering decision.

Immerwahr (2000) suggested that African American parents often emphasize college attendance to help their children to avoid social and economic struggles. Therefore, a smaller college within a few miles of home is heavily promoted in the minority household. “A wealth of data point to the stress and isolation many underrepresented students feel on campuses when they are a small minority” (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998; Mehta, Newbold, & O'Rourke (2011). The first-generation parent is very much aware of the isolation because he or she may have felt isolated on the campus. The parent is privy to racial issues that plague society and are more involved than ever in their children’s college decisions. For this reason,

minority parents and students also consider the ethnic climate of a college (Cho et al., 2008).

Many African American students aspire to attend college because they want to go beyond their parents' achievements, despite their parents' educational level (Holland, 2010; Shankle, 2009). They inherit their parents' religious beliefs concerning choice and achievement, which heavily influences grade point average (GPA; Toldson & Anderson, 2010). These parents also use religious beliefs to influence positive success among students. In fact, "Blacks in America support religion as a choice in schools more than any other group" (Toldson & Anderson, 2010, p. 206). Therefore, involvement in the Black church becomes a large factor in the academic success of students (Shankle, 2009; Toldson & Anderson, 2010). Religion also plays an important role in promoting success in the rural African American family. Brody, Flor, and Gibson (1999) agreed that families who were involved in the rural African American church were more likely to experience supportive coparenting relationships that related to better performance and fewer problems with externalizing and internalizing behaviors.

Despite religious or nonreligious approaches, encouragement is a pivotal force in the emergence of occupational and educational aspirations and plays a significant role in college preparation (Hertel, 2002). It is conditioned by the ability to prepare the child and relies on parental and sometimes sibling educational attainment (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001). Despite generation status, minority students reported that they received the "cheerleading" type of encouragement that kept them focused and confident but that support in college preparation was insufficient. However, for the second-generation

student, retention becomes an issue if not fully supported by family and friends. Since second-generation students have adequate family support, they specifically look to their friends for additional support, which determines the college adjustment levels for this group (Hertel, 2002). However, retention among SGCGs is much higher than among FGCGs, who may not continue after the first year (Hertel, 2002). For successful students, this support and encouragement lead to a full endorsement and transfer of values and goals from their parents.

Parental Investment IV: Personal Endorsement

The final component of parental investment is *personal endorsement*. This psychology-based concept “reflects the extent to which parents perceive school as important and valuable, hold a favorable attitude toward school, and have high academic aspirations for their child” (Henry et al., 2011). Stage and Hossler (1989) and Flint (1992) found that parents maintained high educational expectations for their children. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) questioned why parents become initially involved, claiming that role construction, sense of efficacy and general invitations, demands, and opportunities for involvement (three major constructs) define and focus on reasons for parental beliefs about their perception of what their children need. However, no matter how much parents invest in their child through involvement and cognitive stimulation, the parents should instill in their children favorable attitudes toward attending college (Dennis et al., 2005).

Parents who influence their children via encouragement strategies should realize positive outcomes. According to Broekemier and Seshadri (1999), a gap results from the

failure to make comparisons between the influences of rural and urban parents and students and counselors and parents and students. Religion plays an important role in promoting success in the rural African American family. The present study explored the details of parental investment strategies to discover how college success was cultivated in this population through the transfer of educational beliefs. Based on the purpose of this study, I posit that a transfer of educational beliefs cannot occur without strategies of parental investment. Therefore, the idea of parental investment should serve to support concepts within a theory that outlines how a transfer of beliefs occurs between parents and their children.

Lieberman's Transgenerational Theory

According to Stuart Lieberman (1979), there are critical periods of learning in childhood during which acquired behaviors, beliefs, and practices are not only transferred but also molded into the child. Specifically, "transgenerational theory (TGT) deals with the rules that govern the communication of acquired practices, behaviors and beliefs between generations" (p. 347). TGT attempts to answer how a family passes on its unique identity and culture and what mechanisms allow the passing of family traditions from one generation to the next. This theory aligns with the aims of discovering the discourse, parental influence, and involvement that create a second generation of college-goers in rural African American families. TGT posits that the passing of information from parent to child is molded into the psyche of the child, enabling a "transgenerational passage of family culture" (Lieberman, 1979, p. 348).

Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that these rules might aid in uncovering how FGCGs create a college-going family by passing on educational beliefs.

Lieberman (1979) suggested that people continue to learn by association. Human complexity owes much to the capacity to continue modifying responses through associational learning. Therefore, children learn from their parents and internalize and update responses as they change. Association learning occurs throughout one's life. The level of interaction during childhood depends on the strength of the parent-child relationship. Lieberman suggested the following concepts: language (communication), family constellation (family structure), bonding (between members), family patterns (the tendency for an event to occur in one generation and skip another), family collision (conflict), and marital choice. He included family losses (deaths) and replacements (shifting the bond from a deceased member to another), family secrets (restricting information flow), and family evolution (change in family culture from generation to generation), contending that of these concepts factor into the transmission of family beliefs, values, and behavior.

Authors and researchers alike have borrowed ideals within TGT to support similar or related theories related to intergenerational transfer of personality characteristics, dysfunctional behavior patterns, traumatic experiences, exchange of family secrets, and health wellness behavior in minorities. Attachment, family systems, human development, psychoanalytical, and genetic theories have supported and been enhanced by these characteristics. In fact, the use of the eight concepts within TGT can be found throughout the literature. Therefore, TGT provides a foundation for researchers

to contribute new knowledge about the transfer of beliefs, behaviors, and communication patterns from generation to generation.

There is a reasonable extent of TGT research in educational literature. There is reason to believe that “individuals’ cognitive skills are positively related to their parents’ abilities, despite controlling for educational attainment and family background” (Anger & Heineck, 2010, p. 1255). These cognitive abilities influence educational attainment and derive from an intergenerational transmission of these skills from parent to child (p. 1256). Research regarding Head Start programs provides a rationale for the program as a vehicle for the upward mobility of minority families (Oyemade, 2010). These premises guide the development of this program and discuss transgenerational poverty. It assumes that “a child could serve as a vehicle for the economic mobility of the family” (p. 591). That study is relevant to the conversation about first-generation college students and graduates. Valencia and Black (2002) set out to uncover myths, expose mythmakers, and debunk ideas that Mexican Americans do not value education. They reported a case study of Mexican American parental involvement, based on discourse from six families in Austin, Texas that provided “strong evidence that Mexican Americans do indeed value education” (p. 81).

Alishio (1992) used the application of TGT to propose a model for applying TGT family intervention strategies to college student psychotherapy. Juarez-Torres, Hurst, and Hurst (2007) studied TGT mentoring among teachers who mentored other teachers as recorded in 125 autobiographical portfolios. The findings revealed that active involvement among mentoring teachers directly affects teacher retention. It is plausible

that communication transfer can be positive or negative, affecting the outcome. Lin, Suyemoto, and Kiang (2009) found that education was helpful in facilitating intergenerational communication to overcome the trauma narratives passed down in refugee families affected by war and genocide. Past learning is the vehicle used by parents to transmit educational beliefs and cognitive ability, thereby highlighting the importance of parental investment.

TGT has been used in other disciplines, including psychology, biology, and health care. Attachment theory was used to postulate spiritual-religious forms of interventions “that may be of help in mitigating the harmful consequences of severe trauma in the lives of trauma survivors and its generational effects in the lives of their offspring” (Doucet & Rovers, 2010, p. 93). These researchers concluded that there are spiritual and religious resources that can facilitate the healing of posttraumatic experiences. Concepts of TGT were used in biology to explain how the transfer of beliefs within a family plays a significant role in organ donor decision making among minorities. Religious beliefs, events such as the Tuskegee syphilis study, and the overall distrust of the medical field (among others) sparked negative attitudes in the decision to become an organ donor (Xu, 2011). A health promotion study by Watson and Pulliam (2000) used concepts from TGT to support adult learning theory and to propose a program that would measure desirable transition outcomes for older adults. These examples demonstrate that there are many theoretical orientations for studying transgenerational transmission (Garvey, 1999), an ever-evolving theory with many roots. Contributions from the social sciences and anthropology, economics, psychology, and

educational science have developed and enhanced theories similar to TGT (Schönflug, 2009). Relevance to the transmission of beliefs and behaviors between generations is consistent throughout the research. Such transmission informs other parents, college staff and administrators, and stakeholders of the importance of parent-child interaction and provides some explanation for the thought processes behind family behavior. While the number of studies on the role of family and college success is growing, the intergenerational transmission of educational beliefs is an underresearched topic in the field of education (Anger & Heineck, 2010).

In the present study the concepts of language, bonding, and family evolution were extracted from TGT to determine how college success is cultivated. Lieberman discussed *language* in the parent-child relationship, which is relevant to the communication component in this study. He posited that children learn emotional, behavioral, and spoken language from their parents. All three forms of language are used simultaneously during effective communication; however, the focus in the present study was behavioral language. Lieberman (1979) noted that parents' behavior, beliefs and control are directly handed down to the next generation. Thus, the parents' investment through discourse were expected to reflect transfer.

Complications may emerge when family members pass conflicting reaction patterns to the same child. For example, a first-generation mother who values education and a father who did not attend college may not share the same values and may pass on conflicting views to the child. As a result, there is a chance that child may not attend college, depending on the dynamics within the parental relationship. "Transgenerational

passage incorporates the transmission of the entire gamut of family-related traditions, beliefs and behaviors . . . including racial and ethnic values . . . choice of occupation and educational aspirations” (Lieberman, 1979, p.350). The present study focused on the discourse that the parents used during their child’s secondary through postsecondary years.

Bonding between family members constitutes an emotional attachment between two or more members (Lieberman, 1979). Bonding is an important concept in this study because of the need for the college intervention process to be well received. Parental influence plays a role in bonding between parent and child, especially if the parent is educated and communicates the rewards of higher education. Although the concept of upward mobility is not the focus of this study, it was anticipated that the discourse between parent and child might include this concept, fostering a bond rooted in the child becoming an additional role model for the family. The parent-child relationship and bonding was the second focus of data collection.

Family evolution refers to the change in family culture after the passing of beliefs, practices, and traditions from one generation to the next. There is a relationship between the two concepts of family evolution and personal endorsement, as discussed in this chapter. In the context of creating a college-going family, family evolution can occur once the parent(s) transfer beliefs to a child, who then acquires this endowment. According to Davis-Kean (2005), parents’ beliefs and behaviors are related to a child’s beliefs and achievement. “For family evolution to occur there must be a variation between family cultures, a means of passing on the revised instructions that produce a

molded variant individual, and a difference in the fitness of such variants” (Lieberman, 1979, p. 359) In other words, rural FGCGs changed the family culture when they earned a college degree. Once this college graduate has children, the instructions from this parent can be revised to ensure that the child follows the new pattern. Therefore, family evolution emphasizes the possibilities of change in a family system over time. New knowledge is widely disseminated and put to use by the next generation, which can instill new traditions within a family overnight (Lieberman, 1979).

Based on this concept, parental investment can cultivate college success in each generation. TGT supported this study in determining how parental investment strategies are transferred in this population. It provided a framework to increase knowledge about the bond between parent and child and the variations in communication in this relationship that can ignite college-going behaviors from one generation to the next. This theory provides a broad perspective regarding differences in communication between parent and child but does not address alternate paths of communication, should the next generation reject the beliefs of the previous generation. Figure 1 applies the concepts of TGT to the process of creating a college-going family among rural African American families. The figure illustrates the components needed to cultivate college success based on the concepts within parental investment and Lieberman’s (1979) TGT.

The study was designed to give voice to this underrepresented population. Concepts within TGT and parental investment framed this research in an attempt to contribute new knowledge to the field of higher education. Figure 1 suggests that family evolution cannot occur unless there is a process of parental investment strategies.

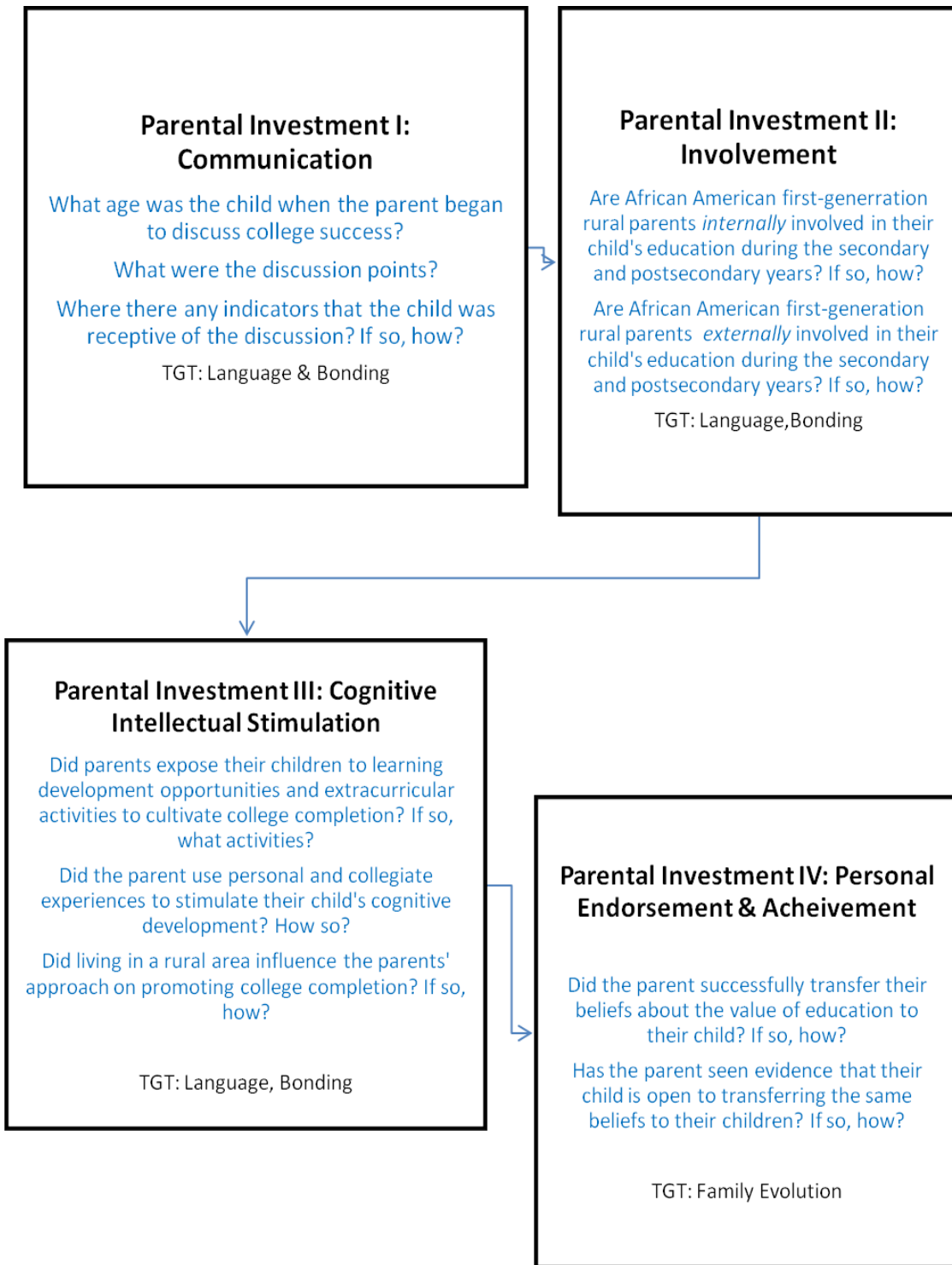


Figure 1. The role of rural African American first-generation college graduates in cultivating college success through parental investment and transgenerational theory.

Parental investment among first-time college graduates is informed by the parents' educational beliefs, allowing the child to receive the information positively, and produce a second college degree in the family. The process of creating a college-going family should serve as a support of these beliefs and should show the child that the parent is genuinely interested in advancing the child through the college years. The African American population in rural areas is lower than that of Whites and the educational levels and salaries among rural residents are lower than those in urban communities. Therefore, it was necessary to seek detailed information from educated African American rural residents to contribute to the research on college success. These stories of success were told through the eyes of the parents and their adult offspring.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this literature review was to connect relevant literature to the topic of this study. The review introduced the connection between parental investment and transgenerational theory and discussed how both are necessary to explore how beliefs and views of parents are passed on to their children. This review also discussed the African American population and its history of upward mobility, and how college success plays a role in their overall success. Further, literature on first- and second-generation status, preparedness, college choice, and African American rural residents speaks to the uniqueness of this study.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

This study utilized qualitative research methods for data collection and analysis. Qualitative research is used to understand interpretations of an experience at a particular point in time (Merriam, 2009). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) demonstrated that qualitative researchers “seek answers to questions that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning” (p. 10). Having a conversation with someone about how that person thinks or feels is very common in everyday life. Qualitative research allows the researcher to implement a systematic way to collect conversations, transcribe them, and derive common themes to make meaning of what people think and why they think it (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). The sample in qualitative research is small to allow concentration on a particular group and to allow the researcher to enter that group’s world (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). The final product in this study was a rich, thick description of how African American FGCGs living in a rural area create college-going offspring (Merriam, 2009).

Statement of the Research Questions

A qualitative research study requires research questions to state what an investigator wants to learn (Maxwell, 2005). This study was designed to address two research questions:

1. What parental investment strategies did the first-generation African American rural parent use to cultivate college success in their children?

2. In what specific ways did this parent transfer their educational beliefs to ensure college completion?

These questions were framed to discover the total parental investment of this population through discourse, parental influences, and involvement that fostered support of the child through the completion of college.

Theoretical Tradition

The interpretive/constructivist orientation undergirds this topic as it assumes that reality is socially constructed and that there is no single, observable reality (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2009). In other words, it was to be expected that each parent and their offspring would have a different interpretation of his or her world; the process that they implement and how they implement them were not expected to be identical. The participants were expected to relate different experiences in different ways. Qualitative research recognized and allowed for these differences so that the stories could be analyzed and common themes could emerge from the discourse. A quantitative study involves testing a theory in a controlled environment through statistical analysis to determine whether predictive generalizations hold true (Patton, 2002).

A qualitative study involves a process or study conducted in a natural setting that seeks to understand a social or human problem (Merriam, 2009). The research is accomplished by building a holistic picture created with words and based on the views of the informants. According to Creswell (2007), the qualitative paradigm is best suited when the nature of the problem involves exploratory research and the variables are

unknown. Therefore, a qualitative study was deemed most appropriate for this study, as the method focuses on studying issues in depth and detail (Patton, 2002).

A basic qualitative study is the most common form of qualitative research found in education. According to Merriam (2009), qualitative researchers who conduct a basic study are “interested in (a) how people interpret their experiences, (b) how they construct their worlds, and (c) what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 23). The goal of a basic qualitative study is to uncover and interpret meaning (Merriam, 2009, p. 24). This study utilized a basic qualitative design to receive and analyze the parental investment strategies of rural African American FGCGs to interpret the ways in which these parents transferred their educational beliefs to their children to create a continuation of education in the family.

Site and Sample Selection

Participants were selected from two southeast rural cities. I attended Freedmen University (pseudonym), located in one of the cities, and am a former employee. The county demographics allowed access to the African American rural population. The 2010 census recorded that the population of the county was 43,205, of which 25% were African American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010a). The two cities in this county with the largest African American populations were chosen as sites from this study. As of 2010, City 1 had a population of 5,770, of whom 39% were African American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010b), and City 2 had a population of 5,576, of whom 89% were African American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010c).

The physical environment of a setting is critical to the results of a research study (Patton, 2002; Shankle, 2009). In an effort to collect thick and rich data, the participants were interviewed in their own homes or workplaces, in a study room in the Freedmen University library, via telephone, and/or via email. It was anticipated that these options would not only provide a convenient site for interviews but would also serve as an inspirational tool (home interview) because the elements in the environment would add visual support to the responses. The offspring interviews were flexible due to location constrictions. The chances of the offspring living in the rural city where they had grown up were minimal; however, if they happened to live in or near City 1 or City 2, I interviewed them in their homes, a neutral location of their choice, or via telephone.

Purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants (Merriam, 2009). “The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question” (Creswell, 2009, p. 178). Sampling is aimed at insight about the phenomenon instead of empirical generalization from sample to population (Patton, 2002). “The logic and power of purposeful sampling derive from the emphasis on in-depth understanding” (p. 46). Therefore, a sample of rural African American FGCGs with children who have completed college was deemed appropriate to gain information to address the research questions and to understand how a college-going family is created in rural areas.

Data were collected through individual interviews with a maximum of six first-generation African American parents and six adult children who had graduated from college. This small sample was chosen to increase depth of understanding and reduce

generalizability by allowing the process differences in each household to emerge (Patton, 2002). Recruitment began by gaining access to a local church and members of all nine of the African American Greek Letter Organization alumni chapters (Alpha Phi Alpha, Alpha Kappa Alpha, Omega Psi Phi, Kappa Alpha Psi, Delta Sigma Theta, Phi Beta Sigma, Zeta Phi Beta, Sigma Gamma Rho, and Iota Phi Theta) in the area. The African American church was selected due to its years of strength and support for the African American community and its promotion of education (Shankle, 2009). I anticipated that members of the African American church would be supportive of the contribution made to higher education.

The following criteria were used for inclusion in the study: (a) African American; (b) former or current resident of City 1 or City 2 (former residents include parents who raised their children in the area but no longer lived in the area); and (c) a FGCG and SGCG from any 4-year public or private college or university. Participants were invited to refer other residents of the area who met the criteria. I recruited a maximum of 12 persons. Each family group included parents (mother and/or father) and at least one adult child (male or female). The possibility of interviewing a set of parents was an option. If two parents met the criteria and agreed to participate, they were interviewed together in one interview session. However, the length of time for the couple interview was extended to 2 hours to accommodate two-person responses.

Selecting parents and their adult children who had completed college measured the parent-child relationship, support level, discourse, and parental influences and involvement during the child's middle and high school years. These strategies served to

influence the child to attend *and* finish college. This requirement coincides with the *family evolution* component of TGT, the final component of the theory that signifies that change has occurred in the family (in this case, creation of a college-going family marked by an SGCG).

Researcher's Role Management

A researcher may take one of several stances during data collection that details the relationship between the observer and the observed (Merriam, 2009). In this study researcher participation was secondary to the role of information gatherer because I do not have a child who has completed college and do not live in a rural area. The goal of the study was to explore the details of parental investment strategies to discover how college success is cultivated in this population through the transfer of educational beliefs. Therefore, my relationship with the participants was that of observer (Merriam, 2009). In this relationship, researchers “observe and interact closely enough with members to establish an insider’s identity without participating in those activities constituting the core group membership” (Adler & Adler, 1998, p. 85).

Entry

Patton (2002) described entry into the field as a way to make contact to find some pattern of behavior that would permit the researcher to be accepted. Entry was gained for this study through one or more African American churches in and/or near Cities 1 and 2 and nine chapters of African American Greek letter organizations in the area to distribute recruitment information. As a Christian, alumnus/former employee of Freedmen’s University and member of one of the Greek organizations, I was able to

establish initial rapport with the gatekeepers, including the presidents of the Greek organizations and the church representative. An authorization letter was sent by mail and/or e-mail to the churches and chapters. The representatives replied, authorizing me to recruit participants.

Reciprocity

Parents' discussion of their children or family life is a very personal revelation. It would be easy to avoid answering such personal questions. Thus, the objective was to foster mutual respect, trust, and reciprocity in the group interview (Patton, 2002) so that the information gained through one-on-one interview, telephone interviews, and email would serve to assist other parents, researchers, and policy makers and add to the literature on this topic. The contribution of time and cooperation by the participants was reciprocated by making their participation as convenient as possible within the constraints of research dynamics and personal ethics (Rossman & Marshall, 2006). All participants were afforded the opportunity to review the report and all participants received a copy of the final product.

Ethics

According to Creswell (2009), a researcher must develop trust with participants and promote the integrity of research by protecting them. Creswell suggested that writers "anticipate and address any ethical dilemmas that may arise in their research" (p. 88). This principle was followed in this study. The information that the participants shared was treated as confidential; no identities, comments, or experiences were shared except in anonymous form.

Ensuring the confidentiality of participants required an informed consent form (Creswell, 2009), among other protection strategies. First, the form and statement reviewed the purpose and process of the interview and described how the information would be used. Second, it was necessary to code the data. Coding assists in reducing the participants' transcripts "into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information" (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p.171). Third, interviews, transcripts, notes, and printed emails were kept confidential, stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home. Data were not shared with anyone other than participants, the faculty dissertation committee, the transcriptionist, and the editor. The emails were destroyed after I had printed the responses. Fourth, pseudonyms were assigned to the parents, their families, and their alma maters to protect identity (Merriam, 2009). Based on these ethical strategies to protect the participants, risks were considered to be minimal and no greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Researcher Strategies

The research for this study began by becoming familiar with the African American rural population. This was accomplished by reviewing literature and seeking information on the population via the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2010). As a college recruiter, I also worked closely with African American rural parents and their offspring during the first stages of the college process. Much of the literature on the education of rural residents suggests that rural residents have fewer bachelor degrees, lower expectations for educational attainment, and less parental investment than families in any other locale

(Britton, 2011; Henry et al., 2011; Irvin, Meece, Byum, Farmer, & Hutchins, 2011; Kendell, 2009; USDOE, 2010). Therefore, this study filled a gap in the literature concerning this population and their college success outcomes.

Recruitment

An introduction (Appendix A) and authorization letter (Appendix B) were created to generate interest and to receive permission to recruit participants from these organizations. For the church, I proposed the following options for approval: announcement of the purpose and criteria of the study after church services via a church script (Appendix C), posting a flyer in the facility (Appendix D), or placing an announcement in the church bulletin (Appendix E).

The Greek organizations were selected because the members were all African American and alumni chapter membership requires a 4-year college degree. For Greek organizations, I proposed that a chapter representative read the introduction letter at the group's February 2012 meeting and distribute the contact information to members. I created a follow-up e-mail (Appendix F) to remind church/organization members of the study and its purpose. Greek chapter leaders were asked to send this e-mail to all chapter members via the chapter listserv or communication board (Shankle, 2009). It was most appropriate for the potential participants to contact me to eliminate the possibility of distributing names and telephone numbers of persons who did not want to be contacted. Next, a general telephone script (Appendix G) was created to ensure appropriate flow of conversation and accuracy of communication between myself and potential participant regarding the study. At the end of the call, I obtained the e-mail address from the

potential participant if he or she agreed to hear more about the study. I sent an e-mail to potential participants (Appendix H) with attached Consent Form (Appendix I) and Biographical Information Form (Appendix J) to be returned within 5 days. Upon making a decision to participate, the participant returned the aforementioned documents via e-mail and an interview date and time was scheduled.

The in-depth interview questions for the parent (Appendix K) and offspring (Appendix L) were presented in open-ended format. The questions were designed to correlate directly with the conceptual framework derived from Lieberman's TGT. Questions for both parent and offspring were formulated to align with the concepts of *language*, *bonding*, and *family evolution*. For example, the interview questions that were aligned with the *language* concept focused on the discourse that the parents used to convey the importance of education to their children, asking parents to share specific phrases that they or their spouse had used. The interview questions that were aligned with the *bonding* concept focused on parental involvement and influences, asking the participants to discuss their relationship with their parents/child through the years and to share how their relationship had provided the vehicle to influence the child's educational values positively. The interview questions that were aligned with the *family evolution* concept focused on the level of support that the parents had provided to the child throughout the college years that had ultimately created college success. Once participants had entered the interview, my role was that of "process historian" (Patton, 2002). Parents were asked to discuss their feelings regarding their child's accomplishment and what that accomplishment meant for their family. The child was

asked to discuss feelings about continuing the legacy that their parents had begun. During the interview, I utilized a self-generated notes and observation form (Appendix M) to capture thick descriptors such as facial expressions, hand gestures, and body language. Email was used as a follow-up/informal conversation tool for the parents and offspring to produce a thicker description and to add details to the data that were collected during the interviews. Maxwell (2005) found that collecting multiple sources of data reduces the risk that conclusions will be limited.

Emergent Design

The design of naturalistic inquiry must emerge, develop, and unfold; it cannot be predetermined (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In an emergent design, “the researcher avoids getting locked in to rigid designs that eliminate responses and pursues new paths of discovery” (Patton, 2002, p. 40). This flexibility is required in qualitative research to allow for evolution of the participants’ experiences as they develop; the researcher’s responsibility is to capture this evolution as it unfolds (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). This study was designed to allow the data to address the research questions within the constructs of the conceptual framework. Any changes or new paths of discovery were reported in Chapter IV.

Data Collection Techniques

In a qualitative study data are collected through interviews, observations, or documents (Patton, 2002; Merriam, 2009). The qualitative findings in this type of study “grow out of three kinds of data collection: (a) in-depth, open ended interviews; (b) direct observation; and (c) written documents” (Patton, 2002, p. 4). Further, in-depth

open-ended interviews and review of documents yielded direct quotations from participants about their experiences as parents seeking to transfer their educational beliefs and students manifesting these beliefs to cultivate college success (Patton, 2002). The interviews took place in the homes of the participants, in a study room at Freedmen's University, or via telephone. One week after the offspring interviews, participants were asked to answer questions via email or text message in case I had follow-up questions or sought clarification of responses. Parents were reached by telephone for follow-up. These text messages were forwarded to my email account and all responses were printed immediately after each response and stored in the locked box in the file cabinet. The emails and texts were deleted after the last response was collected.

Parent and Offspring Interviews

According to Patton (2002), interviews allow the researcher to gain perspectives of the participants in their own words. He asserted that “the much smaller sample in open-ended interviews adds depth, detail and meaning at a very personal level of experience” (p. 17). Rubin and Rubin (2005) introduced the concept of investigative interviewing as being “narrowly focused to learn what happened in a specific instance” (p. 7). These authors outlined types of investigative interviewing, including *oral history*, and interview type that is focused on events and processes and explores past events (broad or narrow) to allow the researcher to explore the history of the participants' experiences. “The most common form of interview is the person-to-person encounter in which one person elicits information from another” (Merriam, 2009, p. 88). Two

separate person-to-person interviews were utilized in this study. These conversations took place in the form of two separate interviews, one with parents and the other with their adult children. These interviews sought information about a specific time in the past that had created a current educational evolution of the family. The parents were asked questions related to their background as first-generation students, their parental investment strategies over time, the educational values that they had passed along to their children, and what that process had meant to them. The offspring interview focused on the offspring's definition and view of the parental strategies that had been implemented, their experiences as students, the development of their educational values, and what it had meant to have continued their parents' legacy. The main purpose of these interviews was to discuss what was on the minds of the participants and to construct meaning of their worlds (Patton, 2002).

The interview method was chosen based on an "interest in past events that are impossible to replicate" (Merriam, 2009, p. 88). A semistructured or interview guide approach (Merriam, 2009) was used to conduct the in-depth, open-ended interviews because it allowed a mix of more- and less-structured questions. For example, the parents were asked to recall the specific age of the child at the time the child was receptive to the parents' discourse about a college-going morale. Likewise, the offspring were asked to recall the age at which they seriously thought of going to college, based on their parents' influence. This was important because part of discovering the process of how college-going families are created required specific ages and discourse at the time that the discourse occurred. The interview questions focused on the parents' investment

strategies that had been implemented during the child's primary, secondary, and postsecondary years (if applicable).

Telephone interviews were used to collect data from the offspring if they no longer lived outside the major city or state of their parents. Clarification probes are questions after the interviews that clarify a statement that a respondent provided in the interview (Patton, 2002). This type of interview was also used as a follow-up tool in case I wanted to ask clarification probes or additional questions for more information. The duration of each interview was about an hour; I asked about 10-12 questions per interview. Notes were also taken regarding verbal and nonverbal cues.

Document Review

Emails were used to collect written data supplementary to the interview discussions. These data were subsequently analyzed. An unanswered questions arose from the interview data, emails were sent to enhance interview data, to capture information about the participants in their own words (Merriam, 2009), and to gather additional dialogue regarding the relationships between parent and child. This information provided a foundation for the moments that sparked the need to transfer educational beliefs (through discourse, parental involvement, and influence). Both parents and their children were questioned via email after the individual interviews were complete. The responses were printed daily and stored in the researcher's locked box in a file cabinet. The emails and telephone interviews provided the opportunity to clarify statements or follow up with the participants.

Assumptions

Patton (2002, p.337) noted that it is important for a researcher to question “the hidden assumptions” surrounding the “evaluation work.” During the design stage of this study, it was assumed that there is a college-going process implemented by rural African American FGCGs to ensure that their educational beliefs are transferred to their children. The goal of the study was to determine how rural African American FGCGs create this evolution, starting with their offspring.

Based on the choice of conceptual framework, it was assumed that a college-going family’s educational habits continuously evolve once a FGCG becomes a parent. Calabrese (2006) reported that the use of a conceptual framework allows a researcher to identify a model of what the researcher believes is happening.

The assumptions in this study included the belief that the background and former academic experiences of the parents, support level between middle school and college graduation, parental influence and involvement, parent-child relationship, and discourse played a role in whether or not a SGCG was created. It was also assumed that “a college-going family” meant that there would be a continuation of education after a second-generation graduate was created.

Managing and Recording Data

The interviews were digitally recorded. A notes and observation form (Appendix M) was used to capture nonverbal cues during the interviews and to back up the data in case of technical failure (Shankle, 2009). After each interview, I used a reflexive journal to record my thoughts. The files of the digital recordings were saved electronically for

future updates and/or clarifications. They were also printed and stored in a locked box in a locked file cabinet in my home. The documents (Google blog printouts) and notes were placed in separate folders and locked in the same file cabinet. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), telephone interviews can pose difficulty in collecting nonverbal cues, stress, and anxiety. I compensated by using verbal temperature checks, that is, infusing “communications that are normally done nonverbally” (p. 126). For instance, asking “Are you OK with this topic? (p. 126)” was the best way to determine whether I had asked a sensitive question.

Assuring Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) established four criteria for trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In order to establish *credibility*, the researcher must use a combination of techniques. In this study the combination included triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking. Credibility assures the reader that the researcher is providing a complete and accurate representation of the respondent’s realities-the “truth value” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). To establish credibility, the respondents reviewed the transcribed interviews.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) described purposeful sampling as a part of *transferability*. Obtaining lived realities and tacit knowledge through interviews produces the thick description that is needed to realize transferability (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The interview questions were mostly open ended to ensure collection of thick, rich data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that the reader instead of the researcher ultimately must determine the application of the findings. Transferability provides the

thick descriptions (a term coined by Geertz) of the respondents lived experiences and realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, transferability should provide the reader with enough information so that the study may be duplicated and compared with similar findings (Schwandt, 2007). The purpose of this study was to explore the parental investment strategies of first-generation African American rural college graduates to discover how college success is cultivated through transfer of educational beliefs.

Triangulation was used to provide credibility to the findings and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation uses multiple sources of data and strengthens the reliability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). The point of triangulation is not to demonstrate that different data sources yield the same result but to test for consistency (Patton, 2002). The multiple sources of data in this study included separate parent and offspring interviews, email printouts (documents), and/or telephone interviews. Data from the documents and transcripts of the interviews were used to check for consistency in matching and conflicting responses.

Dependability is determined by whether the conclusions are consistent with the data and the results make sense (Merriam, 1998). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), dependability and confirmability are interrelated and must be examined and be established independently. They explained that dependability looks at the inquiry process and *confirmability* looks at the findings of the inquiry. In this study audit trails were used to meet dependability and confirmability requirements to ensure that the study could be duplicated. Therefore, methods, procedures and decision points were reported in detail.

Member checking and peer debriefing were utilized to ensure trustworthiness of the study findings. In member checking, data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of the groups from whom the data were collected; it is the most crucial way to establish credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A copy of the transcription of the interview was sent to the participants with a request that they check for completeness and accuracy of their responses. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), peer debriefing is “a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (p. 308). Peer debriefers (dissertation committee chair and co-chair) reviewed the findings and responded with comments and recommendations.

Data Analysis Strategies

The analysis of data in a basic qualitative study involves identifying recurring patterns that characterize the data and findings are recurring patterns or themes supported by the data for which they were derived (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). This study used content analysis to analyze the data collected in the interview (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). “All qualitative analysis is content analysis in that it is the *content* of interviews, field notes, and documents that is analyzed” (Merriam, 2009, p. 205). The analysis of data is my interpretation of the participants’ understanding of the main research question (Merriam, 2009). Using content analysis to analyze the data ensured that the focus of analysis was on the communication of meaning. According to Merriam (2009), content analysis involves transcribing, coding, grouping common themes, and labeling them

appropriately. Merriam (2009) specified that “the units of measurement in this form of content analysis center on communication, especially the frequency and variety of messages” (p. 205). Analysis in this study focused on the themes derived from the parental investment strategies (parent interviews) and the receipt of those strategies (offspring interview). Therefore, this form of analysis allowed analysis of the intricacies of communication between parent and child to cultivate college success.

The interviews were transcribed and the data were categorized by meaning and concept. These units were then coded according to their meaning and placed on note cards. Themes were derived by grouping the cards under common headings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). Assigning themes continued until all data were analyzed and there was no new information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The topics that emerged from these categories identified the strategies that had been implemented by the parents, the confirmation/receipt of these strategies, the transfer of educational values/beliefs, and the meaning of college success to these families.

During the analysis and writing phase of the study, I identified comments from the transcripts that best described the emerging theme and allowed those comments to represent the theme and subthemes, a type of analysis known as *in vivo* coding (Charmaz, 2006). *In vivo* coding allows the titles of the themes to be represented using the narrative of the participants. For example, the parents and a few of the adult offspring used the phrase “catch them early” or “it was instilled early” in describing the events surrounding their first exposure to higher education. This signified the first theme, which identified the first strategy that parents used to cultivate college success.

Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on the methods used to complete this study. I used a basic qualitative design to collect conversations, create transcriptions, and derive common themes to make meaning of the participants' experiences. The interpretive/constructivist orientation undergirded this topic, as the participants socially constructed their own realities. In this study I acted as "participant as observer" to interact closely with the participants without constituting core group membership. Data collection in this study consisted of separate parent and offspring interviews, email printouts (documents), and telephone interviews. Data from the documents and transcripts of the interviews were used to check for consistency in matching and conflicting responses. The content analysis technique was used to analyze the data. *In vivo* coding was used to identify the titles of emerging themes and subthemes. Triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, and an audit trail ensured trustworthiness of the data.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter presents findings from an investigation focused on the parental investment strategies and educational beliefs of first-generation African American rural college graduates and their adult offspring. Two research questions were developed to identify parental investment strategies and educational beliefs that these parents impart to ensure the college success of their children.

1. What parental investment strategies did first-generation African American rural parents use to cultivate college success in their children?

2. In what specific ways did these parents transfer their educational beliefs to ensure college completion?

Demographic information was collected using the biographical form (Appendix J). Brief profiles of each family are presented to build on the characteristics of the participants and describe the parent and adult offspring as a family unit. Pseudonyms were utilized to protect the identity of the participants and their family members, schools, and universities. Next, a methodological summary recounts the research process. Finally, a summary and analysis of the findings in this study are presented based on the emerging themes.

In vivo coding was used to allow the titles of the themes and subthemes to be represented using the narratives of the participants. The themes are based on the parental investment strategies and beliefs that these parents used to cultivate college success in their adult offspring: (a) Foundation—Catch Them Early, (b) Consistency—Set the

Tone, (c) Readiness—Keep Them Busy, (d) Selection—Don't Let Them Break Rank, (e) Evolution—Encourage Advancement, and (f) Transmission—Tell the Generations.

Two subthemes emerged from the data to support the first theme: (a) Form a Strong Coparenting Relationship, and (b) Create a Sibling Assistant. While these subthemes did not emerge as major themes, they provided some common level of support toward creating a solid foundation toward college success.

Population, Sample, and Participants

This study began in spring 2012. Interviews were conducted April 17–30, 2012; however, data collection continued until June 2012. All participants were first- and second-generation African American rural college graduates consisting of one parent and one adult offspring. The families consisted of one father and four mothers and one adult offspring per family—three sons and two daughters. The number of potential participants was set at a maximum of 12, and 10 invitees agreed to participate. All parents had advanced degrees: four master's degrees and one doctoral degree. Three adult offspring had earned bachelor's degrees, one had earned a master's degree, and one earned a doctorate. It is necessary to mention that the university located in Posh Valley (Freedmen) employs 75% of the Posh Valley, Hope Station, and Windsor population, and four of the five parents were current or former employees of the university, working in various departments such as Library Services, Enrollment Management, and Cooperative Extension. There was one retired English Professor (Freedmen) and a K–12 administrator. The adult children had a variety of occupations: pharmacist, college faculty (Freedmen), paralegal, sales manager, and music instructor. One parent was a

current resident of Posh Valley, Hempstead, or Hope Station, but none of the adult offspring were current residents. Three parents and two adult offspring had been raised in the area. The other two parents, from a rural city in Mississippi and a major city near Posh Valley, had raised their children in the area. The average age of the parents was 60.4 years and the average age of the adult children was 31 years. Large families were a characteristic of these participants. The number of siblings of the parents ranged from three to nine and the number of siblings of the adult offspring ranged from two to six.

All of the parents had earned Bachelor's degrees from the same Historically Black College/University (HBCU: Freedman University) in the Posh Valley, Hope Station, and Windsor area, and three of the adult offspring had attended Predominately White Institutions (PWI) and two had attended the same HBCU as their parents. Three of the parents had earned a master's degree from an HBCU and two had earned a master's degree or higher from a PWI. Two of the adult children had earned a master's degree and one had earned a doctoral degree from an HBCU. All but three siblings of the adult offspring had earned at least a bachelor's degree or higher. All but one of the parents and two adult children were members of an African American Greek letter organization located in the Posh Valley area. Although two participants were recruited from the local church, a third participant (recruited via Facebook) was also a member. Tables 1 through 4 summarize the demographic and educational characteristics of the participants and their families.

Table 1

Family Constellations of Participants

Family	Family member	Relationship	Age	Residence ^a
Farrell	Patrice	Stepmother	49	Former resident
	Sasha	Adult stepdaughter	29	Nonresident
Carson	Kevin, Sr.	Father	52	Former resident
	Kevin, Jr.	Adult son	25	Nonresident
Wilson	Modestine	Mother	67	Former resident
	Jason	Adult son	35	Former resident
Walker	Beverly	Mother	83	Current resident
	Selene	Adult daughter	44	Former resident
Regan	Sharon	Mother	51	Former resident
	Chance	Adult son	22	Nonresident

^aCurrent or former resident of Posh Valley, Hope Station, or Windsor. This study required that the parent be a current or former resident of one of these areas. Nonresident status indicates that the parent relocated to raise the children.

Family Profiles

The Farrell Family

The Farrell family consisted of a father, stepmother, Patrice and three adult children: two sons and one daughter. The mother was interviewed because she met the criteria for the study and responded to the solicitation email. The patriarch of the family had been raised in Louisiana, attended college for 2 years, and was a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. He was a recent retiree from a large oil company in the Southeast. The matriarch, Patrice, is a college administrator at Freedmen University, a former

Table 2

Participants' Educational Background

Family	Family member	Degree	Undergraduate school ^a	Undergraduate major
Farrell	Patrice	Master	HBCU	Merchandising/Design English
	Sasha	Bachelor	PWI	
Carson	Kevin, Sr.	Doctor	HBCU	Education Music
	Kevin, Jr.	Bachelor	PWI	
Wilson	Modestine	Master	HBCU	Education Biology
	Jason	Doctor	HBCU	
Walker	Beverly	Master	HBCU	English Math/Computer Science
	Selene	Master	HBCU	
Regan	Sharon	Master	HBCU	Business Music
	Chance	Bachelor	PWI	

^aHBCU = Historically Black College/University, PWI = Primarily White Institution.

resident of the Posh Valley area, a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and a two-time alumnus of the university. Until recently, she commuted more than 50 miles to work each day, as she and her husband live in a nearby city. When her husband retired and all of the children were gone, they moved to a suburb 15 miles from Freedmen University. She was very happy about the shorter commute and made it clear that she would continue to work because she loved helping college students. Her parents currently reside in the home where she grew up in, which is within walking distance of

Table 3

First-Generation College Graduate's (FGCG) Family Education Background

Family	Participant	Highest level of education of family member		
		Parents	Siblings	Spouse
Farrell	Patrice	Mother: High school Father: High school	A: Bachelor's B: High school C: Bachelor	High school
Carson	Kevin, Sr.	Mother: Grade 11 Father: Grade 3	A: Master's B: Master's C: Associate D: Bachelor's E: Bachelor's F: Bachelor's	Master's (SGCG)
Wilson	Modestine	Mother: High school Father: Grade 4	A: High school B: High school C: High school D: High school E: High school F: High school G: High school H: High school	Bachelor's (FGCG)
Walker	Beverly	Mother: High school Father: Grade 9	A: Master's B: Master's C: Master's	Doctorate (FGCG)
Regan	Sharon	Mother: High school Father: High school	A: Bachelor's B: High school C: Bachelor's D: Bachelor's	Bachelor's (FGCG)

the university. Mrs. Farrell has three siblings: a younger sister who has obtained college success and two older brothers who did not attend college.

Patrice's oldest adult child, Sasha, a paralegal, was interviewed because she was the only sibling of her father's three children who had attained college success. Sashahas

Table 4

Second-Generation College Graduate's (SGCG) Family Education Background

Family	Participant	Highest level of education of family member		
		Parents	Siblings	Spouse
Farrell	Sasha	Stepmother: Master's Father: High school Mother: High school	A: High school B: High school C: High school	(none)
Carson	Kevin, Jr.	Mother: Master's Father: Doctorate	A: Master's	Bachelor's (SGCG)
Wilson	Jason	Mother: Master's Father: Bachelor's	A: Master's B: MD C: Master's D: Bachelor's E: Bachelor	Doctorate (FGCG)
Walker	Selene	Mother: Master's Father: Doctorate	A: Master's B: Master's	Bachelor's (SGCG)
Regan	Chance	Mother: Master's Father: Bachelor's	A: High school	(none)

one sister by her biological mother and stepfather (also nondegreed), who is currently attending Freedmen University. Mrs. Farrell helped to raise her stepchildren in a major city in the southeast. Sasha is not married and has no children. She graduated with a Bachelor's degree in English in December 2011 from a nontraditional PWI in the southeast. She aspires to become an attorney.

Sasha was a nontraditional student who chose to work full time and attend school part time. She has no Black Greek-letter affiliation. She was very serious about the financial responsibilities and time frame for her degree, which took 10 years. Sasha

made reference to setting the educational trend among her siblings, assisting her younger sister through matriculation, and encouraging her brothers to attend. The dynamics of this blended family are very interesting, as Patricia (her stepmother) used education as the “glue” to their relationship during Sasha’s primary school years.

The Carson Family

The Carson family consisted of the father (Kevin, Sr.), a mother, and three children: two sons and one daughter. Kevin was interviewed because he was raised in the Windsor area and responded to the Facebook solicitation. Kevin’s 85-year-old mother lives in the Windsor area in the home in which he was raised. Kevin is the third of eight children. Although his parents were not educated (a farmer and a homemaker), he was proud to say that all of his siblings have at least an Associate degree. He also noted that, after he and his siblings had received their education, their mother entered a certificate program at Freedmen. Kevin earned a Bachelor’s degree from Freedmen, a master’s degree from a PWI in the Southwest, and his doctorate from a PWI in the Southeast. Understanding the process of obtaining a doctorate, Kevin was very eager to make a contribution to the current research. He was the most active participant, as he was consistent in responding to follow-up questions, emails, and text messages regarding the major topics in this study. He frequently inquired whether more information was needed. Although he and his family visit Windsor often, his children were raised in San Antonio, Texas. He has no Black Greek letter affiliation and is currently a high school technology teacher.

The eldest son, Kevin, Jr., a middle school teacher, was interviewed because only one adult child was required. His younger sister had recently earned a master's degree and he hoped to attend graduate school in the near future. He is married with no children. He attended Freedmen University for his first year of college and then transferred with an impressive GPA to the school of his choice (a PWI). The PWI had the exact music program he was looking for, while Freedmen had only a similar program. However, he was urged by Kevin, Sr. to attend Freedmen to "prove" himself for his freshman year. He felt that his parents were hard on him academically because he was the older sibling and the oldest of his cousins, but he was glad that they were heavily involved in his education.

The Wilson Family

The Wilson family consisted of a father (deceased), mother (Modestine, a Freedmen University librarian), and six adult children: five daughters and one son. All six children in this family had attained college success. Two had received terminal degrees, two had received master's degrees, and two had earned bachelor's degrees. Both the paternal and maternal grandparents were the working-class children of slaves from rural Mississippi. They had met at an HBCU located in their hometown. Modestine and her late husband, who lived to see the first four children graduate with bachelor's degrees, had raised their children in Windsor, as both were employees of Freedmen University at one time. Modestine is the second of nine children, none of whom have obtained college success. Modestine is affiliated with Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and is a member of the graduate chapter located in Posh Valley. The family is very

closely connected and maintains a close relationship. I spoke with Modestine first, looking to interview one of her children, and her son volunteered to participate.

Jason, a pharmacist and the fourth child, is a graduate of two HBCUs in the Southeast. He and his wife graduated from pharmacy school together and have a 7-month-old daughter. Jason is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. but does not affiliate with a chapter. Three of the children in this family attended Freedmen University, while one attended a PWI and the other two attended HBCUs in the South. Jason credits his father's sharing of college experiences and his mother's involvement over the years as the reason for his success.

The Walker Family

The Walker family consists of a father, mother (Beverly, a retired Freedmen University English professor), and three adult children: two sons and one daughter. All three of the adult children have earned master's degrees. Beverly, the second of four children, is from a major city in southeast Texas. She is an alumna of Freedmen and another HBCU in the southeast area. She and her three siblings have obtained master's degrees. Like the other families, Beverly had an older brother who had attended Freedmen and had set the tone for the other siblings. In fact, all of Beverly's children also attended Freedmen, spearheading a family tradition among the first and second generations. Beverly's parents were working-class people. Her mother attended college for 1 year but had to terminate her studies due to finances. In her narrative, Beverly reiterated her mother's teachings that stressed the importance of giving higher education an honest try. Her mother also made sure to stress that education was good enough for

her sons and her daughter. Beverly's father did not finish high school but he and her mother worked to pay tuition for all of their children, which was \$24 per semester in the 1940s. After marrying in the 1950s, Beverly and her husband built their dream home in Posh Valley and raised their children there while they were employed at Freedmen University. Her husband, Dr. Walker, earned a PhD degree from a PWI located 30 miles from Posh Valley and is still employed at Freedmen University. He is also an FGCG.

Their only daughter, Selene, a mathematics instructor, was interviewed because she is a member of the church that received invitations to participate; she is also a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. She is a married mother of two adolescent children. As I waited outside her faculty office, I could hear her "mother's voice" and see her demeanor as she spoke very candidly with her students about their grades. Selene credits the bond with her mother and father for her college success.

The Regan Family

The Regan family consisted of a father, mother (Sharon), and a son and daughter. Sharon, an employee at Freedmen, was raised near Windsor and is a two-time graduate of Freedmen University. Her father was a Cuban migrant who attended college for 2 years and was a professional baseball player for a few years. Her mother was a working-class woman who ran a day care service in the family home. Her husband, Clarence, is also a first-generation graduate of Freedmen. Sharon is the middle child of five children. All but one of her siblings earned college degrees. She spoke very openly about her secondary years, as her class was the first to integrate the once-predominately White Windsor High School. She and her husband raised their children in a very diverse area

and credited their constant encouragement for their success. Sharon's own success was fostered by her older sibling, who, prior to college, participated in Upward Bound.

Sharon is a member of the Posh Valley chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

The son, Chance, a sales manager, was very eager to share his story about leaving the HBCU environment to attend a more diverse university. This was a very interesting interview because Chance was the only adult offspring in this study with diverse opinions about higher education. He represented the millennial population well. He had graduated from a PWI in the southeast Texas area with a bachelor's degree in music in 2011, after transferring from Freedmen in his sophomore year. He is not married and has no children. He is not affiliated with a Black Greek letter organization. Unlike his mother, Chance was raised in the suburbs near a major city in southeast Texas and attended a very diverse high school.

Emergent Themes

Six themes and two subthemes emerged to address the research questions. The next sections provide narratives regarding the educational background of the parent to generate insight regarding the strategies and beliefs that emerged in this study. The six themes and subthemes were (a) Foundation—Catch Them Early, (b) Consistency—Set the Tone, (c) Readiness—Keep Them Busy, (d) Selection—Don't Let Them Break Rank, (e) Evolution—Encourage Advancement, and (f) Transmission—Tell the Generations. In addition, two subthemes emerged under Theme 1, adding supplementary strategies within catching them early that serve to share the best way to gain the child's buy-in during the early years: (a) Form a Strong Coparenting Relationship, and

(b) Create a Sibling Assistant. These themes serve to report the parental investment strategies and the educational beliefs of the participants is discussed using the participants' own words. These parents fostered a very simple and consistent process of early intervention, encouragement, involvement, support, and unity as demonstrated in the themes.

Foundation—Catch Them Early

This theme addresses the importance of fostering a strong educational and social foundation for college success during the formative years. Seeking the parental investment strategies during this period of time was necessary to capture when and how parents began to transfer their beliefs. It was clear in the data that everyone in these families was involved in ensuring college success. The FGCGs in this study spearheaded this mode of thinking in their children early on. Collectively, it was very important for the parents to give the child tangible and intangible advantages that the parents had not been not afforded as children. Parental involvement was a very common strategy within this theme. Parents discussed their strategies of intrinsic involvement (checking homework, tutoring, etc.) and extrinsic involvement (school involvement, parent-teacher relationship, etc.). Most of the offspring relied on this involvement to assist them throughout their education.

Along with involvement, this theme includes the age of exposure, influence, and the importance of setting a good example. The educational and family background provided perspective on how these parents positioned themselves regarding their children's education. All of these parents were products of a two-parent home. Thus,

there was a great deal of stability among these rural families that transcended the generations. All of the fathers had been hard-working providers and the mothers had been very intelligent and supportive. However, the parents of the parent participants either had not attended or had not completed college. All of the parents also had several siblings. As a result, a chain of common events occurred: The parent stressed the importance of education, one of the children went to college, and in most cases the other siblings followed suit. However, the encourager was not always the parent. Beverly spoke about the lecture that she had received after purposely failing her first semester so she would be expelled from Freedmen: “My older brother was the first one who went to college, so when I got sent home, my mother didn’t say anything, she did want me to stay, but my brother—you know, said I’m disgracing him” (Beverly, 4/24/12, p. 1). As a sign of the times, some parents of the FGCGs had encouraged them to finish high school, which was a significant accomplishment during those time, as the culture of the Posh Valley area focused on field work, and many of the fathers had quit elementary and high school. Kevin, Sr. also spoke about his parents’ expectations:

My father went as far as sixth grade and worked in the field and my mother got as far as 11th grade, but she would have been valedictorian. Their expectation was graduating high school. That’s all we ever heard: “You need to graduate from high school.” Never heard *college* from them. (Kevin, Sr., 4/18/12, p. 52)

Most of the parents who were interviewed had similar backgrounds. Their parents were mostly field workers or homemakers with several children in the household to provide for, so there had been little time for school. It was very rewarding to hear

these stories of advancement. The hardworking parents of these FGCGs set the example of a strong work ethic and encouraged their children to achieve more than they had done. However, Modestine shared how her siblings, although encouraged to attend school, chose their own paths. Both her mother and father had left school to work and had encouraged their children to finish high school. However, Modestine was the only sibling to take the encouragement of her parents a step further by attending college.

I was the only one who went to college. To tell you the truth, all of my brothers and sisters had an opportunity to go. . . . I did try to encourage them. (Modestine, 4/21/12, p. 45)

Despite her encouragement to go to college, her siblings established careers after high school and, according to Modestine, have done very well.

Patrice and Sharon's parents finished high school and had aspirations of finishing college, but raising a family took precedence over school. They both spoke about the roles of their parents in raising and providing for them; they both admitted being very protective of their own children's educational future. Patrice revealed the very moment that she realized her parents' educational values:

My mother and father did not go to school. They graduated from high school, but did not go to college. I received support toward college because they did not want me to have to struggle and so they stayed on me about my studies and I learned early on not to play when it comes to academics. . . . My mother would give me that look—even my grandmother . . . no negotiation, just act, they were old school. So, I started studying before they could ask. (Patrice, 4/17/12, p. 4)

As Patrice spoke, she was very articulate and it was clear that her upbringing was centered on academics. Her diction, posture, and manner were very professional. She talked about her mother's aspirations to major in interior design and stated that she had decided to live her mother's dream by choosing the same major. This seemed to define Patrice. Although her mother had not pursued a career in merchandising, Patrice was proud that she had completed the degree that her mother had always wanted; it seemed to bond them more closely.

After Sharon's father migrated to Posh Valley from Cuba, he worked in the salt mines and in the rice fields. Sharon's mother was a neighborhood babysitter and homemaker who taught her children the value in education. Each day she checked their homework. Sharon had a very calm demeanor. She admitted being overprotective and sheltering her children. She remembered her parents' and older sisters' example.

My mother went as far as high school; my father went 2 years in college . . . but he grew up in Havana, Cuba, so he spoke a different language. . . . My mother wanted us to go to college and all but one did . . . my older sister went to Freedmen and we all ended up going there. (Sharon, 4/24/12, p. 23)

Although her father attended college for only 2 years, he provided some limited examples of what going to college meant. Sharon and her siblings were proud of their father and wanted to at least try to attend college. However, Sharon's mother took the lead in setting the educational values in their home. In fact, all of the parents in this study credited their mothers with setting the educational standards within their families. This is the type of involvement that these FGCGs repeated with their children. However,

these parents amplified the involvement, began their course of involvement much earlier than had their parents, and were able to set the example of college completion, thereby allowing their children to grow up receiving benefits of education.

It is ultimately these experiences that provided the framework for how these parents would cultivate college success in their children. While these parents had had at least one person in their families encouraging them toward higher education, there had been no one specific to guide them through it, which is consistent with the literature on first-generation college students (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998; Richardson & Skinner, 1992; Tierney, 2002).

All of the parents in this study had ensured that their children were exposed to the possibility of higher education when the children were in elementary school. This was based on the exposure that they had experienced from their older siblings, peers, or parents. These values trickled down and manifested in ways that would create interest in each of the SGCGs to pursue a college degree.

Patrice remembered the exact moment when her daughter Sasha became interested in attending college. At the age of 7, Sasha attended a father-daughter day event at her father's company. According to Patrice, two female engineers presented their job duties and the lifestyle that they could afford due to their hard work in college. This opened Sasha's eyes to numerous career possibilities and encouraged her to strive toward college success. She was also impressed to see that the two engineers were females. Patrice commented on Sasha's reaction on their way home from the event:

She basically said, “Well, daddy, can I do that?” And he said, “Of course you can—you can do whatever you want.” Sasha replied, “Well, what do I have to do, where do I go, what is it that I need to be doing now?” (Patrice, 4/17/12, p. 19)

Sasha was so enthusiastic that she continued the conversation with her parents and grandparents throughout the weekend. This enthusiasm captured at that moment is what Patrice said continues to keep Sasha motivated today.

Patrice reported that she and her husband were very excited about Sasha’s newfound interest in engineering. She said that, when they realized that Sasha was enamored with the idea of attending college, they took the opportunity to encourage her and never wavered. This is something that these parents had not experienced with their own parents. Although they were encouraged toward education, it was not necessarily toward higher education. Higher education was something that the FGCGs either decided themselves or followed the lead of a sibling or a peer. The parents of the FGCGs had allowed their children to decide whether they wanted to go to college. High school did not seem to be an option, but college was not insisted on by these parents. Also, these parents did not take an interest in the FGCGs’ early aspirations.

While this theme is dedicated to the idea of “catching them early,” the data indicated that the FGCGs’ parents had not created situations of exposure or discussions during elementary school that would create interest in college success. Perhaps this is because there were no opportunities for these parents to take their children to work, given that the fathers worked in the fields. The dynamics of the culture in Posh Valley

more than likely played a role in the exposure of these FGCGs but when they became parents, they deliberately provided opportunities for exposure for their children.

Patrice and her husband had discussed the possibility of Sasha attending the father-daughter day event at his work and had even contemplated the Sasha might not be interested because she was so young. However, Sasha remembered being intrigued by this early exposure and she reported that the event ignited her interest in college and had motivated her throughout her life.

My stepmom and dad instilled that education was very important; they encouraged me to seek college and to further my education beyond high school. . . .

That father/daughter day was an inspiration to me as to, you know, I wanna have me a nice job and be able to do something in the professional world. So yeah, I guess there was some sort of motivation towards that way early on. (Sasha, 4/20/12, p. 9)

Only two of the FGCGs raised their children in the Posh Valley area, so for the rest of the parents it was important to have their children experience a more mainstream education. Kevin, Sr. made certain that his children were first exposed to the “right” living and learning environment that would place them around a college bound population.

My wife was a teacher; I’m a teacher, so education was very important. And we were able to work with them. . . . But one thing, we purposely moved from the east side, you know, the Black area; we moved to [another] district so that they could get a better education. We knew that that would be good for them. . . . We

would see kids in the same grade who came from the Black schools and they would be so far behind [academically]. So that's what we did, they were in elementary school. (Kevin, Sr., 4/18/12, p. 19)

In addition to a new environment, the Carsons also led by example. Kevin, Jr. recalled looking up to his parents and being close to them in bond and proximity. Kevin, Jr. attended the same elementary school where his mother taught and remembered his parents "pushing" education. Exposure was prevalent in his early childhood years, so it was no surprise to him that he would be successful as an adult:

We were exposed early, when we were really young, like maybe 7-8, around there, my mom was in school for her master's. . . . We saw how hard she was working . . . plus whenever we went to visit my grandma in Hope Station, we'd pass by Freedmen University and my dad would point and say, "That's where I went to school, son." (Kevin, Jr., 4/18/12, pp. 7-14)

Expectations of attending college were set early in Kevin, Sr. by his sibling's example. He naturally made the same decision after witnessing the success of his brothers. "That's all I knew, [all of my siblings] went to college, so it was almost like automatic" (Kevin, Sr., 4/18/12, p. 55). He even saved money and moved into a house immediately after college because he did not know what it was like to live in an apartment. He had always had two parents, so he made sure that he kept his own family together as well. Kevin was soft spoken but firm in his discussions about education. He said that he had a strong presence in the household and made sure that his children remained focused. He admitted being strict with them.

Like the Carsons, exposure for the Walker children came from the parents' example and guidance. Beverly recalled the following:

My husband was going for his doctorate and at that time we had two children—the two older boys . . . so the boys saw this early on. They were small children and they knew their daddy was in school. I already had my master's and was teaching in the school district. . . . You have to start early and guide them. . . . By the time Selene came, she knew there was no question about college. My older boys are almost 10 years older. (Beverly, 4/24/12, p. 50)

Beverly and her husband took the initiative to manipulate the home environment to promote education. She reported that they did not allow television or similar distractions in their children's bedrooms. Selene discussed the early influence of her parents and the environment that they provided for her. She agreed with Beverly's description of their home, saying, "My room at home was set up like a dorm with a bed and a desk, the light above the desk, the chair. I had an area to study and I utilized what my parents set up for me in my boudoir" (Selene, 4/30/12, p. 12). Each of the Walker children had chores and a strict schedule to promote learning responsibility as well.

This is a clear example of how the simple arrangement of a child's room can foster positive attitudes and commitment toward academic achievement. Beverly and Selene were very much alike in demeanor and in their facial expressions and thought processes. Both were quick witted and full of personality. During the interview, Beverly shared her experiences as a college professor at Freedmen. When I interviewed Selene, I saw how much of Beverly's influence had been transferred. Before interviewing Selene,

I witnessed her interaction with a few of her students. The same values that Beverly had emphasized were apparent as Selene emphasized those values with her students. It was important that Selene had chosen the same profession as her parents, but it was impressive to see the resemblance in teaching philosophies. This observation demonstrates how transferring educational beliefs, involvement, and influence work together to shape the lives, attitudes, and beliefs of children.

While discussing the dynamics of her family, Selene also share that her parents, both college graduates, were strict with her older brothers and that she, like Kevin, Sr., knew that she had to follow. She used the example her of her brothers' rewards and consequences to spearhead her actions. This set the standard for what to do. She stated that her parents were strict on her, but "they never did really say, 'Go study,' as a child I just did it" (Selene, 4/30/12, p. 12). The difference between the Carsons and the Walkers were the educational expectations of the parents.

As previously defined, parental involvement, influence, and personal endorsement personify the parents' commitment to their children's education and are key components of the overall investment in the college success of a second generation college students. Within influence and involvement, early exposure was a key finding in this study that began the identification of the other strategies.

Modestine's approach to early exposure was mainly based on her extrinsic involvement early in her children's lives. She told of her involvement during her children's elementary school years and described how she often volunteered in the library to be close to them and to support their education. Of all of the FGCGs

interviewed, Modestine was the most involved in school leadership activities, serving as the “president of the elementary, junior high and high school Windsor School PTA Association” (Modestine, 4/21/12, p. 45). Her involvement set the expectation that education was important and she was going to see that her children were successful. Her personal endorsement of education was seen through her actions as well.

Jason confirmed his parent’s involvement and endorsement and complimented his mother for her commitment. He spoke of her involvement and described her relationship with the counselors and staff. He mentioned his father’s position at the local high school also. However, he was adamant about the influence stemming from his parents working at Freedmen:

There was no reason for us not to go to college, because there was a university right down the street, a mile from the house. . . . We used to go to the games and visit the campus all the time. At one point my parents both worked there, too. So college was the standard because we knew our parents went, worked, and did well. (Jason, 4/19/12, p. 6)

The data began to paint a clear picture of the influence that these parents had on their children and their children’s influence on others. Patrice discussed Sasha’s involvement with her godchild. “Sasha checks homework and goes to the school to meet with his teachers. She disciplines them as well. She is more involved than their biological mother, and the mother relies on her a lot” (Patrice, 4/17/12, p. 176). It is important to reiterate that Patrice and Sasha are stepmother and daughter, so Sasha’s

heavy involvement in her godchild's life mimics Patrice's involvement in her life.

Likewise, Selene mentioned her involvement in her own children's education

When I'm checking the grades, I do have to catch myself though, because one of them will bring home a 92 and I try not to say, "What happened?" like my dad, but you know, a "B" will do it. I have to say, "Now what happened?" (Selene, 4/30/12, p. 29)

These parents involved themselves and set the example, thereby setting the expectation for their children early in their lives. They also groomed an older sibling to reinforce the example and solicited the sibling's involvement in the other children's education. The "each one teach one" philosophy cultivated these strategies early and enabled the child to receive the parent's leadership, gain buy-in, and follow the trend of the family. In addition to exposure, the language used in the home emerged, focusing on support and consistency in the college message. The results of this research clearly show that becoming the first in a family to graduate from college is the first step in creating college success for that family. The first example of success creates interest and curiosity; soon it begins to motivate other family members. The following subthemes emerged regarding what enabled these families to work together in supporting creation of more college graduates and maintaining a consistent message of support.

Subtheme: Form a Strong Coparenting Partnership

There was a high level of familial support for all of the second-generation graduates. Holding the family to a standard and supporting that goal is the message of the subthemes within this section. The parents and their offspring discussed how their

parents, and in most cases the older siblings, not only provided the exposure and example but gave hands-on assistance that touched each level of development during primary, secondary, and postsecondary education. It was consistent across the narratives that living in a two-parent home played a role in cultivating success for the parent and the second-generation graduate from the beginning. Each participant remembered each parent taking a “department” in preventing the student’s failure.

Patrice remembered that she and her husband worked together to provide Sasha the best support possible. Since she was the college-educated parent, she and her husband made a deal to take separate departments, confirming their arrangement as “a team effort” (Patrice, 4/17/12, p. 43). She handled the academic aspect and he handled the social/extracurricular aspect. However, she recalled that they “took turns helping with homework and going up to the school” (Patrice, 4/17/12, p. 43), although she later handled the college admissions process.

For these parents, fostering a positive coparenting relationship in a two-parent home proved to be very helpful in creating academic standards in the home. Kevin, Sr. added, “Being successful has a lot to do with how you are brought up. I had a mother and a father in the home” (Kevin, Sr., 4/18/12, p. 46). If the parents function as one in cultivating college success, the child gains “buy-in” and is more receptive. However, if there is less consistency in parenting strategies, even from one child to the next, the child might not receive buy-in. For instance, Patrice’s two stepsons, Sasha’s older brothers, did not complete college. Later in the interview Patrice admitted that she and her husband did not push the boys as much as they did Sasha. For Sasha, having parents who

were interested in seeing her attend and finish school motivated her. Patrice also expressed that, after they pushed the boys once and received resistance toward college success (graduation), they ended their strategies. This situation proved the difference in strategy results. In these families, the parents were very open regarding the firm approach that they had displayed with the children who were successful.

Having both parents maintain a firm message, standards, and consistent actions enhanced the lives of these second-generation college students. Tough love and strict rules let the adult offspring know that their parents sincerely cared about their success. Although some of them would have wanted to have a bit more freedom socially, it was academically beneficial, as evident by the outcome. Sometimes a lack of academic responsibility on the part of the offspring affected the child's social privileges. Kevin, Sr. discussed his and his wife's way of support.

We were tough, we were hard on them. . . . They wanted to go outside and play, they did not want to do their homework. But we made it through with both of them. I was tough on them because I knew how hard it was to be an African American male or female. (Kevin, Sr., 4/18/12, p. 59).

Living in a two-parent home was very effective in ensuring that the second-generation graduate stayed on task. The adult offspring in this study were also very open about the separate roles that their parents played in their success. These separate but consistent roles remained the topic of conversation for these participants. One interesting observation is that the parents in this study were able to master coparenting with their

mate, even though they had not had a coparenting example when they were growing up; many spoke primarily of their mother's encouragement.

Beverly's mother's words rang true to Beverly at the age of 11 while they were discussing her older brother's desire to "hang out in juke joints and shoot pool" rather than attend college.

Kevin, Jr. recalled his parents' methods:

My mom made the law, and my dad enforced the law. . . . So my mom would help with the homework, because she was a teacher herself. It was a rule you had to finish your homework first before you could play or anything like that. If you were making good grades, life was good. (Kevin, Jr., 4/18/12, p. 30)

Kevin also said that he and his sister received special privileges, such as spending the night at a friend's house, if they did well in school.

Like Kevin, Sr., Modestine was very clear about her position with her son Jason. She reported having had many rules where Jason was concerned and noted that having built a solid foundation of involvement in her children's education meant that she "stayed on them a lot about their studies and my husband would discipline" (Modestine, 4/21/12, p. 103).

This was yet another example of team efforts by the parents in cultivating college success.

Jason discussed the difference in his parents' team concept. He stated that his mother was "the biggest communicator in the house about education" (Jason, 4/19/12, p. 48). He recalled that she kept up with all six of her children while working and taking

care of their home. He described his father as “laid back” but vividly recalled their long one-on-one talks about responsibility and the importance of being an educated and successful man.

In Jason’s interview it was evident that he was academically astute. He spoke about his grades and reported that he brought home a less-than-stellar grade during only one year of his primary and secondary school years. He was very mild mannered and articulate. He spoke very clearly and gave detailed responses. His posture was that of a pharmacist: upright and professional. He thought very carefully before answering. It was clear that he wanted his father to see him graduate from college. Modestine transmitted the same vibe. There was no question that the road to college success was not an easy one for any of these families.

Beverly spoke about her rebellious son, calling him her “problem child” and stressing the point that his success was the most difficult to attain. But she also held steady to her belief that, if both parents displayed teamwork and remained consistent and supportive, even the rebellious child would come around. Beverly’s discourse stressed that she had been very strict.

I got after them about everything, the company they kept, school, staying committed to activities, everything. . . . If I could turn back the clock, I wouldn’t fuss so much. I was a stern disciplinarian and I would whip you, too! . . . [Her husband] was the counselor. His field is counseling, very easy going and soft spoken: “Now, you do this and you know better than that. You can’t do this and you can’t do that,” so and so and so and so. (Beverly, 4/24/12, p. 114)

This was an important statement in that it supports the grey area of the “rebellious child,” as this study reports positive results from adult offspring who gained buy-in early on. This study will help parents who have challenges help their children to obtain college success. By understanding the strategies that actually lead to college success, parents can implement strategies that could work for their children’s respective differences. While Beverly was ensuring that her son was on track, her husband recognized Selene’s talent for mathematics and pushed her to do her best.

Selene described her father’s role in nurturing her talent and being somewhat of a perfectionist. According to Selene, her father set the bar high “because to bring home a 95 really was not great, it was like, ‘Why didn’t you get the 100? So how did you miss this one problem?’ It might have been an A but it still it wasn’t a 100. He’d say, ‘What did you do wrong?’” (Selene, 4/30/12, p. 10). Her mother’s support in building Selene’s writing skills came as a result of her mother being an English professor. However, despite their areas of expertise, “they both made sure to be there” (Selene, 4/30/12, p. 10) and, although she saw her parents as strict, she and her siblings knew that their parents would help them.

Like the other families, the Regan family practiced coparenting and being very supportive. Sharon recalled checking homework to ensure that it was complete. She stated that her husband made sure the children were well rested “and that they reported their progress in school before we heard it from the teacher” (Sharon, 4/24/12, p. 36).

A good point is raised by this narrative. Having the child display some accountability early on could be instrumental in the outcome. If the parent asks for

reports of progress prior to the report card or communication from the teacher, the student is taught honesty and openness about success, building character and strengthening the bond. Although some children tend to be reluctant on report card day, this method will teach them that it is acceptable to communicate as a preventive measure. Sharon ensured that her children were accountable in the presentation of their work.

Chance recalled his parents stressing that his and his sister's work be neat and presentable. He smiled avidly during this narrative, laughing about his parents saying "You don't have any ailments or anything to stop you from doing nice neat work" (Chance, 4/20/12, p. 6). According to Chance, his parents' stance on grades was that "A's and B's were preferable and one C was one too many" (Chance, 4/20/12, p. 6). The completion and accuracy of his homework was also tied directly to his freedom. Chance admitted feeling pressured to complete the work as quickly as possible so he could watch a movie before bedtime. Looking back, he admitted that working hard made him appreciate his freedom.

Subtheme: Create a Sibling Assistant

In addition to the dual parenting roles established in these families, the parents expected assistance from an older sibling. This was a common report by participants. Part of helping these families to succeed was an all-for-one and one-for-all attitude from the beginning. Patrice recalled being proud that Sasha took the lead in encouraging her two older brothers and assisting her younger sister.

The two older boys didn't go to college and Sasha stays on them saying, "It's never too late, look at what I did, you can still work and go to school." Tammy, the other sister, can't understand why they have not followed in their footsteps. She is about to graduate from college this year, and Sasha encouraged and helped her with paper work all the way through. (Patrice, 4/17/12, p. 203)

I asked Sasha to describe how she had helped her younger sister. The answer was almost identical to the way Patrice had helped Sasha. She helped her with her admissions application, financial aid paperwork, and housing arrangements. It was almost as if Patrice had passed the baton to Sasha, who had passed the knowledge to her sister. Sasha even reminded her sister about visiting the student services offices to remain in communication about her affairs.

Kevin, Sr. recalled his children being supportive of each another. "Kevin and his sister are close . . . they talked about a lot of things concerning school. She just finished her master's degree and so she is telling him about going to get the master's" (Kevin, Sr., 4/18/12, p. 60). Kevin, Jr. confirmed this with some differences.

My parents would always say, "Your sister is looking at you," because I'm the oldest of all, not only my siblings, but I'm also the oldest cousin as well. . . . So I knew I had to help them help her get through as well . . . and now my sister just finished her master's this last week in education. I'm the low man on the totem pole right now, I only have a bachelor's. So now my sister is encouraging me. (Kevin, Jr., 4/18/12, pp. 4, 50)

Modestine and her husband put all six of their children to work to encourage one another. However, the oldest sibling, Ann, had a special assignment, given her profession. Modestine said that she enjoyed watching the oldest sibling set the pace for the rest of her children. According to Modestine, Ann was a college recruiter and “every time something was going on, she told Jason about it” (Modestine, 4/21/12, p. 80). Jason recalled going to out-of-town career fairs with his sister. “That was my way of getting information on the different colleges and universities while I was in high school. She helped a lot” (Jason, 4/19/12, p. 24).

Having an older sibling can also provide an example of what *not* to do. Beverly spoke of her experience with her sons regarding their grades in college; she remarked that having a car affected one son’s honor roll status. “Selene looked at her brother’s example. . . . Whatever wrong the boys did, Selene knew it wouldn’t fly for her” (Beverly, 4/24/12, p. 133). Based on this, she had decided not to allow Selene to have a car during her freshman year. This did not bother Selene. Because her mother worked at the same college that she attended, they conveniently rode together every day. In the end, the example of Selene’s brothers created an educational standard for her as “both brothers got master’s degrees” (Selene, 4/30/12, p. 16) and she followed.

The interview with Sharon stirred thoughts about the dynamics of families and the fact that there are relationship differences between parents and children and among siblings. Sharon recalled her youngest being an example for the oldest.

Chance's grades began to fall his senior year and I would hear Bethany ask him about it saying, "Why did your grades fall? Do you think you can get a tutor?"

They always kept each other going. (Sharon, 4/24/12, p. 50)

Many of the parents in this study had bonded well with their parents but relied strongly on their siblings. These types of relationships carried over into the parents' families through their children. Sharon reported the differences in her two children, admitting that they were close. However, Chance admitted that, although he was close with his parents, he had a stronger bond with his sister because they were close in age and spent time over the years helping and understanding one another.

All of the participants in this study had very close relationships with their siblings. Chance reported that he had provided a listening ear to his sister during her adjustment phase at Freedmen. He admitted that he and his sister had been taught to respect others' belongings and space, which was tested in the college dormitory. He also talked about giving her moral support when "somebody used the bathroom and left the towel on the floor or . . . she would complain, 'These loud girls and I'm trying to study!'" (Chance, 4/20/12, p. 56). He told her stories of his roommates, which made her feel better. Chance felt responsible for his sister and felt it necessary to "help her to adjust to some of the things that go on in college" (Chance, 4/20/12, p. 56). This was an impressive illustration of sibling support. I was surprised to find no sibling rivalry among the participants.

This theme provided the foundation for the remainder of the findings in this study. Interviews with these participants confirmed that, without a solid foundation and

early intervention, college success might be placed at risk. The subthemes within this theme were two pleasant surprises: that the combination of a two-parent home and sibling assistance would be key in cultivating college success. This strategy must take place prior to conversations surrounding college success. In other words, before parents engage their children in college success topics, the children must first be given a visual example of college success. From there, involvement, age of exposure, influence, and the importance of setting a good example form the basis for detailed conversations about why college success is important. The second theme is centered on the conversations that these parents and their adult offspring had regarding the importance of college success.

Consistency—Set the Tone

This theme presents the conversational motivation that these parents used to cultivate college success in their children. These consistent monologues began in elementary school and continued even after college graduation. Thus, part of “setting the tone” weighs heavily on the messages that these children received from the beginning. These messages ranged from social to academic issues and everything between. The parents were very adamant about using certain language to foster a bond with their children that ultimately kept the children engaged, promoting a very open relationship between parents and child.

Also, given the exposure and numerous examples of success presented to the SGCG during the primary school years, the explanation of the importance of success and verbal encouragement not only followed the child thereafter but provided constant

rationale for the strategies that these parents would implement. These conversations ultimately created the bond that these families experienced.

Sasha shared the topics that she and her father discussed over the years that created a father-daughter bond.

It's a close bond. We're able to talk about anything, politics, life in general. We have a close relationship. . . . He would say, "Apply yourself; have fun, but don't go overboard with partying, and stay focused. . . . He said he pledged and goofed off, so he always told me, "Don't goof off. (Sasha, 4/20/12, p. 26)

When Sasha expressed her interest in engineering after being exposed to two female engineers, Patrice recalled that she and Sasha's father had told her to focus on mathematics if she aspired to be an engineer. Although Sasha majored in English, her parents made sure to support her decision and pointed her in the right direction of how to get there. When Patrice learned of Sasha's intent to major in English, she introduced her to her old English professor. This was a key component in the conversations between parent and child.

Sharon and her husband spent time learning about their children's interests. She shared, "We used to always ask and talk about what they wanted to be when they grew up" (Sharon, 4/24/12, p. 36). Once the child was exposed early, conversations arose regarding the child's interests in order to prepare the child to focus on the goal. Although the interests were important, conversations about college attendance were necessary to help the child to understand that college was the overall goal to help the child to achieve his or her interests.

Kevin, Sr. remembered his parents encouraging him and his siblings.

For them [parents], it was get an education. . . . But with my kids, I never said high school . . . it was, “graduate college; when you go to college.” That was the language in the house. (Kevin, Sr., 4/18/12, p. 9)

Although Modestine reported having a strong bond with her parents, the language that had motivated her had come directly from her teachers. Modestine’s mother created a platform for her and her siblings to receive nonbiased encouragement by way of a Catholic school education.

I was told by my mother that her friend said, “Norma, last Sunday we were told that some nuns were coming to Clarksdale to open a Catholic School.” . . . So my mother took her advice and got us baptized as Catholics so we could go to the school and get a good education. . . . The nuns taught us that we were just as good as anybody else . . . and “If you study hard, you can do this and that.” (Modestine, 4/21/12, p. 25)

Kevin, Jr. talked about the language between his father and him from the time Kevin, Jr. was in elementary school and how that language manifested into an indelible father-son tradition. “As early as I can remember, my dad would tell me, ‘Now you have to be responsible.’ We had many man-to man talks” (Kevin, Jr., 4/18/12, p. 20).

Father-daughter talks were prevalent as well. Sasha appreciated that her stepmother worked at a university. Sasha was very comical in her delivery, often imitating Patrice’s voice: “‘Now I work at a university; if you have questions about anything, feel free to ask. And don’t stop asking until you get your questions answered’”

[laughs] (Sasha, 4/20/12, p. 27). Sasha spoke very highly of her parents' role in her college success. She remembered that, although her father had not finished college, he always used language to support her by telling her how important it was to complete her students and to "watch out for the knuckleheads" (Sasha, 4/20/12, p. 27). According to Patrice, Sasha was very open about the college process and often brought home pamphlets from various schools to share with her.

The fathers of the FGCGs were dominant in using educationally supportive language, as many of them just wanted their children to achieve more than they had achieved. Because many of the fathers had dropped out of primary school to work in the fields in this area, there were educational delays, such as illiteracy. Modestine shared that her father was an unlicensed electrician who, in order to take the electrician's examination, needed assistance from someone who could read the test. Based on this, she spoke about the language that her father used to convey his beliefs.

My father instilled education upon us . . . he said he wanted us to learn more than he had learned. He wanted us to be capable of doing things for ourselves and not depending on someone else. So they were very strong on education. (Modestine, 4/21/12, p. 30)

Her father's experience taught Modestine the value of independence. Throughout her interview, her manner of speaking and her chosen topics regarding her childhood showed that she had had to learn how to be independent while working for everything she wanted in life. She had maintained a strong work ethic and she exuded pride when speaking of her accomplishments and the accomplishments of her children.

Although these parents were very “hands-on” with her children during the primary and secondary years, it is important to note that these parents amplified their language of support when their child entered college. Jason reported that his mother was very involved and often encouraged him throughout his educational journey. He recalled being frustrated in college after seeing a friend earn a decent living without an education.

I talked to my mom about it, and she was like, “Boy, you already got this—just go ahead and just stick it out.” I talked to my second-oldest sister, and she was like, “Yeah, you just need to focus because it’s going to be greater later.” . . . She said, “If you stop, you may not go back.” And I just remember that, and so I just stuck with it. (Jason, 4/19/12, p. 36)

Although the language that Modestine used was not specific to Jason’s concerns, he understood that he had come too far to allow someone else’s situation to affect his own. It was clear that Modestine did not have to repeat herself with her children. Based on Jason’s narrative and after speaking with her, I concluded that she had a quiet way of getting her point across and that her children held on to her encouragement and appreciated her very much.

Some of the language that these parents used was through the telling of their own college experiences, although the content of the conversations seemed to be tailored to the gender of the child. Selene talked about the language that her parents used to illustrate the social side of college, based on their experiences at Freedmen.

I was the only girl . . . they would stress the importance of being responsible, but the only thing for me was, “the boys couldn’t go in the girls’ rooms when I was

there.” That’s about the only thing they wanted to get across “You get to the end of the sidewalk, the boys went one way and the girls went the other way.” So I believe they shared more of the social side of college life than the academic one. (Selene, 4/30/12, p. 15)

Perhaps more of the social side was the focus in the parents’ conversations once the child had enrolled in college because of the effect that the college life and the new-found freedom would have on the young student. These two factors can have an adverse effect on academic success, which can hinder college success.

Beverly shared her discussions with Selene about being serious about her education, admitting that she may have been too serious. “I told her, ‘You get on that campus and you book, you don’t have time for boys!’” (Beverly, 4/24/12, p. 127). Beverly admitted that she had been wrong to be so concerned about Selene’s social life. She said that, if she had to do it over again, she would not have nagged so much. Instead, she would have encouraged her daughter to balance the academic and social aspects of college, as she had done. Beverly also shared that she was hardest on Selene because she thought that Selene would be naive with young men on campus. But she offered advice to parents to “trust the way they taught and brought up their children” (Beverly, 4/24/12, p. 127) so the children would not feel confined.

It appears that these parents made deliberate attempts through a consistent message to ensure the success of their children every step of the way. This included overcoming challenges and fostering positive self-images among their children.

Sharon discussed her language with her children surrounding obstacles in life: “I always encouraged them to do well in spite of that. I told them they could do well if they just focus on their goals” (Sharon, 4/24/12, p. 42). Chance took his mother’s words to heart after a difficult semester. He was proud to say that his parents had never made him feel like less of a person because of his grades. “Mom was nurturing. She’d say, ‘You are talented; you are smart and can do what you want to do. You know, just try and go for it’” (Chance, 4/20/12, p. 14).

In this theme, the language used by the parents in this study supported the educational success of these families and made the difference in fostering early and continuing interest in college success. In their dialogue the parents discussed their children’s readiness, college choice, and advancement. The adult offspring confirmed their parents’ strategies by communicating the language and imitating their parents’ tone of voice and facial expressions during the interviews. I gathered from the language that these families were close and had used these expressions to support one another lovingly. Using language as a strategy was successful for the children because they often passed the same language on to their siblings, creating a standard of success for future graduates from the family.

Readiness—“Keep Them Busy”

One of the most significant findings in this study was the importance of extracurricular and precollege activities. All of these parents were FGCGs and, according to the literature (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998; Richardson and Skinner, 1992; Tierney, 2002), first-generation students show lower

participation numbers in college readiness activities. However, it is clear from the results of this study that participation and readiness depend on the environment in which the student grew up and the beliefs of the parents, along with other variables that promote exposure, readiness, and advancement.

Three of the parents had been raised in the rural Posh Valley area and all had participated in precollege activities. Beverly had grown up in an urban area and had not participated in college readiness activities but had visited college campuses while she was a high school student. Modestine had grown up in a rural area in Mississippi and had participated in a college readiness program. This program allowed her to gain first-hand exposure to college life and the responsibilities that go with choosing the path toward higher education and to pass beliefs to her children.

The [College] Readiness program helped me. . . . We took English, Math, and several courses and like Freedmen used to have the pre-college programs. . . . My oldest two daughters were in every program I could get them in, because you had to keep them busy. I didn't want them to have a free moment. (Modestine, 4/21/12, p. 42)

For Kevin, Sr. and the rest of the parents, precollege programs in the Posh Valley area provided inspiration and opportunity. "I was in the Upward Bound program but that was because my brother went there. I found out about Upward Bound through the church we went to. That helped me" (Kevin, Sr., 4/18/12, p. 29).

These parents recognized the impact of such programs on their own success and they ensured that their children were involved in similar experiences and were involved

in three main institutions: community organizations, church, and school. In this section, parents discuss their high school experiences that ultimately prepared them to influence readiness in their own children.

Sharon shared the details of her exposure: “I was involved in the precollege program at Freedmen, the summer program . . . my older sister was in Upward Bound” (Sharon, 4/24/12, p. 34). Having been exposed herself, Sharon ensured that her children were also busy with activities. In her narrative she advised parents to get their children to participate in extracurricular activities. She talked about the need for parents to recognize their children’s strengths and talents during the elementary school years. She said that it is also important to provide opportunities for children to express themselves in settings that nurture those talents. She recalled her experience with her children.

My son always enjoyed singing, so we did everything we could. We kept him in choir and piano lessons. Bethany: We always knew she wanted to go to college and be a doctor. She was a bit more laid back. So she played basketball with the YMCA and volleyball. . . . My son played baseball and football in elementary . . . they interacted with good people. (Sharon, 4/24/12, p. 31)

Based on her experience and the support that she received, Patrice described the level of influence that she had on her stepchildren’s readiness. She shared that the church was a large part of the readiness strategy, which was a common finding among the other parents, as well. The YMCA and precollege events held at the school that Sasha attended were contributors. Patrice and her husband ensured that all of their children were

exposed to the same programs. She reported that she brought all three of her children, despite age or interest, to ensure support for everyone.

Sasha remembered that extracurricular activities in school provided a platform for her to interact with college-age students during performances with her high school band. She recalled being grateful to have experienced this level of exposure while traveling with the band. She also reported being “more excited in terms of wanting to go that far” (Sasha, 4/20/12, p. 15). Also, seeing her former classmates attend college and come back to the high school games “looking and speaking more educated” (Sasha, 4/20/12, p. 15) motivated her. Participation in the band was an excellent way for Sasha to be exposed to college success. Although they can be expensive for parents, activities that require travel to college campuses can serve as a mini college tour for the child.

Jason commented on the activities in which he was involved that assisted in his college success. He described in his narrative how well rounded he was after playing football and participating in school plays and precollege programs at Freedmen. He credited Modestine with promoting these activities: “Mom made sure we were active” (Jason, 4/19/12, p. 24).

Modestine reported having tried various activities according to what was available. In other words, she did not place a limit on the type or frequency of extracurricular activity in which her children participated.

Parents will never know what their children can do or what talents they have until they are given a platform to express it. I knew from an early age what I

wanted to do and my parents nurtured my talent through these activities. (Kevin, Jr., 4/18/12, p. 15)

Like Kevin, Jr., Chance appreciated his parents taking an interest in his talents. He discussed how being involved as a child had encouraged him to remain involved in activities as a college student. He confirmed that, after his parents had probed their career path, they enrolled them in activities that reflected their interests. This was very common among these parents. In college, Chance “found similar organizations and stayed involved” (Chance, 4/20/12, p. 22). I found it interesting that the children had continued their involvement in activities in college. There is evidently a relationship between early involvement and continued involvement in college.

In addition to school and community activities, the parents encouraged church activities. This was a major factor in keeping the children busy. According to the data, this strategy began with the parents of the FGCGs in this study. All of the parents described their parents as very religious. They all expressed how “the church” had played a role in their success. This was one of the major differences between them and their peers. Kevin, Sr., discussed this point:

We all went to the same school, did the same things. My mom and dad were strong Christians and that played a real vital role in it because we were not allowed to get into a lot of stuff other people did. They got to go out, we didn't . . . we were at church somewhere. (Kevin, Sr., 4/18/12, p. 48)

The main idea of keeping the child busy means keeping the child occupied and surrounded with positive people doing productive things. These FGCGs were not

allowed to sit idle, and neither were their children. Church was a major way that these FGCGs were exposed to opportunities that promoted college success. Therefore, it was no surprise that, as parents, they kept church activities in the strategy. However, unlike the FGCGs, the SGCGs were encouraged by their parents to become involved in school and community activities. Most of the parents talked about some of the children with whom they had gone to school in Posh Valley who had not achieved college success. Upward Bound, the church, and the way they were raised made the difference. Kevin, Sr. said that, from that point on, they made sure that their children were active and involved in the church and other activities.

These parents also involved themselves in their children's activities, as opposed to dropping them off and picking them up from the activity. Kevin, Jr. reported that his father served as a chaperone and basketball coach of his sister's little league team and enrolled him in piano lessons to nurture his talent for music. He said that his parents "came to all the major events" (Kevin, Jr., 4/18/12, pp. 40, 63) and that church was an important part of his routine.

Kevin, Jr. was very grateful to his parents and spoke in the same tone and manner as his father. It was clear that they were very close and that he idolized his father. Their interview started late because they were volunteering at their church. Their relationship was refreshing to see and hear. This father and son duo was actually a duo. They did everything together.

Modestine recalled “fellowshipping” after mass one evening and overhearing the adults reminiscing on their college years. Specifically, she recalled hearing about college as the adults identified their sorority affiliations:

I remember this so well. They said, “Betty Jo, what did you pledge?” and she said, “I pledged Alpha Kappa Alpha!” “Janice, what did you pledge?” “I pledged DST!” And they would run up and they would hug and we were just high school kids and we were standing there like, “What is a soror?” [laugh] “What is DST?” (Modestine, 4/21/12, p. 50)

She admitted that, at the time, she did not know what any of these affiliations meant or why it was so important to these women, but she recalled thinking that she was going to college to find out for herself. She also stated that fate had something to do with this encounter because, if she had not attended mass that particular evening, she would not have experienced anyone expressing positive college experiences.

This interest in the sorority spearheaded a trend among her children, as all but one had joined a Black Greek-letter organization. For Modestine, variables such as the sorority sparked her interest in college, but she made sure that her children were interested in college success before she would discuss her experiences of Greek life.

These parents were proud of the way they influenced their children. They all belonged to churches in the Posh Valley area and the networking continued to pay off for these families. Clearly, it was not the church itself but the people in the church who wanted success for all members. This community of people worked together in every aspect.

Beverly was also initially attracted to the social side of college life. She said that visiting her brother had intrigued her so much that she felt that she had to go. On the night she visited there happened to be a band playing music that she had heard in the city. Beverly joked that, until then, she had not thought any entertainment at Freedmen would be worth hearing. She reported being “taken a back and mesmerized” (Beverly, 4/24/12, p. 22) by seeing how much fun college students had. She Beverly also expressed the need to include church activities in the strategy for her children’s success. She explained that she and her husband felt that church was a necessity, so every Sunday she gathered her family and attended church. She said that the religious side “plays a role in [a child’s] well-roundedness” (Beverly, 4/24/12, p. 80).

In addition to ensuring their well roundedness with the school and school activities, one parent made tutoring available as a part of her strategy for her children’s college success. For Modestine, keeping them busy meant paying someone to assist her children with their academic needs. “They were . . . tutored by a young man in the engineering department. We paid him to tutor our children in the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades” (Modestine, 4/21/12, pp. 95, 116).

Modestine clarified that she and her husband did not necessarily see a specific need for tutoring in their children; rather, it was a way to be proactive in case there was a weakness. She said that, because of this, her children not only did well in their classes, they did well on the standardized tests.

Beverley had more formal ideas planned for the college readiness of her children. “You name it, they were in it. Senora started with the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Top

Teens, Jack and Jill . . . my second son was in Top Teens and Jack and Jill” (Beverly, 4/24/12, p. 78). Making sure that her children received reinforcement outside of the home to support the efforts inside the home was a key strategy. She and her husband ensured that music and sports activities were at the fore of their early involvement; once the children entered high school, they began to introduce programs to support college attendance. “They were in the Upward Bound program. I think Selene also did [the precollege program at Freedmen]” (Beverly, 4/24/12, p. 82).

Selene expressed appreciation for having been involved in these activities. She explained that if she did not “catch it” at school, she did so in the various organizations of which she was a member (Selene, 4/30/12, p. 230). She said that she had expressed interest in the activities and had been receptive to new ones that her mother encouraged. She was also grateful for the opportunity and for her mother being involved with her. She confirmed the many activities in which she and her brothers were involved and mentioned other community organizations, such as Top Teens of America, Jack and Jill, and Girl Scouts. She also mentioned her affiliation with academic organizations such as the honor society.

These programs required time and money, which was necessary to keep all of these SGCGs and their siblings busy. However, all of the parents in this study were pleased that their success had enabled them to provide these programs for their children. The adult offspring were happy to have been involved and that their parents had paid so much money to ensure their roundedness. Modestine shared Jason’s observation in her narrative: “Jason used to say, “Mama, we were poor but we didn’t know it, because you

had us in Jack and Jill, Top Teens, Boy Scouts.” They were in everything.” (Modestine, 4/21/12, pp. 95, 116).

This theme emerged as the third most common strategy among the participants in this study. The parents were very in tune with their children’s interests. They were persistent in asking specific questions, observing their children’s likes and dislikes, and providing support toward the children’s goals. The adult offspring recalled their being very receptive of being involved in church, school, and community activities and being grateful to their parents for participating with them and caring enough to ensure their participation. This finding is significant because success for these SGGs depended not only on early exposure or consistent conversation but also on awareness of their interests, placement in activities, and parental involvement in said activities.

Selection—Don’t Let Them “Break Rank”

Another major strategy that emerged was that of influencing college choice in an effort to ensure success based on familiarity with the college. All five participating parents had attended an HBCU, including attendance by four of them at Freedmen. Therefore, for most of the parents, college choice for their children was simple: Freedmen University. However, a few of the offspring had other plans. For the parents, college success meant attending Freedmen, especially since four of the five parents were current or former employees of the university. In this section, the parents explain their experiences of college choice and their adult offspring discuss their stance on their receipt of this strategy.

There is a popular saying, “What is good enough for the goose is good enough for the gander.” This was the unspoken mantra of the parents in this study. The parents who grew up in Posh Valley were not all focused on attending Freedmen University, despite the college town being very proud of the university.

Patrice explained the sabotage of her plans for college choice when her parents enrolled her and took her to Freedmen one day. Patrice and I laughed about her having a fun-filled 48 hours of summer vacation after learning that her parents had enrolled her in summer school to get ahead on her college coursework.

After I graduated high school and told me I needed to get up and get ready. I said, “Why, I’m a high school graduate, I have the summer off.” She said, “Oh, no, you don’t.” I said, “Excuse me?” She said, “Oh no, you have class.” . . .

(Patrice, 4/17/12, p. 97)

She had wanted to get away from home and attend another college, but this situation had forced her college choice. Although being forced to attend a certain school was not Patrice’s favorite situation, she made the best of it. In the interview she expressed her feelings about her parents’ actions in retrospect, saying, “I thank God every day they made me go to Freedmen” (Patrice, 4/17/12, p. 101). She praised the school for its caring professors and nurturing environment.

Offline, Patrice talked about her older brothers and the fact that her father and mother were not so strict on their college success. She said that her brothers admitted that they would have done what their father wanted them to do and, because he did not encourage college success with them, they worked instead. This was interesting because

it revealed the connection between Patrice's parents' beliefs and her brothers' and Patrice's actions concerning her sons. Even though Patrice had not had an older sibling example, Kevin, Sr. discussed his choice being based on the trend among his siblings and his attempt to sway his son toward the same school.

I went to Freedmen because some of my older siblings went . . . I did not have a second choice. KC's goal was (you know, he majored in music), his goal was to go to State University. But I wanted them both to go to Freedmen. And they ended up going there their first year and I felt like if they proved themselves that first year, they could go anywhere they wanted after that. . . . State University had the music program he wanted and Freedmen didn't. So his grades were a 3.8 or 3.9 and he was able to transfer into their music program. (Kevin, Sr., 4/18/12, p. 37).

Like some first-generation students, Modestine's college choice decision was heavily influenced by her peers. She shared that her friends' choice to attend college had influenced her choice to attend. "Everyone in my class said they were going to college and I said, 'I'm going to college, too'" (Modestine, 4/21/12, p. 47). She spoke of the older students at her school and church as her role models, so much so that she chose to attend the same college as these students.

However, Modestine felt pressure from her family to come home for other responsibilities.

During my second semester at Town University, people started writing and telling me that I needed to be at home taking care of my sisters and brothers, that my

stepmother wasn't doing what she was supposed to do . . . the adults just hounded me, saying, "You can go to the junior college at home." (Modestine, 4/21/12, p. 54)

Unfortunately, this is a reality for many first-generation students. Responsibility calls many students home to help with bills, siblings, or an ill relative, which can impede their success. Modestine reported that, despite her relative's suggestion, she did not want to attend a junior college and decided instead to enroll at a university close to her home and work to pay tuition. This experience taught Modestine to allow her children to make their own college choice decisions; however, her influence of college choice proved successful. "They saw our degrees on the wall, so it was understood—and Posh Valley was a college community—you are going, if not Freedmen, somewhere" (Modestine, 4/21/12, p. 135).

In some families, attending the same college became the norm, beginning a tradition. It seemed in these families, that it only took one family member to graduate and there would be at least one follower. A few of Beverly's family members had attended Freedmen, influencing her.

My mother only went 2 years at Mary Allen, but most of her sisters came to Freedmen. So it was more or less a family tradition. . . . (Beverly, 4/24/12, p. 72)

Based on the familiarity and fond memories, these parents placed heavy influence on their child attending their alma maters. For Beverly, having her children attend Freedmen was more about convenience than the fact that she worked there. However, there were other factors. Unlike Beverly, being an employee of a university

weighed heavily on college choice for Sharon and her children. Sharon admitted being afraid to send her children anywhere she could not check on them. She discussed her reasons for wanting her children to attend Freedmen and the difference in her children's receptiveness of her preference.

Yes, I wanted both of them to go to Freedmen. . . . I didn't have a problem with Posh Valley and I didn't think they would have one either, but my son insisted on leaving there and going to Sampson University [pseudonym]. . . . I figured that, since a lot of people knew me and knew I worked there, they wouldn't have any problems, they would be taken care of. . . . Bethany didn't have a problem with going to Freeman, she wanted to be close to home. I wanted her to be close, too, because you hear so many horror stories now when children go off to school. But with Chance, I went on ahead and bit the bullet; he wanted to transfer so he did and we supported that. (Sharon, 4/24/12, pp. 48, 49)

Initially, Patrice shared Sharon's feelings about college choice, until Sasha made other plans. Having a mother employed at the university did not bother Sasha, as she was more concerned about her ability to maintain full-time employment. But Patrice admitted looking forward to checking in on Sasha if she attended Freedmen. Although Patrice raised her family about 50 miles from Posh Valley, she remembered the speech that she gave Sasha and her other children about attending Freedmen.

I jokingly told all three of them, "Now if I gotta spend my money, you all know where you're all going, right? Right here [Freedmen]." It wasn't a question I mean that was my mantra. (Patrice, 4/17/12, p. 80)

For these parents, choosing the “wrong” college led to teasing and long-running family jokes. When Sasha attended a private Baptist university instead of an HBCU, Patrice joked with her about that choice.

I laughed when I said, “Now, you know you’re Catholic, why are you at a Baptist university?” That was my joke for that semester, “You’re Catholic but you’re at a Baptist school.” Okay, something [is] wrong with that picture to me. (Patrice, 4/17/12, p. 86)

This was a very light way for Patrice to discuss college choice, but in the end she realized that Sasha wanted to work full time and attend school part time. However, Sasha was not focused on the type of university; she was instead set on the program. She admitting not having focused on the type of college and explained her choice to attend the Baptist College being because of their nursing program. She also noted that “working full time and going to be a nurse was difficult” (Sasha, 4/20/12, p. 60).

Patrice eventually accepted that Sasha would be better suited for another type of university, which she found. “City University [pseudonym] provided that flexibility with the schedule, of course, and online courses where it was just a good fit for her” (Patrice, 4/17/12, p. 89). Sasha was not interested in attending an HBCU in a rural area because she “didn’t wanna be in the country” and was a self-proclaimed “city girl.” Sasha admitted that she was glad that she had not attended Freedmen because of its remote location, and her younger sister’s current experience is validation of her initial decision to attend college in the city. “My younger sister is there [Freedmen] now, and she’s like,

‘I’m on an island, really’” (Sasha, 4/20/12, p. 22). These discussions between siblings painted a clear picture regarding the college choice decisions of the adult offspring.

Unlike the other adult offspring in this study, Kevin, Jr. decided to attend Freedmen for two important reasons:

I didn’t get accepted to State my first go-around. . . . I actually went to Freedmen for a year because I wasn’t certain on my degree choice. . . . I would have loved to have stayed at Freedmen, but they just didn’t have my major. (Kevin, Jr., 4/18/12, p. 23)

One important component within this strategy is that some parents were adamant about their children attending their alma maters, while others took a more subtle approach of suggesting a college. While Modestine did not decide for her children where they would go, she was very consistent in offering suggestions. In this case, her suggestions led one of her daughters to attend her alma mater.

[Janet] wanted to go to this school in Dallas, and I looked at the catalog. I said, “This is not for Janet.” But I didn’t tell her that . . . but I said, “Janet, why don’t you apply for [Town College]? You can major in business management or administration and then go from there.” She said “Ok, mama, that’s far enough away from home.” So she applied and she got the scholarship. (Modestine, 4/21/12, p. 86)

The general idea surrounding college choice for these parents was that the adult offspring would stay close to home, and many of them did just that. One common component in these families’ conversations concerned financing. For these parents,

college choice was based heavily on the ability to pay, and Freedmen's reasonable tuition was a very attractive option.

Jason was clear that his parents had not forced the issue of college choice on him, but rather focused on the financial perspective. He reported that Freedmen gave him the scholarship that he needed and that his grades had provided an opportunity that pleased his parents very much. Jason explained that being injured in high school had precluded a football scholarship, which he had wanted very much. He admitted "dragging [his] feet on applying for scholarships" (Jason, 4/19/12, p. 28) but was relieved that his grades provided the opportunity to attend Freedmen. Jason was not very particular about his college choice. He was just happy to attend any school that provided financial assistance. He saw his award as a way to help his parents, who had two other children after him to send to college.

Beverly was straightforward with her views about college choice. She confirmed her desires for college choice for her children. She was proud of her children's accomplishments and, based on their grades, the options to attend other colleges; however, in the end, she made her preference known with the following statement:

They could have gone anywhere but we preferred they go to Freedmen. It was tradition. It was good from a financial point of view. Also, "What's good for mom and dad is good enough for you." (Beverly, 4/24/12, p. 77)

Beverly's and her husband's influence was realized in their children's choice to attend Freedmen. However, according to Beverly, there was a "close call" when her son decided to "break rank" and attend a school that his friend was attending. However, she

shared with her son her experience as a master's degree student at the school. "I told him, 'I know you don't play around there, you have to book 24/7.' Now, I wish I had encouraged him, but he went on to Freedmen" (Beverly, 4/24/12, p. 72).

It was important to Beverly that her children not break tradition—in her words, "break rank." Although Beverly had wanted her children to attend Freedmen for her reasons, Selene discussed her choice and her reasons for attending, which were based on more than her parents' influence. "No, I didn't think about going to any other college. . . all of my friends stayed and attended, so that had something to do with it. We just all went together" (Selene, 4/30/12, p. 30).

Many of these parents wanted their children to attend Freedmen or a school nearby to ensure their success. The idea of keeping them close was a common strategy for all of the FGCGs. However, in an unexpected turn of events, all of the adult offspring reported wanting to see their children go away to college.

Sharon and Chance's relationship, according to Chance, was "a really good one" (Chance, 4/20/12), but when the college choice discussion came up, he was very adamant in his desire to go away to college. However, pressure from his parents to attend Freedmen, combined with the idea of breaking family tradition, pushed him to enroll. Unfortunately, Chance was miserable. Although Chance shares a close bond with his mother, he did not necessarily want to attend college under a watchful eye. Both Chance and Kevin, Jr. attended Freedmen their first year and then transferred to another university, but they expressed different reasons for making the change. Kevin, Jr. explained that, if he could have gone back to high school, he would have applied himself

more. Because his father had wanted him to prove himself at Freedmen, Kevin, Jr. had not opposed this plan. He decided to attend Freedmen for two important reasons:

I didn't get accepted to State my first go-around . . . I actually went to Freedmen for a year because I wasn't certain on my degree choice. . . . I would have loved to have stayed at Freedmen, but they just didn't have my major. (Kevin, Jr., 4/18/12, p. 23)

While Kevin, Jr., was set on a school with a specific major, Chance's experience was very different. Although he had several reasons, he explained one reason was wanting to transfer to another school after attending Freedmen for his freshman year: "It did feel overwhelming that my mom knows everybody there" (Chance, 4/30/12, p. 30).

Sharon and her husband had expected Chance and his sister Bethany to attend Freedmen, but Chance said that, in addition to feeling watched, the environment was a bit of a shock for him. With regard to following the family tradition, he said that he did not give himself enough options.

Since everyone went to Freedmen, it was kind of expected that I go. . . . My high school was very diverse and that's what I was used to, being around all types of people. I just didn't feel enough variety in the group. (Chance, 4/20/12, p. 24)

Perhaps the reasons for Chance's transfer is common for many students. Strongly suggesting a particular college choice could result in a transfer to the school that the student originally wanted to attend. Ultimately, Chance made his own decision to attend a nearby university with more diversity, and he was supported by his parents in that decision. After interviewing Chance, I concluded that he might not have been successful

had he remained at Freedmen. This is a lesson for parents who may want their children to attend their alma mater, despite the possibility that the school would not be a good fit for the student. Although Sharon admitted that she and her husband were disappointed, they were open and adjusted to his choice, because, ultimately, graduation was the goal.

Selene and Jason were the only adult offspring who had children. When the college choice discussion came up, they had their own views for their children. Selene talked about regretting not going away to college and admitted later that the bond with her mother had been another reason for attending Freedmen. However, the grandchildren in this family are setting a new trend. Selene shared that her “brothers’ kids went away and ‘broke the mold’” (Selene, 4/30/12, p. 33). Beverly’s oldest grandchild attended a PWI nearby and the other one is currently attending college in another state. Selene shared her plan to encourage other colleges for her children as well.

I want my kids to go far. I want that for them. They have different cultures out there. Now we live in a major city, so they are being introduced to other cultures.

But as far as college, there is more out there than Freedmen. (Selene, 4/30/12, pp. 35, 33)

Jason’s views were less specific about college choice for his daughter. Since Modestine had never placed a stipulation on college choice for her children, it is not surprising that Jason reported being open to any college choice for his daughter. His plan concerning her college choice has more to do with the financial aspect.

I'm all ready to tell her that school is already paid for, you know, daddy has that covered. . . now if you get a scholarship, then you know, daddy is going to buy him that BMW that he wants. [laughs] (Jason, 4/19/12, p. 40)

Although Jason admitted being very protective of his little girl, he said that he will raise her to be responsible enough to go off to college and to be comfortable living on her own. He said that his experience had taught him that “nobody is going to hold your hand and walk you through it [college]”, so it is very important to instill a bit more responsibility if the child is to go away to college. He said that she would be ready and he and his wife would be supportive, no matter what she decides. This is a great attitude to have about this topic. It is difficult for parents to predict what will happen; the only controllable thing is the type of relationship, what is taught, what they are exposed to, and how their talents are nurtured.

College choice emerged as a important theme among the participants in this study. All of the parents had the desire to form or continue the Freedmen tradition and suggested that, if their children did not attend Freedmen, they should at least attend a university close by. As a result, all of the adult offspring in this study had attended Freedmen or a college close to home, and all had become college graduates. The offspring were receptive to their parents' preferences. Although the adult offspring did not all finish at Freedmen, they at least gave it a try for the sake of their parents. This finding speaks to the bond that these families shared.

Evolution—Encourage Advancement

This strategy was paramount in cultivating college success in the adult offspring. The college degree is the very first indication that the parents were successful in catching them early, setting the tone, keeping them busy, and helping them to make the appropriate college choice. After the implementation of these college success strategies, the parents in this study remembered the pride that they had felt after witnessing the college graduation of their offspring. Many described commencement as a monumental event. Others were specific, stating that it was wonderful to see their legacy of education continue in their children for the first time, which brought many other relatives

Everyone came together, from the country, from the city [laugh], old aunt so and so and uncle whosoever, come out to celebrate. My husband and I turned to one another and said “Wow!” There is nothing like a Black graduation . . . it’s an accomplishment for the family and the race. (Patrice, 4/17/12, p. 203)

These parents were very open about these times and often related graduation to other important events. Kevin, Sr. pointed out that his son’s graduation was similar to “the moment when I saw him being born” (Kevin, Sr., 4/18/12, p. 42). He explained that seeing him become a man made him very proud.

Beverly shared her feelings of triumph after all three of her children obtained college success. She admitted that she had been strict on them and had worried about their success constantly but noted that, in the end, her strategies had paid off.

Those were joyful moments. We felt blessed; I thought we had accomplished something as parents. You know, because you don’t own your children, you have

to guide them. . . . I felt that our teaching and our talking with them paid off.

(Beverly, 4/24/12, p. 113)

Modestine's pride came from having graduated all of her children despite the untimely passing of her husband. She was happy that her family had pulled together and had stood united to help each other to achieve college success. Speaking of her son Jason and his triumph, she said, "I was so proud of him. His father had already passed away. Jason was my only boy, and I wanted him to do well and he did. His sisters and I were very proud" (Modestine, 4/21/12, p. 114).

Sharon's narrative described her feelings on seeing her firstborn walk across the stage. She commented on how beautiful the day was. During the interview, she showed pictures of Chance's graduation, and the smiles were priceless. She beamed as she spoke.

Graduation was awesome . . . we were always so proud of him. . . . It is something to be said when your firstborn is successful, because it provides an example for the other sibling. . . . It took him 5 years, but I was happy. [laughs] (Sharon, 4/24/12, p. 58)

In addition to sharing the joy of college success, data emerged to introduce the strategy of encouraging a graduate degree. While conducting this research, I began to see closure in the strategies toward undergraduate college success and the emerging of strategies to advance the family. It is important to note that the time to promote advancement for these families was during the sophomore year up to the first college

graduation. Many of these parents did not allow much time to pass before bringing up the benefits of earning a post-baccalaureate degree.

As the interviews progressed, more parents discussed the need to encourage their children to attend graduate school. Part of this encouragement had to do with the fact that all of the parents had advanced degrees themselves. The other reason was the parent's understanding the economic demands of persons who hold advanced degrees. Beverly pointed out, "From an economic point of view, you are able to have a decent lifestyle" (Beverly, 4/24/12, p. 145). Like many parents, Patrice shared her wisdom by telling her children, "Darlin' . . . go beyond your limits . . . reach for the sky" (Patrice, 4/17/12, p. 240). It is important to point out that Patrice was not only encouraging her sons to attain undergraduate college success; she and her husband were also encouraging Sasha to go further than a bachelor's degree. Patrice shared a conversation that she and her husband had with Sasha:

After graduation, we were like, "Okay, so what's the next thing?" And she said, "Well, you know how y'all been harping about law school?" And I was like, "Excuse me?" So her daddy said, "Okay, you're serious right? When you taking the LSAT?" (Patrice, 4/17/12, p. 160)

I observed that some of the adult offspring felt pressured to earn advanced degrees due to their parents' accomplishments. Kevin, Jr. spoke about how his mom and sister earning their masters and his dad earning a doctorate had compelled him to do more. "I'm the low man on the totem pole right now. . . . I got a lot of big shoes to fill" (Kevin, Jr., 4/18/12, p. 4).

Selene admitted feeling the pressure of continuing graduate studies because her parents had those credentials. Prior to receiving her master's degree, Selene (according to Beverly) "got a taste of the real world" (Beverly, 4/24/12, p. 54) when she looked for a job without having had working experience. After Selene was denied work, Beverly jokingly said to her "Did you think they would say, 'There is Selene, come on, we want to hire you'?" (Beverly, 4/24/12, p. 54). After this, Selene reluctantly went on to enroll in a master's degree program. Beverly admitted that Selene's job hunt became a running joke in the family that is told during family events each Thanksgiving or Christmas holiday.

However, the Walkers had more in mind for Selene. Beverly confirmed the pressure that she put on her daughter when she said that her husband had wanted Selene to "take an apartment and work on her doctorate" (Beverly, 4/24/12, p. 56) after she had obtained a master's degree. Selene explained how growing up in a rural college town had meant that everyone knew her parents and their aspirations for her. She shared the conversations that she had had with her coworkers/parents' neighbors at Freedmen:

Even now coming back here to work, now his friends will start in on me:

"Selene, you going to get your PhD?" The old heads know me and they are on me, too. (Selene, 4/30/12, p. 44)

Perhaps the most pressure was placed on Selene to advance, and she admitted feeling "the need to advance" (Selene, 4/30/12, p. 45), but Chance felt pressure by way of his younger sibling's example. He related that he was proud of his younger sister and that he encourages her to finish her degree. Although his parents are not pushing him to

attend graduate school, his sister's example has been a silent encourager. He admitted that her hard work in the biology program motivates him.

My sister is going to medical school and that is a terminal degree, so even though no one has said, "Go to grad school," I do feel the need to go further just to have something to increase my skills in music. (Chance, 4/20/12, p. 54)

People in the Posh Valley community also encouraged advancement. Modestine explained that her neighbor brought an application to a pharmacy summer program for Jason. He applied and attended the program, where he learned about the various careers in the pharmaceutical field. Upon his return from the program, Modestine reported that Jason was "excited about making \$50,000 as a pharmaceutical representative" (Modestine, 4/21/12) but she admitted encouraging him to become a pharmacist. Jason remembered his mother's words of wisdom and her teaching him not to forget those who had helped him. He recalled his mother saying to him, "If it wasn't for [Mrs. Martin], then you wouldn't have known anything about pharmacy school" (Jason, 4/19/12, p. 77).

Encouraging advancement can be a coin toss; the child might not wish to continue. However, the strong bond that these parents fostered with their children made their suggestions persuasive and contagious. Patrice stressed that her parents had "encouraged advancement" (Patrice, 4/17/12, p. 12). Also, because they had been unable to finish college, they had passed this mantra to Patrice. As a result of Patrice's efforts, the ideal of advancement is trickling down to her extended family. As Sasha was encouraged to attend law school, Sasha encouraged her younger sister to do the same.

Patrice shared her feelings about the idea. “So she and her sister [are] . . . thinking about going to law school together. And I just think that’s awesome” (Patrice, 4/17/12, p. 163).

This theme emerged as a major strategy to realize college success in the adult offspring. The parents in this study made sacrifices for their children to ensure their college success. Each graduation was special and called family members from far and wide to witness the academic triumph. The commencement ceremony not only signified the accomplishment of the graduate but the advancement of the family. A second family member earning a college degree is noteworthy, considering the long history of oppression and other variables that had hindered other members of the family. These parents planned the conversation of advancement to begin as early as the child’s sophomore year in college. Thus, the parents never ceased in the implementation of their strategies and even insisted on their children’s advancement ahead of time.

Transmission—Tell the Generations

This section presents the final theme that emerged in this study. The transmission of educational beliefs between a parent and child is paramount in ensuring college success. Transmission occurs after the strategies have been implemented and the child receives confirmation by way of his/her own graduation that the parents’ pathway of success was one that was always within reach. Transmission also has an intergenerational property in that it can be passed along to grandchildren and their children. The data that emerged related to this theme demonstrate the dialogue that these parents and their adult offspring share, with minimal differences.

In this study, the transmission of educational beliefs began with the core message given directly to the child. The transfer of the message is seen when a comparison is made between the first-generation parent and the second-generation adult offspring. Therefore, this theme confirms the educational values of these families and reveals the differences in values between the parent and adult offspring. Patrice began by stating her beliefs regarding the parent's role in assisting the child.

What I try to instill in my children is like . . . “I’m you’re stepping stool as a parent, and so . . . I want you to excel even higher than where I’m at this point in my life. . . . I don’t want you to make the mistakes that I did,” as most parents will say. . . . So primarily it was to graduate from high school, preferably without any children. Unfortunately, we were at that day and age. (Patrice, 4/17/12, p. 10)

All of the parents in this study reported that their parents had had strong educational values. However, many parents of these first-generation graduates spoke of the importance of being educated primarily in the primary and secondary years during an era when African Americans were fighting for equal access to higher education. However, transmission among these parents occurred also because of precollege programs/exposure and positive relationships and examples seen in older siblings, peers, members of the church, and school personnel. These relationships reinforced the parents' general point and sparked interest in these FGCGs to continue their education at the postsecondary level.

Sasha spoke to the message of education being important but expressed some difference in expectation and approach, noting that “school is not for everyone” (Sasha,

4/20/12, p. 39). I questioned Sasha about why so many people make this statement, and she clarified her belief based on her close friendships. “I know people that don’t have college degrees and that have their own businesses and do very well, but I will be there to make a claim that education is important (Sasha, 4/20/12, p. 39).

Sasha ultimately agreed with her parents’ strategies in terms of incorporating them with her own children, stating, “So what I value, I think it is close to my parents” (Sasha, 4/20/12, p. 57). However, in addition to expressing her values, she emphasized her desire to financially support her children through college, based on her personal struggles with student loans. Sasha noted that, when she has children, she “will put money up” (Sasha, 4/20/12, p. 58) for their education and promote good study habits with them before college. In fact, Sasha is very involved in her godchildren’s lives and takes the role seriously. She sees this time as practice for her own children and her values and actions speak to this commitment. Patrice had several comments regarding the evidence that Sasha is willing to transfer what has been given to her.

She’s trying to tell him now, “We’re not raising you to be a thug, we’re not raising you to just be a day laborer, we’re raising you to be a man. You will be educated. She is tougher on him than we were with her brothers. (Patrice, 4/17/12, p. 174)

Perhaps Sasha is “tougher” on her godchild because she recognizes the importance of her parents’ teaching and will never forget her own financial struggle to pay tuition. Sasha was adamant about the plans for her future offspring. She was the only participant who actually touched on the financial struggles of being a college student.

Sasha's journey toward college success began 10 years ago as she worked full-time and paid her tuition, never giving up on her goal. These participants learned that college was a time for growth and maturation; it was a time to learn new subjects, be responsible, and step into adulthood. It was also an opportunity to turn the strategies that had been instilled by their parents into their own college success. Kevin, Sr. relayed this message to his children as part of the expression of his values:

I told them, "[College] was the best period of your life." You work hard but you have fun and you get to that stage where you are almost grown or you're grown and it can be a lot of fun; you work hard now so you can play later. (Kevin, Sr., 4/18/12, p. 41)

Reiterating the point that it takes a strong support system to make a successful child was one of Kevin, Sr.'s top priorities during his interview. He talked about the example that his parents set; although they were not educated, they were a stable unit and ensured that their children were encouraged to do their best. When asked about Kevin, Jr.'s values and what evidence he has seen that carried over into his son's life, he responded,

Yes, I see it all the time. Junior [Kevin, Jr.] will speak about his future children, saying, "Well, when Tré comes along . . . he's gonna get a master's, he's gonna get a PhD like his granddad. (Kevin, Sr., 4/18/12, p. 45)

It is evident that, once these FGCGs achieved college success, they began to think about their own children and the legacy that they would create by becoming educated. These parents were very proud of their children and the legacy that they

began, and the offspring were even more excited that it will continue through their children. Kevin, Jr. discussed his intent to mimic his parent's strategies and instill the same values, saying, "I will do everything like my parents did" (Kevin, Jr., 4/18/12, p. 17). Kevin, Jr.'s interpretation of this parents' push for advancement had to do with them fostering certain rules prior to the actual encouragement of advancement. He also commented on a family tradition that motivated him to do his best:

They were there to enforce the law, to encourage us; they were involved in our extracurricular activities and are still encouraging us to advance. Like me and my dad had this little signature thing that we did ever since I graduated kindergarten, where we would take a picture and he would shake my hand. Even when I graduated and got married, we did our signature pic. . . . I will do that with my kids, too. (Kevin, Jr., 4/18/12, p. 18)

The establishment of traditions such as this commemorative photo gave Kevin, Jr. something to look forward to. It allowed him to share indelible moments with his father, capture them, and continue to do his best to create more of these moments. While not all parents mentioned the establishment of such traditions, this is a very good way to create buy-in, celebrate accomplishments, and keep children focused on leading a positive path in life. During the readiness phase, the parents discussed the importance of keeping their children busy with activities, but the celebration of small accomplishments also keeps them busy *thinking* of the next way they can make their parents proud. Although Kevin confirmed his plan to follow his parents' blueprint of encouraging college success, he added his own stance on readiness. "The only thing, I would

encourage my kids toward more scholarships and help them really understand what getting a scholarship means.” (Kevin, Jr., 4/18/12, p. 62).

According to a few of the offspring, having a parent who was also employed at Freedmen University had its privileges and drawbacks. The privileges were expressed as the parent being able to identify with the current college environment, as opposed to relying on their past experience and convenience. However, it was also clear, although unspoken, that the parents who worked at Freedmen had deeper affinity to see their child be successful at Freedmen. And no matter in what department they worked or position they held, they felt very strongly about college success. Sharon discussed that she shared her values not only with her children but with people in the Posh Valley community.

It’s a wonderful feeling to see my kids successful. I want that for everyone.

There were people in our hometown who had good intentions and it just didn’t happen that way. They went to work instead, but those I talk to, I tell them my values all the time, I say, “It’s never too late to get what you want out of life and education is the key.” (Sharon, 4/24/12, p. 63)

Selene, like all of the offspring in this study, share her parents’ general beliefs about education. After seeing her mother earn a Master’s degree and her father earn a Ph.D., she aimed high and earned at least two degrees. She discussed her educational values and stance on the changes she plans to make in her delivery regarding college choice.

History repeats itself. . . . I am the same way they were. I’m on my kids, too, but I want them to go to away to another school. . . . So I would say the college

choice thing is the difference between me and my parents, but our values are the same. (Selene, 4/30/12, p. 33)

She added advice to parents about the importance of conveying educational values to create a family legacy. She contended that, if parents want to have successful children, they will not only show them with their example, but will “sit them down and discuss the value of it and tell the generations” (Selene, 4/30/12, p. 33). Constantly repeating success, according to Selene and other parents, is needed to create a legacy of education.

Beverly shared evidence of “telling the generations” in a discussion about her grandson, who chose to leave the college environment and try his hand at music production. When asked whether she saw evidence that her and her husband’s values had been transferred to her children and grandchildren, she stated,

Well, somewhat . . . the second grandchild is the one in New York. His mother said, “Let him follow his dream.” I wanted to say, “Are you crazy? Follow his dream? He needs a degree!” (Beverly, 4/24/12, p. 181)

Although Beverly is somewhat disappointed in her grandson’s choice to follow his music career, she shared her plan to continue to encourage him toward finishing his degree. She shared her expectations and expressed her desire to see her children and grandchildren successful. So her values are still being expressed to her grandchildren, regardless of whether or not they heed her advice.

Modestine has been employed at Freedmen since 1972 and, like Beverly, offered her children sound advice on life and education along the way. She shared her values and the evidence seen of transmission, stating that her children followed her advice and

stayed away from trouble. She said that she knew that they would do well in life because she “was right there every step of the way” (Modestine, 4/21/12, p. 113). She noted that the examples set by her peers had inspired her to inspire her children’s success.

Modestine stood firm in her values and did not stop believing in them. This type of value system was displayed by all parents in this study. As a result, the values of their children were evident as well.

Jason revealed his plan to carry on what his parents had instilled in him.

Although his daughter is only 6 months old, he has a plan this early regarding how he will implement college success by ensuring that she stays focused on academics. He said that, when she is able to understand, he will tell her “the more you know, the better you’ll be” (Jason, 4/19/12, p. 47).

Hearing plans for college success that have yet to be implemented by the offspring reiterated the transfer of beliefs. The reward of college success is not only the ability to transfer beliefs, once college success has occurred; the other benefit for the parent is seeing their children do well in a chosen profession while the adult child is able to see that all of the parents’ strategies were worth implementing. Sharon shared her belief that her son Chance would make the transfer to his offspring.

I think he would transfer our values to his kids. . . . I know he believes the education was worth it because he is working and wouldn’t be making a decent living if he didn’t. . . . I believe if you study hard, it will pay off. There will be obstacles in the way, but that’s life in general—you have to keep going. (Sharon, 4/24/12, p. 62)

Although Chance felt somewhat smothered while attending the same university where his mother worked and admitted that college was a struggle for him, he stated that everyone should give college an honest try. Chance illustrated his own struggles during his matriculation at Freedmen: “The main thing with being away from family, there are times when you are bored. We always had someone to talk to at home” (Chance, 4/20/12, p. 63). He admitted that it was difficult to choose the right friends and activities, because choosing the wrong ones could affect the experience. I was surprised to hear that he had struggled with his degree plan and knowing exactly what courses to take. There were suggestions that academic staff were not as available as needed. Chance thought that someone should have kept him abreast of these things. He was outspoken about his beliefs and how his experience at an HBCU had shaped his views of college. He then offered a statement on the reality of college life despite a students’ intentions.

You could come in with the best grades in high school and the best outlook and you just crash and burn; you can’t deal socially or you lost your motivation, aren’t studying the right thing or the right way. (Chance, 4/20/12, p. 67)

Chance was very honest about his experiences and referred to a few of his reactions to them as “shortcomings”; however, in reality, his experiences are similar to those of many students. The account spoke to the struggles that can impede success of a student without warning. One day, the student is doing well and attending class, and the next day the student is homesick, failing, and unsure about whether to continue. These struggles directly reflect Chances’ beliefs and the strategies that he plans to use with his own children. He shared that he and his sister had been sheltered and overprotected so

much that in college they both endured several struggles that might not have happened had they had more exposure, knowledge, and freedom. The following statement represents what college choice strategies he will incorporate with his own children.

I want to take my kids everywhere. . . . I would take them to different campuses. . . . I want them to know where the Ivy League schools are, where the local schools are . . . alternative schools and trade schools. (Chance, 4/20/12, p. 63)

Kevin Jr., Chance, Jason, Selene, and Sasha reported that they wanted their children to go further than they had gone. They reiterated the importance of finding the appropriate college environment for their children and, in doing so, offered views that were very similar to those of their parents. Their statements demonstrated the transferability of their parents' parental investment strategies.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reported the data and analysis of those data from interviews with 10 participants who discussed their exposure to college campuses beginning in the primary years. Many had attended college fairs, career fairs, step shows, and college recruitment events and had toured several campuses while in elementary school. The atmosphere of a college town and their parents' educational values had a significant influence on this exposure.

These narratives suggest that parents should seek summer programs or camps that address the interests of the child. The parents were very intentional in implementing these strategies within the guise of keeping the children busy—specifically, the parents' role should be to keep the child busy doing what he loves to do while remaining the

parents remain involved as well. The parents should help the child narrow interest and enroll the child in lessons. The child needs to know that the parents believe in him or her during the early stages of life.

I did not anticipate the role of the rural church being such a strong player in the support of the parents' strategies. The religious community provided a platform for some of the adult offspring to showcase their talents and to become even more involved in activities that allowed the child to be seen as a young leader. The members of the church were supportive of the education of their community's children. College applications and summer program opportunities arose from these relationships and created additional support for the parents.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents a summary and discussion of the results, implications for future research and practice, and recommendations and conclusions of the study. This study was designed to explore the details of parental investment strategies to discover how college success is cultivated in this population through the transfer of educational beliefs. These strategies were expressed by African American first-generation rural college graduates and their adult offspring. The research questions that guided this study were, *What parental investment strategies did first-generation African American rural parents use to cultivate college success in their children? In what specific ways did these parents transfer their educational beliefs to ensure college completion?*

Conclusions

Analysis of the data led to several conclusions. First, the parental investment strategies used by first-generation African American rural college graduates were (a) providing examples of college success and early exposure, (b) having intentional and consistent conversations of college readiness and success throughout the child's primary, secondary, and postsecondary years, (c) keeping the child engaged in extracurricular activities, which served to support the conversations and contribute to the well-roundedness of the child, (d) encouraging the child to attend the parents' alma mater as a means of ensuring the child's success and the support of a familiar environment, (e) encouraging the child to earn an advanced degree in an effort to match or go beyond what the parent had accomplished, and (f) creating a continuum of college success in the

next generation by instilling very similar educational values in the adult offspring. Thus, the parental investment strategies of these parents emerged within the realm of exposure, support, consistency, readiness, selection, evolution, and transmission. These were implemented to provide positive examples, to assist and nurture their children, to help the children gain buy-in, and to accept and pass along the parents' educational beliefs.

Second, the parents in this study transferred their educational beliefs through communication, actions, and encouragement. They were consistent in every effort. More than one conversation was held, more than once the parent was involved, in more than one instance the child was encouraged, and there was more than one example of college success in the home. The child's personal, academic, and social interests were also financially supported. In the process of implementing these strategies, these parents also made time to teach morals and core values that lead to success. They communicated openly with the child and became physically involved and committed to success.

All of these factors provided buy-in for the child. Thus, the transfer of beliefs occurred through the positive relationship that these parents built with their children and the physical and financial investment that they made in their child's future. The parents used encouraging but firm language and bonded with the child through their moral and physical support. These parents built the child up and never discouraged the child. When college success occurred, the parent was even more encouraging of the graduate to advance.

Third, the family background and college experiences of the parents provided the basis of what the parents believed regarding higher education. These beliefs informed

the development of the college success strategies that they implemented in their children's lives. It is important to note that these strategies were not preplanned. That is, these parents recognized the need to encourage the child to attend college as early as elementary school and implemented support instinctively throughout the child's life according to the child's interests and academic strengths. Again, the investment by these parents heavily depended on the child's interests, which could not be predetermined at birth. It is important to note that these parents had not been encouraged toward college success in elementary school by their parents. In fact, each of them had stumbled upon exposure through their community or religious institutions and, while some had been given examples by their older siblings or peers, there was very little parental investment on the part of the FGCGs' parents.

Fourth, the fact that these FGCGs had chosen professions in education did not directly affect their implementation strategies. Instead, they were more affected and driven in their actions by seeing their child succeed. While strategies were not scheduled when the child was born, beliefs were already extant. The beliefs fueled the strategies along the way. For instance, many of these parents believed that Freedmen University was the best college choice for their child, so they influenced the child to attend that school. Parents who realized that their child excelled in mathematics encouraged the child's participation in mathematics clubs in elementary school and later encouraged the child to major in mathematics.

Fifth, the adult offspring in this study had been receptive of their parents' investment strategies and credited these strategies as the foundation of their college

success. Also, as a result of their parents' investment in them, they made plans to pass on the general principals of their parents' educational beliefs to their children, based on the consistency of their parents' actions, communication, encouragement, and involvement. The conversations with their parents, the intrinsic and extrinsic involvement that they received, their receipt of assistance with educational processes, and the support of a two-parent home and educated older siblings were specific contributors to their receptiveness. While the adult offspring may not impart the exact same strategies as the parents did (especially where college choice is concerned), the adult offspring will impart both accommodating and productive strategies that will ensure multiple generations of college success hereafter.

Relationship to the Literature

It is necessary to return to the literature to integrate the results of this study. The existing literature related to college success, generational status, parental investment, college preparation, college choice, and educated African Americans was discussed with the participants. Both the literature and this study's results were primarily concerned with African American college-going behaviors. The results of this study are herein compared to the findings reported in the literature.

One significant difference between the results of this study and the literature lies in the difference between rural and urban first-generation college students. Just as Dennis et al. (2005) found examples of good developmental outcomes in ethnic minority at-risk students, this study found positive outcomes among rural African American first-generation college graduates and their educated adult offspring. As students, the first-

generation graduates were properly developed for college success while in college and proceeded to transfer their beliefs into strategies that would develop a second-generation graduate. The results of this study show that these parents were not considered to be *at risk* as the term is defined in first-generation college student literature. These first-generation college graduates had been brought up in safe, stable two-parent homes, were mostly encouraged to attend college by their parents, a sibling, or peer, and had high motivation to succeed. Although the parents in this study did not consider themselves to be at risk, they described themselves as financially disadvantaged, which was consistent with Yoder's (2008) finding that rural adults receive a lower per-capita income. Many participants confirmed tuition as a financial hardship for their parents; rather than imposing this burden, they elected to work to cover the costs.

The small population in this study does represent the entire U.S. rural population. However, the results add more information to the literature on the background, educational values, and characteristics of educated African American families. Unlike the at-risk literature, these families created a significant family life experience and raised their children responsibly. Although these parents of the first-generation graduates did not assist with the college process, their educational values were linked to literacy and positive school relations. These characteristics merged to create two generations of achievers. Consistent with Richardson and Skinner (1992), success was based on the students' perception that a college degree would provide a better life for them, which was a common statement by participants in this study.

The results of this study were inconsistent with those reported by Hertel (2002), who found that interaction with first-generation students and their parents presents an inner conflict between values and attitudes of family, home, and the friends left behind. The participants in this study described no inner conflicts, mainly because they had been encouraged to develop positive attitudes toward education. These positive attitudes carried over a desire to become college educated. Their values were not negatively affected by their parents, but enhanced to turn a modest past into a prosperous future. These students knew about the humble beginnings of their grandparents as children of slaves and their parents' struggles to raise a family with limited resources. Thus, Feagin's (2006) suggestion that Blacks did not inherit economic resources and/or significant cultural capital (such as education) as their White counterparts did was consistent with the current research. However, most of these parents did report having inherited their homes, as some of the land was passed down from slave owners. None of the first-generation students was fond of the idea of staying home to babysit their siblings or to work in the rice fields. However, all of them attended school close to home and visited when they could. Similar to the report by Gofen (2009), these students prioritized education with the support of their parents and began an intergenerational cycle of educational-level inheritance in their children.

The narratives of the rural residents in this study was consistent with the studies by González et al. (2003) and Noeth and Wimberly (2002), who found that parents of color were encouraging higher education but did not possess the knowledge to assist in the college process. The ability of rural parents of color to utilize community resources

to prepare their children for college was consistent in the families in this study. Some of them recalled their parents commenting that college preparation and encouragement was “free of charge,” despite the rising cost of college. These participants took this philosophy and applied it to their own parental investment strategy. Although the participants admitted that their parents were not knowledgeable about the college-going process, they reported that their parents had used the resources in their community to help the first-generation students to gain necessary knowledge to assist themselves. From there, the first-generation graduates used similar community resources to expose their children. These behaviors of college-educated rural residents created another generation of college graduates with positive attitudes about higher education.

Unlike Ogbu (2004), who found that students of color were less likely to have adults who intentionally helped them to shape the college planning process, the current study found that first-generation African American rural parents provided an adequate example, supported their children’s interests, shaped their ideals, managed the college planning process, and created additional assistance through an older sibling. While some parents of color are viewed by society as being indifferent about college preparation and encouragement, the rural parents in this study made concerted efforts to create upwardly mobile offspring. The parents were also willing to speak against the stigma of rural residents speaking in broken English and chewing tobacco, as all were very articulate and cultured. Although the USDOE (2010) reported that a low percentage of rural parents expected their child to obtain at least a 4-year degree, the parents in the current

study expected their children to earn at least a master's degree and began to encourage the advanced degree during their children's sophomore year in college.

The participants in this study confirmed Yoder's (2008) findings that college completion was linked to greater lifetime earning potential, personal and professional networking, exposure to diverse philosophies, enhanced leadership abilities and opportunities, greater health, and a longer life expectancy. The adult offspring also confirmed Barnett's (2004) finding that Black family support was the main contributor to Black college student success and the path to liberation in American society, which was consistent with the findings reported by Shankle (2009).

The second-generation graduates in this study received an individualized level of support from their parents, in part because the parents had actually experienced and succeeded in the college process and matriculation. It was established that the first-generation parents had received less support from their parents but more support from an older sibling or peer, which was consistent with the findings reported by Naumann et al. (2003) and York-Anderson and Bowman (1991). In fact, the level of preparation that these parents provided was consistent. Similar to the report by Adelman (2005), the results in this study were consistent in that the parents provided educational support to their children prior to and throughout postsecondary education. Instead of dropping their child at the college dormitory, these parents assisted in the college process and groomed an older sibling to serve as a mentor to the student. This level of support went beyond communicating the parents' expectation that the child attend college. Enrolling their children in school-related and community-based extracurricular activities while

chaperoning was one significant way in which these parents heightened their efforts. Although Holland (2010) reported low numbers in individualized, concrete, and comprehensive college planning among African Americans, the adult offspring in the present study clearly received this level of planning from their parents. The results of this study confirmed findings reported by Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, and Perna (2008), DeRonck (2007), Guryan et al.,(2008), and Milkie, Kendig, Nomaguchi, and Denny (2010) that parental achievement and involvement influence the postsecondary outcome and success of children and that educated parents make significant efforts to pass on their legacy to their children.

Like the results reported by Holland (2010), Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997), Perna and Titus (2005), and Reynolds (2009), the results of the present study demonstrated that a strong parent-teacher relationship was necessary for success. However, the participants in this study reported the strongest parent-teacher relationships during the elementary school years. They recalled communicating and meeting with teachers less during the secondary years. The adult offspring found that seeing their parents build a strong relationship in the beginning served as a model for them to communicate openly with their parents about their grades, academic issues, and achievements and helped them to develop relationships with their teachers, enabling them to ask for additional help if needed.

During the elementary school years, the parents spent a considerable amount of time with their children doing homework, reviewing assignments, and discussing the present week's and next week's assignments. The parents in this study reported spending

at least 1 to 2 hours per day with their children after school, which is consistent with the research reported by Guryan et al. (2008) and Milkie et al. (2010) on the amount of time that educated parents spend with their children. The parents in this study stressed the importance of laying a solid foundation during this time and admitted finding several extra hours in their day just to implement these strategies. However, because there were two parents in the home, the responsibilities were shared, especially when the child had to study and participate in extracurricular activities. The results of the present study confirmed findings by Cheadle (2008) and Lareau (1996) that communication and the organization of a daily routine were major factors in parental investment. However, it is important to note that this routine was unwavering in the primary years. During the secondary years, the parents did not “make” the child stick to a routine, but strongly suggested that they do so. These strategies proved developmentally sound and were consistent with research reported by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) about modeling, reinforcement, and instruction, which influenced the fit between student outcomes and parental involvement.

The findings of this study were consistent with those reported by Immerwahr (2000), who found that African American parents emphasized college attendance to help their children to avoid social and economic struggles. This was the first reason these parents implemented their strategies. However, there were some differences of opinion between the findings and the literature regarding college choice. The results of this study showed that the parents were more concerned with affordability, convenience/location, and familiarity in a college, while their children were most concerned with degree

availability, convenience, and cultural adaptability. These findings were consistent with those reported by Cho et al. (2008) and Kim (2004), who found that African American parents and their children were more concerned with institutional characteristics. Although most of the second-generation graduates chose a college based on their parents' approval, they preferred their children to attend college out of state and were most concerned about cost, the academic rigor, reputation of the university, and the overall safety of their children, which were similar to the findings reported by Canale et al. (1996) for parents in general.

The results of this study revealed participants' thoughts regarding how college completion is cultivated in rural African American families. It was the expectation in the present study that parental investment strategies of FGCGs would emerge. The literature supported the findings of this study that revealed how participation is transferred between generations within the rural Black family. Although the USDOE (2010) reported fewer African American rural residents with degrees, the current study reported the parental investment strategies that helped to create the SGCG. These investment strategies toward college attendance should be implemented at an early age; if this is done consistently, it will ultimately produce college-going offspring.

Relationship to the Conceptual Framework

Lieberman (1979) theorized several factors that contribute to the transfer of beliefs between parent and child. His theory (TGT) suggests that there are critical periods of learning in childhood during which acquired behaviors, beliefs, and practices are not only transferred but also molded into the child. TGT provides a framework to

assist in determining how a family passes on its unique identity and culture and what mechanisms allow the passing of family traditions from one generation to the next—the “tradition” in this study being college success/graduation. I also fused TGT concepts with ideas from current parental investment literature (Henry et al., 2011; Hill & Chao 2009; Wartman, 2008) to frame the research questions and interview protocol. This is not to be confused with parental investment theory PIT; Fox & Bruce, 2001), which is focused on paternal certitude, differential commitments to children, and the insistence that one’s parenting investments be made exclusively in one’s own children.

Instead, I chose to use more recent concepts of parental investment that are developed specifically toward determining the investment made by both parents in a child’s education. From TGT, I extracted the concepts of *language*, *bonding*, and *family evolution* to determine whether and how a transfer of educational beliefs occurs among African American first-generation rural college graduates and their adult offspring.

I found outcomes that supported my theory. The first-generation African American rural college graduates in this study used their educational beliefs to guide their language, their bonding, and the support of family evolution. Upon realizing their children’s talents, they nurtured them by setting an example of college success with their own accomplishments, matching the child’s interests with activities and serving as a participant, creating a team of siblings, each teaching the other, and by promoting advancement after earning a bachelor’s degree. These parents’ involvement, support, and belief in their children never wavered. While some parents take their children to college for their freshman year, turn the child’s room into a lounge, and call occasionally, the

parents in this study remained steadfast in their development of a successful college graduate. They saw their children through life until they were employed or married. It may be easy to compare the actions of these parents with those of “helicopter” parents, who may appear on campus to confront university staff. In contrast, these parents approached the support of their children in a way that allowed the children to make their own decisions, handle their own affairs, and solicit advice when needed. However, their language was intense, their support was steady, and their encouragement was focused on tangible evidence of their child’s success.

The adult offspring adopted similar beliefs and felt a responsibility to continue the pattern of college success and to contribute to the mobility of the family. They have already begun communicating college attendance to their young children. Many of them have their children involved in extracurricular activities. All of them have bonded with their children as their parents did and have vowed to spread the good news of college success to future generations.

I observed the parents and children operationalizing these models through their narratives but also in their facial expressions and body language. When they talked about their children, they leaned in, gave consistent eye contact, and share their stories clearly. I actually felt how strongly they felt about their children’s success. When I later read the words from their transcripts, I felt that their words were as sincere as they had been in person. Their emotions were clear. They stood by their children in every undertaking and kept them engaged in success. I gathered from these cues that they had bonded with their children; they used specific language and communicated this language in doses based on

the child's stage of life. They promoted excellence and advancement within the family. They gave their children the opportunities and exposure to become involved in their own success as they themselves had had. Through the years, they taught their children about accountability. In the end, the children validated all of their parents' narratives and shared stories of their receptiveness. The main ingredient of their receptiveness was their parents' example. They saw their parents working and making money. They attended college events with their parents and heard stories of their struggles as first-generation students. The offspring knew that their parents would not have them struggle as they had done, so they did their best to get to college and succeeded for their own benefit. The strategies used to cultivate success in the adult offspring represented a concrete and comprehensive plan tailored to the child's interests.

Based on these findings, I suggest that a combination of TGT and parental investment created a desired behavior or return on investment (college success). This is connected with the parents' *language* that supported the adult offspring's cognitive/intellectual stimulation. *Bonding* was connected with the level of parental involvement and influence in the stories, and *family evolution* was connected by the parents' ability to help their children realize their full potential. The parents endorsed education and enforced rules along the way that would help the child personally endorse similar values and passed these values to another family member or the following generation. This research confirms that the investment strategies of these FGCGs created a timeline of support, involvement, and influence that cultivated college success for generations to come.

This framework was utilized to formulate a protocol (Appendices K and L) to examine the details of parental investment strategies to discover how college success is cultivated in this population through transfer of educational beliefs. Figure 2 describes how the parents in this study used their beliefs, experiences, and college success as a foundation to create ideas of support for their children. Once the foundation was laid, the parents recognized and nurtured their child’s interest and implemented a series of strategies that became an informal plan for success. The FGCGs worked with their spouses to fuel parental investment strategies toward college success. When these strategies were paired with their child’s skills and interests, the return on investment is seen in the college success of the child and the transfer of the parents’ educational beliefs. Thus, illustrated are the variables that created the foundation of these parents’ beliefs and the variables that created how the parent would make their investment resulting in a positive outcome (return on investment).

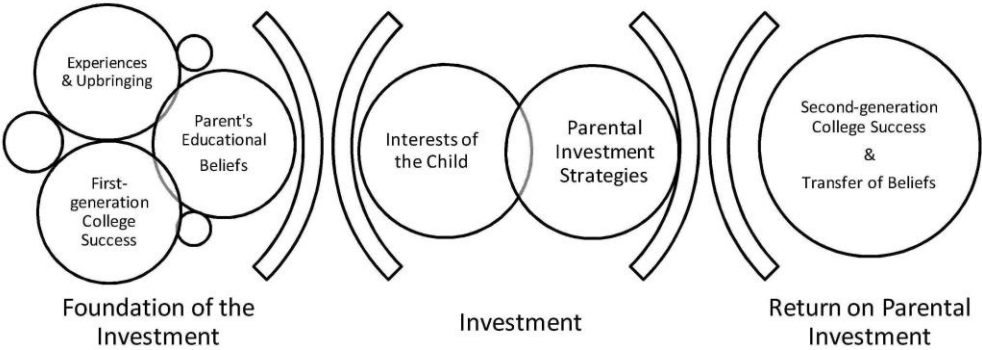


Figure 2. The return on parental investment model suggests how educational beliefs and parental investment create a return on parental investment.

Summary and Discussion of the Results

This qualitative study produced salient data that, when analyzed, rendered six major themes: (a) Foundation—Catch them Early, (b) Consistency—Set the Tone, (c) Readiness—Keep them Busy, (d) Selection—Don't Let Them “Break Rank,” (e) Evolution—Encourage Advancement, and (f) Transmission—Tell the Generations. These themes were consistent with Lieberman's (1979) TGT and yielded the parental investment strategies and educational beliefs of these families. The findings demonstrate the unique ways in which first-generation African American rural college graduates cultivated college success in their children. Specifically, the parents in this study shared their educational values and provided a narrative depicting the unique strategies implemented to create the SGCG.

Foundation—Catch Them Early

The parents in this study began to discuss college attendance while their children were in elementary school. In most cases, the conversations were combined with exposure to the collegiate environment, specific careers or college successful persons, including the parent, spouse, older sibling, or other family members such as aunts or uncles. The discussions introduced the child to the idea and various careers began to peak the child's interest early on.

Once the parent had an idea of what the child wished to do, the parent began to nurture the child's talents and provide opportunities for exposure to the interest area(s). If the child's interest area happened to change, the parent adapted the conversations, the instructions for success, and the type of exposure to accommodate the child.

The subthemes—(a) Form a Strong Coparenting Relationship and (b) Create a Sibling Assistant—emerged to support the theme of “catching them early.” These two subthemes developed from these families and speak to mechanisms appropriate to the early exposure of the adult offspring. The fact that all adult offspring in this study were products of a two-parent home was an unexpected finding. The significance of the two-parent home within this theme served to shed light on how much exposure and support two parents can provide. All but one adult offspring had two educated parents; however, the demographic of the Farrell family consisted of an educated stepmother and a father who had completed 2 years of college. The fact that the father had some college experience was significant, as he shared his experiences and directed his daughter toward a college path. This dynamic brought to the surface how the influence of even one parent who has achieved college success can make an impact on college success for the child. Further, the patriarch of the house played a major role in lending himself to develop strategies according to his daughter’s capabilities and assisted the biological mother in understanding the strategies implemented to lead her toward success. All parents shared a dual role in every aspect of communication, action, exposure, and support for their offspring.

The second subtheme emerged from discussions regarding other examples that the adult offspring cited as a credit to their early exposure. The role of the older sibling as a member of the investment team was a common topic among many of the participants. This was a pleasant surprise, as I had not anticipated including the older sibling in the considerations. I had no idea how much impact the older sibling would

have on college success. The participants were grateful to have been assisted by or were willing to give assistance to their siblings. The older siblings provided a nonauthoritative role in encouraging college success. This relationship allowed exposure to and assistance with college processes in an informal way. The conversations with the older sibling closed the generational gap. The adult offspring reported looking up to the sibling as a role model just as much as the parent, if not more. This assisted the parents a great deal. It is clear from this research that a family team consisting of two parents and an older sibling increase the chances of college success in this population.

Consistency—Set the Tone

According to the participants, the discussion points focusing on cultivating college success were used throughout the child's life. These topics reflect the language used to exhort motivation, generate participation in activities that would develop the child, and yield sound academic and social decision-making skills prior to college attendance. This strategy was critical in the cultivation of success in these children. The adult offspring were unanimously receptive of their parents' language, not only because the parents were their guardians but also because the parents were verbally motivating and had been successful themselves. The children showed their receptiveness by following the strategies that their parents implemented. There was no resistance to the language because the general message was positive. There were a few instances in which the parents' language was stern due to poor grades or lack of focus, but the child was still receptive because of the bond and cognitive stimulation created by the consistency of the positive language. There were also instances in which the child reported not

wanting to comply with the language. Some reported being a little rebellious against the language or taking heed only after the second communication; overall, these children knew that their parents meant the best for them and used the communication with their parents as a vehicle to motivate themselves.

Another part of setting the tone involved the parents supporting their language with complementary actions. This was done using intrinsic and extrinsic involvement. This involvement was a very important complement to the language used in these families. These data suggest that verbal communication is not enough to bring about college success. The parents held important discussions, the child was receptive, and the parents took this strategy a step farther by infusing themselves into the variables that would bring about success. Intrinsically, these parents were unpaid tutors or they hired professional tutors to assist the child in the home. All of the adult offspring reported having been unable to participate in a social activity until academic responsibilities were fulfilled. The parents reported threatening to remove a social activity or other distractions such as outside play and (later) car privileges if the child's grades were not better than passing. On the other hand, if the child did well, the parents rewarded the child with praise or a tangible item, although one parent was of the opinion that it was the child's duty to apply himself/herself.

Each parent stressed that the child should do neat and presentable work and remain organized. The parents tried to show a bit more trust in the child to hold himself/herself accountable as he/she approached college. Parents reported making the child bring the report card to them in elementary school, a bit less in middle school, and

even less in high school. In other words, there was an exchange here. As the parents implemented this strategy and the child became more responsible, the child brought the report card and shared academic triumphs *and* failures without the parents having to ask. This might not have happened had the communication between parents and child not fostered a bond to build the relationship. The adult offspring admitted being held accountable for their academic success and social interactions right the beginning of their education throughout postsecondary years. These internal strategies helped the child to realize the parents' concern for the child's success. It let the child know that home was a place to seek help and clarification when difficulties arose. The parents also held their child's friends and associates accountable while visiting the home. The culture of this community was close knit; everyone felt responsible for others. This is why these parents received applications and word-of-mouth opportunities for their children from church members and other members of the community. A few of the parents and adult offspring reported attending their college of choice because their like-minded friends were attending there. This strategy set the tone inside the home, creating a vehicle of development during the secondary and postsecondary years.

Readiness—Keep Them Busy

The parents in this study were adamant about ensuring the well-roundedness of their children. They were intentional in this strategy to provide the child every opportunity that the parents might not have had to experience and learn from situations outside the home and to build relationships with other adults and their peers who were also moving toward college success. Extracurricular activities weighed in more than

learning development opportunities in this study. Many of the learning activities were more prevalent in the child's primary years. As the child grew closer to postsecondary years, the parents allowed more extracurricular or social activities. Therefore, the extrinsic involvement of the parents surfaced a great deal in this theme. These parents were little league coaches, chaperones, advisors, organization presidents, and fundraising chairs for the PTA, Jack and Jill, cotillion, debutante, Boy and Girl Scouts, math club, band, youth choir, school choir, and church drill team. They were present and lent time and talent to the school, often serving as volunteers at sporting events or recitals, hosting parent meetings, and reading to children during the lunch hour. These strategies outside the home were instrumental in helping the child to learn how to succeed socially and to collect experience in applying the intrinsic strategies learned at home. In many ways, activities outside the home rewarded these students for their academic success, prepared them for social responsibility, and engendered a sense of self as a person. Also, according to the parents, it helped keep the child busy.

The adult offspring reported participating in at least three extracurricular activities throughout the year prior to college. Some activities, such as cotillion, debutante ball, football, basketball, and summer programs were seasonal. However, others, such as Jack and Jill, honor society, math club, and voice lessons, happened year round. The parents allowed the student to choose the activities. However, the two parents affiliated with Jack and Jill reported not giving the child an option to participate due to the leadership benefits provided by the organization. The adult offspring who participated in Jack and Jill referred to many programs, experiences, and the friendships

that still existed from that affiliation. The parents discussed developing the concept of giving back to the community through this program. In addition, most of the parents were affiliates of Black Greek-Letter Organizations, which also provided the adult offspring with some exposure if they accompanied their mothers to an event. However, the one parent who did not affiliate with Greek organizations kept their children just as occupied as those who did affiliate.

Perhaps these results meant that, for these students, providing early exposure, specific conversations, and learning opportunities gave the student a better foundation. The adult offspring reported having many weeknights and most weekends during their teens consumed with extracurricular activities. However, they remembered younger years involving more time at home for academic tasks and some weekends consumed with extracurricular activities. Thus, there was a balance between extracurricular and learning opportunities during the primary years. The variety of extracurricular activities made the adult offspring feel that they were not missing out on other social activities such as parties. According to the parents, the main point of having the child involved in so many time-consuming activities was not only for development but also for safety. Many parents admitted that, although the rural area was close knit, they were afraid to give their children too much freedom.

Selection—Don't Let Them "Break Rank"

"Breaking rank" was a phrase used by one parent in her dialogue to reflect the rebellious attributes that children sometimes have. Specifically, she referred to the resistance that she felt when one of her children decided to apply to a school other than

her alma mater. She and the other parents discussed how college choice remained a constant topic in their homes. These discussions showed that living in or having family ties to a rural area influenced college choice. This influence was the dominant strategy in this theme. Some of the adult offspring reported that they felt slightly obligated to attend Freedmen University, and as a result all but one enrolled there for the freshman year.

The Posh Valley Area was considered by the participants to be a college town. While the idea of choosing the college down the street in a small rural town is not implausible, there were mixed feelings about making the choice to attend Freedmen. All of the parents made remarks to their children about Freedmen being good enough for them, since the parent had attended there. The parents shared that they felt that their children would be safe at Freedmen because of the small community and nurturing environment that it would provide. However, their main reason was that most of the parents were employed at Freedmen, and keeping their children close was a priority, out of concern that the child might not be ready to function away from home. It seemed that the parents were concerned that, if something went awry, they would not be able to get to their child quickly enough to offer assistance.

A few of the adult offspring described their parents' influence as overbearing. Based on their responses, it seemed that these offspring were interested in leaving home to prove that they were responsible but the parents were not as open to this concept. The adult offspring who transferred from Freedmen reported that they wanted to give attending Freedmen a try for their parents. Their body language and tone suggested that they wanted to please their parents by attending the parents' alma mater. It was obvious

that Beverly had wanted all of her children and grandchildren to attend Freedmen; while three children have done so, but none of her grandchildren have done so. Patrice made a statement about her money only going to Freedmen, but the very independent Sasha decided against Freedmen and was successful.

Although the parents joked about their children “breaking rank,” it seemed clear that the parents wanted reassurance that, if their child attended another school, they would be successful. Most of the parents admitted that their children and grandchildren desiring to attend another school was difficult to accept, but when the children achieved college success, the parents were relieved of the choice and accepted the outcome, regardless of where the success occurred. Initially, this admission had led me to conclude that the parent and offspring sharing an alma mater would further bond parent and child. However, as the parents spoke, it was clear that, as long as their children completed their degrees, the parents and child would bond, regardless of the school choice, because they shared the accomplishment. Family members with a variety of college experiences could inform the younger generation just as if the family had attended the same school.

Evolution—Encourage Advancement

At the beginning of this study, I did not think asking the participants about their educational values would evolve into their being adamant about encouraging advancement, but it is logical. Since all of the parents in this study were educated beyond the baccalaureate level, they naturally promoted this goal in their children. A few

adult children admitted feeling intimidated by this but others knew that they would follow the path to graduate school.

The strategy lies in the timing of the encouragement. Some parents introduced the idea of graduate school education as early as the sophomore year and were aggressive in promoting the idea when their children were in college. This strategy guaranteed that the child would earn at least a bachelor's degree. So while the parent focused on the bachelor's degree conversation in elementary school, they began, as the child became more receptive, to set the standard of graduate education later. These parents realized the potential economic implications of not having an advanced degree, depending on their child's major. When Jason (biology major) came home excited about the possibility of earning a \$50,000 salary in pharmaceutical sales, Modestine, doing the math, figured not only that he was intellectually capable of more but that he needed more money to sustain a suitable living, especially if he were to marry and provide for a family. Modestine was not alone. The other parents were unanimous in their thoughts of encouragement. They agreed that a person cannot rise to his or her full potential without a college degree. They all stated that a person's associations are better after attending college. My mind was flooded with the imagery of the conversations held while driving in a car or attending church—all the while implanting this belief system.

There were no subtleties in the delivery of this strategy. These beliefs were transferred verbally and nonverbally with great clarity, as seen in the hand gestures, innuendos, and some of the words used to convey the message that education is important: "Higher education provides a decent living. Your father and I did it, you can

do it. You cannot survive without it. Finish what you start. Seek academic challenges. Expand your potential intellectually, socially and financially.”

Transmission—Tell the Generations

The only way to determine whether the educational beliefs of a parent have been transferred is to interview the child. In this study, the adult offspring of the parents interviewed in this study shared their beliefs so they could be compared with the beliefs of their parents. The parents were open about their views and listed them throughout the interviews.

Based on the responses of the adult offspring, the transfer first began to occur when the child realized the lifestyle that they had been afforded as a result of their parents' educational achievements. A few adult offspring mentioned having friends whose parents had not attended or completed college and spoke briefly of their lifestyle in comparison to that of their friends. The importance of a college education was clear to them early even before the parents began to implement their strategies. Specifically, the degrees on the wall sparked interest, but the actual lifestyle created awareness and a definition of success. Beverly recalled her mother being adamant about educating her older brother to move him away from gambling in the pool hall. In the parents' home growing up there was no middle-class lifestyle paired with a college education; instead, there were lessons of hope that spoke to what life could be like with college success, while the adult offspring lived the better life as a result of their parents' success.

As a result of the educational beliefs that were verbalized and the strategies that were used by parents to cultivate college success in the adult offspring in this study, it

was clear that there was indeed a transfer of general beliefs from parent to child. Evidence of this transfer was reflected in the data comparison of parent and adult offspring responses. The parents were successful in painting the picture of success to their children. The children received visual images of success, verbal coaching, academic assistance, exposure to like-minded peers and siblings, and rewards such as scholarships and praise for their successes prior to high school graduation. The common thread is *positivity*. These families created a positive experience for the next generation and the adult offspring confirmed their intention to carry on this method to cultivate success in their children or had already begun to do so.

The parents reported verbal evidence of the transfer by hearing their child repeat and promote the parents' beliefs to others. They also reported having seen their children use strategies similar to those that they themselves had used. These parents served as such a positive influence on their children that the children aimed to emulate the beliefs, not only because they respected their parents but also because the strategies had worked and their graduation and career success were the proof. The only strategy that did not transfer successfully was that of influencing the choice of attending the same college. The adult offspring believed in less sheltering in this area; they were firm about their children seeing more and experiencing life outside of their neighborhoods and nearby communities. The conversations with the adult offspring surrounding this matter were extended, which conveyed their regret for not having attended an out-of-state school. All of the offspring had graduated from schools in Texas, and most of them admitted having wanted to go away but not having done so due to their parents' influence to remain close

to home. The bond that had been created by their parents was the central reason for their decision.

Summary

A review of these themes suggests that success was realized through the beliefs of the parents and the strategies that they implemented to help their children to be successful (Figure 2). These participants created strategies and a set of beliefs concerning the value of higher education to help their children to discover their own paths to their individual success. Success in general was not the goal; rather, success was measured according to the children's own interests, talents, and skills. These parents did not feel that they "owned" their children and did not approach promoting college success for their own benefit or to be able to brag of their children's accomplishments as a result of their influence. These parents were genuine in their approach and were willing to develop a child who was happy in a profession and content with personal life choices. These themes are the windows to the process cultivated by first-generation African American rural college graduates. Based on the findings of this study and the need to craft a comprehensive definition, it is recommended that *parental investment* be defined as *a combination of support mechanisms, fostered by parents and other investors, involving the consistent communication of a set of beliefs, early exposure, a positive family dynamic and the utilization of community resources with the intent to cultivate college success in a child.*

Recommendations for Practice

Based on analysis of the results and the conclusions drawn from that analysis, several recommendations for practice could easily be implemented by parents to cultivate college success in their children. The recommendations for improved practice are presented in three stages for parents and one stage each for school and college personnel. In chapter II, I discussed the intent to collect strategies that make up a process of college success during the secondary and postsecondary years. However, I learned from the participants that these strategies begin earlier than middle school and continue beyond college. These findings are summarized in Figure 3.

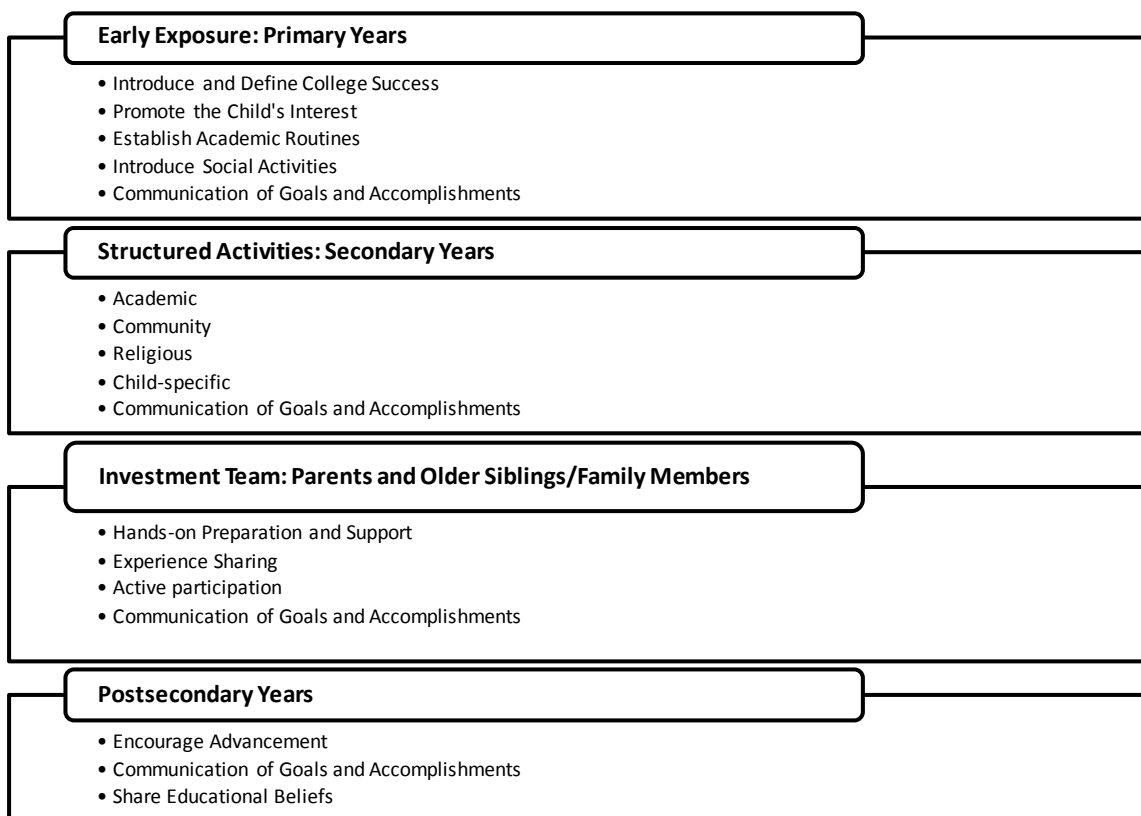


Figure 3. Top four recommendations for parents to cultivate college success in their children.

Create exposure to college success during the primary school years. Based on this research, middle school is too late to begin having conversations about college success. According to the results of this study, parents seeking to cultivate college success in their children should begin exposing the child to college life, academic success, and the meaning of accomplishment early in the child's life. The participating parents discussed what the interests of the child were and introduced a specific major or career comparable to the child's interests. Parents must introduce the child to persons who have obtained college success and discuss the excitement of making a living doing what the child loves to do. If the child is doing what he/she loves to do, it will not seem to the children that he or she is *working* toward a goal. Like some of the adult offspring indicated, their interests as a child changed a few times, but their parents were there to change with them. As the child's interests change, parents can increase awareness of careers to suit the new interest to let the child know that it is common and acceptable to change one's mind about careers. This also teaches useful lessons for everyday life: to accept change, to acquire versatile skills, and to live without limits. The participating parents were heavily involved in their children's lives. This is key to cultivating college success.

The participating parents read to their children, were strict concerning their children's schedule, assisted with homework, kept in constant communication with teachers, helped their children to complete neat and presentable work, enrolled them in classes dedicated to their talents, and held the children accountable for their grades and behavior in school.

The offspring in this study were grateful to their parents for their investment. As assumed in the literature review, the time spent between parents and children resulted in greater skill sets, better opportunities for school activity involvement, and a solid foundation for the child to achieve college success. As cited, the children of educated parents have greater educational potential and greater educational opportunities (Guryan et al., 2008). The main idea of this recommendation is to create knowledge and define what college success is by beginning the conversations of success, creating buy-in, and using visual and interactive stimuli to engage the child. Creating a solid foundation for college success will prepare the child for continued acceptance of these strategies. Therefore, parents should spend quality time with their children with the intent to invest in the children's success.

Help the child to become involved in activities specific to the academic, community, and religious institutions. This recommendation focuses on the need for parents to ensure that their child is well-rounded, increasingly responsible, and thus too occupied to be involved in unhealthy habits or to be improperly influenced. The parents in this study ensured that their children remained busy in affiliations at school, in the community, and in their place of worship. As the adult offspring moved into their secondary years, they became involved in more activities. The parents encouraged the child to join honor societies and math or science clubs to socialize and work with other academically astute students. This strategy was a key factor in reinforcing earlier teachings and exposure to college success. All of the adult offspring discussed how their association with the individuals in these organizations kept them thinking of and

discussing college attendance, college choice, and potential career options. A few of the offspring even went into detail about college-related conversations with club members. For these parents, helping their child to make the transition meant helping the child to become more responsible and independent about academic success.

Create a team to invest in the child's success during and after the postsecondary years. The parents in this study did not allow their child to feel unsupported at any time. The parents continued to invest in the child and remained the “voice of reason” and solicited help from the oldest sibling to serve as a nonauthoritative role model. During the primary and secondary years, the sibling served as another encourager; however, in the postsecondary years, the sibling began making personal investments by physically supporting the child with the admissions and financial aid processes. Some of the adult offspring credited their older siblings with sharing a bit more of their college experiences than the parent. The rest of the offspring had served as the older sibling and reported sharing their stories and helping their younger sibling to face their experiences. Investment became less hands-on for the parent and more hands-on for the older sibling in the postsecondary years. This could be because most of the parents were preparing another child for college. In addition, it is necessary to point out that the parents did not recruit the older sibling to invest at this stage in the child's success. Instead, the older sibling was trained by the parent to assist in supporting the younger sibling at an early age, so by the time the next child went to college, the sibling naturally assumed a more active role. For families with an only child, the same type of investment can be made by the parent or other close family members. Thus, the main point of this recommendation

is to communicate the need for family members to see the child through the academic journey until college success is realized.

The families in this study took specific areas and worked as a unit to ensure college success and *family evolution*. This scenario makes reference to the “team” concept mentioned in Chapter IV. For the oldest sibling, the mother and father assumed their respective roles and, once that sibling had achieved success, the sibling joined the team of investors. *Family evolution* occurs when there is evidence of the transfer of beliefs and investment strategies from one family member to another family member. Figure 4 illustrates how parents pass their strategies and beliefs on to their children. To continue the illustration of family evolution, we could include the investment strategies of the adult offspring to cultivate college success in their children, and so on.

The next two recommendations are addressed to school personnel and college administrators. As stated in Chapter I, it is necessary to address ways in which colleges and schools can join with parents and their children to ensure college success. This research identified additional information regarding the participants’ experiences with college and school staff. Although this finding did not surface as a strategy for college success, it informs the recommendations in this study, given the presence of few qualitative studies on rural populations/schools. These experiences revealed concerns regarding the role of the high school counselor and inconsistencies in service for the adult offspring’s college preparation. It also suggests for consideration programs that colleges and universities can use to increase their involvement with the first-generation alumni population.

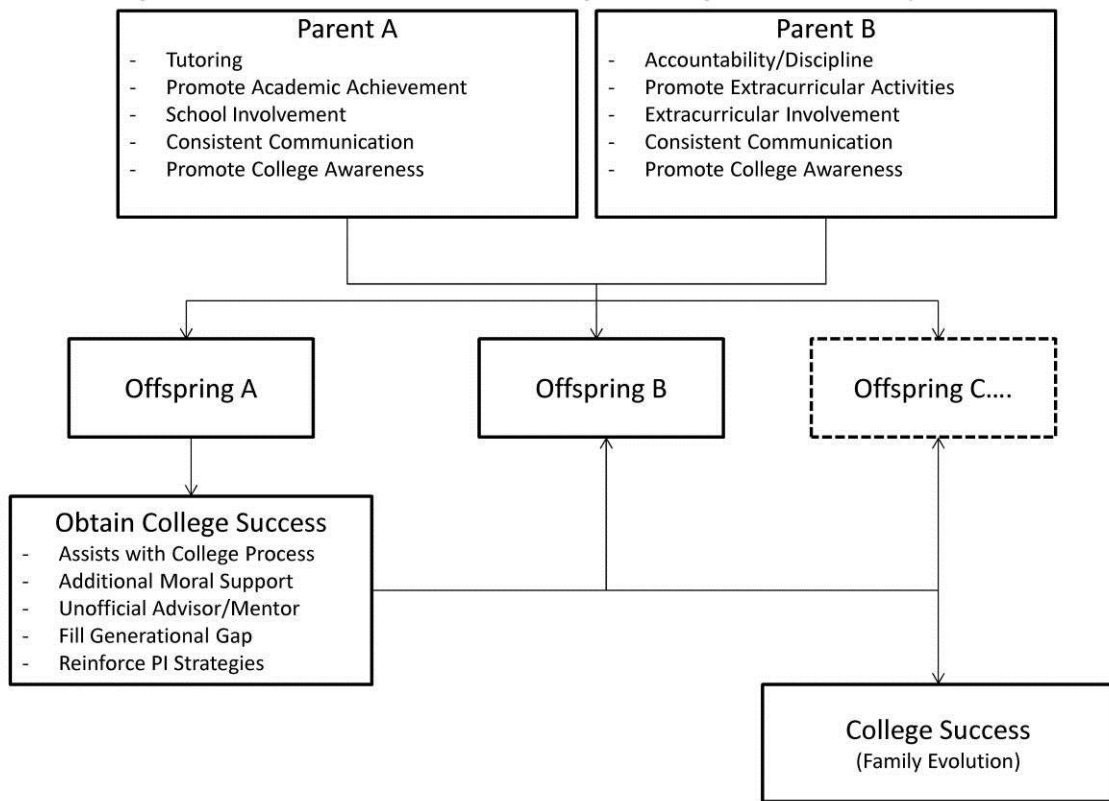


Figure 4. The role of parents and siblings in college success (family evolution).

K–12 institutions should be consistent and impartial in their delivery of college success strategies. Half of the participants in this study attended the same postsecondary school. When asked about support from school staff and guidance counselors, they replied almost unanimously that they could have received more support. However, perceived racial innuendos could have affected the support received from the counselor. The participants who attended the school in the early 1980s and mid-1990s praised their counselors for their involvement in their college success. The participants who attended the school in the 1960s and 1970s reported that they felt that their counselor showed less interest in their college success than in the success of the Caucasian students.

Specifically, the counselors failed to promote a variety of colleges (especially PWIs) and failed to assist the students in the college application process. A few of the participants reported having had one-on-one sessions with their counselors in which career goals were discussed but, according to the participants, the counselor did not take initiative to match college programs with the student's interest. Some of the other participants' counselors had discouraged them or someone whom they knew from college attendance, instead recommending a business cooperative program or trade school. As a result, the participants felt that their aspirations were unimportant to the counselor. To be clear, motivating a student toward a trade school or alternative career program is not an issue; these programs are beneficial and relevant to students. However, allowing a personal bias to exclude a student from all options, including college, is an issue. The participants rejected their counselors' advice and went on to earn degrees, despite their grades. One of the participants invited his counselor to his college graduation, and the counselor expressed regret for having the earlier discouraging conversation.

It is necessary for high schools to make more efforts to personalize a college success initiative for each student and omit personal biases. According to Epstein and Salinas (2004), a marriage between a professional learning community and a school learning community is necessary to fill this gap. A professional learning community uses the teamwork of principals, teachers, and staff to identify school goals, improve curriculum and instruction, reduce teachers' isolation, assess student progress, and increase the effectiveness of school programs (Epstein & Salinas, 2004, p. 12). This recommendation may be difficult to achieve, especially for larger schools, but perhaps

college success cohorts can be created based on career interests. The students would generate a college success profile that includes grades, classification, career interest, and pretest scores. This initiative would require high school freshman to complete a career assessment. Cohorts of student would be created based on their interests and counselors would be assigned accordingly. These cohorts would receive information on specific colleges according to their interests and tour the colleges. This is an example of how schools can create a professional learning community to provide personalized service to students that goes beyond information packets and general college and career fairs.

Develop college success programs for the offspring of first-generation alumni.

The results of this study suggest that colleges could do more to assist their first-generation students. A school/collegiate learning community (Epstein & Salinas, 2004) is a necessary recommendation. A school/collegiate learning community would include students, parents, community partners, and colleges who work together to improve the school and enhance students' learning opportunities about college success. Figure 5 illustrates what components are needed to create learning communities in the primary, secondary, and postsecondary environments to support parents and their ongoing parental investment strategies. The FGCGs in this study implemented college success strategies that were successful, but they might have benefitted from increased support from K–12 and collegiate institutions.

The participating parents felt solely responsible for their child's success. There is no reason for parents to feel alone, as it is the general goal of colleges and universities to provide "mass tertiary education, professional specialized higher education and research

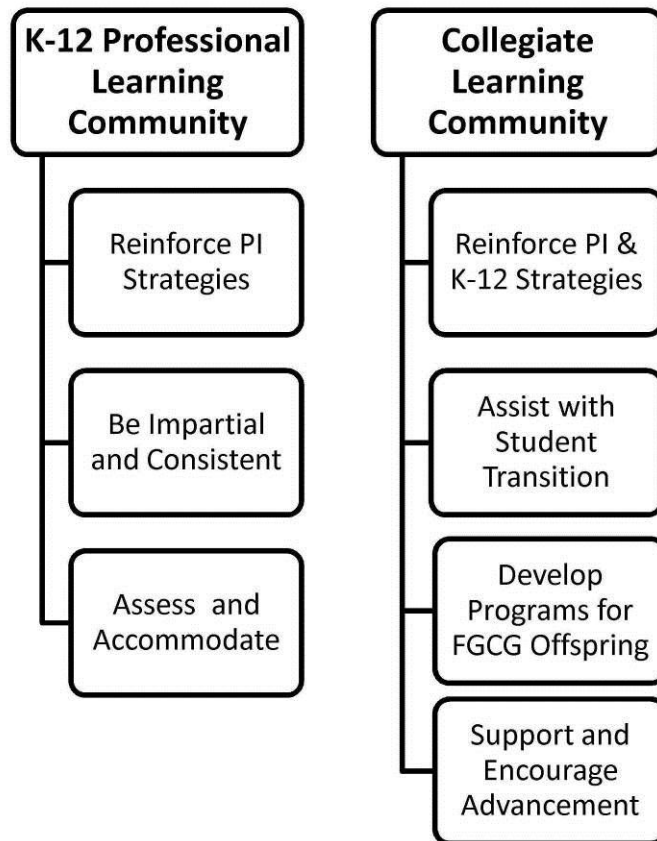


Figure 5. Encouraging K–12 and collegiate environments to create learning communities that encourage college success.

and academic training” (Laredo, 2007, p. 441). From the time the child reaches the primary years, the parents should introduce and define college success, while universities support parents in their efforts and provide purposeful opportunities for further exposure. Thus, alumni programs for first-generation graduates that assist to prepare their offspring might be helpful. Figure 6 illustrates a collaborative relationship that rural parents, rural schools, and universities can develop to cultivate college success. Ultimately, the parents, schools, and universities should share the responsibility to create



Figure 6. Increasing the college success of rural residents through parental investment strategies and professional and collegiate learning communities that collaborate to cultivate college success.

positive success outcomes. Investment should touch the child in every environment. The results of this study suggest that the obligation lies with both parents and institutions.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings in this study suggest that first-generation African American rural college graduates have much to share with regard to their experiences, especially as they prepare their children for college success. While the participating parents' strategies

were not identical, they made significant contributions to their children's success and advancement. Although this study provides insight into the participants' experiences and presents feasible recommendations to assist other parents and academic institutions, it also points to areas where further research is needed. A dozen families cannot serve as one voice for the entire rural population; gathering more information can inform studies concerning colleges and universities and family studies on this topic. Five recommendations for research are presented as a result of observations made during this study.

First, *inquire further into the parental investment strategies of first-generation African American rural college graduates*. The results of this study are consistent with the literature and conceptual framework that first-generation African American college graduates implement unique strategies to cultivate college success in their children by using TGT and concepts from research on parental investment. However, more studies on this population are needed to contribute to higher education research. In addition, educational theories of parental investment are needed to provide a solid framework for future studies.

Second, *study and compare the parental investment strategies and educational beliefs of African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic rural FGCGs*. As stated in the review of literature, few qualitative studies have focused on rural populations in terms of higher education. The results of this study show that African American rural families have access to and utilize resources within their communities that support college attendance and success. Therefore, it is necessary to study whether other races living in rural areas have the same access and take advantage of resources provided to them.

Third, *examine and compare the parental investment strategies and college choice decisions of African American families living in rural college towns versus in other rural areas.* College choice was a significant topic in this study. The results of the study brought to light the discussion of access and exposure afforded to rural residents who live in a college town. However, not all rural cities are college towns. More research is needed to compare the college success of rural college town residents with rural residents who do not have a university in the hub of their community. Comparing the college choice decisions and the parental investment strategies of these families could make significant contributions to research.

Fourth, *compare the parental investment strategies of rural versus urban FGCGs.* The comparison between rural and urban African American FGCGs can contribute to higher education research by communicating ways to improve college success initiatives in these areas. Some resources that are used by urban cities may be useful to rural areas and vice versa. In addition, environmental issues faced by urban students may pose some difficulties in achievement and make for an interesting comparison to issues faced by rural students. K–12 schools, colleges, and universities could use the results to share best practices and cross-reference the types of messages and programs provided to students. This research might also inform higher education boards of the variety of issues faced by students, administrators, and staff.

Fifth, *study the parental investment strategies of rural college-educated African American two-parent and single-parent families.* This study reported the educational beliefs and parental investment strategies of families with two parents as head of

household. The father and mother worked together to create an unstoppable support system for their children. This is not to say that single parents are not capable of creating the same team. The perspectives of single parents could contribute to research by reporting significant similarities or differences in parental investment strategies.

Summary and Conclusion

This study explored the parental investment strategies of first-generation African American rural college graduates to discover how college success is cultivated through the transfer of educational beliefs. The research questions were framed to discover the total parental investment of this population through discourse, parental influences, and involvement that fostered support of the child through the completion of college. Each parent and offspring had a different interpretation of his or her world, which supports the interpretive/constructivist orientation used in this study. This basic qualitative study used data collection via in-depth, open-ended interviews and review of documents such as the biographical information form (Appendix J), e-mails, text messages, and field notes. The final product was a rich, thick description of how African American FGCGs living in a rural area created college-going offspring.

The first-generation graduates in this study created second-generation college graduates armed with a solid foundation of support, advanced degrees, firm beliefs and values of success, and the intent to transfer their beliefs to their children and other family members. Thus, a college-going family was created within these units. It is necessary to realize what makes a child successful and how the pieces of the puzzle fit together for that individual child. Parents, communities, colleges and universities are called to serve.

Success itself does not come easily. It is a process that requires time and resources to implement a plan for each individual.

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APPENDIX A

INTRODUCTION LETTER TO CHURCH/GREEK ORGANIZATIONS

Title of Research: **THE PARENTAL INVESTMENT OF FIRST-GENERATION AFRICAN AMERICAN RURAL COLLEGE GRADUATES IN CULTIVATING COLLEGE STUDENT SUCCESS**

Dear _____,

My name is Crystal Allen and I am a proud graduate of Prairie View A&M University and current doctoral student at Texas A&M University-College Station. I am conducting a research study on first-generation African American college graduates from rural areas. My aim is to find out what specific communication, influences and involvement this population had on their children that resulted in their college graduation.

As the principal investigator of this study, I would like to meet with any of your members who fit the following criteria for a face-to-face interview that will report family education and college background information. The interview will last up to 2 hours and will be held separately for the parent and their adult child.

I am interested in interviewing participants that meet the following criteria:

Parent:

- (1) African American (whose parents did not attend college)
- (2) Holds a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university
- (3) Lives in or has lived in the Hempstead, Prairie View or Waller County, TX. Area
- (4) Parent or legal guardian of a person who has completed a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university.

Adult child: Completion of a bachelor's degree no later than December 2012

Participation in this study is voluntary and anyone may withdraw consent and terminate participation anytime without threat or consequences. If any of your members are interested and/or agree to participate in this study or have any questions, please have them to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Crystal J. Allen
Doctoral Candidate
Texas A&M University
832-372-6231
Zg44@neo.tamu.edu

APPENDIX B

AUTHORIZATION FORM FOR CHURCH/BLACK GREEK-LETTER ORGANIZATIONS

Title of the Study: The Parental Investment of First-Generation African American Rural College Graduates in Cultivating College Student Success

My name is Crystal Allen and I am seeking authorization from your chapter to recruit participants for my dissertation on African American first-generation college graduates and their educated adult offspring.

As the principal investigator of this study, I would like to meet with any of your members who fit the following criteria for a face-to-face interview that will report family education and college background information. The interview will last up to two (2) hours and will be held separately for the parent and their adult child.

Participation is voluntary and anyone may withdraw consent and terminate participation anytime without threat or consequences. Please mark one of the options below and reply with your answer to zg44@neo.tamu.edu. I will then send an information sheet for any interested members to contact me.

_____ Crystal J. Allen, Texas A&M University doctoral student, **does** have permission from _____ to solicit participants for her study of first-generation African American college graduates and their adult children. We also agree to all of the above solicitation requests.

_____ Crystal Allen, Texas A&M University doctoral student, **does** have permission from _____ to solicit participants for her study of first-generation African American college graduates and their adult children. We agree based on the following change:

We would like to add _____ to the recruitment request.

We would like to omit _____ from the recruitment request.

_____ Crystal J. Allen, Texas A&M University doctoral student, **does not** have permission from _____ to solicit participants for her study of first-generation African American college graduates and their adult children.

Representative Name _____

E-mail _____

*Church Organization Addition: Recruitment can include one or more of the following, (1) posting of a flyer in your facility and (2) an ad in your church bulletin (3) post-service announcement. The potential participant will contact the research team and communication will occur thereafter between the participant and the researcher.

APPENDIX C

CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENT SCRIPT

Good Morning/Afternoon:

My name is Crystal Allen. I am a proud graduate of Prairie View A&M University and a current doctoral student at Texas A&M University. I am studying how Black college-going families in rural areas are created and need the help of first-generation college graduates and their educated adult children. I am focusing on persons who live in or are former residents of the Hope Station or Posh Valley, Texas area (pseudonyms). This research will contribute to the body of knowledge on rural families and the educational strategies and beliefs of African Americans.

Participation in this study consists of a separate interview with a parent(s) and one of their adult children. The interview should take no more than 2 hours. This study has been approved by the Texas A&M University Institution Review Board, which protects studies involving human participants. In no way are you obligated to participate and your responses will be confidential.

If you are interested in participating, please see me at the back of the church. There, I will be happy to provide more information on this study and give you my contact information.

For decades, the Black church has been instrumental in the education our people. Today, researchers like me will continue to provide avenues such as this study for our voices to be heard. Thank you and God Bless.

APPENDIX D

RECRUITMENT FLYER

AFRICAN AMERICAN FIRST-TIME COLLEGE GRADUATES LIVING IN A RURAL AREA WITH EDUCATED ADULT CHILDREN NEEDED:

- Research consists of a separate one hour interview with the parent and the adult child.
- Questions are related to the parental strategies implemented and received in the African American family.
- Participants must:

Parent:

- (1) Be African American (whose parents did not attend college)
- (2) Hold a Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university
- (3) Lives in the Hempstead, Prairie View or Waller County, TX. Area
- (4) Parent or legal guardian of a person who has completed a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university

Adult Child:

- (1) Completion of a Bachelor's degree no later than December 2011.

Contact:

Crystal Allen, Prairie View Alumnus
Doctoral Student
Texas A&M University
E-mail: Zg44@neo.tamu.edu
Phone: 832-372-6231

APPENDIX E

CHURCH BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENT

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY DISSERTATION RESEARCH STUDY:
PARTICIPANTS NEEDED!!!!!!

----- Student seeking to interview parents and their adult children-----

Criteria

Parent: (1) African American College Graduate (whose parents did not complete a college degree); (2) parent of a college graduate; (3) current or former resident of Posh Valley, Hope Station or Waller County. **Adult Child:** College graduate as of December 2011.

For more information contact Crystal Allen via e-mail: zg44@neo.tamu.edu or phone: 832-372-6231

APPENDIX F

FOLLOW-UP EMAIL FOR CHURCH/GREEK ORGANIZATIONS

Hello _____ Members,

Please contact Crystal Allen to receive more information about her research study featuring African American first-generation college graduates and their educated adult offspring. This study will discuss the strategies Black parents used to help their child graduate from college. There are few studies on Black families from rural areas, so this study will give a voice to residents of the Posh Valley/Hope Station/ Windsor area (pseudonyms). All information received will be confidential.

Please email your inquiries directly to Mrs. Allen at zg44@neo.tamu.edu. Interviews will be scheduled according to your availability.

Thank you for your consideration,

Representative Name

APPENDIX G

TELEPHONE RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Key:

P= Potential Participant

I= Interviewer

P= Hello, may I please speak to Crystal Allen

I= Hello, this is Crystal Allen speaking.

P= My name is _____ and I am interested in hearing more

about participating in your research study.

I= Thank you for calling! How did you hear about the study?

P= I am a member of _____

I= Great! As you have heard, I am a doctoral student in the College of Education at Texas A&M University-College Station. I am conducting a research study on the parental investment strategies of first-generation African American college graduates from rural areas. I am seeking to interview African American educated residents of Hope Station and Posh Valley (pseudonyms) such as you to discover the strategies used to cultivate college success.

I= Just to confirm that you qualify to participate...are you/your parents African American and a current or former resident of the Hope Station, Windsor or Posh Valley area?

P= Yes OR P= No (Thank you so much for your inquiry. If you can refer anyone who fits these qualifications, please have them to call me as soon as possible.

End Call)

I= Do you have a Bachelor's degree?

P= Yes OR P= No (Thank you so much for your inquiry. If you can refer anyone who fits these qualifications, please have them to call me as soon as possible.

End Call)

I= Ok. Last question...are you a first-time college graduate and have an adult child with a bachelor's degree? Or Are one or both of your parents first-time college graduates?

P= Yes OR P= No (Thank you so much for your inquiry. If you can refer anyone who fits these qualifications, please have them to call me as soon as possible.

End Call)

I= Great! You fit the qualifications of this research study. Do you have time to hear more?

P= Yes OR P= No (Schedule a call back time. Thank you for your time.)

I= Background Information:

- I will begin interviewing March 15, 2012
- Your interview would be held in your home or via the telephone for apx. 1 ½ hour
- I am also planning to interview your parent (s)/ adult child to give a second perspective of the support given or received.
- With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded, so that I may collect accurate information
- All information you provide is confidential, meaning I will not share anything you share with me with anyone. I will keep your responses in a lock box in a locked file cabinet for 7 years and on an encrypted computer.
- After I collect responses from the interview, I may follow-up with you via telephone, e-mail or Google blog site in case I need to clarify any statements or ask additional questions. I will provide a copy of the transcript so you may confirm your responses.
- If you have any questions regarding this study, you may contact my supervisor, Dr. Fred Bonner at (phone number).

- I would like to assure you that this study has been approved by the Texas A&M University Institution Review Board, which ensures the protection of research participants.

I= Are you interested in receiving more details about this research study?

P= Yes OR P= Not at this time (Thank potential participant for his/her time)

I= Great! With your permission, I would like to e-mail a biographical information form and consent form to you with further details to help you make a decision in participating in this study. You are welcome to take five (5) days to review the form and discuss it with your family.

P=Yes OR P= No thank you. (Thank potential participant for his/her time)

I= Thank you very much for your time and consideration. Hopefully this research will assist other parents with incorporating similar strategies of college success and help college administrators provide more support in the academic environment to increase college completion among African Americans from rural areas. I will need your e-mail address (obtain e-mail address and telephone number). Are there any questions?

P=Yes (answer questions) OR P= Not at this time.

I= I will send the e-mail at the conclusion of this call. Again, I appreciate your consideration. Please feel free to call with any questions about the two forms.

P= Ok, thank you.

I= Thank you so much for calling. Good-bye

*This form was based on a telephone recruitment script developed at the University of Waterloo.

APPENDIX H

EMAIL TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS

Hello _____,

Thank you for calling to inquire about this research study. As promised, I have attached both the Biographical Information Form and Consent Form. Please take five (5) days to look them over. If you are willing to confirm your participation, please complete the forms and return them via e-mail to zg44@neo.tamu.edu. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Crystal Allen
Doctoral Candidate
Texas A&M University
Zg44@neo.tamu.edu
832-372-6231

APPENDIX I

CONSENT FORM

Texas A&M University
Institutional Review Board
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
College of Education Administration and Human Resources

Crystal Allen
Phone: (832) 372-6231 or E-mail: zg44@neo.tamu.edu

Title of Study:

The Parental Investment of First-Generation African American Rural College Graduates in Cultivating Student Success.

Introduction:

Before agreeing to participate in this study, it is important to understand the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed during the study, the potential risks and benefits of participating in the study, the rights of each participant, and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality.

Purpose of Study:

The purpose of this study is to explore the details of parental investment strategies and discover how college success is cultivated among Black rural families through the transfer of educational beliefs. You, _____ agree to participate in this research study in which the investigator will ask you to discuss your personal experiences and views pertaining to the strategies you (or your parents) used to ensure the continuation of education in your family.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview with the researcher to obtain information regarding the parental investment strategies that enabled you (or your parents) to finish college. Your participation in this study will last for one day consisting of no more than 2 hours. Additional information may be gathered through follow-up communications including email, Google blog site, phone calls, and/or second interviews. Additionally, you will be asked to complete a Bio form that outlines your background. The form will be emailed to you. Interviews will be recorded digitally and transcribed. Records will be scheduled for destruction seven years after the initial recording.

What are the risks involved in this study?

The risks associated in this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life.

What are the possible benefits of participating in this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, the study will provide a clearer understanding of the strategies first-generation college graduates use to cultivate college success among their offspring.

Do I have to participate in this study?

No. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without affecting your current or future relations with Texas A&M University.

Texas A&M University IRB Approval IRB Protocol # 2012-0023	From: 03/23/12 Authorized by: KR	To: 03/22/13
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Version: 2/27/12

Who will know about my participation in this research study?

This study is confidential and the records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Crystal Allen will have access to the records.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Crystal Allen, (832) 372-6231, zg44@neo.tamu.edu, Dr. Fred Bonner at fred.bonner@gse.rutgers.edu or Dr. Kelli-Peck-Parrott at kpparrott@tamu.edu.

Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979) 458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

Signature

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to participate in this study.

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

For more information, contact:

Crystal Allen
(832) 372-6231
zg44@neo.tamu.edu

Dr. Fred Bonner
fred.bonner@gse.rutgers.edu

Dr. Kelli-Peck-Parrott
kpparrott@tamu.edu

Texas A&M University IRB Approval IRB Protocol # 2012-0023	From: 03/23/12 Authorized by: KR	To: 03/22/13
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Version: 2/27/12

APPENDIX J

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FORM

(Please Print and return via e-mail to zg44@neo.tamu.edu)

Study about the Parental Investment Strategies of First-Generation College Graduates

Yes, I am interested in being interviewed.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: () _____

Cell number: () _____

E-mail: _____

Age: _____ Gender: _____ Race: _____

Occupation: _____

Highest level of education obtained (please check): _____ Bachelor's degree
_____ Master's degree _____ Doctoral degree _____ JD _____ MD _____ Other _____

List colleges and universities you have attended:

Are you a former or current resident of the Hempstead, Prairie View or Waller, TX.
Area? ___ Yes ___ No

Has your child completed a bachelor's degree as of December 2011? ___ Yes ___ No

If so, from which college did they graduate? _____

APPENDIX K

PARENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

General

1. What has a college degree done for you and your family?

Communication

2. What age was your child when you began to discuss college success and why did you choose this age?
3. Can you describe the moment your children became receptive to your ideals about higher education? What were the details of the discussion?
4. What private discussions did you and your spouse or significant other have about promoting college in your home?

Parental Involvement (Internal and External)

5. In what ways were you involved in your child's education?
6. Did you face any challenges through the years? Triumphs? If so, what were they?

Cognitive/Intellectual Development

7. How did you come to decide what college/university you would attend?
8. What personal and collegiate experiences did you use to promote college attendance in your home?

Rural

9. Discuss your experiences living and being educated in a rural area.

Personal Endorsement and Achievement

10. What are your educational values and how were they influenced?
11. Have you seen evidence that your child is open to transferring the same beliefs to their children? If so, how?
12. Is there any information you would like to add?

APPENDIX L

OFFSPRING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

General

1. What did it mean for you to continue the legacy of education your parents began?

Communication

2. What were some specific things your parents said that influenced you prior to high school graduation?
3. What was the most important thing your parents communicated to you after during and after finishing college?

Parental Involvement (Internal and External)

4. In what ways did your parents involve themselves in your education?

Rural

5. Did growing up in a rural area influence your college choice decision? If so, how?

Cognitive/Intellectual Development

6. What personal college experiences did your parents discuss with you?
7. Do you feel you were adequately prepared for college? How so?
8. What age did you know you were going to college? And what were the events surrounding your decision?

Personal Endorsement and Achievement

9. What are your educational values? Do you feel they are a direct reflection of your parents' beliefs?
10. Did you receive support throughout your college years? If so, what support did you receive?
11. What strategies are you planning to use to help your children attend and finish college? Do you credit these strategies to your parents influence?
12. Is there anything you would like to add?

APPENDIX M

NOTES AND OBSERVATION FORM

What general nonverbal cues did you observe during this interview?

What specific nonverbal cues did you observe during this interview?

General notes:
