First-Generation African-American College Graduates:
The Lived Experiences of Six Urban Charter High School Alumni

Clement Okoronkwo Ukaoma
B.A., Goshen College, 1981
M.B.A., Emporia State University, 1983
B.S. (Hon.), Friends University, 1989
M.Ed., Wichita State University, 1997

Submitted to the Graduate Department and Faculty of the School of Education of
Baker University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

_____
James Robins, Ed.D., Major Advisor

_____
Margret Anderson, Ph.D.

_____
Harold Frye, Ed.D.

Date Defended: April 6, 2016

Abstract

This phenomenological, qualitative research study explored, by means of in-depth interviews, the lived experiences of six graduates of an urban college-preparatory public charter high school, including their pre-college preparation, focusing especially on how that preparation and other factors impacted their college experiences, leading to their successful attainment of college degrees. The choice of a phenomenological, qualitative design was dictated by the study's purpose, which was to illuminate the essence of the lived, college-going and college graduation, experiences of these participants. The study's theoretical framework interwove four ideas: (1) A brief history of public education in America, including attempts over the years to reform the system so it better meets the needs of society, parents and students; (2) Choice, vouchers, and market-oriented reforms including the peculiar problems of urban or inner-city education, and Missouri's charter school legislation; (3) Tinto's theory of college departure, along with the phenomenon of first-generation college students (FGCS) and the challenges they face in transitioning to college; finally, (4) Salient non-academic factors that bear on the college success of FGCS, such as the role of parents, family, and peers, and students' dispositions. Findings were that participants perceived their high school preparation, the support and expectation of friends and family, college professors who supported but also challenged them, and their own sense that the college they chose to attend was a good fit for them, were important factors in their college successes.

Dedication

This dissertation is gratefully dedicated to my three children--Justin, Victoria, and Miles. May you live long enough to know a measure of the honor and joy I have known as your father; To my wife, Elizabeth Grace—yes, it is done…finally! To the memory of my father, Lawrence Okoronkwo Ukaoma, who discerned the future more clearly when many in his day were reluctant, afraid, or indifferent to the promise and the possibility of a formal education, and to my mother, Janet Ugo Ukaoma, whose love and equanimity in the face of life guides me still; To my "muse of a thousand words," thanks for urging me on even, and, especially, when, the road to completion did not seem so clear; To my *Captain Courageous*, my late, younger brother, Sampson Onwubiko Ukaoma, whose eponymous name speaks to my most fervent wish for his children, and for our extended, extending families; To Zion and Okalani, in my eyes, the smartest and most perfect grand-daughters—you, indeed, are the pride and joy of your grand-parents! Finally, this study is dedicated to the students of the Upper School whose efforts continue to justify the founders' vision, to the Helzberg family—Barnett, Shirley, and Bush—and to Tom Bloch, and past and future board directors of UAPCS, to Mr. Tony Kline, and to the staff of UAPCS who keep the magic going—the future looms, it is larger than life itself, let's go forth and embrace it with optimism.

Acknowledgements

The labor of successfully completing a dissertation requires team effort. So, let me begin by highlighting members of my team: My major advisor, Dr. Jim Robins for arriving in the nick of time with unyielding nudges, complete with timelines and deadlines; Dr. Susan Rogers for never giving up on me; Dr. Verneda Edwards for challenging me to simply "get this done;" Dr. Little, for his quiet confidence that my research interest was worth pursuing; Dr. Frye, for solidity and inspiration; Peg Waterman, for plying me with books and questions and for being a researcher's best analyst; and, not the least, Dr. Maggie Anderson, for reading through my first drafts and offering suggestions that vastly improved the final product, and for agreeing to serve as the external member on my dissertation team. I'd like to acknowledge Ms. Katy Kenyon for her critical role as the study's interviewer, Ms. Susie Jackson for patiently and deftly transcribing hours of audio interviews, and, of course, my six study participants—the three young ladies and three young men—who agreed to be interviewed for this study. Finally, John Veal did yeoman's work of editing out run-ons, Andrew Blakemore did a read through, and Brad Rose helped scrub the entire text of pesky, embarrassing errors of syntax. Thank you, one and all, for sharing this experience with me. Alas, such errors as remain are mine.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter One

Introduction

If we want to answer the question how tall can the human species grow

then, obviously it is well to pick out the ones who are already tallest

and study them. If we want to know how fast a human being can run,

then, it is no use to average out the speed of a 'good sample' of the

population; it is far better to collect Olympic gold medal winners and

see how well they can do. (Maslow, 1971, p. 7)

The popularity of charter schools has made them a fixture in America's public

school landscape. In just over two decades, charter schools have spread across every

region of the country, increasingly becoming the education reform model of choice. For

policymakers in communities and within states grappling with the perennial problem of

underperforming urban schools and the students they trap in mediocrity, charter schools

seem to have become the panacea (Nathan, 1997; Consoletti, 2012).

The term "charter school" was first coined in the 1970's by Ray Budde, a

University of Massachusetts professor. He reasoned that public schools might benefit

from emulating the continental companies that were granted charters to do business

within designated territories in the early years of the republic. The idea seemed to linger

among school reformers until publication of *A Nation at Risk* (Gardner, 1983*)*, famously

decrying "the rising tide of mediocrity" threatening to swamp America's public schools,

essentially re-launched it. Reform-minded colleagues convinced Budde to publish his

idea, which he did as *Education by Charter: Restructuring School Districts* (Budde,

1988). The book has been widely cited for providing the charter school movement its

early impetus. The late Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers from 1974 to 1997, also supported "autonomous schools led by teachers" (Berger, 1997; Kolderie, 2005). Then, in 1992, City Academy in St. Paul, Minnesota, opened its doors to students, becoming the nation's first charter school; and, by 2012, charter schools had grown to the point where there are currently only eight states without charter school laws (Schroeder, 2004; edreform, 2013). See Tables below:

Table 1

Growth of Charter Schools in the United States: 1999 - 2014

Five-Year Intervals	Charter Schools in Operation
1999 - 2004	2,959
2004 - 2009	4,640
2009 - 2014	6,440 [a]

Note. [a] Estimates only. Adapted from NAPCS Dashboard. Copyright 2014. Retrieved from http://dashboard.publiccharters.org/dashboard/schools/page/overview/year/2014

Background

Participants in this study were all graduates of an urban public charter school (hereafter referred to as UAPCS) located in a large, mid-western city. The school began with a three-fold mission: (1) to prepare students to gain admission to college; (2) to prepare students to complete college and earn a degree; and (3) to prepare students to return to their communities as active participants and leaders. UAPCS's current student body is predominantly African-American (96%). At the same time, roughly 76% of its students meet the federal Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) requirement (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary School (MODESE, 2013).

Table 2

Charter School Student Enrollment in the United States: 1999 - 2014

Five-Year Intervals	Charter School Enrollment
1999 - 2004	789,479
2004 - 2009	1,445,954
2009 - 2014	2,569,029 [b]

Note. [b]These are estimates only. Adapted from NAPCS Dashboard. Copyright 2014. Retrieved from http://dashboard.publiccharters.org/dashboard/schools/page/overview/year/2014

The founders of UAPCS always operated from a college preparatory mindset. As city residents who had benefitted from a good education within the city, they were concerned that the very educational opportunities they had enjoyed in their youth were rapidly disappearing for the present generation of inner-city youth. As pragmatists who had known business success in their own rights, they wanted to create a tangible way by which inner-city students might be equipped to build a better life for themselves and their community. This was the catalyst for founding a school whose mission is: "…to prepare students to enter and succeed in an institution of higher education and to participate as leaders in society" (UAPCS website, n.d., 2013). The school opened its doors to 218 students in grades 7 through 9 in 2000; in 2001 grades 6 and 10 were added and so on until the school graduated its first high school class of 13 students in 2004.

In 2005, the school relocated to its current site. The new facility has made it possible for UAPCS to expand its enrollment as well as its academic offerings. That same year, a veteran school leader with elementary expertise was hired to organize the elementary school (grades 1 through 5); kindergarten was added two years later in 2007, ensuring a sustainable flow of students from kindergarten to high school (UAPCS

website, n.d., 2013). The author of this study was hired in 2006 to reorganize the Upper

School, which then included grades 6 - 12, into a more traditional grades 9 - 12 high

school. Among the first changes he proposed was a graduation requirement that students

earn four credits in designated *core classes* in mathematics, science, English and social

studies plus a half-credit in oral communication. The Board of Directors also approved

an Upper School proposal, making it mandatory for all seniors to secure four college

admissions, backed by acceptance letters, as a precondition for graduation (*Upper School*

Personal Plan of Studies, 2011).

Other important milestones include the establishment of Friends of UA,

(FriendsofUA.org), a separate 501(c) organization in 2010. The sole purpose for forming

Friends of UA was to support UAPCS alumni with enrolling in college and persisting

until they earn a degree. The *College Incentive Program* (CIP), part of Friends of UA's

Alumni Success Program (ASP) has had the greatest impact on UAPCS's college

graduation rate, mainly because most of the alumni are themselves the first in their

families to go to college. ASP's programming essentially fills the role of a supportive

surrogate, giving these alumni the support that a rich uncle or aunt might provide to guide

them to college success. Upon enrolling into college (and nearly 100% of graduates have

done so), graduates become eligible for cash and other categorical incentives. ASP also

organizes alumni socials and get-togethers, arranges paid and unpaid internships during

college breaks, and sends out care packages to alumni.

Statement of the Problem

The economic benefits of education are firmly established (see Appendix L, p.

203). According to the Department of Labor, for Americans aged 25 and older who had

less than a high school education, the median weekly wage or salary was $472.00 in 2012. By contrast, the median weekly wage or salary for Americans with bachelor's degrees was $1,108; overall, the average weekly wage or salary for all Americans was $827. Those benefits also extend to unemployment, where educational attainment seems to inoculate against unemployment (see Appendix M, p. 205). Against this background, some, like Tom Bloch, a founding board member and teacher at UAPCS, have wondered why "inner-city kids fail to use school as their ticket to the middle class" (Bloch, 2008, p. 12). For decades, the search for an answer to Bloch's wonderment has been at the core of many education reform efforts, including policy prescriptions in the United States.

Yet, only a handful of studies (Davis, Dias-Bowie, Greenberg, Klukken, Pollio, Thomas, & Thompson, 2004; Gofen, 2007; Hall, 1999; Steele, 1999) have asked the successful college graduates, whose life prospects are, presumably, the target of many of these reform efforts, how they were able to succeed at college when others have not been as fortunate. This phenomenological study, therefore, explored how six African-American graduates of this one urban charter public high school (UAPCS) managed to succeed at college—including their perceptions of their college journeys, the choices and sacrifices they made along the way, and the commitments they had to keep in order to join the ranks of college graduates.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore, by means of in-depth interviews, the lived experiences of six graduates of an urban college-preparatory public charter high school, their high school's role in preparing them for college, their college experiences, culminating in their attainment of bachelors' degrees.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is that it adds to our understanding of graduates of urban charter schools, especially graduates of those schools with the avowed mission of preparing minority students to enter and succeed in the nation's colleges and universities. Although there have been several studies of charter schools (Hoxby, 2004; Hoxby & Rockoff, 2004; Hill, Angel & Christensen, 2006; CREDO I, 2009; Guy, 2011; CREDO II, 2013), none of the studies undertook an in-depth look into the experiences of urban charter high school graduates as envisaged in this study. The fact that all the participants are African-American as well as first-generation college students also adds the dimension of ethnicity to the study.

Additionally, in their study looking into possible re-segregation in charter schools, Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley and Wang (2010) suggested the need for research into charter schools that are managing to turn out "engaged, empathic and responsible citizens and to provide opportunities for exposure to a wide variety of social and cultural networks that help open doors to college and career opportunities…" (p.18). By exploring participants' college experiences, including how their high school preparation impacted them, this study responded to the challenge issued by Frankenberg et al.

Furthermore, findings from this study should have some utility for school administrators, legislators, teachers, and others who are interested in providing college preparatory opportunities for urban students. Findings from this study should also equip parents, grandparents, and guardians with real options, especially for those parents and grandparents who feel that their students are currently underserved by the educational choices available to them within the inner-cities of this country.

Delimitations

Simon and Goes (2013) asserted that the "…delimitations of a study are those characteristics that arise from limitations in the scope of the [study and which define the study's boundaries] and by the conscious exclusionary and inclusionary decisions [governing the development of the study plan]" (n. d.). Accordingly, this study is delimited in four important ways:

1. Participants were all alumni of UAPCS who went on to graduate from four-year colleges and universities;

2. All six participants earned college degrees within six years of graduating from high school (UAPCS);

3. Data collection for this study was delimited to two interview sessions: an initial, and a follow-up interview. Both interview sessions were conducted at a location that was convenient for the participants. Phone interviews were used whenever a face-to-face interview was not possible during the fall of the 2015-2016 school year; and,

4. Participants were not directly observed for this study.

Assumptions

An underlying assumption in this study is that purposive sampling (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) using six alumni who met the two conditions articulated in the study's purpose statement would yield participants who, in turn:

1. Would answer the research questions in ways that are not only useful, but that also provide fresh insight;

2. Would answer honestly, truthfully, and fully in their responses to the

questions posed to them during the initial interview of approximately 30-50 minutes;

3. Would use the shorter, follow-up interview to clarify their previous answers and to explicate the phenomenon in a way that also validated the study's design; and

4. Would respond to probes in meaningful, revelatory ways.

Framework for the Study

This study's framework consists of four concepts that seem pertinent to the experiences of the study's participants. First, a brief history of public education in America whose ultimate goal has been the improvement of individuals and the communities they live in, was explored. Second, choice-based education reform as an idea that is key to understanding the phenomenon of public charter schools, especially those, like UAPCS, that profess a mission of preparing students for college success, was also explored. Third, Tinto's work on college departure, retention and persistence until graduation (1975, 1987a, 1987b, 1993), especially as it relates to first-generation college students (FGCS) was explored. The work of other researchers (Davidson, 2009; Ishitani, & DesJardins, 2002; and Ishitani, & Snider, 2004; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Metz, 2002) who have suggested improvements to Tinto's work on college departure and college persistence by verifying aspects of it and challenging other aspects with the aim of improving the theory were also explored. Importantly, these researchers have added the perspective of minorities to our understanding of persistence and retention, inasmuch as all six participants in this study were both African-American and FGCS. Fourth, the addition of a college readiness motif (Conley, 2012) was intended to add a special lens

for understanding these respondents' lived experiences as they navigated their respective ways through high school and college, persisting to graduate within six years as has become the standard length of time required for college graduation in the United States (NCES, 2014).

Research Questions

The grand tour question for this study was: *What stands out about how participants experienced high school and college that enabled them to succeed in earning a four-year college degree when many others in similar circumstances have not been able to do so?* Grand tour questions are often used in qualitative research to elicit paricipants' true feelings about a phenomenon in a fairly focused way (Spradley, 1979; Siedman, 1991; Kairuz & O'Brien, 2007). Permission was obtained from Davidson (see Appendix D, p. 160), the lead author of the College Persistence Questionnaire (CPQ), to use selected questions from their instrument to guide the interviews. The CPQ (Davidson, Beck & Milligan, 2009) validated many aspects of Tinto's college departure and persistence theory. Following were the study's research questions:

1. Could participants recall the academic factors or any incidents that either empowered them or that became obstacles on their way to earning a college degree?

2. What else about participants' lived college experiences as graduates of an urban, college-preparatory public charter school, helped them to successfully navigate and complete college?

3. What were the non-academic factors that participants perceived to have impacted their college journeys—either negatively or positively?

4. To what extent did a commitment to earning a degree play a discernible role in participants' college success?

Definition of Terms

      Alumni Success Program (ASP). A program funded by Friends of UA, a 501(c) arm of UAPCS whose aim is to financially support alumni through their college years by sending care packages, offering paid and unpaid internships, as well as financial incentives to students for earning good grades and progressing through college until graduation (Friendsofua.org/about-2/alumni-support-program-2).

      American College Test (ACT) is one of two college readiness tests (Scholastic Aptitude Test [SAT] given by the College Board is the other one) generally used by colleges and universities in the United States in their admissions decisions. The term "ACT" usually refers to the test, but can also refer to the organization ACT, Inc (Radunzel and Noble, 2012).

      Attrition or College Attrition. This is the decision to drop out or leave college without earning a degree (Fisher & Engemann, 2009).

      College and Career Readiness. Conley (2012), posits that a student is "college ready" when the student is "ready for college and career … can qualify for and succeed in entry-level [or] credit-bearing college courses leading to a baccalaureate or certificate, or [can] enter a career pathway-oriented training program without the need for remedial or developmental coursework" (p.1). ACT (2012) defines "college readiness" as a student "having a 50% chance of earning a grade of B or higher or about a 75% chance of earning a … C or higher in first-year college English Composition, College Algebra, Biology, History, Psychology, Sociology, Political Science, or Economics" (p.15).

College Incentive Program, (CIP). This is a companion program of Friends of UA, which supports alumni of UAPCS in college through cash incentives if they achieve a certain college Grade Point Average (GPA) using a predetermined scale: a GPA of 2.5 qualifies an alumnus enrolled in college for a $500.00 incentive; 3.0 GPA qualifies an alumnus enrolled in college for a $750.00 incentive, and a GPA of 3.5 and above qualifies an alumnus enrolled in college for a $1,000.00 incentive (Undergrad- CIP-Guidelines, 2014).

Core Classes. This refers to a sequence of courses in mathematics, science, English, and social studies. In their report on research conducted for the College Board, Radunzel and Noble (2012) noted that high school students who met the ACT benchmarks, equivalent to taking the sequence of courses described above, were equipped with the necessary content knowledge for college and career success**.**

College Predisposition. This refers to a student's decision or aspiration to pursue higher education after graduating from high school (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

Disposition refers to one's consistent, internal motivation to employ all of one's abilities in deciding what to believe or what to do in a given situation (Facione, Facione, & Giancarlo, 1996).

First Generation College Student (FGCS). These are students whose parents do not hold a bachelor's degree. According to Martinez, Sher, Krull, and Wood, (2009); Somers, Woodhouse, and Cofer (2004), (FGCS) are "those (students) whose parents had an educational level of high school diploma or less" (p. 423); FGCS are often contrasted with Second-Generation College Students (**SGCS**) whose parents earned BAs.

Persistence is a student's internal drive or motivation to remain at an institution until he or she has earned a college degree (Berger & Lyon, 2005; Smith & Cumpton, 2013). Duckworth & Quinn (2009) coined the term *grit* to refer to "the capacity to sustain both effort and interest in projects that take months or even longer to complete" (p. 166). For this study, persistence will be understood as a student re-enrolling at a college year to year (up to six years for our purposes) until graduating with a degree.

Retention refers to an institution of higher education's demonstrated ability to attract a student to return and re-enroll again and again, from admission until graduation (Berger & Lyon, 2005).

School Mission is a statement of the aims of a school, usually required as part of the application to open and operate a charter school (Weiss & Piderit, 1999).

School Choice or Parental Choice. In either form, the term "…means giving parents the opportunity to choose the school their children will attend" (Adbulkadiroglu & Sonmez, 2003, p. 2).

Social Promotion is the practice of permitting a student to advance from grade to grade, regardless of the student's demonstrated academic proficiency (Green & Winters, 2004, p. 1).

TPS. This is the common acronym for traditional public schools (Bifulco & Ladd, 2004).

Overview of Methodology

The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation. In the human sphere, this normally translates into

gathering 'deep' information and perceptions through inductive,

qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions and participant

observation, and representing it from the perspective of the research

participant[s] (Lester, 1999, p. 1).

Considering the unique nature of the phenomenon being investigated, six

graduates of a college-preparatory charter high school located in a mid-western American

city who subsequently earned college degrees were chosen for the study. As is common

in phenomenological research, the individuals and their lived experiences as they

progressed through UAPCS on their way to enrolling in and graduating from college

remained the thrust of emphasis. A central focus of the study was acquiring a sense of

how the participants perceived UAPCS and its college-preparatory mission from the

vantage point of college. Also of some interest is how these participants' perceptions of

their pre-college preparation may have influenced their college experiences.

In keeping with a central tenet of phenomenological methodology, which is to

understand a phenomenon from the lived experiences of the research participants, a 15-

question, in-depth interview protocol (Appendix H, p. 172) was developed for the study.

This assured that each of the four research questions was thoroughly explored with every

participant. Furthermore, the interview questions supplemented the grand tour question

that served as the starting point for the initial interview of participants. To further

validate participants' answers to the interview questions, a final interview question placed

participants in the role of advising a fictive high school junior whose background

resembled theirs, on how to succeed in college. Davidson, Beck and Milligan (2009)

developed a College Persistence Questionnaire (CPQ), which they validated for use in

predicting student attrition and persistence in college. This researcher obtained

permission from the lead author of the CPQ to use their instrument as the source for the

in-depth interview questions and the probing questions used to collect data for this study.

According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenological research "involves studying a small

number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and

relationships of meaning" (cited in Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p.32).

Participants' responses in the initial interviews were transcribed, collated, and

reviewed with them independently. Discrepancies were resolved and emergent themes

noted and used to further refine questions in preparation for a second round of follow-up

interviews. Responses from the second interviews were, similarly, transcribed, collated,

and individually reviewed with respondents to verify and to clarify any confusion in

meaning that might exist in the transcripts. The process of reviewing interview

transcripts with participants served to further validate the interviews as well as to

empower the study's participants. Interview transcripts were coded and analyzed for

emergent and recurring themes, and those themes were then subjected to further analysis

for the purpose of gaining fresh insights. The study's conclusions emerged from the

themes, analysis of the themes, as well as participants' input as interview transcripts were

reviewed with them.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. In chapter one, the study was

introduced. A background section provided important preliminary information: a

statement of the problem, purpose of the study, assumptions underlying the study, the

study's delimitations, the research questions that guided the study, a list and definition of

the technical terms used in the study, and an overview of the study's methodology as well as its organization. Chapter two provided a brief history of public school reforms in America, especially the introduction of vouchers and choice-based varieties as the antecedents of the charter school movement; analysis of Missouri's peculiar urban charter school legislation and the literature on college departure and persistence, FGCS college transitions, the common barriers faced by FGCS, and academic factors, like college readiness, and non-academic factors which contribute to their college successes as FGCS. Chapter three dealt with the design of the study: rationale for the chosen method, how samples were selected, the information needed to conduct the study, ethical considerations, issues of confidentiality, as well as procedures for data collection. Chapter four presented the results of the study as well as discusses and analyzes the study's results in light of the literature. Finally, chapter five presented the major findings of the study and their implications for the field of educational administration and educational leadership. The chapter ended with suggested recommendations for further research.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

In this second chapter, the literature deemed pertinent to the study was reviewed and presented: first, a brief history of public education in America, including attempts over the years to reform the system so it better meets the needs of society, parents and students, was reviewed; second, a review of choice, vouchers, and market-oriented reforms including the peculiar problems of urban or inner-city education, and Missouri's charter school legislation were presented; third, a review of Tinto's theory of college departure along with the phenomenon of FGCS and the challenges FGCS face in transitioning to college were presented; and fourth, other salient academic and non-academic factors that bear on FGCS's college success, such as college readiness, and family and friends were reviewed. To facilitate readers' comprehension, and as a device to give the literature review some coherence, each segment concluded with a summary of the main points.

A Brief History of Public School Reform in America

The American public school system has always been a work in progress, presumably propelling students, teachers and administrators toward a more democratic, more inclusive society. According to Goldin (1999), the educational system that currently exists in the United States resulted largely from three central transformations: (1) the "common" school movement, advocating for the education of youth aged 6 to 15 years and corresponding to our current grades 1 - 8 in elementary and middle school, (2) the secondary or high school movement, advancing the education of youth aged 14 - 18 years and roughly corresponding to our current grades 9 - 12 in high school, and (3) the

tertiary or higher education movement, providing for mass higher education. *School: The Story of American Public Education,* edited for a Public Broadcasting System (PBS) program of the same name by Mondale, Patton, and Streep (2002) the evolution of public education in America was divided into four broad eras: Common School (1770 to 1900), Public School (1900 to 1950), Separate and Equal (1950 to1980), and the era of The Bottom Line (1980 to Present). This last era encompasses No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Race To The Top (RTTT), and the more recent and controversial Common Core State Standards movement (Common Core). Common Core is currently controversial, with teachers' unions and Republican conservatives opposing it for violating the principle of local control. Yet, while the American educational system as a whole, is unique in being more democratic than the more elitist systems that existed in Europe well into the 20th century, the so-called localism of the American system, and the decentralization that is endemic to it, has also been problematic. For instance, African-American students and other ethnic minorities were, and some say, still are, excluded from full participation in the system. Minority groups have had to fight for their place in the system, often using political, legislative, and legal means as their most effective weapon (Savitch, 2001).

Berube (1994) argued that the three major educational reform efforts of the past century—the progressive, the equity, and the excellence movements—are best understood in terms of the societal forces that bracketed and, essentially, necessitated them. According to Darling-Hammond and Adamson (2010), there has always been an economic dimension to our educational reform efforts. However, since *A Nation at Risk*, the impulse to keep up with whichever country or countries appear to be getting ahead of

us has accelerated the public's concerns, prompting policy makers to work to "better

prepare all children for the higher educational demands of life and work in the 21st

century" (p.1). Savitch (2001) further highlighted four traditions that have shaped, and

continue to shape, the development of public schooling in America: (1) the family,

bearing, as it does, the primary responsibility for children's education; (2) pluralism,

meaning a belief in the necessity of making available different kinds of schools for all

sorts of religious and cultural reasons; (3) a public consensus around common or public

schools for all; and, (4) cooperation between public and private sectors, which has been

the main source of support for charter schools, for instance (p.13).

According to Savitch (2001), education's multiple social, economic, and political

roles in American life have only grown in cogency in recent years, with pressure

continuing to come from America's global competitors, to the extent that:

> Young people who do not acquire the skills of literacy and numeracy
>
> and a solid education will find themselves locked out of all sorts of
>
> opportunities. This is not tolerable for our society, and our pragmatic
>
> bent will prod us towards finding additional ways to spread the
>
> promise of education throughout the population. (p.14)

Summary. The impulse to reform public education in America, at least more

recently, has been propelled by a desire to make the system work for all children. A

consensus is beginning to form around the idea that in order to participate as full citizens

in the affairs of the nation, young people must first acquire the skills that will equip them

with economic independence. A driving force in all of this has been the growing

awareness of the reality of global economic competition in American life.

Choice, Vouchers and Market-Oriented School Reform

Whether one considers the central role that parents have historically played in their children's education within the American system, or the fact that pluralism seems hard-wired into American thought and psyche, choice has been central to the American educational experience (Hess, 2010). The idea of parental choice in the education of children harkens back to the late 18th and 19th centuries, specifically to the writings of Thomas Paine and John Stuart Mill. However, in its more recent incarnation, in the form of market-based school choice, many have credited Milton Friedman, the late libertarian economist, as the foremost proponent of school choice. In his seminal, 1955 essay, Friedman argued for a voucher system in which the role of government in education is limited to merely setting basic standards and then providing vouchers to parents, leaving them to choose among schools based on which one they perceive as providing the best educational opportunity for their children (Hess, 2010, p. 37).

However, subsequent attempts to popularize Friedman's voucher idea had mostly been unsuccessful. Then, in the 1980s, things began to change for school choice and its advocates. A combination of four factors contributed to this resurgence: (1) Ronald Reagan's ascendancy to the American presidency, (2) Catholics who worried about perceived judicial attack on prayer in school and who, at the same time, needed governmental help with tuition for their parochial schools, (3) a reinvigorated Republican Party in search of new ideas for its market-based policies, and, (4) a vocal core of inner-city community leaders and parents who sought social justice and protested against the poor quality of schools available to children within their neighborhoods (Hess, 2010, p. 38). Tommy Thompson, Wisconsin's former republican governor, capitalizing on the

"social justice" argument then being advanced by black clergy and others, signed the nation's first voucher bill in 1990. But, according to Hess (2010), the euphoria over vouchers soon waned because research could not confirm the popular assertion being made by its proponents that vouchers would produce markedly better results than traditional public schools (TPS) and thus, were a worthy replacement for TPS (p. 40).

In the aftermath of the Supreme Court's 2002 ruling in *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* that tuition vouchers for private and religious schools did not violate the First Amendment's establishment clause, the challenge for choice proponents, as well as for its opponents, has shifted finding a way to coalesce around the idea of "accountable choice," that is, creating meaningful choices for parents, while remaining accountable to the tax-paying public. This can only be achieved if choice proponents maintained the stance of being both inclusive and responsive to the educational needs of the underclass. America's urban centers have continued to be overrepresented in the category of ineffective school systems and in the proportion of students receiving subpar education. According to Rotherham (2002), "the … problems with vouchers have little to do with church-state issues; rather, they raise organizational questions about American public education that should be decided through political, rather than a legal process" (p.1).

Finally, in a 2014 speech before a Cleveland City Club audience following the release of yet another mixed outcomes report for charter schools and their students, the report's principal investigator, Margret Raymond, mused aloud about her dissatisfaction with the seeming inability of choice-based strategies to quickly turn around the persisting, poor performance of certain students in America's public schools:

This is one of the big insights for me. I actually am kind of a pro-

market kinda girl. But it doesn't seem to work in a choice environment

for education…[education is] the only industry/sector where the

market mechanism just doesn't work… I think the policy environment

really needs to focus on creating much more information and

transparency about performance than we've had for the 20 years of the

charter school movement. I think we need to have a greater degree of

oversight of charter schools, but I also think we have to have some

oversight of the overseers. (Strauss, n.d.)

The National Charter School Movement. The publication of *A Nation at Risk*

in 1983 brought renewed interest in Budde's charter idea, just as the idea of education

through vouchers was beginning to falter. *Education by Charter: Restructuring School*

Districts (Budde, 1988) thus served as the first organized description of what a charter

school could be. Many now regard the book as the genesis of the national charter school

movement. To be sure, the late Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of

Teachers from 1974 to 1997, was also an early promoter of a charter idea, though his

vision was more about "autonomous schools led by teachers" (Berger, 1997).

But, charter schools remain public schools. A school's charter is reviewed

periodically (typically every 3 to 5 years) by the institution or jurisdiction listed as its

sponsor or authorizer. Typically, too, a school's charter can be revoked if stipulated

policies concerning curriculum and operations are not followed, or if student outcome

standards are not met. Moreover, American presidents from Bill Clinton, George W.

Bush, to Barack Obama have endorsed charter schools as a viable educational reform

model. This has prompted researchers like Imberman (2011) to assert that "[one] of the

fastest growing education reforms in the U.S. today is the charter school movement"
(p.1). The Obama administration went so far as to make charter school expansion a key
component of its Race To The Top (RTTT) program, part of the American Recovery and
Reinvestment Act (ARRA), and a centerpiece of his administration's review of national
educational policy. Specifically, the Obama administration's federal education
department made charter expansion a precondition for granting state education agencies
waivers from the strictures of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) federal education
reauthorization act. Also, during an interview with NBC's Matt Lauer, President Obama
made reference to charter schools that seemed to be doing a good job with students in
poorer communities. The president then went on to re-affirm his administration's
intention to "foster these laboratories of excellence" (NBC television broadcast, Sept. 27,
2010).

Typically, charter school sponsors come from the ranks of two- or four-year
colleges and universities, although some state charter laws permit school districts to
directly sponsor charter schools as well. Some states even make allowances for religious
and other for-profit, educational management organizations (EMOs) to operate charter
schools (NAPCS, 2013). Some state charter laws exempt charter schools from certain
state or local rules and regulations. This practice, often referred to as a "quid pro quo,"
appears, therefore, to be central to the concept of chartering and requires that, in return
for receiving public funding and enjoying operational autonomy, charter schools must
meet the accountability standards articulated within their charters.

Yet, charter schools only account for a very small proportion of all public schools
operating in the United States, amounting to no more than 12% of all public schools. In

terms of student census, charters schools only serve approximately 5% of all students

enrolled in public schools in the United States (NCES, 2012). A recent report by the

National Association of Public Charter School (see Table 3) illustrates the essentially

urban character of charter schools, with the Midwest and Northeast of the country

commanding ever-larger market shares of such schools, while the South and West have

recorded the fastest growth in the rate of new charter schools (NAPCS, 2013).

Table 3

Top Five Charter School Regions by Market Share

Rank (#)	Market Share (%) [c]	Locale and State
1	79	New Orleans, LA
2	51	Detroit, MI
3	43	Washington, DC
4	36	Flint, MI
5	36	Kansas City, MO

Note. [c] Percentages are estimates only. Adapted from NAPCS. Copyright 2014. Retrieved from http://www.publiccharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/2013-Market-Share-Report-Report_20131210T133315.pdf

Charter School Achievement Studies. The literature on charter school

achievement has been mounting, but overall, findings have remained mixed, with some

studies showing that charter schools deliver positive student outcomes, while others show

just the opposite. For this reason, major findings will be summarized here in two broad

parts: (1) Studies showing positive student impact and, (2) Studies showing neutral to

negative student impact. Sorting through research claims has not been as straightforward

as one might expect because charter schools are not monolithic: they differ both in

mission and in terms of the state laws that created them in the first place.

Much of the early research studies on charter school practices and the findings of those studies were plagued with problems. These problems ranged from selection bias (Zimmer, Booker, Lavertu, Sass, & Witte, 2009); to student attrition from charter schools, whereby the departure of low-skilled, low scoring students could unduly raise a charter school's scores in ways that are misleading (Miron, 2005; Henig, 2008a, 2008b; and Bennett, 2010); to the challenge of aggregated data (Hanushek, 2009; Greene, 2010); and other associated research design problems. As a consequence, it has not always been easy to tell which aspect of a charter school's operation is producing particular outcomes among students. Add to these concerns the fact that the first crop of charter studies were either underwritten by opponents or by advocates of charter schools—both of which make their results suspect. Indeed, a national randomized study by Clark, Gleason, Tuttle, and Silverberg, (2011) found that, with regard to overall student impact, charter schools do neither better nor worse than TPSs. Apparently, just as there are good charter schools that produce good results for students, there are bad charter schools that produce poor results for their students.

The first study of charter schools that included enough states to be deemed of national scope was conducted in 2009 by the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University. The study involved 1.7 million students in grades 1 through 12, attending 2,403 charter schools in 16 states. By matching charter students on characteristics such as demography, English language proficiency, participation in Free and Reduced Lunch, and Special Education status, with students in traditional public school (TPS), the study, notably, created "virtual twins" that made it possible for researchers to compare charter schools to TPS.

Studies Showing Positive Charter Student Impact. CREDO's 2009 study,

hereafter referred to as CREDO I, found that 17% of charter students made gains that

were significant and higher than the students would have made had they remained in

TPS. Additionally, when disaggregated by grade level, CREDO I also found positive

effects for charter elementary and middle schools although the effects were not as strong

in high schools. In their longitudinal study commissioned by the charter school network

Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP), Gleason, Clark, Tuttle, and Dwoyer, (2010)

examined the achievement of students in 22 KIPP schools before and after the students

enrolled at KIPP against the achievement of students in neighboring TPS. After

controlling for such factors as gender, special education status, limited English

proficiency, ethnicity, and students' previous two test scores, Gleason et al., (2010) found

achievement improvements for mathematics in 18 of the 22 KIPP schools and

improvements in reading in 15 of the 22 KIPP schools studied.

Additionally, Booker, Sass, Gill, and Zimmer (2008) reviewed student data from

the state of Florida and Chicago, Illinois for the effect of attending charter school on

students' educational and academic achievement. They found that charter school

students were 7% to 15% more likely to graduate high school with a standard diploma,

and 8% to 10% more likely to attend a two- or four-year college. In the same vein, Betts

and Tang's (2008) meta-analysis of studies comparing student achievement in charter

schools with student achievement in TPS, found that in elementary math and reading,

charter students outperformed TPS students. More recently, in separate studies

comparing Boston's charter middle and charter high school students' performance against

those of Boston's TPS students on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

(MCAS), Abdulkadiroğlu, Angrist, Dynarski, Kane, and Pathak (2011) found that students who attended charter schools showed positive gains in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics, as measured by the MCAS.

Then, five years after its original 16-state, national study of charter schools, Stanford's CREDO researchers embarked on an expanded, 27-state study, hereafter referred to CREDO II (2013). Importantly, the researchers treated New York City and Washington, D. C. as virtual states. Also worthy of note, CREDO II included 95% of all charter students in the United States because the study enlisted the collaboration of state education departments in the 27 states studied. This rare collaboration gave researchers access to 79% of all tested students (p. 4, p.29). Just as in their 2009 study (CREDO I, 2009), CREDO II (2013) used a large database of virtual twins that included such variables as grade level, gender, race/ethnicity, eligibility for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), English Language Learner (ELL) status, special education status, and previous state tests (p.8). Additionally, CREDO's 2015 study of urban charter schools in 41 areas located within 22 states found that student performance improved because a "…larger share of [charter] schools performed better than their TPS alternatives [while] a smaller share of charter schools fell among the under-performing schools" (p. v).

Summarily, CREDO II found that in reading and mathematics, for certain student groups, achievement improved in charter schools more than would have been the case had those students remained enrolled in TPS. These subgroups included low-income and English Language Learners (ELL). For a complete illustration of the positive impact of charter schools on selected sub-groups of students (see Table 4, p. 29).

Studies Showing Neutral to Negative Charter Student Impact. In a

randomized study of the effectiveness of 36 charter middle schools drawn from 15 states

and funded by the U. S. Department of Education, Gleason, Clark, Tuttle, and Dwoyer

(2010) of *Mathematica Policy Research* compared the results of students who had

applied and been admitted into charter schools through lotteries to those of students who

had applied but had not been admitted. To minimize the impact of newly established

charter schools, schools that had not been in operation for at least two years were

excluded from the *Mathematica* study. Among the study's major findings were the

following: (1) Overall, charter middle schools were no better at raising student

achievement scores than TPS; (2) Charter schools serving students with higher income

and prior achievement had significantly negative math scores; (3) Charter schools

enrolling fewer advantaged students had no impact on achievement.

Second, in their longitudinal study using student-level data from eight states—

Florida, Ohio, and Texas, and five large urban school districts (Denver, Colorado,

Chicago, Illinois; San Diego, California; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Milwaukee,

Wisconsin—Rand researchers Zimmer, Booker, Lavertu, Sass, and Witte, (2009), found

that: (1) Charter middle and high school students produced results that were no better

than those attained by students in TPS; and, (2) There were moderately worse effects in

reading for Chicago middle schools, and moderately negative effects in math and reading

for Texas middle schools. Nisar (2010), in a longitudinal data covering all public schools

in Milwaukee during the period from 2005 to 2008, examined the effect of charter

schools on student performance. The researcher found that, on average, charter schools

"appear to have no significant effect on student achievement" (p. 2). Recall that

CREDO I also concluded that: (1) In the aggregate, charter schools did not advance students' learning as much as TPS, since as much as 47% of charter students had results that were no better than the results of TPS students; and (2), 37% of the charter students produced results that were significantly lower than what the students would have had in their TPS; and (3), When disaggregated by grade level, CREDO I mainly found significant negative effects for charter high schools, especially for charter schools with multi-grade configurations.

For CREDO II (2013), the researchers expanded their reach by recruiting 10 more states along with the group of charter schools from the original 16-states. This enhanced the sweep of the study. Despite finding that charter schools in the original 16-state study had shown improvements in student achievement, its results remained mixed (see Table 4). CREDO II had four significantly negative findings for charter schools: (1) White students attending charter schools experienced 14 fewer days of learning in reading than white TPS students; (2) The learning deficit for white charter students was larger in math, amounting to 50 fewer days of learning than their TPS counterparts; (3) Of the charter school students studied, 19% had weaker growth than TPS students in reading, and 31% had weaker growth in math than TPS. When growth was compared to achievement, the researchers found that 32% of charter school students had both weak growth and low achievement in reading and as much as 40% less growth in math, (p. 80); finally, (4) Asian students seemed to benefit least from the charter school experience because they had the equivalent of 29 fewer days of learning than their counterparts attending TPS and similar learning gains in reading (CREDO II, p. 74).

Table 4

Summary of Significant Charter Impacts By Student Groups

Groups	Reading	Mathematics
White	Negative	Negative
Blacks	Positive	Positive
Blacks in Poverty	Positive	Positive
Hispanics	Similar to Comp TPS	Similar to Comp TPS
Hispanics in Poverty	Positive	Positive
Hispanics Non Poverty	Negative	Negative
Hispanics ELL	Positive	Positive
Hispanics Non ELL	Positive	Similar to Comp TPS
Asian	Similar to Comp TPS	Negative
Students in Poverty	Positive	Positive
ELL [d]	Positive	Positive
Special Education	Similar to Comp TPS	Positive

Note [d]: English Language Learners
Adapted from Executive Summary, (CREDO II, 2013, p.17).

In their study of charter schools in Philadelphia, Zimmer, Blanc, Gill, and

Christman (2008) found that the average charter student's achievement gains were about

the same as when the student was enrolled in a TPS. Similarly, in their California charter

school study, Zimmer and Buddin (2005) also found mixed outcomes. For instance,

while Los Angeles elementary charter students did as well as their counterparts in TPS,

Los Angeles charter secondary students did slightly better in reading and slightly worse

in math than their TPS counterparts. Further, in San Diego, the researchers found charter

students' achievements to lag behind their TPS counterparts. Similarly, a meta-analysis of charter school studies conducted by Betts and Tang (2008) found that: (1) charter school results were mixed in math and reading—both at the elementary and the middle school levels; and (2) TPS students outperformed charter students in math and reading at the high school level.

Finally, Bifulco and Ladd (2004, 2006) evaluated the impact of charter schools in North Carolina by following 6,000 students in grades 4-8 and monitoring their performance in End-of-Grade math and reading assessments. In all, the study reviewed six years of test data for these students. An aspect of note with regard to this study was that, since the students had split enrollment between charter schools and TPSs, they essentially served as their own controls. The researchers' two main findings were: (1) Negative achievement impact for charter students; (2) The negative impacts were even more pronounced for students attending newly-opened charter schools than for charter schools that were already well-established and operating for three or more years.

Summary. As charter schools enter their third decade, the results of charter school achievement studies at the national level have remained mixed and varied. While some studies show achievement gains at the elementary school level; others find improvements for low-income, urban students; and a few others found improvements, but only in well-established charter schools, and not in upstarts or newly established charter schools.

Origins of Missouri's Charter School Law. Missouri's historic legacy is that of a *de jure* segregator of students within its public schools. In 1847, for instance, a Missouri law mandated that "no person shall keep or teach any school for the instruction

of mulattos in reading or writing" (quoted in Freivogel, 2002, p. 2). The fact that Missouri prohibited slavery in 1865 is common knowledge; what is less well-known is that Missouri also maintained segregated schools for longer than most southern states. In fact, Missouri operated segregated schools for 115 years of its existence as a state (Freivogel, 2002). Indeed, twenty-two years after the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* decision, a Missouri Attorney General opined that a local school district "may permit white or black students to attend the same school" however, the opinion left it up to each locality as to whether or not to integrate (Benson, 1995).

Against this historical background of operating dual and discriminatory school systems, legal and political efforts soon began to converge in the 1970s, especially in the wake of *Brown*, to desegregate the Kansas City and St. Louis school systems. In addition to being Missouri's largest urban centers, these two cities also held the greatest concentration of black students. Spearheaded by such agencies of the federal government as Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) and the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and with other progressive and civic-minded groups and individuals serving as catalysts, the drive to end segregation in America's schools soon began in earnest and Missouri featured as a national bell-weather for what *Brown* would come to mean for America's public schools (Rebore, 1997; Moran, 2005).

In 1977, the Kansas City Missouri School District (KCMSD) joined two black students and their families to sue the state of Missouri. The plaintiffs alleged that the state of Missouri and school districts surrounding Kansas City had perpetuated dual systems that denied black students equal educational opportunity in contravention of

Brown. That case dragged on for over two decades and produced three Supreme Court rulings: (1) In *Jenkins I*, written in 1989, the Supreme Court affirmed a lower court decision that the state of Missouri was responsible for $4 million in attorney fees. This was important since plaintiffs who were generally less economically better-off, were represented by the NAACP and a private attorney. (2) A year later, in 1990, the Supreme Court ruled in *Missouri v. Jenkins*, commonly known as *Jenkins II*, that the federal district court, which had also transferred Kansas City Missouri School District's (KCMSD's) status at the outset of the litigation to that of defendant, overstepped its authority when it "imposed a tax increase to fund [its] desegregation plan" (Rebore, p. 5). (3) Then, in 1995, the Supreme Court ruled in *Missouri v. Jenkins,* also known as *Jenkins III,* that the federal district court could not order the state of Missouri to develop a "superior school system." The term refers to the new magnet schools into which the district was then converting its middle and high schools as part of federal district Judge Russell Clark's desegregation orders. The sole purpose of the order was the hope that magnet schools would attract white students back to the KCMSD. But, by this time, the state of Missouri had spent a great deal of money—$1.3 billion in St. Louis and $1.3 billion or more in Kansas City, according to some state estimates—on the protracted, court-mandated desegregation plans (Freivogel, 2002; Rebore, 1997).

Two years later, in January of 1997, the Attorney General of Missouri, Jay Nixon, the current Democratic governor of the state, argued before Federal District Judge Russell Clark that the KCMSD's desegregation plan should be dropped because the district had reached unitary status. Nixon also urged the Court to approve an agreement that the state of Missouri had negotiated with KCMSD and the teachers' union in 1996,

which required the state to pay KCMSD $314 million over the next three years. The

agreement stipulated that at the end of the three years, the state would have no further

financial obligation to KCMSD for desegregation. According to Nixon, Missouri was

spending $2.9 million per week on desegregation payments to its two largest cities

(Rebore, p. 5). By February of 1997, Missouri Senator Harold Caskey had introduced

Senate Bill 360 that would authorize private groups to establish charter schools with state

funds. Among its other provisions, the bill also authorized the state to redistribute part of

the money—roughly $146 million out of $250 million being spent on desegregation—to

any school districts "where 20 percent of the district's student body qualified for free and

reduced lunches" (Rebore, p. 8).

A month later, Senator Ted House, Chairperson of the Missouri senate's

Education Committee, crafted an alternative to Senate Bill 360. At the time, he declared

that his intention was to return Kansas City and St. Louis schools to their neighborhood

origins, which predated the desegregation battles. Senator House's bill proposed: (1)

Terminating the financially exhausting desegregation plans in Kansas City and St. Louis;

(2) Allowing both urban districts to receive half of the desegregation savings on a per

capital basis over five years after which all remaining savings would be put back into

general state funds for distribution under a state aid formula; (3) Allowing the state to

spend the remaining half of the desegregation savings on capital expenditures and on

special programs; and, (4) Creating charter schools, though only with the approval of the

local Boards of Education (Rebore, p. 8). Then, in 1998, Missouri became the 27th state

in the union to pass a charter school law. The charter legislation came about largely out

of a bruising, multiple-year, legal struggle, led by three state attorneys general, though

other political interests also weighed in, to end the court-ordered desegregation plans that had been widely cited in the media at the time as being the most expensive desegregation plan in the nation (Crumpley & Horsley, 1994, cited in Ciotti, 1998).

Since its enactment in 1998, Missouri's charter school law has been amended twice, in 2005 and in 2009 (Dent, 2014). In 2012, responding to a spate of charter school closures in Kansas City and St. Louis, and the Governor's challenge to the legislature to pay attention to the recommendations of a *Kauffman Foundation* study of Missouri's charter schools conducted at its second decade's mark (Dent, 2014), the Republican-controlled legislature finally passed a charter expansion law. By making charter school expansion a precondition for waiving key requirements of the NCLB law, the Obama administration had also been nudging states in the direction of expanding charter schools. Whereas the original law limited the location of charter schools in Missouri to Kansas City and St. Louis, the expanded law allowed charter schools already in operation in those two cities to expand into "unaccredited" school districts anywhere in the state. This revision also allowed for the establishment of charter schools in "provisionally" accredited school districts (Cavanagh, 2012). Finally, the revised law created a nine-member Missouri Public Charter School Commission with the authority "to sponsor high quality charter schools throughout the state of Missouri" (Senate Bill 576, 2012). Thus, among other changes, the 2012 charter school expansion law notably removed the two-city restriction in terms of where charter schools could be located within the state of Missouri.

Seventeen years is perhaps still too early to ascertain any enduring effects that the charter law and the schools they created have had on public schooling in Missouri. But,

it is it possible to reach some conclusions as to whether or not charter schools have had a positive impact on student achievement in Kansas City and St. Louis. The fact is that, of the 57 charter schools that opened in Missouri since the state passed its charter law in 1998, 18 have closed, mainly due to charter revocations—11 in St. Louis and 7 in Kansas City (see Appendix K, p. 200). At nearly 32%, Missouri's charter closure rate is double the national closure rate, where, of the "…approximate 6,700 charter schools that were opened…since 1992, only 1,036 had closed [that number equates to] roughly 15.5% of all charter schools being shuttered for cause" (edreform, n.d., 2014). To charter school proponents, this demonstrates that states, as well as charter school sponsors in general, have properly held charter schools accountable.

However, for those who oppose charter schools, these closures have come too late, and at the expense of the very students whose educational interests the charter law was supposed to advance in the first place. According to CREDO's (2009) supplemental report titled *Charter School Performance in Missouri*, certain subgroups of students seem to have fared better as a result of having attended charter schools than have their peers who remained in TPS (see Table 5 below).

Table 5

Missouri's Charter Schools: Who Fares Better?

Groups	Reading	Mathematics
All Students	Significantly better results	Significantly better results
Blacks	Significantly better results	Significantly better results
Hispanics	Significantly better results	Significantly better results

Note. Adapted from Charter School Performance in Missouri, p.12. Retrieved from http://MO_CHARTER SCHOOL REPORT_CREDO.pdf

On the other hand, it is also true that some students attending Missouri TPSs performed as well, if not better than students attending the state's public charter schools. At the same time, it should also be noted that some subgroups have not fared as well (see Table 6, p. 36). What is perhaps most surprising is that the achievement gap seems to persist and even to grow as students have moved up in grades—from elementary to middle to high school:

Table 6

Missouri's Charter Schools: Who Fares Worse?

Groups	Reading	Mathematics
Enrolled 1 Year or Less	Significantly worse	Significantly worse
Students in Poverty	Significantly worse	Significantly worse
ELL	Significantly worse	Significantly worse

Note. Adapted from Charter School Performance in Missouri, p.12. Retrieved from http://MO_CHARTER SCHOOL REPORT_CREDO.pdf

UAPCS. The institutional site for this study was first granted its five-year operational charter by the state of Missouri in 1999. In fact, UAPCS was also among the first schools granted a charter by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MODESE] (http://www.universityacademy.org/home?sid=1, n.d., 2013a). The University of Missouri, Kansas City, an urban research university located in the same city, has served as UAPCS's institutional sponsor/authorizer since that time. After taking a year to plan, the school's founders opened the school's doors to students in August 2000. Operating from a former dairy facility which was leased from its founding sponsor, the school first enrolled students into grades 5 through 7. The original plan was to continue admitting and promoting students until grades 5 through 12 were populated

with students (see http://www.universityacademy.org/home?sid=1, n.d., 2013b).

However, that plan changed with the addition of grades K through 5 when the school

moved to its current location in 2005. UAPCS gives admission preference to students

who reside within the city's boundaries. Admission is by lottery only; notably, the

school's charter includes preferences for siblings as well as for children of staff. The

school's current census is 1,000 students enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade.

The founders of UAPCS have gone to extraordinary lengths and expended

considerable resources to ensure that every student graduates college-ready. Starting in

their junior year, upper school students receive training and coaching on how to

successfully navigate the ACT test. Juniors also receive instruction in career exploration

and in completing the FAFSA—the federal college scholarship application process.

Additionally, all students participate in multiple college and university visits. Then, in

their senior year, the emphasis shifts to college matching—applying and gaining

admission into four colleges or universities. Representatives of colleges routinely visit

the school to make presentations to juniors and seniors in their seminar classes.
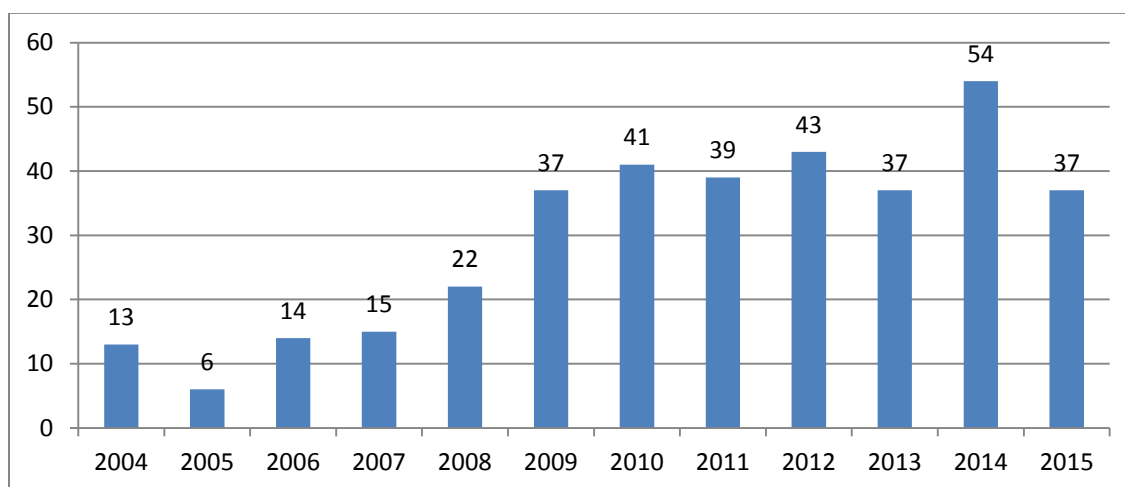
Figure 2

UAPCS: Twelve-Year Graduating Cohorts (2004-2015*).* Source: UAPCS archives.

The start of the 2015 school year marked fifteen years since UAPCS opened its doors to students, and in that time, the school has graduated twelve cohorts of seniors, totaling 358 students (see Figure 2). Nearly 100% of UAPCS graduates have subsequently matriculated into institutions of higher learning. To date, a total of 46 alumni have earned their bachelor's degrees, with about 10 also earning master's degrees; two have been accepted into professional programs in the medical field, and one—a 2007 graduate—has already earned a doctoral degree in Physical Therapy. Perhaps most promising, a large proportion of UAPCS's alumni are still persisting in college, longer than the national average, owing largely to the outreach efforts of the Alumni Success Program (ASP). According to an ASP report which were based on a Pew Research Center's report on the college completion rate of Americans 25- to 29-year old from 1971 to 2012 (Fry & Parker, 2014), alumni of UAPCS graduate from college at rates that are
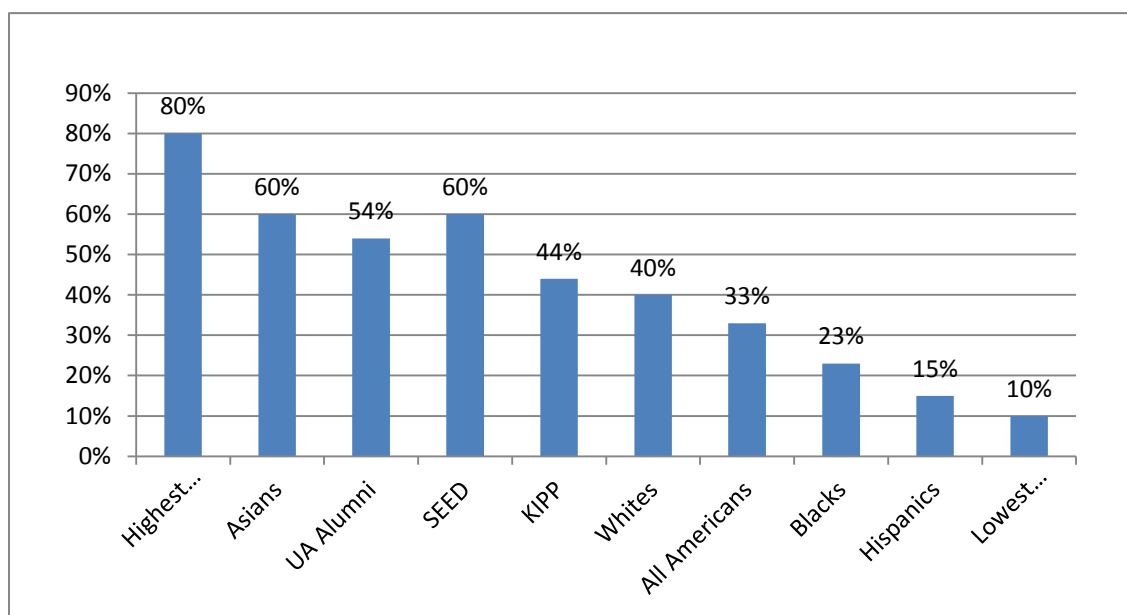
Figure 3

6-Year College Completion Rates, (2004 – 2009): UACPS Cohorts v. Others.

 Source: *Friends of UA's Executive Director's Annual Reports to the Board of Directors.*

higher than the national rate for Americans 25- to 29-year old, by 21%, higher than all KIPP graduates by 10%, and higher than the rate for all whites by 14%. Only three groups posted higher college completion rates than UA alumni: graduates of SEED's residential schools and Asians, both of whose graduates completed college at 60%, only 6% higher than UA alumni, and Americans in the highest income quartile who posted a college completion rate of 80%, besting UA alumni by 16% (see Figure 3).

Summary. Many consider charter schools to be the natural outgrowth of the clamor of urban parents and clergy for some choice in terms of better educational opportunities for their children and grandchildren. Milton Friedman's voucher idea was reborn as charter schools. Charter schools continue to spread across the nation, especially in regions—that are chiefly urban, but increasingly suburban and rural as well. Legislatures and policy makers in these disparate regions view charter schools as the latest "fix" for failing schools—the last chance for students attending chronically under-performing schools. But, while research has continued to show mixed results for charter schools in terms of student achievement, there remain schools, like UAPCS that are matriculating student cohorts who consistently enter and graduate from college.

College Departure and Student Persistence

Out of an earlier collaboration with John Cullen (1973), Victor Tinto began working on a model that would crystallize the problem of college dropout. That effort resulted in the first model that offered a theoretical explanation for the dropout phenomenon that was so conceptually easy to understand that it has largely influenced how other researchers have approached their investigation of the phenomenon. Thanks to Tinto, higher education administrators also began to adjust their institutional policies and

practices in order to reduce student attrition and increase completion rates (Falcone, 2011). Tinto renamed his model the Student Integration Model in 1975, a change that was influenced by two factors: his review of the literature on college dropout as it existed up to that point, and his incorporation of ideas from the earlier work of (Spady, 1971, cited in Demetrious & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). Spady theorized that student attrition was chiefly a problem of poor academic performance that owes much to a paucity of pre-college preparation (Demetrious & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). Tinto also borrowed from the work of Durkheim (quoted in Tinto, 1973), analogizing the problem of dropouts to Durkheim's classic study of suicides. In developing his theory, though, Tinto made a strategic decision to substitute suicide for the notion of departure when describing the college "drop out" experience. Consequentially, many writing in the field now agree that Tinto's enduring contribution to the study of college student departure and persistence remain his rather astute development of a descriptive theory that has become paradigmatic (Braxton, 2000).

As originally developed, the "conceptual schema" (Tinto & Cullen, 1973, p. 42) for college dropout consisted of six variables: (1) *pre-entry attributes*: family background, skills and abilities, and prior schooling; (2) *goals and commitments*: intentions, goals and institutional commitments, and external commitments; (3) *institutional experiences*: academic systems (formal academic performance and informal faculty/staff interactions) and social systems (formal extracurricular activities and peer group interactions); (4) *integration*: fitting in academically and socially; (5) *goals and institutional commitment*: intentions, institutional commitments, and external commitments; (6) *outcomes*: conceptualized as resulting from an integrationist process,

wherein the various elements work together to influence the decision to drop-out or to persist until graduation (Tinto & Cullen, 1973). According to Tinto, the model is best understood as a process and not a definitive pathway (Tinto, 1993). Thus, whether a student decides to persist in an institution of higher learning until graduation or decides to leave that institution, depends to a large extent on whether or not the student perceived the institution and its social and academic systems to have been supportive.
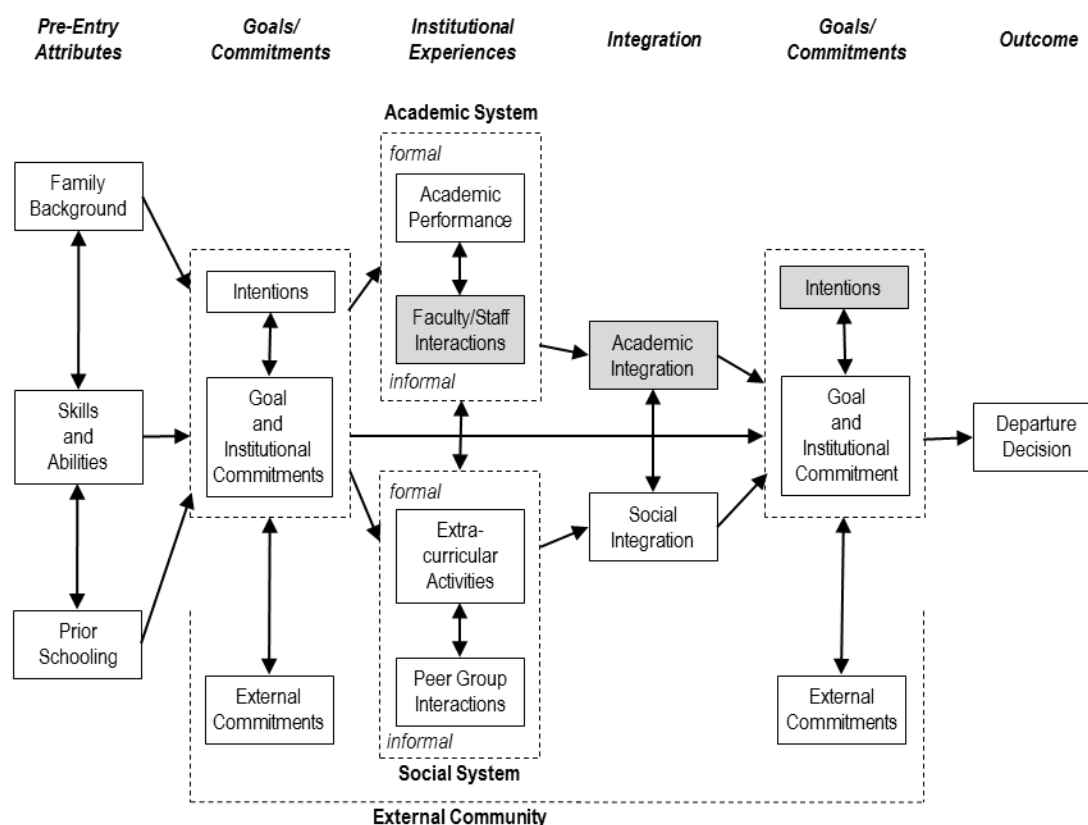
Figure 4. Tinto's (Integrationist) Model of Student Departure

Source: Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, (p. 114).

Moreover, Tinto (1993) has now acknowledged the unique college experiences of various groups such as African American students, students from low-income families, adult students and transfer students, groups that often require specific interventions and

policies if they are to succeed in college. *Leaving College* (Tinto, 1993) laid out a more

nuanced version of the model of Tinto's student integrationist theory, one that takes into

account the growing research focusing on the phenomenon of student departure as well as

efforts by educational institutions to address the problem so as to better retain their

students from year to year until graduation. The revised model maintains the

interactional nature of the key variables that bear upon student attrition or integration

until graduation. For instance, Tinto now places the onus for positive student interactions

with faculty and staff squarely on educational institutions themselves (Tinto, 1993).

Thirty years of research have also explicated the role that factors like motivation,

expectancy, and goal-setting play in student retention and student attrition in college (see

Figure 4, p. 41).

While the outlines of Tinto's model have remained the same as first proposed,

other researchers have raised questions which, in turn, caused Tinto to re-examine the

meaning, as well as the different interpretations that could be applied to aspects of his

model. For instance, (Longwell-Grice & Longwell-Grice, 2008) noted that because of

their backgrounds, students who are working class and first-generation are discomfited by

the idea of approaching college professors or other staff members for support. This has

the effect of denying these students the very support that Tinto considers vital to their

retention. Others (Liu, 2002; Ishitani & DesJardins, 2004; and Ishitani & Snider, 2004)

have raised questions that caused Tinto to address the plight of FGCS and ethnic

minorities. The model is now more explicit in asserting that dropping out of college or

persisting until graduation are distinct intentional decisions that work themselves out over

a dynamic, time-bound process.

While a student is enrolled in college, several factors interact to help that student to either integrate into the academic and social systems of the college or university, to leave academia permanently, or to transfer to another university or college. Central to all of this is the student's sense of integration into the fabric of the institution as manifested in the student's own motivation and degree commitment which is often a surrogate for the intention to earn a degree. One possible explanation for Tinto's model's continuing popularity is that, in addition to appealing to commonsense, aspects of the model have, to varying degrees, been tested and partially supported by different researchers (Ashar & Skenes, 1993; Lundberg, 2010; Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011).

These researchers and others have also highlighted the unique needs of FGCS—a growing subgroup of students whose representation in America's colleges and universities is projected to continue to increase in the years ahead, for demographic and economic reasons. To give a sense of their size in America's colleges and universities, in 1995-1996, Choy (2001) found that 34% of beginning students at America's four-year colleges and universities, and 53% of students starting at two-year colleges were FGCS. Another study found that fully 364,000 of all first-time college freshmen who took the SAT in 2001 were FGCS. Between 1987 and 1996 there was almost a 5% increase in the population of FGCS on America's colleges and universities (Ishitani, 2003).

First-Generation College Students (FGCS). According to Donovan and Johnson, (2005), credit for coining the term "First-Generation College Student" belongs to Adachi, who first used the term to refer to "(s)tudents entering higher education without guidance from a college-educated parent" (p. 33.). Somers, Woodhouse and Cofer (2004) define (FGCS) as "those (students) whose parents had an educational level

of high school diploma or less" (p. 423). For their part, Martinez, Sher, Krull, and Wood (2009) consider any college student whose parents do not hold bachelor's degrees to be a FGCS. However, the term is also a hybrid one, encompassing a subset of non-traditional, generally older students who are entering academia much later in life. Finally, the difficulty of finding a common definition for the phenomenon is complicated by the fact that even the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS, 1988) groups university students into three distinct categories: (1) students whose parents had at most a high school diploma, (2) students whose parents had some experience with college, and, (3) students whose parents hold a bachelor's degree or higher (Chen, 2005; Choy, 2001). One thing is clear, however, as a group, FGCS's differ markedly from their counterparts whose parents hold college degrees. This study assumes the definition of FGCS proposed by Martinez et al. (2009).

Characteristics of FGCS. As a group, FGCS are more likely to be female than male (Chen, 2005; Ishitani, 2006). Furthermore, FGCS's seem to face disadvantages so numerous that researchers routinely list them as a litany:

(a) *Ethnic minority origins*—this is often cited as a surrogate for low acculturation to the social capital found to be essential for college success (Bui, 2002; Choy, 2001; Ishitani, 2006);

(b) *Low Socio-Economic Status*—FGCS typically come to college lacking a variety of social and economic resources (Chen, 2005; Housel & Harvey, 2010);

(c) *Poor performance on or lack of standardized college admissions test, such as the SAT or ACT*—50% vs. 29% of CGCS; further, 40% of FGCS

reported low test scores compared to just 12% of CGCS, (Chen, 2005);

(d) *Lack of higher-level mathematics course in high school*—41% of GGCS

have taken higher-level mathematics courses compared to only 15% of

FGCS (Chen, 2005). Moreover, taking higher-level mathematics courses

has been found to correlate with increased persistence in college (Choy,

2001);

(e) *FGCS were more likely to first enroll in two-year institutions*—(Chen,

2005; Engle, 2007; Engle, Bermeo, & O'Brien, 2007) than at four-year

institutions;

(f) *Poor choosers of college—*In their study of FGCS, Pascarella, Pierson,

Wolniak, and Terenzini (2004) noted that FGCS were more likely to

choose less academically selective institutions, despite being qualified by

grade and entering scores on the ACT or SAT.

The fact that many FGCS who begin college end up not earning a bachelor's

degree has enormous costs both for the individual student and for the nation. According

to Schneider and Yin (2011): "For full-time students who started college in fall 2002

seeking a bachelor's degree but failed to graduate six years later, approximately: (a) $3.8

billion was lost in income; (b) $566 million was lost in federal income taxes; and (c)

$164 million was lost in state income taxes nationwide" (p.2).

FGCS Compared to Second-Generation College Students (SGCS). Any

comparison between students whose parents earned a bachelor's degree and those whose

parents did not attend college ends up being a disadvantageous one for the later (see

Appendix N, page 207). Whether the metric is college enrollment (where there is a gap

of 37% in favor of the SGCS), or earning an associate degree (where the gap climbs to

41%, again in favor of SGCS), or earning a bachelor's degree (where the gap jumps even

higher to 46%), FGCS consistently lag behind SGCS (Engle et al, 2006. p. 14).

Role of College Preparation in College Aspiration. Surprisingly, the disparity

in college aspiration that some researchers have noted between FGCS and SGCS begins

even as early as middle school and seems to continue into high school, even extending to

which students actually take the necessary steps to enroll (Appendix O, p.209) in a four-

year college (Choy, 2001). Furthermore, strong encouragement and support from parents

appear to exert a measurably positive influence on whether those students aspire to, as

well as enroll in, college (Hossler et al., 1999). There is evidence, however, that FGCS

receive even less encouragement and support and, in some instances, receive

discouragement from their non-college educated parents when it comes to college-going

(London, 1989, 1992; Terenzini et al., 1996).

Summary. Victor Tinto's theory of college departure and student persistence in

college provides a paradigm for understanding the challenges faced by students entering

college for the first time, especially FGCS. As the population grows more diverse and as

international competition mounts, America can ill-afford public schools that produce

students who lack the skills to enter and complete college or who enter the workforce

needing remedial training. Public secondary schools, including charter schools like

UAPCS, must take seriously the job of getting their students college- and career-ready.

However, meeting that challenge calls for teachers, counselors, and school leaders to first

understand the unique needs of FGCS. Secondly, teachers, counselors, and school leaders

must ensure that these students are adequately prepared for the rigors of college. A

critical challenge for high schools continues to be finding ways to correct the students'
skill deficiencies so that they, too, can succeed at the college level, without having to take
remedial classes that often don't count towards graduation.

College Readiness and College Success Factors

Many high school seniors matriculating into the nation's colleges and universities
have been found to be neither "ready for college and career…[nor ready to] succeed in
entry-level or credit-bearing college courses leading to a baccalaureate or certificate, nor
[ready for] career pathway-oriented training programs without needing remedial or
developmental coursework" (Conley, 2012, p.1). As a consequence of this misalignment
between their high school preparation and the heightened expectations that colleges have
of their students, as many as 41% of students enter college unprepared (Gigliotti, 2012).
This, partially explains why, even though many high school graduates enter college fully
intending to earn a degree in four or six years, only a few actually succeed in doing so
(Chen & Carroll, 2005; Conley, 2007).

For instance, of high school seniors who took the ACT test in 2010, only 24% met
ACT's college readiness benchmarks in the core tested areas of mathematics, science,
reading, and writing (ACT, Inc. 2010). Further, according to Complete College America
(2011), 50% of students pursuing an associate degree and 20% of those studying for a
bachelor's degree, end up taking remedial or developmental courses as a pre-condition
for taking credit-bearing coursework. This has the effect of discouraging these students,
saddling them with remedial coursework that doesn't count toward graduation and which,
in fact, delays their graduation from college. In some cases, these detours and the

financial liabilities that attend them often result in students dropping out of college altogether.

Adelman (2004) reviewed the college transcripts of high school 12th grade cohorts from 1972, 1982, and 1992, using data from three longitudinal studies designed and executed by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES): (1) The National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972, beginning in the spring of 1972 with a national sample of 22,500 12th graders, and followed subgroups through 1986. The postsecondary transcripts of 12,600 cohort members were gathered in 1984, at which time cohort members had reached the age of 30 or 31. (2) The High School and Beyond Longitudinal Study of 1980 sophomores (HS&B/So: 80-92), which began with a national sample of U.S. high school sophomores in 1980 and followed cohort subgroups through 1992. The postsecondary transcripts of 8,400 cohort members were gathered in 1993 when most cohort members were 29- or 30-year old. Finally, (3) The National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS: 88/2000), which began with a national sample of 25,000, 8th graders in U.S. middle schools in 1988 and followed subgroups until 2000 when the postsecondary transcripts of 8,900 cohort members were gathered at around age 26 or 27. Among other findings, Adelman (2004) noted that, between 1982 and 1992, the number of college students requiring remedial reading, who had also not earned postsecondary credentials, had risen by 13%—from 57% to 70%, (p. viii).

But producing high school graduates who are both college- and career-ready requires high schools to inculcate in students a set of abilities, skills, and dispositions. Conley (2012) recently reduced *college readiness* to four emblematic domains: (1) *Think*—cognitive strategies such as problem formulation, research, interpretation,

communicating with precision and accuracy; (2) *Know*—content knowledge such as the structure of knowledge, technical knowledge and skills, challenge level, value, attribution, and effort; (3) *Go*—transitional knowledge and skills such as postsecondary awareness, postsecondary costs, matriculation, career awareness, role and identity, and self-advocacy; and (4) *Act*—skills and techniques that promote ownership of learning as well as learning how to learn.

Role of Pre-College Academic Factors. Finishing high school competently is critically important to students' future prospects. For instance, several studies show that a student's high school performance has significant impact on the student's college performance. Researchers (Lotkowski, Robbins, & Noeth, 2004; and, French, Immekus, & Oakes, 2005) concluded that a student's high school grade point average [GPA] strongly impacted the student's college freshman year GPA. Other studies (Lam, Doverspike, & Mawasha, 1999; Ohland & Zhang, 2002) found that high school GPA positively impacted college persistence. French, Immekus, and Oakes (2005), and Murphy, Gaughan, Hume, and Moore (2010) also found that high school GPA had a positive impact on a student's likelihood of graduating from college. Additionally, Lam et al. (1999) suggested that doing well on standardized tests positively impacted a student's persistence throughout college. Finally, Dougherty, Mellor, and Jian (2006) observed that the opportunity to pursue AP courses, and to experience success in them, have been found to positively impact college graduation. In the same vein, taking dual-credit courses was found to have significantly positive impact on first semester college GPA as well as persistence in college, at least into the second semester. According to (Eimers, & Mullen, 2003; Karp, Calcagno, Hughes, Jeong, & Bailey, 2007; Hughes,

2010; Ramsey-White, 2012) students who took dual-credit courses expressed more confidence in college and were also more likely to attend four-year colleges.

Social Capital and the Role of Non-cognitive Factors. The term social capital originated with the French philosopher, Bourdieu. *Social capital* is essentially a sociological term: "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (Bourdieu 1985, p. 248, quoted in Portes, 1998).

Other researchers have applied variants of Bourdieu's conceptualization to study issues of social mobility and educational attainment; however, the essence of the term remains the provision of mentorship and advice, access to which these students would not otherwise have (Portes, 1998). Coleman (1990), who has also been credited with introducing the idea of *social capital* to the field of sociology of education, defined the term as "…the set of resources that inhere in family relations and in community social organizations and that are useful for the cognitive or social development of a child or a young person" (Coleman, 1990, p. 300, quoted in Gofen, 2007, p.6). Social capital manifests itself in three ways: (1) by exerting social control, (2) by offering support within the family context, and finally, (3) by extending its influences to networks of resources beyond the context of the immediate family.

Thus, social capital supplies a network of benefits that redound to the individual as well as to the group. The benefits of social relationships, a common surrogate for social capital, and the significant role such relationships play in the educational development of social skills in students, especially minority students, has been well-documented: Farmer-Hinton and Adams (2006) noted that access to social capital

enhanced students' self worth and their development of social skills; Stanton-Salazar, (1997) and Gasman and Palmer (2008) found that social capital, in the form of bonding relationships with instructors and others who served as role models and mentors, boosted students' educational attainment, especially for minority students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

In a three-year qualitative study of a college preparatory program offered to minority students enrolled in public high schools, Tierney and Jun (2001) concluded "…that a program based on what the researchers termed 'cultural integrity' (in other words, feeling socially and culturally accepted) has significant implications for increasing access to postsecondary education for those students who were most 'at risk' of otherwise not being able to gain access to a college education" (p. 207). Dika and Singh (2002) cautioned that while a preponderance of the research they reviewed for a critical synthesis into how the idea of social capital was being applied within the field of education showed that social capital and certain psychosocial factors were positively linked, as a concept, *social capital* still lacked precision (p. 43). However, despite this imprecision, the importance of social capital as a factor in the college success of FGCS is undeniable—as a means by which FGCS gain the resources they typically enter college without.

While performance on standardized tests remain critical to college success (Engels, et al., 2006), there is evidence that these standardized tests do not now give universities all the answers they need to link students' college readiness to their subsequent college performance. Accordingly, Sedlacek (2011) has proposed that colleges and universities consider using some non-cognitive measures in their admission

decisions. This is especially critical at a time when non-traditional and FGCS are a growing presence on America's college campuses. Sedlacek (2011) went on to list eight such variables: (1) positive self-concept, confidence and independence, (2) realistic self-appraisal, (3) understanding and knowing how to handle racism and to navigate the system, (4) setting long-term goals, (5) access to a strong support person, (6) leadership, (7) community, and (8) the wherewithal to acquire knowledge in non-traditional ways.

Sedlacek & Sheu (2004) also noted that non-cognitive or non-academic variables have become so important that even the Gates Millennium Scholars (GMS) program now uses them in conjunction with GPA and individual prospective essays, to select scholars. Follow up studies have also shown these students to persist into their sophomore years in college at higher rates. A possible explanation could be that these measures pick up certain attributes crucial to college success that do not register in traditional standardized tests. Cokely (2000), in his investigation of academic self-confidence, factors that predict academic self-confidence, and the relationship of academic self-confidence to academic achievement among African-American college students, found that, among African-American students attending HBCUs, the quality of student-faculty interactions was a better predictor of academic self-confidence, while GPA was a better predictor of academic self-confidence for African-American students attending Predominantly White Colleges and Universities [PWCUs] (p. 154).

Role of Parents, Family, and Peers. That parents play foundational roles in helping their students graduate from high school and enter college is a fairly settled idea (Tierney, 2002; Gofen, 2007). However, parents' roles extend beyond influencing their children's college aspirations to serving as a fount of advice throughout the college years.

Yazedjian, Toews, Sevin, and Purswell (2008) found that despite their good high school marks, students often arrive on college campuses totally surprised by the amount of work they must do to succeed there: "… many students [who] reported feeling prepared to do well academically, found that they had underestimated the amount of work necessary in order for a student to be successful in college. Other students reported that their high school study habits were no longer effective in college" (Yazedjian et al., 2006, p.1).

Another way parents carry out their increasingly complex role is through the memorable messages they pass on to their children, or in terms of the general advice they give their children about the importance of earning a college degree (Kranstuber, Carr & Hosek, 2012). In a study of FGCS recruited from the *Mizrahim,* an ethnic group whose members typically live in Israel's poorer neighborhoods, Gofen (2007) reported that parental influences were both subtle and direct, always in the background in the respondents' day-to-day family lives, and highly consequential as well. Gofen (2007) concluded that parental influences operate on three dimensions: (1) time horizon, (2) interpersonal relationships, and (3) family values. The implication is that the interactions between these three dimensions essentially constitute the mechanism by which FGCS break the cycle of poverty and underachievement (p.12).

Then, in their longitudinal study of 100 ethnic minorities who were FGCS, Dennis, Phinney, and Chauteco (2005) found, among others results, that the support of peers or the lack thereof, strongly predicted college GPA when family support and peer support variables were a part of a regression analysis (p. 234). Further, Winston (1999) suggested that the quality of peers that a college student encounters upon arriving on a college campus is at least as important as the quality of the professors who will teach her

on that campus. Peers exert an influence on students' college aspiration, and this influence even follows the student to college. Winston (1999) also found that, together, professors and peers constitute inputs into processes that ultimately determine the quality of education the student will receive (p. 17).

Additionally, in their longitudinal study of eight high school students, Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper (1999) found that by itself, family support was not solely determinative of a student's decision to enroll in college. Friends were also an important influence, though not at the predisposition stage. Hossler et al.'s finding supported an earlier study done by Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith (1989), which found that peers do impact a student's college aspirations. On the other hand, Singham (2003) found that peers could actually have a negative influence on a student's educational aspirations, which seems to corroborate Ogbu's (2003) assertion that African-American male students often perform poorly in school, and look down on their high-achieving peers for "acting white," in order to fit in. However, in a study of 22 high-achieving African-American students, Newman, Myers, Newman, Lohman, and Smith (2006), found that the effect of peers on a student's academic achievement could be both positive and negative. Finally, in a longitudinal study conducted at a highly selective research university, Ost (2010) used administrative data to investigate the determinants of persistence among entering and returning students. His most important finding was that the very students who were most at-risk of failing to persist in college were also the ones most likely to be positively influenced by association with higher-ability peers (p.14).

Role of Grit and Student Disposition in College Persistence. In addition to recognizing the importance of non-cognitive factors in the college persistence and

subsequent college success of FGCS, researchers have also noted the crucial role that a student's disposition plays in his or her ability to persevere and, even rebound, when faced with difficult or challenging situations (Tierney & Jun, 2001). Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, and Kelly (2007) introduced the construct of *grit* as a factor in goal attainment and tested it in a series of five studies, the fourth of which was with West Point cadets. The authors concluded that "in every field, grit may be as essential as talent to high accomplishment" (p. 1100).

Duckworth and Quinn (2009) also found that grit "predicted achievement in challenging domains over and beyond measures of talent" (p. 166). Furthermore, in a study to validate a short-form, grit instrument [Grit-S], Duckworth and Quinn (2009) noted that "individuals high in grit do not swerve from their goals, even in the absence of positive feedback" (p. 166). It seems plausible, therefore, that the ability to commit to a long-term goal would be equally beneficial in the context of college. Secondly, because college is a long-term proposition, it is equally plausible that succeeding at it may require a measure of fortitude or grit. According to this line of research, those FGCSs who persist in college all the way to graduation may also be the same ones who possess within their dispositional make-up, a certain degree of grit.

Facione, Facione, and Giancarlo (1996) have proposed the California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory (CCTDI), using the 1990 Delphi study expert consensus description of the ideal critical thinker as an organizational starting point. The CCTDI measures the strength of a person's disposition toward or away from critical thinking across the following seven scales: (1) open-mindedness—tolerance for new ideas, (2) analycity—being alert to potential problems, (3) truth-seeking—intellectual honesty, (4)

systematicity—being organized, diligent, and persevering, (5) self-confidence—trust in one's ability to think critically in leading others, (6) inquisitiveness—being intellectually curious, and (7) maturity—a measure of judiciousness in reading complex situations. Moreover, in an exploratory study investigating the role of epistemological beliefs and dispositions on learners' thinking, Valanides and Angeli (2008) found that: (1) students who believed that learning was a slow, gradual process were more disposed toward open-mindedness, maturity, truth-seeking, analycity, and systematicity in their thinking; and (2) that thinking through a problem with someone else, collaborating with others, in other words, tended to dispose learners towards drawing deeper inferences and making more nuanced value judgments (Valanides, & Angeli, 2008, p. 215).

Summary. To recap, then, college success seems to require preparation, hard work, postponement of immediate gratification, commitment to earning a degree, as well as access to a variety of networked support systems. College-readiness also matters because it requires a student to master skills in four broad domains and to sustain those skills until he or she earns a college degree. In addition to the traditional academic or cognitive skills, college success also calls for a host of non-cognitive skills that students, especially FGCS, may not have acquired prior to entering college. This is where such resource-seeking behavior as networking, creativity, and grit enter the picture. Parents, family and peers also exert some influence on the college choice decisions of students, especially FGCS. While the role of grit is still not fully understood, it does appear to be an ingredient in the success of students, though it remains essentially an imprecise term. Nor has grit, as a construct, become widely accepted in the field of education. Disposition is also important in that it seems to play a role in a student's ability to learn and grow

intellectually.

      Chapter Summary. Chapter two presented and reviewed literature deemed pertinent to the study: first, a brief history of public education in America, including attempts over the years to reform the system to better meet the needs of society, parents and students; second, choice, vouchers, and market-oriented reform including the peculiar problems of urban or inner-city education, and Missouri's charter school legislative history were reviewed; third, Tinto's theory of college departure along with the phenomenon of first-generation college students and the challenges these students face in transitioning to college were reviewed; and, fourth, other salient factors that bear on college success, including such factors as the importance of pre-college preparation, non-academic factors such as the role of parents, family, peers, the student's disposition, all of which impact student's persistence in college until degree attainment were also reviewed.

Chapter Three

Methodology

In their study investigating possible re-segregation of African-American students in charter schools, Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley and Wang (2010) suggested the need for research into charter schools that are managing to turn out "engaged, empathic and responsible citizens and to provide opportunities for exposure to a wide variety of social and cultural networks that help open doors to college and career opportunities." (p.18). Frankenberg et al.'s (2010) suggestion as well as Bloch's (2008) wonderment about inner-city students provided the central impetus for this study. Accordingly, the purpose of this phenomenological, qualitative study was to explore, by means of in-depth interviews, the lived educational experiences of six alumni of an urban college-preparatory public charter high school, their experiences while enrolled in high school, as well as their experiences in college, culminating in their successful completion of the requirements for bachelors' degrees.

Chapter three detailed the research approach used in the study, the author's research perspective, rationale for the study's design, as well as a description of the study's population and sample. Information needed to conduct the study, including the questions used and where those questions originated were explained. Since in-depth interview was the means of data collection for the study, the procedures employed thereto, as well as the methods, including the use of the computer software *NVivo 11 for Mac* to organize and analyze the data were also detailed. Finally, the limitations of the study were outlined.

Author's Research Perspective

As long as I can remember, I have always loved reading, thinking about what I read, and explaining it all to anyone who would listen. As often as not, my choice of reading titles has ranged from autobiographies to biographies. For the most part, biographies are life stories of men and women as told by others. Autobiographies, on the other hand, tell their authors' life-stories in the authors' own words, making them excellent windows through which authors disclose perceived transformational events in their lives to readers. Something of that life-stories approach to reading has continued to shape my practices as a teacher, assistant principal, and now, principal. Tong, Sainsbury and Craig (2007) asserted, in arguing for the inclusion of researchers' personal and professional perspectives, that:

> Qualitative researchers closely engage with the research process and
> [with] participants and are therefore unable to completely avoid
> personal bias. Instead researchers should recognize and clarify for
> readers their identity, credentials, occupation, gender, experience and
> training. Subsequently, this improves the credibility of the findings by
> giving readers the ability to assess how these factors might have
> influenced the researchers' observations and interpretations. (p. 351)

The fall of the 2015-2016 academic year marked my tenth year as principal of the Upper School at (UAPCS). Combining those ten years with my tenures of employment elsewhere, this means that the entirety of my 26-year career as an educator has been spent in public schools. To me, all education is a process of equipping young learners to pursue and secure meaningful lives for themselves and for their significant others. This

has certainly been true in my case—both intellectually and experientially. My siblings and I were FGCS long before the term was even coined. Against incredible social and cultural pressures, our father managed to secure a fourth grade education at a time when Nigeria was still a British colony. But even that meager education meant that he could read and write. Father was able to parlay those skills into some success as an importer and businessman as we were growing up. Thus, insofar as formal, western education was concerned, my father was an early adopter, and an inveterate proselytizer. My siblings and I all attended good boarding schools in Nigeria, where my beliefs about education began to take form.

It was in boarding school that I first encountered a phenomenon that first convinced me, and convinces me still, that education is, indeed, the great equalizer. The phenomenon, a simple one indeed, was that the brightest students always seemed to come from the humblest of economic circumstances. These students just seemed to want their education more ardently, which meant that they were always the studious ones. Consequently, it did not surprise anyone that they were always registering the highest and best scores. It was not until I came to live and study in the United States that the phenomenon I had grown up taking for granted, got turned on its head. Contrast that with my experience in public education here, with the poor routinely underperforming when compared to their more affluent peers. Still none of that affected my educational philosophy, which had long been shaped by my earlier experiences as a boy growing up in Nigeria. The logic of my philosophy runs something like this: hard work and innate intelligence will always trump high economic status. I witnessed this firsthand at Methodist College Uzuakoli. Since low economic status, clearly, did not limit my poorer

classmates' ability to achieve, then, low status should not be solely determinative of a

student's academic achievement in America's public schools as is so often the case.

Perhaps, this is where I should stipulate that the six participants in this study were

former students of mine. Needless to say, these "former students" are now college

graduates, young men and women in their own rights. As such, they engage the world

with their own points of view, using their own voices, and with a coalescing set of

convictions about why things are the way they are, including how the world works. They

have their own answers for why things work and their own explanations for when things

do not work. Because the six participants were all former students of the Upper School, I

have made every effort to approach each one of them as a co-investigator with a voice in

this study rather than as mere subjects. Accordingly, the role of interviewer was

transferred to another educator who never had the participants as students. She was then

trained on the rudiments of a good interview, and how to take notes, and audio-record the

participants' responses for later transcription. A former architect turned Teach for

America mathematics teacher, the interviewer has taught in the Upper School since 2012.

There are at least two sources of implicit bias that follow upon the foregoing: (1)

My very human desire to see the school at which I am employed as principal, as well as

my "former students," in a rosy light; and (2), My former students' equally human desire

to please and not disappoint me. Recognizing these potential biases, I have taken several

procedural steps, including the aforementioned use of a separate interviewer in order to

blunt the effects of my apparent subjectivity. I have also taken every opportunity to

triangulate information sources wherever possible, engaging in *member checks*

throughout the process, which is allowing participants to review interview transcripts

immediately following the interview. Member-checking also served the purpose of validating and reconfirming or correcting any misapprehensions of each participant's views as expressed in the interviews.

According to Morrow (2005), *bracketing* is "the process of becoming aware of one's implicit assumptions and predispositions and setting them aside to avoid having them unduly influence the research" (p. 254). This is another practice that is quite commonplace in qualitative research, which I have adopted for this study. Students' lived experiences remain an underexplored source of information upon which to base educational policy, educational theorizing, educational praxis, and educational decisions. Like Maslow (1971), I believe that individuals who have experienced a phenomenon first hand are in the best possible position to tell us about that phenomenon and to do so in ways that provide meaningful and fresh insight.

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

A phenomenological, qualitative research design was selected for this study. Polkinhorne (2005) observed that only participants who have had direct experience of the phenomenon being studied are in a position to provide the researcher information likely to advance the study. Furthermore, Lester (1999) has asserted that:

> The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation. In the human sphere this normally translates into gathering 'deep' information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions and participant

observation, and representing it from the perspective of the research participant[s]. (p. 1)

Moustakas (1994) further argued that phenomenological research "involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning" (cited in Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p.32). In addition, McCaslin and Scott (2003), in their paper on *"The Five-Question Method for Framing a Qualitative Research Study*," observed that, in phenomenological research, "(t)he researcher reduces data gathered as lengthy interviews describing the shared experiences of several informants to a central meaning, or 'essence' of the experience" (p. 449).

According to Seidman (2006), the best way to understand social abstractions such as "education" is through the experiences of the individuals whose work and lives constitute those abstractions. Finally, Stark and Trinidad (2010), in their article on the choice of strategies available to qualitative researchers, asserted that:

Phenomenologists are interested in common features of the lived experience. Although diverse samples might provide a broader range from which to distill the essence of the phenomenon, data from only a few individuals who have experienced the phenomenon—and who can provide a detailed account of their experience—might suffice to uncover its core elements. Typically, sample sizes in phenomenological studies range from 1 to 10 persons. (p. 1373)

In-depth interviewing was the primary means by which data collection was done for this study. According to DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), "in-depth interviews

are used to discover shared understandings of a particular group…[who also] share critical similarities related to the research question" (p. 317). Hess-Biber and Leavy (2011) stated that the in-depth interview "seeks knowledge from the respondent's point of view" (p.127). Therefore, the researcher is often considered the instrument in qualitative research. Perhaps this view owes much of its currency to the fact that the interviewer is essentially the conduit for what is said and heard in the give and take of the interview:

> At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience…Being interested in others is the key to some of the basic assumptions underlying interviewing technique. (Seidman, 2006, p. 9)

Creswell (2003; 2007) recommended that any researcher employing the qualitative interview as a method of data collection must pay special attention to three factors: (1) interview preparation, (2) formulation of effective research questions, and (3) the implementation of the actual interview. Rubin and Rubin (1995) highlighted the cultivation of trust between the interviewer and the interviewee as being a crucial ingredient in successful interviews. Rubin et al. (1995) further asserted that the "interviewer's enthusiasm for the topic and interest in what is being said encourages people to expand on what they say" (p. 143). According to Anderson (2010), "Qualitative research involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data that are not easily reduced to numbers. These data [is] related to the social world, and to the concepts and behaviors of people within [that world]" (p. 1).

McNamara (2009) singled out the preparation stage as being more determinative of the success or failure of the research effort. McNamara (2009) suggested eight

important factors that researchers must include as part of their interview preparation stage:

- choose a setting without distraction

- explain the purpose of the interview

- clearly address the issue of confidentiality

- explain how the interview will unfold

- communicate how long the interview will last

- provide an e-mail or cell phone number the participants can use to contact you as the interviewer

- provide an opportunity for participants to ask any question they might have prior to beginning the interview

- do not count on your memory to remember every answer given (as cited in Turner, 2010, p. 757.)

Population of Interest

The sample for this research study consisted of six alumni of UAPCS who met the study's criteria. In all, three females ($N=3$) and three males ($N=3$) were selected for the study because each went on to earn a bachelor's degrees after graduating from UAPCS. Participants were also differentiated by year of graduation as follows: One male graduated from UAPCS in 2008, two males and two females graduated in 2009, and one female graduated in 2010. The population of interest consisted of graduates of a college preparatory public charter school located in a mid-western city. Of special interest is the fact the UAPCS was in its fifteenth year of existence at the time of this study. In that time, the school has graduated twelve cohorts totaling 358 students (see Fig. 2, p. 37).

According to Devers and Frankel (2000):

> Purposive sampling strategies are designed to enhance understanding
>
> of selected individuals' or group's experience[s]…Researchers seek to
>
> accomplish this goal by selecting 'information-rich' cases, that is
>
> individuals, groups, organizations, or behaviors that provide the
>
> greatest insight into the research question." (p. 264)

Other researchers (Creswell, 2003; Bunce, Guest, & Johnson, 2006; Polkinghorne, 1989) have suggested that interviewing 5 to 25 individuals would be sufficient to explicate a phenomenon, especially for studies whose population is characteristically homogeneous or similar, as is the case here.

The Research Sample. The six individuals who participated in this study were, therefore, selected using a purposive sampling procedure from cohorts of alumni who graduated from UAPCS between 2008 and 2010. The span of years from which participants were ultimately chosen was dictated by the fact that it provided the best chance of picking those who would have had the opportunity to earn a college degree in as much as six years. In his study of sample size and saturation in qualitative Ph.D. studies in which interviews were used to gather information, Mason (2010) examined a total of 560 qualitative studies across thirty methodological approaches. He found that the "…phenomenological studies identified in his study had at least six participants" (n. d.). The number six, therefore, became the floor for the study. Each participant selected for the current study met two additional criteria: (1) graduating from UAPCS; and, (2) enrolling in, and subsequently graduating from college within six years of graduating from UAPCS. As candidates were identified and contacted they were asked to suggest

other alumni who had also earned college degrees, in a process commonly referred to as snowballing. This was also how the first five participants were selected. According to Biernacki and Waldorf (1981), the snowballing method "yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest" (p. 141). Some qualitative researchers (Lee, Lim, Fullerton & Sandler, 2010; and Atkins & Flint, 2001) situate snowball sampling within a historical context that includes contact-tracing or link-tracing strategies that have been used to study populations of interest in sociological and health-related studies that are ordinarily difficult to reach.

The sixth and final study participant was suggested to the researcher by one of the first five participants because she felt that the challenges this one candidate had faced and overcome might strengthen the study. Specifically, the fact that this last candidate's college trajectory included an unplanned departure from one college, transferring to, and graduating from another college meant that her perceptions might differ from those of the others who graduated from the same college that they begun their college career. In other words, inviting her to participate in the study would likely provide a different viewpoint than those of the other five, and, would therefore, be more likely to strengthen the study—especially if her "different" perspectives on the experience of attending and completing contradicted any of the other five participants' perspectives in any significant way. Securing her agreement to participate in the study brought the research sample up to six—three females and three males.

Next, each of the six candidates was contacted, either by phone or by e-mail, and formally invited to participate in the study. But, prior to the actual interview, each

participant was given an "Informed Consent to Participate" Form (Appendix C, p. 159). The informed consent form included an 'opt out' clause, meaning that, in addition to the study being entirely voluntary, participants could also have withdrawn their participation at any time of their choosing as the study progressed. Following a respected practice in qualitative research, participants were also issued pseudonyms to assure anonymity. Age and college graduation information were as reported by the participants, other demographic information was collected through a brief survey that began the initial in-depth interview. All demographic information collected from the survey was checked against UAPCS's archival data both for reconfirmation and for further corroboration.

Participants' Descriptive Information. Brief biographical information about each of the study's participants, including age, occupation, and education follow:

Marcus is a 25 year-old, African-American male. He graduated from UAPCS in 2008. After high school, he went on to attend a small, four-year, private university on a football scholarship. He subsequently earned a BA degree in 2013. At the time of the study he was employed in the field in which he earned his college degree. He was planning to enroll in graduate school in the near future.

Julia is a 25 year-old, African-American female who graduated from UAPCS in 2009. She then attended a flagship, mid-western research university, earning a BS degree in 2013. She recently moved to a large, southern metropolis where she was living at the time of this study.

Barbara is a 24 year-old, African-American female. A former Kauffman Scholar, she graduated from UAPCS in 2009. She attended college at a flagship, mid-western research university, graduating with a BS degree in 2013. At the time of the

study she was enrolled in graduate school, pursuing a professional degree in the medical field.

Cantu is a 24 year-old, African-American male. A former Kauffman Scholar, he graduated from UAPCS in 2009. He next attended a flagship, mid-western research university, earning a BA in 2013. At the time of the study he was pursuing graduate studies at a state university in the western United States.

Quinton is a 23 year-old, African-American male who graduated from UAPCS in 2009. He then went on to attend a flagship, mid-western research university, where he earned a BA in 2013. At the time of the study he was pursuing a professional degree in the medical field.

Juanita is a 23 year-old, African-American female. She graduated from UAPCS in 2010. After a year at a southern, HBCU, she transferred to a mid-western, research university closer to home, earning a BA in 2014. She was subsequently hired in her major field of study. At the time of this study, she was also completing a master's degree at the same university where she had earned her bachelor's degree.

Information Needed to Conduct the Study

In qualitative research, the researcher is often considered the research instrument (Chenail, 2009). Yet, according to Poggenpoel and Myburgh (2003), unless adequate attention is paid to field preparation, to researcher reflexivity, to humility, and to triangulating information sources whenever and wherever possible, the very idea of "researcher as instrument" runs the risk of potentially introducing, perhaps the greatest threat to trustworthiness. As is common in phenomenological methodology, a set of questions was adapted from Davidson et al.'s CPQ (2010) and used, both as the interview

instrument, and as probes for deeper insight as well as to check for consistency in terms of what participants asserted in their interviews. For an overview of the CPQ instrument (see Appendix E, p. 163-164). The grand tour question for this study was: *What stands out to you about your college experience? Specifically, what types of things enabled you to succeed in earning a four-year degree within six years when statistics show that most African-American FGCS's do not end up graduating?* Grand tour questions are often used in qualitative research to elicit respondents' true feelings about a phenomenon in a fairly focused way (Spiggle, 1994; Spradley, 1979; Siedman, 1991; Grunig, 2002; Mandich, Polatajko, and Rogers, 2003; and Kairuz, & O'Brien, 2007). Two interviews, the initial one and a follow-up interview, were conducted with each participant for this study.

Participants' responses in the initial in-depth interviews were transcribed, collated, and separately reviewed and *member-checked* with each participant. Discrepancies were resolved and emergent themes noted and used to further refine the initial questions for a second round of follow-up interviews. Responses from the second, follow-up interviews were also transcribed, collated, and individually reviewed with participants. These reviews served to verify as well as clarify any confusion in meaning that might exist in the transcripts. Transcripts were finally coded and analyzed for emergent and recurring themes, and these themes were further analyzed for new insights. These, as well as the major thematic findings were then reviewed with participants before arriving at the study's conclusions.

This study's framework consisted of four ideas whose convergence essentially shaped the participants' high school experiences: First, a brief history of public school

reform in America, which has had, as its ultimate goal, the improvement of individuals and their communities was explored. Second, choice-based education reform as an idea key to understanding the phenomenon of public charter schools, especially schools like UAPCS with a mission of preparing students for college success, was explored as yet another frame. Third, Tinto's work on college departure, retention and persistence until graduation (1975, 1987a, 1987b, 1993) especially as it relates to first-generation college students (FGCS) was explored. The work of other researchers (Metz, 2002; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Davidson, Beck and Milligan, 2009; Ishitani, & DesJardins, 2002; and Ishitani, & Snider, 2004) who have enhanced Tinto's work on college departure and college persistence by verifying aspects and challenging other aspects of the theory aiming to improve the theory overall, were also explored. Notably, these researchers have added the perspective of minorities to our understanding of persistence and retention, inasmuch as the six participants in this study were all African-American and FGCS. Fourth, the concept of college readiness (Conley, 2012) provided a special lens for understanding these respondents' lived experiences as they navigated their respective ways through high school, entering college and persisting until they earned their college degree. Parenthetically, six years has become the typical length of time required to earn a college degree in the United States (NCES, 2014).

Importantly, the literature review undertaken for this study provided multiple lenses through which the responses of participants to the in-depth interview questions were ultimately evaluated. Four research questions guided this study's exploration of the lived educational experiences of six African-American alumni of UAPCS who subsequently enrolled in college and earned college degrees:

1. Could participants recall any academic factors, or incidents that either empowered them or that became obstacles they had to overcome on their way to earning a college degree? (In-depth interview questions numbers 1, 2, 3, 8).

2. What else about participants' lived college experiences as graduates of an urban, college-preparatory public charter school, helped them to successfully navigate and complete college? (In-depth interview questions numbers 4, 5, 6, 7, 9).

3. Were there any other non-academic factors that participants perceived to have impacted their college journeys—either negatively or positively? (In-depth interview questions numbers 10, 11, 12, 13).

4. To what extent did being committed to earning a degree play a discernible role in participants' college successes? (In-depth interview questions numbers 14, 15).

Between the literature review, the demographic survey that preceded the initial interview, and participants' responses to the 15-question, in-depth interview protocol, answers to the research questions were gathered. The answers were then grouped into categories that made the most sense in terms of explicating the phenomenon under investigation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 119).

How the In-depth Interview Questions Were Derived

The Davidson et al., (2009) college persistence questionnaire (CPQ) supplied the questions for the in-depth interviews. Because the CPQ remained faithful to Tinto's schema which essentially undergirded it, I felt free to pick and choose among CPQ

questions in assembling the final list of questions for the in-depth interview. Some

questions were included because they best addressed a particular RQ; some questions

were included to further probe the participant's initial responses; other questions serve

the purpose of establishing and verifying the veracity of a previous responses. It is, also

important to bear in mind that the questions that make up the 15-item, in-depth interview

protocol (see Appendix H, p.172) basically follow Tinto's organizational schemes and

terminology. For instance, to answer RQ1, three questions (#1, #2, #3), addressing

academic integration and one, (#8), addressing *social integration* were borrowed from

the Davidson instrument to compose questions number (1, 2, 3, 8) of the in-depth

interview protocol. To answer RQ2, two questions (#4, #5) addressing *academic*

integration, two questions (#6, #7), addressing *social integration*, and one question, (#9),

addressing *supportive services satisfaction* were borrowed from the Davidson instrument

to compose questions number (4, 5, 6, 7, and 9) of the in-depth interview protocol. To

answer RQ3, one question (#10) addressing *supportive services satisfaction, and* three

questions (#11, #12, and #13), addressing *degree commitment* were borrowed from the

Davidson instrument to compose questions number (10, 11, 12, and 13) of the in-depth

interview protocol. And, to answer RQ4, one question (#14) addressing *institutional*

commitment, and one question (#15), addressing *academic commitment* were taken from

the Davidson instrument to compose questions number (14, and 15) of the in-depth

interview protocol. In the fifth and final section of the in-depth interview protocol titled

"Advice to the Next Generation of College Aspirants," participants were asked to:

Imagine that another African-American high school student, let's say a junior, whose

parents never earned a college degree, but who dreams of attending college has come to

you for advice. I want to eavesdrop on you talking to that student. What "college

success" advice would you give this student? Be sure to draw from your own

experiences

Ethical Considerations

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) have argued that "[a] social science researcher is

responsible for both informing and protecting respondents" (p. 124). According to

Steneck (2007), ethical regard for the participant involves three main considerations: (1)

respect for persons—whether participants were given informed consent as to their right to

participate or not participate, including the fact that participation in the study was

voluntary; (2) beneficence—meaning that researchers must weigh the benefits of

participation against any potential risk to the participants; and (3) justice—meaning that

investigators must give consideration to the actual reason for including participants in the

study, making sure that the study's purpose was to address a real problem and not just to

exploit the vulnerable (p. 43).

To assure proper oversight, this study was formally submitted to the Baker

University Institutional Review Board for its approval before it could proceed.

Additionally, each participant was provided an Informed Consent to Participate form.

Each participant had to affirm that participation was voluntary. Further, each participant

understood that she or he could withdraw consent to participate at any time. In their

article on ethics in qualitative research, Orb, Eisenhauer, and Wynaden (2001) cautioned

that: "…conducting qualitative research in an area in which the researcher works or is

already well-known raises several issues and ethical considerations" (p. 96). Their

warning is a cogent one in this case. Consequently, while the participants in this study

were no longer students at UAPCS at the time of the study, out of an overabundance of caution in terms of safeguarding the "validity, reliability, and meaningfulness of the data," (p. 96), the researcher ultimately relinquished the role of interviewer to another individual.

Accordingly, the study's main interviews were conducted by a former Teach for America corps veteran who was in her third year as a mathematics teacher at the Upper School at the time of the study. Most notably, none of the participants was a student at UAPCS at the time of the study; thus, there was no overlap in the teacher-student roles. Turning over the in-depth interviews to someone who had no direct teaching relationship with the participants helped obviate the presumptive imbalance in power that would have existed had the researcher, who served as these individuals' principal when they were students at UAPCS, also conducted the interviews.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Qualitative studies are typically evaluated based on whether the steps taken in conducting them are transparent enough for readers and other researchers to follow. In other words: How trustworthy was the entire research process? Devers (1999) suggested four strategies or constructs for enhancing rigor in qualitative research. By extension, the constructs are also useful for evaluating this study:

- *Credibility*—In this study, steps taken to enhance credibility include triangulation through the use of other data sources and member checks were also used to enhance accuracy;

- *Transferability*—The use of rich, detailed descriptions, as well as the study's well-established context should enhance the likelihood that

another researcher, working within the same context, would produce

similar findings;

- *Dependability*—This qualitative research was evaluated for dependability

    by giving serious consideration to the completeness and accuracy of the

    findings;

- *Confirmability*—Confirmability was addressed in this study mainly

    through triangulation and journalizing throughout the two interviews that

    constituted the main data gathering procedure for the study.

This study expressly adopted Devers' approach and suggestions.

Data Collection Procedures

Request to begin collecting data for this study was made of the Baker University

Office of Institutional Review Board [IRB] (Appendix A, p. 152). Once approval was

obtained (see Appendix B, p. 157), interviews were scheduled with participants to begin

data collection. In addition to the grand tour question, additional questions and probes

culled from Davidson et al.'s CPQ instrument were used to formulate the 15-question, in-

depth interview protocol. Informed Consent forms were then presented to each

participant. No interviews were conducted before each participant had read and signed

two copies of the consent form—one for the participant and one for the principal

investigator. The consent form included the title of the study, the researcher's name and

particulars, including contact information, the advisor's particulars, including contact

information, and an affirmative consent section. Each participant was also assigned a

pseudonym for identity protection purposes and to facilitate the maintenance of

participant anonymity throughout the study, especially during the reporting phase.

Data collection for this study consisted of two interview sessions: an initial and a follow-up interview. Both interview sessions were conducted at a location that was convenient for the participants. Because some of the participants had relocated to different cities by the time the study commenced, it was necessary, in one instance, to conduct that one follow-up interview by phone, in lieu of face-to-face interviews. All interviews took place during the fall of 2015. Participants were not directly observed for this study. Each interview was digitally audio-recorded and interview transcripts were stored on a flash drive to be kept in a safe in the researcher's home. The flash drive will be erased after three years. Additionally, the interviewer was trained by the researcher on the rudiments of effective interviewing, including jotting down notes and impressions as they came to her during the interview. Those notes and the fact that the interviewer debriefed with the researcher following each interview enhanced the meaning of participants' words. The fact that the interviewer made notes on participants' expressions during the interview was also helpful in assessing their feelings and any meanings they attach to certain events and circumstances. Of course, it was impossible to do this with interviews conducted over the phone.

Data Analysis

According to Tong et al., (2007), being explicit about all the measures the researcher took to triangulate data collection helps to validate the study for readers and to make the phenomenon as explicated and presented more believable. The process of *coding,* defined here as selecting significant sections from participant statements for use in the analysis stage of the research, decisions about how themes were identified, and how themes were selected for inclusion in the analysis was made explicit. The study

relied on Saldana's (2013) *Coding Manual,* and Weston, Gandell, Beauchamp, McAlpine, Wiseman, and Beuachamp's (2001) work on *Analyzing Interview Data* for insight and ideas on coding and analysis. *NVivo 11 for Mac* (2015) software was used to organize, store, manage, and analyze the transcribed interview data. Participants' feedback during the findings stage ensured that "the participants' own meanings and perspectives [we]re [accurately] represented …and not curtailed by the researcher's own agenda and knowledge" (Tong, et al., 2007, p.24). Including participant feedback in this way, and using direct quotes from their interview transcripts wherever applicable, served to enhance the validity of the study by ensuring that the researcher's interpretations did not stray too far from the participants' intended meanings. Hardt, Sidor, Bracko, and Egle (2006) found two factors: (1) the accuracy of coding categories and (2) the concreteness of the interview question, to be central to obtaining good reliability (p. 676).

Limitations

Anderson (2010), in an article on presenting and evaluating qualitative research listed the limitations of qualitative research in seven succinct bullets:

- Research quality is heavily dependent on the individual skills of the researcher and more easily influenced by the researcher's personal biases and idiosyncrasies.
- Rigor is more difficult to maintain, assess, and demonstrate.
- The volume of data makes analysis and interpretation time consuming.
- It is sometimes not as well understood and accepted as quantitative research within the scientific community.

- The researcher's presence during data gathering, which is often unavoidable in qualitative research, can affect the subjects' responses.

- Issues of anonymity and confidentiality can present problems when presenting findings.

- Findings can be more difficult and time consuming to characterize visually (pp. 2-3).

More specifically, a major limitation of this study was the smallness of the research sample size. Typically, a small sample size makes the findings difficult to generalize, but since this was a qualitative study, that concern was vitiated by the fact that the study employed strategies to promote transferability. Firstly, every effort has been made to accurately describe each step of the research process so that any researcher using the same procedures, with similar populations, and within a similar context, should arrive at similar findings. This is the essence of transferability. Secondly, since in-depth interviews constituted the primary means of data collection for this study, there was, of necessity, a reliance on participants' memory. Reliance on retrospective data raises a concern about reliability—a concern that Bernard, Killworth, Kronenfeld, and Sailer (1984) termed "the 'fugitive problem' of informant accuracy in reporting past events, behavior, and circumstances" (p. 495). However, according to Merriam (1995), this concern is best addressed by aiming for consistency and dependability, making sure that the findings, to the extent practicable, reflects the participants' intentions and meanings. As stated earlier, transcripts of individual in-depth interviews were member checked with each participant prior to beginning the analysis stage of the study.

Summary

Chapter three detailed the research approach used in this study, the author's research perspective, the design of the research, a description of the study's population, as well as the study's sample. The questions needed to conduct the study, as well as where those questions originated, were explained. Since in-depth interview was the principal means of data collection for this study, the procedures employed thereto, as well as the method used to analyze the data, were also detailed. Finally, the limitations of the study were clearly outlined.

Chapter Four

Findings

The purpose of this phenomenological, qualitative research study was to explore, by means of in-depth interviews, the lived experiences of six graduates of an urban college-preparatory public charter high school, focusing especially on their college experiences, culminating in their successful completion of the requirements for their respective college degrees. Four main ideas intertwine to form the theoretical framework for this study: (1) A brief history of public education in America; (2) Choice-based education reform, being an idea key to understanding the phenomenon of public charter schools, especially schools, like UAPCS, that profess a mission of preparing students for college success; (3) Tinto's theory of college departure, retention, and persistence until graduation (1975, 1987a, 1987b, 1993) especially as it relates to first-generation college students (FGCS), including the contributions of researchers who have enhanced it by verifying certain aspects and challenging its other aspects, as well as the perspective of minorities; and, finally, (4) College readiness was reviewed as a motif for understanding these participants' perceived preparedness as they approached their college experiences. This chapter provides a rich detail of the findings of the research study.

Participants were selected for this study because they met certain criteria—graduating from UAPCS and earning a college degree within six years of completing high school. All six participants self-identified as African-Americans. Female participants ($N = 3$) represented 50% of the sample, while males ($N = 3$) made up the remaining 50% of the sample. Sixty-seven percent ($N = 4$), or a majority of participants only lived with their mothers while attending high school; one ($N = 1$), 17% lived with an

older sibling's family; only one ($N = 1$), or 17% of the participants lived with both

parents during high school. Roughly a third ($N = 2$), of the participants reported living in

a low socio-economic status (LSES) household during high school; while the majority of

participants ($N = 4$) lived in middle socio-economic households (MSES).

Participants' Demographic and Educational Information

Table 7

Participants' Parental Education and Household Arrangements

Pseudonym/ HS Grad Year	High School Living Arrangement	Socio-Economic Status (SES) [f]	Parental Education HS Grad or Not
Marcus/2008	Lived with mother	Low	Father HS Grad Mother HS Grad
Julia/2009	Lived with sibling	Middle	Father Not HS Grad Mother Not HS Grad
Barbara/2009	Lived with mother	Low	Mother Not HS Grad
Cantu/2009	Lived with Both Parents	Middle	Father HS Grad Mother HS Grad
Quinton/2009	Lived with Mother	Middle	Father HS Grad Mother HS Grad
Juanita/2010	Lived with Mother	Middle	Father HS Grad Mother HS Grad

Note. [f] SES designations and parental education are as self-reported by the participants.

The findings presented here also include responses garnered from the two in-

depth interviews. Participants ranged in age from 23 to 25 years at the time of the study

(see Table 10, p.85). Fifty percent ($N = 3$) of the participants (two females and one male)

reported final, graduating cumulative college GPAs that were slightly lower than

their graduating cumulative high school GPAs. The remaining fifty percent ($N = 3$) of

participants (one female and two males) reported final graduating cumulative college

GPAs that were higher than their graduating cumulative high school GPAs (see Table 8,

p. 83). Fifty percent of the participants, ($N = 3$) (one female and two males) earned

higher graduating GPAs in college in contrast to their graduating or cumulative high

school GPAs; the remaining fifty percent of participants (two females and one male)

reported graduating with slightly lower college GPAs.

Table 8

Participants' Educational Attainment:

High School GPA versus Graduating College GPA

Pseudonym/ HS Grad Yr.	High School Cumulative GPA	Final GPA [g] College	Change +/-	Degree, Year/ College Major
Marcus/2008	2.22	2.96	+0.74	BA, 2013/ Admin of Justice
Julia/2009	2.73	3.40	+0.76	BS, 2013/ Human Services
Barbara/2009	3.88	3.70	-0.16	BS, 2013/ Dental Hygiene
Cantu/2009	3.26	3.60	+0.44	BA, 2013/ English
Quinton/2009	3.83	3.40	-0.43	BA, 2013/ Chemistry
Juanita/2010	3.63	3.34	-0.43	BA, 2014/ Accounting

Note [g] Final College GPA figures are as self-reported by the participants; High School
Cumulative GPA were garnered from UAPCS archives.

Composite ACT scores also did not appear to predict participants' final college GPAs. For example, one participant, Marcus, with final composite ACT score of 18 and a high school GPA of 2.22 still managed to graduate from college with a college GPA of 2.96. Julia, with a final composite ACT score of 17, and a graduating high school GPA of 2.73 still graduated from college with a college GPA of 3.40 (see Table 9, p. 84).

Table 9

Participants' Educational Attainment: Highest ACT versus Final College GPA

Pseudonym/ HS Grad Year	Highest Composite ACT	Final College GPA[h]	Degree, Year/ College Major
Marcus/2008	18	2.96	BA, 2013/ Admin of Justice
Julia/2009	17	3.40	BS, 2013/ Human Services
Barbara/2009	26	3.70	BS, 2013/ Dental Hygiene
Cantu/2009	19	3.60	BA, 2013/ English
Quinton/2009	27	3.40	BA, 2013/ Chemistry
Juanita/2010	25	3.34	BA, 2014/ Accounting

Note [h] Final College GPA figures are as self-reported by the participants; Highest Composite ACT scores were garnered from UAPCS archives.

These results indicate that, despite their final composite ACT scores falling between 17 and 27, these graduates of an urban, public charter school were still able to earn college degrees, with final college GPAs ranging from 2.96 to 3.70. These participants' composite ACT scores did not seem to accurately predict their college performances as measured by their college GPAs. This suggests that the instructional

practices they experienced as high school students UAPCS must have equipped them

with some success-building skills that their scores on standardized tests, such as the ACT,

did not seem to have given the right valuation.

Table 10

Participants' Age, Gender, and Year of Graduation: High School and College

Pseudonym/ Interview ID#	Gender	Age	High School Graduation Year	Year of College Graduation
Marcus/08	Male	25	2008	2013
Juanita/09	Female	23	2010	2014
Julia/13	Female	25	2009	2013
Barbara/10-11	Female	24	2009	2013
Cantu/14	Male	24	2009	2013
Quinton/12	Male	23	2009	2013

Note. All data is as self-reported by participants and cross-referenced against UAPC archives.

Responses to the Grand Tour Question

Each participant interview began with the following grand tour question: *What stands out to you about your college experience? Specifically, what types of things enabled you to succeed in earning a four-year degree within six years when statistics show that most African-American FGCS's do not end up graduating?* The grand tour question's purpose was to place the participant in a reflective frame of mind, allowing the in-depth interview questions to explore with each participant, the essence of his or her experience as a FGCS attending and, ultimately, graduating from college. The grand tour question elicited a variety of strong emotional responses from these participants. A possible explanation for this could be that the question was probably the first chance

these participants had to reflect, in a formal way, on the experience of attending college and earning college degrees. Marcus stated that his roommate and his football teammates, in his words, "people that I hung around," made a big difference in his ability to earn a college degree on time: "…surrounding myself [with] people who were trying to succeed [helped me graduate]." Julia chose to highlight her support system: friends, family, and college mentors: "I mean, I just had a great support system that was behind me 100% with whatever I needed. If I couldn't get it, they would get it for me…people was [sic] there for me."   Julia also mentioned the fact that she had been assigned to a learning community her freshman year as a positive factor. Living on the same floor with 80 other students who were further broken down into smaller groups of 15 to 17 individuals meant that she had fellow students with whom she "hung out," bonded, and took classes. For Julia, the bonding experiences she had with her dormitory mates coupled with the fact that she, herself, got to be a Resident Assistant (RA) her sophomore year, created a solid foundation that helped see her through to graduation.

Juanita, who began college at an out-of-state HBCU, pointed to her social experiences, "making friends and joining groups and organizations," as being important to her, especially, during her freshman year. When she came home because of changed life circumstances, she quickly found the support she needed to enroll in her home town university and ultimately earned a bachelor's degree in accounting there. In her words: "I never knew how loving and supporting [sic] this town was until I transferred [back]." Juanita also cited her daughter, family, friends, Friends of UA, staff and faculty of the university she attended as being crucial to her success. According to Juanita:

I can honestly say that I would not be where I am today if it had not

been for two things—the help of the people that I mentioned above

and the guidance and support of UAPCS, including Friends of

UA…UAPCS supported me … academically. My friends and family

supported me mentally and emotionally. Unfortunately, most African-

American, FGCS didn't and don't have the academic, financial,

mental, and emotional support that I have had, so it stop [sic] them

from reaching their goals.

The themes that emerged from the grand tour questions were: leaving home,

friends and family, the opportunities that college provided, and the social aspects of

college. Barbara's reflections on the things that stood out for her about college follow:

What stands out to me the most about my college experiences are the

friends I made and the professors and staff that I connected with. My

friends and me [sic] were all first generation college students and we

supported each other. The staff and professors also supported me—in

and out of class. They wanted me to succeed academically and also

personally. My own personal determination was another, and

probably the most important factor in me graduating in four years. I

wanted it for myself and worked hard to get there and make it happen.

For his part, Quinton spoke to the many opportunities that he was exposed to while

enrolled as a college student:

I would say that something that stands out to me about my college

experience would be the opportunities that … my school [provided]. One

of those opportunities is [sic] called supplemental instruction, which

allows students to learn…from students who previously received an "A"

in the course. These opportunities, including the fact that, in my junior

year, I applied [sic] and was accepted to become a member of the Student

Activity Planning Board (APB)… presented … me the tools I used to

receive a good education and graduate on time.

Like Juanita, Cantu highlighted the social aspect of college as something that stood out

for him and that, ultimately, catapulted him into the position of graduating in four years:

Just meeting new people and having an opportunity to get outside

Kansas City…I think those have been the big, prominent things

because growing up and reflecting on myself as a student, or as a kid

in general, I consider[ed] myself to be very introverted.

In the following section, the findings, arranged according to the four questions

that guided the research study, are presented:

RQ1 Findings: Could participants recall the academic factors or any incidents that

either empowered them or became obstacles on their way to earning a college

degree? The participants in this study all credited their high school preparation,

especially, the experiences they accumulated in their English classes at UAPCS as being

critical to their college readiness, and, by extension, for their college successes. The

school's English curriculum was the one aspect of their high school preparation that was

consistently cited as being instrumental to participant's college success, insofar as,

entering college prepared to write error-free essays and academic papers. Several selected

particular high school English teachers for commendation.

High School Preparation. Across the board, study participants commended their alma mater, UAPCS, for the preparation it gave them for college. Several participants mentioned two English teachers by name for special praise. Both teachers taught Comparative English, and College English, the junior and senior English classes at UAPCS. Of one of his senior English teachers, Cantu said: "he drilled into my head the importance of words…how to write a good sentence, and sparked my interest in creative writing." Julia referenced Junior Seminar and Senior Seminar, two classes taught at UAPCS to juniors and seniors. The seminar classes focus on preparing students to apply and gain admission into college, along with how to compete FASFA, the federal forms required for college scholarships and subsidized loans, as having been important for her college aspiration and college search process. Julia also felt that, overall, UAPCS prepared her and her classmates very well. She freely expressed heart-felt gratitude to the Board of UAPCS for the various resources that were directed toward helping her classmates and her get into college. She also said that the various alumni support programs helped her to persist until she was able to earn her degree.

Quinton contrasted the excellent preparation he received from his English teachers at UAPCS with the poor preparation his college peers who had attended other high schools received: "I learned that not all students get that kind of teaching in high school because I would edit papers for peers in college my freshman year and their writing skills were just subpar, to say the least." Barbara also asserted that she arrived in college considerably well prepared. She also credited her high school English for her skills. Of one particular English teacher, Barbara said, "He was a good instructor and I

used his format for all of my papers in college." On the theme of high school

preparation, Juanita said:

> I've found myself applying the things that I learned from my English
>
> teachers at UAPCS in my [college] papers…even when I was
>
> attending college out of state…my teachers always said: "yea, you're a
>
> very strong writer…most people don't come in here writing like this!"

Finally, according, to Marcus, college was 'super easy' when he got there because

"college professors were way more lenient than Mr. Freeman who held you to a higher

standard…So, having been held to that high standard, I was able to reciprocate…in

college."

Career Connection and College Satisfaction. In-depth interview question #3

relates to Tinto's nexus of *social integration* and focuses on participants' satisfaction

with the academic advice they received while in college. *Social integration* has to do

with the degree to which students feel a part of the social life of their college.

Participants' responses to the question about their personal and intellectual growth as a

result of having attended college also indicated that all six were satisfied. Question #2 of

the in-depth interview is one such question: *"You are now a college graduate. Looking*

back, how satisfied are you with the extent of your intellectual growth and interest as a

result of having attended the college you attended?" The CPQ also includes several

questions that sought to measure a student's *academic integration.* All six participants

felt that there was a clear connection between what they learned in college and their

career choices. Many mentioned Friends of UA as having been helpful in arranging

internships for them while they were still in college. In two instances, (Marcus and

Juanita) the internships that Friends of UA arranged for them actually turned into career

opportunities. Quinton's response to in-depth question #2 is emblematic of participants'

general sense:

> I look back at how I thought about situations in high school and my
> first couple of years of undergrad and I know that if I had the mind
> [sic] that I have now, I know I would be able to handle certain
> things…much better, such as how to approach studying for classes or
> just in general…I am definitely pleased with the education I got from
> [my college].

A plurality of the participants ($N = 4$) or 66.66 percent also expressed satisfaction

with the academic advisement they received in college. The CPQ classifies academic

advisement under *supportive services satisfaction*, which is, at least, one way of linking

what the student is studying in college, the student's major for instance, to future careers.

After all, there is more to advisement than picking, enrolling in, and taking classes.

While many of the participants in this study expressed satisfaction with the academic

advice their college provided them, Quinton was, again, the most articulate on the

subject:

> I think I was fortunate enough to have (sic) an excellent academic
> advisor, she was also in the Chemistry department…She didn't just
> tell me, 'these are the classes you can take…go ahead and pick some.'
> Rather she would tell me: 'this class is taught by … he does a really
> good job of teaching and you'll enjoy his class…She took the time
> to review … available options with me.

Cantu said that his academic questions answered by fellow students and other

professors because he did not find the academic advisor he was assigned as helpful to

him as he would have liked: "I felt like every time I went and there was something I

wanted to do, my advisor couldn't point me in the right direction [as to] what choices I

could make or what the path would look like for me…So, a lot of it was me exploring on

my own, outside of my advisor."

The *supportive services satisfaction* strand of the CPQ deals with concepts such

as timely and appropriate modes of communication, advisement, and indications of a

college's efforts at meeting students' needs. Three questions (#8, #9, and #10) of the in-

depth interview protocol came from this strand of the CPQ. Marcus recalled that

everyone at his college "communicated very efficiently through e-mails, and campus

flyers." But these were also supplemented by student efforts and word-of-mouth.

Marcus even recalled his friends organizing a "capture the flag event on campus" as well

as a campus-wide hide and seek event that went very well. He also thought that

advisement was something his college did well:

> To my knowledge, everybody had an academic advisor for their major
>
> who kept track of their credits. Dr. Myer was my Academic Advisor
>
> and teacher and he helped me tremendously with planning out where
>
> I needed to be. When I changed majors, I had to take 18 credit hours
>
> to ensure I would graduate on time. We had monthly meetings to
>
> make sure I stayed on track.

RQ2 Findings: What else about participants' lived college experiences as graduates

of an urban, college-preparatory public charter school, helped them to successfully

navigate and complete college? Tinto's model—and Davidson et al.'s CPQ (2009) agrees—considers a student's ability to recall favorite college professors to be a marker for *academic integration,* an important factor in college persistence. The participants in this study were also able to recall 'stretch' experiences with college professors that allowed them to grow intellectually. They cited these and other positive interactions with college faculty as memorable factors that were critical to their persistence and eventual degree attainment. While most of the participants could recall favorite professors, Marcus remembered one particular professor-student relationship that began in mutual suspicion, but ended up with both professor and student coming to respect each other. The overall state in which a student arrives on campus can also stand in as a surrogate for how well that student's high school prepared them for college.

Favorite Professors and Stretch Experiences. All participants could name at least one professor who was their favorite while they were attending college. Cantu's favorite professor, an English professor, allowed Cantu to work on a research project with him. Even as a working professional, Juanita shared that she often "runs ideas or professional issues by" her favorite professors. She recounted an experience with a current professor in a writing-intensive, graduate course that had been a challenge to her because the professor's expectations differed vastly from all that she had known about writing, but she persisted, explaining her challenges as follows: "I guess my interpretation of the rules of writing and this teacher's interpretation …were different…But you kinda [sic] figure out what the teacher is wanting."

While Barbara did not mention a professor by name, preferring to talk about subjects like General Chemistry, she expressed a general preference: "I like instructors

that…challenge me a little bit, that are not easy, and that expect more." For Cantu, the stretch experience came in the form of a class he took last semester in graduate school called the *Inclusive University*. That class challenged everything he thought he already knew, beginning with,

> What does it really mean to be an African American, or male living in
> America? …What did I really want out of life and, I would say that
> that class really got me thinking about …the students I would be
> interacting with, how I would be coming off to them …impacting their
> lives, or connecting with them.

Interactions with Faculty. While all six participants agreed with Tinto that interaction with faculty was an important indicator of *academic integration*, how they operationalized that knowledge differed from participant to participant. Growing up in an urban environment and attending a high school that was predominantly African-American meant that these students faced a culture shock when they got to college. Their urban neighborhoods and backgrounds also meant that opportunities to interact with other cultures were, necessarily circumscribed, which in effect, constrained their patterns of interaction with faculty once they arrived in college. For instance, Marcus's ability to approach college faculty was hampered by his own past experiences growing up in Kansas City:

> So, I'm in the middle of Missouri…in a town where there's …shallow
> perception of black people…Honestly, I thought everyone was racist
> [sic]. I know that sounds terrible, but I <u>did</u> think so, you know? So, I

really didn't communicate with a lot of my teachers, except for those

ones who reached out to me.

Juanita felt that her university professors went out of their ways to make it known to students that "although we are your teachers and we are grading your tests and things like that, we're also here to help you, mentor you, and build a relationship." She continued:

> …it's hard to really succeed in college without a good level of
>
> interaction with [your] professors. I mean, even the best student
>
> should, I feel, interact with…professors to get a good understanding of
>
> what the [professors] want and not just in the classroom…Sometimes
>
> it's good to talk to professors about situations you're having in the
>
> professional field…

For her part, Barbara saw student interaction with professors as a necessary ritual:

> I guess interacting with college professors you have to make the first
>
> move. Um, … they do have office hours and that's how I got through
>
> my first chemistry class, um, because I was struggling, but I went to
>
> my professor and he helped me with homework and [sic] suggestions
>
> for studying for the tests and I got a good grade in that class.

Quinton's interaction with professors, on the other hand, started out weak and minimal for a different reason and changed when he realized that there was a definite benefit to seeking out teachers. A fairly good student, Quinton began college expecting he would follow the same strategy that had worked for him in high school: if the material was difficult, study it hard and break it down until it gradually becomes understandable.

Quinton confessed that he was not the type to seek out a professor or ask questions in class, because, in addition to being a fairly good student, he was also shy. All that changed when he began to explore the possibility of applying to dental school. For him, the epiphany came when he realised that the recommendations of professors formed a key part of the application process. From that moment on, Quinton says:

> I kinda [sic] had to start communicating with professors because if the teacher doesn't know you from any of the other 100 students in the class, it's kinda [sic] hard to write a letter of recommendation. So, I always made an effort, to, at the very least, thank my teachers at the end of the semester and, even at the end of my four years, I wrote [my advisor] a letter and hand-delivered it to her office just to say thank you for all you taught me, you [sic] a great teacher, one of my favorites…

Julia found that as she began to get into her major area, the professors she encountered seemed to become more personable and approachable: "I had very good interaction with the faculty that were in my specific college we were like co-workers in a sense…"

Cantu spoke at length about how he finally overcame his initial shyness as well as the overall sense of intimidation that he used to have about professors:

> College professors can be intimidating…I would say that they were intimidating my first few years of college, just because I saw them as very direct: 'I speak, you listen and just take notes'…I was very intimidated by professors my freshman year…going to the office hours

or at least introducing myself after class that first day of class really

helped…Now, I ask questions all the time, I think I bug my professors

a lot now if I don't understand something…

RQ3 Findings: What were the non-academic factors that respondents perceived to have impacted their college journeys—either negatively or positively? Each participant acknowledged that there were certain intangibles that impacted their college journeys. In some instances, the intangibles were positive factors that engendered a sense of obligation. Friendships, interactions with peers, and family support were examples of these intangibles. In other instances, the intangibles were negative factors such as, experiences with racism, less than full acceptance by fellow students and faculty on campus. These were influences that participants had to overcome themselves, and they had to draw from their own self-pride, or on sheer dogged determination to succeed or they would have succumbed to failure.

Institutional Responsiveness. Juanita recalled a time towards the end of her pregnancy when she came to feel that her university, clearly, went above and beyond to meet her unique needs. Davidson et al. (2009) grouped institutional responsiveness under *supportive services satisfaction*:

My university teachers were the best at working with me with what

was going on. [They] helped me out. Most of my teachers were e-

mailing me the assignments here's what happened today in class and

being very helpful…they were even letting me push tests off until I

[sic] recovered…So they were a huge, huge help…I don't know if

…professors everywhere would have been that helpful [sic]

understanding…

Julia felt that sometimes her university was very responsive and did a very good

job, but at other times it wasn't. She singled out financial aid as one of the areas that her

university did not do such a good job and, in fact, could have done better:

I just feel like they could have done a better job of telling the students

about their financial aid packages, loans, grants, scholarships…[sic]

kinda like going to the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV)…people

were always angry and you felt like [sic] pulling teeth to get answers

out of them…I had such a hard time even figuring out the cost of…

simple things [sic].

Marcus, also felt that his college did not make his needs a priority:

My honest opinion of college (sic)? I see college as a business…I was

asking to move off campus because I had a financial need, I didn't

want a bunch of student loan debt, my parents didn't have it. We were

taking out Plus loans…I wouldn't have the debt that I have now if

they'd let me move off campus when I asked because housing fees for

private schools and…the meal plans, that's what hurts…I felt that

college don't [sic] care about that because it's a business, you know?

'you need us, we want you to go here, but…pay what you owe…'

Cantu, who attended the same college as Julia, spoke of a serendipitous meeting

with the director of the Multicultural Student Success Center during his freshman year

that exposed him to that helpful campus resource which he didn't even know existed:

Andre introduced me to OASIS (Office of Academic Success and

Inter-cultural Services). This became a way for me to get free

tutoring…they had a computer lab, a Student Lounge area, so I had the

opportunity to interact with other students there and, the following

semester I was able to work in the building…So I would say that I was

supported and I felt like I had my own family…my own group of

friends, and I felt I had a place to connect and feel safe on campus…

Role of Family, Friends, and Peers. In his response to the grand tour question,

Marcus sounded a note that became a recurring theme throughout the other participants'

interviews, interweaving itself throughout as influential factors, making their impact

undeniable. Friends and family were two concepts that were interchangeable in these

participants' stories of college-going. One gets the sense that for these FGCS, good

friends, for all practical purposes were synonymous with family. Davidson et al. (2009)

grouped these influences under *degree commitment*. Speaking about friends, Marcus

shared:

When I tell someone that 'you're my friend,' you know what I'm

saying? We're friends to the end of times…I hold my friends to a

higher standard than I do my family because you have a choice of

being my friend…I love them to death…

Juanita said that if it were not for her family, the dream of college would have

been much harder for her to achieve:

Um, they were supportive in every way you can think of, if [I just

needed] to talk to someone they were there to listen, offer advice. If I

need [sic] someone to watch my daughter they were there ... If there

was something I didn't understand that was academic [sic] related …

they may not have known the answers, but they were definitely there

to advise…you should probably reach out to your teachers or you

should do this or you should do that. So, anyway they could help, they

did. They were 'super' supportive. I'm grateful for them.

Julia also affirmed that family support was a key factor and something that helped her

commit to earning a college degree:

It was [sic] always someone I could call…just to say, 'you know, I'm

having a hard time or this good thing happened--I just got an A on my

test or something like that.' It was just great. I talked to my sister

every single day. It [sic] wasn't a day that went by in school that I

didn't talk to my sister, just about the most random stuff. I mean, that

right there is support to me because that just let me know that she will

always be there... they were there for me 100 percent... So, just having

all those people behind me, even my UAPCS family.

Cantu echoed the same sentiments, but added the dimension of FGCS:

So I would say my parents and my brothers and sister were like on the

forefront like of my mind … 'okay if I drop the ball, I drop the ball not

only for myself but for my brothers and my little sister' … I would

say, because I was the first one to go to college, not just to go to

college, but…to graduate college…that was [sic] expectation …I had

to live up to … that's because my cousins who went to college didn't

[graduate] and so they were pushing [me] to do better…and so I felt

like I had this huge pressure not to quit. Because if I'd quit then…yea,

it wasn't just about me…I was looking out for my family who [sic] put

so much forth.

Quinton introduced the idea that, even though family and friends played a central

role in his earning of a college degree, ultimately, it was he, the student, who had to

shoulder the day-to-day load of attending to all the responsibilities that attach to being a

college student:

I was just doing what I thought that I had to do and never thought of

[there] being any other option. But they were always there to help me

with whatever I needed so, if I needed money to get food because I

was studying and missed the cafeteria on campus they helped me with

that…

Barbara reiterated the same point, going further to include the notion of parents

trusting college students to "explore" independently as a legitimate form of support:

I don't think that my mom or my family put a lot of stress or

expectations on me but they definitely supported me. Um, even

though I was in Ohio and they were in Kansas City…just calling to

check on me and driving me up to Ohio and bringing me back. So, I

think they just let me go and explore and just learn and if I didn't call

for awhile they didn't bug me or anything, they knew that I was taking

care of me and my education.

The Determination to Succeed. Marcus' answer to the question about how often he missed class for frivolous reasons, a measure of *academic commitment*, illustrates how the decision to enroll at a particular college sustained by the intentional arrangement of social interactions between students can form the basis of important friendships which, in turn, makes important contributions to college success:

> I never, never [sic] missed class. [That was mainly] because of my roommate. I suck at getting up in the morning. You know what I'm saying? So, [for] those 8 o'clock classes, my roommate Dave would be on me [sic]..."Marcus get up! Marcus get up!" Giv[ing] me the shake and I'm running out--ten minutes before class starts, you know?

Juanita's determination to succeed, an obvious aspect of *academic commitment*, was evident in her lax attitude toward class and attendance during her freshman year at an out-of-state HBCU, which stood in sharp contrast with the young mother and definitely more serious student she became upon transferring to her hometown university:

> My freshman year I will say I probably missed um (laughing) a little more class than I should have…It wasn't like a regular everyday thing but it was probably once a month when I would be like, "Hey, I'm sleepy, I'm not gonna go." I don't know if that's like the norm with every freshman, but yeah, I definitely skipped more class freshman year than any other year. [But once I transferred to UMKC], I don't remember missing class if I could've made it. If there was something I could do to get there, I did…

Barbara never missed class while she was in college, either because being a Kauffman Scholar made her more conscientious, or just because she had managed to figure out ahead of time that regular attendance was important:

> I didn't … I only missed like one class because I overslept… that was it. I went to my class (laughing). I still go to class…I was actually mad, too... [That class] was the end of the semester and it was the last class and I [overslept and] missed it!

Quinton's, feelings about skipping class mirrored Barbara's in some ways:

> I would say… a maximum of once a semester simply because I had those times when an alarm clock didn't go off or random reason …made me oversleep. But I never skipped class just to skip class. I guess because you're paying for this education, why not go to every class? Also because I found it a lot harder to miss a class and have to try to play catch up because you have to study pretty much twice as hard, alone, because you didn't go to class when the teacher taught… [it] the first time.

Julia echoed the same sentiment of 'missing class equals wasting money':

> The thing about it was I always said, 'I'm paying for this. If I would've missed class it would be like flushing money down the toilet.' So, I always had that in my mind like 'just go, it's nothing, especially if it was a 50 minute class.' I'm like' it's '50 minutes and if you have anything to do you can do it after that.' So I didn't miss …

too often, I guess I can say in a semester or like per month out of the

30 days, I only missed 1 or 2 classes a month, if that!

In response to the question of skipping class, Cantu had this to say:

I was always paranoid…missing class because if I miss one day

there was so much material that I would have to catch up on and I

understood, too, that given the privileges that I had [as] a Kauffman

Scholar, and having my mom and dad on my back and then really

wanting to do my best…I knew that I had to be on top of my

academics and so it was always 'school first and then after school … I

made time for my friends,'…and so like… just finding… a balance

came easy for me and that's something that I recognize that the folks

around me… kinda struggle[sic] with that…um, but I will say,

because of my mom and dad …I wanted to keep that up and so I just

made my education my number one priority...

RQ4 Findings: To what extent did a commitment to earning a degree play a discernible role in respondents' college success? A majority of the research participants said they were confident that the college they attended, and ultimately, graduated from was the right college for them. The perception that a student was attending the "right college" seemed to contribute to the student's commitment to persist and, ultimately, earn a college degree. Even Barbara who had serious doubts at the beginning of her college career ended up expressing satisfaction with the college she graduated from.

College Fit. Juanita began her college education at an out-of-state HBCU. For most African-American, college aspirants, HBCUs hold a certain allure. Consequently, these students' often make them first college choices. But when Juanita, who had gained admission into an HBCU, later found out she was pregnant, she reluctantly came home, forced by circumstances beyond her control to transfer to her home town university:

> When I got to UMKC, originally I didn't think it was a good fit for me
> at all. I just thought I had to do what I had to do. But I would say after
> my first semester [there] I knew that UMKC was the right place for
> me. I was very, very happy that I made that choice, not only because
> of the support that the staff offered…the location, but they had high
> statistics in accounting, which was the area I wanted to focus on. The
> students were great, you know, everybody was friendly, too. I don't
> (sic) wanna say I'm happy that my daughter forced me to go to
> UMKC, but looking back, knowing what I know now, I probably
> would've chosen UMKC first straight out of high school.

Barbara also expressed both confidence and satisfaction in her college choice:

> I guess looking back on it now maybe …[I was] like 75 percent sure
> that [Ohio State] was the school for me. [It] is a big school and UA is a
> very tiny school. So, that was…big for me whereas I [was] used to
> knowing the people like everybody I go to school with…at Ohio State,
> you [couldn't] do that…Also, being a minority at Ohio State…[when I
> had been in the] majority at UA…just a little bit different. But I don't
> regret it—I would still go to Ohio State.

Quinton originally chose UMKC because of the university's six-year medical school program. Later, he switched majors, graduating with a double major in Chemistry and Biology on his way to enrolling in the university's School of Dentistry. He said that he still had no doubt he would graduate and has no regrets about switching majors:

> I never saw college as where [you]…feel at home and what not. I originally wanted to go to UMKC because of their 6-year medical program so … it fit perfectly … but after I decided not to do that anymore, I settled in pretty quickly. I realized like, okay, I really did make the right decision simply because UMKC wasn't too big, it wasn't too small, it was the right size for me and, overall, I had an amazing college experience.

Institutional Commitment. These six participants profess that they were able to graduate from college because they were fully committed to doing so. Tinto referred to the likelihood of earning a degree from a particular college as part of the nexus of *institutional commitment*. Participants all said that they were determined to graduate from their college. For instance, each participant rated his or her degree commitment a "5" on a 1-5 scale. That determination was further demonstrated in their collective will to persist in the face of financial and other difficulties, ranging from the culture shock they confronted and overcame, and the general sense of feeling out of place on their college campuses. But it was also evident in the diligence necessary took to win over a skeptical professor, or in the dogged resourcefulness needed to access networks of support such as on campus resources, friends and family, even Friends of UA. In his words, Cantu operationalized *institutional commitment* as follows: "I learned every

single day …whether it was through conversation or whether it was in my class, I tried to use every opportunity as a learning opportunity…" An unstated point remained that the various support systems that these participants were able to access during their time in college were also instrumental in propelling them forward, semester after semester, and year after year, until the day arrived when they walked across the commencement stage to receive their diplomas and joined the small but growing number of African-American, first-generation college graduates.

Dealing with alienation on campus. In-depth interview question #7, part of RQ 2, attempted to get at a key dimension of being a FGCS by asking participants how much they had in common with other students on their college campuses. Tinto considered this a marker for *social integration,* without which most college students are unable to persist until graduation. While the other participants approached this question cursorily, answering in terms of their minority status, or, in terms of their college majors, Marcus chose to address directly, the issue of racism and its alienating consequences:

> I saw myself as an outcast. The only people that I felt I could truly
> identify with were athletes on the football and basketball teams. I
> think this contributed to my success because I was uncomfortable, and
> I truly had to grow up. With me being an outgoing person, I would
> say 'hi' to everybody I passed and the same gesture, more often than
> not, was not reciprocated. Coming from inner-city, Kansas City, it's
> hard to identify with the ways of students coming from very different
> regions…My first year, the guy across the hall from me had a huge
> Rebel Flag in his room. I took that as a form of racism, and I asked

him about it, and he didn't correlate it with racism. That's just one

instance…

Among the more pernicious and persistently ironic aspects of racism on

America's college campuses is that it works to constrain one's circle of friends so that,

instead of making new friends from different and diverse cultural backgrounds—an often

avowed expectation of college—which is put aside for the status quo. But, the reality is

that the opportunities that colleges should provide for experiential learning and

engagement with students from other cultures are lost on students like Marcus and vice

versa. Thus, students end up leaving college pretty much as they had arrived—playing it

safe and interacting with people who look, feel and speak like themselves. In other

words, many college students pass through college, but, at least in the dimension of social

integration, college does not seem to have passed through them. Marcus continues:

> Towards the end of my college career, my closest college friends all
>
> had [a] similar…background to mine. Mainly, we all had parents or
>
> grandparents that were advocates of higher education and self-
>
> sufficiency. We all knew…both our mothers and fathers, we all had
>
> siblings, we were all competitive, we were all African–American, and
>
> we all graduated within 4 years of first enrolling!

Advice to the Next Generation: "The College Success Talk"

In her study on the perceptions of high school seniors who had been retained or

held back in their elementary grades but who managed to graduate from high school with

college track diplomas, Smith (2013) gave participants, who, after all, had experienced

retention firsthand, an opportunity to advise teachers and principals who are often called

upon to decide whether or not to retain students. Borrowing from Smith (2013), the six participants in this study were also invited to advise a hypothetical high school junior from a background much like theirs about college. The advice had to focus on how to successfully navigate college. The advice also had to draw from the participants' lived college experiences. In this way the opportunity to advice served to triangulate participants' responses to the grand tour question that began the in-depth interviews. Four themes emerged from the advice offered by the participants:

Viewing High School as Preparation for College. Barbara said: "I would tell them…keep working hard in high school right now, what you're learning…you'll need all of it when you get to college…just [ask for] as much help as you need, everybody wants to help." Julia shared: "…the first thing I would [do] is [to] congratulate them on making the decision to actually take the steps of getting into [college]…because a lot of people don't have that opportunity--snatch it, hold it and don't let go [of it]."

Find Answers to Quell Your College Fears. Barbara's advice to the hypothetical high school junior addressed the anxieties and uncertainties that are part of college especially during the freshman year:

> It can be a little bit scary going to college, especially, if your parents or no one else in your family went to college. But just get to know some of the faculty and some of the courses or organizations, especially, African American faculty… everybody in college, for the most part, wants you to succeed, especially people from the Black Students' Association.

Juanita concentrated her advice on the many issues that often bedevil FGCS, from applying to college in the first place, to actually completing all the paperwork one needs to attend college. She also highlighted the importance of asking questions: "...I would want to know about any question that they might have…if there was anything that they were uncertain about, or anything they are questioning, so that I could address those directly."

Balancing Academics with Fun. Juanita's advice to our hypothetical high school junior was to aim for a healthy balance between working hard to earn a degree, and leading a sustainable social life as a college student, because:

> People go to school and are all work and no play, well I won't say all play, but people who are overworking themselves on school… sort of regret it once they graduate… they look back and they don't have memories, friends, and stuff like that. So, I would try to make sure that there is a good focus on both of those but you are there to get a degree…get an education.

Surround Yourself With Success-Seekers. Marcus' advice to the hypothetical high school juniors was more pointed than the one given by the other participants:

> Your college success will depend on who you surround yourself with, if you surround yourself with partiers, you're gonna party, if you surround yourself with … nerd [sic], you [sic] gonna study, you know? And, if you can find an equal balance between having a good college experience, going to functions outside school, and going to study hall, and making sure you are in the right group to succeed.

Quinton refined Marcus' point even further:

> My freshman year, I befriended people who had different majors than
>
> me [it did not go so well]…Not saying not to have friends from
>
> different majors, it's just that it is easier if your closest friends are in
>
> the same majors... I would say…an encouraging word of advice, don't
>
> stress too much because… many other people have gone [to college]
>
> before you. Also I would find ways of staying fit by exercising
>
> regularly.

Cantu's advice to our hypothetical high school junior reflected his own experiences
throughout his college journey:

> Take time to explore…yourself, find your likes and dislikes and find
>
> your own aspirations and dream(s) [sic]. While you are living up to making
>
> your family proud also live up to making your ownself proud by achieving the
>
> things that mean [sic] the most to you.

Letters and Care Packages Sent from Home. While this item appears to fall
outside of this study's scope, or of what the opportunity to advice actually intended,
Marcus volunteered some advice for family and friends that seemed both cogent and
practical; certainly, in light of his background as an African-American FGCS from urban
Kansas City who attended a predominantly white, Liberal Arts College in central
Missouri. Thinking back to his own experiences, and to the sort of things that sustained
him as he worked to earn a college degree, Marcus highlighted a resource so intangible as
to be easily overlooked among the college success factors. That resource was the care
packages he received while he was in college, especially when these packages were

accompanied by notes of encouragement from home that he could read again and again—

in down times and in times when he was stressed by the travails of being a college

student. It should be mentioned at this juncture, that each year at about the start of the

fall semester, UAPCS's ASP arranges for care packages to be sent to alumni who are

enrolled in colleges and universities across the country. Marcus' advice was specifically

aimed at parents or guardians of FGCS:

> Write letters [to your college students]. Phone calls are fine, but a
>
> letter is something you'll have forever. I know. Those letters pushed
>
> me through hard nights of studying and [sic] stress and all that stuff
>
> because it's motivation to know … somebody's [sic] for you to be the
>
> best you that you can be.

Summary

Participants' high school preparation, the support and expectation of friends and

family, professors who provided learning opportunities that stretched their understanding

and challenged them to grow personally and intellectually, and the sense that the

educational institution they chose was a good fit for them, were the factors most cited by

the participants as being important to their college successes. While the participants

reported that their college experiences were not all positive, certain intangibles, such as

their own determination to graduate, meaningful relationships on- and off-campus, and

care packages and notes of encouragement from home, seemed to inoculate these

students so that they were able to achieve academically and earn their college degrees

despite being confronted with some experiences that they perceived negatively.

Chapter Five

Interpretation and Recommendations

Chapter five is presented in several sections as follows: Study summary, overview of the problem, purpose statement and research questions, review of methodology, major findings, findings related to the literature, and conclusions. This study was guided by a grand tour question: *What stands out about college and respondent's experiences of college that enabled them to succeed in earning a four-year college degree when others in similar circumstances have not been able to do so?* A 15-item, in-depth interview protocol derived from Davidson et al.'s College Persistence Questionnaire (2009), which was based on Tinto's College Persistence theory constituted the main data collection instrument for this study of the lived college experiences of six alumni of an urban, public charter high school. A review of the problem, purpose statement, and research questions, the study's methodology, and its major findings are contained in the study summary section. Findings related to the literature and the research questions are also included. The study's implications for action are discussed, as well as recommendations for future research, along with a concluding section.

Study Summary

This section presents an overview of the study of the lived experiences of six African-American graduates of an urban charter high school as they transitioned into college and successfully earned their college degrees. Additionally, the purpose statement and research questions describe why the study was conducted. The review of the methodology discusses the study's design as well as how data was collected for the study. Finally, the major findings section provides the results of the study.

Overview of the problem. Given the clarity of the data on the economic benefits of education, some have wondered why "inner-city kids fail to use school as their ticket to the middle class" (Bloch, 2008, p.12). Research has shown that, while African-American and other minorities are entering college in higher numbers, the actual number of FGCS earning college degrees within six years remains low. Chen and Carroll (2005) found that only 24% of FGCS manage to earn a Bachelor's degree in six years; the comparative number for non-FGCS was 68%. Alumni of urban public charter schools like UAPCS with a *mission of preparing minority students to enter, and successfully complete college, on their way to becoming our society's future leaders*, are of particular interest for a couple reasons: (1) The simple act of alumni of schools like UAPCS earning college degrees is validation of their college-preparatory mission; (2) At the same time, their graduation addresses Bloch's (2008) wonderment cited above; (3) These successful graduates also answer the challenge posed by Frankenberg et al (2010)—doing so for themselves as well as for the charter public school they attended.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions. The purpose of this phenomenological, qualitative research study was to explore, by means of in-depth interviews, the lived experiences of six graduates of an urban college-preparatory public charter high school, focusing especially on their college experiences, and culminating in their successful completion of the requirements for their respective college degrees. The choice of a phenomenological, qualitative design using in-depth interviewing for the study was dictated by the fact that the study sought to illuminate the essence or meaning of college-going and the experience of graduating from college for people who lived those experiences (McCaslin & Scott, 2003; Hess-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Specific areas

the study explored included participants' educational experiences, first, as alumni of an urban public charter high school; and, second, the participants' college experiences, focusing especially on experiences unique to their FGCS status. Tinto's six attributes of pre-entry attributes, starting goals and commitments, institutional experiences, academic and social integration, continuing goals and commitments, and outcomes were used as anchoring themes for the study.

The study's four Research Questions were annotated with the 15 in-depth interview questions that constituted the chief instrument by which data was collected as follows:

1. Could participants recall any academic factors, or incidents that either empowered them or that became obstacles they had to overcome on their way to earning a college degree? (In-depth interview questions numbers 1, 2, 3, 8).

2. What else about participants' lived college experiences as graduates of an urban, college-preparatory public charter school, helped them to successfully navigate and complete college? (In-depth interview questions numbers 4, 5, 6, 7, 9).

3. Were there any other non-academic factors that participants perceived to have impacted their college journeys—either negatively or positively? (In-depth interview questions numbers 10, 11, 12, 13).

4. To what extent did being committed to earning a degree play a discernible role in participants' college success? (In-depth interview questions numbers 14, 15).

Each participant's initial in-depth interview began with this grand tour question: *What stands out about college and your experiences of it that enabled you to succeed in earning a four-year college degree when others in similar circumstances have not been able to do so?* The grand tour question was supplemented by a 15-question, interview protocol adapted from Davidson et al.'s, (2009) College Persistence Questionnaire (see Appendix E, pp.162-163), which was predicated on Tinto's model of student departure and persistence (1973, 1975, 1987a, 1987b, 1993). Additionally, each participant was given an opportunity to advise a hypothetical high school junior who had college aspirations. Together, the grand tour question, the 15-question in-depth interview protocol, and the advising scenario, which provided participants the opportunity to offer advice based on their educational experiences, generated important and meaningful data from the participants.

Review of the Methodology. A phenomenological qualitative research methodology was chosen for the study, with an in-depth interview and a follow-up interview serving as the main data collection instrument. Tinto's model of student departure and persistence was used as one of the study's frames. Two semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with six African-American alumni of an urban, college-preparatory public charter school who subsequently enrolled into college, and earned bachelor's degrees. Data gathered from the two in-depth interviews represented the participants' best articulation of what attending an urban public charter school before enrolling in colleges and graduating, meant to them—both individually and as a group. The first interviews were transcribed, member checked, and uploaded into the *NVivo 11 for Mac* qualitative research software. Then, codes were generated based on participants'

responses and the congruence of those responses with Tinto's model of student departure and persistence. Major themes were identified according to the frequency of their occurrence within the interview transcripts. These themes were then presented within the study's findings.

Major findings. Participants' responses to the in-depth interviews indicated that their high school preparation, the support and expectation of their friends and families, professors who provided learning opportunities that stretched them and challenged them to grow personally and intellectually, the sense that the educational institution they chose was a good fit for them and, finally, that faculty and fellow students cared about them as individuals, were the factors most cited as being important to these participants' college successes. Other factors included the fact that the participants perceived a clear connection between what they studied in college and their subsequent career choices. While the participants reported that not all their college experiences were positive—at least one participant spoke about his experience with racism—certain intangibles, such as their own determination to earn a college degree, meaningful relationships, on- and off-campus, and notes of encouragement from home sent along with care packages, seemed to inoculate these students so that they were still able to achieve academically and earn their college degrees in spite of these negative forces.

Clearly, there were some intangible factors that played a role in these participants' college successes. For instance, Tierney and Jun (2001) noted the important role that student disposition plays in the student's ability to persevere, and to rebound, when faced with difficult, or challenging situations. Marcus, Juanita, Julia, and, to a certain degree Cantu, all alluded to a certain, unquantifiable element which helped them to re-write their

life scripts, or to persist in the face of seemingly negative life events until their stories

could become transformed into success stories. Some researchers have termed that

"unquantifiable factor" grit (Duckworth and Quinn, 2009).

Findings Related to the Literature

Literature deemed pertinent to the study's topic was reviewed. The review found

that the impulse to reform public education in America, at least in recent years, comes

from a desire to influence the system to better work for all children. Consensus now

exists around the fact that in order to participate as full citizens in the affairs of the

nation, young people must first be equipped with the skills that will give them economic

independence. Our growing awareness of global economic competition has also been a

driving force for public school reform. Next, the phenomenon of charter public schools,

which is central to the experiences of the FGCS who participated in this study was

reviewed since all six of them attended UAPCS. Additionally, public charter schools

have grown in popularity across the country, at the same time that urban TPS's have been

faltering, because parents increasingly find charter schools, especially ones that profess a

college-preparatory mission as an educational option, allowing them to fulfill their own

dreams for their children and grandchildren.

The College Persistence Questionnaire (CPQ) that was developed by Davidson et

al., (2009) as an instrument for validating Tinto's six-variable model, as well as to predict

college persistence was the basis for the 15-question, in-depth interview protocol used to

collect participants' responses. In Tinto's model, students' family backgrounds, the skills

and abilities they bring with them to college and any prior schooling all constitute *pre-*

entry attributes. Conley (2012) referred to this toolbox of skills and attributes as college

readiness. All the participants in this affirmed the positive impact that their high school preparation had on their college success— especially in terms of their preparation in English classes as well as in their seminar classes.

London (1989, 1992), and Terenzini et al. (1996) found evidence that FGCS receive less encouragement and support, and even discouragement from their non-college educated parents. However, this study found the exact opposite—participants reported receiving almost boundless encouragement and support from their parents and family. Among these participants, there was evidence of peer support positively impacting their college GPA, as Dennis, et al., (2005) found in their own study of 100 FGCS. The positive influence of Marcus's college roommate on his commitment to "study, study, study" in college was also confirmatory of Winston's (1999) assertion that the quality of students' on-campus peers may be as important as the quality of professors. In fact, Marcus's experiences cohered with Ost's (2010) assertion that students at-risk of failing to persist in college were the ones most likely to benefit from association with higher-ability peers. Finally, Cantu's and to some extent, Quinton's and Marcus's reluctance to approach college faculty confirmed Longwell-Grice and Longwell-Grice's (2008) finding that FGCS are often discomfited by the prospect of approaching college professors.

Tinto's second set of variables, *starting goals and commitments,* addresses a student's beginning intentions and goals, including institutional and external commitments (see p. 41). This variable considers the student's decision to enroll in college—and to re-enroll from semester to semester—to be an indication of the student's intention to graduate. According to Tinto, a college's academic systems, meaning its formal academic offerings, including informal faculty/staff interactions, as well as its

social systems, meaning the formal extracurricular activities, and informal peer group interactions, constitute the students' *institutional experiences*. In other words, Tinto (1993) was asserting that a student's decision to persist is predicated on the student perceiving that the college's academic and social systems offer the student positive support. Across the board, participants in this study were satisfied with their college.

A majority affirmed that their college experiences, including interactions with peers were mostly positive. Tinto's variable of *academic* and *social integration* represents the degree to which students felt that they were a part of the life of the college they attended. Participants' responses suggested that there was both academic and social fit between them and their colleges in terms of the totality of their college experiences matching their own expectations. Tinto's variable of *continuing goals and institutional commitments* addresses persisting intentions, institutional commitments, and external commitments. All six participants indicated that their goals became more concrete the longer they were enrolled, making graduation a more tangible reality. All of the study's six participants (100%) graduated from college within four years of entering college. Tinto's final variable, *outcomes,* results from an integrationist process, meaning that the various elements work together to influence whether the student decides to drop out or persists until graduation.

The findings of this study amount to a measured affirmation of the mission of UAPCS and other schools with a similar mission. This research suggests that the school's approach yields outcomes that other public schools could possibly replicate. More importantly, these findings disprove the commonly held notion that FGCS do not graduate from college at rates that are reliable enough to justify the time and resources

spent on sending them there. In fact, these participants' college experiences seem to show that reasonable interventions, beginning with adequate preparation for college during high school could stem the losses heaped on society when students enroll but do not complete college. It bears repeating that for fulltime students who entered college in 2002, but who failed to graduate six years later in 2008, Schneider and Yin (2011) estimate that the cost to society amounted to: "...$3.8 billion [of] lost income; $566 million [of] lost federal income taxes; and $164 million [of] lost …state income taxes nationwide" (p.2).

Conclusions

The current study presented information on the lived experiences of six alumni of an urban public charter school as they transitioned to college and persisted to earn their college degrees. An in-depth interview protocol elicited from the study's participants, all of whom were FGCS, rich data on the factors that led to their attainment of college degrees. Participant's perceived that: (1) their high school preparation, including high school teachers who set high standards and worked with them to reach those standards, (2) the support and expectation of friends and family, (3) college professors who provided learning opportunities that stretched and challenged them to grow personally and intellectually, and, (4) the sense that the educational institution they chose to attend was a good fit for them, were the factors that were important to their college successes. Additionally, while the participants reported that not all of their college experiences were positive, certain intangibles, such as their own determination to graduate, meaningful relationships on- and off-campus, and notes of encouragement from home, seemed to

inoculate these students so that they were able to build beneficial relationships, achieve academically, and earn their college degrees.

Implications for action. This study should have utility for school administrators, legislators, teachers, and others interested in providing college preparatory opportunities for urban students. Specifically, these findings add to our understanding of urban youth by advancing strategies and practices that work in educating these youth. Secondly, findings should equip parents and guardians with the knowledge to expand their options as they seek to achieve their educational hopes and dreams for their own children and grandchildren. For, in the final analysis, the needs of students attending America's urban public high schools are not so different from the needs of students attending high school in America's suburban and rural areas. We know that pre-college preparation, which begins with staffing high schools with qualified teachers who are willing and motivated to teach all students to high standards and whose daily practices insure that key principles are mastered by students to high levels are all critical to college success. The foregoing assertions imply that certain actions must be taken urgently if we are to achieve the positive outcomes of sending urban students to college prepared and ready to succeed.

Rethinking high school's role in college preparation. Currently, within most American high schools, the job of helping students apply and get into college is typically left to counselors. What is often overlooked in this traditional approach to college-going is the unique needs of students, such as FGCS, for whom the school must do double-duty of *educational scaffolding*—doing things like tutoring, advocating for, and, even role-playing the requirements of college—for these students prior to them entering college. Because of its college-preparatory mission, UAPCS and schools with similar belief view

college-going as too important a job to be left only to counselors. In these schools, there

is a concerted effort to build a culture that makes college-going commonplace.

Participants also indicated that high school teachers who had high expectations for them

were important to their college success. Among the teaching practices they praised were

teachers who taught their subjects for mastery, mandatory classes like junior and senior

seminar devoted to teaching the ins and outs of college entry as well as school-wide

strategies that promote college persistence. Participants also spoke of the importance of

raising students' consciousness about graduating on time—items that were a part of the

curriculum for junior and senior seminar classes at UAPCS. A few of the participants

mentioned the important influence of counselors who were well-equipped to teach the so-

called "soft skills" such as seeking help to understand that certain life events will become

barriers to success unless students learn early on, effective ways of coping with such

events.

Buttressing the roles of family, friend, and peers. Participants indicated that

family, friends, and peers contributed to their college success in a variety of ways. Yet,

high schools often exclude parents when it comes to planning for college success

(Tierney, 2002). The participants in this study were FGCS who managed to graduate

college despite their parents not having done so. Principals, counselors and teachers

should consider how much easier these students' college experiences would be if schools

provided opportunities for them and their parents to receive coaching on strategies to

support their students to persist and finish college. According to (Swail & Perna, 2000;

Perna, 2002), successful college preparatory programs continue to be those that include

parental involvement components. Because, as Tierney has concluded, "families—

broadly defined—are of significant help in enabling children to graduate from high school and go on to college" (p. 603).

Modeling diversity and assertive training in high schools. Diversity as well as assertiveness training during the K-12 experience can help to better prepare college-bound students for college success. Participant Quinton arrived at his college intending to deploy the same strategies that had worked for him in high school. It was not until he was considering applying to dental school that he realized that something was missing. He needed to develop relationships with the professors who would be writing his dental school references. Had his high school experience inculcated the idea that student-teacher interaction was a necessary part of education, he might have learned to overcome his shyness sooner. On the other hand, Marcus reported experiencing difficulties with students from cultural backgrounds that were different from his inner-city background. Marcus' difficulty could have been alleviated through a targeted, purposeful program of diversity training that exposed him to different students while he was still in high school.

Intentionality in college selection and college fit. Urban high schools can, and must do a better job of inviting parents to be partners in their own students' preparation for college. This should begin with preparing students to take college entrance exams such as the ACT as early as the 10th grade, explicitly taking 11th graders through the essential steps of selecting and choosing best fit colleges, helping students apply to colleges, and once admitted, helping them to access the resources required for semester to semester persistence, and eventual graduation. In their study investigating the mechanisms by which otherwise qualified high school students in Chicago decided on which college to attend, Roderick, Coca, and Nagaoka (2011) found that, by themselves,

qualifications and college aspirations did not result in qualified students enrolling in four-year college. This suggests that before that to happen, urban high schools must develop intentional organizational norms and structures that guide students effectively through the college application process so that they are able to gain admission as well as enroll into colleges. The critical elements appeared to be the high school that the students attended and whether or not

> [T]here is a pattern of four-year college-going, where teachers report high expectations and strong supports for college attendance, and where there is high participation in financial aid application are more likely to plan to attend, apply to, be accepted into, and enroll in a four-year college that matches their qualifications. (p. 202)

Recommendations for future research. The following recommendations represent potential areas identified for future inquiry. The current study included male and female FGCS who attended a predominantly African-American public charter school located in a mid western city. Future studies could include FGCS alumni of other ethnicities who attended TPSs in other geographical locations. This study collected data from six participants—three males and three females. The sample size could be increased and expanded to include additional African-American FGCSs, which would add to the existing literature.

Only alumni of UAPCS who went on to graduate from college were included in the current study. Future studies could focus on participants who graduated from UAPCS, but did not persist to earn a college degree. The experiences of non-college graduates are not inconsequential to understanding factors salient to college persistence. Their

perceptions would be invaluable to researchers seeking either to increase college graduation rates or to offer recommendations for improving college success rates for all students. While this study concentrated on the experiences of six alumni of UAPCS, future studies could focus on the experiences of African-American, FGCS from other charter schools and TPS districts.

One of the participants in this study encountered a life-changing experience that led to her transferring back to her hometown university to complete her college education. Perhaps, future studies could focus on the plight of students like Juanita who had to transfer to other schools in order to complete their goal of earning a college degree. Do these students experience college differently, for instance? Finally, a major theme in the current study was the important role that family and friends played in the participants' college successes. A future study could explore this in more depth in order to add to the literature on the family as an agent of social capital for FGCS's. A follow-up study of the same students could be undertaken after a few years have elapsed to see if the passage of time or their own maturity had produced any change in their views.

Concluding Remarks

This study explored the lived experience of six alumni of UAPCS, a college-preparatory public charter school located in a large, mid-western urban city. A focal point of the study was the participants' high school preparation and how that preparation impacted their experiences as they navigated college, successfully graduating in four years—well ahead of the six years that accomplishment typically requires. Descriptive statistics within the study included parental education and household living arrangements. Participants' educational attainments—including high school, ACT scores and college

GPAs—and their ages at the time of the study were also detailed. Among the factors participants perceived as having been instrumental to their successes were high school preparation; satisfaction with college and the relatedness of their major to their career; role of favorite professors, institutional responsiveness to their needs; role of family, friends, and peers; determination to succeed; college fit; and academic commitment. Participants advice to a hypothetical high school junior included: use high school to prepare for college, ask questions about your college concerns, have fun but make academics a priority, and seek out and associate yourself, as much as possible, with other college students for whom earning a college degree is also important.

Summary

This study explored the lived experience of six alumni of UAPCS, a college-preparatory public charter school located in a large, mid-western city. Among the factors participants perceived as being instrumental to their successfully completing college and earning their college degrees were: their high school preparation; career connection and satisfaction with college; role of favorite professors, the colleges' responsiveness to their unique needs; role of family, friends, and peers; their own determination to succeed; and their academic commitment. Participants' advice to a hypothetical high school junior included encouraging the junior to use high school to prepare for college, to identify and face their fears about college, to have fun while in college but to also make academics a priority, and, finally, to seek out and associate with those students who are serious about earning a college degree on time and who are investing in that goal daily.

References

Abdulkadiroğlu, A., Angrist, J. D., Dynarski, S. M., Kane, T. J., & Pathak, P. A. (2011). Accountability and flexibility in public schools: Evidence from Boston's charters and pilots. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *126*(2), 699-748.

Abdulkadiroğlu, A., & Sönmez, T. (2003). School choice: A mechanism design approach. *The American Economic Review*, *93*(3), 729-747. Retrieved from http://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/10161/2090/fulltext.pdf?sequence=1

Adelman, C. (2004). *Principal indicators of student academic histories in postsecondary education*, *1972-2000*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/prinindicat/index.html

Ashar, H., & Skenes, R. (1993). Can Tinto's Student Departure Model Be Applied to Nontraditional Students? *Adult Education Quarterly,* 43(2), 90-100.

Atkinson, R., & Flint, J. (2001). Accessing hidden and hard-to-reach populations: Snowball research strategies. *Social Research Update*, *33*(1), 1-4. Retrieved from http://scholar.google.com/scholar?start=0&q=snowballing +sampling+technique&hl=en&as_sdt=0,26&surl=1&safe=active

Banks-Santilli, L. (2014). First-generation college students and their pursuit of the American dream. *Journal of Case Studies in Education*, *5*(1). Retrieved from http://www.aabri.com/manuscripts/131657.pdf

Barusch, A., Gringeri, C., & George, M. (2011). Rigor in qualitative social work research: A review of strategies used in published articles. *Social Work Research*,

35(1), 11-19. Retrieved from http://www.biomedsearch.com/article/Rigor-in-

qualitative-social-work/251631075.html

Bennett, J. (2010). Vanishing students, rising scores: Middle school charters show

alarming student attrition over time. *Edwize*. Retrieved from

http://www.edwize.org/middle-school-charters-show-alarming-student- attrition.

Benson, A. (1995). School segregation and desegregation in Kansas City. *Unpublished

Manuscript. Spring.* Retrieved from

www.bensonlaw.com/deseg/deseg_history.htm, work in progress, Spring 1995

with 1996 epilogue

Betts, J. R., & Tang, Y. E. (2008). *Value-added and experimental studies of the effect of

charter schools on student achievement.* Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing

Public Education.

Berger, J. B., & Lyon, S.C. (2005). Past to present: a historical look at retention. In A.

Seidman (Ed.), *College student retention formula for student success* (pp. 1-2,

9). Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Berger, J., (1997, February 24). Albert Shanker, 68, combative leader who transformed

teachers' union, dies. *New York Times*. Retrieved from

http://www.nytimes.com/1997/02/24/nyregion/albert-shanker-68-combative-

leader-who-transformed-teachers-union-dies.html?src=pm&pagewanted=1

Berube, M. R. (1994). *American school reform: Progressive, equity, and excellence

movements, 1883-1993*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Biernacki, P., & Waldorf, D. (1981). Snowball sampling: Problems and techniques of

chain referral sampling. *Sociological Methods & Research*, *10*(2), 141-163.

Retrieved from

http://scholar.google.com/scholar?start=0&q=snowballing+sampling+technique&

hl=en&as_sdt=0,26&surl=1&safe=active

Bifulco, R., & Ladd, H. F. (2006). The impact of charter schools on students: Evidence

from North Carolina. *Education*, 1(1), pp. 50-90.

Bloch, T. M., (2008). *Stand for the best: What I learned after leaving my job as CEO of*

H & R Block to become a teacher and founder of an inner-city charter school.

San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Bloomberg, L. D. & Volpe, M. (2012). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A road*

map from beginning to end. (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Booker, K., SASS, T. R., Gill, B., & Zimmer, R. (2008). *Going Beyond Test Scores:*

Evaluating charter school impact on educational attainment in Chicago and

Florida. (No. 6026). Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Boyce, C., & Neale, P. (2006). *Conducting in-depth interviews: A guide for designing*

and conducting in-depth interviews for evaluation input (pp. 3-7). Watertown,

MA: Pathfinder International.

Budde, R. (1988). *Education by charter: Restructuring school districts. Key to long-term*

continuing improvement in American Education. Andover: MA.

Bui, K. V. T. 2002. First-Generation College Students at a Four-Year University:

Background Characteristics, Reasons for Pursuing Higher Education, and First-

Year Experience. *College Student Journal* 36: 3–11.

Cavanagh, S. (2012, June 29). Mo. Governor Signs Charter-Expansion Law, but Says

They Must Do Better. *Education Week,* Blogs. Retrieved from

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/charterschoice/2012/06/missouri_governor_signs
_law_but_says_charters_must_do_better.html?qs=Mo+Gov+signs+inmeta:Pub_y
ear%3D2012

Center for Research on Education Outcomes, [CREDO I]. (2009). *Multiple Choice:
Charter School Performance in 16 States*. Stanford University, Palo Alto: CA.
Retrieved from http://Credo.stanford.edu/reports/MULTIPLE CHOICE
CREDO.pdf

Center for Research on Education Outcomes [CREDO II]. (2013). *National charter
school study*. Palo Alto: CA. Retrieved from
http://credo.standford.edu/documents/NCSS%202013%20Final%20Draft.pdf

Center for Research on Education Outcomes (2015). *Urban Charter School Study*. Palo
Alto: CREDO, Stanford University, Palo Alto: CA. Retrieved from
http://urbancharters.stanford.edu/index.php

Chen, X., & Carroll, C. D. (2005). *First-Generation Students in Postsecondary
Education: A Look at Their College Transcripts. Postsecondary Education
Descriptive Analysis Report.* NCES 2005-171. Washington, DC: National Center
for Education Statistics.

Chenail, R. J. (2011). Interviewing the investigator: Strategies for addressing
instrumentation and researcher bias concerns in qualitative research. *The
Qualitative Report*, 16(1), 255-262. Retrieved from http://nsuworks.noca.edu/
tqr/vol16/issl/16

Choy, S. P., Horn, L. J., Nuñez, A. M., & Chen, X. (2000). Transition to College: What Helps At-Risk Students and Students Whose Parents Did Not Attend College. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, *2000*(107), 45-63.

Choy, S. (2001). *Students whose parents did not go to college: Postsecondary access, persistence, and attainment. Findings from the condition of education.* National Center for Education Statistics (ED), Washington, DC: MPR Associates. Berkeley: CA. NCES-2001-126.

Clark, M. A., Gleason, P., Tuttle, C. C., & Silverberg, M. K. (2011). *Do Charter Schools Improve Student Achievement? Evidence from a National Randomized Study.* Working Paper. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Cokley, K. (2000). An investigation of academic self-concept and its relationship to academic achievement in African American college students. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *26*(2), 148-164.

Coleman, J. S. (1990). *Foundations of social theory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Conley, D. T. (2007). Redefining college readiness. Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center.

Conley, D. T. (2012). *A complete definition of college and career readiness*. Educational Policy Improvement Center. Retrieved from https://www.epiconline.org/Issues/college-career-readiness/definition.dot

Consoletti, A. (2012). *The state of charter schools: What we know—and what we do not—about performance and accountability*. Center for Education Reform.

Retrieved from https://www.edreform.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/StateOfCharterSchools_CER_Dec2011-Web-1.pdf

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Current Population Survey. (2013). U. S. Bureau of Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. Washington, DC. Retrieved from:

http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_education_summary.htm and

http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_education_by train.htm

Davidson, W. B., Beck, H. P., & Milligan, M. (2009). The College Persistence Questionnaire (CPQ): Development and validation of an instrument that predicts student attrition. *Journal of College Student Development,* 50(4): 373-390. Retrieved from

http://libres.uncg.edu/ir/asu/f/beck_hall_2009_the_college_persistence_questionnaire.pdf

Davis, M., Dias-Bowie, Y., Greenberg, K., Klukken, G., Pollio, H. R., Thomas, S. P., & Thompson, C. L. (2004). "A fly in the buttermilk": Descriptions of university life by successful Black undergraduate students at a predominately White southeastern university. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 75(4), 420-445.

Demetriou, C., & Schmitz-Sciborski, A. (2011). Integration, motivation, strengths and optimism: Retention theories past, present and future. In *Proceedings of the 7th National Symposium on Student Retention* (pp. 300-312).

Dennis, J. M., Phinney, J. S., & Chuateco, L. I. (2005). The role of motivation, parental support, and peer support in the academic success of ethnic minority first-generation college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, *46*(3), 223-236.

Dent, J. (2014). Missouri and the Charter School Puzzle: A Story with an Uncertain Ending. *Missouri Law Review*, *79*, 733.

DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education*, *40*(4), 314-321.

Donovan, J., & Johnson, L. (2005). Exploring the experiences of first-generation, multiethnic undergraduate college students. *Journal of Student Affairs*, *14*, 32-38.

Dika, S. L., & Singh, K. (2002). Applications of social capital in educational literature: A critical synthesis. *Review of Educational Research*, *72*(1), 31-60.

Dougherty, C., Mellor, L., & Jian, S. (2006). The Relationship between Advanced Placement and College Graduation. 2005 AP Study Series, Report 1. *National Center for Educational Accountability*.

Duckworth, A. L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., & Kelly, D. R. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 92*, 1087–1101.

Duckworth, A. L., & Quinn, P. D. (2009). Development and validation of the Short Grit Scale (GRIT–S). *Journal of personality assessment*, *91*(2), 166-174.

Edreform. (2012). *The last eight states without charter laws*. Center for Education Reform. Retrieved from https://www.edreform.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/CharterLaws2013-Last-8-States.pdf

Eimers, M., & Mullen, R. (2003). Dual credit and Advanced Placement: Do they help

prepare students for success in college. In *MidAIR and AIR Conference*.

Engle, J., Bermeo, A., & O'Brien, C. (2006). Straight from the Source: What Works for First-Generation College Students. *Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education*.

Facione, P. A., Facione, N. C., & Giancarlo, C. A. F. (1996). The motivation to think in working and learning. *New Directions for Higher Education*, (96), 67-79.

Falcone, T. M. (2011). Toward a new model of student persistence in Higher Education. *Online Submission.* Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED530661.pdf

Farmer-Hinton, R. L., & Adams, T. L. (2006). Social capital and college preparation: Exploring the role of counselors in a college prep school for Black students. *Negro Educational Review*, *57*(1/2), 101.

Frankenberg, E., Siegel-Hawley, G., Wang, J. (2010). *Choice without equity: Charter school segregation and the need for Civil Rights standards*. Los Angeles, CA: The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles at UCLA. Retrieved from www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu

Freivogel, W. H. (2002). St. Louis: Desegregation and school choice in the land of Dred Scott. *Divided We Fail*, 209-35.

French, B. F., Immekus, J. C., & Oakes, W. C. (2005). An examination of indicators of engineering students' success and persistence. *Journal of Engineering Education*, *94*(4), 419-425.

Friends of University Academy, College Incentive Program Guidelines. Retrieved from http://friendsofua.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Undergrad-CIP-Guidelines-2014-5-6.pdf

Friends of University Academy, College Incentive Program Guidelines. Retrieved from http://friendsofua.org /about-2/alumni-support-program-2

Fry, R., & Parker, K. (2014). Record shares of young adults have finished both high school and college. *Generations*. Retrieved from http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/11/05/section-2-bachelors-degree-completion-among-young-adults/

Gardner, D. P. (1983). *A nation at risk*. Washington, DC: The National Commission on Excellence in Education, US Department of Education.

Gewertz, C. (2010). High school narrows college-success gap. *Education Week,* 30:7, p. 8. Retrieved from http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/10/13/07readiness.h30.html?tkn=ZVVF oY3upq4ltzIQDZxjdKWiErXbuKfkHHP5&print=1

Gigliotti, J. (2012). Rice University: Innovation to Increase Student College Readiness. *Continuing Higher Education Review*, *76*, 166-174.

Gleason, P., Clark, M., Tuttle, C. C., & Dwoyer, E. (2010). The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts: Final Report. Washington: DC. NCEE 2010-4029. *National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance*.

Gofen, A. (2009). Family capital: How first-generation higher education students break the intergenerational cycle. *Family Relations*, 58(1), 104-120.

Goldin, C. (1999). A brief history of education in the United States. Historical paper 119. *National Bureau of Economic Research*. Cambridge: MA.

Greene, J. P., & Winters, M. A. (2004). Florida's program to end social promotion. Education working paper. *Center for civic innovation, Manhattan Institute for*

Policy Research, Manhattan, NY: Retrieved from

http://epsl.asu.edu/epru/ttdocuments/EPRU-0512-140-OWI.pdf

Greene, J. P. (2010). An evaluation of Florida's program to end social promotion. Education working paper. *Center for Civic Innovation*.

Grunig, J. E. (2002). Qualitative methods for assessing relationships: Between organizations and publics. Working papers. *Institute for Public Relations,* Washington, DC. Retrieved from

http://www.instituteforpr.org/files/uploads/2002_AssessingRelations.pdf

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). The voice of the customer. *Marketing Science*, 12(1), 1-27.

Guion, L. A., Diehl, D. C., & McDonald, D. (2006). Conducting an in-depth interview. Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, IFAS, University of Florida.

Hanushek, E. A., Kain, J. F., & Rivkin, S. G. (2002). The impact of charter schools on academic achievement. Cambridge, MA, *National Bureau of Economic Research*. Retrieved from http://www.nber.org/~confer/2002/hiedf02/KAIN.pdf

Hanushek, E. A. (2009). Why are some environments better than others for charter schools? *Education Next*, Retrieved from http://educationnext.org

Hall, C. (1999). African American college students at a predominantly white institution: Patterns of success. Paper presented at the *39th Annual Meeting of the Association for Institutional Research*.

Henig, J. R. (2008a). *Spin Cycle: How Research Gets Used in Policy Debates--The Case of Charter Schools*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Henig, J. R. (2008b). What do we know about the outcomes of KIPP schools. East

> Lansing, MI: *Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice*.

Hess, F.M. (2010). Does School Choice Work? *National Affairs, 4*. Retrieved from

> http://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/does-school-choice-work

Hesse-Biber, S. N., & Leavy, P. (2011). *The practice of qualitative research*. Thousand

> Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Hill, P. T., Angel, L., & Christensen, J. (2006). Charter school achievement studies.

> *Education Finance and Policy*, 1(1), 139-150.

Hill, N. E., Castellino, D. R., Lansford, J. E., Nowlin, P., Dodge, K. A., Bates, J. E., &

> Pettit, G. S. (2004). Parent academic involvement as related to school behavior,
>
> achievement, and aspirations: Demographic variations across adolescence. *Child*
>
> *Development*, *75*(5), 1491-1509.

Hossler, D., & Gallagher, K. S., (1987). Studying student college choice: A three-phase

> model and implications for policymakers. *College and University*, 62(3) 207-21.

Hossler, D., Braxton, J., & Coopersmith, G. (1989). Understanding student college

> choice. *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research*, *5*, 231-288.

Hossler, D., Schmit, J., & Vesper, N. (1999). *Going to college: How social, economic,*

> *and educational factors influence the decisions students make*. Baltimore, MD:
>
> Johns Hopkins University Press.

Housel, T.H., & Harvey, V.L. (2010). Introduction and overview of the book's

> objectives. In T. Housel & V. Harvey (Eds.), *The invisibility factor:*
>
> *administrators and faculty reach out to first-generation college students* (pp. 13-
>
> 22)*. Boca Raton, FL: Brown Walker Press.

Hoxby, C. M., & Rockoff, J. E. (2004). The impact of charter schools on student achievement. Cambridge, MA. Retrieved from http://www.innovations.harvard.edu/cache/documents/4992.pdf

Hughes, K. L., (2010). Dual Enrollment: Postsecondary/Secondary Partnerships to Prepare Students. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 39(6), 12-13.

Ishitani, T. T. & DesJardins, S. L. (2002). A longitudinal investigation of dropout from college in the United States. Paper presented at the *42nd Annual Meeting of the Association for Institutional Research*, Toronto, Ontario, Canada).

Ishitani, T. T., & Snider, K. G. (2004). Longitudinal effects of college preparation programs on college retention. Paper presented at the *44th Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research*. Boston, MA.

Ishitani, T. T. (2006). Studying attrition and degree completion behavior among first-generation college students in the United States. *Journal of Higher Education*, 861-885.

Kairuz, T., Crump, K., & O'Brien, A. (2007). Tools for data collection and analysis. *The Pharmaceutic Journal*, 371-377. Retrieved from www.pjonline.com

Karp, M. M., Calcagno, J. C., Hughes, K. L., Jeong, D. W., & Bailey, T. R. (2007).The Postsecondary Achievement of Participants in Dual Enrollment:" An Analysis of Student Outcomes in Two States". *Community College Research Center, Columbia University*.

Kazis, R. (2006). Building a Pipeline for College Access and Success. *Connection: The Journal of the New England Board of Higher Education*, *20*(4), 13-15.

Kranstuber, H., Carr, K. & Hosek, A. M. (2012). "If You Can Dream It, You Can Achieve It:" Parent memorable messages as indicators of college student success. *Communication Education.* 61(1), 44-66. doi: 10.1080/03634523.2011.620617.

Kolderie, T., (June, 2005). Ray Budde and the origins of the Charter Concept. Retrieved from http://www.educationevolving.org/pdf/Ray_Budde_Origin_of chartering.pdf

Lam, P. C., Doverspike, D. & Mawasha, R. P. (1999). Predicting success in minority engineering program. *Journal of Engineering Education*. 88(3) 265-267, 367, 369-370.

Legard, R., Keegan, J., & Ward, K. (2003). In-depth interviews. *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*, 138-169.

Lester, S. (1999). An introduction to phenomenological research, Taunton UK, Stan Lester Developments. Retrieved from http://www.sld.demon.co.uk/resmethy.pdf

London, H. (1989). Breaking away: A study of first-generation college students and their families. *American Journal of Education, 97*(2), 144-170.

Longwell-Grice, R. & Longwell-Grice, H. (2008). Testing Tinto: How do retention theories work for first-generation, working-class students? *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *9*(4), 407-420.

Lotkowski, V. A., Robbins, S. B., & Noeth, R. J. (2004). The Role of Academic and Non-Academic Factors in Improving College Retention. ACT Policy Report. *American College Testing ACT, Inc*.

Liu, R., & Liu, E., (2000). Institutional Integration: An Analysis of Tinto's Theory. Paper presented at the *40th Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research*, Cincinnati, OH.

Lundberg, C. A. (2010). Institutional commitment to diversity, college involvement, and faculty relationships as predictors of learning for students of color. *Journal of the Professoriate*, 3(2), 50-74.

McCaslin, M. & Wilson Scott, K. (2003). The five question method for framing a qualitative research study. *The Qualitative Report, 8*(3), 447-461. Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR8-3/mccaslin.pdf

McNamara, C. (2009). *General guidelines for conducting interviews*. Retrieved from http://managementhelp.org/evaluatn/intrview.htm

Mandich, A. D., Polatajko, H. J., & Rodger, S. (2003). Rites of passage: Understanding participation of children with developmental coordination disorder. *Human Movement Science*, *22*(4), 583-595.

Martinez, J. A., Sher, K. J., Krull, J. L., & Wood, P. K., (2009). Blue-collar scholars?: Mediators and moderators of university attrition in First-generation college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 50(1). 87-103.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B., (2011). *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Maslow, A. H., (1971). *The farther reaches of human nature*. New York, NY: Viking.

Mason, M. (2010). Sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative interviews. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 11(3).

Merriam, S. (1995). What Can You Tell From An N of l?: Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning*, *4*, 50-60.

Metz, G.W. (2002). *Challenges and Changes to Tinto's Persistence Theory*. Paper

   presented at the Annual Meeting of the *Mid-Western Educational Research

   Association*. Columbus, OH.

Miron, G. (2005, April). Strong charter school laws are those that result in positive

   outcomes. Presented at the *Annual Meeting of the American Educational

   Research Association, Montreal, Canada*.

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MODESE]. (2014a).

   Retrieved from http://dese.mo.gov/school-data

Mondale, S. (2001). *School: The story of American public education*. Beacon Press.

Moran, P. (2005). Too little, too late: The elusive goal of school desegregation in Kansas

   City, Missouri, and the role of the federal government. *The Teachers College

   Record*, *107*(9), 1933-1955.

Moustakas, C. (1994). Phenomenological research methods. Sage. *Thousand Oaks, CA*.

Nathan, J., (1996). *Charter schools: Creating hope and opportunity for American

   education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (2013). A growing movement: America's

   largest charter school communities. Retrieved from

   http://www.publiccharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/2013-Market-Share-

   Report-Report_20131210T133315.pdf

National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES] (2014). *The Condition of Education*.

   Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cva.asp

   National Educational Longitudinal

Nisar, H. (2010). Do charter schools improve student achievement? *Unpublished paper. University of Wisconsin, Madison*.

Obama, B. (2009). Interview With Matt Lauer on NBC's 'Today.' *American Presidency Project*, *1*.

Ogbu, J. (2003). *Black Americans in an affluent suburb: A study of academic disengagement*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Ohland, M. W., & Zhang, G. (2002). A study of the impact of minority engineering programs at the FAMU-FSU College of Engineering. *Journal of Engineering Education*, *91*(4), 435-440.

Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L., & Wynaden, D. (2001). Ethics in qualitative research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, *33*(1), 93-96.

Ost, B. (2010). Differences in persistence patterns between life and physical science majors: The role of grades, peers, and preparation [Electronic version]. Retrieved from Cornell University, School of Industrial and Labor Relations site: http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/workingpapers/119/

Palmer, R., & Gasman, M. (2008). It takes a village to raise a child: The role of social capital in promoting academic success for African American men at a black college. *Journal of College Student Development*, 49(1), 52-70.

Pascarella, E.T., Pierson, C.T., Wolniak, G.C., & Terenzini, P.T. (2004). First generation college students: Additional evidence on college experiences and outcomes. *Journal of Higher Education, 75*(3), 249-284.

Patton M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. 3rd Ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Perna, L. W., & Titus, M. A. (2005). The relationship between parental involvement as social capital and college enrollment: An examination of racial/ethnic group differences. *Journal of Higher Education*, 485-518.

Poggenpoel, M. & Myburgh, S. (2003). The researcher as research instrument in educational research: A possible threat to trustworthiness? Education, 124 (2), 418-21, 320.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, *8*, 5-23.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1989). Phenomenological research methods. In R. S. Valle & S. Halling (Eds.), *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology.* pp. 41- 60. New York: Plenum.

Portes, A. (1998). Social capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *24*, 1-24.

Rebore, R.W. (1997). Unitary status: What does it mean in the Saint Louis desegregation case? Paper presented at the annual meeting of the *American Educational Research Association,* Chicago: IL.

Radunzel, J., & Noble, J. (2012). *Tracking 2003 ACT-tested high school graduates: College readiness, enrollment, and long-term success*. ACT Report series. Iowa City: IA

Ramsey-White, Kim Renee, (2012). Exploring College Readiness: Self-Perceptions of Early College Students. *Unpublished Dissertation*, Georgia State University. Retrieved from http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/eps diss/96

Ravitch, D. (2001). American Traditions of Education, in *A primer on America's schools*, Moe, T. M. (ed.) Stanford, Cal.: Hoover Institution Press.

Reichstadt, J., Sengupta, G., Depp, C. A., Palinkas, L. A., and Jeste, D. V. (2010). Older adults' perspectives on successful aging: Qualitative interviews, *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, 18*(7), 567-575.

Reid, M. J., & Moore, J. L. (2008). College readiness and academic preparation for postsecondary education oral histories of first-generation urban college students. *Urban Education*, *43*(2), 240-261.

Roderick, M., Coca, V., & Nagaoka, J. (2011). Potholes on the road to college: High school effects in shaping urban students' participation in college application, four-year college enrollment, and college match. *Sociology of Education*, *84*(3), 178-211.

Rotherham, A. J. (2002). Putting Vouchers in Perspective: Thinking about School Choice after Zelman v. Simmons-Harris. *Policy Brief*.

Rowan-Kenyon, H. T., Bell, A. D., & Perna, L. W. (2008). Contextual influences on parental involvement in college going: Variations by socioeconomic class. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *79*(5), 564-586.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Saldana, J. (2013). *The Coding Manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sadler, G. R., Lee, H. C., Lim, R. S. H., & Fullerton, J. (2010). Recruitment of

hard-to-reach population subgroups via adaptations of the snowball sampling

strategy. *Nursing & Health Sciences*, *12*(3), 369-374.

Schroeder, J. (2004). Ripples of Innovation: Charter Schools in Minnesota, the Nation's

First Charter School State. Progressive Policy Institute. Retrieved from

http://www.dlc.org/documents/MN_Charters_0504.pdf

Sedlacek, W. E., & Sheu, H. B. (2004). Academic success of Gates millennium scholars.

Readings on Equal Education, *20*, 181-197.

Sedlacek, W. E., (2011). Using non-cognitive variables in assessing readiness for higher

education. *Readings on Equal Education*, 25, 187-205.

Seidman, I. E., (1991). *Interviewing in qualitative research: A guide for researchers in

education and social sciences*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Spiggle, S. (1994). Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data in consumer research.

Journal of consumer research, 491-503.

Simon, M. K., & Goes, J., (2013). *Dissertation and Scholarly Research*: Recipes for

Success. Seattle, WA: Dissertation Success LLC

Smith, C. M. (2013). Elementary school grade retention: A qualitative study of high

school seniors' perception of being held back. *Unpublished Dissertation*.

presented Graduate School of Western Carolina University. Retrieved

http://libres.uncg.edu/ir/wcu/f/smith2013.pdf

Smith, T., & Cumpton, G. (2013). The Central Texas College Access and Persistence

Program Evaluation: Outcomes and Impacts Summary Report. Austin, TX: The

Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources.

Singham, M. (2003). The achievement gap: Myths and reality. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *84*(8), 586.

Somers, P., Woodhouse, S. R., & Cofer, S, J. E. (2004). Pushing the boulder uphill: The persistence of first-generation college students. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, *41*(3), 811-828.

Spradley, J. P. (19979). *The ethnographic interview*. Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Starks, H.; Trinidad, S. B. (2007). Choose your method: a comparison of phenomenology, discourse analysis, and grounded theory. *Qualitative Health Research*. 17, 1372-1380.

Steele, C.M. (1999, August). Thin ice: "Stereotype threat" and black college students. *Atlantic Monthly*, 44–54.

Steneck, N. H. (2007). *ORI: Introduction to the responsible conduct of research*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

Strauss, V. (December 12, 2014). Major charter researcher causes a stir with comments about market-based school reform. *Washington Post Blogs* Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2014/12/12/major-charter-researcher-causes-stir-with-comments-about-market-based-school-reform/

Tierney, W. G., & Jun, A. (2001). A university helps prepare low income youths for college: Tracking school success. *Journal of Higher Education*, 205-225.

Tierney, W. G. (2002). Parents and families in precollege preparation: The lack of connection between research and practice. *Educational Policy*, *16*(4), 588-606.

Tinto, V. & Cullen, J. (1973). *Higher Education: A Review and Theoretical Synthesis of*

Recent Research. New York, N.Y: Teachers' College, Columbia University,

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent

research. *Review of Educational Rese*arch, 45, 89-125.

Tinto, V. (1987a). *Leaving college: rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*.

Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (1987b). The Principles of Effective Retention. Paper presented at the Fall

Conference of the *Maryland College Personnel Association*, Largo, MD.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures for student attrition.*

(2n. ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Toews, M., & Yazedjian, A. (2006). How Parents Can Help First Generation College

Students Succeed. Retrieved from

http://www.education.com/reference/article/parents-help-first-generation-college-

students/

Tong, A., Sainsbury, P., & Craig, J. (2007). Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative

research (COREQ): a 32-item checklist for interviews and focus groups.

International Journal for Quality in Health Care, *19*(6), 349-357.

Turner, D. W., III (2010). Qualitative interview design: A practical guide for novice

investigators. *The Qualitative Report*, *15*(3), 754-760. Retrieved from

http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR15-3/qid.pdf

Tuttle, C. C., Teh, B. R., Nichols-Barrer, I., Gill, B. P., & Gleason, P. (2010). Student

Characteristics and Achievement in 22 KIPP Middle Schools: Final Report.

Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

University Academy Public Charter School, (n.d.). Home page/Our history. Retrieved from http://www.universityacademy.org/community/history

University Academy. (2011). Personal Plan of Studies: Courses and graduation requirements. University Academy Public Charter School, Upper School.

Valanides, N., & Angeli, C. (2008). An exploratory study about the role of epistemological beliefs and dispositions on learners' thinking about an ill-defined issue in solo and duo problem-solving contexts. In *Knowing, Knowledge and Beliefs* (pp. 197-218). Springer Netherlands

Weiss, J. A., & Piderit, S. K. (1999). The value of mission statements in public agencies. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *9*(2), 193-224.

Winston, G. C. (1999). Subsidies, hierarchy and peers: The awkward economics of higher education. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 13-36.

Yazedjian, A., Toews, M. L., Sevin, T., & Purswell, K. E. (2008). It's a whole new world: A qualitative exploration of college students' definitions of and strategies for college success. *Journal of College Student Development*, 49(2), 141-154.

Zimmer, R., & Buddin, R. (2005). Charter school outcomes in California. *National Conference on Charter School Research, Vanderbilt University*.

Zimmer, R., Blanc, S., Gill, B., & Christman, J. (2008). *Evaluating the performance of Philadelphia's charter schools* (5883). Mathematica Policy Research.

Zimmer, R., Gill, B., Booker, K., Lavertu, S., Sass, T. R., & Witte, J. (2009). *Charter schools in eight states: Effects on achievement, attainment, integration, and competition.* Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation.

Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Request Form

BAKER UNIVERSITY

Date: September 1, 2015

School of education   IRB PROTOCOL NUMBER _____
Graduate department   (irb USE ONLY)

IRB Request
Proposal for Research
Submitted to the Baker University Institutional Review Board

I.   Research Investigator(s) (Students must list faculty sponsor first)

Department(s)   School of Education Graduate Department

     Name   Signature

1. James Robins_____, Major Advisor

2. Margret Anderson _____, External Committee Member

3. Harold Frye_____University Committee Member

Principal Investigator: Clement O. Ukaoma
Phone   314.583.XXXX
Email: clemou@yahoo.com
Mailing address: XXXXXXXXXXXX, Olathe KS XXXXX

Faculty sponsor: Dr. James Robins
Phone: 913.344.XXXX
Email: James.Robbins@bakeru.edu

Expected Category of Review: ___Exempt X Expedited ___Full

II: Protocol: FIRST-GENERATION, AFRICAN-AMERICAN COLLEGE
GRADUATES: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SIX URBAN CHARTER HIGH
SCHOOL ALUMNI.

_____

_____

Summary
The following summary must accompany the proposal. Be specific about exactly what
participants will experience, and about the protections that have been included to
safeguard participants from harm. Careful attention to the following may help facilitate
review process:

In a sentence or two, please describe the background and purpose of the research.

The purpose of this study is to explore, by means of in-depth interviews, the lived experiences of selected graduates of an urban charter public school who not only went on to college after high school, but who earned their college degrees within six years of entering college.

Briefly describe each condition or manipulation to be included within the study.
No conditions or manipulations are a part of this study.

What measures or observations will be taken in the study? If any questionnaire or other instruments are used, provide a brief description and attach a copy.
Study subjects will be interviewed for approximately 30 minutes, with a possible follow up interview where clarifications are needed, of approximately 25 minutes in duration. The interviews will take place either in-person, by phone or by teleconference. Since the intent of the study is to explore subjects' lived experiences, no direct observations are required.

Will the subjects encounter the risk of psychological, social, physical or legal risk? If so, please describe the nature of the risk and any measures designed to mitigate that risk.
Participating in this study will not expose the subjects to any psychological, social, physical, or legal risk.

Will any stress to subjects be involved? If so, please describe.
Study subjects will not encounter any stress as a result of their participation in this study.

Will the subjects be deceived or misled in any way? If so, include an outline or script of the debriefing.
Subjects will not be deceived or misled in any way during this study.

Will there be a request for information, which subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive? If so, please include a description.
The interview questions used in this study are limited to inquiring into the participants lived experience as students at UAPCS and at the college/university into which they matriculated. Any further information provided the principal investigator will be entirely at the discretion of the participant. Each participant will have an opportunity to review his or her responses as well. Subjects may opt out of answering any question or questions that they consider too sensitive or personal during the interview stage of the study.

Will the subjects be presented with materials, which might be considered to be offensive, threatening, or degrading? If so, please describe.
Subjects will not be presented any material—written or otherwise—that might be considered offensive, threatening, or degrading as part of this study.

Approximately how much time will be demanded of each subject?

Subjects will be asked to participate in no more than two interview sessions. Each interview session will last no longer than 40 minutes.

Who will be the subjects in this study? How will they be solicited or contacted? Provide an outline or script of the information, which will be provided to subjects prior to their volunteering to participate. Include a copy of any written solicitation as well as an outline of any oral solicitation.
The sample for this study consists of 6 former graduates of UAPCS. Participants have been recruited for this study based on the fact that they meet the criteria for the study: entering and graduating college within 6 years of college entry. Each subject is at least 21 years of age.

What steps will be taken to insure that each subject's participation is voluntary? What if any inducements will be offered to the subjects for their participation?
Each subject will be presented with an informed consent document prior to his/her participation in this study. Participants will receive no inducement for participating in this study. Finally, participants may withdraw from the study at anytime and for any reason.

How will you insure that the subjects give their consent prior to participating? Will a written consent form be used? If so, include the form. If not, explain why not.
Each participant will be presented an informed consent form, which he/she must sign prior to participating in this study. To assure the subject's confidentiality, each signed informed consent form will be safeguarded in a place that only the principal investigator will have access to.

Will any aspect of the data be made a part of any permanent record that can be identified with the subject? If so, please explain the necessity.
No aspect of the data collected for this study will be part of any permanent record that can be identified with the subjects. Study participants will be assigned apha-numeric pseudonyms to help protect their identities as a condition for participating in this study.
Will the fact that a subject did or did not participate in a specific experiment or study be made part of any permanent record available to a supervisor, teacher or employer? If so, explain.
Whether a subject participated or refused to participate in this study will not be made a part of any permanent record nor made available to a supervisor, teacher or employer.
What steps will be taken to insure the confidentiality of the data?
While the study is in process, the principal investigator will share raw data generated with his immediate research committee. All other data—electronic and otherwise—will be stored on a flash drive that is password-protected and in the principal investigator's custody. The flash drive and the data contained therein will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

If there are any risks involved in the study, are there any offsetting benefits that might accrue to either the subjects or society?

There are no risks involved in this study. Further, there are no benefits accruing directly to the participants. However, the findings of the study will add to our knowledge base of enrolling and persisting in college until graduation for minority students like the participants.

Will any data from files or archival data be used? If so, please describe.
Limited archival data such as graduation data, college attendance rates, and the like will be used to establish a background for the study.

Appendix B: IRB Approval Letter

BAKER UNIVERSITY *Give Confidence*

Baker University Institutional Review Board

10/27/2015

Dear Clement Ukaoma and Dr. Robins,

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your research project application and approved this project under Expedited Status Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

Please be aware of the following:

1. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
2. Notify the IRB about any new investigators not named in original application.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents of the research activity.
4. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.
5. If the results of the research are used to prepare papers for publication or oral presentation at professional conferences, manuscripts or abstracts are requested for IRB as part of the project record.

Please inform this Committee or myself when this project is terminated or completed. As noted above, you must also provide IRB with an annual status report and receive approval for maintaining your status. If you have any questions, please contact me at CTodden@BakerU.edu or 785.594.8440.

Sincerely,

Chris Todden EdD
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee
      Verneda Edwards EdD
      Sara Crump PhD
      Erin Morris PhD
      Scott Crenshaw

Appendix C: Informed Consent to Participate Form

Research Title:	First-Generation African-American College Graduates: The Lived Experiences of Six Urban Charter High School Alumni

Researcher:	Clement O. Ukaoma

Advisor:	Dr. James Robins
	School of Education
	Baker University
	8001 College Blvd.
	Overland Park, KS 66210
	(913)-344-XXXX
	jrobins@bakeru.edu

My name is Clement O. Ukaoma and I am a doctoral student at Baker University in Kansas. I am conducting research on the lived experiences of alumni of UAPCS who have gone on to graduate from four-year colleges.

You will be asked to answer approximately 12-20 questions on your schooling experiences within UAPCS and in college. You may decline to answer any question at any time. Moreover, you may discontinue your participation at any time for any reason.

All personally identifiable information will be kept confidential. Interview transcripts will be password protected and only the research advisor and the principal investigator will have access to the raw data.

Consent to Participate:

I understand that my participation in this research study is completely voluntary. I also understand that I am able to discontinue my participation within this study at any time for any reason. I understand that the principal investigator can be contacted at clemou@yahoo.com should I have questions or wish to discontinue my participation.

I have read and fully understand the above statement. By signing, I agree to participate in the research study. The Baker University Institutional Review Board approved this study on October 27, 2015 and the approval will expire on October 27, 2016 unless renewal is obtained from the Review Board.

Participant's Signature _____**Date**_____

Appendix D: Permission to Adapt Questions from CPQ

Ukaoma, Clem

<ukaomac@universityacademy.org>

to beckhp, bill.davidson, milligan

Gentlemen:

I am writing to request your permission--individually and jointly--to use some
questions from the instrument you reported on in your 2009 paper I cite below:
Davidson, W. B., Beck, H. P., & Milligan, M. (2009). The College Persistence Questionnaire:
Development and validation of an instrument that predicts student
attrition. *Journal of College Student Development*, 50(4): 373-390. (July/August).

The title of the dissertation I am currently working to complete is as follows:
First-Generation African-American College Graduates:
The Lived Experiences of Six Urban Charter High School Alumni
Since my respondents are all African-Americans who persisted through college until graduating
with bachelor's degrees.   I am using Tinto's Student Integration Model as a framework for my
study. What I plan to do is obtain your permission to use some questions from your instrument
for my interviews. By doing so, I will be using questions that are already tested and validated,
which, in turn, will add to my study's credibility. Should you grant me permission to use your
instrument, you would all be helping a graduate student complete his doctoral study.

I hope you are able to assist me in this endeavor...

Clem Ukaoma,
Principal,
University Academy Upper School

Bill Davidson

to me
Thanks for your interest in the CPQ questions, Clem,
Yes, you have our permission to use them in your dissertation project.
Best wishes,
Bill
William B. Davidson, PhD
Professor of Psychology
Angelo State University
Department of Psychology, Sociology, and Social Work
ASU Station #10907
San Angelo, TX 76909
Phone: 325-227-1016 (mobile), 208-719-0117 (office)
bill.davidson@angelo.edu

Appendix E: College Persistence Questionnaire, Davidson et al., (2009)

Academic Integration

How well do you understand your instructors when they lecture or ask students to answer questions in class?

How satisfied are you with the extent of your intellectual growth and interest since coming here?

In general, how satisfied are you with the quality of instruction you are receiving here?

How concerned about your intellectual growth are the faculty here?

On the average across your courses, how interested are you in the things being said during class discussions?

How much of a connection do you see between what you are learning here and your future career?

I believe that many instructors deliberately impose unreasonable requirements on students and enjoy their distress?

Students differ widely in how much interaction they want to have with faculty. How disappointed are you in the amount of interaction you have?

Social Integration

How much have your interpersonal relationships with other students had an impact on your personal growth, attitudes, and values?

How strong is your sense of connectedness with other faculty, students and staff on this campus?

How much do you think you have in common with other students here?

When you think of your overall social life here, friendships, college organizations, Extra-curricular activities and so on, how satisfied are with yours?

How many of your closest friends are here in college with you rather than elsewhere such as other colleges, work, or hometown?

What is your overall impression of other students here?

How often do you wear clothing with other college's emblem?

Supportive Services Satisfactions*

How satisfied are you with the academic advisement you receive here?

How well does this institution communicate important information to students such as academic rules, degree requirements, individual course requirements, campus news and events, extracurricular activities, tuition costs, and financial aid and scholarship opportunities?

How easy is it to get answers to your questions about things related to your education here?

How much input do you think you can have on matters such as course offerings, rules and regulations, and registrations procedures?

If you have needs that are different from the majority of the students here, how well does this university meet those needs?

How fairly do you think students are handled here?

Degree Commitment

When you think of people who mean the most to you (friends and family) how disappointed do you think they would be if you quit school?

At this moment in time, how certain are you that you will earn a college degree?

At this moment in time, how strong would you say your commitment is to earning a college degree, here or elsewhere?

How strong is your intention to persist in your pursuit of the degree, here or elsewhere?

How supportive is your family of your pursuit of a college degree in terms of their encouragement and expectations?

Institutional Commitment

How likely is it that you will earn a degree from here?

How confident are you that this is the right university for you?

How likely is it that you will re-enroll here next semester?

How much thought have you given to stopping your education here, perhaps transferring to another college, going to work, or leaving for other reasons?

Academic Commitment

How often do you miss class for reasons other than illness or participation in a school-sponsored activity?

How often do you turn in assignments past the due date?

I am disinterested in academic work and so do as little as possible.

Appendix F: Interview Documentation Sheet

FIRST-GENERATION, AFRICAN-AMERICAN COLLEGE GRADUATES: THE
LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SIX URBAN CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI.

Date of interview:

Place interview was held:

Duration of interview:

Interviewer:

Identifier for the interviewee:

Gender of the interviewee:

Age of the interviewee:

College Status of interviewee:

Degree and Major:

Any peculiarities of note:

Appendix G: Initial Interview Protocol

A. **INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

FIRST-GENERATION, AFRICAN-AMERICAN COLLEGE GRADUATES:
THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SIX URBAN CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI.

PARTICIPANT'S DEMOGRAPHICS

I.   PERSONAL
PERMANENT
ADDRESS:_____

NAME:_____

CELL PHONE:_____   E-MAIL:_____

PLEASE CIRCLE THE YEAR YOU GRADUATED FROM UA:

2005   2006   <u>2007</u>   **<u>2008</u>**   **<u>2009</u>**   **<u>2010</u>**

<u>2011</u>   <u>2012</u>   <u>2013</u>   <u>2014</u>   <u>2015</u>   <u>2016</u>

1.   I AM THE FIRST PERSON IN MY FAMILY TO GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL.   YES/NO

2.   I AM THE FIRST PERSON IN MY FAMILY TO GRADUATE FROM THE UPPER SCHOOL.   YES/NO

3.   I AM THE FIRST PERSON IN MY FAMILY TO GRADUATE COLLEGE.   YES/NO

4.   ARE THERE OTHER SIBLINGS WHO ATTENDED OR ARE CURRENTLY ATTENDING UA?   YES/NO

IF YOU RESPONSED **YES** TO THE ABOVE, PLEASE LIST THEIR NAMES AND CURRENT GRADES:

_____

5.   DID YOU FINISH AND EARN YOUR COLLEGE DEGREE?   YES/NO

6.   WHAT DEGREE DID YOU EARN AND IN WHAT YEAR?

II.   HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE
With whom did you live while you were a student at UAPCS?

(Please circle the best option that applies best):

LIVED WITH MOTHER AND FATHER   LIVED WITH MOTHER ONLY

LIVED WITH FATHER ONLY   OTHER LIVING ARRANGEMENTS (Please specify)

III.   ECONOMICS
Please give me a sense of your household's economic circumstances while you were a student at UA? (SES means SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS):

Lower SES (Low)   Middle SES (Middle)   Upper SES (Upper)

IV.   PARENTAL EDUCATION

MOTHER AND FATHER GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL   YES/NO

ONLY MOTHER GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL; FATHER DID NOT YES/NO

ONLY FATHER GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL; MOTHER DID NOT
                                                              YES/NO

IF NEITHER MOTHER NOR FATHER GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL,

PLEASE INDICATE HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION THAT EACH

PARENT COMPLETED

                    MOTHER   MA/BA/AA   FATHER MA/BA/AA

DID EITHER OR BOTH PARENTS ATTEND/GRADUATE COLLEGE?   YES/NO

IF YES, INDICATE YEARS OF COLLEGE ATTENDED BY EACH PARENT (CIRCLE HIGHEST YEARS ATTENDED) ALSO PLEASE CIRCLE ANY DEGREE(S) EARNED:

                    MOTHER   1 2 3 4 5 6   DEGREE: MA/BA/AA

                    FATHER   1 2 3 4 5 6   DEGREE: MA/BA/AA

I want to begin by thanking you for agreeing to take time out of your busy schedule to help me with this research study involving alumni of UAPCS. There will be three steps to the process: (1) Completion of a short survey, (2) An initial interview dealing with your colleges experiences, (3) A follow-up interview to clarify or extend findings/responses to steps (1) and (2).   The interviews will last no longer than 45 minutes. My objective during the interviews will be to give you a chance to…share your story of earning a college degree. Feel free to share your perceptions of the journey from high school to college graduation.

Next, I want to explore with you, in your own words why you think you were able to earn

your degree within six years when studies clearly show that most African-American students who enroll in college leave without earning their degrees.

In order to better listen to your responses, I'd like to use an audio recorder to capture your thoughts and words during this interview. I assure you that only the principal investigator and his academy advisor will be listening to these recordings. The recorder will only be used to help ensure that your words are accurately reflected in the report I am required to write on the findings from this study. You will also be shown transcripts of the actual interview for review and comments to ensure the responses accurately reflect your true feelings. Once the report is completed, the audio recordings, in their entirety, as well as the transcripts made from them, will be held in a safe for three years and destroyed thereafter.

Our discussion today will be confidential in nature. No one will be told what you, as an individual, said to me. Rather, your comments will be combined with the comments of other individuals who, like you, have agreed to speak with me. The interview transcripts will be handled in a manner that protects the identity of everyone taking part in this study.

I have brought along two Institutional Consent Forms. The form describes the study of the lived experiences of former UAPCS who have graduated and gone on to college. Read it over and, if you are willing to help me out with this research, please sign both and return one to me (you may keep the second copy for your records). This is a prerequisite for this research study.

Do you have any questions about anything I have said so far?

You completed a short survey that will be used to code your responses. Now we are ready to begin the taped interview.

TO THE INTERVIEWER: AT THE END OF THE INTERVIEW, SAY:

"Thank you for your participation."

Appendix H: In-depth Interview Questions

> **Grand Tour Question**: What stands out to you about your college experiences? Specifically, what types of things enabled you to succeed in earning a four-year degree within six years when statistics show that many African-American FGCS do not end up graduating?

I.   AI

1. *How well did your high school prepare you for college*? Please give me example(s) to illustrate your answer*.
2. *You are now a college graduate. Looking back, how satisfied are* you with the extent of your intellectual growth and interest *as a result of having attended the college you attended*?
3. How much of a connection do you see between *what you learned in college* and *your current or future career*?
4. *Can you tell me about your favorite college* professors? *Tell me about a time that you were challenged or stretched by a* professor*? How did it happen?*
5. Students differ widely in their interaction level with college faculty. How important was that interaction for you? How satisfied *were* you *with* the amount of interaction you *had with your college professors*?

II.   SI

6. How much *impact* have your interpersonal relationships with other students *you met in college had on* your personal growth, attitudes, and values?
7. How much *did* you feel you had in common with other students *who attended your college*?

III.   SSS*

8. How satisfied *were* you with the academic advice you received when you were in *college*?
9. How well *did your* college communicate important information to students such as academic rules, degree requirements, individual course requirements, campus news and events, extracurricular activities, tuition costs, and financial aid and scholarship opportunities?
10. *Thinking only of the college you graduated from, imagine when* you had needs that *were* different from the majority of the students in *that* college, how *hard did your college work* to meet those needs?

IV.   DC

11. When you think of people who mean the most to you (friends and family) how disappointed do you think *they would have been* if you *had* not completed college?
12. On a scale of (1-5= low to high) how determined where you to earn a college degree?
13. How supportive *was* your family in your pursuit of a college degree. Think in terms of encouragement, financial support and expectations?

V.   IC

14.
    How confident *were* you that *the college you chose was* the right one for you? Tell me more…

VI.   AC

15. *When you were in college, h*ow often *did* you miss class for reasons other than illness, or participation in a school-sponsored activity?

V.   Advice to the Next Generation of College Aspirants?

0. Imagine that another African-American high school student, let's say a junior, whose parents never earned a college degree, but who dreams of attending college has come to you for advice. I want to eavesdrop on you talking to that student. What "college success" advice would you give this student? Be sure to draw from your own experiences.

Appendix I: Follow-up Interview Protocol

FIRST-GENERATION, AFRICAN-AMERICAN COLLEGE GRADUATES:
THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SIX URBAN CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI.

B. Follow-up Interview

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me for a follow-up interview. I will, again, be taking no more than 45 minutes of your time.

In order to listen to you and better, I'd like to use an audio recorder to capture your thoughts and words. I will assure you that I am the only one who will be listening to these recordings, but only to help me assure that your words are accurately reflected in the report I am required to write on the findings from this study. Once the report is completed, the audio recordings, in their entirety, will be destroyed.

Our discussion today shall be confidential in nature. No one will be told what you as an individual said to me. Rather, your comments will be combined with the comments of other individuals who, like you, have agreed to speak with me in a manner that protects the identity of everyone taking part in this study.

Do you have any questions about anything so far?   PAUSE FOR ANY QUESTIONS…

Then, let us begin:

1.   CLARIFICATIONS:

Tightening…In our first interview you said…what did you mean by that...?

WHAT FOLLOWS IS FOR ILLUSTRATION PURPOSES ONLY—Follow-up will actually follow-up on specific areas or questions or items from the initial interview that require elucidation/clarification:

Prompt #1) Can you recall any academic factors, episodes, or experiences that

empowered or became an obstacle on your way earning their college degrees?

Prompt #2) Can you recall anything else about your lived experiences while

attending UAPCS that helped you to successfully navigate and complete college

Prompt #3) Can you recall any non-academic factors (family, friends, peers) that

you perceive to have impacted your college journey—negatively or positively?

Prompt #4) How committed were you to earning a college degree and what part would

you sat that commitment played in your eventual success?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

AT THE END OF THE FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW, SAY:

"Thanks, again for your participation in this doctoral study."

Appendix J: Summary of Responses to Research and In-depth Interview Questions

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Participants	Gender	Grand Tour Question	RQ 1 1,2,3,8	RQ 2 4,5,6,7,9
Marcus	Male	People I "hung" around… My group of friends. Gives a strong indication that one's peers and associates make a key difference in one's ability to earn a college degree. "[I did it by] surrounding myself [with] people who were trying to succeed."	**IIQ1: High School Preparation** College was 'super easy' … "I had already been used to MLA format and writing 10,15 page papers, reading books and explaining, reading for comprehension and explaining things." I was so good at it based off my high school experiences with the hardest [English] teacher I have ever had in life, Mr. Leigh Freeman. If [there] were five grammatical errors, you got an F on the paper! You know what I'm saying? So college professors were way more lenient it seemed than this person, and… Mr. Freeman, man, he held you to a higher standard, you know. So being held to that high standard I was able to reciprocate […] in college. **IIQ2: How Satisfied were you with the extent of your intellectual growth and interest as a result of College** I'm very satisfied with my education from Central Methodist because it is an accredited college, so, when I graduated and I'm filling out job applications, [the] first thing they ask you [was] the school you graduated from accredited? I hope that has influenced me getting the good jobs that I have been able to get so [far]... I'm very pleased with [my] Central Methodist's education. **IIQ3: Connection with what you learned in college and your current career.** Plenty. FriendsofUA internships, Lambda Alpha Epsilon. Says his current job came out of an internship that Friends of UA got him while he was still a college student. **IIQ8: Satisfaction with academic advice received in college.** I did get a (excuse me) Criminal Justice major it wasn't specific enough. I feel like if I was directed in a better way to, I don't know, to push me to like career goals specifically, you know what I'm saying, like you have a major in Criminal Justice but you have a minor in Forensics or a minor in Policing or a minor in something that would've benefitted me to push me forward to probably getting a[n] FBI job or something like that I feel like I would've been better off but… I mean I'm happy with the choices I made but as far as I guess the guidance of a person who would…I was the only person in my friend group who majored in Criminal Justice. Everybody else was either a	**IIQ4: Favorite Professor** Could name a favorite professors plus allowed as to how the relationship began with them first doubting him and him having to prove himself over, and over again **IIQ5: Interactions with faculty** Did not have much interaction with faculty as such, giving the insularity of his inner-city background as the reason as well as the fact felt some faculty members doubted his academic abilities. **IIQ6: Impact of interpersonal relationships with peers *on* your personal growth, attitudes, and values** Affirms that his college relationships have helped him grow as a person. "We're friends to the end sometimes I hold my friends on a higher standard than I do family because you have a choice of being my friend. So, the guys that I met are my friends, you know what I'm saying, and I love them to death like so um (pause) we push each other you know? It was like, in football and academics like we were trying to, I'm trying to have a better grade than you, you know what I'm saying, I'm trying to be better…" "…just like…having the same goal of succeeding in football, succeeding in (pause) academics like I'm trying to continue to surround myself with those same individuals and those same individuals alike so I can succeed in life basically." **IIQ7: Connection with fellow college students** Going to a small private school in the middle of Missouri, I saw myself as an outcast. The only people that I felt I could truly identify with are those of the athletes on the football and basketball team. I think this contributed to my success because I was uncomfortable, and I truly had to grow up. With me being an outgoing person, I would say 'hi' to everybody I passed and the same gesture more often than not, was not reciprocated. At the end of my college career, my closest college friends all had some … back ground similarity. Mainly, we all had parents or grandparents that were advocates of higher education and self-sufficiency. We all knew both our mother and father, we all had siblings, we were all competitive, we were all African –American, and we all graduated with in the 4 years of first enrolling. Coming from the inner-city , it is hard to identify with the ways [of people who came from very] different region, who are not like you. My first year at CMU, the guy across the hall from me had a huge Rebel (Confederate) Flag in his room. I took that as a form of Racism, and

minor or they did business or something like that so. If I had some other type of push to tell me like these are the steps you need to take. Then I would've [taken] those steps but it was more of, "you in college son, you know what I'm saying? [All I got from] my parents and from everybody else was …"you're in college, finish college, finish college," so I was looking more towards the finish line instead of the future.

I asked him about it, and he didn't correlate it with Racism. That's just one instance.

IIQ9: **How well did college communicate important information to students?**
Central Methodist communicated very efficiently, through emails and campus flyers. To my knowledge, everybody had an academic advisor for their major who kept track of their credits. Dr.Myer was my Academic Advisor, and teacher and he helped me tremendously with planning out where I needed to be. When I changed majors, I had to take 18 credit hours to ensure I would graduate on time. We had monthly meetings, to make sure I stayed on track. Like most campuses, CMU posted flyers of all extracurricular activities, financial aid, and campus news. With CMU being such a small school, events of any kind seemed to become known. A few friends of mine even established a capture the flag event and campus wide hiding go seek event, through word of mouth.

Participants	Gender	RQ 3 10,11,12,13	RQ 4 14, 15	Advice to a HS Junior
Marcus	Male	**IIQ10: How hard did your college work to meet your unique needs?** [M]y honest opinion of college? I see college as a business and I was asking to move off campus because I financial needs and I didn't want to have a bunch of student loan debt, my parents didn't have it. We were taking out parent plus loans and my mom, she would give me a certain amount as far as bills go and whatever was on top would be hers because that's what the parent plus loan was about. But um, my sophomore year I asked to move off campus and they wouldn't allow me to, and they said no, no, no and I'm not understanding like we had people who are my age who moved off campus like …Why wouldn't you allow me to move off campus to save money? You know and begging and pleading with them to allow me to move off campus …it wasn't till my senior year [that] they gave me the go ahead and I fought for this three years in a row and subsequently I ended up with thirty five thousand dollars in student loan debt when it could've been um (what's the word I'm looking for) it could've been (I don't know what I'm trying to say) I wouldn't have what I have now, I wouldn't have the debt that I have now if I was able to move off campus because housing fees for private school and the lunch and all that other stuff, the meal plans is just… that's what hurts you, that's what kills you, it ain't the class credits you know, it's all the extra stuff that comes with it, and I felt that schools don't care about that because it's a business you know, you need us, we want you to go here but you gonna have to pay, pay what you owe. **IIQ11: How disappointed would people who mean the most to you have been had you not graduated** Oh, my God… this was the motivation for completing college because I had my grandma and my great aunt who would send me letters and change and peanut butter and jelly and things like that so I wouldn't have to worry about, you know finances and letters of encouragement, my great aunt, may she rest in peace, she sent me at least 2 or 300	**IIQ14: Confidence that participant's college choice was the right one.** I wasn't…I wasn't, not going in. It was more in my experience and looking at my dad and my grandpa, it something you gotta do, you know. You may not wanna do it but this is something you need. Of course, I wanted to go to a bigger school, a party school you know what I'm saying? I'm glad with the choice I made now based off the relationships and things like that I was able to acquire but as far as going in… it was just me and I didn't know anybody, you know what I'm saying, and that's how probably most college experiences are but I didn't know anybody and being so close minded, being from Kansas city based off of, I'm not even gonna jump off of that deep end, but I felt like Lee's Summit was far, I felt like Johnson County was super far, you know. I rarely went on the other side of Troost, you know what I'm saying? So I'm in this small portion of the city and this is all I know to go to the country where I can see stars. I'd never been able to see stars till I went to college, you know so…I don't know. **IIQ15: Number of time participant missed college classes for frivolous reason?** Never…never missed class. Because of my roommate…I suck at getting up in the morning, you know what I'm saying? So those 8 o'clock classes, my roommate Dave, "Marcus get up, Marcus get up," giving me the shake and I'm running out ten minutes before class starts, you know?	I've been talking about surrounding yourself with good people. So, your college success will depend on who you surround yourself with, if you surround yourself with partiers, you gonna party, if you surround yourself with somebody who is a nerd, you gonna study, you know and if you find a equal balance between having a good college experience with going to functions outside school and going to study hall and making sure in the right group to succeed. So, I would say surround yourself with good people and encourage your parents to support you by sending you small tokens of love and appreciation. Write letter, phone calls are fine but a letter is something you will have forever, I know those letters pushed me through hard nights of studying and stress and all that stuff because it's motivation to you know, you have somebody for you to be the best you that you can be.

letters throughout my college experience of hey this is what's going on in the world. It was… anyway, she was definitely the motivation.... I felt like [there] is no excuse I [c]ould've been able to make [that] would've been good enough, you know, and especially all the time, love and money they invested in me…

IIQ12: Determination to earn a college degree (1 – 5)
Ranked his determination to earn a degree a 5.

IIQ13: Family Support and Encouragement
family support is the only way I can see a person making it through a situation like college because you have somebody who is there for you, who is wanting you to succeed and they're even giving you money, they giving you advice, they giving you love they showing you, hey, you can do it, you can do it, you can do it and… I read letters now that she used to give to me, or she used to send me and it flutters my heart because she's gone but what if I didn't complete it, like how could I come home and look them in the face and be like yeah mom, yeah auntie, yeah grandma I didn't make it… it was too hard, you know what

Participants	Gender	Grand Tour Question	RQ 1 1,2,3,8	RQ 2 4,5,6,7,9
Juanita	Female	At Hampton, the social experiences stand out to me the most. I will always remember the friends that I made, the groups and organizations that I was able to join and assist in, and the events that I attended on and off campus. At UMKC, the support stands out the most. I never knew how loving and supporting this town was until I transferred. I received overwhelming support from my family, friends, Friends of UA, the UMKC staff and so many others. I honestly attribute my success to all of the support that I received after I transferred and had my daughter. I can honestly say that I would not be where I am today if it had not been for two things--the help of the people that I mentioned above and the guidance and support of University Academy (Including Friends of UA). Ultimately, I think these two things allowed me to graduate period, not only in just 4 years. University Academy prepared me academically and in turn supported me financially through scholarships and the continual assistance of Friends of UA. My family, friends, and faculty supported me mentally and emotionally. Unfortunately, most African-American first generation students didn't and don't have the academic, financial, mental and emotional support that I had/have so it stops them from reaching their goals.	**IIQ1: High School Preparation** "I've found myself applying the things that I was taught in my English classes at University academy in my papers and my um writings that are necessary the whole time I've been at UMKC and even when I was at Hampton for a short time. So, my teachers have always said, "yea, you're a very strong writer, most people don't come in writing like this" and I think it's because of those basic principles that teachers like Mrs. Mahoney and Mr. Freeman made sure they instilled in us very early. You know, while we were here we were thinking, like these are the hardest teachers ever and we didn't want to take their classes. Now, I'm seeing the value of what they did so I really appreciate it." I really think UA was just a big help period, you know. Even in like my math courses and my basic social courses like the senior seminar stuff and helping me prepare for college you know. I find myself applying those a lot. So, I think they did a very, very good job of preparing us. **IIQ2: How Satisfied were you with the extent of your intellectual growth and interest as a result of College** "…I'm really satisfied, you know. Like I said, I find myself applying principles on a daily basis that I learned and not just principles in the classroom but social experiences and developing my personal levels of achievement and things like that. Getting to know people, having conversations on a regular …to enhancing my professional skills, to having conversations with clients and things like that. So I feel like I'm very satisfied with that. **IIQ3: Connection between what you learned in college and your current career.** Well, [for] the career path that I'm on, most of the things that you learn … stem from what you learn in the classroom in college. So I know there are some careers you know, you can go to college and learn things but you don't really grasp it until you've actually practiced it in a workplace and stuff like that, but with accounting it's very hard for someone to go in who hasn't had any education behind it and just learn from experience. So I think it's hard for anyone to succeed in accounting without having the knowledge. So I think, basically everything that I'm doing is stemming from that.	**IIQ4: Favorite Professor** Uh, Dr. Cornell is by far my favorite college professor. I've had him three times at UMKC and he is now the dean of the accounting department so he's not a teacher anymore but he is still someone you can kinda go to in times of trouble or whatever. He's like a…I don't wanna say a confidant but just someone that the students can reach out to and stuff like that… **IIQ5: Interactions with faculty** "I think it's hard for anyone to really succeed in college without a good level of interaction with their professors. I mean even the best student should, I feel, should interact with their professors to get a good understanding of what they want and not just in the classroom, you know, sometimes it's good to talk to professors about situations you're having in the professional field and stuff like that. Especially if they've experienced it and they're in your same career path…" "UMKC is really big on making that known to their students that "although we are your teachers and we are grading your test and things like that, we are also here to help you and mentor you and build a relationship." I'm satisfied with that." **IIQ6: Impact of interpersonal relationships with peers *on* your personal growth, attitudes, and values** I have just been able to make friends you know, it's always good [to] have friends in other areas and things like that. As far a UMKC most of the relationships that I have with students have been career related so that's definitely helped me. Like for instance the job that I'm at now, the reason I knew about the interview was because of a relationship I have with another student. So, I can kinda say she is the reason why I have the job. It's been a good career building relationship environment I guess you can say at UMKC because most of the students that I hang out with are also accounting majors. So, not only am I able to make friends but I'm able to build professional relationships at the same manner. So, It's been really good. **IIQ7: Connection with fellow college students** …honestly, I would say the career path was…I won't say the only thing um, it's the biggest thing I had in common with the student but I did feel like there was a lot of difference in myself and the student that were surrounding me

| | | | **IIQ8**: Satisfaction with academic advice received in college.
I can say that the advice that the professors at UMKC did give me regarding academics and classes going forward was very helpful. (clears throat) Most of the UMKC professors have been there for awhile so it was easy for the professor before them to say, um you're gonna have Dr. Williamson's class next so make sure you do this and do that. So that was definitely helpful and it was nice of them to do that and they didn't have to do that. They could've just let me go in blind and say do what you have to do, but. That was nice of them. | because I'm a young mom, [there] wasn't a lot of those at UMKC you know the students that were there that were parents were the usually students that were coming back to school or you know took a break off. None of them were as young as I was or going straight in from high school with children, so. I didn't feel like there was a lot in common but even without that I was able to build relationships so I guess my career was really the only thing that I felt that we shared.

IIQ9: How well did college communicate important information to students?
I'll say if you were looking for an answer to a question in those areas they definitely had people there to help out and people there to help guide you in the direction you needed to go but if you weren't looking for it I don't know how well they were at communicating it up front you know…I think if you have a question they definitely have things in place for you to have it answered but I don't about communicating it before you have a question |

Participants	Gender	RQ 3 10,11,12,13	RQ 4 14, 15	Advice to a HS Junior
Juanita	Female	**IIQ10: How hard did your college work to meet your unique needs?** I can definitely think of one…when I was at the end of my pregnancy about to have my daughter…obviously everyone in the class wasn't pregnant so …(laughing) my time was different than theirs... Most of my teachers were emailing me the assignments, what happened that day in class and being very helpful they were even letting me push test off until I recovered and stuff like that. So they were a huge, huge help in that. I definitely appreciate that because I don't know if that's the norm at other colleges. **IIQ11: How disappointed would people who mean the most to you have been had you not graduated** I think they definitely would've been disappointed…first I think they would've been disappointed because throughout high school it was kinda apparent the road I wanted to take and everyone knew college was what I wanted to do and what my focus was going to be so if I hadn't finished…I think they would've been disappointed that I didn't finish what I started... And, two ,I think me getting pregnant at a young age it would've been disappointing to feel like maybe I was another statistic and I couldn't beat the odds…so I think it would've disappointed them as well. I think a lot of my younger cousins and siblings kinda look [up to] me as a role model and so if they're watching me and trying to model my behavior. To see me not graduate from college would've been disappointing to their parents who knew they are looking at me and even… consider me a role model. So I think it would've been an overwhelming[ly] disappointment so, (chuckling) I'm happy I did [graduate]… **IIQ12: Determination to earn a college degree (1 – 5)** I'll say before I got pregnant… a 4. Afterwards, a 5. Um, I always knew I wanted to get a degree because I wanted to afford myself opportunities that I seen that others couldn't because they didn't have a degree. But once I had my daughter it was just like…it was necessary, it had to happen because now I had someone else that I'm taking care of that's watching me, that I need to set an example for and it's like not graduating was not an option at this point. So, I think I already was determined but my daughter gave me that extra push. **IIQ13: Family Support and Encouragement** I would give them a 10 (laughing) Um, they were supportive in every way you can think of, if it was just needing to talk to someone they were there to listen, offer advice. If it was needing someone to watch my daughter they were there to step in. If it was some things I didn't understand that was academic related or a subject topic, they may not have known the answers but they were definitely there to where, you should probably reach out to your teachers or you should do this or you should do that. So anyway they could help they did. They were 'super' supportive. I'm grateful for them…	**IIQ14: Confidence that participant's college choice was the right one.** …when I graduated high school I didn't go straight to UMKC I went to Hampton University in Virginia. I would say about a 3 [on a 1-5 scale], I wasn't sure if I was ready for out of state, I wasn't sure if an HBCU was right for me. There were a lot of questions there but I figured all I could do is go for it. All I could do is go for it. I wasn't super confident, but I wasn't so questioning it that I [thought] I shouldn't go at all. Um, when I got to UMKC originally I didn't think it was a good fit for me at all. I just thought I had to do what I had to do. But I would say after my first semester I knew that UMKC was the right place for me. I was very, very happy that I made that choice because, not only because of the support that the staff offered, the location but they had high statistics in accounting, which was the area I wanted to focus in. The students were great you know, everybody was friendly, too. I don't wanna say I'm happy that my daughter forced me to go to UMKC, but looking back, knowing what I know now, I probably would've chosen UMKC first straight out of high school instead of the school that I did. (Laughing) **IIQ15: Number of time participant missed college classes for frivolous reason?** [My] freshman year I will say I probably missed um (laughing) a little more class than I should have. It wasn't like a regular everyday thing but it was probably once a month when I was like, "Yeah I'm sleepy, I'm not gonna go." I don't know if that's like the norm with every freshman, but yeah, I definitely skipped more class freshman year than any other year. After that I don't remember missing class if I could've made it. If there was something I could do to get there I did.	Well, first I would want to know any question that they have or anything that they are uncertain about or questioning, so I could address that directly… The second one would be to make sure that they have a good school life balance. I would make sure that I reiterate how important it is that they are focused on the school and the material and ultimately getting a degree but make sure they have a good balance in their personal and school life. Because I found that people that go to school and are all work and no play, well I won't say play but are overworking themselves on school they sort of regret it once they graduate and they look back and they don't have memories and friends and stuff like that. So I would try to make sure that there is a good focus on both of those but their purpose is to get a degree and get the education that they are going for.

Participants	Gender	Grand Tour Question	RQ 1 1,2,3,8	RQ 2 4,5,6,7,9
Barbara	Female	What stands out to me the most about my college experiences are the friends I made and the professors and stuff that I connected with. Me and my friends were all first generation college students and we supported each other. The staff and professors also supported me in and out of class. They wanted me to succeed academically and also personally. My own personal determination was another, and probably the most important factor in me graduating in four years. I wanted it for myself and worked hard to get there and make it happen.	**IIQ1: High School Preparation** UA prepared me fairly well for college, um especially in math and science um with the AP courses that we took at UA in math and also Mr. Freeman was a good instructor and I used his format for all of my papers in college. The only subject that I felt weak in going to college was science. I didn't feel like our program was that strong so I struggled a little bit but um I just supplemented with tutoring. **IIQ2: How Satisfied were you with the extent of your intellectual growth and interest as a result of College** I'm pretty satisfied… um Ohio State had a lot to offer in terms of like courses um that you wanted to take. Anything that you wanted to take they had a class for it. I feel like I learned a lot and they had good instructors so I'm satisfied. **IIQ3: Connection with what you learned in college and your current career.** I mean it's a big connection… in college I majored in dental hygiene so that's the majority of the class that I took and now I'm I Dental School so my Dental degree. Hygiene is helping me now. **IIQ8: Satisfaction with academic advice received in college.** Um, super satisfied, like my academic advisor for dental hygiene took care of us to where we knew exactly what classes we needed to take for the next semester. I never had to worry about being wait listed or anything like that. Um did you ask for financial too? KK – Yea talk about whatever… Barbara – I don't think I got a lot of financial advice simply because I had the Kauffman scholarship. So, my expenses were all paid for... I didn't need counseling on that.	**IIQ4: Favorite Professor** I don't know if I really have a favorite one, I mean I guess in general, I like instructors that just challenge me a little bit like they're not easy and they expect more of you. I had one for General Chemistry at Ohio State and one for Organic Chemistry at UMKC. So I guess those would be my two favorites. **IIQ5: Interactions with faculty** …interacting with the college professors you have to make the first move. Um, but they do have office hours and that's how I got through my first chemistry class, um because I was struggling but I went to my professor's office hours and he helped me with the homework and suggestions for studying for the test and I got a good grade in that class. **IIQ6: Impact of interpersonal relationships with peers *on* your personal growth, attitudes, and values** …you just meet a lot of different people and become more culturally aware and just everybody with their different backgrounds and beliefs. **IIQ7: Connection with fellow college students** I guess being African American I was a minority at Ohio State, but there was a BSA or Black Student Association, so I could connect a little bit more with people in that organization, but not really completely just because I'm my own person. Just me being black doesn't [necessarily] make me [better] relate to somebody else, so. **IIQ9: How well did college communicate important information to students?** … there was a[n] email for everything so they communicated well. (chuckling)

Participants	Gender	RQ 3 10,11,12,13	RQ 4 14, 15	Advice to a HS Junior
Barbara	Female	**IIQ10: How hard did your college work to meet your unique needs?** 000 **IIQ11: How disappointed would people who mean the most to you have been had you not graduated** I don't think they would've been disappointed. I mean they were definitely routing for me to graduate but I'm a first generation college student so I think that they would understand like, oh you know it got tough and I couldn't do it anymore. I think that they would support me to go back to school but I don't think they would be terribly disappointed in me just because I went, you know. **IIQ12: Determination to earn a college degree (1 – 5)** 5. Do I need to explain why? I mean I just knew that it was something I wanted to do. Um, I wanted a career and I don't want just a job and to have to struggle to find a job. I want a degree and a career that I can keep for life. **IIQ13: Family Support and Encouragement** I don't think that my mom or my family put a lot of stress or expectations on me but they definitely supported me. Um, even though I was in Ohio and they were in Kansas City. But just calling to check on me and driving me up to Ohio and bringing me back. So, I think they just let me go and explore and just learn and if I didn't call for awhile they didn't bug me or anything, they knew that I was taking care of me and my education.	**IIQ14: Confidence that participant's college choice was the right one.** I guess looking back on it now maybe like 75% sure that it was the school for me. Ohio State is a big school and UA is a very tiny school. So, that was big for me where as I [was] used to knowing the people like everybody I go to school with but at Ohio State you can't do that and also being the minority at Ohio State but being the majority at UA so just a little bit different. But I don't regret it I would still go to Ohio State. I think I just might do things a little differently as far as getting involved in some other organizations just to make it feel a little bit smaller. **IIQ15: Number of time participant missed college classes for frivolous reason?** I didn't. I only missed like one class because I overslept. And that was it, I went to class (laughing). I still go to class…I was actually mad, too. It was the end of the semester and it was the last class and I missed it.	I would tell them keep working hard in high school right now, be sure what you're learning …you'll need when you get to college. It can be a little bit scary going to college especially if your parents or no one else in your family has been to college. But just get to know some of the faculty and some of the courses or organizations especially the African American faculty cuz everybody in college for the most part wants you to succeed especially people from BSA. So just get as much help as you can, everybody wants to help um…. just have fun I guess and take advantage of every opportunity that you get. I think that would be good, that would be fine.

Participants	Gender	Grand Tour Question	RQ 1 1,2,3,8	RQ 2 4,5,6,7,9
Quinton	Male	I would say that something that stands out to me about my college experiences would be the opportunities that were presented to me at my school. One of those opportunities is called supplemental instruction, which allowed students to learn the subject from students who previously received an A in the class. This, and many other opportunities that were presented to me were the tools that I used to receive a good education and be able to graduate on time.	**IIQ1: High School Preparation** I would say that my high school prepared me fairly well for college especially in the sense of writing papers. The English teachers that we had at University Academy did a great job of preparing us to be able to write a full at least 5 page paper, know how to cite it properly, proper MLA format and also know how to cite it if it was something else such as APA or Vancouver whatever it may be. But write a full paper, know how to cite it with a maximum of two errors. I learned that not a lot of students get that kind of teaching in high school because I would edit papers for peers in college my freshman year and their writing skills were just very sub par to say the least. (chuckling) **IIQ2: How Satisfied were you with the extent of your intellectual growth and interest as a result of College** I'm very pleased with the extent of my growth intellectually I would say. I look back at how I thought about situations in high school and in my first couple years of undergrad and I know that if I had the mind that I have now I know I would be able to handle certain things like much better such as how to approach studying for classes or just in general and I would say I'm definitely pleased with the education I got from UMKC. **IIQ3: Connection with what you learned in college and your current career.** I would say it's a pretty good connection between the two. I got my bachelor of arts in chemistry and biology and everything I learned in all of those biology classes, chemistry classes its helping me now while I'm in dental school and it will further help me as a dentist just because I know how certain things in the body work and although I didn't learn specifically about teeth, everything I've learned I feel will help me in some way shape or form, even my statistics class will help me just making calculations for if I'm running a business or whatever I'm doing that involves math. **IIQ8: Satisfaction with academic advice received in college.** I think I was fortunate enough to have an excellent academic advisor, she	**IIQ4: Favorite Professor** I would say one of my favorite professors was my professor for organic chemistry. Her name was Dr. Kilway and she's probably my favorite because it's always nice when teachers show that they care about their students. Not only just caring about them as a person but also caring about if they're actually learning the material rather than just teaching it and whatever happens happens. Um, she made an effort to teach it well, go a pace that was good for everyone and if there was confusion about something she would make an effort to make sure that it was understood why this happened or why that happened. I would also say that she challenged me…what was the question? Challenged me… **IIQ5: Interactions with faculty** Dr. Kilway definitely did that simply because each test just made sure you knew everything so there were no shortcuts to getting by in the class. You really had to put forth an effort to study it and also commit it to memory. Actually a lot of my teachers at UMKC did that simply because I think the biology and chemistry departments are well staffed and all the teachers made sure that you don't get by… My interaction with professors was always…I would say maybe a weak one in my educational career simply because I was a shy student so I wasn't the type to go to a professor and ask questions or I guess go to a professor for anything especially because I was also a pretty good student so I never had any huge question about the material because I would just gradually understand it but…my undergrad years I kinda had to start communicating with professors because to get into dental school you're gonna need letters of recommendations and if the teacher doesn't know you from any of the other 100 students in the class its kinda hard to write a letter of recommendation for whatever you're going to next. So I always made an effort to, at the very least, thank my teachers at the end of the semester and so with the teacher that I referred to earlier, Dr. Kilway, at the end of our semester and even at the end of my four years I wrote her a letter and hand delivered it to her saying thank you for all that you

was also in the chemistry department, her name was Dr. Drew, and she…didn't just tell me these are the classes that you can take go ahead a pick some, she would tell me ok…this class is taught by this professor, he does a really good job at teaching and you'll enjoy the class. She knew that students don't want to sit in a class that's boring or a class that's extremely difficult and she would sit down with me for about 30 minutes and talk about all the options and give me her best advice which I most often took because she was an expert in the matter but there were people at UMKC who had different majors that said that they had advisors that said that here is a list of classes that you can take as a sophomore go home, go online, pick them out and go to your classes and they would end up at the end of their 4 or 5 years, depending on how long it took, and say man I really wish that I had a different academic advisor or just knew what I was doing. I felt that mine was amazing at doing her job at advising me which classes to take because I finished in 4 years and never had a extremely stressful semester.

taught me, you were a great teacher, one of my favorites. And it goes to show me that a simple thank you goes a long way and she knew my face just from just me being in her class but that further interaction just solidified it and now she knows me from all the many students that she has taught over the years.

IIQ6: **Impact of interpersonal relationships with peers *on* your personal growth, attitudes, and values**
It's had a huge impact […] simply because you can't go through life looking at everything from one point of view. You have to know that everyone looks at the same problem differently and that goes for whether it's a problem or whether its just anything in life everyone looks at it differently so to be able to interact with so many people on a diverse campus and see how everyone act, how everyone may live differently different ethics and values that they share, it enables me to be able to know that…like I said everyone thinks differently so you don't want to just assume that everyone thinks that this is the right thing to do, you kinda live life with more of an open mind and I think that helps everyone be better people.

IIQ7: **Connection with fellow college students**
I would say very little. It depends on who it was but overall I would say very little. One of the biggest ways is that my senior class at University Academy was 37 and so pretty much everyone else that I knew in college came from schools where their senior class was hundreds whether it be anywhere from 100 to 1000 depending on the size of the high school….but just everyone came from different backgrounds and different areas of life so while there were plenty of people that I thought that I could relate to there

IIQ9: **How well did college communicate important information to students?**
Overall I felt that a campus could only do so much to communicate [information to students]. Students have to kinda take the initiative to look for it. I was part of an organization on campus that provided free extracurricular activities and we would put the information out there and put it on bulletin boards or what not, social media, but students would always

| | | | | say we didn't hear about it and we would always say you gotta take the initiative and be looking for it… KK – Yea keep your eyes open…not on your phone (chuckling) BJ – Right, right. So the campus overall did an amazing job of putting it out there to like …not just on the website but…they would send emails to you about hey your financial aide payment is due this month, this is how much it is but a lot of students will see its from UMKC cashiers and delete but they can't enroll the next semester, what happened. But overall with everything I say the campus did a good job of making the information regularly available. It's just that in higher education, past high school, you no longer [need] to be coddled and babied through the process. You have to start to become an adult and know what your financial aide is and when it's due, know how to get help from xyz or what not so overall I feel UMKC did a good job. |

Participants	Gender	RQ 3 10,11,12,13	RQ 4 14, 15	Advice to a HS Junior
Quinton	Male	**IIQ10: How hard did your college work to meet your unique needs?** I don't think that I ever had extensive needs but I know that those needs were always met from the point of view [by] other students. Teachers would always emphasize that we had a test on Monday for those of you that need, what's it called? [Those of you that] have any special testing needs or need special testing environments just send me an email and we will plan accordingly. I know they were always taking it into account and the teachers did what they could, I just didn't have any first hand experience with it. **IIQ11: How disappointed would people who mean the most to you have been had you not graduated** That's kinda a difficult question to answer simply because I know they would've been supportive in the sense of you didn't finish that's okay but what's next[?] But on the other hand I know they would've been disappointed because they know that I was capable to finish. Before college I never received a grade lower than a C. If I didn't finish college a lot of people would've been confused as to why. But if it was for a serious reason [they] would've been understanding, but overall I think there still be some disappointment just because they know I have the potential and capability to do so. **IIQ12: Determination to earn a college degree (1 – 5)** I'll say 5, simply because I never saw any other option. I always went through school with the mindset of this is what I have to do. I never thought of it being an option to drop out of high school and get a GED. I never	**IIQ14: Confidence that participant's college choice was the right one.** My first year or two, like year and a half maybe, I didn't really think about it. I never [gave too much thought to the idea of] a college where I have to feel at home and what not. I originally wanted to go to UMKC because of their 6 year medical program so with them being the only college that had that it fit perfectly for me but after I decided not to do that anymore I settled in pretty quickly so I realized like okay I really did make the right decision simply because UMKC wasn't too big, it wasn't too small it was the right size for me and overall I had an amazing college experience so I have not regrets. **IIQ15: Number of time participant missed college classes for frivolous reason?** I would say a maximum of once a semester simply because I had those times when an alarm clock didn't go off or just random reason that made me oversleep but I never skip class just to skip class I guess because you're paying for this education, why not go to every class, also because I found it a lot harder to miss a class and have to try to play catch up because you have to study pretty much twice as harder alone because you didn't go to class when the teacher taught the first time. So that made me never want to skip class voluntarily but if I did miss class I would feel bad about it because I realize now I have to catch up and learn this information that I'm learning just from reading the book there is not expert telling me about it.	Um, going back to the very last question I would definitely tell them to go to class and in college it is very easy to skip class simply because it's not like high school where you go at the beginning of the day, stay for the entire day and you know have classes back to back. It's very easy to go to your class at 9 oclock or skip your class at 9 o clock and not go to your class at 1 but that makes things ten times more difficult. I would say my biggest advice would be to find a group of peers that you not only enjoy spending time with outside of school but also that will motivate you to want to study and want to do well in school. My freshman year I befriended people who had different majors than me. So they may be business majors whereas I was chemistry and biology so their test would be a simple paper that they had to write or something that didn't take as much as studying for organic chemistry or bio chemistry and at UMKC business majors also didn't have classes on Fridays. So they were much more relaxed and the fact that we had different majors and we had test at different times. So if I had a test on this week and they didn't they would want to hang out and do this and do that. The pressure was there to want to hang out with them but you know you should study, so I found that its much easier to find people that you can hang out with that have the same major as you that way they are pushing you to study for the same test, you can study together and also you know that you have breaks at the same time and you can hang out outside of class at the same time. Not saying not to have friends from different majors its just that it makes it easier if your closest friends aren't from different majors. Also I would say like a encouraging word of advice, not to stress too much about it simply because you gotta look at the fact that many people [have done this before you] so it's definitely possible to get done. I know with me my parents didn't finish college either but that was motivation to get it done cause its kinda cool to be able to say that I'm the first in my family to do this to go on to professional school and what not so don't use that as a crutch or a handicap use

thought of it being an option to not finish college. I also never thought of it being an option to finish in more than 4 years simply because I knew that there is curriculum built to where it can be done quite easily, it should be done quite easily so I was like okay that's what I have to do that's what I'm going to do. So yea I would say 5.

IIQ13: **Family Support and Encouragement** Encouragement and expectations (thinking) In terms of encouragement there were…it's a hard question to answer because I don't know if I ever needed the encouragement. I was just doing what I thought that I had to do and never thought of it being any other option but they were always there to help me with whatever I needed so, if I needed money to get food because I was studying and missed the cafeteria on campus they helped me with that. Um, in terms of expectations was the other one right? In terms of expectations I would say that the expectations were my own so there is nothing extensive with that just doing whatever they could to help me out when I needed it.

it as motivation to pull yourself through….and have fun I know it's like a cliché thing to say you know and when you play sports and they say last but not least have fun but honestly if you stress too much about class that's not gonna go well for you to continue studying because that stress is just gonna keep building up so you wanna make sure you have fun, stay healthy and what not just because it all reflects back on your education and how you're doing in class. So find a way to relax whether it be something simple like going to the gym every week or going to sporting events. Make sure you're enjoying it because if you're not your gonna look at college as one of the worst times in your like where it should be one of the best times in your life.

Participants	Gender	Grand Tour Question	RQ 1 1,2,3,8	RQ 2 4,5,6,7,9
Julia	Female	I think I was able to get mine done because of the support system that I had. Um, I had a lot of friends and family who supported me while I was there. FriendsofUA was always one of the people I could call on if I needed anything. Um, mentors in college, people back home in Kansas City, I mean I just had a great support system that was behind me 100 percent with whatever I needed. If I couldn't get it they could get it for me, so people was there for me. One of the big things was my freshman year I joined a learning community which is like a…I lived on the floor with um 80 other people so our learning community was small it was like 15 to 17 of us and we just like we hung out, my roommate was in the learning community with me, we took 2 classes together our first semester and I mean that just kinda created the foundation for actually going on for the rest of my years because those people when I graduated, they were still there so I mean it was it was just the people that I hung out with that we were able to form a bond from our shared experiences because we were all minorities also so we kinda got together whenever we needed to vent or to do homework or anything like that so that was one of the big things because they were around for the whole entire 5 years I was in school.	**IIQ1: High School Preparation** Um, they prepared me very well. I feel like that, the teachers that they had were great for us. One of the things that I really liked was that we had the senior seminar at the beginning and that just kinda helped us to get things ready um fill out college applications and to you know that was another support system we had in high school so um, the teachers were always there and just other people that stuck around for us, I mean they just had so many resources for us and so much to help us to actually get there and to make us stay there. **IIQ2: How Satisfied were you with the extent of your intellectual growth and interest as a result of College** Um, I was satisfied I mean…it was, it's a great university so I don't really have too many bad things to say about it but um, I think it just …I don't know I guess I, I'm satisfied with my growth there because they taught me so much about myself and where I started from as a 18, 19 year old going off to school and then just all the experience that I had in college I mean I feel like I wouldn't have gotten them from a lot of other universities but at that university I feel like it prepared me to be out in the real world and to handle things that were, you know, gonna come to me when I got older in my 20's and 30's and stuff so I feel like my growth was very good. **IIQ3: Connection with what you learned in college and your current career.** Oh, a lot. I can even look back…now. Um, look back as some of the papers that I did or even look back at some, I kept some of lectures from some of my more important higher level classes because I know I couldn't go back and look at all of that stuff. So just kinda seeing the juxtaposition of all of it they really prepared me to go out into the work field because my last year I had to do a internship and all the stuff I did for my internship I now see myself using [at] work… so I mean it was great. I look back on it sometime and I'm like I really do use that and that's a great tool that they gave me and it comes in handy. **IIQ8: Satisfaction with academic advice received in college.** Very satisfied…ok so we one of the things that I loved about the college that I was in which was the college	**IIQ4: Favorite Professor** My favorite college professor was my um…I had him for two class, one class actually, he was my addiction professor… Um. he was just like one of my favorites and I didn't get him until like my junior year or senior year so I was waiting on him because I had a mentor that told me yea take his class because he is one of the greatest and I was like okay and I made sure I took the class with him and I never regretted it because I loved it from beginning to end. One that stretched me was my African History teacher. I think the course was like African History from 1700 on up and his name was Dr. Gregory Rudley, I remember him like the back of my hand. He was so like…I don't know he pushed you when you didn't want to go farther. Like, I mean there were some days where I would be like I don't want to talk about this I don't want to discuss it I don't want to do that but he pulled it out of you because he wants you to get it and to be engaged with him and everything because he is so passionate about what he taught so he wanted everybody else to be passionate about it with him. Sometimes you feel like this is just to get me a easy 3 credits, get me a easy A and get out of here but no if you thought that was how it was gonna go…it didn't go like that because he made you come and engage and be there with him instead of just like sitting in the back not doing nothing just give me my grade. He wasn't like that so. He was really one of my…he wasn't very hard he just was, he wanted 100 percent from you even when you didn't want to give it. **IIQ5: Interactions with faculty** - Um I had a lot…I am very interactive with my college professors. There were only a few that I can really remember that were not as open and willing to help you get to where you needed to, but that was like the more general education ones where you know you took those in the beginning and they were just like I'm here to get you in and get you out with whatever grade you want. But once I started getting into my major classes and the higher level classes I found that they were more personable and

of education and human sciences was that we had our own advisors we didn't have to go and see other advisors and I was suppose to keep the same advisor from the time I started school to the end of my career but that didn't happen for me. I changed advisors like three times but it was great to have someone who knew about the classes more than I knew um, to tell me you know or to even look at my degree audit and say you have this many credits left, this is what you need to take what you still need to take or if you still have electives left um so it was kind of they said we had the best advisors and I totally 100 percent agree because other colleges like the arts and sciences colleges didn't have the best advisors and you would have to wait weeks and weeks on time and that's one thing that they prided themselves on was getting the students in on that high traffic time and finding classes and stuff like that so I feel like with my advisors I got the best advice and also just working in one of the offices that was in my college, I worked in one of the dean's office, and I got kind of a like a background look at it because I was able to see stuff before the others students were and they would tell me like oh yeah you should do this and do that because they would see it before they would send it out to the students so it would be good to just have like the first point of contact with special things that was going on or academic stuff that was going on so that was good for me.

were willing to help you more so I mean I had very good interaction with the faculty that I interacted with that was in my specific college. So I mean I worked with other people that were from a different college but I mean you know it was just kinda like I had worked with them it was like we were co-workers in a sense but it was still like different. But the ones that I interacted with on a daily basis with my college were good, most of them were, yeah.

IIQ6: **Impact of interpersonal relationships with peers** *on* **your personal growth, attitudes, and values**
I had a lot of like….because I was in a learning community there were people that were older than me that I could go and talk to and help me out. There was one girl that I worked with that was an Resident Assistant with me and she was the same age as me so I talked to her a lot to pick classes and to help me out and to get things done because she had been through a lot of the stuff I was going through, took a lot of the classes I had taken so just having those people who had already been through something in your college and um you know just talking to them and they helped me out a lot because a lot of time even the advisors couldn't tell me a lot about out the classes so having an actual student a older student to tell me about classes and professors like oh no he's not a good one take another professor or that class isn't the best class you should take this class or this is a fun class you should take this class or just having a few people that was in the same situation I was in help me out a lot.

IIQ7: **Connection with fellow college students**
Um, Oh wow, um, I feel like I had some things in common with some people I mean I got to see a lot of different people because I was a Resident Assistant at one of the dorms at the school so I saw a lot of different people which kind of showed me that I was different from a lot of people that went to school there but also showed me that I had a lot of stuff in common with a lot of people that went there also. Um, I don't know I didn't think I was the exact same because first of all I wasn't from the same state as them so it was

kinda like we had different opinions and different ways about us that just didn't mesh up sometimes. But we also, I also just embrace those differences with other people and just was like either I like it or don't like it and we just not gonna get along but most of the people there were…they were good people. Nebraska they say is the good life so a lot of people there were happy and nice but I ran into a few people that weren't but I mean you're gonna find that everywhere.

IIQ9: How well did college communicate important information to students?
Um I could say the academics were…they kept us on the up and up but one thing that I didn't like necessarily was how they got like events out and stuff. I feel like they only put those up on around like the dorms and the dining halls and stuff like that and when you move off of campus you kinda miss those things on campus unless you're just always on campus or you know coming to campus for certain things but I feel like they only targeted the students that were in like res life (residential life) I'm sorry I'm talking acronymns and stuff. People were…if you didn't live on campus sometimes you missed some events or you just didn't know about the events because they didn't post them to target the students that didn't live on campus.
I really hated financial aide because they were not forthcoming with a lot of things and I just feel like they could've done so much better at um telling the students about their financial aide packages, loans grants, scholarships and everything. It was kinda like going to the DMV and the people were always angry and you feel like pulling teeth to get answers out of them so I hated going to the financial aide office and I thought they could do so much better but everything else academics everything else was great. But financial aide and campus stuff…unless it was a super big event you probably didn't hear about the smaller events around campus.

Participants	Gender	RQ 3 10,11,12,13	RQ 4 14, 15	Advice to a HS Junior
Julia	Female	**IIQ10: How hard did your college work to meet your unique needs?** Um, sometimes they were good about things and sometimes they were bad about it. Like I said, just going back to the financial aid stuff like I had such a hard time even figuring out the cost of things at the school so I just feel like it's different departments that do better jobs at different things so I mean it's really hard to answer that because like I said every department is different. I've had bad experiences with some departments and good and great experiences with other departments. So I mean I don't know if that answers your questions but its just hard for me to say that they….the departments that wanted to work hard, worked hard. That's a closer answer. **IIQ11: How disappointed would people who mean the most to you have been had you not graduated** …[V]ery disappointed because I mean the first year was a very hard year. I mean I got on the eviction list the first semester because I was having some financial trouble so my family like banded together and pulled money for me and got me off the eviction list and helped me pay for the rest of my college. So I mean if they, if I would've got to my like 3rd or 4th year and been like I just don't want to do this anymore they would've been livid, I mean they probably would've wondered why and supported me but they still would've had their little things to say about it like you had one year of college left like…my family is blessed so my brother probably would've told me that's stupid to quit college at this point like that's dumb to just do that and all the money you spent just going down the drain. My sister would've said the same thing. I feel like other people in my family probably would've tried to be more understanding but not by much. My friends probably would've said the same thing, I went to school with two of my friends and if I would've not graduated and they graduated they would've	**IIQ14: Confidence that participant's college choice was the right one.** …[I]n the beginning I wasn't that confident because I had a hard time adjusting being away from home, being away from my family was very hard for me but after my first two or three months it became probably the best decision I have ever made. I didn't want to go too far but I didn't want to stay in Missouri. So being in Nebraska was one of the best things because I got to be away but I got to be kinda close to home. Three hours away wasn't that far, so I gained independence and I made friends that I feel I will have the rest of my life. So after I got over my teenage feelings of just feeling like I was abandoned from Kansas City….it was great. **IIQ15: Number of time participant missed college classes for frivolous reason?** …[N]ot often at all. The thing about it was I always said, I'm paying for this. If I would've missed class it was like flushing money down the toilet. So I always had that in my mind like just go its nothing especially if it was a 50 minute class. I'm like its 50 minutes and if you have anything to do you can do it after that. So I didn't miss it too often, I guess I can say in a semester or like per month out of the 30 days I only missed 1 or 2 classes a month if that. I don't want it to sound bad like I missed that many classes a month. I tried not to skip class I really did because like I said I felt like I would be wasting money if I skipped out on class.	Um, the first thing I would tell them is [congratulate them on] making the decision to actually take the step of getting into …because a lot of people don't have that opportunity. So, if they have the opportunity, snatch it, hold it, and don't let go [of it!]. "I would tell them it's gonna be hard. You're gonna have bad days and you're gonna have worst days but you're also gonna have more happy days and easier days than you can just imagine. Let them know that they need to get people behind them whether [they be] professors, students at school, family at home, if you don't have family people from high school or anything like that, I mean," just have a support system behind you because that's what determines if you succeed or not because as much as people say they did it on their own, you really didn't, because you had somebody who was in your corner, cheering you on, just kinda just letting them know that they can do it." If you want the success you can get…success. Like I said, the happiest moment for me was actually walking up the steps, shaking my dean's hand and getting my degree. So if you have that short term goal in mind, saying " I wanna get my degree saying that's what I wanna do then you'll do it." So there's not much I can say, I would just encourage them because you can look at my mistakes: "I can tell you mistakes as long as my arm that happened [to me] in school and you probably would still make the same mistakes. Just because you heard it from me doesn't mean you won't make the same mistakes, but own it, own those mistakes and say, 'I learned something from that mistake, I got into that class and it was harder than I thought and I had to drop it. Drop it, pick it up again, get a tutor next time, get a study group next time, get another reference book that you need that's gonna help you pass that class … I mean, it's just learning what's gonna be the best for you and just taking it and being happy with the

said that was stupid when you didn't graduate when you could've just finished out and just got your degree. I feel like they would've been open and honest and blunt with me about not finishing.

IIQ12: Determination to earn a college degree (1 – 5)
5+++ (laughing) I mean I was among the first few to go and graduate so I wanted it for myself and for my family. That's what I always say like, I worked so hard to say that yes I got my college degree and that I now have something that no one can take that from me. So I was over the moon happy when I graduated and got my degree like I said I was one of the first so it was a special thing to see my family there to support me getting my degree.

IIQ13: Family Support and Encouragement
…[M]y family was very encouraging and supportive. I went to college with one of my cousins so it was kind of the family doubling supporting us because we were both there at the same school, um they were , it was always people I could call back to and say, 'you know I'm having a hard time or this good thing happened--I just got an A on my test or something like that. It was just great. I talked to my sister every single day. [There] wasn't a day that went by in school that I didn't talk to my sister just about the most random stuff. I mean, that right there, is support to me because that just let me know that she will always be there... they were there for me 100 percent... So just having all those people behind me even my UA family [was powerful]. I call those people family, too.

decisions you make and not regretting anything that you did and getting there and saying I got it and I'm so happy that I did it and stuck through it.

Participants	Gender	Grand Tour Question	RQ 1 1,2,3,8	RQ 2 4,5,6,7,9
Cantu	Male	…just meeting new people and having an opportunity to get outside of Kansas City. I think that has been like the big two prominent things because growing up and reflecting on myself as a student or as a kid in general, I consider myself to be very introverted, very quiet and so not being able to have those interactive skills growing up and so I would say college really challenged me in that and I got to experience a different side of the world. I got to travel to a lot of places here in the United States and um…yeah, the people like I said… and… finding mentors on campus that I could connect with and …who would encourage me to continue to go forth … not having everything figured out going in my first year because like my mom or dad neither went to college so being there and "just being like what the heck is this?" Really just like trying to find my niche on campus and like trying to find my purpose… I would say I'm still working on my purpose. I would say that's a[n] everyday thing, but I would "definitely say my time in college has really, really like impacted my life positively."	**IIQ1: High School Preparation** Um, I would say right before I started college, I was super nervous just because of all of the messages I was hearing rather it was from teachers or friends who were formerly in college saying how difficult or hard it would be and I would say when I got to college I would say that I was quite advanced, I scored into calculus my first semester…I took a lot of … upper level English courses my freshman year so like being up to par with that I would say Mr. Freeman, he was my teacher here my junior year so like having him really… drilled into my head the importance of words and how to write a sentence and things like that… really helped out and sparked my interest in creative writing and so…yeah. **IIQ2: How Satisfied were you with the extent of your intellectual growth and interest as a result of College** I'm very satisfied. Um, I would say…I feel confident. That's what I would say. My freshman year I came into college not really knowing what I wanted out of life…what I wanted out of life… what I wanted to do with my life…Being in college for those 4 years [and] being away from home and being able to explore on my own I would say definitely [opened my eyes] for sure. **IIQ3: Connection between with what you learned in college and your current career.** … I'm always around students and so I see myself as being either a college professor or English teacher at the high school level. [I] have an opportunity to just be around students all the time and really being able to present in front of the class and actually find out that this is really what I want to do because I think just helping a student… understand the writing process or come up with an idea to write a story, or something like that, for me, that, I don't know, fuels me in a sense, if that makes sense. **IIQ8: Satisfaction with academic advice received in college.** Um I would say that I wasn't too satisfied. The reason why I say this is because um I got a lot of my help with the professors I knew outside of my classes and so the ones that I really had a strong connection to or from my colleagues but in terms of like going to my advisor or I would say not very much it was like once a semester. So I would say I got most of my advising if that makes sense from outside. I would consider professors or my friends my advisors so from that sense I would say very satisfied but when it came to actual advising I would say not so	**IIQ4: Favorite Professor** Favorite college professor, let's see, Dr. Rutledge and Dr. Gerror. The reason I would say those are my two favorite professor is because those are my two English professors and I consider them to be my mentors… I actually worked with Dr. Gerror on my research project and we studied Sydney Poitier and the Hollywood industry. Kinda like how the effects were on his life and the effects Hollywood [has] had on the American culture. So… I would say those are …[the] two professors who had the most impact on me just because I was never comfortable with research… I would say I'm not … a fan of research, but I have a mad respect for it and I would say I [am] now be comfortable with research …. **IIQ5: Interactions with faculty** …college professors can be intimidating and I would say then they were intimidating my first few years in college just because I saw them as this very direct: "I speak, you listen and just take notes…" Also, going to office hours or at least introducing myself that first day of class after class really helped and then I don't know now I ask questions all the time I think I bug my professors a lot now if I don't have, if I don't understand something… **IIQ6: Impact of interpersonal relationships with peers *on* your personal growth, attitudes, and values** It [has]taught me that I ha[ve] a voice in college just because, like I said, growing up, I was that quiet kid and so I would just kinda sit in the back and just do whatever… going to college and interacting with my peers, I recognized that my voice matters and [that] I could also impact someone else that was around me…I recognized that I could ask a simple question and someone next to me would be like "I'm so glad that you asked that because I was doing the same thing I just didn't want to raise my hand." So like just little moments like that and then in my current position working at Colorado

			much. Just because I felt like every time I went and there was something I wanted to do, my advisor couldn't point me in the direction of what choices I could take or what the path would look like for me, and so, a lot of it was me kinda exploring outside of my advisor.	State University advising and supervising student leaders, I don't know…still today because I learn so much from them, "I [now] recognize that, regardless of your age, we're people and as people, we grow together and so I don't know, I'd say it was a learning opportunity and it still is today."
				IIQ7: **Connection with fellow college students** Ummmm, (laughing) I would say not much. I would say not much outside of my close organizations that I was a part of, just because I value, I was very introverted, um but now that I am in graduate school I would say a lot. Um….(thinking) I'm sorry.
				IIQ9: **How well did college communicate important information to students?** Gotcha, Um I would say at the beginning of the year that's usually when you kinda get that kind of get most of that information and then throughout the year you hear a lot about student engagement, student activities and stuff like that so that was never a problem. Um but for all the other information I would say was kinda up front and then you just kinda learned along the way it was kinda like a golden rule. As you get older you just kinda picked it up whether somebody told you directly or indirectly

Participants	Gender	RQ 3 10,11,12,13	RQ 4 14, 15	Advice to a HS Junior
Cantu	Male	**IIQ10: How hard did your college work to meet your unique needs?** I would say University of Nebraska Lincoln did a great job. Um, or you said imagine… KK- Well, imagine a time when… KH – Oh imagine a time when. Ok, so going back to my freshman year um and so the director of the Multicultural Student Success Center Andre Fortune he introduced me to the Jack Multicultural Student Success Center and he was like this is a place where we have an oasis and so there was the office of Academics and Cultural Services and so it was a way for me to get free tutoring…they had a computer lab, they had a Student Lounge area so I had the opportunity to interact with other students there and the next semester I had the opportunity to work out the building and so I would say yeah I was well supported and I felt like I had my own family and my own group of friends and I felt I had a place to connect and feel safe on campus so definitely. **IIQ11: How disappointed would people who mean the most to you have been had you not graduated** Very disappointed and the reason why I say this is because my dad and mom they made it clear to me and my brothers growing up that we were going to go to college regardless if we didn't have an opinion to go and so how did they make that happen, they made it happen because all three of my brothers are in college and my sister is here now and she's getting ready to graduate but um I was a Kauffman Scholar too so I had everything…for me I feel like I had a huge responsibility because everything was given to me kinda on a silver platter in a sense that here's your education now all you gotta do is go out there and get it and so there were times where I did consider dropping out just because I was like people don't understand me or I don't see how this is going to get me to where I wanna be or whether it was the learning process of what exactly is college and what I'm supposed to get out of this experience so I would say my parents and my brothers and sister was like on the forefront like of my mind saying okay if I drop the ball I drop the ball not only for myself but for my little brother my sister my mom and dad but even my entire family for that matter. I feel like there was this huge pressure on me yea from my entire community I would say because I was the first one to go to college not just to go to college but to	**IIQ14: Confidence that participant's college choice was the right one.** If you was to ask me that before I graduated I would say on a 1-5 scale a 1 or a 3 just because I feel like my original plan was I always dreamed of going to culinary school and then like I saw all my friends applying to all these different school and was like I'm going here I'm going to study mathematics or engineering or veterinarian or I'm going to study medicine so hearing all these things and I want to go to culinary school and have all that pressure and be the first person in my household to go to college at that. And I started thinking like hmm is this the best or something I want in my future or can I do something better so my best friend LeRoy and my cousin Rebecca Roberts both graduated here and they applied to UNL and I applied too and I got in and I said I don't want to go to college by myself so we all three went. But now I can honestly say I don't regret it at all just because of all the opportunities that I have and I found and still am finding like my niche as to what I want to do for the rest of my life. KK – So when you were just graduating [high school] you would've said a 3, looking back on it what would you say..? KH – I would say a 5. **IIQ15: Number of time participant missed college classes for frivolous reason?** Actually, I can count on my hands how many times I missed class. It was less than, out of my 4 years of college I missed less than 10 days. And the reason why is because like I was always paranoid of missing class because if I miss one day there was so much material that I would have to catch up on and I understood, too that given the privileges that I had I was a Kauffman scholar and having my mom and dad on my back and then like myself, too just really, really wanting to do my best. Like I knew that I had to be on top of my academics and so it was always school first and then after school and then I made time for my friends too and so like just finding like a balance for me and that came easy for me and that's something that I recognize that the folks around me they kinda struggle with…um, but I will say because my mom and dad knew how important it was for me to be in college and how much they would brag about me back at home and how proud they were and	Take <u>time to explore yourself find your likes and dislikes and find your own aspirations and dreams while you are living up to making your family proud also live up to make your self proud by achieving the things that means</u> most to you and by doing that for me I found that I found enjoyment and I was able to fully, fully enjoy my collegiate experience all together without any regrets and I learned every single day whether it was through a conversation or whether it was in my class like I tried to use every opportunity as a learning. Everyday use it as some type of learning experience while you're in college.

		go to college and to graduate. (laughing) So that was my expectation and I had to live up to that because my cousins who went to college they completed half way through but then they didn't complete and so they were pushing to be better than me and so I feel like I had this huge pressure for me not to quit. Because if I quit then…yea it wasn't just about me so I would say I was looking out for my family who put so much forth. **IIQ12: Determination to earn a college degree (1 – 5)** I would say 5 (Laughing) and that's really really hard. I would say 5 because my family means everything to me and so its like I'm not doing this for myself I'm doing this for my family and I come learn to in that process it's like I can do this for myself too and when I thought that it was like I was marveled into do it and it's like I can do things I want to do out of my life while also achieve in the things that my family my mom and dad didn't have the opportunity to do and so like that really really like has driven me to go all the way. **IIQ13: Family Support and Encouragement** (Chuckling) very encouraging. There were times when like I would call my dad and my mom and like I would just talk about everything I had done or everything I had to get through. I remember my last semester of my senior year of college and I had like 6 projects, 4 papers, 3 presentations and just so much and I remember like just crying on the phone just like I don't know how I graduate in 3 weeks and I have all this stuff to get through and I had all this pressure and at that moment too I had graduation fees and I was applying for graduate school and I was like I'm still trying to figure out what I want to do after graduation and on top of that its like no I can't even see graduation just three weeks away and so it was like this really scary moment and like my parents to be there and actually walk me through that really helped me.	I wanted to keep that up and so I just made my education my priority so.	

Appendix K: Missouri Charter School Renewals and Closures

Opening School Year	Co/Dist Code	School Name	1st Renewal	2nd Renewal	3rd Renewal
1999-2000	048-914	Academie Lafayette	2008-2009	2018-2019	
2011-2012	048-927	Academy for Integrated Arts	2015-2016		
1999-2000	048-908	*Academy of Kansas City*	*Closed-2009*		
1999-2000	048-909	Allen Village	2005-2006	2015-2016	
1999-2000	048-902	Alta Vista Charter School	2007-2008	2011-2012	2016-2017
1999-2000	048-911	Benjamin Banneker Academy	2006-2007	2012-2013	2017-2018
2011-2012	155-922	Better Learning Communities Academy	2015-2016		
2002-2003	048-916	Brookside Charter School	2007-2008	2017-2018	
2010-2011	115-915	Carondelet Leadership Academy	2014-2015		
2008-2009	115-911	City Garden Montessori	2017-2018		
2003-2004	155-906	Confluence Academies	2011-2012	2016-2017	
2001-2002	115-901	Construction Careers Center	2011-2012	2015-2016	
2012-2013	048-926	Crossroads Academy of Kansas City	2016-2017		
2010-2011	048-923	DeLaSalle Charter School	2014-2015		
1999-2000	048-912	Della Lamb Elementary	2008-2009	2018-2019	
2002-2003	048-917	Derrick Thomas Academy	2006-2007	*Closed-2013*	
1999-2000	048-903	Don Bosco Education Center	2005-2006	*Closed-2011*	
2013-2014	115-923	Eagle College Preparatory Endeavor	2017-2018		
2000-2001	115-904	*Ethel Hedgeman Lyle Academy*	*Closed-2010*		
2011-2012	048-924	Ewing Marion Kauffman School	2020-2021		
2009-2010	048-922	Frontier School of Innovation	2013-2014	2018-2019	
2010-2011	115-916	Gateway Science Academy of St Louis	2014-2015		
1999-2000	048-905	Genesis School Inc	2004-2005	2014-2015	
1999-2000	048-913	Gordon Parks Elementary	2005-2006	2012-2013	2017-2018
2010-2011	115-918	Grand Center Arts Academy	2014-2015		
1999-2000	048-904	Hogan Preparatory Academy	2005-2006	2010-2011	2020-2021
2009-2010	048-920	*Hope Academy*	*Closed-2014*		
2011-2012	048-925	Hope Leadership Academy	2015-2016		
2007-2008	115-907	*Imagine Academy of Academic Success*	*Closed-2012*		
2007-2008	115-908	*Imagine Academy of Careers*	*Closed-2012*		
2007-2008	115-909	*Imagine Academy of Environmental Science*	*Closed-2012*		
2011-2012	115-921	Jamaa Learning Center	2015-2016		
2000-2001	048-078	*Kansas City Career Academy*	*Closed-2001*		
2007-2008	048-918	KIPP: Endeavor Academy	2016-2017		
2009-2010	115-914	KIPP: St Louis (Inspire)	2018-2019		
2013-2014	115-924	Lafayette Preparatory Academy	2017-2018		
1999-2000	048-910	Lee A Tolbert Community Academy	2005-2006	2015-2016	
2000-2001	115-902	Lift for Life Academy	2005-2006	2012-2013	2017-2018
2009-2010	115-913	North Side Community School	2013-2014	2018-2019	
2002-2003	115-905	*Paideia Academy*	*Closed-2010*		
2009-2010	048-921	Pathway Academy	2014-2015		
2011-2012	115-919	Preclarus Mastery Academy	2015-2016		
2000-2001	115-913	Premier Charter School	2010-2011	2019-2020	
2007-2008	048-919	*Renaissance Academy*	*Closed-2012*		
1999-2000	048-915	Scuola Vita Nuova	2006-2007	2012-2013	2017-2018
2010-2011	115-917	*Shearwater Education Foundation*	*Closed-2013*		
2011-2012	115-920	South City Preparatory Academy	2015-2016		
1999-2000	048-078	*Southwest Charter School*	*Closed-2006*		
2009-2010	115-912	St Louis Language Immersion School	2013-2014	2018-2019	
2007-2008	115-910	*The Can! Academies of STL*	*Closed-2008*		
2000-2001	115-115	*Thurgood Marshall Academy*	*Closed-2005*		
2000-2001	**048-901**	**University Academy (Initial Charter, 1999)**	**2004-2005**	**2014-2015**	
1999-2000	048-907	*Urban com Leadership Academy*	2005-2006	*Closed-2012*	
1999-2000	048-078	*Westport Edison*	*Closed-2005*		
2002-2003	115-115	*Youthbuild St. Louis Charter*	*Closed-2005*		

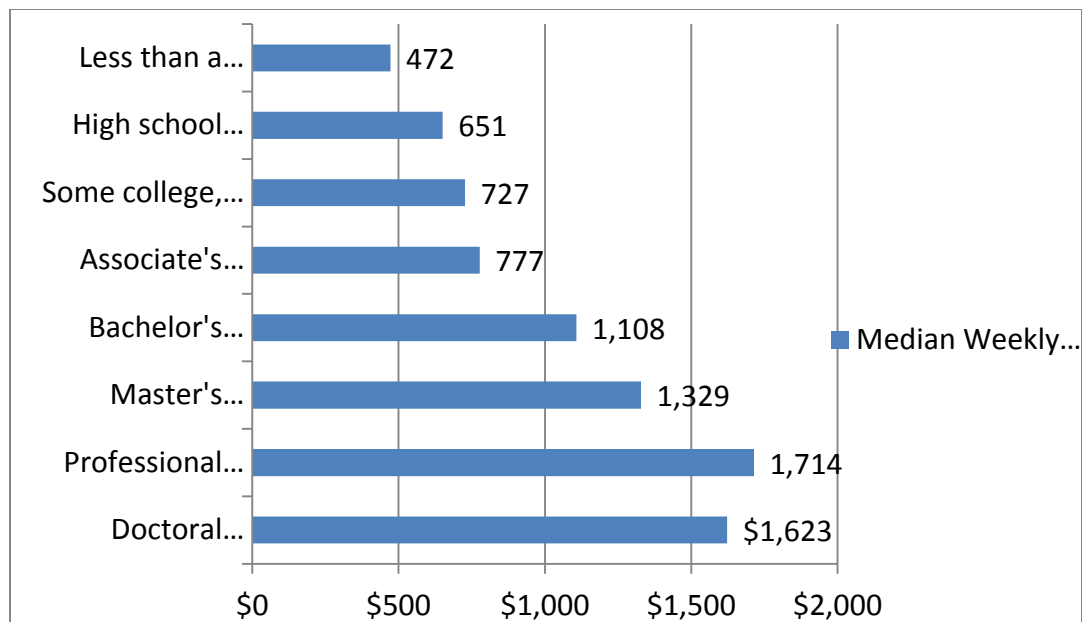**Appendix L: Earnings By Educational Attainment**

Figure 1a: Median Weekly Earnings by Educational Attainment. Figures are for full-time wage and salary workers. Current Population Survey, (n. d.), U. S. Bureau of Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.

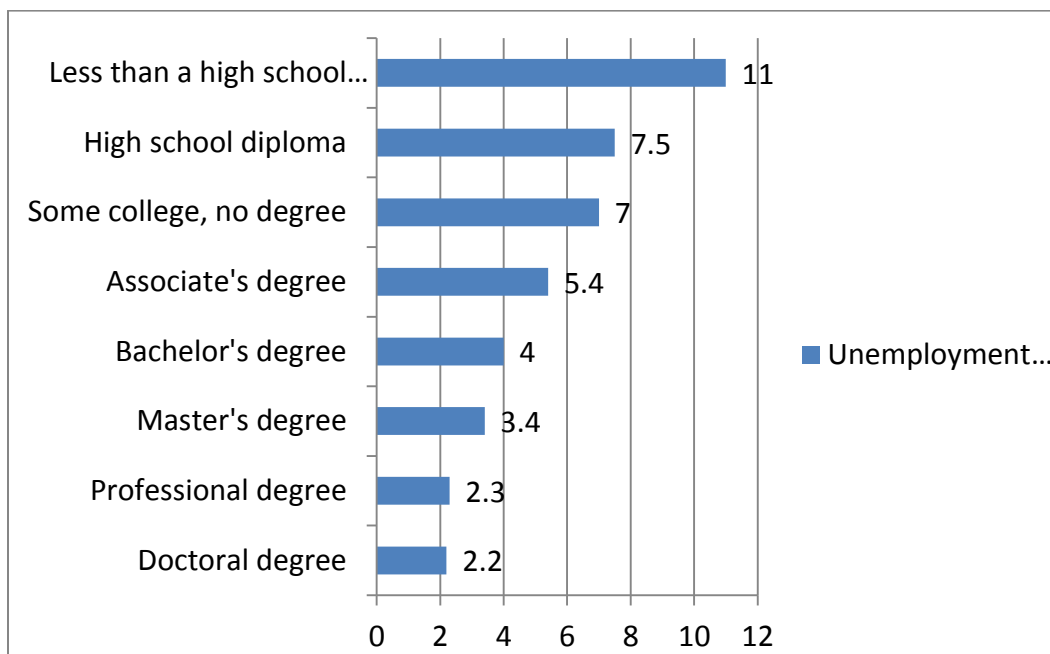**Appendix M: Unemployment Rate By Educational Attainment**

Figure 1b: Unemployment by Educational Attainment. Figures are for full-time wage and salary workers. Current Population Survey, (n. d.), U. S. Bureau of Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.

Appendix N: Percent of 100 Students Attending /Earning College Degrees:
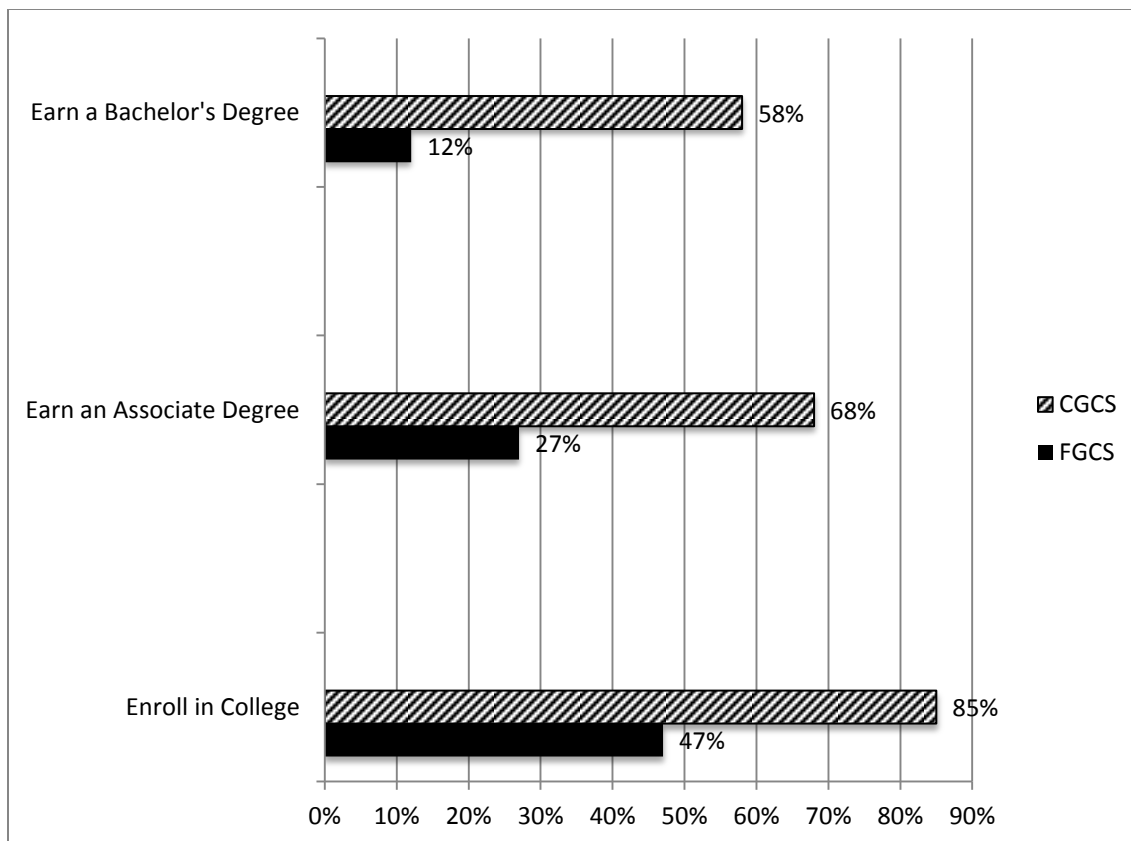
FGCS vs. CGCS

Figure 5
Of 100 High Schoolers, % Attending/Earning a College Degree: FGCS v. CGCS
Source: Engle, J., Bermeo, A., & O'Brien, C. (2006). Straight from the Source: What Works for First-Generation College Students? *Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education*. (p. 14).

Appendix O: Percent of 100 Students Completing Steps to Enroll in 4-Year College:
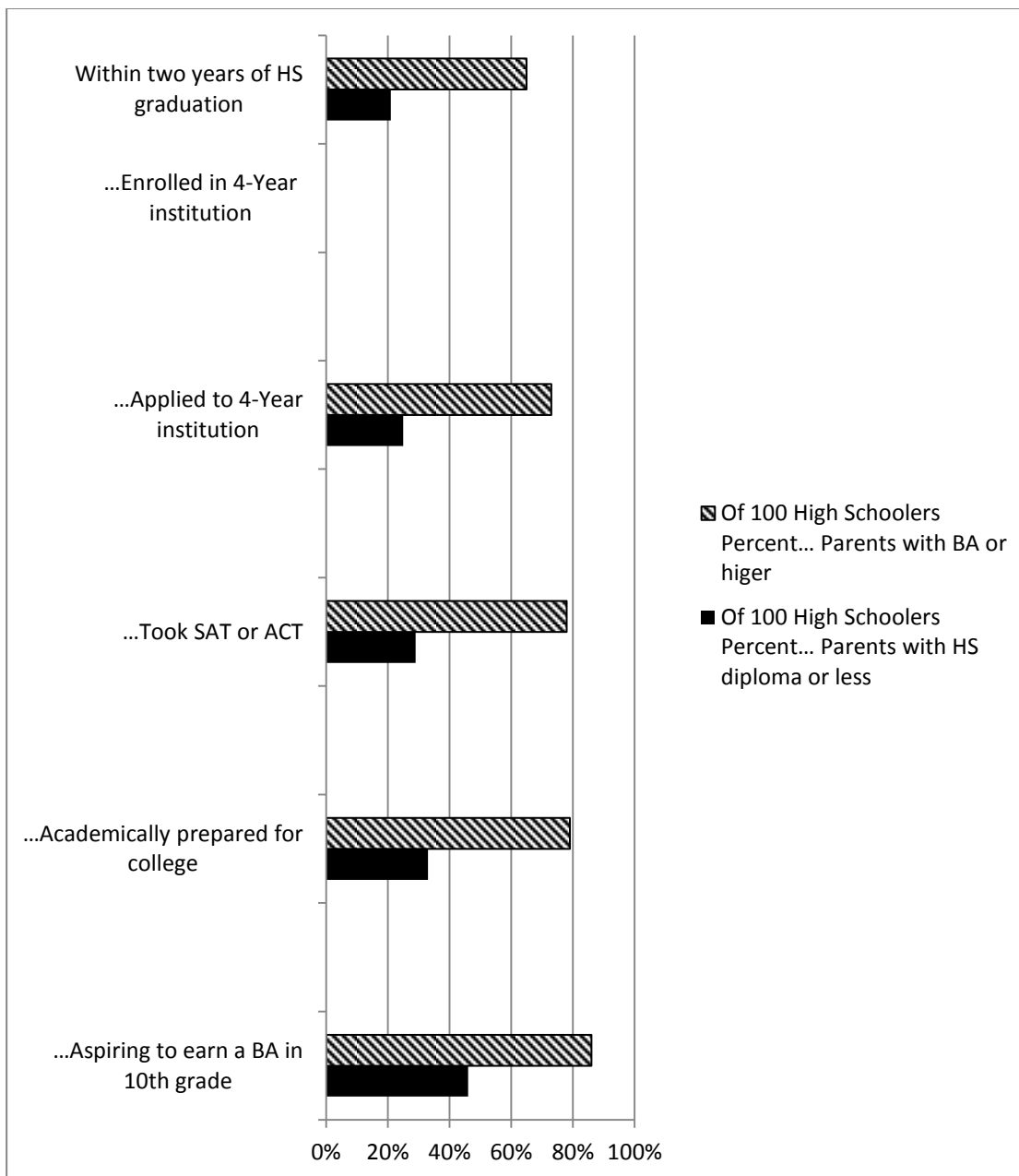
FGCS vs. CGCS

Figure 6
Of 100 High Schoolers, % Completing Steps to Enroll in 4-Year College: FGCS v. CGCS
Source: Engle et al. (p. 15).

Appendix P: Permission to Use UAPCS as the Study Site

February 24, 2014

Greetings Baker University,

This letter is intended to support the University Academy Upper School principal, Clem Ukaoma, in his pursuit of a doctorate degree.   As superintendent, I am granting him authorization to use "University Academy Public Charter School" (UAPCS) for his upcoming study.

Thank you,

Tony Kline, Superintendent

The mission of University Academy is to prepare students to succeed in an institution of higher education and to participate as leaders in society.

6801 Holmes Road Kansas City, Missouri 64131 tel. (816) 412-5900   fax (816) 410-0322