CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In recent years, African American participation in higher education has been critically analyzed by numerous researchers (Allen, 1992; Astin, 1993; Carroll, 1998; Fleming, 1984; Freeman, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993). Much of this analysis has been prompted by the population shifts in the United States.

The national demography is in a constant state of flux (Hacker, 1995). For example, the number of Whites living in the United States in 1970 represented 87.5% of the total population. In the same year, Blacks reflected 11.1% of the people in the United States (Bureau of the Census, 1970).

By 1990, the number of Whites declined in the overall population to 75.3%, while the Black populace experienced a slight increase to 11.9% of all Americans (Bureau of the Census, 1990). Further, as of 1995, the percentage of Whites remained constant at 73.5% of the nation's citizenry, but the number of Blacks increased to the point where they represented a 12.6% share of the United States' population (Bureau of the Census, 1995).

As the demographic landscape has shifted nationally, institutions of higher education have experienced changes in the demographic characteristics of students pursuing postsecondary

degrees (U. S. Department of Education, 1994). While Whites represented 87.5% of the overall United States population in 1970 (Bureau of the Census, 1970), they comprised 90% of all students enrolled in higher education (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1997). Although the total population of Whites in the United States decreased by the early 1990s, their numbers in higher education remained constant and they continued to comprise 90% of all students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1997).

Conversely, during this same period, the total population of Blacks increased slightly in the United States (Bureau of the Census, 1970), while their participation in higher education decreased so that Blacks represented approximately 7% of all students enrolled. By 1994, Blacks in higher education represented 10.7% of the total enrollment (Integrated Postsecondary Data System, 1994). These demographic shifts in enrollment patterns are manifested in the conferral of degrees in the system of higher education.

For instance, White students earned 87.8% of all the undergraduate degrees conferred in 1977, while 6.4% of undergraduate degrees earned in that same year were awarded to Black students (Nettles & Perna, 1997). By 1994, White graduates garnered 78.5% (Bureau of the Census, 1995) of all the undergraduate degrees awarded. Although Blacks represented 12.6%

(Bureau of the Census, 1995) of the United States population, they earned only 7% of all bachelor's degrees nationwide (Nettles & Perna, 1997). While there has been an increase in enrollment figures and in the number of bachelor's degrees conferred to African Americans, this growth is disproportionately low compared to the African American population in the United States (Hacker, 1995).

Graduation rates among Blacks also differ by institutional type. For example, graduation rates in predominately White institutions (PWIs) and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) vary. In 1977, 117 HBCUs accounted for 88.2% of all degrees conferred to Black students nationwide. By 1994, HBCUs conferred 72.6% of all degrees awarded nationally (Nettles & Perna, 1997).

Experts who study enrollment patterns in higher education have searched for answers to explain this disparity (Allen, 1992). For example, in the 1989-1990 academic year, only 57.3% of African Americans enrolled in higher education immediately after high school, compared to 71.7% of their White counterparts who enrolled immediately after high school (Nettles & Perna, 1997). To improve disproportionately low enrollment rates, colleges and universities need to support Black students.

There are multiple forms of support that institutions of higher education provide to students (Allen, 1992; Carroll,

1998). One form of support is academic. Academic support may be manifested in tutoring services, contact with faculty, and peer mentoring programs. Academic support is also provided through campus facilities like libraries and computer laboratories that support student learning (Allen, 1987; Tinto, 1993).

A second form of support that students need in a college environment is emotional support. Emotional support may be viewed as the form of support individuals receive during life's stresses and strains. This support can take the form of providing assistance with coping or serving as a buffer in times of crisis (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Students may receive this kind of support formally from services provided by campus counseling centers. Others may seek emotional support informally from faculty, staff, or peers in the campus community.

Still another form of support beneficial to college students is social support (Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992). In the context of the college environment, social support relates to the friendship and social networks formed by students. Student clubs and organizations are examples of social support networks. Participation in collegiate athletics and intramural sports provides social support for some students. Still other students receive social support from interactions in living and learning communities in residence halls (Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992).

A fourth form of support college students need is financial support (So, 1984; St. John & Noell, 1989). Students may receive financial support from multiple sources. One form of financial support is present in the various federal and state need-based programs. For instance, students may be awarded Pell grants or guaranteed student loans through the federal government. Students may also benefit from financial support programs offered through their state government. Financial support also may be provided from institutional resources. For example, some students may qualify for grants, loans, or scholarships directly from the institution of enrollment (St. John & Noell, 1989).

These forms of support (academic, emotional, social, and financial) are needed for all students, regardless of race. However, some campuses have made special efforts to provide support for Black students. Administrative units in higher education provide varying forms of institutional support for Black students (Tinto, 1993). Support efforts range from the construction of cultural centers on predominately White campuses (Tomlinson, 1992) to the role faculty and administrators play in retaining Black students (Schenider, 1992).

While these forms of institutional support are critical to Black college student success, there may be one additional form of support that Black students need. Despite the efforts of administrators on predominately White campuses, many Black

students seek support from resources beyond those provided by the campus community, particularly from families.

Black students at predominately White institutions rely on support from family members more so than White students at predominately White campuses and Black students at historically Black institutions. Therefore, frequent contact with family members is beneficial for Black students attending majority institutions (O'Leary, Boatwright, & Sauer, 1996; Tinto, 1993).

The literature has overlooked the role family plays in the daily lives of African American students. Some researchers have reported that the family unit is significant to the success of students in general (Lafreniere, Ledgerwood, & Docherty, 1997). Others have suggested that interactions with the family unit are particularly crucial to the success of African American undergraduate students (Billingsley, 1992; Brown, 1997; Fleming, 1984; Ladner, 1999; McAdoo, 1993; Tinto, 1993).

The family is a conduit for educational attainment (Teachman, 1998). It is important to consider parents and the role that they play in education for several reasons. First, families are primary sources of academic potential. That is, the family is the first unit to develop and nurture the student's capacity for learning.

Second, families set the parameters of community standards within the home environment. Such boundaries affect a student's outlook on the larger social order (Teachman, 1998).

Third, parents are influential in creating the context in which events and phenomena are evaluated. In this case, families provide the background for explaining meaning in life and the world (Teachman, 1998).

Another influence of family relates to social context. Parents provide students with a social environment that influences the way in which students view education. This can take place through school choice, career options, and overall higher educational aspirations (Teachman, 1998). The influence of parents has been documented in elementary and secondary settings.

For instance, Clark (1983) studied the academic achievement among 10 Black high school seniors of working class families. Five students were identified as high achievers. The other five were identified as low achievers. Several patterns emerged related to academic success among the high achievers. First, parents were expected to be involved in their children's education. Second, parents were emotionally supportive of their students. Achievement standards set by parents, coupled with students' acceptance of these standards was another factor related to student success. Finally, parents were perceived as

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being nurturing and supportive of students' academic pursuits (Clark, 1983).

Similarly, Lee (1984) studied academic success patterns among rural, adolescent Blacks and identified family variables related to academic success. Variables that are directly linked to the present study are: 1) close knit family relationships; 2) a high level of parental involvement; 3) family openness, 4) educational encouragement; 5) strong family values; and, 6) the influence of extended family members (Lee, 1984).

The partnerships among family members, teachers, and administrators have also been documented at the elementary and secondary levels. Epstein (1987) identified 11 types of information that should be shared between parents and school officials. The types of information related to the present investigation include: graduation requirements; academic policies; and, the steps parents can take to assist students in school (Epstein, 1987).

These studies suggest the kinds of support that families play in K-12 education. However, research on the support parents provide to students in higher education settings is scarce. This gap in the literature may exist because of the tenuous role of parental and family participation in the lives of students enrolled in institutions of higher education (Turrentine, 1999). Consequently, few studies have examined parental involvement in

higher education settings. Those that have examined family relations in higher education have focused on parents' involvement in admissions decisions and summer orientation programs (Flint, 1992; Harmon & Rhatigan, 1990).

In a study to examine parental expectations of the college experience, Turrentine (1999) surveyed 410 parents of first-year students at a predominately White university in the mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. Seven major parental expectations were revealed in the results. First, parents envisioned that their students were receiving a quality education. Second, parents who participated in the study reported that they believed that college was preparing students for the world of work.

The next theme that emerged in this study related to maturity. Parents believed that while in college, students would become more mature and independent. Satisfaction with the university experience was the fourth expectation reported by parents (Turrentine, 1999).

Parents believed that their student would be on target for graduation. Another expectation reported by parents was the hope that their student was academically successful at the university. Finally, parents reported that they believed that their students had developed friendship networks. Results from this study also suggest that after the selection of an

institution, parents may not become too involved in students'

collegiate life (Turrentine, 1999).

In yet another study, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Larsen, and

Jacobs (1997) examined the relationship between the transition

to college and one's family of origin. In this research, 93

undergraduate students were surveyed. Ninety-six percent of the

participants were White. Several findings are related to the

present study. First, family support is positively linked to a

student's transition to college from high school. Second,

students who perceive that they originated from cohesive

families are more likely to establish meaningful relationships

outside the family unit. Third, perceived social support from

families is related to family cohesion and a sense of belonging.

Most of the research conducted in family studies and the

college environment has been conducted on White populations. As

such, findings from many of the studies have been generalized

and interpreted for all populations (Ball, 1993). The

contributions research on the family has made are useful (Kiah,

1992); however, they have failed to examine the role family

plays in the daily lives of Black students. By and large,

scholarly activities in the area of family studies were not

designed to delve into the social and cultural meanings of

family life. Nor were they designed to examine the intersections

of ethnicity, undergraduate student experiences, and the family unit.

In examining the family and organizational structure of Black families, Dressler (1987) found that members of Black households are more likely to seek and receive informal social and emotional support from family members. Black family members are reluctant to trust trained professionals in the areas of seeking advice or resolving a problem.

Traditionally, African Americans have relied on a trusted family member or close friend to disclose and resolve sensitive issues. A heightened sense of distrust, suspicion, and stigma are attached to seeking assistance from trained professionals (Dressler, 1987).

In another study, Kiah (1992) examined traits and attitudes related to Black college students' persistence and achievement. Students' desire to remain in college were attributable to three factors, one of which was family cohesion.

There is a strong correlation between family cohesion and Black student success. Nearly 70% of Black students reported that their family unit is cohesive. That is, family relationships are healthy and offer the appropriate amount of support and interaction. Further, roughly 48% of Black students perceived their mothers as the most influential family member with respect to their attitudes about education (Kiah, 1992).

In a longitudinal study, researchers surveyed 176 African American students 10 years after their university matriculation. Seventy percent of the respondents reported that parents were influential in their retention in higher education. However, even with strong parental support, persistence in college was difficult for many African American students (Hunt, Schmidt, Hunt, Boyd, & Magoon, 1994).

Consequently, it would seem minority student retention is related to the support that students receive from family members (Mallinckrodt, 1988). But few studies have examined these sources of support and how they vary by ethnic group (Mallinckrodt, 1988).

Mallinckrodt (1988) surveyed 171 White and 98 Black undergraduates starting their second semester in college. Results revealed that if Black parents do not encourage their students, those students do not persist in higher education. Similarly, if parents do not believe that their student should attend college, then students do not persist (Mallinckrodt, 1988).

In addition to research related to college experiences and family life, researchers have examined the effects of college by institutional type. Differences in the college experience differ by the nature of the institution (Bohr, Pascarella, Nora, & Terenzini, 1995).

For example, research has been conducted on the differences in Blacks attending historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) versus Black students who attend predominately White institutions (PWIs) (Allen, 1987, 1992; Bohr, Pascarella, Nora, Terenzini, 1995; Watson & Kuh, 1996). Scholarly inquiries related to institutional type and fit also have been launched with respect to Blacks' participation in higher education.

The literature depicts Black students at HBCUs as being satisfied, well-adjusted, and involved in campus activities. They have a strong sense of racial identity, high achievement aspirations (Allen, 1987), and are more engaged in student learning (DeSousa & Kuh, 1996). On the other hand, Black students enrolled at PWIs have been portrayed as socially isolated and not involved in campus activities. These students typically have lower levels of satisfaction, do not identify with the institution, and tend to experience greater levels of stress and anxiety than Blacks attending HBCUs (Carroll, 1998; Thompson & Fretz, 1991).

It has been reported that Black students at HBCUs tend to have lower socio-economic statuses than both Blacks and Whites at PWIs. Black students at HBCUs also have lower high school academic records and poorer academic facilities. Students attending HBCUs also are offered fewer academic options and fewer opportunities for advanced study. Finally, students at

HBCUs generally have lower standardized test scores and weaker high school backgrounds than their comparison groups on White campuses (Allen, 1992).

There has been very little within-race analysis among Black populations (Davis, 1995). For example, analyses that deal with students typically compare White and Black comparison groups. Others may analyze differences by gender. Davis (1995) found that Black males tend to fare better at HBCUs as opposed to PWIs. This finding suggests that there are greater degrees of social support and racial congruency at HBCUs for Black males.

Moreover, scholars have concluded that there are no significant differences in cognitive and intellectual gains of Black students who attend HBCUs and Black students enrolled at PWIs. This finding is consistent even when pre-college student characteristics differ by institutional type. That is, students who graduate from HBCUs and PWIs leave their institutions with similar academic gains (Bohr, Pascarella, Nora, & Terenzini, 1995; DeSousa & Kuh, 1996). Parental background is yet another characteristic that has been used to examine differences between Black students at HBCUs and those at PWIs.

The demography of parents varies by institutional type. The parents of students who attend historically Black colleges and universities tend to live in urban areas, have fewer years of formal education, and are employed in lower paying jobs. These

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parents also tend to be divorced and separated more often than the parents of Black students attending predominately White institutions (Allen, 1992). In addition, there are other differences that set Black families apart from other ethnic families.

Culturally, Black families are not monolithic. Diversity among Black families may exist politically, socially, and economically. Ethnic differences are also apparent among Black families (McAdoo, 1993). On the other hand, however, there are shared characteristics among most Black families.

Black families tend to have a strong religious orientation (Cone, 1990). That is, Black families typically embrace the value of religion, its liberating power, the reliance on a higher power, and the practical application of religious principles in life (McAdoo, 1993). Non-minorities tend to view religion from a theoretical perspective (Thistlehwaite & Engel, 1990). White families do not necessarily place less value on religious orientation, but may be more inclined to view spirituality from an intellectual, abstract, and highly conceptual perspective. The differences in theological perspectives between Black and White families may be attributed to race, class, and social conditions (Taylor & Chatters, 1991).

Black families also are characterized by valuing extended kin relationships. These are blood relationships beyond the

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nuclear family (Staples, 1986). Grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins may reside in the same household with the nuclear family.

Family kinship among Blacks may also be described as fictive (Chatters, Taylor, & Jayakody, 1994). These kinds of kinship bonds are unrelated by blood; however, they are viewed equally significant as blood relationships. Fictive relationships are manifested in "play" relatives and function in the role of blood kin. Fictive kinship networks may include neighbors, church members, and friends. The proximity, availability, and frequency of contact of extended and fictive kin sustain the helping tradition among Black families (Chatters, Taylor, & Jayakody, 1994; McAdoo, 1995). Billingsley (1992) contends that these family relationships are influences that have survived from slave communities.

Consequently, as a result of the value placed on fictive kinship bonds, African American genograms or family trees may be significantly different than their White counterparts. For example, some African American individuals might include "othermothers" on the family tree. Hill-Collins (1991) defined these additional mothers as women who helped blood mothers in child rearing. This phenomenon is reflective of communal parenting, once popular in African American communities. The presence of fictive kinships has been problematic for some

social science researchers and research participants.

Traditionally, fictive kinships have been excluded in research designs and analyses. Nevertheless, Stack (1974) maintained that fictive kinships bonds are legitimate. A responsibility of the researcher is to include fictive kin when participants report them as being significant (Watts-Jones, 1997).

Another distinguishing characteristic found in Black families is parenting style. Black parenting styles tend to be more authoritarian than White parenting styles (Manns, 1997). Moreover, Black parents generally are involved in the lives of their children well into adulthood. For example, Manns (1997) conducted a study to examine the influence of significant others in the lives of 20 Black adult achievers. One of the findings suggested that Black parents remained a significant factor in their offspring's adult years from age 18 to age 40 (Manns, 1997).

On the whole, African Americans value education. Earning a good education is viewed as the portal to economic security and family stability among members of the Black community. Although there is a disproportionately low level of achievement, getting a "good" education is highly regarded in Black communities (Hrabowski, Maton, & Grief, 1998; Ladner, 1999).

Finally, resiliency is another hallmark trait within Black families. In this sense, resiliency relates to the ability of

Black families to endure, survive, and develop buoyancy in the face of crises and adversities. It also relates to the helping tradition present within nuclear and extended kin relationships (McAdoo, 1993; Wilson, 1995). Despite these strengths among Black families, some scholars have viewed Black family configurations unfavorably.

In general, research that has been conducted on the Black family has been done from the deficit model (Hill, 1993). The deficit model observes phenomena from a dysfunctional, pathological perspective. Much of the previous research in Black family studies has examined Black families for what they are lacking within the familial organization. Studies on poverty, the absence of fathers, or domestic family violence are examples of research from the deficit model framework.

Conversely, the holistic model examines the Black family differently. This model creates a framework that takes into account a multitude of factors that influence the life chances and experiences within Black families (Hill, 1993; Wilson, 1995). The holistic model is useful to view the interactions between the internal and external forces that influence the survival of the Black family (Hill, 1993, 1999).

Overall, the literature suggests that family support is important to Black college students (Hrabowski, Maton, & Grief, 1998). Black parents tend to be involved in the lives of their

children well into the son or daughter's adult years (Manns, 1997). Moreover, there are differences in the support Black students at HBCUs versus those at PWIs seem to need to succeed (Allen, 1992).

Furthermore, researchers have primarily viewed family involvement and student support at the elementary and secondary levels (Teachman, 1998). Finally, the research that has been conducted to date has examined support only from the perspective of the family or the perspective of the student. What is needed is an examination of familial support that elicits data from both family members and students.

It would seem, therefore, as higher education hopes to assist Black students succeed, there is a need for additional research on the role that family plays in supporting Black students at different types of institutions of higher education. Specifically, data is needed on the type of support Black students perceive they need and types of support significant family members of Black students perceive they provide. The present study was designed to elicit such data.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of family in the life of African American college students. The study was specifically designed to develop a model of the factors that

affect African American college students' ability to stay in school.

Thus, the research question for the study was: How does the relationship with significant members of the family affect African American college students' ability to stay in school?

Significance of the Study

The present study had significance for both future professional practice and future research. In terms of practice, several groups may benefit from the results of this study. First, African American families participating in higher education may benefit from this research. The results may provide them with information on student success and family support networks. They might use this information to reevaluate the types of support they provide their college students.

Second, university faculty and administrators who design programs for African American college students might benefit from the findings of this research. The results may inform them about the forms of support that Black students and family members say are most important. Such findings may better equip faculty and administrators to further develop new types of support programs for African American college students.

Third, African American college students may use the results of the present study to clearly articulate their support needs to family members. The results may validate their support

issues. Students may then use this information to initiate discussions with family members concerning the kinds of support they need to be successful in college.

Findings of the present study may provide the impetus for future research related to family support and the college student. For example, researchers might replicate this study for other ethnic groups. This study was designed to examine family factors among African American family members and students at two predominately White universities. Conducting a study using different participants, like Hispanic parents and students, might broaden the base of available information about minority college students.

Future research in the area of family support and the college environment might also be designed to examine differences in support by gender. As an illustration, future scholars might conduct a study to explore patterns of support provided by mothers versus fathers. The examination of differences in perception of support by male and female college students might glean yet another useful set of data. Still other researchers may investigate perceptions of family support by academic classification. For example, first-year students may report that they need different forms of support than graduating seniors. Such an investigation may reveal that support needed might vary across the span of a student's college career.

Another consideration for future research is related to the forms of support college students provide family members. Little is known about the coping assistance and support college students provide to parents and extended kin. A study on this issue may be a fruitful line of inquiry.

Finally, another consideration for future research is to examine forms of support by institutional type. For example, researchers may launch studies to explore forms of support among students at a four-year liberal arts institution versus the forms of support provided by family members of students enrolled in a community college environment.

Organization of the Study

The present study is organized in seven chapters. A statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and its significance were described in Chapter One. Chapter Two provides a review of research related to the present study. Chapter Three offers a description of the methodology used in this study including sampling procedures, data collection techniques and data analysis procedures. Chapter Four details the overall results of the study. In Chapter Five, the results of student participants are provided. The sixth chapter highlights the results of family participants. In the final chapter, those results and their implications for future practice and research are discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

To develop the present study, it was necessary to conduct a literature review related to African American undergraduate students and family relationships. Specifically, the researcher examined the literature on the types of support families provide and college student needs. To that end, it was appropriate to examine five broad categories of research.

First, the literature on academic support families provide to students is presented. Second, the literature on emotional support families provide to students is described. In the next section, literature related to social support families provide to students is outlined. In the fourth section, literature related to financial support that families provide to students is reviewed. In the final section, a model for campus climate, as it relates to students of color is discussed.

Academic Support Families Provide to Students

Researchers have documented the value of family involvement in the academic lives of students (Epstein, 1987; Middleton & Loughead, 1993; Smith & Hausfaus, 1998; Taylor, Hinton, & Wilson, 1995). From early childhood educational experiences to the arena of higher education, various studies suggest that family relationships have profound effects on student learning

(Lafreniere, Ledgerwood, & Docherty, 1997; Reisberg, 1999; Sanders, 1998; Wycoff, 1996).

Some scholars have examined ways family members provide academic support to students (Davis, 1977). For example, Middleton and Loughead (1993) reported that parents may be involved in the academic lives of students at three levels: positive involvement, non-involvement, and negative involvement.

Positive involvement suggests that parents are actively engaged in the student's development and take into account the student's individual interests and goals. Parents in this category might ask their college students if they have given any thought about what they would like to be doing professionally in 10 years. Parents who are positively involved in the lives of their students ask effective questions and further augment the student's developmental process (Middleton & Loughead, 1993).

The second level of support relates to parents who are characterized as non-involved. In this case, parents are described as indifferent and take a hands-off approach to their students' academic goals. Students of non-involved parents may report that parents have no concern for their future or may not realize that the student seeks support from the parent (Middleton & Loughead, 1993).

On the other hand, however, parents may be negatively involved in students' lives. In this situation, parents actively

participate in the college student's academic development, but do so based upon the aspirations and desires of the parent, not the student. For instance, some college students report that parents only support them financially if they enroll in a certain degree program that satisfies the wishes of the parent. Under these circumstances, college students' goals and directions are controlled by the parent (Middleton & Loughead, 1993).

Parental and student relationships have also been studied by examining academic and career choices among high school students (Davis, 1977). In one study, 3,700 high school seniors in two school districts in California were surveyed. One school district was characterized as affluent because of the educational attainment and professional occupations among heads of households. The other school district was comprised of primarily blue-collar, working class families.

Regardless of family background, students are inclined to honor their parents' preferences for plans after high school. For example, 70% of the students who planned to attend a particular college reported that their decision was greatly influenced by their parents. Moreover, 80% of those students who made plans to work full-time decided to do so based upon parents' preferences (Davis, 1977).

Further, students who reported that parents were indifferent to their plans beyond school were about 20% less likely to have any plans for postsecondary education or employment. Thus, when parents have high educational expectations for their sons and daughters, the children are likely to plan to enroll in some type of postsecondary education (Davis, 1977).

In other literature related to parental support and involvement in the academic lives of students, Smith and Hausfaus (1998) investigated the dynamics of family and academic achievement among ethnic minority students. These researchers studied how family support affects performance in mathematics and science among seventh graders. They found that parents are supportive of students' academic endeavors, but may not be actively involved in the day-to-day academic activities of the student. The results also revealed that parental involvement is linked to students' academic performance and well being (Smith & Hausfaus, 1998).

Hrabowski (1991) developed an intervention program for Black males enrolled in science courses in elementary schools in Maryland. This program had a triple focus. The first goal was to encourage minority males to pursue careers in the natural sciences. Hrabowski (1991) argued that early interventions involving parents were among the missing links in the

recruitment of Black males to higher education in general and specifically to degree programs in the sciences.

Another goal of this program was to monitor the academic progress of these students throughout their high school experiences. While in high school, university officials maintained contact with these students and encouraged them to enroll in college (Hrabowski, 1991).

In later years, Hrabowski, Maton and Grief (1998) followed the progress of many of these students as they became recipients of the Meynerhoff Scholarship, a program designed for African American males gifted in the sciences. The researchers desired to examine the link between academic achievement and parental support.

Sixty African American males who had been participants in the scholarship program were interviewed, along with their parents. Findings of this study suggested that students who enjoy high levels of academic achievement continue to receive support from parents while in college. Further, the parenting behaviors that parents exhibit during students' precollege years are evident during college (Hrabowski, Maton, & Grief, 1998).

For example, parents continued to be well informed of students' academic status. Parents and students still expected high degrees of parental involvement. Finally, students reported that their parents instilled in them the value of hard work, the

importance of receiving a sound education, faith in God, and maintaining a positive attitude. These values were transmitted to students in the scholarship program (Hrabowski, Maton, & Grief, 1998).

Parental support and family involvement in academics may be manifested differently by cultural and ethnic background. For instance, Levin, Levin, and Scalia (1997) described a successful academic support model for minority students. Five components of the model were described. The component that relates most directly to the present study is parental involvement.

Parents in the program were simultaneously supportive and distracting to their students. This dichotomy was caused by parents placing inordinate demands on students to assist with domestic responsibilities, attend family functions, and provide care for younger siblings and elderly family members. These distractions contributed to the academic failure of students enrolled in the program (Levin, Levin, & Scalia, 1997).

Similar patterns were also documented by Reisberg (1999). Parental demands placed on some Latino students while attending college and facing academic and other challenges resulted in academic failure. For example, parents in some cases expected students to return home on weekends to assist with household chores and provide transport for medical appointments. These kinds of demands impeded students' academic progress.

Academic support may also vary by gender of the parent. Overall, mothers have been identified as being more supportive and involved in the academic life of college students than fathers (Pearson & Dellmann-Jenkins, 1997). Results were based on data from 655 high school students who planned to enroll in college in the fall of 1995. The majority of students reported that mothers were more likely than fathers to encourage them to attend college.

On a related note, the findings also revealed that parents' educational background, encouragement to attend college, and maternal influences were associated with a student's choice of major in college (Pearson & Dellmann-Jenkins, 1997).

Academic support is but one kind of support sought by college students. In addition to academic support that families provide students, emotional support is another form of assistance given to college students.

Emotional Support Families Provide to Students

Another area that has been identified in the literature as linked to family relationships and college students is emotional support. This type of support may vary by the gender of the parent, gender of the student, and race.

Valery, O'Connor, and Jennings (1997) explored the kind and amount of assistance college students receive from family. In this investigation, 206 college students were surveyed. One

finding related to the present study is associated with emotional support. Participants reported that family members are instrumental in providing encouragement, reassurance, active listening, and emotional support connected to problems in college. Results from this research indicated that mothers are more likely than fathers to provide significantly greater support to both male and female college students (Valery, O'Connor & Jennings, 1997).

A similar trend was discovered by Lango (1995) in research related to Mexican American female participation in graduate programs. Findings from the data revealed that mothers are more likely than fathers to support educational aspirations of daughters. Consequently, participants report having close emotional bonds with their mothers (Lango, 1995).

Lango's (1995) findings were reinforced by Wycoff (1996). Emotional support was examined among 50 undergraduate and 50 graduate Mexican American women. Students (90%) reported that mothers are more inclined to provide emotional support than fathers. Slightly more than half (60%) reported that their fathers are least likely to provide support emotionally. Half of the participants reported that mothers had the greatest influence and were the greatest source of support in their student lives (Wycoff, 1996).

In addition to differences in emotional support by gender, there are differences by race (Hill, 1993). For example, emotional support from families of African American college students tends to be manifested through religious expression. Generally, African American college students are more likely to pray, attend religious services, and seek spiritual support from family members than their White counterparts (Hill, 1993; Ladner, 1999; Taylor & Chatters, 1991).

Further, emotional support is related to the campus environment. Prillerman, Meyers, and Smedley (1989) identified three factors associated with Black students' perceptions of emotional support: perceived supportiveness of the environment; the degree of alienation; and, issues unique to minority student status. The more students felt that they were in an inviting and supportive environment, the less likely they were to feel a sense of alienation.

Conversely, students sensed that they were not emotionally supported when there was an absence of coping strategies to deal with their minority student status on a predominately White campus (Prillerman, Myers, & Smedley, 1989). Emotional support is also connected to the presence of a supportive faculty and staff at predominately White campuses.

Sedlacek (1987) identified nine non-cognitive variables associated with Black student success on White campuses. The

variable directly linked to emotional support is establishing a relationship with a strong support person. As Black students deal with issues related to racism, feelings of isolation, and minority student status, it is important for them to connect with faculty and staff who are willing to support them emotionally. In many cases, Black faculty are few in number or unavailable (Sedlacek, 1987). As a result students may seek emotional support beyond the confines of the campus community. Another way to view emotional support among Black college students is to examine the manner in which they cope with stress.

Mundane extreme environmental stress (M.E.E.S.) is a conceptual framework Carroll (1998) developed to explain issues surrounding emotional support and African American college students enrolled at PWIs. The stress that Blacks experience on White campuses is mundane. That is to say, this kind of stress is so prevalent in the daily experiences of Blacks, that in many cases, it is considered a part of routine activities.

This kind of stress is viewed as extreme. It has the potential to negatively affect Black students' emotional well-being, perceptions of self, and the manner in which Black students think, feel, and act (Carroll, 1998).

The type of stress that Carroll (1998) has described is environmental. This is to suggest that the stress some Black

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students experience at majority institutions is produced, fostered, and embedded within the fabric of the campus environment. All of these factors, mundane, extreme and environmental work to create stress (Carroll, 1998).

As a result of these environmental conditions, some Black students seek emotional support from family and friendship networks away from the campus. This behavior may produce positive and negative effects. For example, Carroll (1998) studied the interactions African American students had with family members. On one hand, students felt affirmed and valued when they associated with family members; however, 37.4% perceived that family associations were somewhat a problem and created potential distractions (Carroll, 1998).

Academic and emotional support are important for student success. Social support is another kind of support beneficial to students.

Social Support Families Provide to Students

Another area of study identified in the literature is social support students seek and receive from family members. Social support relates to continuous feedback, aid, and validation individuals receive from others (Kohn & Wilson, 1995).

Cobb (1976) classified social support at three levels. The first level relates to providing information to individuals,

leading them to believe that they are cared for and loved. The second level is associated with sharing information with persons to suggest that they are valued and esteemed. The final level involves providing information to individuals to indicate that they are a part of a network and community where there are shared, mutual obligations (Cobb, 1976).

Other scholars have examined this type of support through a variety of lenses (Brown, 1997; Lafreniere, Ledgerwood, & Docherty, 1997; Taylor, Casen, & Flickinger, 1993; Valery, O'Connor, & Jennings, 1997). Taylor, Casen, and Flickinger (1993) found that social support and feelings of well being among adolescents are related to parenting style. For instance, authoritative parenting styles in two-parent African American households are positively linked to student adjustment and competence in school.

Social support can also be viewed in terms of place of residence. Lafreniere, Ledgerwood and Docherty (1997) surveyed 100 first year students in an introductory psychology course. Student perceptions by race and gender were explored. Results indicated that female college students who reside at home with parents perceive a greater sense of social support from parents than female college students who live on campus; however, the opposite was found among male college students. Male college

students who reside with parents report lower levels of social support from parents (Lafreniere, Ledgerwood, & Docherty, 1997).

Social support among college students is also associated with time and developmental stages (Brown, 1997). The types of support a college student needs during the transition from high school to college may be different than the kind of support they need in later years of the college experience.

For example, social support that first-year college students seek from family is vastly different from the kind of support graduating seniors receive from family members. First-year students are more likely to seek support with the transition from high school to college, homesickness, and feelings of alienation. Graduating students are inclined to ask for assistance as they enter the world of work. They may also seek guidance from parents in their preparation for graduate or professional school. (Brown, Alpert, Lent, & Hunt, 1988).

Additionally, social support varies by institutional type (Jackson & Swan, 1991). Black students who attend PWIs are inclined to rely on family members and institutional support systems. On the other hand, Black students at HBCUs are more apt to rely on themselves to resolve personal issues and problems (Jackson & Swan, 1991).

Still other scholars have reported a relationship between social support and students' adjustment to the college

environment (Holmbreck & Wandrei, 1993; Kenny, 1987; Mooney, Sherman, & LoPresto, 1991). For instance, Kenny (1987) found that the degree to which students adjust to university life is proportional to the perceived availability, responsiveness and reliability of parents.

In another study, Holmbreck and Wandrei (1993) investigated the relationship between first-year student adjustment to university life and parental social support. Results suggested that female students have higher levels of social support, parental attachment, instrumentality, and self-esteem. Conversely, male students were reported to have lower levels of parental attachment, instrumentality, self-esteem, and social support. These conditions were associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety among college males (Holmbreck & Wandrei, 1993). Thus, in order for students to achieve academically, they must be socially supported; however, scholars have not come to a consensus about how students should seek and receive social support.

One area of study related to African American students and social support is social integration into the college environment. Tinto (1993) suggested that in order for students to achieve academically, they must be socially integrated into the campus. He further argued that for many Black students

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attending predominately White institutions, the campus
environment does not provide high levels of social integration.

Tinto (1993) further maintained that for students to
achieve levels of social integration in a postsecondary setting
they must negotiate three stages of development. Separation, the
first stage, involves the disassociation of relationships of the
past, namely family, high school and community friendship
networks. According to Tinto (1993), these relationships are
counterproductive to academic and social success in the college
environment. Hrabowski, Maton, and Grief (1998) have
demonstrated that severing these ties are detrimental to Black
students.

The second stage, transition, may occur simultaneously with
and after the stage of separation. This stage is marked by the
discarding of old social behavioral patterns and the adoption of
new behaviors associated with membership in the campus community
(Tinto, 1993).

Finally, integration, the third stage insures complete
membership into the institutional environment. After having
adopted new patterns of behavior suited for success, students
then establish themselves socially and intellectually with other
members in the college community. Tinto (1993), however,
conceded that not all students will achieve integration and some
will depart from the institution because they fail to ground

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themselves intellectually and socially in the institutional culture (Tinto, 1993).

Some scholars have critiqued the Tinto model as it relates to minority participation in higher education (Carroll, 1998; Tierney, 1992). For example, Tierney (1992) maintained that Tinto's work is not a good theoretical fit with students of color, as it fails to consider cultural differences and the use of support mechanisms by minority students. That is to say, the model is not grounded in the culture of students of color.

Moreover, Carroll (1998) maintained that theoretical frameworks such as Tinto's model do not take into account the nature of the environment for Blacks on White campuses. Further she argued that these models fail to examine internal and external systems of support for African American students in White environments (Carroll, 1998).

A final type of support in the college environment is financial support given to students by family members. The literature on parents, students, and financial support reveals some interesting findings.

Financial Support Families Provide to Students

Some researchers have viewed assistance students receive from family members through the prism of financial support (Brusoski, Golin, Gladis, & Beers, 1992; Fuligni, 1997; Jackson & Swan, 1991; Lango, 1995; Valery, O'Connor, & Jennings, 1997).

The manner in which students receive financial support from family members is related to institutional type, race, and gender (Fuligni, 1997; Jackson & Swan, 1991; Valery, O'Connor, & Jennings, 1997). For example, Black male students at White universities tend to rely more heavily on family members for financial support, whereas students on Black campuses tend to rely more heavily on institutional sources of support (Jackson & Swan, 1991). Still, financial support from families differs by household gross income.

In 1992, the average family income for African Americans entering higher education was approximately $55,000 per year. One-third of this cohort averaged a family income of less than $30,000, whereas the average family income of entering Whites hovered around $80,000 per year (Carroll, 1998). This disparity in family incomes is also reflected in the sources of financial support students seek.

For example, in the 1989-90 academic year, 87.1% of White students enrolled in bachelor's degree programs received financial contributions from parents to fund their college education, whereas 80.4% of all Black students enrolled sought financial assistance from parents. Roughly 24.3% of Black students in U.S. colleges and universities requested loan assistance from parents, while approximately 29.2% of all White students received loan assistance from parents. Students still

requested financial support from other relatives (Beginning Postsecondary Student Survey, 1994).

For instance, 34.2% of African American students received financial assistance from family members other than parents. Similarly, 32.5% of Whites students enrolled in undergraduate degree programs sought financial support from relatives other than their parents (Beginning Postsecondary Student Survey, 1994).

Parental support is also linked to gender (Valery, O'Connor, & Jennings, 1997). Data from one study indicated that male college students are more likely to request money from fathers than mothers. Fathers were more inclined to give money to males for an activity than to females (Valery, O'Connor, & Jennings, 1997). These findings parallel research results of Lango (1995), who reported 90% of students surveyed indicated that they depended on their parents, particularly mothers, for assistance with the costs associated with higher education (Lango, 1995).

Another illustration of gender differences and financial support received is found in research by Brusoski, Golin, Gladis, & Beers (1992). These researchers studied the differences in parental encouragement to attend college between males and females. Differences between college families and first generation families were also examined. Students reported

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that parents assisted them in their junior and senior years of high school with college preparation.

Findings indicated that there are few differences in parental encouragement between male and female participants. Students also reported that parents are influential in obtaining financial aid to pay for college. Parents were also cited as being supportive of students by attending school functions and emphasizing the role of a college education in securing a good job. Sons also reported that mothers were less likely to assist with financial aid or pay for college; daughters reported that both parents were equally supportive in financial matters related to college (Brusoski, Golin, Gladis, & Beers, 1992).

In related research, however, Fuligni (1997) conducted a study concerning immigrant families. In this research, 1,100 immigrant students from Latino, East Asian, Filipino, and European ethnic groups were surveyed. The results suggested that regardless of socio-economic background, successful immigrant students are those who receive high academic expectations from parents. These students are also members of family units that place emphasis on the value of obtaining an education (Fuligni, 1997). Financial support is also associated with family income and the actual dollar amounts families are able to contribute to students' college education.

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The academic, social, emotional, and financial forms of support are ways to explain how African American families assist students while in college. Yet another way to examine the participation of persons of color in higher education is through the use of a conceptual model for campus climate.

A Conceptual Model for Campus Climate

Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen (1999) proposed a conceptual model to explain issues related to campus climate for racial and ethnic minorities. The model is comprised of four components.

The first component is the historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion. This component of the model relates to an institution's historic past of admitting and graduating students of color. From a historical perspective, most predominately White institutions excluded students of color. The developers of this model contend that a historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion may affect current policy decisions related to admission, campus climate, and programs designed to retain students of color (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999).

Structural diversity, the next component, relates to the sheer numbers of racial, ethnic, and gender groups on campus. Planned institutional efforts to bolster the representation from underrepresented groups are paramount to create structural

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diversity for students and faculty. The lack of a critical mass of individuals representative of these groups contributes to the stigma of minority status (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999).

The third component of this theoretical framework to understand campus climate is the psychological dimension. This pillar of the model relates to students' perceptions of discrimination and prejudice, attitudes about racial and cultural differences, and institutional responses to diverse populations (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen).

The final dimension of the model is the behavioral institutional climate. This component is associated with the social interaction between groups that are culturally different. It also consists of the kinds of relationships that individuals develop across campus. Further, this component examines the institutional climate for classroom diversity and opportunities for diverse interactions in out-of-class experiences. The authors of this conceptual model argue that understanding these four contexts is key to explaining the experiences of students of color in predominately White higher education settings. Moreover, Black students might heavily rely on support from family members if institutions have a historical legacy of excluding Blacks and lack structural diversity. Black students may also seek support beyond the campus if there are limited

opportunities for diversity (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999).

In conclusion, the literature on support students receive from family has been conceptualized in four categories: academic, emotional, social, and financial. A fifth category related to a conceptualization of campus climate was also discussed.

In general, it appears that types of support students receive may vary by race (Allen, 1992), gender of the parent and student (Lafreniere, Ledgerwood, & Docherty, 1997), institutional type (Jackson & Swan, 1991), and the number of years in college (Brown, Alpert, Lent, & Hunt, 1988). Further, one must have a working knowledge of the institutional context for African American students participating in higher education.

Finally, it is noteworthy to mention that most of the research conducted on support college students receive from family has used quantitative methodological approaches to examine this phenomenon. There are other patterns of support for college students found in the literature and most of these studies also employed survey methods (Lango, 1995). Existing research that has been conducted used either parents or students as participants. These studies were designed to examine a single type of support. For example, financial (So, 1984) or emotional

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(Wycoff, 1996) support were each studied in separate research projects.

What is missing in the literature are studies using alternative techniques to collect data and studies that examine both students and family members. The present research was designed to explore these gaps in the existing body of literature. It employed qualitative techniques and included both family members and students in the sample to investigate the role of family in the ability of African American students to persist in college.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of family in the life of African American college students. The study was specifically designed to identify the factors that affect African American college students' ability to stay in school. Thus, the research question for the study was: How does the relationship with significant members of the family affect African American college students' ability to stay in school?

In this chapter, the overall design of the proposed study is described. Details are provided about sample selection; instrumentation; authenticity and trustworthiness; data collection procedures; and data analysis procedures.

Sample Selection

In order to collect data, the researcher conducted five sample selections. First, the researcher selected a rural predominately White institution and an urban predominately White institution. Second, African American undergraduate students who were enrolled at the selected rural PWI at the time of the study were selected. In the third sample selection process, African American undergraduate students who were enrolled at the selected urban PWI were identified. Family members of African American students enrolled at the selected rural PWI comprised the fourth sample. The final selection process sought to

identify family members of African American students enrolled at the selected urban PWI. Family members were invited to participate in this study based upon the referral of student participants.

The researcher selected the rural PWI and the urban PWI for three reasons. First, these institutions were chosen for convenience. Both schools are geographically located in the same state. Second, both the selected rural PWI and the selected urban PWI are Research One institutions. Consequently, both universities share similar mission statements. Third, both institutions are public and offer similar academic programs.

The predominately White rural institution was established in 1872 as the state's first land-grant institution. It is located in the southwestern part of the state. The university enrolls approximately 25,264 students, of whom 21,415 are undergraduate students and 3,849 are enrolled in graduate programs. The mission of the university is to provide education to members of the state, primarily in the agricultural, mechanical, and technological sciences. The university is comprised of eight colleges, offering academic programs in architecture, the arts, and the technical, natural, and social sciences. Degree programs may also be pursued in human resources and education, engineering, and veterinary medicine.

The predominately White urban university is geographically located in the central portion of the state. Founded in 1779, the mission of this institution primarily has been to provide educational opportunities for residents of the state. This university enrolls 24,000 students, of whom 14,000 are undergraduate students. This institution enrolls 10,000 graduate and professional students. Undergraduate and graduate programs in education, the natural and social sciences are offered at this site.

The student samples were selected next. Because the researcher wanted to explore family factors that influenced the success of Black college students, he wanted to include only students deemed to be successful. For purposes of this study, therefore, successful was defined as having achieved senior academic status. It was assumed that students who had achieved senior status would go on to graduate and hence could be considered successful.

To select the student sample at the rural PWI, the researcher obtained a list of names, addresses, and telephone numbers of all African American undergraduate students, classified as seniors and enrolled during the spring, 2000 semester at the rural PWI where the study was conducted. The researcher obtained the list of potential participants from the Office of the Provost.

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In the third sample selection, officials at the urban institution would not cooperate with the researcher. Despite providing explanations for requesting a list of names, addresses, and telephone numbers of Black seniors at the urban PWI, the researcher was unsuccessful in obtaining such a list.

As a last resort, the researcher contacted the Office of Multicultural Affairs located at the urban PWI. A staff member in this office made available this facility as an interview site. Further, the staff member agreed to assist the researcher in recruiting potential interview participants.

The researcher then randomly selected 10 students from the list of graduating seniors at the rural PWI. Participants were contacted by letter to seek their participation in the study. Potential participants were promised $10.00 if they were willing to participate in the study. See Appendix A for a copy of this letter.

Participants were called one week after the letters were sent to confirm their willingness to participate. If they agreed to participate, an interview was scheduled. If a selected participant declined to participate, the researcher randomly selected another prospective respondent and invited that person to participate. This process, which only occurred at the rural PWI was repeated until 10 students agreed to participate. This rendered a total student sample of 10 at the rural institution.

Sample selection at the urban institution was different. As a result of the difficulties in securing a list of potential participants from urban university officials, the researcher employed the snowball sampling technique (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Merton, Fiske, & Kendall 1990). Snowball sampling is an appropriate technique in qualitative methodology. It requires the assistance of research participants.

For example, the researcher met graduating seniors who reported to the Office of Multicultural Affairs at the urban university to complete an exit survey, for the expressed use by the urban institution. Upon completion of the survey, the researcher asked individuals if they would be willing to interview for this study. After they agreed to participate and completed the interview, the researcher asked participants to recommend other seniors who were African Americans. This process was repeated until the researcher completed 10 interviews at the urban institution.

To select family participants of students at both the rural and urban PWI, the researcher asked student participants to recommend a family member who would likely complete a telephone interview.

Several decisions regarding the family sample were made prior to selecting participants. First, only one member per family was invited to participate in the study, as the

researcher predicted that some student participants might be members of single-headed households. Therefore, it seemed more prudent to seek participation from only one family member in each household.

Once student participants identified family members who might be willing to become respondents, the researcher sent those family members letters explaining the study and asking for their participation (see Appendix B). Family participants were called one week after the letters were sent to confirm their willingness to participate and, if so, to schedule a time for a telephone interview.

<div align="center">Instrumentation</div>

The researcher developed two interview protocols. One interview protocol was developed for student participants. The other protocol was developed for family participants. The protocols consisted of two sections. The first section sought demographic information about the participants, including age, sex, and years of completed education. The section gathered data about the research question.

To elicit data about the role of family in the lives of African American college students, participants were asked to describe ways that family members provide support to students. Respondents were asked if they thought that their family relationships were typical. To generate data about roles,

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participants were asked to describe student and family member roles. The complete student interview protocol appears in Appendix C. The interview protocol for family members is found in Appendix D.

<div align="center">Authenticity and Trustworthiness</div>

Authenticity in qualitative research relates to whether the technique employed in the study is designed to elicit data relevant to the questions posed in the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). One step was taken to enhance authenticity in the present study. The researcher asked seven faculty members to examine the interview protocols and verify that the researcher posed questions likely to elicit data relevant to the research question. These faculty were experts in qualitative research methods and designs.

Trustworthiness, in qualitative research, relates to the credibility and objectivity in the collection, reporting, and analysis of data (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991). To enhance trustworthiness in the study, the researcher took two steps. First, the researcher summarized at the end of each interview what he believed were the key points the individual respondent made. Participants were invited to add, delete, or change major points if they so desired. This step ensured that the researcher would accurately report data elicited from each participant.

Second, the researcher provided transcripts of each interview to the respective participant and asked participants to review, edit, add or change their comments as appropriate (see Appendix E). This step was taken to ensure that participants were confident that the transcripts accurately reflected their opinions. Such participant review is a typical method of enhancing trustworthiness in qualitative research (Bryman & Burgess, 1994).

<div align="center">Data Collection Procedures</div>

The researcher sought the approval of the Institutional Review Board on Human Subjects (IRB) at the researcher's home campus. Once approval was granted, data collection commenced.

Data from student participants were collected from in-depth interviews conducted between April 17 and September 6, 2000. Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 75 minutes. All interviews were held in a conference room at the student's respective campus. These sites were selected because of their convenience and central location on campus. All in-depth interviews were audio taped with permission of the participants. Informed consent was secured from rural students by mailing permission forms to participants prior to the interviews. Participants signed and returned forms at the time of the interview. Urban student participants received and completed the informed consent forms in person, on the day of their interview.

For family participants, a telephone-recording device was used to record the data with the permission of participants. This recording device was connected to the telephone unit with an adapter. The other connecting point of the adapter was secured to a tape recorder. Telephone conversations were recorded after telephone calls had been placed. The recorder automatically disengaged when the handset was returned to the telephone cradle at the end of the telephone conversation.

Informed consent was secured from family members by mailing consent forms to participants prior to the interviews. Family participants provided verbal consent at the beginning of the tape-recorded telephone interview.

The researcher secured trustworthy audiocassette tapes. This step was taken to ensure the quality and clarity of tape-recorded telephone conversations. The interview tapes were then transcribed by the researcher and a paid transcriber.

Subsequent to the transcription of audio taped interviews, family and student participants were provided transcripts of the interviews. Participants were asked to review, edit, add or change recorded comments. This step was taken to ensure that data were accurately recorded and that participants had provided the researcher all the information they felt was important about the questions raised in the interview.

Data Analysis Procedures

The researcher employed the grounded theory method for data collection. The grounded theory method is a qualitative research technique that is widely used (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and allows for data collection and analysis to occur simultaneously. This approach allows for continuous change in data collection and analyis and affords researchers the opportunity to make decisions related to analyses based upon personal perceptions. This procedure is known as the constant comparative method. Using this approach, the researcher allows the data to generate theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

To analyze data, the researcher transcribed half of the audio taped interviews. A transcriber was hired to transcribe the remaining audio taped interviews. All names and other identifying information about participants were removed from the tapes before providing them to the transcriber.

Analysis occurred by open and axial coding. Open coding is the examination and breaking down of collected data. These data are grouped in categories for theme identification as themes emerge. Axial coding involves the process of sorting themes into groupings and categories while analyzing the meanings and interrelationships among categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The researcher read each transcript several times. The strategy of thematic analysis was used to identify recurring

themes (Gilgun, Daly, & Handel, 1992; McCracken, 1988). After several readings, notations were placed in the margins of transcripts. Data analysis was driven by the research question, the participants' responses, and the overall frequency of responses.

In qualitative research, themes may be subdivided into directions or subsets (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This process allows the researcher to further analyze interrelationships among categories, themes, and groupings. For instance, data assigned to any given theme might be further assigned into three directions: positive, neutral, or negative. The directions within themes were driven by the data elicited from participants.

The unit of analysis in the present study was the comment. The researcher defined a comment as any phrase, sentence, or series of phrases or sentences on a single topic. When participants moved to a new topic, the start of a new comment was noted.

The researcher then reported on each theme in terms of overall frequency of comments within themes and the frequency of the directions of comments within themes. Direct quotations from the participants were used to illustrate each theme and position. For example, student respondents might describe their experiences with family members in terms of their academic

progress in college. This would lead to a theme entitled "Academic Progress." The following kind of language might typify that theme: "I do not think that my parents have any influence over the choices I make related to my education;" "I value and seek input from my parents concerning academic issues;" or, "I just tell my parents how I'm progressing through my degree program. I feel obligated--after all, they pay the bills."

The first of these responses seemed to suggest a negative relationship between parents and academic progress. The second comment suggested a positive relationship between parental support and academic progress, while the third comment suggested a neutral relationship between parental support and academic progress.

The researcher coded all comments in the transcripts and assigned them to themes. Then the researcher reviewed all comments within each theme and further assigned comments to one of three categories (negative, positive, and neutral). This approach enabled the researcher to report on each theme in terms of overall frequency of the theme and frequency of directions within each theme.

The researcher employed this analytical technique to examine the research question posed in the study. First, responses of student participants to the issues of family relationships and one's ability to remain in school were

analyzed. Next, the responses of family participants related to support they provide were analyzed. The researcher then examined similarities and differences between responses from the student groups and the family groups.

This approach to data analysis enabled the researcher to respond to the research question posed in the study. Finally, the researcher used those results to identify factors related to the role families play in the ability of African American students to persist in college.

In summary, this study was designed to elicit data about the role family plays in the lives of African American undergraduate students. The design described in this chapter enabled the researcher to elicit data relevant to the research question posed in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

In this chapter, the overall results of the study are reported. The chapter is divided in two sections. The first section provides a description of each of the four sample groups. In the second section, the overall emergent themes are discussed. Chapters Five and Six report the results of the study by group (i.e., students, parents).

Description of the Samples

Thirty-eight (38) individuals participated in this study. Participants were divided into four groups. The first group consisted of 10 rural university students enrolled at a predominately White institution in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The second group was comprised of 10 urban university students enrolled at a predominately White university also located in the mid-Atlantic region. All participants in student sample groups were classified as seniors at their institution.

Family members of the 20 university students formed the remaining two groups. A family member of each of the student participants was invited to participate in this study. Ten rural family members agreed to participate, while eight urban family members consented to be respondents. Two urban family members

declined to be interviewed. Participants were interviewed in family dyads.

Rural Students

Ten students in attendance at the rural institution were interviewed for this study. These students were enrolled in degree programs, including chemical engineering, economics, English, computer science, and sociology. The mean Grade Point Average (GPA) for this sample was 2.57 on a 4.0 grading scale. All participants were in their fourth or fifth year of college. This group was comprised of four females and six males. Members of this sample ranged in age from 20 to 27, with a mean age of 21.8 years.

There are other identifying traits related to this sample. For instance, 20% reported independent student status. That is, they had released their parents from officially providing any financial assistance. The average frequency with which participants were in contact with family members was 3.1 times per week. Sixty percent (60%) of this sample lived off campus, while 40% identified themselves as residential students. Members of this sample lived an average of 197 miles from their permanent home. Students reported their marital status as single. None reported having any children.

Urban Students

Ten students at the urban site agreed to be interviewed for this study. Students were completing various degree programs, including mass communications, social work, psychology, and interior design. The mean GPA of this sample was 2.75, on a 4.0 grading scale. Forty percent (40%) of this sample identified themselves as independent students. The members of this group ranged in age from 21 to 43 years. One participant reported being a parent. The frequency with which students contacted family members in the course of a week averaged 7.1 times. All participants reported their marital status as single and all were commuter students. None lived at home with parents. Members of this sample lived on average 62.9 miles from their permanent homes.

Rural Family Members

Ten family members of the student participants who attended the rural institution were included in this study. The educational background of this group varied. For example, 10% of the participants had earned a high school diploma; 10% had earned an associate's degree; 30% of the participants had attended one to three years of college. Another 30% of this sample had earned a bachelor's degree, while 20% had completed a master's degree. Members of this sample were involved in a wide range of professions, including a nuclear engineer, educator,

homemaker, accountant, and registered nurse. In every instance, student respondents referred the researcher to a female member of the family to participate in the study.

Urban Family Members

Eight family members related to the urban students were participants in this research project. Two additional family members were invited to participate, but declined after repeated contacts to be interviewed. The educational background of this sample ranged from the completion of high school to earning a bachelor's degree. In this group, 12.5% had earned a high school diploma; 37.5% had attended one to three years of college; and, 50% had earned a bachelor's degree. All but one of the participants were females.

Presentation of the General Findings

Themes were identified by reviewing field notes, listening to interview tapes, and coding passages in the transcripts. The researcher looked for repeated words, phrases, and concepts and assigned those words, phrases and concepts to themes. Next, the language assigned to each theme was examined and sub-themes were identified. Finally, it was assumed that some factors identified in the interviews would positively affect students' ability to stay in college while other factors might have a negative influence. To that end, the researcher sought to assign language in each sub-theme to directions (positive, neutral, negative).

This enabled the investigator to examine the frequency with which themes and sub-themes were mentioned by participants, as well as to estimate the relative type of influence each theme had on promoting persistence in college (positive, neutral, negative).

After analyzing all the data of the individual interviews and reviewing field notes, eight themes emerged: (1) Family Support and Influence; (2) A Sense of Community; (3) Family Investment and Expectations; (4) Negotiating Environments; (5) Role Models and Mentors; (6) Faith in God and Spiritual Support; (7) Factors of Motivation; and, (8) Macro Cultural Perspectives on Race.

In the remaining sections of this chapter, the researcher describes each theme and sub-theme. Quotes from the transcripts are used to present themes and sub-themes and all themes and sub-themes are summarized in Table 1. The frequency of comments and directions of those comments within themes by group (e.g., rural students, urban students) are presented in subsequent chapters of this study. Here, the researcher is trying to paint a picture of the overall themes and sub-themes.

Table 1

Emerging Themes and Sub-Themes for the Study
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    Themes   Sub-Themes

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Themes	Sub-Themes
Family Support and Influence	(1) The dominant role played by mothers and grandmothers in providing support (2) Multiple parenting (3) Sibling support (4) Support of extended kin
A Sense of Community	(1) The role of friends/peers as a support group (2) Black faculty as fictive kin
Family Investment and Expectations	(1) Attending college viewed as a family endeavor (2) Financial support (3) Responsibility to the family (4) Family responsibility to the student (5) Vicarious matriculation of family members (6) Emphasis on repay/appreciation for family support
Negotiating Environments	(1) The academic environment (2) The social environment
Role Models and Mentors	(1) Family Members as role models for students (2) Students as role models for younger siblings and cousins
Faith in God/Spiritual Support	(1) Family prayers of support to sustain students (2) The role of the Black church in providing spiritual support

Table 1 Continued

Emerging Themes and Sub-Themes for the Study
_____

    Themes   Sub-Themes

_____

Themes	Sub-Themes
Factors of Motivation	(1) The yearning to give back to family and make them proud (2) The importance of being a role model to the younger family members (3) Opportunities for a good job and a decent salary (4) Escape from violent background and a negative environment (5) Talking to those who dropped out drives students to succeed
Macro Cultural Perspectives on Race	(1) Family socialization on race (2) Perceptions of discrimination (3) Views of larger society

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Family Support and Influence

African American college students in this study described

the nature of relationships with significant family members and

how these relationships affected their ability to stay in

college. The first theme that emerged among students and family

members was overall Family Support and Influence. Participants

reported that Family Support and Influence comprised ongoing

encouragement, as well as financial, moral, and social support:

> First of all, we support her financially, but we try to
> support her and give her the foundation that she needed. We
> have always done that from day one. Not only financially,
> but socially, spiritually, and academically. We are very
> much involved with giving her direction to help her make
> decisions and share our experiences that we have had and so
> she can glean from that and not make mistakes perhaps we
> had. (Urban Father)

> There's the moral support angle. Also, there's the light
> monetary support as well. I'm a full scholarship student,
> but I still have the mind blowing high car insurance that
> my mom still takes care of for me. (Rural Student)

Family Support and Influence also consisted of values

instilled by parents and other family members. These values were

taught at home and formed a foundation for individuals to use in

managing the daily affairs of life. Family and student

participants in this research project stated that these

ingredients were important for personal and academic success, as

one participant noted:

> They influence my behavior a lot because of my baggage what
> I have picked up from home or my mother taught me and my
> grandmother taught about respect and honesty. I carry them

along with me and I carry them along with me forever. The way I present myself, the way I do things because they enforced that with me when I was growing up. It never left. My mother is like, when you leave home, you don't leave what you learned at home. You take it with you and you use it when you're away from home and that is what I do. (Urban Student)

The first sub-theme that emerged within this theme related to the role of mothers and grandmothers. Student participants from both the rural and urban institutions reported that mothers and grandmothers were instrumental in providing the most support to them while enrolled in college. Participants described these women as the anchors in the family and individuals who galvanized other family members to assist the students while in college. The following comments from participants illustrate this sub-theme:

I think my mother influences about everything I do. I feel as if because of the type of person she is, I feel I have to live up to expectations and make sure everything I do as a college student is equal to what she did or better. (Urban Student)

Her grandmother, on her father's side, she went back to college after her children got grown. So she just graduated from college with her BA about a year ago. Those two, they stay in touch by email a lot. (Rural Mother)

This sub-theme was also reinforced by the fact that in most instances, students recommended that the mother or another female relative be interviewed for this research project. In only one instance was a male family participant recommended for participation.

The second sub-theme that emerged in this theme related to multiple parenting. In this case, multiple parenting refers to the presence of more than one influential adult in the life of the college student. Students reported that they received support from adults who were in some cases related to the birth parents. For example, grandparents, aunts, and uncles were sources of support for some students, as the following comment suggests:

> My mom calls him. She sends him money, gives him a lot of positive reinforcement and encouragement. She just really shows a lot of concern in his studies and what he's doing. And that goes for my mother and father, his aunts and uncles, and also his grandmother and grandfather on his father's side also. They are all influential in giving him assistance and support. (Rural Mother)

In other situations multiple parenting involved the support and influence of other adults who were unrelated by blood. For instance, godparents and women in the birth mother's friendship network were cited as sources of support for student participants:

> My mother keeps me together. I have a godmother. I didn't know my grandparents too well, but my godmother—both of them. Then I have an aunt who's a lawyer and she drives me up the wall. All three of them, I could say, play a part in motivating me. (Rural Student)

Some students reported that older siblings were a source of support while they attended college. This was the third sub-theme of the Family Support and Influence theme. These siblings

provided similar kinds of support as mothers and grandmothers,

but to a lesser extent:

> My brother sometimes helps me out. My brother's coming
> today, actually to pick me up from school. The dorms close
> at five o'clock and he's coming. He flew straight from
> Japan to pick me up. That's support, that's family, that's
> a bond. Money truly is not everything. (Urban Student)

> My older sister, she played a part in like pushing me to go
> to school because my first year was just like terrible. I
> didn't do any work and then they pushed me and helped me
> get back on track again (Rural Student)

Finally, the support of extended kin, the fourth and final

sub-theme, was revealed as important to students. For the

purposes of this study extended kin included cousins, neighbors,

members of a local church, and fictive kin who resided in the

student's hometown. These relationships were viewed as

significant to students, as they note below:

> You've always grown up with your family and you feel safe
> and secure in talking to them and they are always there.
> [Rural institution] can't provide that because they don't
> know who [name of participant] is and my family does and my
> extended family does. They know who I am. (Rural Student)

> Well, being that I am Black and my family always seems to
> have a tight network like, not just my mom and dad but my
> grandparents and my aunts and you know my sisters. You
> always stay close. (Urban Student)

A Sense of Community

Rural and urban students reported that developing a Sense

of Community with other African Americans on campus was crucial

to their existence as students. This emerged as the second theme

in the data analysis. A sense of affinity and connectedness among peers was desirable, as the quote below suggests:

> Sometimes, you just have bad days and you just need someone to talk to. Being here, you're definitely a minority and some of your White friends just can't understand some of the stuff that you go through on a daily basis. Generally, I can handle it, but sometimes, you just need someone who can just relate to what you are going through. (Rural Student)

In many cases, students developed fictive kin relationships with peers. Fictive kinships are non-sanguineous relationships; however, they are valued as much as sanguineous relations. Individuals who participate in fictive kinships are accepted and function in a role of a blood relative, as indicated by the following comments:

> I also consider my close friends as family. We seem to support each other throughout school by sending each other cards and letters. (Rural Student)

> People like Troy and his roommates, I consider them my family here. 'Cause everything that I have been through here they know about. They were there when my grandma died. Troy was there. He was there in the room when my mom called me and told me my grandma died. (Rural Student)

In addition to experiences with fellow students that foster community, student participants stated that contacts with faculty and staff were included in the Sense of Community they enjoyed on a predominately White campus and this emerged as the second sub-theme. The following comments encapsulate students'

perceptions of developing community with Black faculty and staff:

> I think that I have been blessed, I been lucky. The interactions that I've had with Black faculty have been very good where they have invited me into their home, fed me, cooked me meals. They were like an aunt or an uncle to me. They are not my parents, but they care. They do care. (Rural Student)

> I am working at the Center of Multicultural Student Affairs and the staff here, they basically are my play family. (Urban Student)

Students reported that these relationships provided them a sense of belonging within the larger context of the university environment.

Family Investment and Expectations

Another theme that was revealed in the data was Family Investment and Expectations. This area relates to the economic, social, and emotional investment that African American families place in their students participating in the process of higher education. As family members placed certain investments in the lives of students, specific family expectations also accompanied these investments. The following quotes capture the sentiments of student and family participants, as they relate to Family Investment and Expectation:

> Anything that I need, they will give to me and be of support 'cause they trust me and know that I am not going to waste their time and their money. They look at me as kind of an investment. (Urban Student)

No person coming out of high school makes enough money to
pay for his or her education. I didn't. My parents helped
me a whole lot. I paid some, but that's very
disproportionate to what my mom paid. Or what my family
gave to my mom so that I could come here. But I believe
that if your family put in the money, it's like your family
is invested in you. So it is for the whole family. It's not
just for you. (Rural Student)

Most participants in this research study described going to

college as a family venture. That is, the whole family, to some

extent was involved in the student's education. This formed the

first sub-theme in the Family Investment theme. Approaching

higher education from this communal perspective, students

maintained that they had the overall support and endorsement of

the entire family and did not feel alone in matriculating to

higher education, as described in the quotes below:

I have a responsibility to my parents. It's just more than
me in this picture. (Rural Student)

I receive 100% support from my family as far as being in
school. My mother is actually a college student at [name of
university] as well and so she is also very supportive.
They drill me in studies. They study with me. They help me
with papers. They help me create things on the computer
that I need or give me any type of computer assistance that
I need, just about anything that comes up with school.
Anything I need help with. (Urban Student)

Another sub-theme in the area of Family Investment and

Expectations was financial support. Most participants clearly

agreed that family financial assistance was an important

component linked to their ability to remain in school. As

reflected in the following quotes, students and family members

reported diverse comments:

> Generally, when I call home for money, I need to eat; I need money to buy something important. It seems like when they (White students) call home for money, they need money to go on a trip or to buy some new clothes, the non-necessities, I guess. I guess they call home for wants more than needs, in my opinion. (Rural Student)

> My mother is my financial support, as far as paying for school and my living arrangements. My step dad of course helps her with that, but she takes the main responsibility for that. (Urban Student)

A tangential sub-theme related to Family Investment and

Expectation was student responsibility to the family. Students

shared with the researcher what they believed to be their

obligations as a student in light of the family. Students also

explained that although they were college students, there were

certain family responsibilities they felt obligated to maintain,

which are revealed in the statements below:

> My grandmother just passed and we have to go to [name of town] this weekend. So as far as me staying on top of my studies for exams and today was my last exam, but just having that on my mind this week as far as going to school and knowing that I need to go to [name of town] to support my dad. That's his mother. (Urban Student)

> Because I lived with my grandmother all of my life, basically. So I feel like I need to be there. When I went home, it was my muscle. I had to pick up my grandmother and carry my grandmother, fighting and scratching and some of those marks I carry permanently because she scratched that hard. I mean, I felt like I needed to be there. Part of the time, I was here and there were a lot of times that I would rather be at home than be here. My family is like, just go ahead, we have it covered. Just go ahead and do what you got to do to graduate. (Rural Student)

From another perspective, some students reported conflicts

in their student obligations and family expectations. In some

cases, issues were resolved. In others, closure was never

brought to conflicts between the dual role of student and family

member. The following statements are examples of conflicts

between these roles:

> I wanted to go to my family reunion, but I also had an
> organic chemistry test Monday. Even if I went down there
> for just one hour, I knew that I couldn't stay for just one
> hour. Too many people, too many memories to exchange, a lot
> of catching up for the last two years, when I haven't seen
> them. That's nice conflict right there. How do I deal with
> it? You look at the big picture first. Look at the goal you
> set. Now, does going to this family reunion offset you from
> your goal? I would say yeah. I really should spend this
> time that I have studying for this test. I can't just cram
> everything in, all in one day. Whatever you see as more
> important, you just have to reprioritize. (Rural Student)

> My parents, sometimes, they call me and want me to do
> certain things for my family members that are here in [name
> of city]. It's kind of like they are pulling me, you know.
> I am being pulled both ways. I have to go to study groups.
> I have to do this for a family member. I don't have a
> problem with it. I just have to space out my time for
> certain things I have to do for the family, as well as my
> schoolwork. (Urban Student)

As student participants reported what they believed were

the responsibilities toward their families, family members

reported where their responsibilities lie in assisting students

in being successful in their studies. The following comments

illustrate this sub-theme:

> Our responsibility is to provide whatever means necessary
> in reference to money, financial situations for her and to

make sure that she is able to have the benefit of getting her lesson (Rural Family Member)

We have the responsibility to help identify what her goals are so we can find ways to support and encourage her (Urban Family Member)

Vicarious matriculation also emerged as a sub-theme within Family Investment and Expectations. This sub-theme relates to the student taking the place of family members in the university setting. That is to say, as the students progressed through their degree programs, family members in a sense were vicariously earning a degree. In essence, the student in many respects was viewed as the family representative to the university of enrollment. This phenomenon was revealed in first generation college students in general and students who were the first in their families to attend a predominately White institution.

Like my uncles, they never graduated from college so their children are the only thing they have to get a degree. They kind of say that's their degree too. My mom kind of says my degree is hers. Kids have to do the living that the parents didn't have a chance to do. (Urban Student)

My mom didn't graduate from college. She took classes, but didn't graduate. I believe that if you graduate from college, then you bring your family a certain status. Well, my child went to [name of the university], 'cause your parents do talk about you. (Rural Student)

The final sub-theme in the Family Investment and Expectations theme focused on the emphasis on repaying the family for all the support that was provided while the student

attended college. This repayment was not monetary in nature, but focused on a sense of joining other family members to support the next sibling, cousin or person in the neighborhood who attends college:

> I think once she is completed with this, then she is on her own. And I think we will all work with the next person. We don't want her to be the last person so naturally all of the attention can't be focused on her so we have to make room for the next person. So now she has to help support the next person doing the same. (Urban Family Member)

> One of the things that my mother always says, [name of student] when you get of college, don't ever try to pay me back. Just try to put your brother through college. (Rural Student)

Negotiating Environments

The fourth theme, Negotiating Environments related to participants' perceptions of their minority status in a predominately White setting. Impressions about the university climate, culture and challenges associated with students of color were explored. Participants reported what they did to survive and manage adverse situations in these environments. Two sub-themes emerged in this category.

The first sub-theme related to the academic environment. Students reflected on their experiences in classroom settings. The academic environment involved students' interactions with faculty and other students, and their views on the rigors of

pursuing their degrees. The following comments are illustrative

of this sub-theme:

> I consider all my mistakes as part of the learning process
> and I am like in boot camp right now. Right now I have my
> backpack on and I have my camouflage and I am going to
> classes. I am in training. Now, I am in the trenches with
> my camouflage on. Bullets are flying over my head and when
> I come out, hopefully, I will be a general or something
> like that. (Urban Student)

> I pretty much feel bad because I think that my professors
> think that I'm the biggest slacker that there possibly is.
> If I could just express what I have to go through and what
> I go through. They just have no sympathy for me. I'm really
> hesitant to go to professors and complain and because I
> know that they hear various students come in with various
> excuses about why this is late and that is late and I know
> that professors hear this all the time. They've heard it
> all and for me to come in behind them and try to explain
> the situation, it kind of makes me look bad and feel bad
> because I know that I'm not a slacker because of the bad
> situation that I have. (Rural Student)

The second sub-theme focused on the social environment.

This sub-theme was related to participants' view of out-of-class

experiences, the larger community, and campus culture, as they

relate to students of color. Comments below illustrate

participants' view on these issues:

> It's one thing to go to a White school. Then there's
> another thing to go to a White school where there's no
> other people of color around it. Now that's deep! That is
> really hard. So it's difficult. If you are a Black person
> coming from a predominately Black place or mixed area,
> where you're used to seeing so many different people.
> Forget the school—just the area alone, whoa! Now that's a
> major adjustment. You have isolated yourself just by
> choosing to come here. That's moving from a place that you
> know so well that you feel really comfortable with coming
> to a place that's really uncomfortable. The transition, the
> adjustments can be hard when nobody else looks like you or

has the same interests. That's going to be hard. (Rural Student)

We had to give her a lot of self-esteem in herself as a family. That is how to build a relationship strong because in a predominately White school, they're not going to give you that. If you don't have it in your family or with yourself, your self-esteem could go down fast. (Urban Family Member)

Role Models and Mentors

Another theme that emerged in the study related to Role Models and Mentors. This theme is linked to participants' sense of the obligation to provide personal assistance to other individuals. This assistance included providing advice, information, and serving as an overall resource to others. In essence this theme was related to the act of shepherding a person through a process or experience.

In the first sub-theme, family members were identified as role models for some student participants. These family members were persons who, for the most part, had gone to college and shared advice with student participants about things that should be done to be successful in college. On the other hand, some student participants identified other family members as role models and mentors; however, these family members taught student participants lessons about life in general:

And the two brothers right before me, they went to [name of university] and [name of university]. They graduated. My oldest brother, he was the first one to go to college so all the stress was on him. So he was expected to do well

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and put forth the effort and come out of school in a
reasonable amount of time. I have seen my brothers succeed
in college and seen them succeed in life now. (Rural
Student)

Whatever my mom says don't do to us, she didn't do it. She
set the example, if she said don't be out past eight
o'clock, she wasn't out past eight o'clock, unless she was
working. So her behavior kind of spread out to the rest of
us, 'cause we looked at her as an example. (Urban Student)

Student participants also reported the importance of being
a role model to younger relatives. Their status as role model,
they claimed, caused them to stay in school because family
members expected students to be good examples for future family
members who would later enter a university setting, as revealed
in the comments below:

In my family, it's like they kind of look up to me. They
look to me because I have two younger cousins that are
about to enter college and they have been looking at me for
the last four years as a role model for them so I have been
taking that role on. (Urban Student)

My youngest looks up to him. My other son is very
encouraged by what [name of student] is doing. So he's
getting a lot from that. He's looking at [name of student]
and he knows that it's hard and difficult, but he knows
that you can achieve your goals that you set. He's really
learned a lot from his brother. (Rural Family Member)

Faith in God/Spiritual Support

The sixth theme revealed in the findings related to faith.
Both student and family participants maintained that their
abiding acts of faith contributed to students' ability to remain
in school. These acts of faith included prayers, church

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attendance, and sharing scripture or inspirational writings with students.

This theme was divided into two sub-themes. The first sub-theme related to family prayers of support. Students contended that family prayers of support kept them focused in their studies:

> My mom is going to pray on it. She tells my grandmother. My grandmother is a missionary and she is going to pray on it. My sister is going to pray on it, My brother is going to pray on it. So it is not really so much financial, but I like lean on them for emotional and spiritual support. (Rural Student)

> My family is Muslim. My mother is a single parent raising 5 children. She constantly makes references to God as far as her support. God will work, not just praying to God and not doing your work. She definitely believes there is a strong relationship to praying and actually making a step to producing what you pray for. She always believes in that—not just for prayer, but prayer and work. Then you get the results that you pray for. That is what is in our conversations a lot. Praying to God then going to work. (Urban Student)

In the second sub-theme, research participants described the role of the Black church in providing spiritual support. In some cases, participants informed the researcher that they drew strength from the church to meet life's demands. The comments that follow demonstrate the nature of this sub-theme:

> The church is a great outlet for Black people. It has always been our strength, it has always been our guide. (Urban Family Member)

> We believe in God. We know that all of our strength and belief come from Him. We have a strong background in the church. (Rural Family Member)

Factors of Motivation

Student participants described factors external to the university setting that motivated them to complete their degrees. Most student participants explained that whenever the thought of dropping out of school came to mind, these factors were included in their reasons to remain enrolled. They maintained that these factors propelled them to succeed. This category is divided into five sub-themes.

The first sub-theme related to students' yearning to give back to their family. Students reported that they wanted to make their families proud of them:

> At first, it would be discouragement, but then it would become motivation because I know she wants me to be all that I can be and being that, the way she was raised and where she had to struggle for what she got, I know it would be motivation for me because she is pushing me, giving me that push to do it because she knows I can do it. (Urban Student)

> They've done so much for me. I just want to make my family proud. (Urban Student)

The second sub-theme was centered on the importance of being a role model to younger family members. Although this sub-theme was related to Role Models and Mentors, a theme presented earlier in this chapter, students also described it as a motivating factor, as demonstrated in the comments that follow:

> One of the things that I want to do when I leave here, I want to be family to somebody else. When my cousins come to school, I want to say, when they call, [name of student], I

just can't handle it or [name of student], I can't tell
mom. I want to be the support that my family has given me.
To my cousins, my brother, whatever, to the next person in
line. (Rural Student)

It's not about me going to school and getting my degree and
getting my job. That's nice, but it's about showing the
other people, as far as the younger people and other
members of my family that it is possible, it's not just a
little pipe dream. I'm here, I'm all right. It's not even
about me. I don't even know how I could describe how my
little cousins ask, 'What were your grades like in high
school?' or "How in the world did you do this and can I
make it?' or just anybody asking me that. (Rural Student)

The third sub-theme in this section involved students'

belief that earning a college degree provides better

opportunities to obtain a good job. This was a factor that

motivated them to stay in school:

I'm in school so that it will enable me to get a better job
when I graduate. Even though I have loans and stuff, that's
in the short future. In the long range, it's gonna help me
to put me a step about the next man. (Rural Student)

In the fourth sub-theme, some participants reported a

desire to escape from a depressed hometown environment. For

them, higher education was viewed as a way out of those

circumstances:

I have to stay in school just because I didn't want to let
them down. Plus, I didn't want to let myself down and have
to go back to [name of hometown], get into trouble. It is
kind of a break from that. It's tough to live down there. I
lost a couple of friends in the past three or four years.
If I was down there with them, I would probably be with
them. I had to stay here to do what I have to do. (Urban
Student)

I ran, screaming away from home, away from [name of
hometown] to get to college. You work your butt off so that

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you won't fall into the trap. [Name of hometown] is a nice place to visit, but I don't want to live there. (Rural Student)

In the final sub-theme of this section, students suggested that talking to others who dropped out of college motivated them to succeed. Lessons learned from persons who did not complete a college degree affected students' decisions to remain in school:

> Just watch the people who drive by the school. Listen to the people and why they dropped out and stuff like that. That is what is giving me the edge to stay at school and not drop out and be like anyone else. People that I have lost in my life that is like, is driving me to succeed even more for them. My people at home like kind of say, quote, unquote, 'wasting their lives.' I am doing it for them. I guess that is all tied into the fear. I just don't want to fail. I just don't want to fall short of what I know I can do. So that has been my driving force right here. (Urban Student)

> I do have a play sister (fictive kin). Her basic thing, she tells me is not to end up like she is. She is doing well for herself. She is in the navy, but she doesn't have a college education and she has a son right now and she doesn't want me to end up like that. She wants me to get my education and get all my degrees I want before I start a family and things like that. She doesn't want me to end up in her situation. (Urban Student)

Macro Cultural Perspectives on Race

The final theme that emerged from the data focused on the Macro Culture. Student and family participants described extraneous comments chiefly related to race. These comments provided a portrait of their experiences as persons of color in the larger society. These experiences were linked, in part, to

their overall impressions of participating in higher education on a predominately White campuses.

This theme is divided into three sub-themes. The first sub-theme is associated with what family members did to socialize students about race in general. Family members educated students about the realities of race and racism in the United States:

> I think our discussions about ongoing racism have helped to make [name of student] aware of injustices that may occur in grading of her course work by some professors. I encourage and remind her not to feel that she is a second-class citizen and that not all minorities at [name of university] are welfare recipients. Also, she has been taught to critique any professor who exhibits traits of discrimination and racism. She has been encouraged to highlight this unacceptable practice whenever a class or course survey is offered. (Rural Family Member)

> My parents taught me to know that because I was Black and female, I would face obstacles, but could still excel academically. (Rural Student)

In the second sub-theme of this category, participants conveyed their encounters with discrimination. In some cases, students reported that some White faculty, largely due to race, treat them unfairly:

> The diversity aspect is so prevalent in [name of hometown]. I had an Indian friend, White friend, Black friend; all my friends were different nationalities. I really didn't face racism at home. I might have faced it, but didn't realize it, but when I came here, I had to really deal with racism here, how to handle myself and not go off on people. I had to learn how to talk to people who didn't have the same values as I did, and just how to interact with people that I wasn't used to. (Rural Student)

> I try not to think about being discriminated against because I think that's a cop-out in many areas. For me,

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there are ways around it. If you are being treated
unfairly, there are things that you can do, people that you
can talk to, there are options. I try not to think about
the fact that maybe the reason I got a bad grade on this
test is because of my race. (Rural Student)

The final sub-theme in this category revolved around

comments related to perceptions of the larger American culture,

and issues of race in the larger culture. The following comments

depict participants' sentiments about this sub-theme:

I like [name of university]. When I first got here, I went
to a play at [name of university]. When I mentioned the
fact that I went to [name of university], one of the
students looked down their nose at me. And that's when it
hit me. This is an Anglo-Saxon, Protestant country and it's
not a skin color, it's a mentality. (Urban Student)

White Americans have never really had to go through what
Black America has and I think that one of the things that
when you throw all of us together, most of my kids have
gone to school with Black kids and White kids. So they know
the different lifestyles. Just letting your kids understand
that everybody can't have the same thing. We were born
Black and we can't change that, but we can change how we
live. (Rural Family Member)

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this chapter was to present the general

findings of the study related to African American family factors

that influence a student's ability to remain in school. Eight

themes emerged from the data, each with two or more sub-themes.

Given this overview of the type of language that was

assigned to themes and sub-themes, attention is turned to

examining the results of each of the four groups included in the

study. In the next chapter the results of rural and urban students are reported.

CHAPTER FIVE

Results From Student Participants

The purpose of this chapter is to present findings on both the rural and urban student participants. The overall frequencies of comments by themes and positions (positive, neutral, and negative) within themes are reported. Examples of language assigned by positions are also included in this chapter.

Eight themes emerged from the data: (1) Family Support and Influence, (2) Sense of Community, (3) Family Investment and Expectations, (4) Negotiating Environments, (5) Role Models and Mentors, (6) Faith in God/Spiritual Support, (7) Factors of Motivation, and (8) Macro Cultural Perspectives on Race. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides the results of rural students. In the second section, the results of urban students are presented. Finally, the results of the two groups are reported collectively to gain a fuller picture of the students' perspective in the study.

Rural Students

Ten students at the rural institution were interviewed for this research project. These participants provided a total of 482 comments related to the present study. Students in this group devoted most of their comments (173 or 35.8%) to the theme related to Family Support and Influence. The next theme with the

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most utterances involved Negotiating Environments. Almost 30% or 144 comments were cited in within this theme. Themes with the least number of comments included Factors of Motivation (22 or 4.6%) and Faith in God/Spiritual Support (16 or 3.3%) Table 2 presents the frequencies with which rural students' comments assigned to each theme were rated as positive, neutral or negative.

For rural student participants, the rank order of frequencies by theme from highest to lowest were distributed in the following manner: Family Support and Influence; Negotiating Environments; Family Investment and Expectations; Sense of Community; Role Models and Mentors; Factors of Motivation; Faith in God/Spiritual Support; and, Macro Cultural Perspectives on Race.

After discovering themes, the researcher further analyzed the data and identified positive, neutral, and negative language within each theme. In the following sections, examples of positions by theme are presented for rural students.

Rural students reported that family members were influential and supportive of them while enrolled in college (Family Support and Influence). Participants provided positive comments related to this theme:

> I inherited my mom's work ethic. I have a really
> terrorizing work ethic. I pretty much don't let anything go
> until it's finished. A lot of the ways that my mother

conducts herself and the way that she does things is
imprinted on me in the way that I conduct myself. (Rural
Student)

Some rural students made neutral comments related to this

theme:

My mom, my family still has a lot of the '50s, we came
through the civil rights movement ideas. They were either
born in that, before that, or immediately after that. My
grandparents have pushed those ideals on them and they
believe that you should act that certain way. (Rural
Student)

Still other rural students uttered negative comments associated

with family support and influences:

I feel early on in my college life, when I was a freshman,
I could have gained a little more support in my change of
majors. She didn't like that and she didn't support me.
(Rural Student)

In the second theme, rural students discussed the

importance of developing a Sense of Community on campus. Some

students discussed this theme from a positive perspective:

[Name of Dean], she's White and [name of dean}, she's
Black. They are both like my aunt. They always look out for
me. I don't have to do anything. The call me up and see how
I'm doing all the time. They always worry about me. They
are always asking me, 'how have you been?' (Rural Student)

Other students reported neutral comments about community:

See, I have a lot of White friends. I have a lot of Asian
friends. I have a lot of whatever friends. (Rural Student)

Table 2

Numbers and Percentages of Comments from Rural Students by Theme and Direction of Support (N=482)

Theme	n	Percent
Family Support	173	35.8
Positive	110	
Neutral	37	
Negative	26	
Sense of Community	35	7.30
Positive	19	
Neutral	3	
Negative	13	
Family Investment and Expectations	48	9.90
Positive	22	
Neutral	11	
Negative	15	
Negotiating Environments	144	29.90
Positive	30	
Neutral	47	
Negative	67	
Role Models and Mentors	30	6.20
Positive	30	
Neutral	0	
Negative	0	
Faith in God/Spiritual Support	16	3.30
Positive	13	
Neutral	2	
Negative	1	

Table 2 Continued

Numbers and Percentages of Comments from Rural Students by Theme
and Direction of Support (N=482)
_____

Theme	n	Percent
Factors of Motivation	22	4.60
Positive	17	
Neutral	3	
Negative	2	
Macro Cultural Perspectives		
On Race	14	3.00
Positive	0	
Neutral	10	
Negative	4	
Total	482	100%

_____

The same student expressed negative views about a Sense of

Community:

> I think that a lot of the problems here are people's
> friendships belonging in the Black community and those that
> don't are seen as slightly outcasts because, let's say if
> you're dating a White female or a White male, they
> immediately, every other Black is asking, 'Why is he dating
> that White girl or why is she dating that White guy?' If
> they like each other, then why not? If there's one out
> there for you then so be it, I say go for it. I think that
> we have a lot of hypocritical Black people here. (Rural
> Student)

Students also provided varied comments on the theme of

Family Investment and Expectations. Positive language within

this theme included:

> Well, when I go home, I'm the only one in college and my
> parents and my aunts, uncles, and my grandmother—everybody
> provides support (Rural Student)

Still others spoke in neutral terms on this theme:

> I think that they are supporting me to the fullest extent
> of their ability, but I don't ask for all of the support
> that they are able to provide. (RS5)

Another student offered a negative view on Family

Investment and Expectations:

> I told her [his mother] that I am a grown man. I am 22
> years old. I am going to do it whether she likes it or not.
> So she is either going to get over it or whine all of the
> time. I just told her she had to realize that I am a grown
> up. I can go out and do whatever I want to as long as I
> have my own money. (Rural Student)

Rural students provided varied comments on the theme

related to Negotiating Environments. One positive utterance included:

> Of course it's the academic side where I go to class everyday and then it's the—I do silent activism, you could say. I'm a researcher for the [name of the college]. I'm doing a project on the undergraduate Black experience here. I worked with the Women's Center. I had an internship there and I also was in charge of sexual assault awareness month. (Rural Student)

On the other hand, however, some students expressed neutral views related to this theme:

> I grew up on a military base so getting along with different people of different cultures is not a problem. So that has not been a problem for me. The university as an official entity has not influenced me to do wrong or anything like that. I'd say being here at the university, I definitely have been exposed to new people and new ideas, but that would happen to me even if I just moved away from home. (Rural Student)

Still other comments reflected a negative view of this theme:

> Sometimes, I feel invisible on this campus. Plenty of time, I still do. Like in my classes. This semester is the first semester that I had Black people in any of my classes since my second year. (Rural Student)

Rural students explained to the researcher the importance of being Role Models and Mentors to others, the fifth theme identified in the findings. The rural students did not report neutral and negative language in this theme. Positive utterance in this theme included:

> My family set me as the role model for most of my younger male relatives. I'm supposed to set the standard. It's for me to set the example for my little 4-year-old brother, my

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3-year-old cousins, and my 16-year-old cousins. (Rural Student)

My brother has turned 18 this year. He's about to graduate from high school this year. He told me that he like looked up to me and wanted to follow in my footsteps, so to speak, because he's about to graduate. So my parents told him that he could go to the military because he's really active in ROTC, but he said that he'd rather follow my path and go to college and make it through college. (Rural Student)

The sixth theme that emerged within this research project was Faith in God/Spiritual Support. For the most part, rural students' comments related to this theme were positive. For example:

Church is very important to my family. We always went to church together. Whenever there was a function at church, we always had someone from our family represented to support it. (Rural Student)

There were, however, a limited number of neutral and negative comments, as the following respectively suggest:

A lot of my religious views are set. (Rural Student)

My family has a whole set of conservative views that I don't have. Because I'm open minded and started re-evaluating a lot of things, but the basis is still firm. How I was brought up, where I was brought up, the church that I was brought up in, all of those sorts of things. As for common day-to-day things and attitudes, a lot of the stuff that I've done, I realize that I've done just to rebel. I feel like I do things on my own way, the way that I think is right, the way that I think that it should be done, which is not always the way that my family sees things. And that causes a lot of arguments. (Rural Student)

Rural students provided positive, neutral and negative comments related to Factors of Motivation, the seventh theme. A positive quote in this area was:

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Pretty much after my senior year of high school and I got accepted to college, the family relinquished the icon image. By then, my cousins were old enough and pretty much set in their way. They didn't need me to be the icon. I took the role of the icon. Not only do I have to succeed, but also I have to succeed for them. Without them, I wouldn't be the extreme character that I am today. I can't let them down (Rural Student)

A neutral perspective in this theme was reflected in the following comment:

One of the experiences that motivated me, before I came here, I wasn't sure what I really wanted to major in. I possibly wanted to do something with children, since I wanted to get into early childhood education, but couldn't get in, that situation made me realize that I had other options. (Rural Student)

The comment below suggests a negative factor related to Motivation:

My dad went to college at the ripe age of 17 years old. Then basically, after 3 years, he dropped out and worked from job to job. No ambition now, just lazy. You can be a genius. If you don't have the drive and you're not willing to work, and you're done. (Rural Student)

In the last theme, participants described their Macro Cultural Perspectives on Race. The rural students for this theme provided no positive comments. The following is illustrative of a neutral comment:

When I chose to come here, they gave me plenty of advice as to how to handle the change in environment. I'm from a very multicultural environment—military town, lots of different people from different backgrounds. They gave me a lot of advice on how to handle an all-White environment. (Rural Student)

I need to talk to a teacher tomorrow. I studied with three guys. It seems like I'm always showing these guys how to do this problem, how to do that problem, but when we turn the homework in, I get a lower grade on it. I just can't figure out why. He gives them partial credit, but he doesn't give me partial credit. (Rural Student)

In summary, the rural students offered comments assigned to different positions in the coding scheme. For example, of the 482 total comments rural students offered 173 (36%) related to the Family Support and Influence theme. Of these 173 comments, the majority (110 or 64%) was positive in tone. In a Sense of Community, the second theme, rural respondents provided 35 comments with the majority of comments (19 or 54%) as positive.

In the next theme, Family Investment and Expectations, rural students provided 48 comments. Roughly 46% of these comments were positive in nature, while 31% were negative. Negotiating Environments, the fourth theme, rural respondents provided 144 comments. Sixty-seven (67) or 47% of the comments in this theme were negative, while 47 or 33% were neutral in tone. Thirty (30) or roughly 20% were positive. In the fifth theme, Role Models and Mentors, respondents provided 30 comments, using positive language in this theme.

Rural students in the sixth theme, Faith in God/Spiritual Support, spoke a total of 16 comments. Of these 16 comments, 13 or 81% were positive. In the next theme, Factors of Motivation, rural students submitted 22 comments, of which 17 or 77% were

positive in nature. In the final theme, Macro Cultural Perspectives on Race, rural respondents provided 14 comments. Ten of these comments (71%) were neutral, while 29% of the comments were classified as negative. No positive language was reported within this theme. In the next section of this chapter, results from the urban student group are provided.

<center>Urban Students</center>

Ten students at the urban institution were interviewed for this research project. These participants provided a total of 708 comments related to the present study. Students in this group reported most of their comments (223 or 31.50%) in the theme centered on Family Support and Influence. Negotiating Environments was the theme with the next greatest number of utterances (189 or 26.70%). Themes with the least number of comments reported by urban students included Role Models and Mentors (32 or 4.52%) and Factors of Motivation (24 or 3.40%). Table 3 presents the summary of frequencies of positions within themes for urban students.

The rank order of frequencies for urban student participants were distributed in the order, from highest to lowest: Family Support and Influence; Negotiating Environments; Macro Cultural Perspectives on Race; Family Investments and Expectations; Faith in God/Spiritual Support; Role Models and Mentors; Factors of Motivation; and, Sense of Community.

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After emergent themes were revealed, the researcher further analyzed the data and identified positive, neutral, and negative language within each theme. In the following sections, examples of positions by theme are presented for urban students.

Urban students, like their rural counterparts, provided positive comments on the Family Support and Influence theme:

> I think that the family is my source of strength and we really look at the family unit as our main and important thing. I think even back in slavery, I mean it has always been very important and I think that is what separates us from Whites. My White friends, you know? Family is important, but no, it is not like what I have seen with my girlfriends and they don't talk the same way about their families like we do. (Urban Student)

Some urban students made neutral comments related to this theme:

> I think that it is a pride thing. I am not maximizing the support of both my nuclear and extended family. I mean, there are my aunts and I could turn to them if I needed help on a project or something. (Urban Student)

Other urban students expressed negative comments related to Family Support and Influence:

> I kind of put school to the side for a second when I am dealing with a family problem and I just handle that because I can't really concentrate when something is going on. I just can't concentrate on my work so I would rather just handle it first and then go back to my schoolwork. (Urban Student)

Table 3

Numbers and Percentages of Comments from Urban Students by Theme and Direction of Support (N=708)

_____

Theme	n	Percent

_____

Theme	n	Percent
Family Support	223	31.50
Positive	116	
Neutral	62	
Negative	45	
Sense of Community	14	1.98
Positive	13	
Neutral	1	
Negative	0	
Family Investment and Expectations	81	11.40
Positive	55	
Neutral	21	
Negative	5	
Negotiating Environments	189	26.70
Positive	76	
Neutral	70	
Negative	43	
Role Models and Mentors	32	4.52
Positive	20	
Neutral	9	
Negative	3	
Faith in God/Spiritual	38	5.40
Positive	33	
Neutral	5	
Negative	0	

Table 3 Continued

Numbers and Percentages of Comments from Urban Students by Theme and Direction of Support (N=708)

Theme	n	Percent
Factors of Motivation	24	3.40
Positive	8	
Neutral	1	
Negative	15	
Macro Cultural Perspectives On Race	107	15.10
Positive	12	
Neutral	34	
Negative	61	
Total	708	100%

In terms of a Sense of Community, the second theme, urban students discussed its importance at their institution. Some respondents discussed this theme from a positive viewpoint:

> I will say the people in the gym. We are definitely like a family 'cause we argue, then we make up and become friends again. And definitely my peer group because they call and check on me if something is wrong with me. Those would be my home away from home people and I am always in the gym and that is my home away from home. (Urban Student)

Other students reflected a neutral tone related to a Sense of Community:

> The majority of the administrators that I deal with are African Americans. (Urban Student)

There were no negative comments related a Sense of Community reported by urban students.

Urban students also provided a range of comments on the theme of Family Investment and Expectations. Positive language within this theme included:

> My parents pay for everything. I have a son. They take care of me. They take care of him. For school, they pay for whatever I need-they're there. I have a child, but education to them is so important for me to get a College degree (Urban Student)

Still others used neutral terms in this theme:

> The other situation I choose to leave school numerous times because my sister came down with lupus and lost both kidneys and I was leaving back and forth from school and my sister took precedence over my studies. I didn't lower my grades at any point. I just knew that the importance was of going down and taking blood tests, getting shots for a kidney match. I believe over 180 days, I left school 22 or 23 times. (Urban

Student)

A student in this group offered a negative perspective

related to Family Investment and Expectations:

I don't like to set expectations for my family. My
family expectations are that they are there. I don't
set specific expectations for them that is setting
yourself up for failure so I don't. (Urban Student)

Urban students provided varied language on the theme

focused on Negotiating Environments. One positive comment in

this theme included:

Education is one of the best things that will happen
to a person of any kind, as a whole. And to educate me
is to truly extract what is best for you. (Urban
Student)

Other students offered neutral language related to this

theme:

I think that [name of university] has a lot of middle
upper middle class people, the students that go here,
a lot of them are. Some of them have single parents,
but their parents are very involved. I think it just
depends on where you go. [Name of university] carries
a nice class like middle to upper middle class
environment. (Urban Student)

Still other students used negative language to express

this theme:

I was so surprised coming to [name of university].
Seeing many students leaving home for the first
time, totally flipping in attitudes and trying new things.
To me there are very few people who show love. People are
trying to do their thing. I got mine and you get
yours. So I truly don't care about you unless
you're going to get me to the place I need to go.
That's the general atmosphere. So I always turn
back home to get my sense of peace. (Urban Student)

The urban students discussed the fifth theme identified in the findings, being a Role Model and Mentor to others. Positive comments within this theme included:

> I myself am just learning. Then, when I have the necessary knowledge to do what I have to do, then I will start bringing people into my circle as far as helping them out with things. (Urban Student)

On the other hand, however, some urban students used neutral language to discuss this theme:

> My cousin, under me, is in high school and has another year to go and she wants to be a doctor. I'm sort of like the role model in the family. (Urban Student)

Still others expressed the importance of this theme from a negative perspective:

> My little cousin, she got pregnant and that was like a big stir-crazy thing with my family and I mean like everyone was calling me to talk to her because she takes my advice. She takes my word because she looks up to me. So everyone was calling me all day asking me to talk to her. That kind of came into conflict with my schoolwork. I really couldn't do any work because I kept thinking about what I would say to her because it was pitiful. Anything I say could be taken the wrong way and she could just go crazy. So I mean I just had to take and put my school work aside and deal with that problem at home. (Urban Student)

The sixth theme that emerged in the data was Faith in God/Spiritual Support. Urban students only reported positive and neutral comments in this theme, as the following quotes suggest (respectively):

> Spiritually, my mother is there for me. She is a Christian and I am a Christian. So it's always like

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every time she calls, we pray on the phone. (Urban Student)

My grandmother, she is a Catholic. So I get both sides, giving me the option to choose whichever way I want to go. (Urban Student)

Urban students used positive, negative, and neutral language to discuss the seventh theme, Factors of Motivation. A positive comment in this area included:

They have been my motivation. They want to see me graduate. So I take advantage of what they are able to provide to me, what they are able to do for me, 'cause not a lot of girls can have children and finish college, too. (Urban Student)

An example of a neutral comment in this theme was:

My mother is like, they are looking at you, especially your little cousin. She is watching you and whatever you do, she is picking it up. So you have to be careful around her. (Urban Student)

The following quote is reflective of a negative comment in this theme:

They kind of look at me as kind of a prize. My cousin was like my brother. I lost him to gun violence in high school. So my grandmother is like, I don't want that to happen to you so whatever it takes you to stay in school, you do it. (Urban Student)

In the last theme, urban respondents discussed Macro Cultural Perspectives on Race. An example of a positive comment in this theme was:

I have friends from many races. I don't feel like I was pulled in any direction. I went with who I was comfortable with. I enjoy being around people like myself, you are White or if you're Black, or Asian. (Urban Student)

Others expressed this theme in neutral terms:

I think with some of the White students here, they depend on their parents more financially than emotionally or any other way. (Urban Student)

One urban student was disappointed with members in the

Black community, as reflected in this negative comment:

Spike Lee made a movie about Malcolm X and yet Black folk all over the country are still killing each other, still smoking crack, and still dogging our women. (Urban Student)

In summary, urban students provided comments assigned to

different positions in the coding scheme. For example, of the

708 total comments urban students offered 223 (31.50%) were

related to Family Support and Influence. Of these 223 comments,

the majority (116 or 52%) was positive in nature. For a Sense of

Community, the second theme, urban students provided 14

comments. Of these 14 comments, 13 were positive.

In the third theme, Family Investment and Expectations,

urban students offered 81 comments. The bulk of these comments

(55 or 68%) were addressed from a positive perspective. In the

next theme, Negotiating Environments, urban student respondents

offered 189 comments. Seventy-six (76) or 40% of the comments

were positive in tone. Roughly 37% or 70 comments were reported

as neutral, while 43 or 23% of the comments in this theme were

negative.

In terms of Role Models and Mentors, urban students provided 32 comments. The majority of comments in this theme were positive (20 or 63%); 9 comments (28%) were neutral; and, 3 comments or 9% were negative. In the sixth theme, Faith in God/Spiritual Support, urban student participants offered 38 comments. Of these comments, 33 or 87% were positive, while 13% or 5 were negative.

In Factors of Motivation, the seventh theme, urban students submitted 24 comments. Eight (8) comments (33%) were positive and 1 comment (4%) was neutral. The majority of comments (15 or 63%) in this theme were negative. Macro Cultural Perspectives on Race was the final theme and urban students provided 107 comments related to the theme. Of these 107 comments, 12 or 11% were positive, while 34 (32%) comments were neutral. Most of the comments (61 or 57%) in this theme were negative. In the next section of this chapter, the collective results of both rural and urban students are discussed.

Collective Results of Student Participants

Rural and urban student participants offered a total of 1,190 comments in this research project. These comments sorted by theme and position within theme are summarized in Table 4. Of the 1,190 comments, 396 (33%) comments were devoted to the Family Support and Influence theme. Within this theme, students uttered 226 (57%) positive comments. Ninety-nine (99) or 25%

were neutral, while 71 (18%) comments were negative. In the second theme, Sense of Community, student participants provided 49 (4%) comments. Of these 49 comments, 32 (65%) were positive; 4 (8%) were neutral; and, 13 (27%) were negative.

For Family Investment and Expectations, student participants provided 129 (11%) comments. Of these comments 77 (60%) were positive, while 32 (25%) were neutral. Fifteen percent (15%) of the comments (20) in this theme were negative. Student participants provided a total of 333 (28%) comments related to the fourth theme, Negotiating Environments. Of these 333 comments, 106 (32%) were positive. Students offered 117 (35%) neutral and 110 (33%) negative comments for this theme.

In the fifth theme, Role Models and Mentors, student respondents provided a total of 62 (5%) comments. Fifty (50 or 80%) of these comments were positive in tone. Nine (9 or 15%) were neutral. Students provided three (3 or 5%) negative comments in this theme. A total of 54 (5%) comments were offered about Faith in God/Spiritual Support, the sixth theme. Forty-six (46 or 85%) comments were positive. Seven (7 or 13%) were neutral comments and one (2%) was negative for this theme.

In the seventh theme, Factors of Motivation, student participants offered a total of 46 (4%) comments, of which 25 (54%) were positive and four (9%) were neutral. Seventeen (17 or 37%) negative comments were provided in this theme. In the last

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theme, Macro Cultural Perspectives on Race, student participants

offered 121 (10%) comments. Twelve (12 or 10%) were positive in

tone, while 44 (36%) were neutral. Sixty-five (65 or 54%) were

negative (see table 4).

   Given these results from students, attention was turned to

the comments from family members. Chapter Six provides the

results of rural and urban family member participants.

Table 4

Numbers and Percentages of Comments from All Students by Theme
and Direction of Support (N=1,190)

_____

Theme	n	Percent
_____		
Family Support	396	33
Positive	226	
Neutral	99	
Negative	71	
Sense of Community	49	5
Positive	32	
Neutral	4	
Negative	13	
Family Investment and Expectations	129	11
Positive	77	
Neutral	32	
Negative	20	
Negotiating Environments	333	28
Positive	106	
Neutral	117	
Negative	110	
Role Models and Mentors	62	5
Positive	50	
Neutral	9	
Negative	3	
Faith in God/Spiritual	54	5
Positive	46	
Neutral	7	
Negative	1	

Table 4 Continued

Numbers and Percentages of Comments from All Students by Theme
and Direction of Support (N=1,190)
_____

Theme	n	Percent
Factors of Motivation	46	4
Positive	25	
Neutral	4	
Negative	1	
Macro Cultural Perspectives		
On Race	121	10
Positive	12	
Neutral	44	
Negative	65	
Total	1,190	100%

_____

CHAPTER SIX

Results from Family Participants

The purpose of this chapter is to present findings on both the rural and urban family member participants. The overall frequencies of comments by themes and positions within themes (positive, neutral, and negative) are reported. Illustrations of language assigned by positions are also included in this chapter.

Eight themes emerged from the data in this research project: (1) Family Support and Influence, (2) Sense of Community, (3) Family Investment and Expectations, (4) Negotiating Environments, (5) Role Models and Mentors, (6) Faith in God/Spiritual Support, (7) Factors of Motivation, and (8) Macro Cultural Perspectives on Race. This chapter is separated into three sections. The first section presents the results of rural family members. In the second section, the results of urban family members are provided. Finally, the results of both the rural and urban family participants are reported collectively to gain an understanding of family members' viewpoint in the study.

Rural Family Members

Ten family members related to students enrolled at the rural institution were interviewed for this study. These respondents offered a total of 292 comments related to the

present study. The majority of comments (125 or 43%) from rural family members were linked to the Family Support and Influence theme. In the second theme, Sense of Community, respondents provided only two (2, less than 1%) comments.

In the third theme, Family Investment and Expectations, rural family members offered 55 (19% comments). Forty-eight (48 or 16%) comments were provided about the fourth theme, Negotiating Environments.

A total of 16 (5%) comments were assigned to the fifth theme, Role Models and Mentors, while 20 comments (7%) related to Faith in God/Spiritual Support.

Rural family members offered five (5 or 2%) comments associated with the theme, Factors of Motivation. Twenty-one comments (21 or 7%) related to Macro Cultural Perspectives on Race. Table 4 presents the summary of frequencies by theme and position within theme for this group.

In rank order of importance by theme, the following were identified for rural family members: Family Support and Influence; Family Investment and Expectations; Negotiating Environments; Macro Cultural Perspectives on Race; Faith in God/Spiritual Support; Role Models and Mentors; Factors of Motivation; and, Sense of Community.

After themes emerged in this study, the researcher continued to analyze the data and identified positive, neutral,

and negative language within each theme. In the following

sections, illustrations of positions by themes are presented for

rural family members.

Rural family members reported that they were influential

and supportive of their college students. Respondents provided

positive comments related to this theme:

> Our little motto is, as you hold up your end of the
> bargain, you don't have to worry about us holding up
> the end of our bargain. We work together to bring the
> whole pie together. So that's the whole thing. You are
> independent, you're working to further your education
> and at the same time, we are going to be that support
> in whatever way we need for you. (Rural Mother)

Some rural family members reflected neutral language within

this theme:

> I think that our family is very much the norm in providing
> support. (Rural Mother)

Still other participants discussed this theme in a

negative tone, as the following example illustrates:

> A lot of parents, their homes are broken. They don't
> have two parent families, only one, but that is not
> saying that it's bad because they have one parent. They
> don't have the support with broken families. (Rural Mother)

Table 5

Numbers and Percentages of Comments from Rural Family Members by Theme and Direction of Support (N=292)

_____

Theme	n	Percent

_____

Family Support and Influence	125	42.80
Positive	99	
Neutral	17	
Negative	9	
Sense of Community	2	.68
Positive	2	
Neutral	0	
Negative	0	
Family Investment and Expectations	55	18.83
Positive	28	
Neutral	16	
Negative	11	
Negotiating Environments	48	16.44
Positive	30	
Neutral	10	
Negative	8	
Role Models and Mentors	16	5.50
Positive	14	
Neutral	2	
Negative	0	
Faith in God/Spiritual	20	6.84
Positive	18	
Neutral	2	
Negative	0	

Table 5

Numbers and Percentages of Comments from Rural Family Members by Theme and Direction of Support (N=292)
_____

Theme	n	Percent
Factors of Motivation	5	1.71
Positive	4	
Neutral	1	
Negative	0	
Macro Cultural Perspectives On Race	21	7.20
Positive	0	
Neutral	19	
Negative	2	
Total	292	100%

_____

In the second theme, Sense of Community, rural family participants provided only positive comments. For example:

> When she did meet African Americans, they created a
> a bond towards one another. They were more like a
> support group, even though she never had a problem with any
> other group, but you know, this is your culture so you want
> to bond also with your culture. You don't want to forget
> where you came from. (Rural Mother)

In the third theme, Family Investment and Expectations rural family participants offered a range of comments. An example of positive use of language within this theme was:

> I'm from a close knit family. I'm close to mother and
> father and they have always been interested in us
> having an education and taking care of ourselves. It
> was ingrained in me at an early age. What I learned,
> I was able to pass on to [name of student] and
> hopefully to my other son. (Rural Mother)

Another family participant expressed a neutral tone related to Family Investment and Expectations:

> If we have a family function and [name of student] can't
> get together with us, that doesn't make you any less
> important as a family member or if [name of student] can't
> be around us. If [name of student] can't make it home and
> school is important, then that's fine. (Rural Mother)

Still others voiced negative remarks in this theme, as illustrated in the next comment:

> He knows he can't go out there and mess up. (Rural Mother)

Rural family participants provided comments on Negotiating Environments, the fourth theme. An example of a positive tone is reflected in the following comment:

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I think he has learned to interact with people better and
he has to work hard for things that he wants. I think he's
learned that there is competition out there and he's
learned that more. I think he has always known that. (Rural
Mother)

An example of neutral language used in Family Investment

and Expectations was:

When she first got there, I think I saw her take on the
role of trying to fit in. Later, I told her this is about
you and your education, it is not about trying to keep up
with the Joneses. This is your life. (Rural Mother)

Negative responses were also provided in this theme. For

example:

I feel like because of the things that he has been a part
of at school, up there at [name of university], it's made
him indecisive about what he needs to do. He feels like if
I don't make it, so be it. I'll make it next time instead
of giving it his very best the first time. (Rural Mother)

Rural family participants expressed the importance of Role

Models and Mentors. Negative language was not used in this theme

among these participants. Examples of positive and neutral tones

respectively are depicted below:

He is nice and outgoing. He's the oldest. He's got to be
the person out there to set an example to the other
siblings, even to his cousins. He is setting the example by
the type of life he lives. (Rural Mother)

My older sons and [name of student] have totally different
outlooks because [name of student] hasn't had to really
work. I have a son who is an assistant basketball coach at
[name of university]. I have a son who is a senior writer
for [name of insurance company]. My oldest son is an
assistant shop manager at [name of store]. They tend to
want to encourage him to get his education. (Rural Mother)

Rural family participants discussed the value of Faith in God and Spiritual Support, the sixth theme. Participants did not address this theme from a negative perspective. A portrait of positive and neutral language in this theme is expressed in the following comments:

> I was just talking to one of my sisters and told her to always think positive and go for the gold, but always remember, this what I also tell [name of student], have the Lord in your heart and in your mind and you can always succeed in life as long as He is by your side. He is always there whenever you need Him. (Rural Mother)

> I don't think anything will probably pose too much of a threat, unless it is going to cause problems in her spiritual life. (Rural Mother)

In Factors of Motivation, rural family participants discussed reasons for students to remain in school. An example of a positive utterance used in this theme is reflected in the statement below:

> I always remind him about going back and remember. There are three generations behind him and a generation ahead of him. (Rural Mother)

In one neutral comment, a rural family member shared the remorse of not finishing college:

> If I had completed college, I might have a different outlook. (Rural Mother)

Another participant viewed Factors of Motivation from a negative perspective:

> I am put in a low position and let them be the boss

over me instead of me being the boss over them. So that's
why college is very important because of this factor.
(Rural Mother)

In the final factor, Macro Cultural Perspectives on

Race, rural family participants discussed their worldview

related to race and racism. For this theme, participants did not

provide any positive comments. An example of a neutral utterance

is revealed in the statement that follows:

Maybe it's not who you are, but what you are. (Rural
Mother)

An example of a negative remark in this theme is

illustrated in the next comment:

I told [name of student] that you're not always welcome in
certain settings. You are going to have to work hard to get
anywhere and there are a lot of obstacles and race plays an
important part in that. (Rural Mother)

In summary rural family participants offered a total of 292

comments in this study. Of the 292 comments, 125 related to the

first theme, Family Support and Influence. Ninety-nine (99 or

79%) of the comments were positive in tone, whereas 17 or 14%

were neutral. Nine comments (9 or 7%) were negative. In the

second theme, Sense of Community, rural family members offered

two (2) comments. Each was positive in tone.

Fifty-five (55) comments were provided in the third theme,

Family Investment and Expectations. Of the 55 comments 28 or 51%

were positive in tenor. Sixteen (16 or 29%) were considered

neutral, while 11 or 20% were viewed as negative.

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A total of 48 comments were provided in the fourth theme, Negotiating Environments. In this theme, 30 or 63% of the comments were in a positive position. Ten comments (10 or 21%) were viewed as neutral, while eight (16%) comments were negative.

For the fifth theme, Role Models and Mentors, rural family members provided 16 comments. Of these 16 comments, 14 (87%) were from a positive perspective. Two (2) comments (13%) were at a neutral level. Rural family members provided no negative comments in this theme.

Faith in God/Spiritual Support, the sixth theme rural family members discussed 20 comments. Of these 20 comments 18 (90%) were positive, while 2 (10%) were neutral. No negative comments were reported for this theme.

The seventh theme, Factors of Motivation, rural family members provided 5 comments. Four (4 or 80%) were positive in nature, while 1 (20%) was neutral in tone. Participants did not discuss this theme in negative terms.

Macro Cultural Perspectives on Race, the final theme, rural family members uttered a total of 21 comments. Participants did not express any views in this theme from a positive position. Nineteen (19 or 90%) of the reported comments were neutral in tone. Two (2 or 10%) of the comments were negative. In the next section, findings from urban family members are presented.

Eight (8) family members of urban students participated in this study. Participants offered a total of 319 comments related to the present study. The majority of comments (140 or 43%) from urban family members were related to the Family Support and Influence theme. In the second theme, Sense of Community, respondents provided only six (6, roughly 2%) comments.

In the third theme, Family Investment and Expectations, urban family members offered 18 (roughly 6%) comments. Sixty (60 or about19%) comments were provided about the fourth theme, Negotiating Environments

A total of 16 (5%) comments were offered in the fifth theme, Role Models and Mentors, while 20 comments (roughly 6%) related to Faith in God/Spiritual Support.

In rank order of importance, from highest to lowest, urban family members commented on theme in the following manner: Family Support and Influence; Negotiating Environments; Macro Cultural Perspectives on Race; Faith in God/Spiritual Support; Family Investment and Expectation Role Models and Mentors; Sense of Community; and, Factors of Motivation.

Urban family members offered no comments associated with the theme Factors of Motivation. Fifty-nine (59 or about 9%) of the comments related to Macro Cultural Perspectives on Race. Table 6 presents the frequencies of comments by themes and positions within themes for this group.

Urban family member participants addressed the need for Family

Support and Influence in the life of college students. A positive use

of language is represented in the statement that follows:

> Most people rally around family members who are trying to
> pursue an education in order to broaden their horizons.
> (Urban Sister)

> An example of a neutral position in this theme was:

> If the situation is more pro-family, then I kind of let her
> know she has to make a decision in where her values should
> be. Then she has to make a decision. She is an adult now so
> I don't try to tell her what to do. I try to encourage her
> to think of what would be best for her. (Urban Father)

> One urban family member articulated this theme from

negative perspective:

> I couldn't support him because I did not find out that he
> was in school until I got an invitation to his graduation.
> I didn't support him at all. (Urban Sister)

> In the second theme, Sense of Community, urban respondents

offered only positive comments, for example:

> I admire the African American professors there. They not only
> made it hard for [name of student], but they helped her too.
> (Urban Mother)

> In terms of Family Investment and Expectations, the third theme,

urban family members discussed their investment of energy,

with regard to students. One example of a positive remark in

this theme was:

> Hopefully, [name of student] will go on to law school
> year after next. I will continue to be there to help her
> to assist her along the way. (Urban Mother)

Table 6

Numbers and Percentages of Comments from urban Family Members by Theme and Direction of Support (N=319)

_____

Theme	n		Percent
Family Support and Influence	140		43.9
Positive		97	
Neutral		16	
Negative		27	
Sense of Community	6		1.9
Positive		6	
Neutral		0	
Negative		0	
Family Investment and Expectations	18		5.6
Positive		16	
Neutral		1	
Negative		1	
Negotiating Environments	60		18.8
Positive		37	
Neutral		17	
Negative		6	
Role Models and Mentors	16		5.00
Positive		15	
Neutral		1	
Negative		0	
Faith in God/Spiritual	20		6.3
Positive		17	
Neutral		1	
Negative		2	

Table 6 Continued

<u>Numbers and Percentages of Comments from urban Family Members by</u>
<u>Theme and Direction of Support (N=319)</u>

_____

Theme	n	Percent
Factors of Motivation	0	0.00
Positive	0	
Neutral	0	
Negative	0	
Macro Cultural Perspectives		
On Race	59	18.5
Positive	16	
Neutral	33	
Negative	10	
Total	319	100%

_____

In exploring this theme, neutral language was also

expressed by urban participants:

> While you're under my roof, you do as I say. Now if
> you want to go, don't let the door hit you. Now that is
> just the way it is. (Urban Mother)

Still others expressed this theme in negative terms.

For example:

> She has been surviving on her own. She has been surviving
> with very little money, but some how or another, she makes
> it. (Urban Mother)

Family members shared with the researcher what they

believe students do to Negotiate Environments on a

predominately White campus. An example from a positive

perspective was:

> Her environment, being at the school and being at
> the university, she sees a lot of change and she is getting
> the background and everything a student needs.
> (Urban Mother)

A neutral viewpoint in this theme was expressed by the

following:

> She is attending a school that is culturally mixed. Her
> choosing [name of university] was because it wasn't a
> predominately Black school and not predominately White
> school either, but it is culturally mixed. (Urban Mother)

One urban parent discussed environmental influences at

the university from a negative vantage point:

> Initially, the social atmosphere had a negative impact
> on her academically. The guidance, direction, and
> discipline and making her see the error of her ways mainly
> came from home. (Urban Mother)

Role Models and Mentors emerged as a theme among urban family members. This group addressed this theme with positive and neutral language. Examples of each are respectively listed below respectively:

> She has one of my nieces with her now. She got her a job for the summer where she works. You know that was something we were really concerned about because my niece's mother is not very outgoing in the sense of assisting her daughter with that employment piece. She comes home on the weekends with [name of student]. My niece will be a senior in high school so she is looking at that college lifestyle, too. [Name of student] is role modeling this summer. (Urban Mother)

> He had an uncle who went to [name of university] and helped him. (Urban Mother)

Urban family participants, like their rural counterparts discussed the importance of Faith in God and/Spiritual Support, the sixth theme, in the lives of their students. An example of a positive comment was:

> We try to make sure we have Christian values and we keep her understanding in what it is to be a Christian young lady, how to carry herself, how to mingle with other people, whether they be male or female, how to better discern who is a good person and who is not a good person, as far as her goals and her aspirations in life, what kind of crowd she should hang out with and how to handle herself in mixed gatherings. So we give her that spiritual background and always make her aware of who she really is. (Urban Father)

One urban participant provided spiritual guidance to her son. The comment below is typical of a neutral posture related to this theme:

I advise him to weigh his decisions out from a biblical
perspective, his decision making and his dealing with
people and situations. (Urban Mother)

Another urban respondent discussed the use of the

church in a negative connotation:

I think sometimes [name of student] was sometimes so
depressed that she would even go to church and sit there
and cry. (Urban Mother)

In the seventh theme, Factors of Motivation, urban

family participants did not offer any comments. On the other

hand, however, urban family members did voice concerns related

to their Macro Cultural Perspectives on Race. A positive

depiction of this theme is revealed in the following comment:

Black women are wonderful women. They are great mothers,
they would take a child in and they would help. We help
each other, we really do. (Urban Mother)

The statement below reflected a neutral stance related

to this theme:

I attended a Black institution. [Name of student] chose
[name of university] as her institution and I had to
support her in her reasons in choosing [name of university]
was basically because of the cultural differences that she
was used to and you know that is fine and dandy, but I
believe as a whole, someone has to continue to attend our
universities to keep our culture going and our race strong.
Keep the faith in our institutions, but I don't knock
anyone who attends all White institutions. (Urban Mother)

Still others view this theme from a negative tone, as

revealed in the following statement:

There is so much negative about us as a people. I am just
tired of seeing the negative about us as a people. They

don't know the real us, you know what I am saying? (Urban Mother)

In summary, urban family members provided 319 comments to this study. Of the 319 comments, 140 related to the first theme, Family Support and Influence. Of these 140 comments, 97 (69%) were positive. Sixteen (11%) were rate as neutral, while urban family participants reported a total 27 (20%) comments from a negative perspective for this theme. In the second theme, Sense of Community, urban family respondents provided 6 comments. All of the comments (100%) for this theme were categorized as positive.

For Family Investment and Expectations, the third theme, urban family respondent reported 18 comments. Sixteen (16 or 90%) were at the positive level. One (5%) comment was neutral. The remaining comment (5%) was reported as negative. In Negotiating Environments, fourth theme, urban family respondents provided a total of 60 comments. Thirty-seven (37 or 62%) were positive in nature, while 17 (28%) held a neutral position. Six (6 or 10%) comments in this theme were negative.

In terms of Role Models and Mentors, the fifth theme, urban family members provided 16 comments. Of these 16, the majority (15 or 94%) was positive. One (1 or 6%) comment was neutral. Urban family participants reported no negative comments in this theme. In the sixth theme, Faith in God/Spiritual Support, urban family respondents provided 20 comments. Seventeen (17 or 85%)

were positive. One (1 or 5%) was neutral and the remaining two (2 or 10%) comments were negative in tone.

Urban family participants did not offer any comments about the seventh theme, Factors of Motivation. Participants, however, discussed issues related to the eighth theme, Macro Cultural Perspectives on Race. Urban family members provided 59 comments on this theme. Sixteen (16 or 27%) were from a positive perspective. Thirty-three comments (33 or 56%) were associated with neutral language. Ten (10 or 17%) were negative in tone. To gain a fuller understanding of family participants, the next section blends the total responses of each of the two family groups.

Collective Results of Family Participants

Rural and urban family participants provided a total of 611 comments in this study. Of the 611 comments, 265 (43%) related to the first theme, Family Support and Influence. One hundred ninety-six (196 or 74%) of these comments were positive in nature. Thirty-three (33 or 12%) were viewed from a neutral perspective, while 36 (14%) were negative.

In the second theme, Sense of Community, rural and urban family members provided eight (8) positive comments. These comments accounted for approximately 1% of the overall 611 comments in the study.

For Family Investment and Expectations, the third theme, family participants offered 73 (12%) comments. Of this total, 44 (60%) comments were positive, 17 (23%) were neutral in tone, while 12 or 17% were rated as negative. In the fourth theme, Negotiating Environments, family participants offered 108 comments or 18% of the overall 611 comments. Of the 108 comments, the bulk of the comments (67 or 62%) assigned to this theme were positive. Twenty-seven (27 or 25%) of these comments were neutral. Fourteen (14 or 13%) of the comments related to this theme were negative in nature.

Family participants provided a total of 32 (5%) comments in the fifth theme, Role Models and Mentors. Of these 32 comments, 29 (91%) were positive. Three (3 or 9%) of the comments were neutral. Family participants did not provide any negative comments within this theme. For the sixth theme, Faith in God/Spiritual Support, family members contributed 40 (7%)comments. Thirty-five (35 or 87%) of these were positive, three (3 or 8%) were neutral, while two (2 or 5%) were rated as negative in tone.

In the seventh theme, Factors of Motivation, family participants offered five (5 or 1%) comments. Four (4 or 80%) of these comments were positive in tone, one (1 or 20%) was neutral. Family participants did not report negative comments for this theme. Finally, family participants in this study

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offered 80 (13%) comments on Macro Cultural Perspectives on

Race. Of this total, 16 (20%) were positive in nature, 52 or

65% of these comments were neutral and the remaining 12 or 15%

were negative in tone (see Table 7).

The results of both rural and urban participants are

similar in this study. No analysis was conducted on the

differences among sample groups.

In summary, the results from student and family participants

provide some interesting information about the role family plays in the

success of African American college students. The final chapter of

this study discusses these results and their implications for future

practice and research.

Table 7

Numbers and Percentages of Comments from All Family Members by
Theme and Direction of Support (N=611)

_____

Theme	n	Percent

_____

Family Support and Influence	265	43
Positive	196	
Neutral	33	
Negative	36	
Sense of Community	8	1
Positive	8	
Neutral	0	
Negative	0	
Family Investment and Expectations	73	12
Positive	44	
Neutral	17	
Negative	12	
Negotiating Environments	108	18
Positive	37	
Neutral	17	
Negative	6	
Role Models and Mentors	32	5
Positive	29	
Neutral	3	
Negative	0	
Faith in God/Spiritual	40	7
Positive	35	
Neutral	3	
Negative	2	

Table 7 Continued

Numbers and Percentages of Comments from All Family Members by Theme and Direction of Support (N=611)
_____

Theme	n	Percent
Factors of Motivation	5	1
Positive	4	
Neutral	1	
Negative	0	
Macro Cultural Perspectives		
On Race	80	13
Positive	16	
Neutral	52	
Negative	12	
Total	611	100%

_____

CHAPTER SEVEN

Discussion, Limitations and Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships that African American college students have with significant family members and how these relationships influence students' persistence in college. Using grounded theory methodology, the study was designed to identify the factors that affect African American college students' ability to stay in school. Thus, the research question for this study was: How does the relationship with significant members of the family affect African American college students' ability to stay in school?

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings of the present study. The chapter is divided into five sections. In the first section, the relation of this research to previous literature is presented. The second section provides a collective analysis of emergent themes. The next section presents implications for practice, research, and theory. In the fourth section, limitations of this study are provided. Finally, concluding remarks are offered in the fifth section.

Relation of the Study to Previous Literature

The findings of the present study are consistent with previous studies reported in the literature. For instance, both student and family respondents suggested in their comments that family members expected high levels of involvement in the

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students' academic life. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Hrabowski, Maton, & Grief, 1998; Teachman,1998) in which parents played active roles in their students' academic lives.

The results of this study are also consistent with previous research related to family responsibilities (Levin, Levin, & Scalia, 1997). In those prior studies, students who had responsibilities to families reported greater academic stress. In the present study, some student participants commented that family members occasionally requested assistance with domestic responsibilities (e.g., providing transportation for relatives and sending money home). This finding was linked to low achieving students in this study. That is, the participants who reported higher levels of responsibilities to family also reported lower GPAs. These data suggest that interactions with family members may influence students' persistence in college.

The findings of the present study are also related to studies on family involvement by gender (Pearson & Dellmann-Jenkins, 1997; Lango, 1995). Previous studies have reported the influence of women in African American families. Overwhelmingly, student participants in this study cited the influence and assistance of mothers in their ability to remain in school.

Another consistency of the findings, as they relate to previous research, is in the area of social isolation. The

findings of the present study support previous conclusions that African American students seek the assistance of faculty, staff, and peers to reduce feelings of isolation and alienation (Sedlacek, 1987). Respondents commented on the importance of developing community with a critical mass of other African Americans on campus.

The results of the current research are also related to previous scholarship on social support. Student and family participants commented on the value of providing coping assistance to African American students on a predominately White campus. This finding is consistent with previous research (Carroll, 1998; Cobb, 1976; Jackson & Swan, 1991) where minority students reported the importance of family support when dealing with a majority culture on campus.

The findings of the current study are also consistent with previous findings about high academic and social expectations set by family members (Fuligni, 1997). Respondents suggested that family members, particularly mothers established high expectations that influenced their persistence.

On the other hand, however, some of the findings of this study contradict previous work in the literature. For example, Tinto (1993) suggested the need for students to be fully integrated into the institutional culture. The findings of this study suggest that the African American students did not fully

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integrate into the larger campus culture, but benefited from the interactions with other African Americans and liberal Whites on their respective campuses.

So it would seem that individual themes identified in the present study can be compared to prior studies on African American college students. But the purpose of this study was to examine the themes collectively to explain the role of family in the success of African American college students. The next section of this chapter provides collective analysis of comments by theme.

Collective Results of Participants

Thirty-eight (38) participants interviewed for this study. Rural and urban participants provided a sum total of 1,801 comments. Of this total, 661 (36.7%) comments were devoted to Family Support and Influence. Participants provided 422 positive comments for this theme. In the second theme, Sense of Community, respondents offered 57 (3.2%) comments. The majority of comments (40) in this category were positive.

In Family Investment and Expectations, respondents uttered 202 (11.2%) comments. Of these comments, 121 were positive. For the fourth theme, Negotiating Environments, respondents provided a range of 441 (24.5%) comments. Of these comments 173 were positive, 144 were neutral, while 124 were negative.

Role Models and Mentors gleaned 94 (5.2%) comments. These comments (79) were by far positive in nature. Within the theme of Faith in God/Spiritual Support, respondents provided 94 (5.2%) comments. Of these comments, 81 were positive in tone.

In the seventh theme, Factors of Motivation, respondents provided 51 (2.8%) comments. Of these comments, 29 were positive. On Macro Cultural Perspectives on Race, respondents provided 201 (11.2%) Most of the comments in this category were neutral(96) and negative (77). Table 8 provides a summary of the collective frequencies by theme. The themes can be used to explain how the family influences success among African American college students.

Family Support and Influence

Student and family participants stated that this theme consisted of the ongoing encouragement, moral, social, and financial support students need to persist in college. Most participants viewed the family unit as a sounding board, the place to seek advice on personal matters. This theme also related to a core set of family values instilled from home and brought to higher education.

Table 8

Numbers and Percentages of Comments from All Students and Family
Members by Theme and Direction of Support (N=1,801)

Theme	n	Percent
Family Support and Influence	661	36.7
Positive 422		
Neutral 132		
Negative 107		
Sense of Community	57	3.2
Positive 40		
Neutral 4		
Negative 13		
Family Investment and Expectations	202	11.2
Positive 121		
Neutral 49		
Negative 32		
Negotiating Environments	441	24.5
Positive 173		
Neutral 144		
Negative 124		
Role Models and Mentors	94	5.2
Positive 79		
Neutral 12		
Negative 3		
Faith in God/Spiritual Support	94	5.2
Positive 81		
Neutral 10		
Negative 3		

Table 8 Continued

Numbers and Percentages of Comments from All Students and Family
Members by Theme and Direction of Support (N=1,801)

Theme	n	Percent
Factors of Motivation	51	2.8
Positive 29		
Neutral 5		
Negative 17		
Macro Cultural		
Perspectives on Race	201	11.2
Positive 28		
Neutral 96		
Negative 77		
Total	1,801	100.00

Both student and family participants broadly defined family. In this study, family members who were influential in students' lives included parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and siblings. Family members were also loosely described to include extended kin, such as cousins and fictive kin like godparents and church members, and other women in the birth mother's friendship network.

The data clearly revealed the dominant role of mothers and grandmothers in providing support to the students in this research project. The historical nature of the Black matriarchy in guiding the family is a possible explanation for the overwhelming support and involvement of African American women in the lives of college students. In addition to the presence and influence of mothers and grandmothers in African American students' lives, the researcher also explored the uniqueness within African American family relationships.

When student and family participants were asked if the acts of support they reported were typical, most participants responded in both an affirmative and negative fashion. In general, the respondents stated that their family relationships were typical of most African Americans. That is, the manner in which family is defined and the helping tradition within the Black family were deemed typical by participants. On the other hand, however, participants viewed their family experiences as

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atypical, when compared to their White counterparts. For example, the following quote suggests an authoritarian form of parenting:

> I think Black parents are very compassionate. We help our children. We do not let our kids grow up. We try to do the best that we can do for them. But we are tough. We are stern. (Urban Mother)

Finally, both student and family participants suggested that African American Family Support and Influence was an important factor for student persistence.

Although the study was not designed to compare differences in family support and Grade Point Average (GPA), it is interesting to note the following trend. The researcher observed that student participants with low GPAs (1.75-2.00, on a 4.0 scale) reported fewer positive comments and more negative comments related to Family Support and Influence. This would suggest that when family influence is negative, academic success is threatened. Hence, it would seem that family support is an important factor in the success of African American college students, but that influence needs to be positive in tone.

Sense of Community

In the second theme, Sense of Community, both rural and urban participants indicated the importance of African American students developing meaningful friendships and working relationships with other African American students and faculty.

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Most student participants reported that relationships developed with other African Americans on campus provided them a sense of belonging and grounding. One possible reason for this phenomenon is the feeling of isolation and alienation associated with predominately White universities. Fostering within-race cultural bonds among African American students and faculty developed community and a cultural frame of reference in a predominately White setting. Nurturing this Sense of Community enhanced student persistence.

It is also noteworthy to mention the creation of family by students in a university setting. Rural and urban students discussed the role of African American students and faculty and how some are viewed as fictive kin. In most cases, students who adopted others as fictive family members adhered to guidance and sought support from these individuals. Students valued support from fictive family members in the same manner as they valued support from blood relatives. One possible explanation for this important role that fictive kin play in the lives of African American college students is the nature of communal relationships among most African Americans. Communal relationships among Blacks reflect behaviors that have survived since slave communities. This finding is consistent with previous research (Stack, 1974; Sedlacek, 1987; Chatters, Taylor & Jayakody, 1994) related to community among African Americans.

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Family Investment and Expectations

Family Investment and Expectations is the third factor related to student persistence in this study. This theme involves the economic, social and emotional investment family members place in the lives of students. It also involves the returns on family investments or expectations of such returns.

In most situations, particularly with rural participants, it was important for students to remain in school and graduate from their respective institution. This was the case, in many instances because the student was either a first generation college student or the first in the family to attend a predominately White institution. In this theme, the entire family was viewed as a participant in higher education, as suggested by one of the sub-themes in this theme, vicarious matriculation. This finding is consistent with previous research conducted by Teachman (1998), particularly as it relates to families setting parameters and expectations for students. Hence, when students believe that their success in college is providing returns on their families' investment in them, they are more likely to persist and succeed in college.

Negotiating Environments

The fourth factor related to African American students' ability to persist in college focused on their ability to Negotiate Environments. One such environment identified by the

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participants related to the academic environment. This factor is directly linked to students' ability to successfully navigate through the system of higher education. For example, some student participants stressed the importance of aligning themselves with liberal White students in study groups and class projects. One possible explanation for this behavior is the perception that White students may be privy to information that is not accessible to Black students. Scott (1995) codified this behavior as playing the game.

The researcher observed that rural students were not as socially satisfied as urban students. The difference likely has to do with the one school being in a rural area and the other in the city.

In general, then, it would seem that students need to be encouraged by families to associate with White students if such partnerships will help them navigate the academic environment of higher education. Moreover, families that can help students identify social support in the form of Black cultural and social events, either on-campus or in the local community will be providing a service to their students.

Role Models and Mentors

Student and family participants alike stressed the need for Role Models and Mentors. Students attributed their ability to persist, in part, to their involvement with Role Models and

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Mentors. This has involved a two-pronged approach. On one hand, the researcher discovered that students' desire to remain in school was linked to the sense of responsibility to be Role Models; that they had to succeed or make it in college for the sake of younger siblings and cousins.

Some respondents reported that this was a positive and negative responsibility to bear. From a positive perspective, persisting in college and being a role model to others engendered a sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). On the other hand, being viewed as the family icon was a source of stress for some student participants in this study.

The other dimension related to this theme was the responsibility of family members to serve as Role Models and Mentors. Students reported that the examples family members provided in terms of how to cope with life and succeed inspired them. This finding was particularly poignant for students whose parents were college educated. In general, Black students need to serve as role models and need to have role models in their lives if they are to succeed in higher education.

Faith in God/Spiritual Support

It was no surprise that spirituality emerged as a theme in this study. Faith in God/Spiritual Support was viewed as an anchor and source of comfort, as reported by most of the respondents. Prayer, participation in religious services, and

private devotions were valued among participants in this study. In general, it is reasonable to conclude that Black students who have a faith in God and who receive spiritual support from families and others are more likely to succeed in college.

Factors of Motivation

The data revealed from this theme suggest that there are external forces beyond the university that influence students' willingness to persist. These forces may include escape from a negative environment, the promise of obtaining a good job, and heeding the warnings from others who were not successful in college. These forces are likely beyond the control of families, as well, but they are nevertheless important to note in this model of Black college student success. To the degree that families can understand how external factors influence student success, they might better understand how to appropriately support their students.

Macro Cultural Perspectives on Race

The findings related to this theme suggest several possibilities for future research. Participants reported their general perceptions of the larger American culture on race, perceptions of discrimination, and the role that dynamics of race play on a predominately White campus. Realistically evaluating issues of race may influence students' participation in higher education (Sedlacek, 1987).

Nevertheless, both students and their families should be aware that general perceptions of race and society influence Black students' success in college. Frank discussion of these perceptions between students and families may provide students with support to cope with their perceptions of discrimination. Families who simply reinforce the existence of racial bias without providing students an opportunity to understand and deal with that bias may be doing a disservice to their students.

In summary, the eight themes that emerged from this study can be used collectively to paint a picture of what Black students need from families in order to succeed in college. In general, they need unconditional support from family members. Students need to develop partnerships with faculty, staff, and students. Families need to assist students in developing skills to manage their academic and social environments. Students will be better served by family members setting high expectations for achievement. Families members need to support Black college students by role modeling appropriate behavior for success and encourage students to be role models for siblings and cousins. Students and family members need to sustain acts of faith. Both students and family members need to maintain motivating factors for student success. Finally, family members may assist students by providing them with realistic appraisals of race in society.

Implications of the Study

The results of the present study hold several implications for future practice, research and theory. In terms of practice, several constituencies might benefit from the results of the study, including admissions officers, African American family members, Black faculty and administrators, and academic administrators who deal with issues of African American student retention and success.

The first group includes those higher education administrators concerned with the recruitment and admission of African American students. Admissions officers may benefit from these data, as participants revealed that enrollment in higher education is a family venture. Offices of admissions might consider recruitment programs targeted at the entire family, rather than student specific programs.

Professionals who develop orientation programs for student might also benefit from the results of the study. They may develop pre-admission initiatives related to students' accelerated awareness of race, which could be positive or negative. University administrators should make sure that family members and prospective students are apprised of issues related to campus climate.

African American family members and students may use the data from this study. It might be beneficial for these groups to

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examine family practices and determine areas for improvement that support student persistence in college.

For example, the results of this study suggest a lack of meaningful participation from male family members in the lives of Black college students. Understanding this gap in the family support structure may prompt students and families to seek out support from other Black males, perhaps fictive kin or Black faculty and staff.

This leads directly to the implications of the study for Black faculty and staff. These people may wish to better understand that they serve not only as role models and mentors for African American students on their campuses, but in the case of Black university personnel, they may serve as fictive kin. Knowing how they are viewed by Black students and their families may enable Black faculty and staff members to provide the appropriate kinds of support to Black students on their campuses in appropriate amounts.

Finally, those who deal with the retention and success of Black students on college campuses might benefit from the results of this study. Understanding issues of family support as African Americans perceive them may warrant the design and implementation of new programs to promote family support of Black students on predominately White campuses.

In addition to the implications of the study for practice, the findings also suggest future research endeavors. For example, the present study revealed that Black faculty and staff frequently serve as fictive kin of Black students on PWIs. That is, they serve in a sort of *in loco parentis* relationship with students. The implications of such relationships might be pursued in future research.

Another area for consideration is the development of a quantitative study. Survey research, for example, might be useful in assessing the importance of each of the factors uncovered in the present study from a much larger number of participants. It might be useful to know if the factors identified from the present study are relevant to Black students at institutions other than PWIs for example. Future research might also include a study on using the factors and how they interact so a model can be developed.

Finally, the implications of the present findings for future theory are important to note. This study yielded findings that were used to identify the role family plays in the success of Black college students. The model needs to be confirmed through future investigations that explore each of the components (e.g., Role Models and Mentors) and their relevance to Black student success. It is possible that some of the themes

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might in fact emerge as models themselves rather than components of a larger model.

Perhaps most important, however, is the fact that there simply needs to be more theoretical work conducted to examine issues related to Black students in college. This study explored the role that family plays in the success of African American college students. But families are only one component of the Black student experience. More grounded research on the other components of the collegiate experience (e.g., the academic realm) is needed to more fully explain the Black college student experience.

In general, then, the present study had implications for future practice and it also suggested avenues for future research and theory. Nonetheless, the study had it limitations.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of this study was the nature of its design. This study used qualitative research methods and, as with all qualitative studies, the results are generalizable only to the particular samples within this study.

Other limitations also relate to the qualitative nature of the study. For example, it was possible that the interview protocol did not include questions that would lead participants to talk about other elements related to the role of family. If this occurred, the results might have been influenced.

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Likewise, it is possible that participants interpreted questions differently than the researcher intended. If so, this might have influenced their responses and hence influenced the results of the study.

Finally, but perhaps most important, it is possible that the researcher's own biases influenced either the data collection or data analysis process. The researcher is African American. Since his race was evident to participants, it is possible that respondents provided information that was less than candid or that reflected what they thought the researcher was seeking.

Being Black was beneficial in gaining access to the participants. On the other hand, however, respondents might have assumed that the researcher knew all about the complexities of being Black and may not have been as forthcoming in providing data. It was also possible that the researcher's own life experiences influenced the way he perceived the findings. If either of these eventualities occurred, the results would likely have been influenced. Despite these limitations, however, the study provided some important information about African American college students.

Conclusions

This study identified factors to explain the role of significant family members in the life of Black college students

and factors that enhance student persistence. If family members provide and students receive and maximize the support of family members, they will persist in college. Developing community and camaraderie among African Americans at White campuses appears to enhance students' ability to remain in school.

The cultural dynamics of family are different for African Americans, compared to their White counterparts. Defining, involving and maintaining family relationships while in college appears to be different for Blacks. More research is needed to examine the complexities of ethnicity, family relations, and participation in higher education.

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Letter to Student Participants

1704 Emerald Street
Blacksburg, Virginia 24060
Date

Dear_____:

     I am a doctoral student in the College of Human Resources and Education at Virginia Tech. This semester I am conducting interviews on the role of the African American family in the life of college students. The interview will last approximately 60 – 75 minutes. As an incentive for your participation, you will be paid ten dollars ($10) for your participation.

     Attached for your review is an informed consent document. Please review at your convenience. Within the next week, I will contact you concerning your availability.

    Sincerely,

    Michael K. Herndon

    Attachments (1)

Appendix B

Letter to Family Participants

1704 Emerald Street
Blacksburg, Virginia 24060
Date

Dear_____:

 I am a doctoral student in the College of Human Resources and Education at Virginia Tech. This semester I am conducting telephone interviews on the role of the African American family in the life of college students. I recently interviewed [name of student]. You were recommended by [name of student] to complete the interview from your family. The interview will last approximately 60 – 75 minutes. Attached for your review is an informed consent document. Please review at your convenience. Within the next week, I will contact you concerning your availability.

 Sincerely,

 Michael K. Herndon

 Attachments (1)

Appendix C

Student Demographic Information

Name of Participant_____

Institution_____

Major_____ GPA_____

Number of years in college_____

Sex_____ Age_____

Dependent Student Status_____ Independent Student
Status_____

Marital Status_____

Number of children_____ Ages_____

Number of family members living in household _____

Number of family members living outside of household_____

Frequency of contact with family_____

Kinds of contact_____

Distance from family (miles)_____

Commuter Student_____ Residential Student_____

Mailing Address_____

_____

Telephone_____E-mail_____

Date of Interview_____

Location_____

Student Protocol

1. I am interested in the role of your family and your life as a student. Let's begin by me asking you to describe ways that your family provides support to you.

2. Do you think that the relationship your family has with you while in college is typical or atypical?

3. Describe your role as a student?

4. Describe your role as a family member?

5. How do you handle conflicts between your role as a student and your role as a family member when they occur?

       Probe: Can you give me an example when your role as a student came in conflict with your role as a family member?

6. How much do you think that your family influences your behavior as a college student?

      Probe: How much do you think that your behavior has been influenced by experiences at the university?

7. Describe your view of the family's responsibility for supporting you while in college?

8. Describe the type of support you expect your family members to provide during your transition from college to the "real world."

Appendix D

Family Member Demographic Information

Name of Participant_____

Family Member of Student Attending_____

Highest Level of Completed Education_____

Number of family members who have attended college_____

Sex_____ In what year were you born? _____

Occupation_____

Marital Status_____

Number of children_____ Ages_____

Number of family members living in household _____

Number of family members living outside of household_____

Frequency of contact with [student's name]_____

Kinds of contact_____

Distance from [student's name]
(miles)_____

Mailing
Address_____

_____

Telephone_____ E-mail_____

Date of Telephone Interview_____

Location_____

Family Member Protocol

1. I am interested in the role of your family in [student's name]' life as a student. Let's begin by me asking you to describe ways that your family provides support to [student's name].

2. Do you think that the relationship your family has with [student's name] while in college is typical or atypical?

3. Describe [student's name] as a student?

4. Describe [student's name] as a family member?

5. How do you handle conflicts between [student's name]' role as a student and [student's name]' role as a family member when they occur?

Probe: Can you give me an example when [student's name]' role as a student came in conflict with [student's]'role as a family member?

6. How much do you think that [student's name]' behavior as a college student is influenced by your family?

Probe: How much do you think [student's]' behavior has been influenced by experiences at the university?

7. Describe your view of the family's responsibility for supporting [student's name] during college?

8. Describe the type of support you expect your family members to provide [student's name] during the transition from college to the "real world."

Appendix E

Follow-up Letter to Participants

1704 Emerald Street
Blacksburg, Virginia 24060
Date

Dear_____:

Thank you for your recent participation in the interview related to the role of African American families in the life of college students. Attached for your review is your interview transcript. Please check to be sure that the transcript accurately reflects your thoughts on the topic. If there are any additions or deletions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Michael K. Herndon
Mherndon@vt.edu
540-231-7062

Attachments (1)

Appendix F

Curriculum Vitae

Michael Keith Herndon
1704 Emerald Street
Blacksburg, Virginia 24060
540-951-5677 Home
540-231-7062 Work

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy: Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, Higher Education and Student Affairs Program, May 2001, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia

Dissertation: The Role of Family in the Success of African American College Students

Master of Education: Student Development in Higher Education, May 1988, Howard University, Washington, D. C.

Bachelor of Arts: Communications, May 1986, Howard University, Washington, D. C.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Traditional African American family values

Campus climate issues related to race, gender, and civility

TEACHING INTERESTS

The civil rights movement in Virginia
Engendering masculinity
Citizen leadership
Multicultural communication

EXPERIENCE

Academic Advisor, Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia, 1997 – present

Graduate Assistant, Center for Interdisciplinary Studies,

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia, 1995 – 1997

Residence Education Coordinator, Division of Student Affairs, Longwood College, Farmville, Virginia, 1989-1995

Longwood Seminar Leader, Division of Academic Affairs, Longwood College, Farmville, Virginia, 1990-1995.

Administrative Assistant, Office of Residence Life, Howard University, Washington, D.C., 1988-1989

Graduate Assistant, Office of Residence Life, Howard University, Washington, D.C., 1986-1988

Intern, Montgomery County Detention Center, Rockville, Maryland, 1987

Intern, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Washington, D. C., 1985

Substitute Teacher, Prince Edward County Public Schools, Farmville, Virginia, 1982-1986

CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

Volunteer, New River Valley Detention Home, Christiansburg, Virginia, 1998 to present

Member, Prince Edward County School Board, Farmville, Virginia, 1990-1995.

PRESENTATIONS

Order My Steps: An Analysis of Step Teams in the Black Church, First National Conference on Stepping, Virginia Tech, April 2001

Lessons from the Old School: Reclaiming Our Destiny, Lay Speaker, St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church, Blacksburg, VA, October 2000.

Advising African American Students, University Advising Task Force, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, August 2000

Involving Alumni in Career Education, National Association of Academic Advisors Regional Conference, Roanoke,

Virginia, April 2000.

Twelve Myths of Male Sexuality, Longwood College Resident Assistant Workshop, Longwood College, Farmville, Virginia, April 1994

Black Fraternities and Sororities: An Institutional Response to the New Membership Intake Process, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Drive-In Workshop, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, April 1991

UNIVERSITY INVOLVEMENT

Curriculum Committee Member, Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2000-present

College of Arts and Sciences Cultural Diversity Committee Member, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1997-1999

Graduate Student Representative to the Board of Visitors, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1997-1998

HONORS

Recipient of the Cultural Diversity Award, College of Arts and Sciences, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2000