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"YOU WILL DO BETTER THEN I DID" THE POSITIVE ACTIONS BLACK PARENTS EMPLOY TO INFLUENCE THEIR CHILD'S CHOICE TO ATTEND COLLEGE

Meagan Mitchell

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DePaul University
College of Education

**“YOU WILL DO BETTER THEN I DID”
THE POSITIVE ACTIONS BLACK PARENTS EMPLOY TO INFLUENCE THEIR
CHILD’S CHOICE TO ATTEND COLLEGE**

A Dissertation in Education
with a Concentration in Curriculum Studies

by

Meagan A. Mitchell

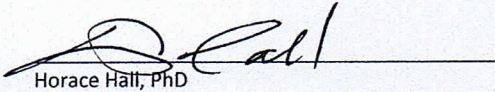
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June 2018

We approve the dissertation of Meagan Mitchell



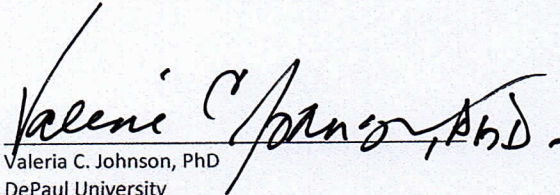
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ABSTRACT

This study employs an anti-deficit perspective in exploring how the parents of first generation, low-income African American students positively influence their child's choice to attend college. This study examines the positive direct and indirect actions taken by African American parents with limited monetary resources to encourage their child to decide to attend college when they have not finished a four-year degree themselves. A qualitative approach that includes a critical narrative inquiry design was adopted to deconstructing the stories of the various families and provide a space to uncover assumptions about knowledge, power and reflexivity. Furthermore, this study deconstructs the participants' stories and expose deficit-informed information and research that silence and distort the experiences of the participants instead focusing on their racialized and classed experiences as sources of strength. The two theoretical frameworks used to undergird the research problem and questions from an anti-deficit perspective that accounts for the cultural nuances of African American families during the college choice process are Freeman's model of African American students during predisposition and Harper's Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework. Findings conclude that low-income African American parents who have not completed a four-year degree are highly involved in the college choice process, set high expectations for their children, and are their child's greatest advocate.

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Dedication

To my Mother and Father whose prayers, words of wisdom, unconditional love, sacrifice, and most importantly belief in my ability to achieve greatness taught me to have faith in myself and to persist through all things. My dreams are limitless. I am simply because you are. Thank you!

Chapter One: Introduction

As a first-generation, low-income African American student, it was difficult for me to learn in an environment where my teachers did not fully understand the cultural value that I brought to a predominantly white classroom, or did they value my college aspirations. Early on I was labeled as being disengaged and struggled to fit in academically. Because of my family's limited access to academic support resources, they were not able to fully cultivate my academic skills. My parents had to trust the school system with my education, and unfortunately, my high school teachers had low expectations for my academic success; they told me to choose vocational training programs over attending college. They would neither write letters of recommendations to the schools that I wanted to attend nor discuss the college options that would be a good fit for me. Despite this, my parents set the stage for my success by setting high goals for me and (most importantly) believing that I could reach them. They always told my siblings and I that we had to make better decisions than they did. Not going to college was never an option. Because of their encouragement, I have been able to do things that I did not think were possible, like obtaining a bachelor's degree in business management, moving on to get a master's degree in higher education student affairs and completing a doctoral program in curriculum studies.

Like other African American students who identify as low-income and first generation, my chances to perform well academically were dependent on limited access to resources and my high school teachers' and counselor's low expectations for my career trajectory. Ladson-Billings (1995a) states that minority students are sensitive to how they are treated by teachers, school administrators, and other students within learning environments. There are five different

misconnections between home, community, and school cultures that impact the teaching and learning environments for students. These connections are defined as: culturally appropriate, culturally congruent, mitigating cultural discontinuity, culturally responsive and culturally compatible (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). I believe schools should adopt a culturally relevant pedagogy and view students from an anti-deficit perspective. Culturally relevant pedagogy is defined by Gloria Ladson-Billings as:

a pedagogy of oppression not unlike critical pedagogy but specifically committed to collective, not merely individual, empowerment. Culturally relevant pedagogy rest on three criteria or propositions: (a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural; and (c) student must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the current status quo of the social order. (Landson-Billings, 1995a)

I believe that regardless of a student's social limitations or inequities, they can successfully transition to college with the support of their parents and other networks. To create a culture of success for minority students, teachers and school administrators must work with parents to attend to each student's individual academic and social needs (Ladson-Billings, 1995c). School personnel must place a strong value on the different cultures that are represented and encourage all students to maintain their cultural norms and customs (Ladson-Billings, 1995c). This concept uses the students' culture as a vehicle for learning and teaching. It uses the students' past experiences to build upon the new knowledge they are learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995c). For minority students to achieve success, teachers and school administrators must focus on students'

needs rather than pitying them and their personal situations. The way that students acquire new skills and how the curriculum is developed can vary, but all students need literacy, numeracy, technological, social, and political skills to be active participants in society (Ladson-Billings, 1995c). It is also imperative that teachers and high school counselors set high expectations for all the students they serve and do not lower the academic expectations because of their race, income, and/or cultural difference (Ladson-Billings, 1995c; Milner, 2011a; Sampson & Wade, 2011).

I am researching the influence parents of African American students who identify as first generation, low-income have on their child's choice to attend college within the context of a predominately white schooling environment. My research will help high school leaders and college administrators gain a better understanding of how to serve this population and help their families as their children transition to college.

Problem Statement

Many students graduate from high school without gaining the skills needed to be successful in college; these students are often labeled 'underprepared,' 'disadvantaged' and/or 'at risk students' (Domina, 2009; Perna, 2002; Strayhorn, 2011). National statistics show that a disproportionate amount of minority students entering their first year of college require remedial or developmental work (Strayhorn, 2011). Per the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education (2008), 30% of Black first-year undergraduate students attending public institutions enroll in remedial courses compared to about 20% of Whites. As a result of the lack of access to pre-college preparation, many of these students do not perform well on entrance exams, feel less confident in their ability to earn a college degree, and lack sufficient preparation for college-level work (Strayhorn, 2011). According to Darling-Hammond (2010), predominately white schools serving African American, Latino, and Native American students

offer fewer academic and college preparation classes and programs; instead, they offer more remedial and vocational classes that tend to train students for low-status occupations that do not require a college degree. In racially diverse schools, curriculum tracks are generally a depiction of modern day segregation. White students have more access to honors or advanced placement classes while lower tracks (basic, remedial, and/or vocational classes) are disproportionately filled with students of color (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Family support and involvement can play a role in whether or not a student is interested in college. The likelihood of students attending college is correlated with the amount of positive parental encouragement (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). A student's success in school can be influenced by the parents' disposition about the benefits of education (Freeman, 2005). Students receive advice from their parents on how to succeed in life beyond high school; the type of advice a student receives is based on the family's and/or parents' experience, attitude, and exposure to higher education (Clark, 1983). Many students of color who live in poverty, and are first generation students, are more likely to live in communities and homes with limited experience with or access to information about college (Herndon & Hirt, 2008).

African American students are less likely to have adults at home or within their networks to help shape their college-planning activities; students within these particular circumstances will need to rely on their school networks for support, and in many cases, the school support may be limited as well (Farmer-Hinton, 2008). Minority families, especially those who identify as African American or Latino, are often portrayed as not being involved or interested in the education of their children. African American parents are depicted in the literature as not being a supportive factor in the success of their student's high school career or in their transition to college (Freeman, 2005).

Parents of minority students who have not had the opportunity to attend a college or a university may be unaware of the processes involved with college preparation (Cabrera, 2000). Research on African American and Latino parent involvement within the college preparation process has shown that, although they have high expectations for their students to attend college, parents have limited-to-no access to information or support to properly guide their child through the college application process (Freeman, 2005, Farmer-Hinton, 2008 & Domina, 2009).

Research regarding parental/family influence of African American students who identify as being the first in their family to attend college and are of low socioeconomic status tends to employ a deficit thinking framework (Valencia, 1997; Reynold 2007). Deficit thinking is a concept often engrained in institutionalized structures; it includes the belief that students who identify as being a part of a minority group and are of low socioeconomic status do not succeed because these students, and their families, have innate developmental deficiencies that impede on their ability to learn (Valencia, 1997). “Such deficits manifest, it is alleged, in limited intellectual abilities, linguistic shortcomings, lack of motivation to learn and immoral behavior,” (Valencia, 1997, p. 2). Deficit thinking is a form of oppression. It is the cruel and unjust use of authority and power to keep a group of people functioning at a lower capacity within society. Deficit thinking in education is “filled with examples of how economically disadvantaged students of color were kept in their place by macro and microlevel educational policies/practices fueled by class and racial prejudice” (Valencia, 1997 p. 4).

African American parents greatly influence their child’s college choice and can add value to their college-choice process. In my research, I utilize an anti-deficit thinking concept as a lens to analyze my work. The concept was coined by Valenica (1997) and later adopted by Harper (2012); I will use it to explore the positive direct and indirect actions of African American

parents who identify as low-income that lead to their child's choice to attend college. Anti-deficit thinking reframes the way experiences are viewed and valued (Harper, 2012; Valencia, 1997 & 2010). An anti-deficit approach embraces the different forms of motivation as encouraging methods to the children of African American parents. This approach will also allow me to examine the unique ways these parents advocate for their child and capitalize on the resources that are accessible to them.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to employ an anti-deficit perspective in exploring how the parents of first generation, low-income African American students positively influence their child's choice to attend college. This study aims to examine the positive direct and indirect actions taken by African American parents with limited monetary resources to encourage their child to decide to attend college when they have not finished a four-year degree themselves. The college-choice process is often impacted by class and race, which can include parental differences based on perceived entitlement, expectations, and access to resources and support (Freeman, 2005; Grodsky & Jones, 2004).

Increasing college awareness and providing exposure to college is critical in helping students choose to attend college. It is important for students to have achievable educational aspirations in order to be successful. Understanding college expectations is a key component in a student's decision to attend college (Perna, 2002). This study will employ the anti-deficit perspective coined by Valencia (1997), and later adopted by Harper (2012), to explore how African American parents' who identify as low-income influence their child's choice to attend college when they have not finished. Deficit thinking refers to the assumption that low-income minorities are intellectually limited and possess deficiencies that do not allow for success

(Valencia, 2010). Anti-deficit thinking is simply the opposite, assuming the notion that low-income minority children and their family already have a high level of intellect and ability to succeed (Harper, 2012; Valencia, 1997 & 2010). This study will use Harper's (2012) Anti-deficit Achievement Framework as one of the two frameworks to explain the research problem and undergird data collected about African American parents. This is important to note within the purpose section simply because this particular framework allows me to seek instructive insights from engaged parents who succeeded in influencing their child to attend college as opposed to adding to the literature and conversations about why these specific parents are not hegemonically engaged in the college-choice process (Harper, 2012). The overall goal of this study is to resist the notion that minority parents (especially African American parents) are less involved with their child's college-choice process by exploring the positive actions African American parents do that may not be valued, or traditionally labeled, as involvement to encourage their child to attend college within the context of a predominantly white environment.

Research Questions

1. What positive role do African American parents/families members who identify as being of low-income status and not having the opportunity to attend college themselves play in their child's decision to attend college?
 - a. What information or resources help these same parents prepare their child(ren) in this decision-making process?
 - b. What barriers or obstacles do the parents/families overcome (and how) to support their student's college choice?

- c. What actions do these parents/families employ to encourage their child(ren) to formally make the decision to attend college?

Overview of Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach to investigate how African American parents influence their child to attend college. I am utilizing a critical narrative inquiry design. Narrative inquiry focuses on the individual, gathering data by collecting stories, reporting individual experiences, and discussing the meaning of those experiences for the individual (Creswell, 2005). Critical narrative inquiry builds upon narrative inquiry to provide a framework for deconstructing the stories of the various families. It also provides a space to uncover assumptions about knowledge, power, and reflexivity. Critical narrative inquiry can deconstruct the participants' stories, as well as expose deficit-informed information and research that silences and distorts the experiences of people color. Instead, critical narrative inquiry can help to focus on their racialized and class experiences as sources of strength (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Hickson, 2016). Critical narrative inquiry is the best approach to explore the direct and indirect actions families employ to influence their child's college choice from an anti-deficit perspective.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

Most of the literature regarding college choice is reflective of the white dominant narrative, excluding the voices of underrepresented populations (Freeman, 2005; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Litten, 1982). This literature also explores the experience of college choice from the student's perspective, rarely including the parent's perceptions of the ways in which they influence their child's choice to attend college (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Freeman, 2005; Hossler et al., 1999; Freeman, 1997; Cabrera, 2000). The general intent of my research is to provide a nuanced understanding of the college-choice process for African American families.

Because I am employing an anti-deficit lens I will analyze all the successful actions parents do to influence their child to attend college.

This research serves to positively influence how college personnel and high school counselors work with African American parents. I am hoping this study will change the way educators perceive the value low-income African American parents add to their child's process of going to college. My research also has implications for families, educators and policy-makers who want to better serve African American families and their children as they transition into the post-secondary environment. I researched the experiences of six participants within one location not to make a generalization but, to gain a better understanding of their lived experiences with the hopes to encourage other scholars to further explore the positive strategies low-income African American families employ to encourage college choice. An increased number of participants and the adoption of mixed methods provides the opportunity assess greater generalizability and further research.

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms and concepts were used throughout the study.

Anti-deficit - Anti-deficit thinking reframes the way experiences are viewed and valued (Harper, 2012; Valencia, 1997 & 2010). Thus, positive characteristics or contributions the individual makes are identified and a new, positive perspective on the individual is created.

College Choice – College Choice is the process that a student employs to confirm the decision to attend college (Chapman, 1981; Litten, 1982; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Bergerson, 2009)

Cultural Capital – Cultural capital can exist in three forms: the embodied state, objectified state and the institutionalized state. It is described as the goods and/or symbolic resources that are conveyed from generation to generation. The concept of cultural capital is convertible to

economic value and may be institutionalized in the forms of education qualifications (Boudieu, 1986).

First Generation College Student - A first generation student is defined as a student whose parents did not complete a college education. Family members may have attended, or may be concurrently attending college, but have not yet completed either an associate's or bachelor's degree (Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996).

Parents and/or families'/family members – I use these terms interchangeably to identify the various family structures that African American students identify with. African American students represent a variety of family structures that may include members beyond the tradition mother and father.

Parental Involvement - Hossler et al. (1999) describes parental involvement as the process in which parents motivate and encourage their child's educational attainment.

Social Capital - Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as the aggregate of actual or potential resources linked to possession of a durable network of essentially institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition within a group. This group membership provides members with network capital obtained by simply being a member. Bourdieu (1986) suggests that the "amount" of social capital one has depends on size of the network of connections that he or she can obtain and on the "amount" of capital - economic, cultural, and symbolic - owned by each person they are connected to.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This literature review will provide an overview of the following: (1) the strength of the African American family from an anti-deficit perspective, (2) a history of African American students in higher education, (3) how access to social/cultural capital can influence how parents support their child's college choice process, (4) pertinent research and theories on the implications of being a first-generation college student, and (5) the process of college choice and parental influence on that choice. This literature review is divided into five main sections: "Strength of the African American Family: Anti-Deficit Perspective", "African Americans in Higher Education," "The Social and Cultural Capital of Parental Involvement in College Choice," "Implications of Being a First Generation and Low Socioeconomic Status College Student," and "College Choice Process" including a subsection titled "Family Influence on College Choice."

These topics are essential because they provide an explanation of how African American students became ingrained in America's higher education institutions and an in-depth discussion on how low-income parents influence their child to attend college when they have not finished themselves. Parents' expectations and encouragement centered on college attendance have the greatest effect on a child's college-choice process (Hossler, Schmit & Vesper, 1999). This is followed by the family's income and whether or not the parents attended college (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999). Parents who identify as being low-income, and who had not attended college, are often viewed by the dominant population as having limited access to knowledge and networks; this can be rephrased as having limited access to the social/cultural capital needed to create a culture of attending college (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999; Freeman, 2005; McDonough, 1997; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000).

The Strength of the African American Family: Anti-Deficit Perspective

There is no shortage of reports, briefs, studies or statistics about the state of the young Black child in America. In particular, we hear about the persistent achievement gap supported by data indicating that the gap begins prior to school, especially for young Black boys. There are many reasons for the achievement gap, and many intertwined solutions. One of the most prominent suggestions is to focus not on the achievement gap itself, but on the opportunities gap that exists for Black children and their families.

However, this gap is deeply entrenched in the social political and historical contexts of the lives of Black families and children since the enslavement period. Research is clear that parenting and family process provide an avenue for successfully addressing the gap experienced by Black children, yet it is critical that we ask how parents are supported in ways that are culturally relevant and strengths based. (Iruka & Porter, 2017, p. 18)

According to Littlejohn-Black & Darling (1993), there are countless characteristics that highlight the greatness of how African American families support their children. The two characteristics outlined in this document that relate directly to this study are: 1. To provide better living conditions for their children, and 2. A strong sense of self (Littlejohn-Black & Darling, 1993).

It is the dream of African American parents to have better living conditions for their children than the generation before them; parents “will exhaust their resources” to provide entry for their children into the economic and political structures (Littlejohn-Black & Darling, 1993, p.463). Thompson (2003) states that African American parents highly value education. The parents in the study expressed that they wanted their children to succeed academically in order to secure a meaningful career. They wanted their children to have the opportunity to choose jobs

that would provide stability, financial freedom, and flexibility; they felt a college education would provide an opportunity for this type of position.

Children in African American families are socialized to become part of the dominant culture while internalizing the value of their heritage. Children are taught to navigate both home life, along with American cultural life (McClain, 1986). African American parents build positive self-esteem, develop ethnic awareness, and instill a “have rather than a have-not mentality” as a part of their parenting style (Littlejohn-Black & Darling, 1993 p.463). Black parents teach their children about their racial heritage, history, and ethnic pride; the parents impart a strong sense of pride in their culture and history to push back against negative images and perceptions about their cultural group (Iruka & Porter, 2017).

African Americans in Higher Education

Education for African Americans has been met with many challenges and obstacles. However, it has always been highly valued in the African American family and community (Neufeldt & McGee, 1990; Lucas, 2006; Fraser, 2010; Stein, 1991; Fields-Smith, 2005). Black slaves often associated education with literacy, self-determination, advancement, and freedom; they taught themselves, learned how to read, and became skilled craftsmen (Neufeldt & McGee, 1990). During slavery, plantation owners needed “carpenters, blacksmiths, coopers, tanners, cobblers, wheelwrights, harnessmakers, butchers, cabinetmakers, bricklayers, stonemasons, silversmiths, spinners, weavers, seamstresses, tailors, cooks, and many other kinds of trained workers” (Neufeldt & McGee, 1990, p. 4). The training process for slave craftsmen ranged from casual to formal training:

Some slave boys and men began as assistants to slave blacksmiths, carpenters, and other workers and gradually learned the trade; the same was true of slave women as they

learned spinning, sewing, and cooking skills from more experienced slaves or even from their plantation mistresses. In other instances, though, slave owners singled out slave men to be apprenticed to white artisans to learn a particular skill. In one case, for example, a planter paid a white machinist \$500 to train a slave in his craft and then used the slave to supervise and to repair all machines on the plantation. (Neufeldt & McGee, 1990, p. 4).

There were incentives for slave owner to train their slaves in various crafts; many owners realized the value in hiring out their skilled slaves to work on other plantations to generate revenue; skilled slave's resale value was much higher than a non-skilled slave, and they would work all year around, unlike white artisans (Neufeldt & McGee, 1990). Only a very small number, no more than 5 percent, of slaves fit within this category of trained workers. As the need for skilled workers declined, the interests in formal education increased.

Slave owners feared that slaves would rebel if they learn to read and write. Slave families' passion for education was evident because they risked severe punishment, and even their lives, to read; reading equated to freedom and literacy (Fields-Smith, 2005; Neufeldt & McGee, 1990). There were laws prohibiting instruction to slaves, however; many Blacks not only received instruction but taught other slaves to read and write as well.

By the year 1830, northern Black children were free and could attend some of the local schools. Many Black families, religious organizations, and other community organizations created schools for Black children (Lucas, 2006). Black parents in the south also continued to pursue education, even in very violent climates where whites did not value educational equality through traditional schooling and simply ignored the educational needs of Black children (Fields-Smith, 2005). According to Lucas (2006), people of color attending college was considered a rarity in the antebellum period; no more than twenty-seven Black students were documented as

attending predominantly white institutions (PWIs) before the Emancipation Proclamation. Founded in 1837, Cheyney University was the first Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in America. Many other HBCU's shortly followed, including Hampton University, Morehouse College, Fisk University, and Alcorn State University (Garibaldi et al., 1991). HBCU's were created because Blacks were not welcomed in other institutions of higher education. Southern Whites expressed very conservative views about educating Blacks, and in most cases, they resisted it (Neufeldt & McGee, 1990). Education for many slaves was considered the first step toward freedom.

The Reconstruction Era (1865-1877) was a time of extreme growth and change within America's society pertaining to the aftermath of the Civil War, economics, and social changes. During this time, there was a debate of how American society should educate African American students (Fraser, 2010; Wintz, 1996). W.E.B. Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, and Marcus Garvey were very instrumental in voicing what they felt was the purpose of education and best teaching method for African American students (Fraser, 2010; Wintz, 1996). These three men had a following of African American people who believed in the work that they did. They are prominent because they were able to organize and influence the masses through their critical thought of how African American people were to advance in a racist society.

Marcus Garvey wanted people of African ancestry in America from different countries around the world to create, develop, and implement their own institutions, cultures, and curriculum independent of the societies that oppressed them. He felt that Blacks should create an entire educational system, including grammar schools and universities, that taught a curriculum rich in Black culture (Fraser, 2010; Stein, 1991). Du Bois believed in the educational liberation of African Americans and that all students should receive a classical education. Unlike Du Bois,

Booker T. Washington believed that a practical industrial education for African Americans was more fitting to meet the needs of the current workforce (Garibaldi et al., 1991). Washington believed that economic stability, not a classical education, would lay the groundwork to prove the worthiness of African Americans to receive equal rights (Garibaldi et al., 1991). Du Bois, on the contrary, believed that equality and access to a good education was a God-given right that did not need to be earned.

In the year 1881, Washington founded the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute (Garibaldi et al., 1991). This institution of higher education taught trades like farming, carpentry, and mechanics. Du Bois felt Washington's stress on vocational schooling, and not on classical education, conformed to the dominant cultural view of African Americans being unworthy of a formal education (Garibaldi et al., 1991). Although Du Bois and Washington had different views on how to educate African Americans, they both changed the culture of America through their ideologies and push for the empowerment and education for Blacks beyond high school.

Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) and Brown vs. The Board of Education, Topeka KS (1954/1955) were two national landmark cases that changed how we view the right of equal access and accommodations for African Americans. In 1896, Plessy v. Ferguson facilitated the legal sanctioning of "separate but equal" accommodations and facilities (such as trains, busses, hotels, schools, etc.) for African Americans. The notion was that segregation based on race and ethnicity was perfectly legal if facilities and accommodations were of the exact same quality. The main issue with this ruling was that several southern states refused to provide equitable resources or treat Blacks equally within various institutionalized systems such as, but not limited to, housing options, jobs, and public establishments, including education.

During the era of segregated schoolings, Black parents believed the school was solely responsible for educating their children, they gave the Black teachers and principals full authority of their children's education (Fields-Smith, 2005). Black parents were truly able to trust the intention and purpose of their child's school. Black parents worked collaboratively with the school; they participated in programs, worked on committees, and were able to influence curriculum and policy (Fields-Smith, 2005). In 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* overturned the *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) ruling, noting it was unconstitutional to provide "separate but equal" public schooling for Black and White students (Fraser, 2010). It was a violation of the 14th Amendment that granted equal rights to all people, including descendants of slaves (Bell, 1980). This allowed Black students to integrate predominately White schools.

All schools in the United States were required to provide equal access and accommodations for African American students (Garibaldi et al., 1991). Unfortunately, that requirement never factualized. During desegregation, black parents had to struggle with language barriers, issues of sociocultural incongruence between home and school, and teachers' low expectations of their children (Field-Smith, 2005). The trust that bound parents and schools no longer existed because of the treatment received from the White school teacher and leaders to the Black families and their children (Field-Smith, 2005).

Although *Brown vs. Board of Education* was an attempt aimed at fully integrating school systems to provide all students with equal resources, schools and other public/private societal institutions are still unequally resourced, especially those located in the inner city with large populations of minority students. (Patterson & Freehling, 2001; Fraser, 2010; Orfield, 2001). Schools that are heavily populated by students of color often do not receive adequate funding and have a high number of students who are living below the poverty line (Orfield, 2001;

Guinier, 2004). There is a disproportionately low number of White students attending impoverished schools compared to Blacks (Orfield, 2001; Guinier, 2004). Guinier (2004) explains how institutionalized racism influences access for Blacks despite court rulings.

Race is a powerful explanatory variable in the story of our country, which has been used to explain failure in part by associating failure with black people. Racial literacy suggests that legal equality granted through the courts will not extirpate the distinctive, racialized asymmetries from the DNA of the American dream. The courts can be and often have been a critically important ally, but neither the judiciary nor lawyers acting alone possess the surgical skill required to alter the genetic material of our organizing narrative. Nor is the attainment of civil rights by itself an adequate measure of success, in part because the problem is not just race but race as conjugated by class, geography, and the organizing narrative of upward mobility. (p.116).

Today, African American students are less likely to be reading at grade level, and they do not take as many college preparation classes, nor do they have the same access to information on the college enrollment process (Orfield, 2001). Race, income, school environment, and parental college status are all factors that influence a student's academic performance. According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 59% of Whites made up the total fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions compared to only 14% of Blacks in 2013. Black students made up 14% of the population of students in college in the U.S. in 2013 (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics). Black students are still lagging behind their white counterparts in terms of college enrollment. It is vital that high school administrators, teachers, and parents collaborate to increase the number of Black students who obtain access to college admissions. This research will explore in detail all

the necessary actions that African American parents take to influence their student's college choice.

The Social and Cultural Capital of Parental Involvement in College Choice

The social capital parents possess plays a huge role on how they view themselves in the college preparation process, how/if their child will be accepted and treated, and if they will be given the necessary information needed to endure the college-choice process (Freeman, 1997). Students and parents are given different opportunities based on the type of capital they obtain. Neither African American students nor their parents bring the same kind of social capital to schools that their White counterparts do, so it is important that pre-college programs and school curriculums equip all students with the skills needed to be successful (Freeman, 1997; Perna & Titus, 2005). Perna & Titus (2005) state that "African Americans and Hispanics not only possess fewer of the types of capital that promote college enrollment but also attend schools with fewer of the resources that promote college enrollment" (p.509). This article further goes on to state: "African Americans and Hispanics not only average lower levels of family income, parental education, and math coursework than Whites and Asian Americans average but also are relatively concentrated in schools in the lowest quartiles of average family income and parental education" (Perna & Titus, 2005, p. 509). The capital that students' parents acquire impacts the college-choice process for their students. Parental involvement in general is a form of capital that embodies knowledge obtained about college and access, or lack thereof, to this information. It also includes the relationships between schools, community organizations, other parents, and students (Perna & Titus 2005).

In researching the work of both Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988) on social and cultural capital to explore the relationship between parental involvement and college choice, I

plan to adopt Coleman's (1988 & 1992) perspective on this concept. Coleman's (1992) work on social capital supports the idea that it is the family's responsibility to adopt certain norms to advance children's chance of being successful in life, whereas Bourdieu's work emphasizes structural constraints and unequal access to institutional resources based on class, gender, and race (Dika & Singh, 2002). Coleman suggests that parents play a primary role in promoting the status attainment of their children. Parental influence is a form of social capital that promotes college choice because of the relationship between a student and their parent, the relationship between the students' parents and school leaders, and the relationship between the student parents and the student's friend's parents (Perna & Titus 2005).

Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as the aggregate of actual or potential resources linked to possession of a durable network of essentially institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition within a group. This group membership provides members with network capital obtained by simply being a member. Bourdieu (1986) suggests that the "amount" of social capital one has depends on the size of the network of connections that he or she can obtain and on the "amount" of capital—economic, social, cultural, intellectual and symbolic—owned by each person they are connected to. Bourdieu's social capital is defined twofold: one, the social relationship that allows the individual to claim resources owned by the group; and two, the quantity and quality of those resources (Dika & Singh, 2002). Bourdieu views social capital as the investment of the dominant class to maintain and reproduce group cohesion, as well as reserve the group's dominant position within society (Dika & Singh, 2002).

Coleman (1988) suggests that social capital is intangible and has three forms: (a) level of trust, as evidenced by obligations and expectations, (b) information channels, and (c) norms and sanctions that promote the common good over self-interest. Social capital is characterized within

the structure of relations between and among actors. The relational function embodies an aspect of social structure and also facilitates certain actions. Social capital constitutes a kind of resource available to an actor. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors-whether persons or corporate actors-within the structure (Coleman, 1988). Bourdieu sees social capital as a tool of reproduction for the dominant class, whereas Coleman sees social capital as (positive) social control, where trust, information channels, and norms are characteristics of the community (Dika & Singh, 2002).

In the college-process process, a part of cultural and social capital is having knowledge of the university's environment and overall standards, gaining access to human and financial capital, learning college specific terminology, and understanding university operations (Inkelas & McCarron, 2006; Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; McDonough 1997). The knowledge and/or capital transmitted from parents to their children may be limited among parents who did not attend college (Inkelas & McCarron, 2006). Inkelas & McCarron (1996) states:

...for those first-generation students who rely on the support and active engagement of their parents, practitioners must better understand the role of parents and the struggle students may face in negotiating the dynamics of parental involvement. The constructive inclusion of parents in the educational process may serve to not only boost students' aspirations but also to diminish the negative effects of college culture shock. (p.545)

College culture shock can occur when a student is surprised and/or overwhelmed with the process of fully transitioning to college (Cushman, 2007). Hossler et al. (1999) describes parental involvement as the process in which parents motivate and encourage their child's educational attainment. Parents' educational aspirations for their child is one of the best

predictors of a student's postsecondary plans. Hossler et al. (1999) found that as parents increased their educational expectations for their child, the child improved their educational performance and was more motivated to choose to attend college. Parents who attended college and are considered high-income leverage their own personal college experience to help their child navigate the system. This allows their child to not only obtain college admissions but to also enhance their child's overall experience. They tend to use their various capital to advance their child's success within the college-choice process (McDonough, 1997). Parents who have not attend college themselves are less likely to provide this level of support to their child.

Rowan-Kenyon et al. (2008) conducted a study using the descriptive case study method to address the knowledge gaps within the area of college enrollment for about 15 high schools. The purpose of this study was to describe how parental encouragement and involvement is important to obtain college admissions but also to describe the barriers that impact, and sometimes limit, parental involvement within the college-choice process for low and middle-income parents. College-educated parents in this study sent implicit and explicit messages confirming the expectation of their child attending college. In high-income school environments, parents were saving money for college or they were committed to fully financing their student college experience. Parents who were not college-educated were less likely to give their students these implicit and explicit messages. Only a few parents of the low-income students expressed interest in taking responsibility for financing their child's education, leaving the full or partial financial burden on the student (Rowan-Kenyon et al, 2008). In this study, all the parents were very supportive of and strongly encouraged their child to attend college. The gaps within college enrollment were presented as lack of resources the low-income, non-college-educated parents needed for providing more complete information to aid in the student's college choice success.

This lack of social capital causes students, and their parents, to rely on their prospective school systems for support (Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008). A counselor at a middle-resourced school presented in the study felt about half of their workload of parents were focused on “survival rather than involvement”, working to make a living and not being able to support the student’s educational goals. The parents were really interested in receiving help from the school, but they had difficulty taking the time off of work. These parents worked in low-income jobs that did not allow for such flexibility (Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008).

Many parents of color who have not attended college often act as “cheerleaders” for their child, offering continuous encouragement and moral support throughout the college-choice process without carrying the financial burden or having the capital to provide practical information (Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Rowan-Kenyon et al, 2008; McDonough, 1997). My research is centered on the positive actions that low-income African American parents do to encourage college choice when they have not attended college. As the main “cheerleaders” for their child, I am exploring how these motivational actions translate to college choice from an anti-deficit perspective.

Implications of Being a First Generation and Low Socioeconomic College Student

A first-generation college student is defined as student whose parents did not complete a college education. Family members may have attended, or may be concurrently attending, college but have not yet completed either an associate’s or bachelor’s degree (Terenzini et al., 1996). These students often have lower grade point averages (GPA) and need additional support gaining important skills such as: time management, studying, and balancing social life with academics (Perna, 2002; Terenzini et al, 1996). First generation students are usually

underprepared for college academically and socially. These students are more likely to be of low-income status and heavily rely on need-based financial aid for funding; low-income and minority parents often overestimate the cost of going to college. These parents are also more likely to have misinformation about the total cost of tuition including books, room and board, food, and other related costs (Grotsky & Jones, 2004). First generation and low-income college students are generally at a disadvantage regarding basic knowledge about postsecondary education, including but not limited to costs and application process, level of family income and support, educational degree expectations and plans, and academic preparation in high school (Pascarella., 2004). These students have a more difficult transition from secondary school to college than students whose parents had completed college. They confront all of the transitional difficulties of their peers but also face cultural, social and academic transition as well (Pascarella et al., 2004) (Dennis, Phinney & Chuateco, 2005) (Thayer, 2000).

In contrast to students whose parents completed college, first generation students drop out of four-year institutions at end of their first year at higher rates (Pascarella et al., 2004). They are more likely to stop-out and are usually not on a persistent track to earn a bachelor's degree after three years of enrollment, and they are less likely to achieve a bachelor's degree in five years. About five years after degree attainment, first generation students appear less likely than students whose parents have college degrees to enroll in a graduate or professional program (Pascarella et al., 2004).

Terenzini et al. (1996) published a study examining the following: (1) the precollege characteristics of first-generation college students, compared to traditional students, (2) how first-generation college students experience difference from traditional students and (3) the educational differences of first year gain in students' reading, math and critical thinking abilities.

This study was part of the National Study of Student Learning (NSSL), which was a three-year national longitudinal study of about 4,000 students who entered college for the first time in 1992 (Terenzini et al., 1996). The findings of this study disclosed that first-generation students are more likely to have limited cognitive skills (in reading, math, and critical thinking), have lower degree aspirations, and have been less involved with peers and teachers in high school. They also tend to have more dependent children, expect to take longer to complete their degree programs, and report receiving less encouragement from their parents to attend college (Terenzini et al., 1996).

Ethnic minority first-generation college students typically have poorer academic performance and higher dropout rates than other students (Dennis, Phinney & Chuateco, 2005). These students tend to lack personal skills and the social support that would contribute to a positive academic experience (Terenzini et al., 1996). Pike and Kuh (2005) states that first-generation students tended to attribute their lower levels of academic and social engagement, and learning and intellectual development to having been born to parents who did not go to college. First-generation college students' low levels of engagement are an indirect result of being the first in one's family to go to college and are more directly a function of lower educational aspirations (Pike & Kuh, 2005; Thayer, 2000). Low-income parents are reported as being less engaged in their child's education when compared to middle and high-income parents. Reports of limited parental involvement among low-income parents and parents of color call into question whether parents are truly uninvolved and have low expectations for their child or if what is defined as a lack of involvement is merely a reflection of the dominant culture frame of reference (Freeman, 2005; Grodsky & Jones, 2004).

In many schools that are heavily populated with students of color, most teachers and administrators are White and do not share the racial or cultural background of the students they serve (Douglas et al, 2008). The discussion about the poor academic progress of low-income and first-generation Black students are often discussed with external factors at the forefront, including, lack of family support. White teachers teach within a White hegemonic framework that perpetuates discriminatory perceptions of students of color, prompting them to have lower expectations of Black students and an absence of respect for the students' families and cultural values (Douglas et al, 2008; Milner, 2011b). According to Milner (2011b):

White teachers adopt deficit orientations about their culturally diverse students...teachers often rely on stereotypes of their students based on misconceptions they have acquired about the students' racial or ethnic group...conceptions and perceptions of students may be constructed and extracted from television programming they have watched, the media, misinformed colleagues in their schools, or even family biases that have been communicated to them yet not critically examined. (p.61)

African American students are influenced by the perceived support they receive from their teachers. This influences students' self-esteem and academic success (Benner & Misty; 2007). Benner & Misty (2007) conducted an analysis of both mother and teacher educational expectations on low-income students to gain a better understanding of how these expectations impact achievement outcomes. Parents, mothers in particular, and teachers' expectations of low-income African American students can have a direct effect on a student's educational expectations, competency beliefs, and academic outcomes. The higher teacher expectations are positively related to higher academic achievement. One student in the above study stated, "(teacher expectations) affect what you think about yourself and how smart you think you are"

(Benner & Misty, 2007, p. 142). Above the teachers, mother's educational expectations for their child's success and choice to attend college report much higher levels of self-concept of ability and academic achieve (Benner & Misty, 2007). When both the parents and teachers of a low-income African American student had high expectations for the student they were even more likely to attend college (Benner & Misty, 2007; Freeman, 2005; McDonough 1997; Bateman & Hossler, 1996).

College Choice

College choice is defined as “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 institution of advanced vocation training” (Hossler, Braxton & Coppersmith, 1989, p. 234). The college-choice process often includes factors that influence college and different stages leading to the decision to attend college. It is important to examine parental/familial influences, as well as the various stages of college choice, to gain a better understanding of the actions that African American families/parents take to influence their child's decision to formally attend college. This section of the literature review will examine the factors that influence college choice, as well as the stages that are a part of the college-choice process; later I will discuss the various college choice models.

Paulsen's ASHE – ERIC Higher Education Report (1990) provides an in-depth overview of literature produced in the 1970's and 1980's regarding college choice; unfortunately, most of this literature is not comprehensive. According to Paulsen's ASHE, historically, the college-choice research has been influenced by three basic perspectives: sociological, psychological, and economic (Paulsen, 1990 & Bergerson, 2009).

1. The **Sociological Perspective** analyzes the impact of the student's choice as part of the social status attainment benefit of a college degree. This perspective emphasizes individual background factors that influence the decision of whether or not a student will choose to attend college. It also focuses on the specific type of institution a student will choose to attend. Background factors include, but are not limited to: income, race, parental expectations, school context, and academic achievement. This research also looks at the inequalities in college access (Bergerson, 2009 & McDonough, 1997).
2. The **Psychological Perspective** studies the effect of the college environment and how this environment influences the choice of which college to attend (Paulsen, 1990). This includes but, is not limited to factors such as: college location, student's assessment of their fit within the perspective college, cost of attendance including room and board, and students' overall quality of campus life (Bergerson, 2009 & McDonough, 1997).
3. The **Economic Perspective** views college choice as an investment decision in which students weigh the cost and benefits of attendance. Students make the choice to attend college based on the cost benefit of attaining a college degree (Bergerson, 2009 & McDonough, 1997).

Holland & Richard (1965) were the first researchers to examine the explanations students gave about their choice of college and the factors that influenced them to choose a specific college to attend. In the 1980s, the researchers (Chapman, 1981; Hanson and Littin, 1982; Littin, 1982; Jackson, 1982; Hossler and Gallagher; 1987) focused on developing college-choice models that were more comprehensive and based on student development (Bergerson, 2009).

Jackson (1982) examined both the sociological and economic perspective of college choice. Litten (1982) further researched the college-choice process based on Chapman's (1981) Conceptual Model of College Choice. Litten (1982) examined all existing research that focused on the college-selection process and reviewed how different types of students differ in their conduct of this process and commonalities among various student populations.

Drawing on Litten's (1982) and Chapman (1981) model, Hossler and Gallagher (1987) offered a model of college choice that includes three general stages: predisposition, search, and choice. These models are discussed further in chronological order in the text below. I am researching the direct and indirect actions African American parents who have limited monetary resources do to encourage their child to decide to attend college when they have not finished themselves. Freeman (2005) states most used the college choice model. "The Hossler and Gallagher (1987) model needs to be expanded to include cultural characteristics...family and schools play a major role in influencing students' aspirations and motivations to participate in higher education, the individual and collective roles that each play are crucial for African American students" (p. 109). The next section provides an overview of the college-choice models that have been presented to explain generally how students choose to attend college. The models listed below are important to my study because they outline the significant research that shape how high school teachers, counselors, and administrators view the college-choice process.

College Choice Models

David Chapman's Model

Chapman (1981) presented a model of the influences affecting prospective students' choice to attend college. The model (see Figure 1) was created (1) to assist college administrators responsible for setting recruitment policies to identify the pressures and influences they need to

consider in developing institutional recruiting policy and (2) to aid continued research in of college choice (Chapman, 1981).

This model states that college choice is influenced by a set of student characteristics along with external influences. The student characteristics are: socioeconomic status, family income, aptitude (i.e., college entrance exams), level of educational aspirations, and high school performance (Chapman, 1981). The external influences are defined by these three categories: (1) the influence of significant persons; (2) the fixed characteristics of the institution; and (3) the institution's own efforts to communicate with prospective students (Chapman, 1981). In turn, Chapman (1981) states the students' characteristics and external factors molded their overall expectation of college life.

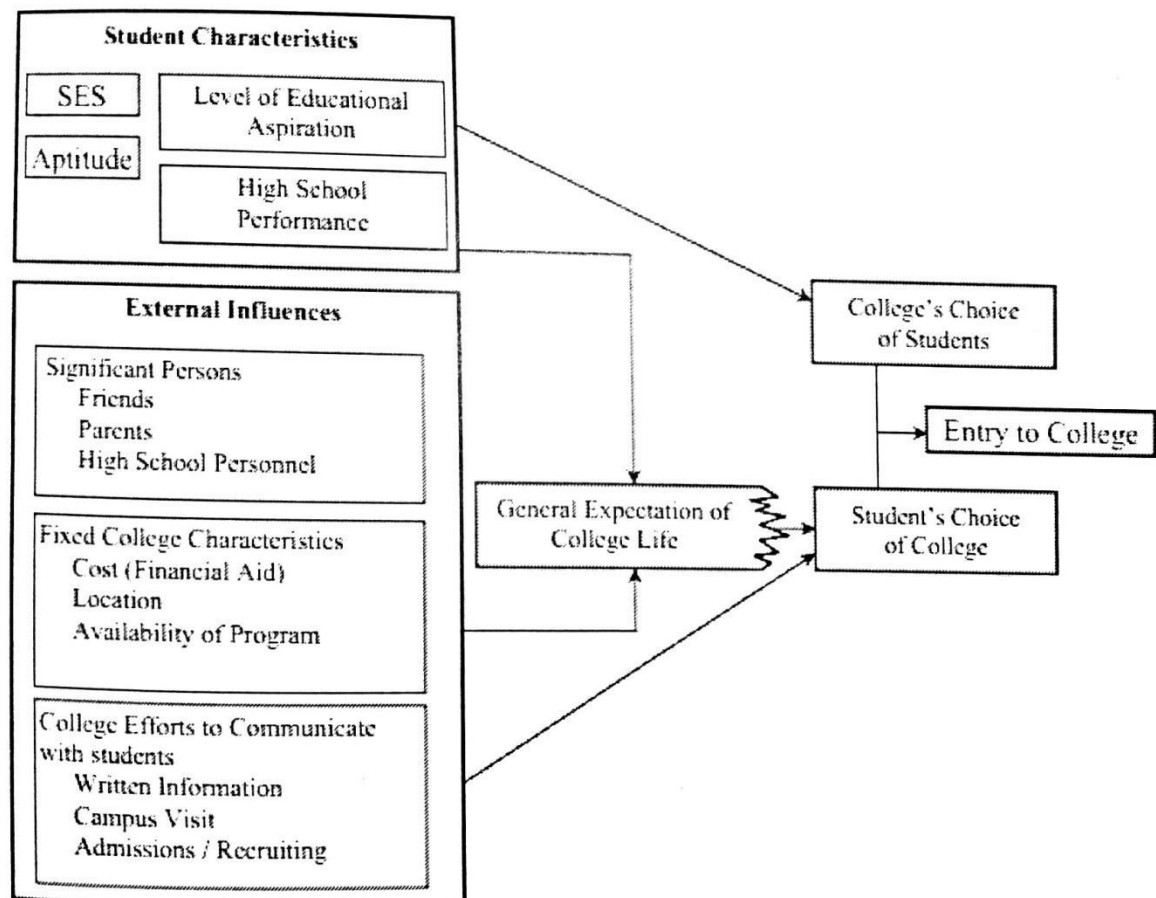


Figure 1. Chapman 's Model of Influences on Student College Choice (1981)

Katherine Hanson and Larry Litten Model of College (1981)

Hanson & Litten (1981) Model of College – Attendance and College Selection is a series of complex processes influenced by Lewis & Morrison's (1975) longitudinal study that highlighted thirteen activities that occur in various phases of the college-choice process. The model in Figure 2 outlines three different stages: stage one - deciding to go to college, stage two – investigating colleges, and stage three – application, admission, and matriculation (Hanson & Litten, 1981). During stage one, the student acquires the desire to attend college and then formally makes the decision to attend. In stage two, students begin to take the steps needed to actualize this decision by researching different types of institutions that may be seen as a good fit. Lastly, in stage three, students complete college applications, gain admissions, and transition into a post-secondary institution.

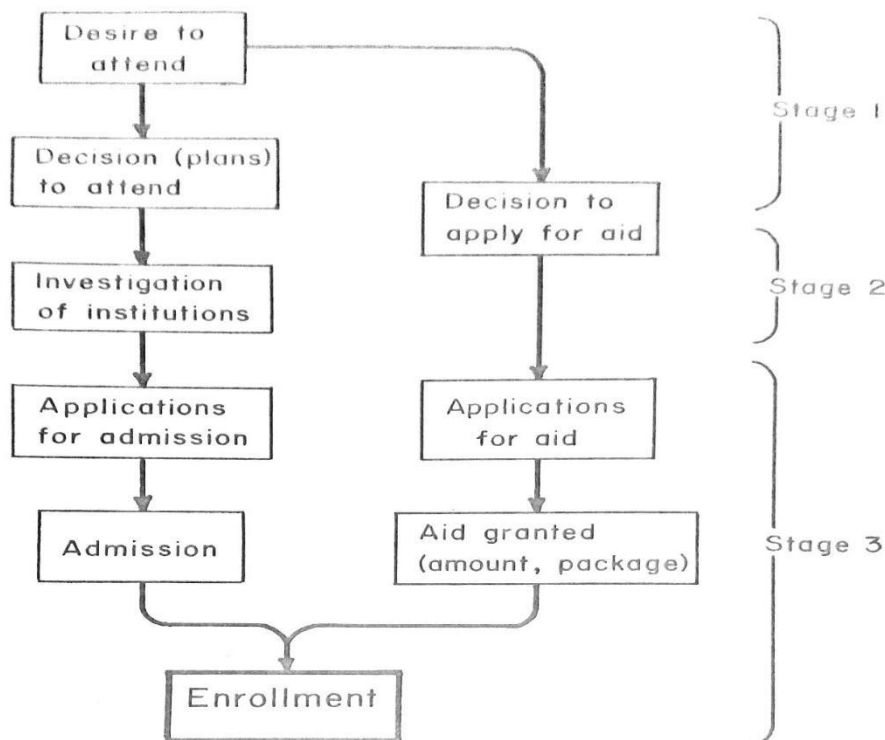


Figure 2. Hanson & Litten College – Attendance and College – Selection Model (1981)

Gregory Jackson Model (1982)

Jackson (1982) examined both the sociological and economic perspective of college choice. He viewed the sociological perspective as an array of social and individual factors leading to students' occupational and education aspirations. The Jackson's Combined Model of College Choice in Figure 3 outlines this process. The economic perspective specifies that students evaluate the cost benefit of various factors relating to college choice that includes their family background, social context, and academic achievement. He combined both perspectives into a formal stage model that includes three phases: Phase I: Preferences, Phase II: Exclusion, and Phase III: Evaluation (Jackson, 1982).

Phase I: Preference is the first stage of this model; it reflects on the sociological influences of college choice, which include students' peers, family background, academic achievement, and income. Jackson (1982) states the most important aspect of a student's college aspirations is strongly correlated to their academic achievement. Please note that these preferences are factors that impact the process leading to college choice (Jackson, 1982).

Phase II: Exclusion is the second stage of this model., Students tend to review the expenses and overall cost of college attendance. Jackson (1982) believes that one may expect students to consider all the colleges geographically available then begin limiting those options that are unfeasible or simply not a good fit. Evidence suggest that accurate information about various college that would be good for a student to consider are often not available therefore; students exclude these colleges from their review group (Jackson, 1982). College location is an

important factor in the exclusion phase; students do not choose colleges that are unknown to them or of which they cannot obtain information about. Information may be limited based on students' academic achievement and financial resources.

Phase III: Evaluation discusses the process by which a student makes the choice to attend a specific college. During Phase III students create a personal rating system, where they will thoroughly review all their options and choose a best fit institution. Factors in this choice stage include college and job attributes (after college), college cost, family background, and academic experience. Students weigh these factors and make a final choice.

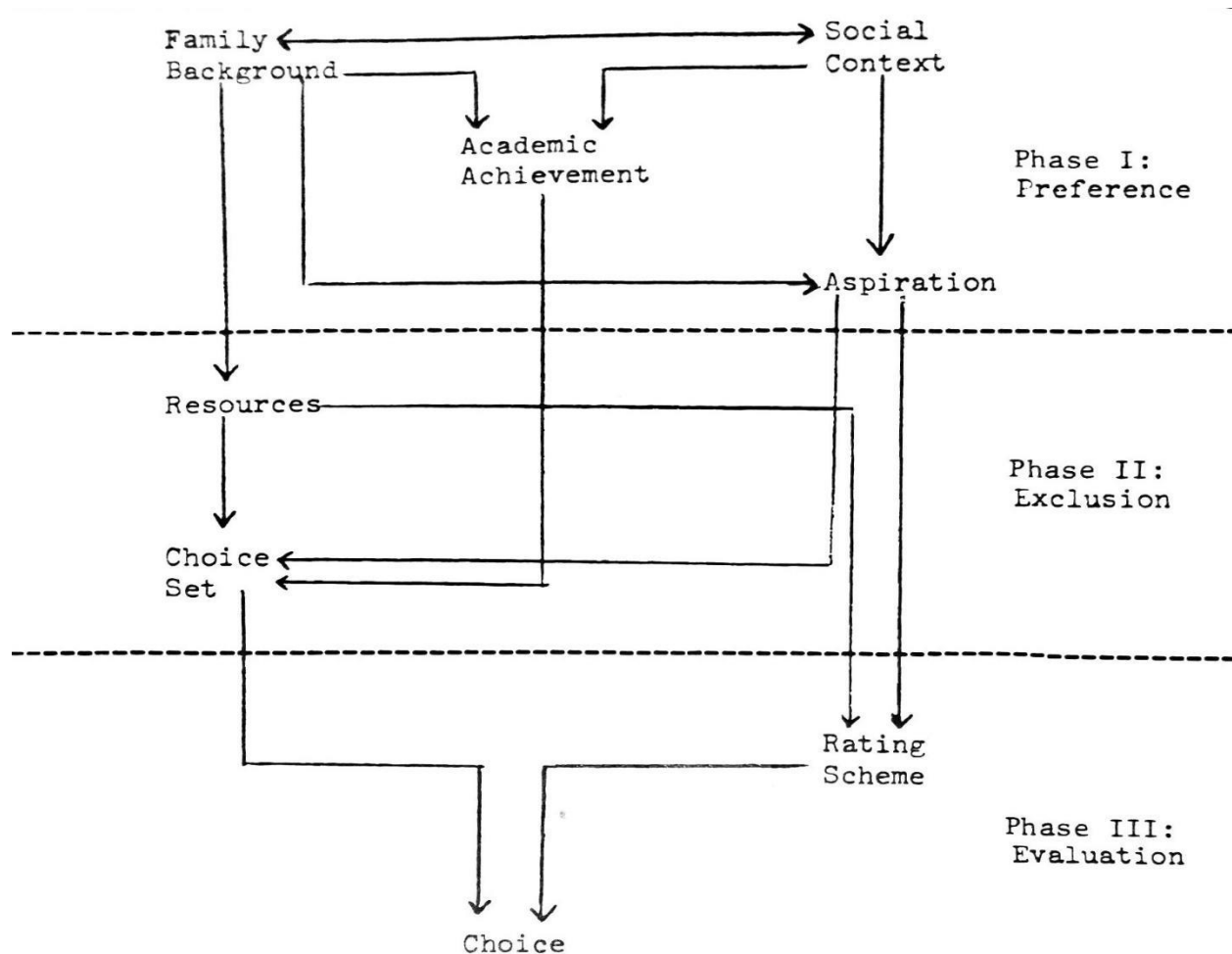


Figure 3. Jackson's Combined Model of College Choice (1982)

Litten's Model (1982)

Litten (1982) further researched the college choice process based on Chapman's (1981) Conceptual Model of College Choice. Litten (1982) examined all existing research that focused on the college selection process and reviewed how different types of students differ in their conduct of this process and commonalities among various student populations. He argued that the current models were highly generalized and imported a very simple model of influence on college choice. As a result, he explored how race, gender, academic ability, parent education, and geographic location impact students' college choice. Litten (1982) concludes that a "fully developed model of college choice will have to embrace the various components of the college-selection process as well as focusing on its outcomes" (p. 400). He further argued that without a more detailed college-choice model, college administrators would not have the tools needed to create effective recruiting strategies that are inclusive of various student populations.

Litten (1982) outlined a three-stage model of college choice (see Figure 4). The first stage began with a student's desire to attend college followed by the decision to attend. The first stage highlights specific variables including but not limited to: race, parental education level, family culture, income, and parent's personalities. The second stage includes researching different types of colleges (information gathering/investigation of institutions). The final stage incorporates actually applying for admissions to the college of choice.

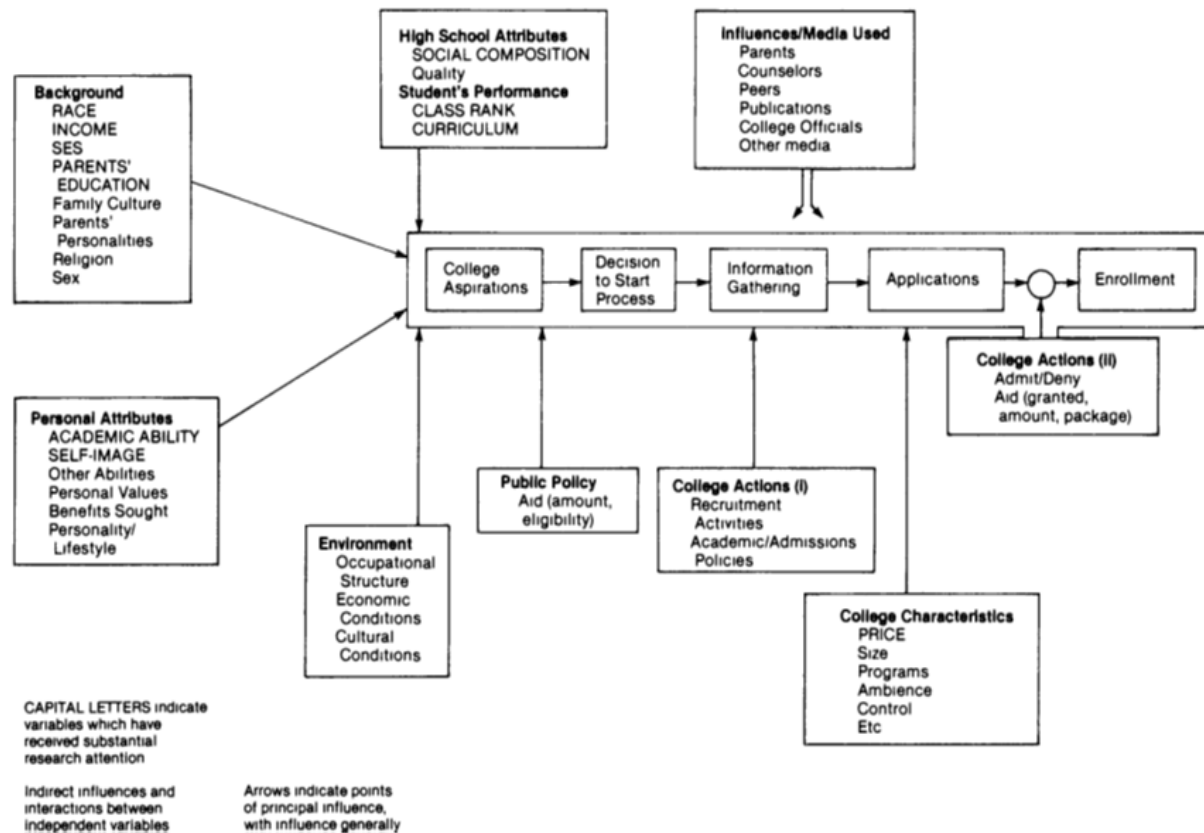


Figure 4. Litten's Expanded Model of College Choice (1982)

Don Hossler and Karen Gallagher College Choice Model (1987)

Drawing on Litten's (1982) and Chapman's (1981) model, Hossler and Gallagher (1987) offer a model of college choice that includes three general stages: predisposition, search, and choice. Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) Three Phase Model of College Choice is the most cited because it is the first comprehensive model developed (Bergerson, 2009). This model combines institutional factors with student's influential factors of college choice.

Model Dimensions	Influential Factors		Student Outcomes
	Individual Factors	Organizational Factors	
Predisposition (Phase One)	Student Characteristics Significant others Educational activities	School characteristics	a. College options Search for: b. Other option
Search (Phase Two)	Student preliminary college values Student search activities	College and university search activities (search for students)	a. Choice set b. Other options
Choice (Phase Three)	Choice set	College and university courtship activities	Choice

Figure 5. A Three Phase Model of College Choice (1987)

Predisposition (Phase One)

The first stage is described as the predisposition phase because it is the developmental phase where students determine if they are interested in attending college. According to Hossler and Gallagher (1987), there are three types of students that emerge in the first phase of the choice process, which are the following listed below:

1. “Whichers” – Those students who never seriously considered not attending college
2. “Whethers” – Those who apply to 1-2 local colleges but may or may not attend
3. “Nots” – Those students who never really considered going to college

Students’ specific background characteristics positively correlated with college attendance are: family income level, family encouragement, and student involvement. The likelihood of students attending college is correlated with the amount of positive parental encouragement (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

Search (Phase Two)

During the search phase, students begin to seek more information about various colleges and universities. This phase is where students interact more frequently with potential colleges and universities (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Depending on the students' level of knowledge about the college-search process, the student may or may not have a clear understanding of the type(s) of institutions that would be a perfect fit for them. Students with limited access to resources are often lost during this phase and do not have the proper skills to ask the right questions important to this process, such as cost of attendance, major programs offered by the college, or support services available to the student (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

Choice (Phase Three)

In this phase, the student's college or university choice is evaluated. This allows for the student to limit their number of potential school choices to their top prospects. As students are deciding which college to attend, colleges are often strategizing on how to successfully position themselves as the student's first choice as well. During this phase, students are charged with finding a school that is considered a good fit. Financial aid and family influence is a large factor in this decision (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

African American Parents/Family's Influence on the College Choice Process

Parents are an important contributor to their child's overall educational success (Fann et al, 2009). Parental influence has been shown to have a positive influence on a child's aspirations beyond high school, higher academic achievement, academic motivation and feelings toward school (Fann, 2009; Hossler et al, 1999). Parental involvement, motivation, and support are essential factors in a child's college choice (Freeman, 2005; Dennis et. al, 2005; Fann, 2009;

Bergerson, 2009; Yan, 1999; Holland & Richards, 1965; Hossler et al, 1999). Children communicate their college aspirations to their parents and parents communicate the expectations they have for their child's success (Hossler et al, 1999).

Traditionally, African American students have not been the focus of many college-choice studies, and research is still currently limited compared to other racial groups; however, some researchers have studied this population extensively (Freeman, 2005). Bateman and Hossler (1996) conducted a study of high school students attending twenty-one different high schools in Indiana. The purpose of the study was to examine the development of postsecondary education plans of African American compared to white students. This study found that parental expectations were the most powerful predictor of college choice for African American students. African American females indicated that parents' expectations and their mother's educational level were positively associated with the development of postsecondary plans (Bateman & Hossler, 1996).

Freeman (1997 & 2005) explores how to increase the number of African American students attending and being retained in college. Her research shows that African American students face psychological barriers such as a loss of hope and feeling intimidated about the pre-collegiate process. The students expressed feeling anxious and ill-prepared for the pre-college process. The theme of hopelessness emerged because students did not feel confident about even simply having the option to attend college (Freeman, 2005). Some of these particular students lost the passion to even pursue a college education because of a lack of support and encouragement from family and school leaders. (Freeman, 2005).

Students in these studies offered solutions to school leaders on how to cultivate their personal aspirations for college at an earlier age. They also wanted school leaders to help them

obtain skills to navigate the many barriers they face as African American's. Lastly, students wanted their family members to obtain knowledge about the college transition process (Freeman, 1997; Freeman, 2005).

Freeman's (2005) study of African American students found that the researched students were influenced by their families to attend college not because they have someone in their family that has necessarily earned a college degree, but because the family members want their child to achieve beyond their educational achievement level. Students in this qualitative study identified three factors that influence their decision to attend college: (1) an automatic expectation in their family; (2) influences beyond family level; and (3) self-motivation and of "what I do not want to be". See the detailed description below (Freeman, 2005):

An automatic expectation in their family:

For students in Freeman's study, college has always been a part of their lives. Many students in this category have family members who have attended college and place high value on higher education.

Influences beyond family level:

This group of students has been told to exceed beyond the generation of family members before them.

Self-motivation and of "what I do not want to be":

Students may have family members who have struggled in life, and because of that, they have reflected on undesirable life situations and decided that college would be their ticket to a better life.

In addition to the factors that influence African American students' choice to attend college, Freeman (2005) also drew upon Hossler and Gallagher (1987) Three Phase Model of

College Choice to identify three types of students within the predisposition phase. According to Freeman's (2005) research, she identified the three distinct types as:

1. *Knowers*: students who know they will be attending college; college was always an expectation in their family.
2. *Seekers*: students who come to believe "I can do this" and begin to prepare and seek information about higher education.
3. *Dreamers*: students who believe that higher education is not an option but may dream about the possibilities.

What makes these categories different from other college-choice models is that "African American students of any type may emerge to choose postsecondary education and sometimes do, yet the proposed model leaves room for those students from all three categories who may not choose to participate in higher education" (Freeman, 2005, p. 24).

Perna and Titus (2005) studied how parental involvement influences the enrollment levels of different racial groups, including African American students. This study used social capital as a lens to understand the relationship between parental involvement and college enrollment. This quantitative study utilized data from the second (1992) and third (1994) NESL studies to research the relationship between parental involvement, the likelihood of the student enrolling into college after high school, the relationship between the different types of parental involvement among various racial groups, the characteristics of the social networks at the schools the students attended, and the likelihood of that student attending college (Perna & Titus, 2005). There were 9,810 participants from 1,006 different high schools. These students all graduated high school in 1992 (Perna & Titus, 2005).

African American parents were more effective than other groups at contacting the school when their child had academic issues, but were less effective in utilizing their involvement to support their student's transition to college (Perna & Titus, 2005). In summary, this study found that African American students are lacking in the college enrollment process because of their low economic status and access to human, social, and cultural capital (Perna & Titus, 2005).

Smith (2008) conducted a study of five African American mothers to gain an understanding of the messages they sent to their child about college, the nature of their involvement in the college choice process, and how the results could influence how parents are educated on the college-choice process. In this study, like Freeman (2005) the parent(s) wanted their child to go farther than they did academically. All the mothers in this study used narratives of their personal life's shortcomings to encourage their child to continue to college. These parents set high expectations for their children and expected them to achieve. The mothers talked to their children about the financial benefits of obtaining a college education, including conversations about how completing college could keep them out of poverty and provide a better life and financial stability (Smith, 2008).

Similarly to Smith (2008), my study will research the actions parents do to influence their child to attend college. I am planning to research the parent's perspective on these topics— more specifically, those parents who identify as African American, low-income, and who have not attended college themselves.

Theoretical Framework

This study employed two theoretical frameworks to analyze the the research problem and undergird data collected about African American parents who had not attended college and identify as low-income. In this section, I will explore Freeman's (2005) model of African

American students during predisposition and Harper's (2012) Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework. These models were chosen for my study because I am employing an anti-deficit perspective in exploring the direct and indirect actions taken by African American parents with limited monetary resources. I am specifically using these models because: (1) Freeman's (2005) model of African American students during predisposition explores how African American families are involved during their child's college choice process; and (2) Harper's (2012) Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework moves beyond the deficit perspectives on achievement by highlighting persons, policies, programs, and resources that help Black men succeed in college; this includes the positive direct and indirect actions the parents employed to influence their child to attend college.

Freeman: Model of African American Students During Predisposition

Freeman's (2005) model of African American students during predisposition is the first theoretical framework for this study. Freeman (2005) drew upon Hossler and Gallagher (1987) Three Phase Model of College Choice to identify three types of students within the predisposition phase. As stated earlier in the literature review in Freeman's (2005) research, she identified the three distinct categories of students during the college-choice process that she coins *Knowers*, *Seekers* and *Dreamers*.

Knowers are students who could not identify a particular time in their lives when their parents initially started the conversation about going to college; college was an ingrained expectation. One student in this study said that the decision to attend college was so natural that it was "like breathing." *Seekers* are students who stand the best chance of choosing to attend college. These students usually have a person in their life who helped them to realize that they too can attend college. *Dreamers* are students who are at great risk for not seeing higher

education as an option. These students are identified as, deep down inside, dreaming of something “better” beyond high school, but have “missed the spark that seekers have received from family, peers, or school” (Freeman, 2005, p. 29).

This model is an effective theoretical framework for my study because it was developed exclusively and explicitly from a sample of African American student’s. My research is exploring the influence African American parents have on their child’s choice to attend college. Freeman’s model demonstrates that students in any category can still make the decision to attend college.

Harper: Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework

Lastly, Harper’s (2012) Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework is the second framework for this study. Research regarding parental/family influence of African American students who identify as being the first in their family to attend college and are of low socioeconomic status tend to employ a deficit thinking framework (Valencia, 1997; Reynold 2007). Deficit thinking is a concept often ingrained in institutionalized structures, including the belief that students who identify as being a part of a minority group and are of low socioeconomic status do not succeed because such students and their families have innate developmental deficiencies that impede on their ability to learn (Valencia, 1997). African American parents greatly influence their child’s college choice and add value to their college-choice process (Freeman, 2005; Harper, 2012).

I plan to utilize an anti-deficit thinking concept coined by Valencia (1997) and later adopted by Harper (2012) to explore the direct and indirect actions of African American parents with limited monetary resources that lead to their child’s choice to attend college. Harper (2012) conducted a national study of 219 Black male students from 42 different colleges and universities in 20 states across the country. The purpose of this study was to provide an anti-

deficit view of Black male college achievement. The study moves beyond the deficit perspectives on achievement by highlighting persons, policies, programs, and resources that help Black men succeed in college (Harper, 2012). The Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework “inverts questions that are commonly asked about the educational disadvantage, underrepresentation, insufficient preparation, academic underperformance, disengagement, and Black male student attrition...instead it includes some questions that researchers could explore to better understand how Black undergraduate men successfully navigate their way to and through higher education and onward to rewarding post-college options” (Harper, 2012, p. 5). The research questions “shed light on three pipeline points (pre-college socialization and readiness, college achievement, and post-college success) as well as eight researchable dimensions of achievement (familial factors, k-12 school forces, out-of-school college prep resources, classroom experiences, out of the class engagement, enriching educational experiences, graduate school enrollment, and career readiness” (Harper, 2012 p. 5). Please see Figure 6 below:

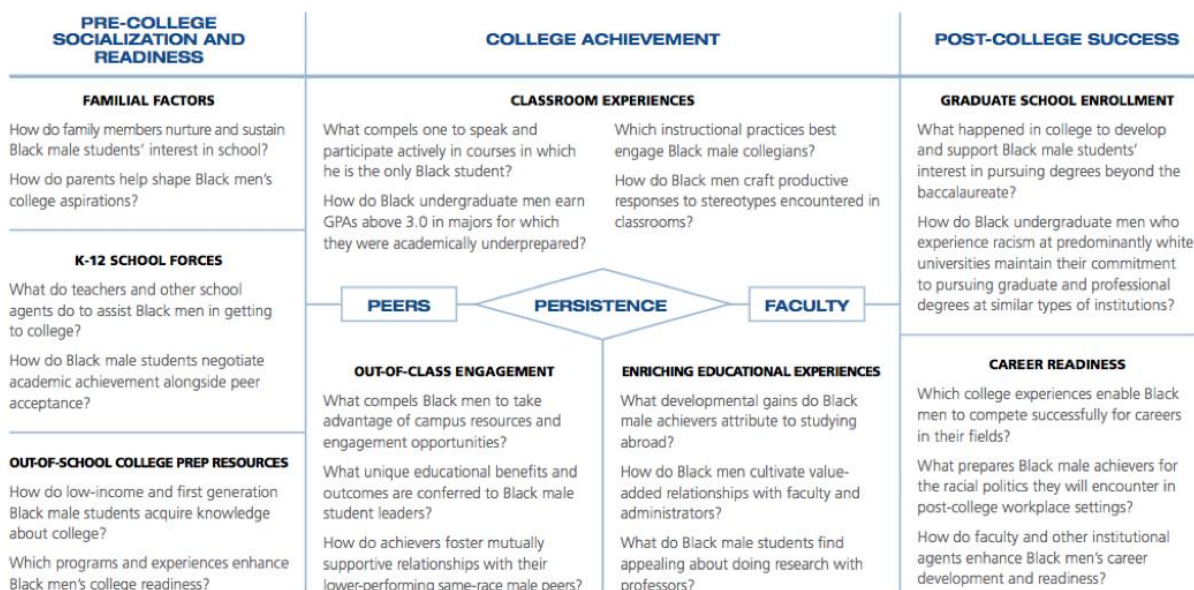


Figure 6. Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework (2012)

In this study parents were a significant factor in the students' college-choice process Harper (2012) states:

“Parents consistently conveyed what many of the participants characterized as non-negotiable expectations that they would pursue post-secondary education. From boyhood through high school, parents and other family members reinforced to the achievers that college was the most viable pathway to social uplift and success.” (p. 9)

In the Pre-College Socialization and Readiness section located in Figure 6, the Familial Factors have two questions: (1.) How do family members nurture and sustain Black male students' interest in school? And, (2) How do parents help shape African American men's college aspirations? These questions are key to exploring how African American parents influence their student's college choice from an anti-deficit perspective. An anti-deficit approach allows for me to embrace the different forms of motivation as encouraging methods to the children of African American parents. This approach will also allow me to examine the unique ways that these parents advocate for their children and capitalize on the resources that are accessible to them. Anti-deficit thinking reframes the way experiences are viewed and valued (Harper, 2012; Valencia, 1997 & 2010).

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to employ an anti-deficit perspective in exploring how the parents of first generation, low-income African American students who are learning in a predominately white schooling environment influence their student's choice to attend college. This study aims to examine the direct and indirect actions African American parents with limited financial resources do to encourage their student to decide to attend college when they have not gone or completed a four-year degree themselves. Deficit models or perspectives fail to provide an accurate or adequate explanation because it does not value the different types of capital these parents employ to add value to their child's experience (Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008; Harper, 2012; Freeman, 2005). Greene (2015) states, "deficit theories of parent involvement ignore the voices of parents, the roles they play in supporting and advocating for their children in meaningful ways outside of school, and their lived experiences" (p. 11). Working from anti-deficit perspectives, for this research study, provides a space where a parents' voice can be respected and acknowledged as adding value to their child's experience. Most research about how or why these particular students attend college is collected at the student level (Hoosler, 1989; Freeman, 1997; Freeman, 2005; Hoosler & Vasper, 1999; Perna, 2000; Perna & Titus, 2005; Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008). There is limited research, both quantitative and qualitative, addressing how African American parents influence their student's choice to attend college (Freeman, 2005). My inquiry will build on this paucity of research, providing an additional lens for high school and college administrators to consider when developing curriculum aimed at better assisting African American low-income parents, family members, and students in making a choice to attend college.

The following chapter will begin with my research questions and then move into a discussion of the significance of qualitative research and narrative inquiry for a research design, which define my methods. I will further discuss the rationale for why I am utilizing this research method for my study. I will also outline: data collection methods, the research location, population, data analysis methods, and issues of trustworthiness.

Research Questions

The following research questions serve as a guide for this study. My work is organized around the following questions:

1. What positive role do African American parents/families members who identify as being of low-income status and not having the opportunity to finish college themselves play in their child's decision to attend college?
 - a. What information or resources help these same parents prepare their child(ren) in this decision-making process?
 - b. What are the barriers or obstacles the parents/families overcome (and how) to support their students' college choice?
 - c. What actions do these parents employ to encourage their child to formally make the decision to attend college?

Research Approach

Many scholars have provided at length various but similar definitions in defining qualitative research to provide guidance to researchers who adopt this approach of data

collection (Merriam, 2002; Creswell, 2002; Patton, 1980; Patton, 1990; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Patton (1980) states that:

qualitative data consist of detailed behaviors; direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts; and excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records, and case histories. The detailed descriptions, direct quotations, and case documentation of qualitative measurement are raw data from the empirical world. The data are collected as open-ended narrative without attempting to fit program activities or peoples' experiences into predetermined, typical questionnaires or test. (p.22)

Qualitative research understands that meaning is socially constructed by people's interactions with the world (Merriam, 2002). The world becomes a reality that is constantly changing and is very different for each person; there are different constructions, realities, and interpretations that are constantly evolving. Qualitative research is used to understand particular interactions during a specific time and within a particular context (Merriam, 2002). Qualitative methods require the researcher to understand the meaning people have constructed about their world and their experiences — using the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis — and use descriptive words and pictures rather than numbers to convey what I have learned about the phenomenon (Merriam, 2002). According to Creswell (2005), qualitative research is defined as “a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants, asks broad, general questions, collects data consisting largely of words from participants, describes and analyzes these words into themes, and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner” (p. 39). I am adopting a qualitative design as I am researching how individuals deeply construct everyday meanings and experiences.

In contrast, a quantitative method does not fulfill the research needs or goals of this particular study. Creswell (2005) notes that quantitative research is “a type of educational research in which the researcher decides what to study, asks specific, narrow questions, collects numeric data from participants, analyzes these numbers using statistics, and conducts the inquiry in an unbiased, objective manner” (p. 39). To gain an understanding of the positive actions African American parents employ to influence their child’s decision to attend college, I am interested in researching their lived experiences, their verbal descriptions, and the meaning they make of how they assist their child in the college-choice process. Quantitative inquiry cannot provide me the rich, contextual data needed to understand the life-world of my research participants.

Critical Narrative Inquiry

As stated in the section above, to further investigate how African American parents interpret and internalize their lived experiences in how they influence their child to attend college it is appropriate to adopt a critical-narrative-inquiry approach. This approach is important to my research because I want to understand the ways the participants’ stories were constructed and positioned; critical narrative inquiry (or critical reflection) will provide a framework for deconstructing the stories and exploring assumptions about knowledge, power, and reflexivity (Hickson, 2016, p. 380). In this section I will define narrative inquiry and critical narrative inquiry research methods; furthermore, I will explain how critical narrative inquiry (CNI) interfaces with my research.

Narrative inquiry is the study of the ways humans experience the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). There are three dimensions of narrative inquiry: “the personal and social

(interaction) along one dimension; past, present and future (continuity) along a second dimension; place (situation) along a third dimension” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 47).

Narrative inquiry focuses on the individual, gathering data by collecting stories, reporting individual experiences, and discussing the meaning of those experiences for the individual (Creswell, 2005). It is “an approach to study of human lives conceived as a way of honoring lived experiences as a source of important knowledge and understanding” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 7).

Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social.” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20)

Furthermore, for researchers, the three dimensions of narrative inquiry allow directions for inquiry that point backward and forward, inward and outward, and located in a place to explore the participant’s lived experiences in-depth (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000). It is important to understand narrative inquiry because critical narrative inquiry builds upon this approach.

Critical narrative inquiry (CNI) is an extremely powerful method to employ when researching the successes of African American families. It provides a social and intellectual space to resist deficit thinking through the expression of storytelling and sharing ones lived experiences. Furthermore, this method enables me to deconstruct stories, interrogate societally constructed assumptions, and critically read notions of race, class, gender, ethics, organizational power, and oppression to provide an anti-deficit lens (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Hickson, 2016;

Connely & Clandinin, 2000). The purpose of moving from a deficit to an anti-deficit perspective is to create a space and time where low-income African American parents' voices can be respected and acknowledged in adding value to their child's college-choice experience, which intersects with broader African American social experiences. CNI affords the opportunity for the perspectives of families in this study to be heightened within society in terms of the value and capital they add to their children through their influence and actions. It also has implications for how US school systems, teachers, and administrators support or fail to support African American families throughout the college choice process.

Baker (2005) adopted critical narrative inquiry as a method to explore the triumphs and trials of African American women with doctoral degrees and careers in the field of education. The study explored how the participants achieved success and how they defined it. Critical narrative inquiry along with other methods allowed Baker (2005) to "appreciate the unique experiences of the research participants" and conclude that "resilience for African American women, is fostered through cultural socialization, affirmation individually and culturally, experiential learning, optimism and faith in God" (p. 167-168). Baker (2005) used critical narrative inquiry to find strength and continuity within the stories of the participants.

Norton (2006) utilized multicultural feminist critical narrative inquiry to explore how Black and Latina/o first grade children co-researchers interview their family members to think about their personal beliefs, how they encourage others, and to acquire more spiritual knowledge. In the study, the critical narrative context allows for the researcher to "create a space for those who have been silenced, including Latinas/Latinos, Blacks, and children, to include their voice in the theorizing that occurs about the practices that inevitably impact their lives, furthermore, "multicultural feminist critical narrative inquiry demands that the researchers illuminate and

attend to the ways culture, structures, discrimination, and power shape the stories that are constructed by and for the participants” (Norton, 2006, p. 319). A key finding of this study suggests the following:

reconceptualization of school policies to involve shifting concepts of family and family involvement from the valuing of family involvement models that focus solely on the physical presence of parents in schools who volunteer in classrooms, attend class trips, and participate in PTA meeting...policies can shift to understand how family members, siblings, aunts, mothers, and friends alike are involved in the lives of their children through the sharing of advice, the developing of spiritual practices, and the guidance of a notion of education that is beyond schooling. (Norton, 2006, p. 330)

The two studies above will assist my research efforts because they both utilized critical narrative inquiry to resist assumptions and to deconstructs the stories told to analyze notions power and oppression to illuminate the value and/or positive actions of the participants.

Within my literature review it is noted that African American parents greatly influence their child’s college choice and add value to their college-choice process (Freeman, 2005; Harper, 2012). Unfortunately, research regarding parental/family influence of African American students who identify as being a part of the first generation in their family to attend college and are low income tend to employ a deficit thinking framework (Valencia, 1997; Reynold, 2007). This concept includes the belief that the type of family I am researching — those who identify as African American, low-income and had not graduated college — have innate developmental deficiencies that impede on their ability to learn simply because of institutionalized societal perspectives (Valencia, 1997). CNI can be used to unpack the assumptions that African American, low-income families who have not graduated college hold deficient knowledge and

skills about post-secondary education and resist the assumptions that they do not add value to their child's college going process (Carey, 2016). Critical narrative inquiry uses "reflection principles to explicitly deconstruct the participants stores to question the construction of knowledge, power and reality" to make meaning of the research questions (Hickson, 2015, p.382).

African American parents are successful in influencing and supporting their child's college choice and transitional process. In my opinion, there is a tremendous benefit to highlight such a process of influence to motivate and encourage other low income, first generation African American families, to gain a better understanding of this population, and to create a paradigm shift to adopt an anti-deficit framework when addressing and researching this population.

Research Location and Access

I conducted my research at a predominately white rural town in the Midwest that is home to about 30,000 residents and located about 60 miles outside of a major Midwestern city. The high school of the students' whose parents I collected data on enrolls approximately 1,712 students. 32% of the students enrolled self-identify as Black, 51% identify as white, 7% identify as Hispanic. Furthermore, a total of 1,114 are eligible for free (981) or reduced priced (133) lunch. The information presented about the school was obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics (2014).

The following steps outline how I formally gained access to the participants after I received IRB approval.

1. I sent an introductory email to the schools superintendent to explain my research topic, dissertation process, and to ask if I could be granted access to complete my study with the parents of the students who fit my research criteria.

2. When granted access, I requested a contact person. The associate superintendent was selected by the superintendent to do the following:
 - a. Communicate with students and families who meet the research criteria requesting their participation in my study. Please see Participation Interest Form: Appendix E.
3. I emailed all the families who were eligible to participate to fully explain my study and request their participation. Please see Formal Invitation to Participate: Appendix F.
4. When they confirm their participation, I scheduled the interview to conduct the research.
5. Students and parents were informed that their participation was strictly voluntary. They were informed that their names were changed and that they can choose to not participate the study at any time without objection.

I have identified this location because the demographics fit within the context of my research questions and study. As a result of the population makeup, I was able to identify participants who met my research criteria and could help answer my research questions.

Population and Sampling

I am researching parents of African American students who are first generation and identify as low-income. A first-generation student is defined as a student who is the first in their family to complete a college education. Family members may have attended, or may be concurrently attending, college but have not yet completed a bachelor's degree (Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). First generation students are usually underprepared for college academically and socially. These students are more likely to be of low-income status and heavily rely on need-based financial aid for college funding. First generation students often have a lower GPA and need additional support gaining important skills such as: time

management, studying, and balancing social life with academics (Perna, 2002 & Terenzini et al, 1996).

For this research, I selected parents of high school students who identify as African American and low-income and have made the choice to obtain a college education immediately after high school. Low-income status was determined by the students' eligibility for United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service's (USDA) free and reduced-price meals and free milk program. This is an indicator of low-income status (Morrissey, Hutchison, & Winsler, 2014). The USDA's outline's income guidelines for student's participation in the program, this program is federally mandated by the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act. The guidelines are intended to directly benefit children who are in need (United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service). I adopted a purposeful sampling method when choosing participants who met the research criteria (Creswell, 2005). Purposeful sampling is utilized with the researcher "intentionally selects individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2005 p. 204)" According to Patton (1990) "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth" (p.230). Patton further states "studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations" (p. 230).

Once I received IRB approval, I e-mailed the superintendent of the school district information about my study to request approval and access to participants that meet my research criteria. I worked with administration (associate superintendent was my contact person) to obtain a list of African American students who parents met the research criteria of: (1.) identifying as African American, (2.) eligible for free or reduced lunch, and (3.) had not completed a college degree. I worked with the associate superintendent to send out the initial communication

(Participation Interest Form: Appendix E). I contacted (Formal Invitation to Participate: Appendix F) the parents of the students who showed interest in participating and who met my research criteria by phone and/or email to schedule a one-on-one interview.

There are no specific rules for sample size in qualitative research (Patton, 1990; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam, 2002; Creswell, 2005). According to Patton (1990), the sample size chosen for qualitative research depends on “what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources” (p. 244). Two key considerations that guide the sample methods in qualitative research are appropriateness and adequacy, the researcher should be “pragmatic and flexible in their approach to sampling and that size is one that sufficiently answers the research question” (O’Reilly & Parker, 2013 p. 192). Because of this, and with consultation with my dissertation Chair and committee, it has been determined between 5-7 separate family participants are sufficient enough to answer my qualitative research questions.

Informed Consent/Confidentiality

Before data collection begins, I followed DePaul University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Human Subjects Review guidelines and presented a formal proposal for review and approval. I took the following steps to uphold the integrity of this research study and for the protection of the participants:

1. Each participant signed a consent form. The consent form will include (Appendix A):
 - a. the purpose of the study
 - b. contact information
 - c. a description of the open-ended interview procedure
 - d. any risks associated with the study

- e. commitment needed for study
 - f. discussion of confidentiality and the option to withdraw from participation at any time.
2. Participants were provided with a summary of the data collection and analysis process, which will include digital recording, transcriptions, and field notes.
 3. To protect the participant identification and to honor their confidentiality, pseudonyms for participants and all research locations are used.
 4. Participation was strictly voluntary and participants could exit the study at any time.
 5. All files are stored on a password-protected computer and/or in a locked office

Data Collection

Using interviews as my primary method of collecting data provides an opportunity to hear the participants' stories and lived experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Creswell, 2005; Creswell, 2013; Patton, 1990). I also collected other forms of data such as demographic information, information parents directly receive from their child's high school about college resources and information they received from various institutions of higher education that they use to help influence their students' college choice. Each method is described below.

Interviews

According to Seidman (2006), in order for people to "give the details of their experience a beginning, middle, and end, people must reflect on their experience...It is this process of selecting constitutive details of experiences, reflecting on them, giving them order, and thereby making sense of them that makes telling stories a meaning-making experience" (p. 7).

I utilized Rubin & Rubin (2005) responsive interviewing as my interviewing approach. This approach fits my research because the techniques outlined below are modified to reflect the

researchers' style of interviewing. This is important because I utilized critical narrative inquiry to explore the nuance of race and class during the college-choice process of families who have not attended college themselves. This approach was helpful when challenging and/or questioning societal assumptions because of the flexibility to adjust when needed (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In this model, "questioning styles reflect the personality of the researcher, adapt to the varying relationships between researcher and conversational partner, and change as the purpose of the interview evolves...Responsive interview begin with a topic in mind but recognize that they will modify their questions to match knowledge and interests of the interviewees (within the context of the topic)" (p. 15). Below are the major characteristics of the Responsive Interviewing Model:

1. Two Human Beings: this model recognizes that the researcher and participant are both people with feelings, personality, interest, and experiences.
2. Style: this model accepts that the researcher has their own style that matches their personality.
3. Self-Reflection: Rather than "pretend that researchers come into the interview with no biases and can listen to answers without sifting them through their own experience and cultural lens" (p. 31), this model argues that researchers must consistently examine their personal feelings, understandings, and reactions.
4. In a Research Relationship: At the core of the Responsive Interviewing Model is the understanding that there is a relationship between both the researcher and the participant that is mutually influenced. The researcher establishes the general direction of the interview, but the participant defines the conversational path.
5. Depth of Understanding and Flexibility of Design: The overall goal of this model is to gain a deep understanding of what is being studied. This is achieved "by going after

context; dealing with the complexity of multiple, overlapping, and sometimes conflicting themes; and paying attention to the specifics of meanings, situations, and history” (p. 35).

I conducted semi-structured, one on-person interview with the available parent(s) of each family in a place that was safe, public and most familiar to the participants as my method of data collection. Semi-structured interviews allowed for the interview questions to contain a combination of more and less structured questions. Structure provided space for word changes that may occur unexpectedly (Seidman, 2006).

When I met the participants, I thanked them for their participation and verbally provided a brief summary of the research purpose and implications. I reviewed the Appendix A: Interview Consent Form and the Appendix B: Interview Protocol document with the participants. Next, I asked the participants to agree to be audio recorded during all interviews and formally sign the Appendix A: Interview Consent Form. I utilized an electronic recording device and took notes (Creswell, 2005). Recording devices were only used with the consent of the participants. Furthermore, I started the interview by asking the questions listed in the Appendix B: Interview Protocol document that discuss (a) the importance of college, (b) direct and indirect actions taken to encourage college attendance, (c) barriers (internal and external), and (d) resources available to support the process. The interviews were 40-60 minutes and took place at the convenience of the participants. After the interviews were complete, I formally thanked the participants for their participation. After the interviews were transcribed and summarized, I scheduled the second contact to connect with the participants either in-person or by phone to review the transcriptions and notes to ensure validity. This concept is referred to as member checking. Member checking is used to determine the accuracy of research findings through taking either the final report, specific narratives and/or themes back to the participants to determine if the participants feel the

findings are accurate (Creswell, 2003). I described the member checking process in detail in the Trustworthiness section.

Demographic Questionnaire

In Appendix D you will find a demographic questionnaire that was used when recruiting participants. This questionnaire was completed after all consent forms were signed but before the interview began. The questionnaire requests the following information: parent(s) first and last name, contact information, gender, age occupation, profession/job, education level, household income, child's first and last name, and information on other family members who have influenced their child's college choice.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis is a process where the researcher makes sense of data, reducing it to meaningful accounts and conclusions (Bailey, 2006). There is no one specific method to analysis of data that have been collected (Merriam, 2002). The two theoretical frameworks used to undergird the data analysis from an anti-deficit perspective accounting for the cultural nuances of African American families during the college-choice process are Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three-phase model of college choice, Freeman's (2005) model of African American students during predisposition, and lastly, Harper's (2012) Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework. These models provide a holistic understanding of the college-choice process for the population I am exploring; from each model, I gained a better sense of how low-income African American families influence their child to attend college. The models help me filter and highlight the positive actions they employ that lead to college choice. These models also help me to construct a new narrative from an anti-deficit perspective to resist the negative constructions of how low-income African American families influence their children to attend college.

As stated in my methodology section, I adopted critical narrative inquiry (Hickson, 2016) to look at the variety of viewpoints and to be open to new understanding or knowledge about what is happening and why (Hickson, 2016). Moreover, a critical lens allows me to analyze the data from an anti-deficit perspective to explore the positive direct and indirect actions African American families employ to add value to the overall college-choice experience of their child (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). I examined for themes related to: (1.) how African American families influence their students to attend college and any barriers they faced because of their identity, (2.) the positive actions they employ to encourage college choice (3.) institutional factors (i.e. school administrators, teachers, school counselors etc.) that influence the process, and (4.) the information and/or resources they utilized to help their child; this helped me construct my findings. I will also explore other themes that may emerge unexpectedly.

For each interview, I sent the recordings to a professional transcription service where each session was fully transcribed. I read each transcript multiple times to create notes of my thoughts and observations about each participant's narrative. In addition, I listened to the audio recording multiple times as well. This strategy allowed me to immerse myself in each of the narratives.

Although there is no one specific method to analyze data, coding is a part of the data analysis procedure (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Bailey, 2006; Merriam, 2002; Patton, 1990). According to Creswell (2013), the process of "coding involves aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in a study, and then assigning a label to the code" (p. 184). Following Creswell (2013), I looked for codes segments that can be used to describe my research and develop themes that represent the following:

- Information that I expected to find before the study;
- Surprising information that I did not expect to find; and
- Information that is conceptually interesting or unusual to myself, the participants and other audiences.

I adopted the coding method described in Bailey's 2006 publication titled "A Guide to Qualitative Field Research", that includes initial coding, focused coding, and memoring (Bailey, 2006). Initial coding, also known as open coding, is defined as the process in which the researcher "breaks up multiple pages of text into more manageable segments that can be grouped together and used during later stages in the analysis" (p. 128). Focused coding, or axial coding, is when you take data used in the initial coding process and "further reduce the data into larger categories that subsume multiple codes" (p. 129). Memoring takes place in conjunction to the coding process; this is defined as the process of writing memos to oneself about new insights that emerge when in reflection about the data during coding (Baily, 2006). Furthermore, after the coding process was completed, I classified the codes and studied information in various themes. Creswell (2013) describes themes as "broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea (pg. 186)."

Trustworthiness

Lincoln & Guba (1985) define the basic issues of trustworthiness by outlining the following questions coupled with the themes listed:

- (1.) Truth Value: How can one establish confidence in the truth of the findings of a particular inquiry for the subjects with which and the context in which the research was carried out?

(2.) Applicability: How can one determine the extent to which the findings of a particular inquiry have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects?

(3.) Consistency: How can one determine whether the findings of an inquiry would be repeated if the research were replicated with the same or similar subjects in the same context?

(4.) Neutrality: How can one establish the degree to which the findings of an inquiry are determined by the subjects and conditions of the inquiry and not by the biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the researcher? (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

To evaluate the questions above, Lincoln & Guba (1985) employ four criterion that I will use to help define the trustworthiness. The criterion are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Each criterion is aligned with a particular question above; question one aligns with credibility, question two aligns with transferability, question three aligns with dependability, and question four aligns with confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility was established through member checking (Creswell, 2005), triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and peer-reviewing (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). At the end of each interview, the key points that the participants made will be summarized and repeated through a process called member checking (Creswell, 2005). Member checking is a process “in which the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account” (Creswell, 2005, p. 252). This involves taking the findings of the study back to the participants and asking them to confirm the accuracy of the data. I did this by communicating with families either in person or by phone. This required me to connect with the families again once the findings had been drafted; I called them personally to make arrangements that were

most convenient (either meeting in person or connecting via phone) for them. As the researcher, I asked the participants about all aspects of the data collected, including whether the description was complete and realistic, if the themes were accurate, and if the interpretations were fair and representative (Creswell, 2005). Participants had the opportunity to add, delete, or change major points if they so desired. This step ensured that I accurately report data I received from each participant (Creswell, 2005).

I used a peer reviewer (Creswell & Miller, 2000), also known as an inquiry auditor (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); this is a person who is familiar with the research and can review the data. A peer review “provides support, plays devil’s advocate, challenges the researchers’ assumptions, pushes the researcher to the next step methodologically, and asks hard questions about methods and interpretations” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 129). This process will fulfil both the criterion of confirmability and dependability.

Finally, credibility will be established through triangulation. “Triangulation is a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). I produced data through interviews, information sent to the parents about college through the student’s high school/perspective college, and the demographic questionnaire. I compared the data for themes and consistency. The information was summarized and reviewed with the participants to expose any discrepancies or inconsistencies. I made all changes as needed.

Transferability

The establishment of transferability requires a thick description of the data. This is defined as describing the setting, participants, and the themes of a qualitative study in rich detail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell & Miller, 2000). According to Creswell & Miller (2000) the

purpose of “a thick description is that it creates verisimilitude, statements that produce for the readers the feeling that they have experienced, or could experience, the events being described in the study.... thus, credibility is established through the lens of readers who read a narrative account and are transported into a setting or situation” (p. 128-129). As outlined in Shenton (2004), I provided the following information in rich detail:

- a.) the number of organizations taking part in the study and where they are based
- b.) any restrictions in the type of people who contributed data
- c.) the number of participants involved in the fieldwork
- d.) the data collection methods that were employed
- e.) the number and length of the data collection sessions;
- f.) the time period over which the data was collected (Shenton, 2004)

This process will help researchers “assess the extent to which the findings may be true of people in other settings...” (Shenton, 2004, p. 69). I presented rich, thick descriptions and details that address the research questions presented in my study and allow for my research to be transferred to other settings.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability and confirmability will be established through the use of a peer reviewer (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell & Miller, 2000) and the adoption of an audit trial (Creswell & Miller, 2000). As stated in the credibility section, a peer reviewer helps the researcher to question assumptions, review the findings, and support to research process (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The adoption of an audit trial is critical. According the Creswell & Miller (2000), a “audit trial is established by researchers documenting the inquiry process through journaling and

memoring, keeping a log of all activities, developing a data collection chronology, and recording data analysis procedures clearly”. As described by Shenton (2004), I presented a thorough understanding of the methods I am utilizing along with their effectiveness. This allows the reader to assess the extent to which best practices were followed. I included the following as a part of my study:

- a.) the research design and its implementation, describing what was planned and executed;
- b.) the operational detail of data gathering, addressing the minutiae of what was done in the field;
- c.) reflective appraisal of the project, evaluating the effectiveness of the process of inquiry undertaken (Shenton, 2004, p. 71-72).

Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter begins with a discussion of the study's participants, including an overview of the participants' completed demographic questionnaire. Furthermore, I will provide a profile of each participant more specifically discussing why college choice is important to their child. Lastly, I discuss the study's emergent themes from the data. Direct statements from each participant will be used to further discuss the themes. The theme topics include: (1.) how African American families influence their children to attend college and overcome any barriers they face because of their identity, (2.) the positive actions they employ to encourage college choice (3.) institutional factors (i.e. school administrators, teachers, school counselors etc..) that influence the process, (4.) the information and/or resources they utilize to help their child, and (5.) family sacrifice.

The Participants:

Six families participated in this study. My approach to this research was to employ an anti-deficit perspective in exploring how the parents of first generation, low-income African American students positively influence their child's choice to attend college. This study aims to examine the positive direct and indirect actions taken by African American parents with limited monetary resources to encourage their child to decide to attend college when they have not finished a four-year degree themselves. These participants were selected based on the criteria established for this study; they are the parents of students who identify as: (1.) first generation, (2.) African American, and (3.) low-income. Pseudonyms were used to uphold the confidentiality of each participant. With the exception of one parent, all participants identified as African American, low-income, and had not complete a four-year degree. Dawn identified as

Mexican American, but she continued to participate in this study because she has a son who identifies as African American and is married to David, who also identifies as African American. Dawn and David were the only couple that participated in the study together. There were six different families represented in this study. There were two married couples who participated in the study, however, I only interviewed one married couple together (Dawn and David). One participant was not married, but in a committed relationship, the other three participants were single and co-parenting with their child's other parent.

Each participant completed a demographic questionnaire that captured their age, occupation, household income, highest level of education within their household, and list of other family members who helped to influence the child's college choice. Please see the participants' demographics listed below:

Name	Age	Occupation	Highest level of education in household	Household income	Other influential family member(s)
David and Dawn (Married)	44 & 38	Food Service & Retail worker	Both high school diploma	\$20,000 (2 dependents in household)	Uncle
Bianca (Married)	37	Surgical Tech	Associate's degree	N/A (2 dependents in household)	Grandma Step father
Kevin (Single – lives with new partner and children)	32	Purchasing Agent	Associate's degree	\$60,000 (8 dependents in household)	Mother Cousin
Carrie (Single: co-parent children)	37	Factory worker	High school diploma	\$50,000 (2 dependents in household)	Father Sister Grandparents Cousins
Tasha (Single: co-parent children)	38	Retail worker	High school diploma	\$20,000 (5 dependents in household)	Older brothers
Randal	42	Steel Worker	Associate's degree	N/A	Mother Grandfather

(Divorced: co-parent children)				(2 dependents in household)	
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Two of the six families were not comfortable sharing their household income; however, my research location did verify that all participants were eligible for either free or reduced lunch. The families also had multiple children with a wide range of ages. All of the parents had students who were actively involved in either sports, church activities, or school-lead student organizations. All the families discussed other family members who were instrumental in their child's decision to attend college. In addition to the parents, the other family members help to play a critical role in their child's success, oftentimes providing mentorship, advice, and monetary resources when needed. Three of the six households has a parent who completed an associate degree. Even with the completion of this degree they still felt as if additional support and resources would be extremely helpful in preparing their child for college. All the parents had high expectations for their childrens' success and were very confident in their childs' ability to attend college. College was an expectation for all their children since birth. According to Freeman (2005), the students would be classified as "Knowers". Knowers are students who have always had the engrained expectation of attending college. Although some of the parents were very strategic in when and how they talk about college to their child, the expectation had always been present. Below is a brief introduction to each family and why they felt college was important to their child.

Participant 1: David and Dawn – With a higher education nothing can stop you.

David and Dawn are married and made a point to specifically participate in the interview together. David was outspoken, very assertive, and passionate about their children. Dawn was

mild-mannered and equally passionate. They were both extremely excited to participate in this study. They have two children; the youngest child is currently in high school. David was the main speaker during the interview while Dawn mostly nodded in agreement. They identify as a interracial couple, as David identifies as African American and Dawn as Mexican American; however, they both agreed that their son identifies as African American.

David works in the retail industry and Dawn works as service worker in the food industry. Dawn was a homemaker for the majority of her children's lives so she could cultivate positive academic experiences for their children. She was very involved in homework assignments and took the lead in addressing all the needs her children had academically. She started working full-time when her children went on to high school. They have always steered both of their children to attend college. They both felt college would provide more opportunities for their children, especially their son who is currently in high school. They were both proud of the fact that their son was a student athlete, on the honor roll and was promoted from seventh grade to ninth a year prior. David, with Dawn in full agreement, stated:

“I want him to go to college because I want him to have a career and not work a regular nine-to-five job. I want him to do something that's going to help him so he can secure his future and he don't have to worry about nothing. And I think a higher education is great for everyone, but especially for him to be independent because we [are] not going to always be around and we want him to be able to sustain, to be able to take care of himself. That's one of the main reasons why I want [him] to get it. Because I believe with a higher education nothing can stop you. You can go further. He can make it. He can do whatever he want to do, be whatever he want to be, and that's pretty much it.” (David and Dawn, personal communication, December 29, 2018)

David spoke frequently about his brother who also helped to raise and mold his children. David's brother also discussed college with their children and exposed them to vacations, summer trips, and cultural experiences. Both David and Dawn felt college provided a pathway to upward mobility for their children. Getting good grades and going to college was always an expectation in their household.

Participant 2: Bianca – Honesty is the best policy.

Bianca is a parent of two children with only one currently in high school. Both of her children are athletes. She is married; her husband was unable to participate in the research study because of his work schedule. She works as a surgical technician in a hospital while her husband is steel worker. Bianca was very serious about the success of her children. She prides herself on being very honest with her son about life. She believes college will help him gain an understanding of how to deal with many of injustices impacting Black men she states, "I try my hardest not to sugarcoat anything for him. I let him watch the news. I'll even call him in to look at stuff. Like, 'Hey, this is what's going on'" Bianca (personal communication, December 29, 2017). For her, college is not just about a particular career, it is also a tool that can be used to push back against the institutionalized barriers her son will face in life. She has a very loving relationship with both of her children. When asked why college is important to her and her family she stated:

"Just for a better education because it's hard to make it out here with a regular nine-to-five, and the way kids are brought up and the things they see now and the things they want to do, it's kind of hard to have a family and be able to travel and have self-confidence in yourself like you want your child to have. They're barely making it, or they

don't have a job, or working at [fast food restaurant] ...”(Bianca, personal communication, December 29, 2018)

Her oldest son is an athlete who participates in football and basketball. She attends as many of his activities as her work schedule will allow. She expressed how proud she was of her son's athletic and academic accomplishments.

Participant 3. Kevin – College provides a better chance at life.

Kevin expressed the dedication he has as a father through how he teaches his children about the importance of education. He has seven children with one currently in high school. He is very involved in all aspects of his children's lives. He loves to travel with his children and engages them in sports or after school activities. His oldest son is currently a junior in high school. Kevin works as a purchasing agent and his child's mother works as a childcare provider. Kevin is currently enrolled in college and is studying business management. He decided to go back to school to be a role model for his children. When asked why college is so important to him and his child, he stated:

“He's a pretty good kid, makes straight A's in school, and I think college is important for him because I don't want him to go through things I had to go through as far as finding a job. When I first got out of high school, I didn't go to college or whatever, so I was finding little dead-end jobs here and there. So, I feel that if he could pick up a trade or go get a degree, he has a better chance of getting a job that can land him somewhere as far as a better career than I had when I was his age getting out of high school, so that's why I push college on him every day, every time we talk.” (Kevin, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

Kevin felt it was imperative that he provide experiences that he did not receive as a child for his children because he wants his children to have the skill and desire to not only define success for themselves but to achieve it as well. Kevin's son is a student athlete that earns the honor roll quarterly. Kevin says that he has a great relationship with his sons' teachers and is involved in school activities.

Participant 4. Carrie – The full experience of college.

Carrie is a single mother with one child currently enrolled in college and one a junior in high school. She is a factory worker. Her child that is in high school is an athlete, and Carrie attends many of her child's sport games and supports each one of her child activities. Her main objective in life is that her children define success for themselves and achieve the goals they create. College is very important her; not so much the formal education, but the overall experience. She states:

“(College), it's very important. Not because of so much the education, but the experience. The experience of college and being on your own, being able ... Not being able to, but having to say, "I have to go to school, but I don't have my parent there to make me go to school. I have to set my classes, time management, study management." Every child needs that experience of meeting friends and like, the different people you meet, the different races you meet in college, every child needs that.” (Carrie, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

Because Carrie already has one child who is currently in college, her younger child has been able to look to the older sibling for advice and mentorship during the college choice process. For Carrie, the discipline and exposure that comes with attending college is very

important to her. She believes the experience of college teaches students to be well-rounded people and provides skills needed to succeed in today's society.

Participant 5: Tasha – Two strikes: Black and Male.

Tasha defines herself as a single mother of five children. She has three older boys and two younger girls. Two of her older sons are currently enrolled in college the youngest of the three sons is currently enrolled in high school. Her two daughters are attending elementary school. Tasha is a high school graduate and works as a beauty advisor for a major retail store. She will pick up extra work to support her children. College is important to her because she wants her children to have a better life than she does. She wants to prove that a single, low-income Black mother is capable of raising children who achieve great accomplishments in life. She is aware of the barriers her children face as minorities, especially her sons. She believes college is the best option for them, especially her sons. She states:

“They got two strikes against them. They're black, and they're male. So, the degree will kind of even it out. They will have a little bit better chance at life or getting through the hoops and loops of things, especially the way things are ran nowadays.” (Tasha, personal communication, January 3, 2018)

For Tasha, obtaining a college degree is an opportunity for her sons to push back against the negative statistics and stereotypes that plague Black males. It is her hope that higher education will level the playing field in a society that has so many barriers for her sons. She believes a college degree will give her sons a leg up as they navigate society to live the life they want to live. Her two older sons also serve as role models to the younger children, encouraging them all to attend college.

Participant 6: Randal – An opportunity to advance.

Randal is a divorced father of twin boys. Both of his sons attend different high schools because of their specific interests and needs. One attends a public high school while the other attends a private high school; both are sophomores. Randal is a steel worker and works closely with his children's mother to raise their sons. Both boys are honor roll students who are involved in sports and other student organizations. He talks regularly to his children about life beyond high school and their future career goals. College is often a part of those conversations:

“I believe college is important for my child and for any child because it affords them the opportunity to advance. It gives them not just as far as broadening and deepening their horizons and intelligence overall, but it affords them opportunity, especially being a Black young man. I share this with my sons all the time, that I really believe that they're gonna have to be that much more prepared than their other counterparts, so as far as just them becoming more intelligent and give them an opportunity to get a good career and advance in life. Afford them opportunities. Open doors for them.” (Randal, personal communication, January 19, 2018)

As a Black male himself, Randal recognizes the importance of creating opportunities for his children to be successful. He understands that because of their identity of being Black and male they will face obstacles that other people will not. As a result of this, he has dedicated his life to their success.

Emerging Themes:

In this section of Chapter Four I report the themes that emerged and helped to answer my research query. The research question along with sub-questions are:

- A. What positive role do African American parents/families members who identify as being of low-income status and not having the opportunity to finish college themselves play in their child's decision to attend college?
- a. What information or resources help these same parents prepare their child(ren) in this decision-making process?
 - b. What barriers or obstacles do the parents/families overcome (and how) to support their students' college choice?
 - c. What actions do these parents/families employ to encourage their child to formally make the decision to attend college?

Following Creswell (2013), I coded my results to describe my research and develop themes that represent the following: (1.) information that I expected to find before the study; (2) surprising information that I did not expect to find; and (3.) information that is conceptually interesting or unusual to myself, the participants, and other audiences. I adopted the coding method described in Bailey's 2006 publication titled "A Guide to Qualitative Field Research" that includes initial coding, focused coding, and memoring . During this process, I broke multiple pages of transcriptions into more manageable segments to be presented and later analyzed. In conjunction, memoring was used as a reflection tool to keep notes on new insights that emerged. The themes presented are significant to my study because they were repeated directly and/or indirectly by each participant. During the in-depth interviews with each parent, I was able to document the individual stories of each participant.

The following themes emerged:

Theme 1 - Breaking the cycle

Theme 2 - Black Family Navigation and Institutionalized Barriers to College

Theme 3 - School Support and Resources Available

Theme 4 – Parental Support: Conversations about Life

Theme 5 - Family Sacrifice.

This study utilized two theoretical frameworks to present the data from the interviews grouped into various themes: Freeman's (2005) model of African American students during predisposition and Harper's (2012) Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework. These models assisted in unearthing the themes because I employed an anti-deficit perspective in exploring the direct and indirect actions taken by African American parents with limited monetary resources. Freeman's (2005) model of African American students during predisposition explores how African American families are involved during their child's college choice process; and Harper's (2012) Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework moves beyond the deficit perspectives on achievement by highlighting persons, policies, programs, and resources that help Black men succeed in college; this includes the positive direct and indirect actions the parents employed to influence their child to attend college.

Themes 1: Breaking the cycle. The underlying message of the participants was that they wanted their children to do better than they did; their hope was their children would be more successful than they were. Three of the families directly spoke to the notion of wanting their children to do better in life than they did. The others either alluded to it or discussed it indirectly. The following excerpts illustrate this narrative on the theme.

“... Because I was working when he was born. I was working at a regular retail job. I was doing good. I was doing okay. But I said, you always want the next generation to be better than what you did. You always want them to go one step higher than what you

went. I graduated from high school. So my goal was to make sure they go to college by any means necessary. I wanted them to have the higher education, because I know how important it is in these days and time. People look at that and they can't take education from you. That's one thing they can't do. They can't take it from you. I was like, no way he going to work like a dog like I do. I want him to have a career.” (David and Dawn, personal communication, December 29, 2017)

David, with Dawn nodding in full agreement, went on to say:

“...I was like, "Oh, you could do so much better." You want the next generation to do so much better than what you doing. And so it was always, you go to school, go to college, get your degree. You'll be able to take care of yourself and then you keep going from there and you'll be happy. And then I even told him, even if you want to be a entrepreneur, you still ... That piece of paper. When the banks, the lenders come looking for you, they say, "Oh, he went to school." So you got to have it. You know what I'm saying? If you don't have nothing, it's like it's a gamble. But when they see that documentation, they know you done did something. They be like, "Okay, we can take a chance." That was pretty much it.” (David and Dawn, personal communication, December 29, 2017)

Bianca discusses how she wants her to child to have an opportunity to obtain a reputable career, she states:

“Just for a better education because it’s hard to make it out here with a regular nine-to-five, and the way kids are brought up and the they things they see now and the things they want to do, it’s kind of hard to have a family and be able to travel and have self-

confidence in yourself like you want your child to have. They're barely making it, or they don't have a job, or working at (fast food restaurant)" (Bianca, personal communication, December 29, 2017)

Carrie talks about her life experiences and indirectly explains why she wants her child to go further than she did educationally. Carrie had many challenges growing up and she wanted to position her child to live a much better life and not have the setbacks she had; she states:

"Life was hard for me as a teenager, coming up. I don't lie to them about my past. I let them know, yeah, I had a disease, yeah I got arrested, I fell in love. No, I didn't go to school. I quit school in the 9th grade. That was like the worst thing I could of done because that right there, put my life back like 15 years." (Carrie, personal communication January 2, 2018)

Similarly, on 'breaking the cycle', Kevin asserts:

"... I just want their greatest success to be able to explore the world, basically. I want them to explore the world and see different things from a different angle than I've seen it, because right now I'm explaining it the way I see the world from my angle and my angle is so different than theirs because my upbringing is what have me ... I have a totally different perception than they have right now, because right now, I think I feel he has it made as far as me having his back, his mom having his back, so if he could explore the world and soak some up from that and then figure out what he's gonna do with his life, I think that would be the best thing for him." (Kevin, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

Randal had a similar response as Kevin, David and Dawn,

“Primarily, me not going and even though I did rebound later in life, I could have been so much further along than I am now, if I would have followed through and got my degrees. I see younger people come in and are at the same level, advancing me because they have that formal education. I want that for my sons.” (Randal, personal communication, January 19, 2018)

Themes 2: Black Family Navigation and Institutionalized Barriers to College. With the exception of Bianca, all participants had very strong thoughts about the barriers that either they or their children had to face because of their specific identity. The following quotes describe their thoughts:

David explains how other students respond to his son as a biracial individual (Mexican and African American) who identifies as African American. As parents, they often have conversations about Blackness with their son, helping him understand how he has to navigate the world because of this identity. They felt as if their son was prepared to handle issues of race within an academic setting. David states:

“...You black. So they looked at him like, "Oh, you not pure. So you black." So he had already went through it. So he pretty much knew what he was up against.” Dawn, personal communication, December 29, 2018)

They go on to state,

“...it was just now, instead it being – I was the minority over here and it was [majority] Mexicans [students] , now it's I am minority over here and it's [majority] white (students). But he never let that affect his studies. He still was at the top [academically].” (David and Dawn, personal communication, December 29, 2018)

As an African American male, David has experienced many negative assumptions and barriers from school administrators and teachers because of his identity and hometown. He states,

“Yeah. Well, you know, coming from [a major Midwestern city] and a African American male, people already think you a crook or criminal, think you don't have no common sense, you never been educated, you never been raised. I was raised. I went to [high] school. We was good students too. All three of my brothers. You know everybody goes down they own path and they own journey...” (David and Dawn, personal communication, December 29, 2018)

He further stated,

“... I think my background has altered [my thoughts on higher education] it's because, my background was kinda rough. I seen a lot of people that, they either lost their lives to the streets or got locked up by not doing the right thing or looking to better themselves or falling victim to statistics out here ... or wherever you go, for black males, period. So that's why I always push the issue to my son like, to be better you know? Be better than what I was and try to have something out of life, then you won't have no worries in life. as far as career wise I just think it would be more of getting in the real world and being a black man in management and then ... you know it's a lot harder for us. We gotta do everything ten times better than the next. Everything is ... the level that we have to step it up is totally different than a white male or a white female, it's totally different and I just think ... him [his son] personally, I don't think he's ready for that type of experience. He never experienced it yet. He never got in the real world, I just started experiencing it myself when I started getting into upper management, me being young and trying to

move up in the company. It makes it that much harder for a black male to move up in a company. It don't matter if you got a degree or not. You can have all the credentials and they still gonna make it hard for you. You're still black at the end of the day. It don't matter at all. They gonna say all type of loopholes and come up with all this type of stuff. You steady keep knocking the obstacles down, they keep coming up with something for you. "Well, you need to do this, you need to do that." (Kevin, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

Like Kevin, David and Dawn, Carrie has had similar experiences; she states:

"I just always told her, that's always going to be your barrier. Us, as Black women, we do have to work 10 times harder. We do have to do 10 times more than the other race, just to be recognized, but that's why you work hard. That's why you don't be what they say you are. Be greater than that. ... And it's sad because it's been from adults, the teachers that look down on her, try to break her, because they saw she was like, this Black student, she knew she was smart. She acted like she was smart. She carried herself like she was smart. She don't tolerate racist comments. She called the teachers out when they were being unfair, from Black students to white students." (Carrie, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

Tasha has two sons that are currently in college. Below she discusses how limited access to information was a barrier and negatively influenced her son's college experience.

"Yeah. As far as getting to college, we didn't have any racist issues, but the financial leg was kind of hard, because we had to pay out of state tuition for the first year, so we had to pay, and that comes with the racist thing, 'cause the white kids didn't have to pay when

they went out of town, you know, out of state tuition. Because it was a loophole. I claimed him on my taxes, so that way he can get in-state tuition that year. He had to wait a whole 'nother year. But if they hadn't told me as a black woman, I wouldn't have claimed him. But the other parents knew, the white parents knew. And I paid it. But if they hadn't told me, "Don't claim your son [on tax return] ," I wouldn't have claimed him, and he would have got it. But like I said, they informed the white folks about that-They didn't tell us. So being a black parent, finding things out, trying to get your kids in college, I've learned the hard way I had to pay out of my pocket, and yeah it was a struggle.” (Tasha, personal communication, January 3, 2018)

Randal discusses assumptions he has experienced:

“...the assumption made by my counterparts, people in here [small, predominately white Midwestern town] , a lot of them when they see how involved I am in my children's life, it's a shock. I think it comes from the stigma black people, we're not really involved in our children's life. Do we even know the kids? Sometimes it's perceived a little weird. That's all I talk about it kids, kids, kids. My sons. I coach wrestling. I coach football for them until they wouldn't let me coach anymore, until they got to high school. It's different. I think it's just different. It all depends on who it comes from. Family, they expect that out of us, but everybody else, I think they don't expect too much out of me” (Randal, personal communication, January 19, 2018)

Randal continues to say,

“I try to sharpen them and make them aware of the assumptions and the stigma put on me as a black man; how important it is to carry yourself without losing your identity, who

you are as a black person. I just put the focus on them and really push black excellence and let them know ...and it's still that assumption. It's a fear, so I always know that's not the case. I try to educate them as far as their black history, their contribution and stuff like that”(Randal, personal communication, January 19, 2018)

Bianca was the only parent who did not feel she, nor her son, faced any external barriers or negative assumptions; she believed the barriers her son faced were internal. She explains

“I didn't notice anything like that. It's kind of hard to say. He doesn't really talk that much and sometimes we've got to kind of choke it out of him to get him to speak, but I don't think he's coming to any barriers. But just probably something in his self just to get his self-motivated, a self-barrier, as they say. Yeah.” (Bianca, personal communication, December 29, 2017)

Theme 3: School Support and other Resources Available. My participants had varying experiences with receiving support and resources directly from the school or other organizations that helped them help their child(ren) with the college choice process. When asked how the school supported them specifically, the parents talked more about the support their children received. Tasha (personal communication, January 3, 2018) directly said the school did not provide her with any support or information. Bianca, Kevin, Carrie, Randal, David, and Dawn discussed The State Scholarship Program¹, high school guidance counselors, and other pre-college programs.

¹ The State Scholarship Program is a state scholarship distributed at the high school level for up to four years of undergraduate tuition at any participating public college or university within the state. Students must earn a cumulative high school grade point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale,

David and Dawn worked with teachers and school administration to allow their son to be promoted from the 7th grade to the 9th grade. Their son was taking pre-college classes in math and science in the 6th grade. They felt it would be better for their son to simply be a high school student. His parents had to drive him between his middle school and high school daily. This was a strain on the family, so they worked with school officials to simply allow their child to attend high school full-time.

David explains this process:

“He skipped a grade – went from seventh to ninth grade - ... because the teacher was like he could handle it. So I had told her, ‘Well, you know what to do.’ So she was a big credit to him because she went to the high school and told them, “If he going to be taking the four major subject, he might as well be in (the) school.”(David and Dawn, personal communication, December 29, 2017)

In contrast, Kevin expresses his frustration with not receiving the information needed to register his son for The State Scholarship Program.

“The State Scholarship Program, but they was acting like they didn't know what it was for a second until I had went to my school, I just go to [a local community college] and they gave me a form to give to [my child’s high school] so they made sure that he's already enrolled and already ... we had this back when he was a freshman ... so they can start getting him enrolled with it now, but in the beginning when we were talking about it,

graduate with a high school diploma, and complete The State Scholarship Program curriculum. The State Scholarship Program curriculum has specific steps that keep students on track for college. Each grade level has requirements that guide students to develop the skills to be college ready.

they act like they aint know what I was talking about.” (Kevin, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

Kevin further states,

“I just think a lot of black parents don't try to push the issue. I just think it's ... as far as the information goes, a lot of them don't know about it, so if they tell you they don't have it, a lot of parents won't push the issue about the situation because they don't know about it themselves so ... I only knew about it because somebody actually told me about it at my school when I was going to school. She asked me ... my counselor asked me if I have any kids in high school and she's like, "You know they got this for your kid, if he keep the GPA, it can help him pay for school and stuff like that." She gave me the for so I gave it to his mom, she turned it in to the school.” (Kevin, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

Randal also express some frustration with one of the high schools his sons attend; however, he was able to have his children participate in The State Scholarship Program.

“We got them involved in The State Scholarship Program. We got them involved in the early college program through a state university, so every summer they go for a couple weeks. The city had a lot of programs for kids, youth, at risk, whatever you want to call them, but we always got them involved in something positive with education at the core.” (Randal, personal communication, January 19, 2018)

He further states,

“...I would say [High School One] could do more than [High School Two] because I've been more involved with the teachers and the faculty at [High School Two] and not

afforded that same opportunity at [High School One] . They're not really opened up to the parents. I like to take more of a proactive stance. I like to meet the teachers. I want to come in when things are going good, not only when you have a problem. Just a good relationship, so we can understand where the child is going. Overall, they tested well, so we'll see. We'll see.” (Randal, personal communication, January 19, 2018)

David discuss the support he and his son received through the high school counselor ,

“It'll be different colleges that come through. They'll send ... It might be like a pen or a brochure: and then say, we got x, y amount of dollars for one school. Send us information on one school. She'll [high school counselor] send his name [to various colleges and universities]” (David and Dawn, personal communication, December 29, 2017)

Carrie's child is a part of The State Scholarship Program, she explains:

“Not so much ... The high school depend on outside sources, like The State Scholarship Program and the Early College Program to convey college stuff. With [older child], I didn't really get no help for college. It was just me wanting my kid to go to college, so I went out there and done the footwork. With [younger child], The State Scholarship Program is built different from the way it was built with [younger child]. Now, they require different task every year, for your child to get online, and do little projects, that help towards college. That helps, but no, basically no.” (Carrie, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

Like Bianca and Carrie's children, Kevin's son is also a member of The State Scholarship Program. Kevin talks about the high school counselor and also explains the challenges he faced to have his son be a part of The State Scholarship Program.

“It might have been ... But [the high school counselor] helped me out too with ... as far as like making sure they put him in the right classes, too. Right now he's taking a lot of college course classes right now. The State Scholarship Program stuff got sent to his mom instead of the counselor or whatever, but they was acting like they didn't know what they was for a second until I had went to my school, I just go to [a local community college] and they gave me a form to give to the High School so they made sure that he's already enrolled and already ... I only knew about it because somebody actually told me about it at my school when I was going to school. She asked me ... my counselor asked me if I have any kids in high school and she's like, "You know they got this for your kid, if he keep the GPA, it can help him pay for school and stuff like that." She gave me the for so I gave it to his mom, she turned it in to the school.” (Kevin, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

All six of the participant’s children are athletes. Tasha was the only participant who discussed how the coach was a resource to her. She explains her interaction with a coach that was very helpful to her as she searched for a college for one of her older sons.

“When Coach was like, “Oh, we're going to send him to California,” I'm like, "That's far. That's expensive," he was like, "If you want him to make it somewhere in life, then he got to go....Coach was the hype man, and then ... I didn't know which way to turn because his grades wasn't good. You know you've got to have a certain GPA to get into colleges and so I'm glad, I don't know, I don't know. And I just prayed on it, and I did, I just prayed on it, and he came, Coach he talked to me, and then we linked up with a recruiter, because he wanted to play football, but he didn't have the grades to play [at a major university].” (Tasha, personal communication, January 3, 2018)

Theme 4: Conversations about Life. Throughout the interview, Bianca, Kevin, Carrie and Randal discussed conversations they have with their child about life and college. According to these four participants, these conversations are defining moments that motivated and encouraged their child to always push forward and strive for excellence.

In my interview with Bianca, she talks with her son about life:

“Well, actually, he started talking about college in elementary. He wanted to go to Alabama. He wants to, "Roll Tide," which I think is all boys dream to go there and play football, but he's been talking about college for a while. Well, as of now it's kind of been ... The topics of college has been very general. Trying to decide what he wants to do and where he wants to go. We explained to him about, "Hey, go far away, it's going to cost more. It's not going to be easy to call like, 'Hey, Ma, I'm hungry. Can you send me this?', or, 'I don't have any clean socks,'" or, you know? I was like, "The farther you go the more you're going to be independent and the more money it's going to cost." We kind of keep it general, without discouragement. Yeah, that's basically it. But yeah, just try to keep everything positive and up close, up front. It's real out here. You can't be, "Oh, everything's going to be peaches and cream," and, "You're not going to encounter this," and, "I'm going to do this." It doesn't work like that. You see all kind of things. You just got to be honest and upfront.” (Bianca, personal communication, December 29, 2017)

Kevin discussed in detail how he had these conversations with his son. Like Bianca, Kevin is straightforward with his son as well.

“I started talking to him about college, I think he was probably in sixth grade, we started talking about it ... that's when I started going back to school myself and taking it serious

and I was figuring out like, damn, I'm 26 years old, I should've finished college. I should've went to college when I was 18 to finish when I was 21 than wait to the last minute to do it, so I started talking to him at an early age to get into his head about it. At first he didn't understand it though, but now he does, he does now...In sixth grade I was just like ... I come up to him like, "Hey, son, what do you plan on doing with your life when you grow up?" He's just naturally like, "I don't know." I said, "Well you need to figure out something because you don't wanna sit around here and not have nothing. There is plenty people around here that don't have nothing. You want something out of life so you need to figure out then you can sit down and talk about it." (Kevin, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

Carrie explains the conversations she has with her child about college. She shared the same thoughts about success and college as the other participants. "What do you want to be when you grow up? Stuff like that. It got more intense when she was like in 3rd and 4th grade, because my other daughter was prepping for college. She got the sitting around at the dinner table, let's talk about, or, B, you got to make five list of colleges and stuff like that. College talk for her, came early, because of her sister and her being around. At that 2nd, 3rd grade level, she was preparing for college." (Carrie, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

Carrie further states,

"...She still wants to go to school to be a lawyer. Now, it's like okay, you have to save money. She's very smart, so she feels like oh, I don't need to study, but you still need to learn study habits. I'm like, when you go to college, you're going to need money saved up. You're going to have to learn time management and study habits. If you learn that

now, it'll be that much easier in college. You don't want to get to college, and spend your whole first year, trying to figure out time management and learning how to study, because if you never studied, you don't know how to study. You got to figure out what's your best study habit. Everybody don't study the same. The year she went down there to [a college campus], where her sister goes to college at, for spring break twice.” (Carrie, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

Kevin, Carrie and Tasha all ask their child the same question, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” This is an important question that defines the college choice process. Tasha discusses how she goes about asking this question to her child.

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" to, "Have you decided what college you want to go to? There's colleges all over the world, all over the world. You don't have to be stuck here in [hometown] or the United States." Just started getting a horizon going, like, "What you want to be? Where you want to go?"

And then, I will ask those questions every other day. Seventh grade went by. Eighth grade went by. Now, we're at high school. So the question, "What college you want to go to?" was a every-second question then, because it's like, "You got four years left. Where you going? What you doing?" (Tasha, personal communication, January 3, 2018)

Like the other participants above Randal also engaged his children with the question of what they wanted to do later in life. He uses positive reinforcement as a way to encourage college choice. Randal responds below.

“You know what, at a very early age. I'm gonna say maybe when I thought they could even begin to have a concept of higher learning. Just the importance of education period and that I want them going to college. I don't know if they fully understood, but we were talking college all the way.

When I'm with my children, I'm always just projecting positive things and how I see them and I talk to them as if, "When you do this," so when I'm saying when you go to college, these are some of the things. You can live here, these are some of the things you're going to do as far as college, taking care of their body, good credit, staying out of trouble, not falling into the criminal system. College and education are always important and I always ask, what do you want to do in life? What type of life do you want? We sit down and then they come up with their lifestyle. They say, "I want to live here. I want to drive this." We calculate. This is the amount of money you might need to have this lifestyle and dream you want to accomplish and then research jobs. You can't have this job without a degree. You can't do this without this. All the time. You haven't met my son. That's all he talks about.

Aw, man. You know what? I've got one son, he's right at a 4.0. He goes to the public high school to early college program. I got another son, they're twins and he goes to a private high school. He's got a 3.8, so they're doing very well so far. No problem out of them.”
(Randal, personal communication, January 19, 2018)

Theme 5: Family Sacrifice. The parents sacrificed different aspects of their lives for the success of their children. They made a special effort to ensure their children were performing at their best academically—socially and emotionally. Family sacrifice emerged throughout the

various interviews. David, Carrie, and Tasha discuss specifically the sacrifices they made for their children.

An example of this, David remarks,

“Yeah, I'm telling them, I was like, "Whenever y'all get successful, don't you forgot y'all mom because ... " Well, I had told her, I was like, "Look, we want them to be better. So you stay at home. I'll go to work." Two parents in the home is a fact. Both of them can't be working. Somebody got to be there to watch them. She picked them up, dropped them off every day. Get up, [she] sat the table with them for hours [doing homework] ” (David and Dawn, personal communication, December 29, 2017)

Bianca discusses the sacrifices she made while working the night shift.

“With school, just random checks, pop up. I just go grab his backpack, his laptop, look at what he's doing. Let him know, "Hey, you've got to come in and show me some type of work before you go to practice or training." He knows that if I look at Parent Access and something doesn't look right I'll call, e-mail the teacher. I have done that before. I really don't do too good at going to the parent-teacher conference because I work nights. I have to leave here at 5:00 and I don't get back until 7:00 the next day in the morning. He has always been a decent student. I've never had any problems with him with school. I think it's just because he knows there will be consequences, so you don't good in school you're not going to sit in the house and play the video game. You're not going anywhere. You're not going to send me this message, "Oh, can I get these new shoes that's coming out?" Nothing. "My birthday coming." Congratulations. He knows that we don't ... what's expected.” (Bianca, personal communication, December 29, 2017)

Like David and Dawn, Carrie discusses how she, too, made sacrifices for her children. Here, she talks about what she does for both of her children socially, emotionally and academically. She states,

“Her having a big sister, helped us out. It probably was that much harder for [older child] , because she didn't have that. All she knew is, I got to go to school, If I want to be something. She had my support. She still has my support. I just gave my car up for three months, because she was without a car, and she was doing her intern. She had to be there at 5 o'clock in the morning. It's like oh, no, we didn't get this car, for anything to happen. You take my car for three months, make sure you get to that intern. If you instill in your kids, what's right, what they need to know, back them up and let them know what you don't accept, and be strict on what you like [your children will learn with discipline] . C's weren't acceptable in my house. My kids knew that, 1st grade. C's are not acceptable. You can't say, you can't do anything. That was a word you couldn't say. I didn't play about cursing. I don't play about curfew. I stand on that. A prime rule, which I think helped my kids out more than anything, you can't just go to school. You have to be involved in two sports. If not two sports, a sport and activity. If no sports, three activities. I mean, that kept them active. I made that a rule, I stood on it and they follow it.” (Carrie, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

Summary

This chapter presented the voices and experiences of six different families who identify as African American, low-income, and have not completed a four-year college degree. The parents here were extremely engaged in positively influencing their child(ren) to attend college. I engaged them in conversations about the life and future endeavors of their children, the direct

and indirect actions they employ to encourage college choice, and the value they place on higher education. The following chapter will discuss the major themes from interviews

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

Chapter Five includes the following sections: (1) discussion of findings, (2) discussion of research questions, (3) limitations and delimitations, (4) implications for practice, (5) recommendations for further research and lastly, (6) concluding thoughts. Freeman's (2005) model of African American students during predisposition and lastly, Harper's (2012) Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework are the two theoretical frameworks that guided this study. The two theoretical frameworks are embedded throughout the discussion and conclusion. I also discuss the research questions and the themes that emerged in the study, utilizing a critical lens to explore how race, class, and power influence this process.

Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this study is to employ an anti-deficit perspective in exploring how the parents of first generation, low-income African American students positively influence their child's choice to attend college. This study aims to examine the positive direct and indirect actions taken by African American parents with limited monetary resources to encourage their child to decide to attend college when they have not finished a four-year degree themselves. In this section, I discuss the findings, utilizing related literature. The themes that emerged from this study are: (1.) breaking the cycle, (2.) family sacrifice (3.) black family navigation and institutionalized barriers to college, (4.) school support and resources available, and (5.) parental support: conversations about life.

Theme 1: Breaking the Cycle

All the parents interviewed wanted their children to be successful and had high expectations for their children's success. The students in this study were predisposed to the notion of college attendance very early in life, one at birth. According to Littlejohn-Black &

Darling (1993), African American parents aspire to provide better living conditions for their children than what they had. Parents “will exhaust their resources” to provide entry for their children into American society (Littlejohn-Black & Darling, 1993, p. 463). The parents in this study were no different. They wanted their children to attend and finish college because a college degree represented upward mobility, success, financial stability, and overall better life. They wanted their children to have access to opportunities they did not due to their level of income, educational attainment, and job choice. They all regarded education as a ticket to a better life.

Freeman (2005) states that the three factors that influence children to choose to attend college are: (1) the automatic expectation from their parents that they would attend (2) the avoidance of what I do not want to be and (3) influences to move beyond the family’s current education level. These factors emerged in my study, as well.

All six parent participants indicated that they always had an expectation that their children would attend college despite not finishing themselves. This expectation was due to parents simply wanting their children to obtain more financial wealth and the desire for their children to be positioned for more exposure and career opportunities. According to Freeman (2005), the automatic expectation of college attendance is aligned with students of parents who have completed college. However, Harper (2012) states that parents who have little or no experience with higher education still cultivate within their children an unwavering belief that college is the only acceptable step after high school. My study represents a group of parents who shared this same unwavering belief. David and Dawn recall discussing college expectations with their children as babies while the other five participants recall discussing college expectations when their children were in elementary school.

Conferring to Freeman's (2005) model of African American students during predisposition, Freeman discusses how one student in her research stated that the choice to attend college was so natural that it was "like breathing". From the moment the children were born, their parents knew they wanted their children to attend college; it was an engrained expectation. The parents in my study had such a strong desire to position their children to be better than they were that they naturally embraced the idea that college choice equates to success for their children.

The other categories of students are "Seekers and Dreamers." Seekers are defined as student who come to believe that they can attend college and start to begin the college research process. Dreamers are students who do not believe higher education was not an option for them but dream about the possibility. These categories do not apply to this study because the participants have instilled college choice into their children's trajectory. All the participants in this study are considered "knowers" because they intentionally engrained the expectation of college choice into the minds of their children. Parents consistently convey post-secondary education as a non-negotiable expectation to their children and reinforced this idea throughout their children's childhood along with other family members (Harper, 2012).

Freeman (2005) explains how students can be self-motivated to attend college even when there are no family members to assist in this process. Students in Freeman's work were motivated to push toward success by low expectations placed on them by others, negative assumptions about their trajectory, and by simply not wanting to live a life similar to those who were deemed unsuccessful (Freeman, 2005). In this study, David and Dawn, Kevin, Bianca, Randal, and Carrie discussed how negative assumptions based on their racial identity shaped their children's thoughts on success. The characteristics of "what they do not want to be" shaped

“what they wanted to be” in life. They wanted their children to have skills to continue to fight for success despite being faced with negative assumptions, lack of support, or institutionalized barriers. All the parents wanted their children to move beyond the family’s highest educational level.

Theme 2: Family Sacrifice

The parents in my study felt obligated to make life-altering sacrifices to offer their children various opportunities. Because they were raising Black children, they felt they had to do more to ensure their children were prepared and well positioned to have certain opportunities in life to have the ability to resist and overcome the institutionalized barriers they would face. One family, David and Dawn, made the decision to have one parent stay home during the day to ensure the children were properly cared for and were academically challenged to help prepare them for the rigor of pre-college preparation classes. Randal has twin sons who both have very different needs academically and socially; he made the financial sacrifice to pay for one of his children to attend a local private school because this particular school was a better fit for one of his children. Kevin enrolled in college to be a role model for his children, specifically wanting to lead by example. Kevin’s purpose for going back to college as an adult student was to show his children that, with dedication and sacrifice, they can achieve. Others worked multiple jobs or delayed their own personal goals to have the time and energy to help cultivate their children’s goals. Because African American parents have a strong desire for their children to go beyond their personal educational attainment, they make selfless sacrifices for their children (Freeman, 2007). This theme is important because the families believed their sacrifices would lay the foundation for their children’s success.

Theme 3: Black Family Navigation and Institutionalized Barriers to College

According to Freeman (2005), society has distorted perceptions of Black parents' educational involvement. The negative, socially-constructed perception of parental involvement created by society is due to the lack of understanding how Black parents support their children (Freeman, 2005). The role families play in the college process is invaluable (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989; Freeman, 2007). Studies do reveal that Black parents teach their children about their racial heritage, history, and ethnic pride; the parents impart a strong sense of pride in their culture and history to push back against negative images and perceptions about their cultural group (Iruka, & Porter, 2017; Freeman, 2005). Most importantly, they have high expectations for their children's success. They are taught to navigate both home life and American cultural life (McClain, 1986). However, this process can be met with struggles and unforeseen obstacles that parents must address. With the exception of Bianca, all of the participants in my study had very strong thoughts about the barrier that either they or their children had to face because of their specific race and class identity.

David and Dawn, Kevin, Carrie, Tasha, and Randal discussed the implications of identifying as Black and having Black children. For them, they believe this meant their children would have to "work harder" than other groups because they operated in a deficit thinking society, were exposed to institutionalized racism, and lacked access to important information needed to create a trajectory to a successful prosperous life. The idea that Black children must "worker harder" to gain success is a concept that was discussed among the aforementioned families. This is important to note because the parents felt as if their children were not born with the same privileges or ease as their white counterparts. The parents understood the implications

of managing life as a low-income Black person. They have faced racism, gender discrimination, and classism; to prepare their children for the same experiences, they tell them that they must “work harder” in every aspect of life to try to level the uneven playing field.

African American parents build positive self-esteem, develop ethnic awareness by teaching their children how to navigate life as a Black person, and instill a “have rather than a have-not mentality” as a part of their parenting style (Littlejohn-Black & Darling, 1993, p. 463). The parents David and Dawn, Kevin, Carrie, Tasha, and Randal spoke candidly about preparing their children for hardship. Their overall goal was to either do their best to be at the forefront of their children’s struggles to address the issues themselves or equip their children with the tools they needed to overcome adversity. This supports arguments made in the research literature that Black parents teach their children about their racial heritage, history, and ethnic pride; the parents impart a strong sense of pride in their culture and history to push back against negative images and perceptions about their cultural group (Iruka & Porter, 2017; Freeman, 2007).

Bianca was the only parent who said she did not notice any negative assumptions or barriers her son had to face because of his identity; however, she also mentioned that she really has to go deep into conversation for her son to verbally expose any of his experiences with her. It could be that Bianca’s son has experienced some barriers but has not reported to his family or has internalized these experiences. Black students face psychological barriers such as loss of hope and the intimidation factor when they are not provided the adequate information needed during the college choice process (Freeman, 2007). The parents in this study prepared their children to endure such barriers and/or ingrained in their children the skills needed to overcome such issues. They did this by advocating for their child and by having discussions about strategies on how to combat issues of racism and discrimination.

Theme 4: School Support and Resources Available

The social capital African American parents hold generally plays an important role on how they view themselves in the college-going process, how/if their child will be accepted and treated, and if they will be given the necessary information needed to endure the college-choice process (Freeman, 1997). Students and parents are given different opportunities based on the type of capital they obtain. In my study, some parents had more knowledge about college than others. Both Tasha and Carrie had older children who were currently enrolled in college; they had some experience and knowledge that Kevin, Randal, Dave, and Bianca did not because they had already gone through the college-choice process with other children. Neither African American students nor their parents bring the same kind of social capital to schools as their white counterparts, so it is important that pre-college programs and school curriculum equip all students with the skills needed to successfully navigate the college-choice process (Freeman, 1997; Perna & Titus, 2005).

Harper (2012) questions how family members/parents nurture and sustain students interested in school. The participants had varying experiences receiving support and resources directly from the school or other organizations to help them and their child(ren) with the college choice process. Tasha directly said that the school did not provide her with any information that would aid in helping her help her child attend college; however, Tasha was the only participant who discussed how the school football coach was a resource to her. She explains her interaction with a coach that was very helpful to her as she searched for a college for one of her older sons. All six of the parents had children who were athletes.

Bianca, Kevin, Carrie, Randal, David and Dawn discussed The State Scholarship Program, high school guidance counselors, and other pre-college programs. Bianca's, Kevin's,

Randal's, David's and Dawn's children are all enrolled in The State Scholarship program. This resource provides their children access to college visits, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) help, and information on how to select college based on their specific needs. However, Kevin explains how he had a difficult time getting access to the information. He heard about the opportunity from his enrollment in a local community college and not from the school; in fact, when he initially inquired about this resource to school administration, it seemed as if they were unaware and unprepared to help him. This made him question if the response he received from the administration was directly tied to his identity as an African American male.

Second to the State Scholarship Program, the guidance counselors were instrumental in providing resources for Kevin and David/Dawn's children. School counselors provided experience and information for the students and not their parents. Parents who identify as being low-income and who had not attended college often are viewed by the dominant population as having limited access to knowledge and networks; this can be rephrased as having limited access to the social/cultural capital needed to create a culture of attending college (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper 1999; Freeman, 2005; McDonough, 1997; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). Parents who are first generation low-income are perceived as having limited access to information about the college attendance because of their own inexperience with the college process, experience, and culture. Freeman (2007) believes counselors should provide opportunities for students and their parents to engage in institutional information, college visits, and interactions with college faculty, alumni, and current college students.

Theme 5: Parental Support: Conversations about Life

Parents of color who have not finished college often act as "cheerleaders" for their child, offering continuous encouragement and moral support throughout the college-choice process,

sometimes without having the capital to provide practical information (Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Rowan-Kenyon et al, 2008; McDonough, 1997). Despite not finishing college, parents still add value to the process, even with limited experience. Each of the parents in my study had the unwavering faith in their children's ability to achieve and were intentionally involved in how they discussed and described success for, and with, their children. I found that parents: (1) discussed their personal struggles and mishaps in detail with the hopes that their children would alter the educational trajectory of the family, (2) discussed their career aspirations and expectations of success for their children, (3) and discussed how race, power and privilege influence how they navigate college and beyond.

Parents in this research study discussed their personal struggles to encourage their children to exceed beyond their generation's educational level. They engaged in these conversations as a method to encourage their children to succeed. Kevin, Dave, Carrie, Tasha, and Randal were raised in low-income homes with families who struggled to make ends meet. The parents are very deliberate in sharing stories of their childhood and upbringing as a means to encourage their children to strive for greatness. African American parents encourage their children to go beyond the family education level (Freeman, 2005).

Discussing their child's career aspirations and expectations for success was common among all the participants. They often engaged in conversations about their expectation of college attendance and career goals with their children. Because these parents are low-income, they are limited financially and their dream is that their children are afforded the opportunity to have financial freedom. Kevin (personal communication, January 2, 2018) specifically stated his desire for his children to move beyond the fast food industry into a career that provides the opportunity for financial stability. Parents' expectations and encouragement centering on college

attendance have the greatest effect on a child's college-choice process (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999).

Race, power, privilege, and deficit thinking are concepts that were interwoven into the conversations parents had with their children about success. These parents explained implications of their children identifying as Black and engaged in conversations about race and how the world and American society may have negative assumptions, limitations, or preconceived thoughts about who they are and their scholarly abilities because of the color of their skin. The parents explained that the purpose of these conversations is to help their children understand concepts of power and privilege to resist institutionalized barriers and find the motivation needed to push toward success despite issues that may be present.

Although low-income parents are reported as being less engaged in their student's education compared to middle and high-income parents, I found the parents in this study to be extremely involved in their children's overall education and college-choice process. Reports of limited parental involvement among low-income parents of color call into question whether parents are truly uninvolved or if what is defined as a lack of involvement is merely a reflection of the dominant culture's deficit thinking perception and misguided view of involvement (Freeman, 2005; Grodsky & Jones, 2004). They ultimately used these conversations as a way to motivate their children throughout life, especially when discussing college and their future career trajectory.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to Research Questions

The research questions, along with the sub-questions, at the center of this study are:

1. What positive role do African American parents/family members who identify as being of low-income status and not having the opportunity to finish college themselves play in their child's decision to attend college?
 - i. What information or resources help these same parents prepare their child(ren) in this decision-making process?
 - ii. What are the barriers or obstacles parents/families overcome (and how) do they support their child's college choice?
 - iii. What actions do these parents/families employ to encourage their child to formally make the decision to attend college?

The following points represent a summarized response to the research question(s) from the data collected. The positive role African American parents play and the barriers they overcome during their child's college choice process are listed below.

African American parents in my study:

1. Encourage their children to do their absolute best. They motivate them to set goals and create a plan to achieve their goals while providing support along the way.
2. Research college options, including cost, major programs, distance from home, and on campus resources available.
3. Connect with school administration, teachers, and counselors to check on their child's success and performance.
4. Connect with other parents, family members, and community members for resources about college.
5. Continue to seek out resources even when they are faced with discrimination, racism, and/or classism.

6. Make sacrifices to enhance their children's success.
7. Are extremely involved in their children's homework, after-school activities, and special interests.

Limitations and Delimitations of Study

The results of this study should be considered in relation to one main critique and various limitations and delimitations of the research design. Clandinin's & Connelly's (2000) critique of narrative inquiry questions the truth of participant stories. Qualitative research is rooted in the understanding that meaning is socially constructed by each person's view and interactions with the world (Merriam, 2002). It is the researcher's responsibility to understand the meaning the participants have constructed about their experiences, using myself as an instrument for data collection and interpretation (Merriam, 2002). Purposeful sampling used in this research limited the potential, and the findings in this study could be generalized to the larger population. For this research, parents of high school students who identified as African American, low-income, and have influenced their children to obtain a college education immediately after high school were selected to participate.

The participants in this study represented six different experiences within one particular high school. The school administration communicated with students and parents who met this research criteria. This may have encouraged their participation and led to bias in terms of who participated in the study because an administration followed up with them personally. African American parents are not a monolithic group, although they all met my research criteria of identifying as Black/African American, low-income and not completing a four-year degree, the participants had varying experiences.

Other limitations are sample size, research location and study methodology; I only researched the experiences of six participants within one location. Increasing the number of participants, research locations and adopting mixed methods could have provided the opportunity to assess greater generalizability. Further noted, a delimitation that could have added to the research would be to include the child's perspective in addition to the parents' to deeply explore the direct and indirect actions the parents employed to positively influence their child's college choice. There is a gap in the research on student and parent voices represented equally within the college choice process.

Implications for Practice

Results of this study give support for the following practical implications and initiatives: (1) school administrations should strengthen their partnerships with parents and create an institutionalized plan for involvement during the student's college choice process, (2) view African American parent's engagement from an anti-deficit perspective, and lastly, (3) build parents social capital as it pertains to information about college. To create a culture of success for minority students, teachers and school administrators partner with the students' parents/families to address their academic and social needs (Ladson-Billings, 1995c). These implications for practice are important in helping African American parents leverage the support they need to aid in their children's college choice process.

Strengthening Parent Partnership

Parental involvement, motivation, and support are the extremely important factors in a child's college-choice decision and process (Freeman, 2005; Dennis et. al, 2005; Fann, 2009; Bergerson, 2009; Yan, 1999; Holland & Richards, 1965, Hossler et, al, 1999). Children communicate their college aspirations to their parents and parents communicate the expectations

they have for their child's success (Hossler et al, 1999). As a result of this, institutions should work to build strong relationships with parents/families; it is very important that schools and parents share the same expectations for the child's success. Parents are the most important contributor to their child's overall educational success (Fann et al, 2009). Each of the parents in my study was critical of the following:

- Information they directly received about college and how to aid their children in the college-choice process.
- Communication with them and the school about college preparation opportunities.
- Assumptions made about them personally, specifically because of their identity, gender, income level, and educational level.
 - The strategies needed to help their students fully acknowledge and resist these same assumptions.
- How they motivated and encouraged their child's positive performance academically and socially in school.

School administrations should create a curriculum of engagement highlighting important information and outlining the actions needed to prepare for college. This curriculum should also include a process for parental involvement and/or affinity groups. The curriculum of engagement should include information that is not limited to financial aid/scholarship options, difference in intuitional choice, college admission standards, and basic college preparation information (Freeman, 2005; Smith 2009). It should be paired with information about how race influences the college-choice process for African American students and parents. This can help school officials understand the true essence of how African American parents define involvement and engagement. African American families impart values of higher education

differently from other groups (Freeman, 1999). In order to service this population, school officials should be knowledgeable of ways in which African American parents prepare their children for college.

Parental involvement has been shown to have a positive influence on a child's aspirations toward college, higher academic achievement, academic motivation and feelings toward school and college (Fann, 2009, Hossler et al, 1999). African American families highly value college attendance. They perceive higher education as a path to a successful life and will aid school administration and teachers in making college a reality for their children (Freeman, 2005).

Anti-Deficit Perspective

All the participants, with the exception of Bianca, felt as if they were viewed from a deficit perspective because of their racial identity, income status, and/or educational level. They were aware of the negative assumptions and stereotypes placed on them simply because of who they were. The parents discussed having to teach their children survival skills on how to deal with the negative assumptions in and outside of the classroom.

Teachers, counselors and administrators must adopt an anti-deficit perspective by understanding students', and their family's, ability to simply be successful and celebrate the unique ways parents motivate and advocate for their children. African American parents greatly influence their child's college choice and add value to their college-choice process (Freeman, 2005; Harper, 2012). Teachers and administrators should examine they value the parents already add to children's success and work them on ways they can enhance the support they provide in helping the parents help their children.

Building Social Capital

According to Freeman (1997), the social capital parents hold greatly influences how they navigate the college-choice process, when to advocate for their child, and if they have the necessary information to make informed decisions about college with their child. Parents and their children navigate college based on the capital they possess. Parental involvement in general is a form of capital that includes the knowledge learned about college or lack thereof regarding this information. School administrations should make an intentional effort to provide all parents with a clear road map outlining the college-choice process in a way that can be understood, even if the parent has little or no experience navigating the college process. Learning about various aspects the college's environment and overall standards, gaining access to human and financial capital, learning college specific terminology, and understanding university operations are all part of social capital (Inkelas & McCarron, 2006; Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; McDonough 1997).

In my study, the participants were extremely involved in the college-choice process along with their children. Half of them, however, lacked access to significant information that would make the navigation experience easier. Kevin, Randal, and Tasha discussed very specific experiences where they had to make an extra effort to seek out information that was not given to them but was known by others. These three parents had to meet with school administration to get the information they needed to help their children. For example, Kevin (personal communication, January 2, 2018) explained having difficulty registering his son for The State Scholarship Program. He was nonchalantly dismissed by administration when he called the school to express a strong interest in receiving information about the program. He had to travel to the school to obtain the information. Freeman (2005) states African American parents,

specifically, must be given access to information about what is expected of them and their child during the college-choice process. Schools have a responsibility to increase parent capital so they have the knowledge to adequately help their children, which in turn makes the college-choice process run more smoothly for all involved.

Recommendations for Future Research

Because little research has been conducted that focuses on the positive actions low-income African American parents employ to influence their child's college choice when they have not finished college themselves, this study contributes to this research literature. As stated in Chapter One, a large disproportionate amount of the literature regarding college choice is reflective of the white dominant narrative, excluding the voices of underrepresented populations, especially African American parents (Freeman, 2005; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Litten, 1982). The literature also disproportionally explores the experiences of college choice from the student's perspective, rarely including the parent's perceptions of the ways in which they influence their child's choice to attend college (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Freeman, 2005; Hossler et al., 1999; Freeman, 1997; Cabrera, 2000).

My research provided a nuanced understanding of the college choice process from the African American parent perspective. Because I employed an anti-deficit lens, I examined the successful actions parents did to influence their child to attend college. The parents in this study highlight a bigger discussion that needs further examination. The following statements are implications for further research.

There is a need for more research focused on the college choice process from a parent's perspective.

A student's success in school can be influenced by the parent's disposition about the benefits of education (Freeman, 2005). Parents play a critical role in this process. All of the participants in this study were preparing their children for college. They all had the expectation that their children would attend college. Students receive advice from their parents on how to succeed in life beyond high school and the type of advice a student receives is based on the family's and/or parents' or guardians' experience, attitude, and exposure to higher education (Clark, 1983). Unfortunately, most of the literature regarding college choice is researched from the student's perspective, missing the voices of their parents and actions they employ to cultivate the college choice process. This is a critical factor in the college choice process that gets overlooked.

African American parents who identify as low-income, have not completed college, and are extremely involved are viewed by teachers and school administration from a deficit perspective.

Deficit thinking is a form of oppression; it is defined as the cruel and unjust use of authority and power to keep a group of people functioning at lower capacity within society (Valencia, 1997). Low-income, uneducated, Black parents are socially constructed to be perceived as being noninvolved and lacking full interest in their children's education. Deficit thinking in education is "filled with examples of how economically disadvantaged people of color are kept in their place by macro and microlevel educational policies/practices fueled by class and racial prejudice (Valencia, 1997 p. 4). It attributes failure for these students on the students' unpreparedness, parents perceived lack of interest and knowledge, and the families' overall lifestyle (Walker, 2011). The parents in my study worked extremely hard to gain access to information about college but still fell short in part because of the deficit mindset of the school administration. For example, in Chapter 4, Randal (personal communication, January 19, 2018)

explained the stigma that Blacks are not involved in their children's lives; he, like other parents, operates in a world that already doubts Blacks parents' ability, presence, and availability to be fully engaged with their children when, in fact, African American parents lay the foundation for their child's success long before the college-choice process starts (Freeman, 2007; Herndon & Hirt, 2004). School administrators and teachers operate from a deficit thinking perspective when examining the general success of students of color (Walker, 2011).

More research is needed to understand (1) why school officials have negative stigmas attached to how they view African American parental involvement despite the value African American parents add to their children college choice process and (2) how we can change the behaviors of school personnel to resist deficit thinking and solicit African American parents as partners in their child's educational journey. More research is needed to explain, recommend, and elucidate how High school administrators and teachers can not only change their deficit thinking perspective but also view parents as partners in the college choice process of their children.

Lastly, a model of engaging African American parents during the college-choice process needs further exploration; this will provide a framework for how to engage this population.

As stated earlier in Chapter 2, college choice is defined as "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 institution of advanced vocation training" (Hossler, Braxton & Coppersmith, 1989, p. 234). The college-choice process includes various elements that influence the choice to attend and different stages that led to that particular choice. Many of the college-choice models that historically represent the college choice process are rooted in student perspective and dominant culture, excluding

other cultures and minorities' perspectives (Chapman, 1981; Hanson & Litten, 1981; Jackson, 1982; Litten, 1982; Hossler & Litten 1982; Freeman, 2005; Smith, 2009).

Model Limited research examines the low-income, first generation African American's parent's perspective of the positive actions they employ to influence their children to attend college. This needs to be further explored because parents have the most influential sway on their child's success and career trajectory (Freeman, 2005; Freeman, 1997; Smith, 2009; Perna and Titus, 2005). I believe further research will provide a framework for how teachers, college personnel, high school counselors and administration engage African American families.

Conclusion

The purpose of my study was to positively influence how college and high school personnel work with African American parents. I am hoping this study will change the way educators and educational policy makers perceive the value low-income African American parents add through the positive direct and indirect actions they employ as they influence their child's college-choice process. In summary, school personnel and policy makers should do the following:

1. Strengthen parent partnership and create comprehensive ways for African American families to be involved in the college-going activities initiated by the school.
2. Change their perception of African American families who are low-income and have not completed a four-year degree by viewing them, and the contributions made to toward their child's success, from an anti-deficit perspective.
3. Create opportunities for African American families to increase their social capital. It is critical they are exposed to information and various networks that will position

them to have greater access to additional knowledge and relationships to enhance their child's college-choice process.

My hope is that the findings from this study will encourage other scholars to further explore the positive strategies low-income African American families employ to encourage college choices. Further research is needed that focuses solely on college choice from a parent's perspective, the implications of how parents are viewed from a deficit perspective, how we create a paradigm shift to view this population from an anti-deficit perspective. Lastly, a model of engagement must be researched to better serve African American parents. My research has implications for families, educators, and policy-makers who are interested in better serving African American families and their children as they transition into post-secondary education.

Appendix A: Adult Consent to Participate in Research

The Influence of Family on their Child's Choice to Attend College

Principal Investigator: Meagan Mitchell, graduate student

Institution: DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois, USA

Department (School, College): Curriculum Studies, College of Education

Faculty Advisor: Horace Hall, PhD Associate Professor, Human Development Counseling and Special Education – College of Education

What is the purpose of this research?

We are asking you to be in a research study because we are trying to learn more about the role parents of African American students who identify as first generation, low-income, have on their child's college choice process within the context of a predominately white schooling environment. This study is being conducted by Meagan Mitchell, a graduate student at DePaul University, as a requirement to obtain her doctoral degree. This research is being supervised by her faculty advisor, Horace Hall.

We hope to interview six different parents.

Why are you being asked to be in the research?

You are invited to participate in this study because of the following reasons: (1) you are an African American parent who have not graduated from college with a bachelor's degree, (2) have a child who is eligible for free or reduced lunch who has decided to attend college.

What is involved in being in the research study?

If you agree to be in this study, being in the research involves a demographic questionnaire, interview, and follow-up interview to validate the information collected in the original interview. The interview questions will be about all of the positive direct and indirect actions you employed to support your student's college choice.

- **Demographic Questionnaire:** The demographic questionnaire will ask you to identify other family members living in your home who helped influence your child's college choice, the educational level of the parents/caregivers, parent's profession and/or job, and annual household income. I will provide you with a paper copy of the questionnaire along with a writing utensil for your response. The questionnaire will take about 15 mins to complete.
- **Interview:** The interview will last about 60 mins and will include the following topics: assumptions about your level of involvement in the college choice process, helpful resources and information you received, how you supported your child throughout the process, why college is important and when did you introduce college as an option to your child.
- **Follow up Interview:** The interview will last about 60 mins after I summarize the original interview in written form. I will review your response for accuracy. You will have the option to reconfirm your original response. We will reconnect either by phone or in person.

Please note the following:

1. All interviews will take place either in the family's home or in a private meeting room at Michigan City High School.
2. The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed into written notes later in order to get an accurate record of what you said. Audio recording will be deleted from all electronic devices one year after the completion of the study.
3. The questionnaire will be completed during the first meeting.

How much time will this take?

This study will take about 2 hours and 15 mins (60 mins for the interview, 15 mins to complete the demographic questionnaire) of your time. The follow-up interview will take about one hour to complete. The entire study should take one year to be written and published in my dissertation.

Are there any risks involved in participating in this study?

Being in this study does not involve any risks other than what you would encounter in daily life. You may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about answering certain questions. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to. There is the possibility that others may find out what you have said, but we have put protections in place to prevent this from happening. Your data will be stored in a secure manner.

Are there any benefits to participating in this study?

You will not personally benefit from being in this study.

We hope that what we learn will help educators and policy makers gain a better understand of how to support African American parents when they are helping their child attend college.

Can you decide not to participate?

Your participation is voluntary, which means you can choose not to participate. There will be no negative consequences, penalties, or loss of benefits if you decide not to participate or change your mind later and withdraw from the research after you begin participating.

Who will see my study information and how will the confidentiality of the information collected for the research be protected?

The research records will be kept and stored securely. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study or publish a paper to share the research with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. We will not include your name or any information that will directly identify you. We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. However, some people might review or copy our records that may identify you in order to make sure we are following the required rules, laws, and regulations. For example, the DePaul University Institutional Review Board may review you information. If they look at our records, they will keep your information confidential.

The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed into written notes later in order to get an accurate record of what you said. Audio recording will be deleted from all electronic devices 1 year after the completion of the study. A transcription company will transcribe the audio recordings of each interview. The transcriptionist will complete a confidentiality agreement before reviewing any recordings.

Who should be contacted for more information about the research?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. If you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study or you want to get additional information or provide input about this research, you can contact the researcher, Meagan Mitchell 219.210.1429 MeaganMitchell8354@gmail.com

This research has been reviewed and approved by the DePaul Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have questions about your rights as a research subject you may contact Susan Loess-Perez, DePaul University's Director of Research Compliance, in the Office of Research Services at 312-362-7593 or by email at sloesspe@depaul.edu.

You may also contact DePaul's Office of Research Services if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent from the Subject:

I have read the above information. I have had all my questions and concerns answered. By signing below, I indicate my consent to in the research.

Signature: _____

Printed name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Research Study: The Influence of Family on their Child's Choice to Attend College

Interview Date:

Interview Time:

Place:

Interviewer's Name:

Participant's Name:

Thank you so much for your participation. Please know that this conversation is being recorded for research purposes. Please let me know if you know if you do not agree to being recorded. You may request that the recording stop at any time. If you agree to be interviewed, your responses to the interview questions will be audio-recorded. The digital audio file will be professionally transcribed. The transcriptionist will complete a confidentiality form. Audio recording will be deleted from all electronic devices 1 year after the completion of the study.

Interview Questions:

1. Can you please complete the demographic questionnaire?
2. From your perspective please explain why is college attendance important to you and your child?
 - a. Why do you value college education?
 - b. What factors influenced your perspective on your student attending college?
3. When did you start talking to your child about attending college?
 - a. What advice did you give your child?
 - i. Why do you feel these conversations were successful?
4. What were the successful actions you took to encourage your child to choose to attend college? How often did you do these things?
 - a. How do you feel you prepared your child for college? Why? And/or How?
5. Were there any negative assumptions made about your level of involvement in your child's college choice process?
 - a. What were the assumptions?
 - b. What other barriers did you encounter during this process?
 - c. Do you feel any of the barriers were related to your identity (race)?
 - d. What did you do to overcome these barriers and assumptions?
6. How did you help your child access resources and/or information about college?
 - a. What were these resources?
 - b. How did these resources help you?
 - c. How did these resources benefit your child?
7. What information and/or resources did you directly receive either from your child's current high school or perspective college that helped you influence your child's college choice?
 - a. Please describe how these documents helped you.
8. How has your influence impacted/supported your child's overall high school experience?
 - a. Grades?
 - b. Attendance?
 - c. Behavior or attitude toward school?

9. How were you able to support your child's choice to attend college?
 - a. Financially? Why and/or Why not?
 - b. Emotionally? Why? and/or Why not?
 - c. Academically? Why? and/or Why not?

Appendix C: Transcriptionist Confidentiality Form

A CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I, _____ [NAME], acknowledge that I will be providing translation, interpretation, data entry, or transcription services to DePaul University in connection with the following research:

Research Title/Description: Title: The Influence of Family on their Child's Choice to Attend College
Description: I am researching the influence parents of African American students who identify as first generation, low-income have on their child's choice to attend college within the context of a predominately white schooling environment and from an anti-deficit perspective.

Principal Investigator(s): Meagan Mitchell

I understand that I may receive sensitive and legally protected information in connection with my services. For example, I may receive oral, visual or written information regarding (i) the research, such as its design and findings; (ii) a research participant, such as his or her contact information, medical conditions, thoughts, and feelings; and (iii) persons known by a research participant.

I understand that disclosure of any information I receive in connection with the research may result in irreparable harm to DePaul and the research participants. I accordingly agree to the terms of this Confidentiality Agreement, including the following:

- I am permitted to disclose the information I receive in connection with the research to the following individuals only: _____ [LIST OF AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL]. I will not disclose to any Authorized Personnel any research-related information unless and until I have received instructions from the Principal Investigator regarding what is necessary to keep the records safe.
- I will not disclose the information I receive to anyone who is not authorized by this Agreement to receive it unless (i) the Principal Investigator gives me written authorization, or (ii) disclosure is legally required.
- I will use precautions to prevent unauthorized parties from accessing the research-related information I have in my possession. At a minimum, I will keep all tangible information (such as documents, notes, audiotapes, videotapes, and all media with electronic or digital information) locked in a file cabinet or safe, and I will keep all electronic information (such as computer files and other digital information) password protected.

This Confidentiality Agreement begins on the date I receive research information or begin providing my services to DePaul, and it has no expiration date. Information that I knew before I began my services to DePaul or that is in the public domain through no fault of my own is excluded from the confidentiality requirements. This Confidentiality Agreement embodies the understanding and agreement of DePaul and me, and it may not be amended or changed except by written instrument signed by both parties. It is governed by the laws of the State of Illinois, and DePaul and I agree to use the State of Illinois for jurisdiction and the County of Cook as venue for any disputes. Breach of this Agreement may, without limitation, result in termination of my services and other legal action against me.

I AGREE TO THE TERMS ABOVE:

Signature of Service Provider

Address

Name (printed)

Date

**ACCEPTED,
DEPAUL UNIVERSITY**

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

Name (printed)

Title

Appendix D: Demographic Questionnaire

Thank you very much for your participation. Please complete the questionnaire by checking or writing the appropriate answers.

1. What write your first and last name.
2. What is your high school student(s) first and last name?
3. What is your email address?
4. What is the best number to reach you? What is the best time to call you?
5. What is a way to contact you? (email or phone)
6. Gender:
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Other_____
7. Have you influenced your child(ren) to attend college after high school? (Yes / No)
8. If applicable, please identify all the family members who helped influence your child's college choice (such as mother, father, sibling, aunt, etc...)

Relationship to child	Age	Job/Grade
a) _____		
b) _____		
c) _____		
d) _____		
e) _____		

9. If applicable, please identify the high level of education of the primary female guardian?
 - a) Elementary school only
 - b) Some high school
 - c) High school diploma
 - d) Associate's degree
 - e) Some college
 - f) Bachelor's degree
 - g) Some graduate school
 - h) Master's degree
 - i) Doctoral/Professional degree
 - j) Unknown
 - k) Not applicable

10. If applicable, please identify the high level of education of the primary male guardian?

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a) Elementary school only | g) Some graduate school |
| b) Some high school | h) Master's degree |
| c) High school diploma | i) Doctoral/Professional degree |
| d) Associate's degree | j) Unknown |
| e) Some college | k) Not applicable |
| f) Bachelor's degree | |

11. What is the female guardian's profession or job?

12. What is the male guardian's profession or job?

13. Does your child qualify for free or reduced lunch? (Yes / No)

14. What is the annual household income:

- a) Under \$20,000
- b) \$20,000-\$39,000
- c) \$40,000-\$49,000
- d) \$50,000-\$59,000
- e) \$60,000-\$79,000
- f) \$80,000-\$99,000
- g) \$100,000-\$149,999
- h) \$150,000 +
- i) Unknown
- j) prefer to not answer

Appendix E: Participation Interest Form

This email is sent on behalf of Meagan Mitchell – a doctoral student at DePaul University.

I am recruiting participants for a research study about how parents influence their child's decision to attend college. Your participation is vital because your response will contribute to educators understanding of how African American parents positively influence the college choice process of their child(ren). The purpose of this study is to seek more information about the positive direct and indirect actions you employ to influence your child's college choice. As such, African American parents who participate in study should not have not graduated from college with a bachelor's degree, have a child who is eligible for free or reduced lunch and that decided to attend college.

Your participation will involve one initial interview (demographic questionnaire included) and a follow-up meeting to formally review/provide clarification to the written summary of the initial interview. Please note, the first interview including the demographic questionnaire will take about an hour and 15mins and the follow-up meeting will take an hour. The total time commitment will take about 2 hours and 15mins. Both interviews will be audio recorded; the initial interview will take place in person and the follow-up meeting may take place either in-person or by phone.

The questions in the interview and in the demographic questionnaire will focus on the following topics: (a) the importance of college, (b) direct and indirect actions taken to encourage college attendance, (c) barriers (internal and external), and (d) resources available to support the college choice process.

Please reply to this email and you will be connected to the facilitator of this project. If you have any questions, please feel free to me at MeaganMitchell8354@gmail.com or 219.210.1429. We thank you for your support and look forward to your participation.

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Appendix F: Formal Email Invitation

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I have received confirmation of your interest in participating in a research study on how African American parents influence their child(ren) to attend college. Thank you very much for considering involvement in this study.

You are receiving this letter because you are the ideal participant for this study. As previously mentioned in the first communication, your participation will involve one initial interview (demographic questionnaire included) and a follow-up meeting to formally review/provide clarification to the written summary of the initial interview. Please note, the first interview including the demographic questionnaire will take about an hour and 15mins and the follow-up meeting will take an hour. The total time commitment will take about 2 hours and 15mins. Both interviews will be audio recorded; the initial interview will take place in person and the follow-up meeting may take place either in-person or by phone.

Please know, all information will be kept confidential including, your identity, all interview files and demographic questionnaire.

Please respond with a time for your first interview. I can meet you at your home or at Michigan City High School. If you have any questions, please feel free to me contact at MeaganMitchell8354@gmail.com or 219.210.1429.

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Appendix G: Member Check-Script/Protocol

Research Study: The Influence of Family on their Child's Choice to Attend College

Interview Date:

Interview Time:

Place:

Interviewer's Name:

Participant's Name:

Thank you so much for your participation. The purpose of this conversation is to check the accuracy of our interview. During this conversation, I will review the major themes and points you shared. Please confirm accuracy of this information.

This process will last about 1 hour. Please know that this conversation is being recorded for research purposes. Please let me know if you now if you do not agree to being recorded. You may request that the recording stop at any time. If you agree to be interviewed, your responses to the interview questions will be audio-recorded. The digital audio file will be professionally transcribed. The transcriptionist will complete a confidentiality form. Audio recording will be deleted from all electronic devices 1 year after the completion of the study.

During this time, I will review the key findings with the parent participant.

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