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An exploration of the impact of family on the achievement of African American gifted learners originating from low -income environments

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College of William & Mary - School of Education

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AN EXPLORATION OF THE IMPACT OF FAMILY ON THE ACHIEVEMENT

OF AFRICAN AMERICAN GIFTED LEARNERS ORIGINATING FROM

LOW-INCOME ENVIRONMENTS

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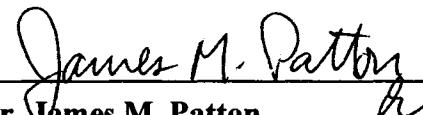Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Joy L. Davis

September 2007

An exploration of the impact of family on the achievement of African American

gifted learners originating from low-income environments

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Approved September 2007 by

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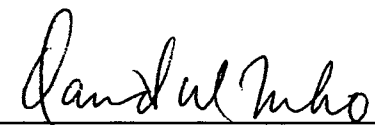Chair of Doctoral Committee

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Dr. James M. Patton

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Dr. David W. Leslie

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Acknowledgements

'I have great faith in a seed, convince me that you have a seed there, and I am prepared to expect wonders'

– Henry David Thoreau

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine what, if any, impact families have on the academic achievement of African American gifted learners from low income environments. This grounded theory study was designed to explore family and student perceptions of a complex set of variables related to families and home environments. The variables explored were based on a conceptual framework developed from previous research related to social capital and its uses within families with limited economic resources. Study participants were junior and senior level high school students and their parents.

Instruments included a demographic questionnaire with open-ended questions, a researcher-developed interview protocol and the Moos Family Environment Scale. Based on the findings, certain 'social capital' resources were revealed: family cohesion; strong relationships with mothers; family to student discussions related to education and positive achievement; the role of the extended family (particularly aunts and cousins); emphasis on religious identity development; and the role of fathers are noted as having impact on school achievement. Another notable source of capital revealed was the intrinsic motivation and resilience of each of the students based on parent and student responses to interview questions.

The most pronounced findings were the role of the mother as nurturer and encourager; the flexible role of extended family members who provide additional support; the emphasis within the households on positive achievement orientation, and certain family traditions which taken together form a cohesive, supportive family

environment, even in the midst of challenging life circumstances. In addition to the social capital provided by families, this study also revealed other sources of positive impact including special school-based programs and internal traits. Implications for future research include the design of a controlled study of African American families of gifted students utilizing the Moos & Moos Family Environment Scale (FES), a study of the support structure provided by mothers of gifted learners across a variety of cultural contexts, and study of the intrinsic motivation and resilience of at-risk African American gifted learners. Implications for educational practice include improving professional development for educators, family and parent education programs, and enhancing guidance and counseling programs for African American and other culturally diverse gifted learners.

Chapter One

Nature of the problem

Introduction

Educators and other child development practitioners generally agree that parent

and family involvement lend crucial support to the success of children in schools

(Epstein, 2001). This premise is based upon experiential involvement and a wide body of

research related to mainstream students and their families for over a century in America's

schools. What is more limited, however, is research examining school and family

interactions within our most at-risk populations, those who are culturally diverse, live in

poverty, and those who speak English as a second language. As our country's schools

increase in diversity, new efforts will be required to make the critical connections

between home and school across cultural groups. These connections will also be

beneficial in efforts to explore resolutions to address contemporary educational problems

intimately connected to these students.

Statement of the Problem

One specific contemporary problem in education is the ever-widening

achievement gap between minority and non-minority populations, and economically

disadvantaged/low socio-economic status (SES) students and middle to upper income

students. A research policy paper published by the American Educational Research

Association (2004) identifies two common threads across successful programs that

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enable high achievement of children of color - a demanding curriculum and a strong social support system that values and promotes academic achievement (p. 4). In a detailed examination and analysis of achievement gap research, Barton (2003) identifies the home learning and home-school connection as important to examine in addressing the 'gap' in achievement between minority and non-minority populations and low income and middle income groups. This conclusion is supported by Epstein's (2001) assertion that it is within the home context that students first begin to express behaviors associated with school achievement and success.

A review of research related to high ability minority and low SES students provides information that appears contradictory in that it describes students who have experienced success in school, despite their disadvantaged status and the fact that they are members of cultural minority groups. This unique group of low socioeconomic and minority students are those who are being provided access to gifted program services and advanced learner programs across the country, in particular African American and Hispanic American children and youth (Castellano, 2002; Ford, Baytops & Harmon, 1997; Tomlinson, Callahan & Lelli,1997). The variables to be revealed in this study have the potential of contributing to a better understanding of some of the underlying factors that contribute to the success of students from these diverse families living under difficult economic, cultural, and psycho-social circumstances.

The study of such variables is imperative for two key reasons. First, there is need for a better understanding of family structure, home environment, achievement-related family beliefs, and patterns of interactions between parents and students that may have impact on the success of culturally diverse and low SES students in schools. Secondly, a

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critical look at these variables may help to shape new constructs of parent and family involvement related to students of similar cultural backgrounds who are at risk of school failure and underachievement.

As a first generation college graduate, my family life was somewhat similar to that of intended participants in this study. With only limited education and financial resources, both of my parents worked to support six children. Living in a tenement apartment during my early years, we survived and thrived without many of the material comforts of middle America during the 1950s and 60s. I attended elementary and junior high school in Newark, New Jersey and later completed high school in a small rural community in the middle peninsula of Virginia. Despite the stresses of economics and racial tensions of the time, my home environment nurtured a great respect and desire to learn within my siblings and myself. Our parents, extended family members, and adults in the neighborhood encouraged us to do well in school so that we could have better lives than their generation.

Education was seen as a 'way out' of current oppressive life in the low-income setting. Education was also seen as the only way that our race could be placed on a more equal footing with the dominant culture. With my family's early recognition of my special gifts came the offer of additional support for special programs, emotional support, and encouragement. The outside influences, which could have taken a toll on my development and placed me at an even greater disadvantage, did not. My relationship with my parents, extended family, older siblings, church leaders and community members played a significant role in encouraging my school achievement and ultimate success.

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Today's youth have additional stressors (i.e., drug culture, gangs, negative peer pressure) with which to contend, thus, nurturance within the home and school settings serve a more critical role than ever. A glance at school achievement data (of the division from which my study participants will be extracted) reveals a number of students from socially, economically and culturally depressed neighborhoods among the high achieving students. Examining the specific home and family context of these students may shed some light on what makes them different and how are they better able to succeed than their peers from similar environments.

Research and development of theoretical constructs regarding giftedness has primarily been devoted to enhancing identification protocols and special program models to increase identification and services to targeted at-risk populations in gifted programs (Castellano, 2002; Ford, 1996). In an examination of literature and theoretical constructs regarding family involvement and student achievement, there are some studies that begin to shed light on the elusive phenomenon of non-mainstream families and the impact of their involvement in the success of their high achieving children. While there is much diversity within any single group, and there may be a tendency to overgeneralize, some researchers have found patterns within families of high risk, high potential populations that may illuminate why some students are more successful than others. Examining the differences between school and family communication and nurturance strategies may enhance the ability of schools and families to work together to improve achievement opportunities for all students. To better understand the role of the family in a student's academic achievement, it is necessary to design a study using grounded theory and case study methods.

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Employing a socio-cultural approach to the study of this phenomenon will enable this researcher to look more closely at personal and family aspirations; differential behaviors at home and school; intensity of faith-based involvement; amount of parental monitoring and direct involvement with school; family communication patterns and the role of the extended family. Other thematic foci may emerge as data from the study are analyzed. The research hypothesis is that student achievement and success (as measured by grades, involvement in extra curricular activities, participation in competitive opportunities, and plans for post-secondary education) is impacted by certain patterns of behavior and practices in families of at-risk students. Specific research questions are:

1. *What are the demographic characteristics of high achieving low-income African American students at junior and senior level in a Southeastern Virginia school district?*

2. *How do students describe their home environment and its influence on their achievement?*

3. *What family patterns and interactions do participants report?*

4. *What are the family traditions and values that influence/impact school achievement?*

5. *What are barriers and facilitators in the home environment that influence school achievement?*

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Purpose of study

The purpose of this grounded theory study is to discover what, if any, impact families have on the successful school achievement of African American gifted. At this stage of the research the family impact will be generally defined as 'social capital' (Coleman, 1988; Yan, 1999). In general, social capital is a range of resources, cultural, inherent, and behavioral that may positively influence the school achievement of the identified students. The specific social capital constructs that will be examined are: family to student discussions; family traditions and values; family role in racial identity development; religious belief systems; and other constructs that may emerge and be perceived to contribute to the student's school achievement.

Methodology

Using a socio-cultural approach to grounded theory and case study research, the design will enable the researcher to collect in-depth data from – student records, students, family members, and parents/legal guardians and other adults within the home. This qualitative study process is used to examine perceptions of families and students as they occur in the natural setting, allowing for rich, complex findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Initially, twenty-five students will be selected to complete a family/home environment questionnaire. This questionnaire will provide student and family demographics. The questionnaire will also allow students to respond to general questions related to family influence on student achievement.

Cases will be selected from the first group based on willingness to participate,

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uniqueness of each case, the ability of the student to articulate responses to open-ended questions on the questionnaire and level of advanced coursework the student has been enrolled in. With the use of multiple cases, the phenomenon of family influence on student achievement will be observed across different families who share some similar traits.

The second phase of the study will be conducting in-home interviews with students and families. In-home interviews will give 'voice' to the study results, enabling the researcher to gather information that holds deeper meaning for each participating family. The interview questions will be developed to provide responses related to parent-student interaction patterns, discipline strategies, role of family in development of racial identity, teaching of values, and guidance for future education and career direction. Case study students will also be interviewed separately to ascertain their responses to the same indicators. Each interview will conclude by allowing the interviewee to provide any other information that they believe may be important in evaluating the family's level of influence on the student's academic achievement.

Conceptual Framework

As noted earlier, a 'social capital' conceptual framework will be used to gather data which would provide deeper meaning of the influence of families on their student's school achievement. This framework is a flexible paradigm designed from a review and compilation of research of the past two decades (Coleman, 1988, Yin ,1999). It describes a complex array of resources that are inherent within the African American community. The resources, upon closer examination can be described as those which have contributed to the survival of the race through generations of oppressive economic and discriminatory

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conditions in this country. These environmental, behavioral, and cultural constructs

originate from the unique strategies developed and utilized by African American families,

in particular, those living with limited economic resources, to enhance their own living

conditions and that of their offspring, household at large, extended family and

community. A more detailed description of the framework appears in Chapter Three.

Sample

Students participating in the study were enrolled in high schools in a mid-size

southeastern Virginia school district where the school division enrollment is 23,102

students. Approximately 63% of the student population is black, 32% white, the

remaining 5% is comprised of Hispanic and other ethnic groups. Of the total population,

8% of the students are identified as intellectually gifted, grades 2-12. Of the total

population of gifted students, 55% are white, 38% black and 7% of other ethnic groups.

These data indicate that black students are underrepresented in the school division's

gifted programs by approximately 25%.

Using purposeful sampling, students selected for the study met the same initial

criteria- they were a) members of African American families; b) had a cumulative grade

point average of 3.5; c) were identified as gifted according to school division criteria or

have ability and/or achievement scores one standard deviation above the norm, and d)

originated from a Title I feeder school based on their mailing address. Students were also

current juniors or seniors at one of four high schools in the district.

Teachers and guidance counselors in these schools served as the contact in

identifying potential students from the division's database of identified gifted students.

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Once the sampling group was selected, the student's feeder elementary and middle school was identified verified based on local address. Students originating from feeder schools identified as Title I schools became the initial pool of twenty-five students. These students and their parent or legal guardian received a letter of invitation to participate, including the permission form and initial demographic questionnaire. An analysis of the questionnaire data determined the best candidates for the five (5) case studies.

Definition of terms

Key terms used in this study are defined below to present meanings relevant to the study.

- **Family values:** Principles and standards held by families to guide development of character and deemed important to family members' achievement and success. (Gibbs, 1989; Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993; Majoribanks, 1992; McAdoo, 1991; Kitano & Lewis, 2005).

- **Ethnicity:** Study will focus on African American students whose parents are Native Americans who claim a primary African descent. In the literature, the term African American is used interchangeably for black. Within the context of this study, both terms are appropriate (Ford, 1996).

- **Gifted:** The division's criteria for identification as gifted includes achievement or ability scores one standard deviation above norm: 116 or higher, parent and/or teacher ratings indicating exceptional potential and exemplary grades (Reis, Colbert, & Hebert, 2005).

- **Parenting style:** The manner in which parents provide direct guidance, discipline, or assistance to children in the home environment (Mandara, 2006; Olszewski-Kubilius, 2002, Sloane, 1985)

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- **Economically disadvantaged/low socio economic status:** Meeting Federal guidelines for Free and Reduced lunch – qualifying income levels (United States Department of Agriculture, 2006).

- **Moos & Moos Family environment scale:** A social climate scale which can be *'used to describe family social environments, to contrast parents' and children's perceptions, and to compare actual and preferred family climates'* (Moos & Moos, p. 5).

- **Social capital:** refers to the social resources generally provided by parents and families to supervise, monitor, advise and provide leadership for youth (Coleman, 1988).

- **Family:** 'a functional group situation in which opportunities exist for at least economic and instrumental cooperation, informal communication, and reciprocated social emotional obligations among members' (Wilson & Tolson, 1990)

Contributions to Gifted Education

This study has the potential to significantly add to the theoretical constructs relevant to parent and family influence on the achievement of African American gifted students. Additionally, as some research has suggested, other culturally diverse students share similar familial and environmental contexts as those included in this study. Thus, the research also will lead to better understanding of the academic, familial and environmental influences of students across culturally diverse groups and those from within economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The field of gifted education will also

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benefit from the broadened perspective engendered by the examination of multiple contexts – racial, ethnic, familial, social, intellectual, and the value of these combined variables to a comprehensive understanding of the nature and needs of gifted learners. Professional development in gifted education may also be impacted as it broadens its scope to include school division level administrators and sociologists, psychologists, and other child development practitioners to focus on these learners.

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Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature and Research

To assume that poverty is equivalent to poor parenting and absence of family strength is an insult to the centuries of adaptive processes that oppressed families in the United States have used to protect their children from discrimination and to nurture family bonds and children's individual strengths.

The absence of such insight from the literature on families reflects not only the deficit perspective of the research community as a whole, but also the lack of interest in research methodologies that can capture the dynamic, interpersonal aspects of family life. It is easy to measure children's emergent literacy skills or toxins in the blood. Factors such as internal resilience, interpersonal affiliation, and creativity are much harder to quantify and are generally not seen as the stuff of science. (Harry, Klingner, Hart, 2005, p. 103)

Introduction

The literature reviewed presents a complex array of constructs related to the achievement of African American students and their families. The strands that are examined are: Identification of African American gifted students, curriculum and instruction; racism and gifted education; African American families; values, social capital, and family strengths; role of the extended family; African American families and character development of their youth; and the role of the family in talent development. The lines between each of the strands are not clear-cut, however, for the researcher to completely explore the questions posed, it was important to create the specific subheadings. The research reviewed covers a broad scope of literature within the fields of education, sociology, and psychology.

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Identifying giftedness in African American students

Nearly a century ago, researchers in the fields of education and social science began to explore the controversial topic of high intelligence among Negro children. In response to widespread theories of intellectual inferiority of Negroes, Horace Mann Bond produced a series of articles to dispute the 'ill-founded' conclusions based on IQ test results used to classify African-Americans as intellectually inferior (as cited in Kearney & LeBlanc, 1993). Bond's work is noted as the first published account of intellectually gifted African American children (Kearney & LeBlanc, 1993).

In the 1930s, Lillian Steele Proctor published an extensive study of gifted African American children that was the first to appear in research literature (as cited in Kearney & LeBlanc, 1993). The study was written while Proctor was a graduate student at the University of Chicago. Proctor selected 30 students from among 40 segregated schools in the District of Columbia to participate in the study. Four of the children in Proctor's group received intelligence test scores above 150. Similarly, as a doctoral student, Martin D. Jenkins developed a series of writings examining a group of highly gifted African American children from the racially segregated, low-income area of the South Side of Chicago. Jenkins' dissertation produced case studies of Negro children of superior intelligence, one of which was a female with an I.Q of 200 as measured by the Stanford-Binet intelligence test (Jenkins, 1943). The case study of the female student with the exceptional IQ became the first published case study of a gifted African American child (Witty & Jenkins, 1935).

Thomas (1984) also analyzed this early research of scholars who worked to provide empirical evidence of the intellectual development of persons of Negro descent

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and to refute previously published research about the mental inferiority of the black race. Remarkably, it was noted that parents of these highly intelligent children worked a variety of careers as laborers (semi-skilled and skilled) and professionals living in urban areas. In the conclusion, it was noted that, in general, 'the functioning of these highly intelligent students was greatly enhanced when environmental conditions were favorable' (as cited by Thomas, p. 488). This body of literature spanned over a period of thirty years and provided groundbreaking research and theoretical constructs laying the foundation for the study of the enigma of giftedness within the black population.

Building upon this earlier work was other researchers who posited theories related to the identification of giftedness in African American and other culturally diverse learners in two interrelated areas: 1) by utilizing the cultural strengths, world views, and experiences of African Americans (Gay, 1978, Frasier, 1987; Harris & Ford, 1991) and 2) by using multidimensional tools to assess the multidimensional nature of giftedness within these students (Baldwin, 1984; Frasier, 1987; Renzulli, 1973).

New identification protocols that emerged during this time provided the foundation for the field to expand definitional constructs related to giftedness and its measurement. Among the researchers were those who promoted the use of a multiple criteria protocol (Frasier & Passow, 1994; Baldwin, 1987). It became the general consensus that multidimensional screening (using standardized and nonstandardized criteria) would become the preferred method of identifying minority gifted students (Baldwin, 1987). Characterizing these students as 'undiscovered diamonds', it was Baldwin's contention that with appropriate identification protocols and service models, gifted students from culturally diverse, low income environments could become

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successful (Baldwin, 1987). A multidimensional process had the potential of opening

possibilities for exploring newer, more effective instruments for this purpose. Included

among these instruments were tests of creativity, characteristics checklists, teacher,

parent, and peer rating leadership scales as promoted by Blackshear, 1979 and Dabney,

1983 (as cited by Baldwin, 1987).

Additional identification tools revealed in the literature are checklists that

measure intellectual and creative strengths and environmental influences in the lives of

black children and those that describe behavioral characteristics related to specific

sensitivities (Baldwin, Gear, Lucito, 1978; Gay, 1878). In 1976, Hilliard developed a

checklist that reflected his view of the relational style exhibited by black students (i.e.,

tendency to view things in their entirety; preferring to focus on people rather than objects;

tendency to approximate space and time). In his early work in the area of creativity,

Torrance (1977) designed the Checklists of Creative Positives (CCP) from his experience

working with low income, primarily black students. The CCP measured the degree to

which students engaged in problem solving tasks, their ability to improvise, the

expression of feelings, use of creative expressive speech, humor and their originality of

ideas.

As a result of her initial work, Baldwin developed one of the first processes for

documenting multiple criteria, from standardized and nonstandardized sources, the

Baldwin Identification Matrix (BIM). The BIM served as a systematic and practical way

of documenting qualitative and quantitative data collected during the identification

process. Use of such matrices became a widely accepted practice in the field and

contributed greatly to the fair assessment of giftedness in culturally diverse learners

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(Ford, Baytops, & Harmon, 1997). The use of multiple criteria to identify gifted learners represented a major paradigm shift in a field that had been characterized by the use of a single intelligence score as the sole measure of high intelligence (Frasier & Passow, 1994).

The persistent underrepresentation of black students and other at-risk populations was addressed in a nationwide study of state and local programs for gifted learners (VanTassel-Baska, Prillaman & Patton, 1989). The study encouraged a new emphasis within the field to seek out giftedness within all economic classes and ethnic groups. Ford, Baytops, and Harmon (1997) described the under-representation of racially and culturally diverse gifted students as 'one of the most persistent, troubling and controversial issues' in education (p. 201). This problem persists. National statistics show that while black students represented 17% of the nation's total k-12 population, they represent only 3% of the total number of students identified and served in gifted education programs (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2006).

One national effort to address the challenge of under-representation of culturally diverse gifted learners was the passage of the Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Act as part of the Elementary and Secondary Students Act of 1989. Javits grant applications specifically included language to address the needs of students who were economically disadvantaged, limited English proficient, or had disabilities or handicapping conditions, these projects were given 'highest priority' for consideration for funding (as cited by Ford et al, 1997). Using dynamic assessments and multiple criteria identification protocols, culturally sensitive teacher training programs, parent and family involvement programs, Javits grants have contributed to the expansion of services to

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previously underserved gifted learners nationwide (Clasen, 2006; Ford et al, 1997; Swanson, 2006).

Curriculum and instruction for African American gifted learners

In addition to assessing the effectiveness of new tools, researchers developed new understandings of black gifted learners through direct interactions with students in programs. In 1978, Shade (as cited by Frasier, 1989) summarized studies of black achievers and noted that these students felt positive, in control of their destiny, had high levels of aspirations, possessed confidence in their ability to accomplish their goals. More recently, Project Synergy, a research project which served low socio-economic status students in Harlem, New York identified students, worked with children, their parent/guardians and teachers (Borland, Schnur, & Wright, 2000). Among the project findings were 'assertions' describing personal perceptions of student traits, parent feelings about their students' giftedness, and the impact of schooling on the potential for the students' success.

As noted earlier, federal funding through Javits grants have been provided to address this underrepresentation. One recent longitudinal study was designed to address two critical issues related to underrepresentation of certain gifted children: identification and programming (Clasen, 2006). Project STREAM is a program for minority and low-income students who were first identified as gifted in middle school. The goal of this project was to determine the impact of pre-college support programs on later college attendance and success. The study assessed the value and potential impact on academic achievement of a university school pre-college program for participating middle school

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and high school gifted students from minority and low-income backgrounds. Support for the program model has come from a variety of sources. The author cites two historically successful pre-college programs: Upward Bound and A Better Chance (ABC) as having contributed to enabling high ability and gifted minority and low income students in the successful transition between high school and college. Levine and Nidifier, 1996 (as cited by Clasen, 2006) note that both programs reported a significant number of their participants entering post- secondary education, thus experiencing achievement at higher rates than their peers who did not participate in such programs. Results of these specifically designed transition programs show a significant relationship between the level of student involvement in program activities and successful achievement of academic outcomes.

Another uniquely designed Javits grant was Project Athena, a three-year project designed to assess a nontraditional identification protocol for identifying low income learners for gifted programs awarded to the College of William & Mary. In addition to the development of a unique identification protocol, the project also studied the effects of high-level content based curriculum focused on the achievement of diverse learners of varied ability levels. Among the study participants were 2,770 students participating in Title I from a range of school divisions across three states. 53.5% of the participating students were from ethnic minority groups (Bracken, VanTassel-Baska, Brown & Feng, 2007). Using nonverbal measures, Athena identified nearly twice as many Title I gifted as compared to participating districts' identification procedures. Athena's curriculum, while designed for gifted learners, also yielded higher educational outcomes for all learners in the participating districts over the three year period (Bracken et al, 2007).

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Project Breakthrough, a Javits demonstration awarded to the South Carolina Department of Education, provided additional support for the importance of exposure to high-level curriculum for identified 'at-risk' learners. The project's participants were students and teachers from three schools (majority of students in the participating schools were low socioeconomic African American) (Swanson, 2006). Project goals were to improve the performance of low to high achieving students in the areas of math, science, and language arts; and to enable the identification of more low-income African American students as gifted. The result of the three year project has been a threefold increase in the identified gifted population; overall increase in achievement levels of participating students; and attitudinal shifts demonstrated by teachers as they discussed the training, experiences with students after using high level curriculum (Swanson, 2006). Project investigators engaged the expertise of curriculum developers from the College of William and Mary's Center for Gifted Education to train teachers in the use of their Integrated Curriculum Model (VanTassel-Baska, 2003) designed to enhance thinking skills of gifted learners.

After extensive training in the use of the high-level curriculum, teachers utilized the curriculum units with targeted students whose school experience had previously yielded inadequate results. In post implementation interviews, teacher participants remarked that they were surprised at the responses of students once they were taught differently. The teachers commented that students' abilities to make connections, analyze, and retain information taught was greatly improved over previous responses to instruction. The study revealed that project students rose to the challenge of the higher-level curriculum, thus, achievement increased in the content areas covered by the project

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units (Swanson, 2006). Project Breakthrough researchers concluded that as teachers often act as 'gatekeepers' for gifted programs their attitudes and views of children and their potential are key to students being identified and served or being 'shut out' from services. Project teachers faced up to their role in previously focusing on student deficits based on assumed disadvantages caused by race and income status (Swanson, 2006).

Provision of after school, summer and Saturday enrichment experiences have been shared in the literature as important to the success of low income African American and other culturally diverse gifted learners (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2006). In a report of two different supplemental programs, Project Excite and Project LIVE, Olszewski-Kubilius (2006) reported increased access to advanced classes for student participants. The author also noted program sustainability as a problem for students most in need of services.

Perceptions of racism and gifted education

In 2006, Morris examined the continuing influence of race and politics in gifted education. Morris suggests that one of the first steps toward creating more equitable education for all gifted and talented students is to closely examine the racial and cultural assumptions upon which the field of gifted education operates and to consider the impact of racially and culturally biased attitudes on identification and services provided for gifted learners of African American descent (Ford et al, 1997; Morris, 2006). Morris contends that the extent to which researchers and educators consider the impact of these forces in determining who is placed into gifted education can have a direct bearing on whether meaningful solutions are conceptualized and implemented to rectify the gross racial disparities that exist in the field.

The differential school and social experiences of African American gifted learners

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reflecting positive and negative influences on their achievement have also been reviewed (Grantham 2002; Grantham & Ford, 1998; Harmon, 2002). Harmon (2002) provides a descriptive report of the experiences of inner city African American gifted students participating in a gifted program in a predominately white school outside of their neighborhood. Anecdotal comments from students participating in the study also illustrate Morris' thesis regarding racially and culturally biased attitudes and their impact on the experiences of gifted students. The students describe the challenges of attending a gifted program at a predominately white school, their teachers' perceptions of them, and the reaction of peers and others in their social context to their participation in the special program. As a result of the study, the author recommends that teachers become more 'cognizant' of the role of community, develop necessary skills that will better enable them to interface with African American community. Such interface is critical in improving school experiences for gifted learners when placed in specialized programs for the gifted outside of their own neighborhood.

A case study of an African American female illustrates the unique psychosocial and socio-cultural challenges of being an African American and gifted (Grantham & Ford, 1998). The authors closely examine the student's perception of teacher reactions to her identification as a gifted learner and peer interactions to her participation in specialized programming. In this particular student's experiences, the authors emphasize the need for assistance and guidance from adults in her environment to enable her success as a gifted learner.

When black males are identified and they choose to participate in gifted programs, their experience differs from that of African American females and other

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underrepresented groups (Grantham, 2002). To refute the negative comments most

prevalent in theoretical constructs regarding giftedness and at-risk populations, Grantham

(2002) provides a case study of an African American male who expresses satisfaction and

success in a gifted education program. In this case study the student participates in a

gifted program in a small high school in rural Virginia. The researcher explores

motivational issues, school environmental influences, academic experience influences,

and social influence on academic success.

The author suggests that teachers and other educators might learn from his case

study that not all black male students in gifted programs have negative experiences, and

that some do experience high achievement and is relatively popular among their social

peers and within the school environment, in general. The researcher concludes by

suggesting that teachers can help to increase Black male students' motivation as they

acknowledge and nurture their students' academic potential. More research is

recommended to more clearly define other influential factors (family, community, peers)

on the development of giftedness and successful academic achievement of African

American students (Grantham, 2002).

In a qualitative study that included 161 African American parents of K-8 students

and 18 teachers, perceptions of parents and teachers to the parental involvement in

schools are examined (McKay, Atkins, Hawkins, Brown, & Lynn, 2002). The

researchers examined the distinct, yet, overlapping factors associated with parental

involvement. An analysis of interviews with parents and teachers indicated that parental

perceptions of racism and racial socialization were positively related to at home parent

child interactions yet these same racial socialization strategies negatively impacted

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parent-school interactions. Parents in the study reported poor relationships with school personnel, feeling disrespected by school staff, not receiving information needed to 'negotiate' the system (McKay et al, 2002).

In the same study, teacher comments revealed beliefs that these parents were less concerned about their children, based primarily on their limited involvement or lack of participation in school sponsored events. Researchers concluded that parent involvement should explore associations among the interactive, overlapping perceptions of racism, parent community support, and parental involvement in schools. Recommendations for future research include the need to examine the impact of more intensive outreach to parents by school administration and staff. The authors also suggested the development of programs to bring parents and staff together as collaborators in the creation of school goals. Such collaboration, it is suggested, may act to dispel myths and negative perceptions on both sides (McKay et al, 2002).

African American families

Wilson and Tolson (1990) defined a family as 'a functional group situation in which opportunities exist for at least economic and instrumental cooperation, informal communication, and reciprocated social emotional obligations among members' (p 347). In a text devoted to theories and research regarding family competence, it was noted that families have multiple functions and that their structure and processes have important consequences for the child's development (Lewis & Feiring, 2000). A variety of theoretical and measurement models are offered within the text, yet the authors conclude that there is much work to be done. Specifically, they suggest that there is the need to understand and articulate those measures of family functions best related to children's

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educational and social competence. In a comprehensive treatise on African American families, Billingsley delineates a historical view of African American families and their legacy in this country (1992). Providing data and analyses regarding black family typologies, in home parenting practices, economic data, occupation and educational statistics, and a thorough commentary regarding family values, the role of other institutions (e.g., churches, government agencies), Billingsley focuses on the historical strengths of the black family that have enabled it to endure despite external forces impacting its survival in this country since the introduction of slavery (1992).

In 1983, Clark's seminal study examining low socioeconomic Black students' achievement and underachievement in the family context provided new insight into this complex issue. The researcher concluded that black parents of achieving students were straightforward in their efforts to be involved with their children's school experiences; perceived themselves as having the ability to effectively cope with varied circumstances; held positive achievement orientations; set clear expectations for their children and had positive parent-child relations. Clark's study was later supported by VanTassel-Baska (1989) in her examination of low SES black families of gifted students. She also presented evidence of the positive influence of home environment, family to student interaction patterns, the impact of family on student achievement, and the role of extended family members in the development of talent.

Additional studies present descriptions of family-child interaction, culture specific communication patterns, and positive family processes that may impact student achievement (Boykin & Bailey, 2000; Luster & McAdoo, 1996; Slaughter & Epps, 1987; Taylor, Hinton, & Wilson, 1995). Boykin and Bailey define culture-specific strategies

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used successfully by families of African American students to positively influence their academic and intellectual development. A study of forty-one (41) low-income African American children and their caregivers revealed that parent's expectations for their children's' future success in school and parents' perceptions of their children's academic skills were positively correlated with their achievement scores. This study also showed that children who had more books in the home read at a higher level than those with fewer books (Halle, Kurtz-Costes, & Mahoney, 1997).

The experiences of parents of gifted African American students clearly reflect the difficulty parents have accessing services and receiving much needed support (academic and social-emotional) for their children in public school settings (Huff, Houskamp, Watkins, Stanton, & Tavegia, 2004). Parents in this study reported lack of academic support, insensitivity of school personnel to culture of families, inadequate training of teachers and administrators, and difficulty 'navigating the educational system' to obtain services for their gifted children. Relative to intellectual and psychosocial needs of African American gifted learners, the parents in this study expressed that their childrens' teachers were '...unaware of individual differences in terms of student talent, inexperienced with students' uneven development, and unfamiliar with personality and cultural characteristics of gifted African American children' (p. 218).

Parents in the study also noted concern for other African American gifted learners whose parents may lack education and who may have to endure long hours at low-paying work. The perception was that parents with limited resources might not feel empowered and knowledgeable about educational services. Thus, their students may be easily overlooked for gifted education services from which they might benefit. The researchers

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recommend future studies to address the connection between parent advocacy and the numbers of African American children identified as gifted. They also comment on the importance of understanding the incidence of perceived racism on both individual and collective levels and its impact on accessing gifted services for African American gifted learners (Huff, Houskamp, Stanton & Tavegia, 2004).

<div align="center">Values, strengths and social capital</div>

Family 'values' research provides additional insight into the complex social and psychological composition of African American families and communities. Several 'values' of black families are delineated across studies- the importance of religion and spirituality; household elasticity (taking in others who need support and care); importance of the extended family and kinship networks; flexible roles of family members; and the importance of education; resiliency in the face of adversity; and, a strong sense of self and heritage (Billingsley, 1992; Gibbs, 1989; Kitano & Lewis, 2005; Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993; Majoribanks, 1992; McAdoo, 1991; Wilson & Tolson, 1990). These authors suggest that values of African American families be used as intervention foci in the design of family and community involvement plans. Values cited have been noted as consistent with positive child-rearing practices. These positive values are handed down from generation to generation within the African American community through other oral expressions, family stories, and 'proverbs' unique to the African America culture (McAdoo, 1991, Kitano & Lewis, 2005).

A more recent trend in the literature is the renewed interest in the concept of 'social capital'. Social capital refers to social resources that are generally provided by parents and families to supervise, monitor, advise and provide leadership for youth

<div align="center">28</div>

(Coleman, 1988). Using data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88), Yan (1999) examined the relationship between social capital and academic achievement. The NELS: 88 data were useful in studying this phenomenon as it provided the largest and most comprehensive database with data over an eight-year period from parents, teachers, students, and school administrators. Study participants were in the eighth grade when first surveyed. The data collected specifically requested responses to patterns of interaction between each group.

Yan's analysis captured four interactive social capital constructs: 1) parent-teen interactions, 2) parent-school interactions, 3) interactions with other parents and 4) family norms. The study documented that African American parents' social capital in the area of home discussion and school contact were significantly higher than those of European American students' families. In discussion with other parents and parent-teen relationships, social capital of Black families was lower than those of white families. In the category of family norms, African American families were found to have higher levels of family rules than White families. After a complete analysis of all data, the researcher reported that despite their disadvantaged status, academically successful Black high school students have higher levels of social capital when compared to successful white students as well as to their non-successful equally disadvantaged Black peers (Yan, 1999).

In a study specifically examining the role of African American parents with male students, Mandara (2006) found that when African American parents use their own style of authoritative parenting, teach their children about culture and their own personal power, and limit counter-productive use of time, in spite of the disadvantages faced by

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this population, their odds of succeeding are greatly enhanced. The author concluded in this analysis that policy and interventions must focus on increasing the control that parents have of their children's education. (Mandara, 2006).

Similarly, parent and family 'strengths' are revealed in other studies of African American parents (Hurd, Moore, & Rogers, 1995; Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993; Schumm, 1984). Emergent themes across studies included substantial parent involvement, support from external caregivers, and a great deal of male involvement, an emphasis on the importance of education, emphasis on achievement, respect for others, spirituality, self-reliance, coping skills, self respect, racial pride, and connection with family. Patton and Baytops (1995) recommended that practitioners draw on strengths of families to improve relationships between families, communities and the educational system. Among recommendations offered for future research were the examination of the central role of African American parents and families in the enhancement and motivation of the gifts and talents of their children.

Boykin and Bailey (2000) offered a theoretical construct that delineates a set of culturally relevant strategies borne of the family context that could be used to inform classroom pedagogy. These researchers suggested that such pedagogy has the potential of increasing student achievement. The aim of their study was to investigate home socialization experiences, values, practices and preferences of African American learners from low-income families. To analyze the influence of cultural factors and home environments, these researchers suggested that it was necessary to develop a conceptual scheme to better understand the connection among culture, home and learning. Three cultural themes: communalism (importance of social bonds/interconnectedness with

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others); movement (dance, rhythm, syncopation, music); and verve (receptiveness or preference for physical stimulation) were defined and measured with participating students.

Children in the study reported a prevalence of communal, movement-expressive or vervistic attitudes and practices cultivated by family members in their homes (p. 18). The students endorsed learning orientations and classroom practices that are more consistent with familiar and routinely practiced home activities. The researchers concluded that school environments more reflective of familiar home/cultural experiences may be instrumental in facilitating cognitive functioning and thus, positively influence student achievement (Boykin & Bailey, 2000).

Role of the extended family

The crucial role of the extended family and the black 'kinship' network is also prevalent in literature examining African American families (Hatchett & Cochran, 1991; McAdoo, 1991; Wilson & Tolson, 1990). These extended family members are described as serving ' many of the functions traditionally ascribed to the nuclear family' (Hatchett et al, p 48). In another variation of the kinship network, Fordham (1988) describes 'fictive kin' as those persons considered by the family to be part of the circle of support and dependency including both blood and non-blood relations (Fordham, 1988). According to McAdoo (1991), the support of the extended family network within the African American community is normal and expected.

In 1990, Wilson and Tolson estimated a 25-85% incidence rate of extended family networks in the African American community. In her study of family influence in the lives of disadvantaged gifted learners, Van Tassel-Baska (1989) described the role of

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the grandmother as significant in the development of youth from these backgrounds. Within the extended family network are persons of diverse classes and achievement levels (Prom- Jackson, Johnson, & Wallace, 1987; Wilson & Tolson, 1990). Baytops (1994) also noted that the African American extended family and the Black church have historically provided substantial support to their students in the educational and socialization processes. Support of the extended family is consistent with theories derived from the work of Clark (1983) and Hale-Benson (1986). This variation of roles providing multiple support systems have been shown to be advantageous to culturally diverse, low income gifted learners within the family context. Such support has also been noted as an important survival mechanism for these learners.

The African American family and character development of their youth

One additional socialization responsibility of the family network is to teach African American youth how to cope with the negative effects of racism. This responsibility is especially important in the effort to retain these students in gifted education services, particularly when they are among the few minority students being served (Ford, 1996). Barnes (1980) maintained that the black community can support the positive self-concept of its children under certain conditions that require the creation of a "sense of peoplehood, group identification and a black consciousness or pride" (p 681).

Intrinsic motivation to survive and succeed has always been noted as a characteristic of achieving adults from adverse circumstances. Kulieke and Olszewski-Kubilius (1989) discussed the self as a powerful motivator for achievement. Belief in self and motivation to achieve were specified as two characteristics of achieving students that differentiated them from their underachieving peers from similar environments (Reis,

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Colbert & Hebert, 2005).

Resiliency as a trait of at-risk high ability and gifted students also emerges in the research as a notable character trait (Floyd, 1996; Fordham, 1988; Reis, Colbert, & Hebert, 2005). Fordham (1988) notes that such character traits first receive nurturing and encouragement within the family context. In their study of resilience of urban high school students of diverse backgrounds, Reis et al (2005) concluded one protective factor contributing to the study participants' resilience in difficult settings was the support of at least one parent. This parent was important to the achieving student living under adverse circumstances to provide at least minimal levels of economic and family support. Floyd (1996) also notes that it was the support of one or more adults in the life of the child who made the difference.

The role of the African American mother as the primary source of affection, aspirations, and assistance with children's educational plans was also noted as important to students' development of resilience, despite adverse circumstances (Shade, 1983 as cited by Floyd, 1996). Self-understanding and sense of responsibility must also be nurtured and supported for these youth who often have to function within a culture that demands they perform in a manner commensurate with their ability (accepting their gifted status) while often being set apart from their social peers and family members (Fordham, 1988). Researchers have reported a sense of alienation experienced by minorities struggling with 'negotiating' between two worlds – being black and living within the context of the culture and functioning within the intellectual and socially different demands of accelerated programs (Fordham, 1988; Patton & Baytops, 1992; Ogbu, 1994). In an effort to foster academic achievement, families and communities are

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encouraged to instill in students the value of personal effort, determination, perseverance, and the ability to set goals beyond one's current circumstances (Parham & Parham, 1989).

Role of the family in talent development

According to Bloom (1985), families play a very important role in the realization of promise and potential (as cited by Olszewski-Kubilius, 2002). In his talent development model, Gagne (2000) theorizes that families are among a set of environmental catalysts that may exert influence (positive or negative) on the development of specific gifts over time during the talent development process. Gagne differentiates between the terms 'gifted' and 'talent' in his theoretical effort to bring order and consistency to the field. According to Gagne, giftedness is the possession or use of untrained, spontaneously expressed natural abilities in at least one domain that places a person in the top 15% of his or her age peers (p. 106). Talent on the other hand is the superior mastery of abilities, placing an individual in the upper 15% of achievement levels for his or her own age peers. This differentiated definition distinguishes giftedness from talent more clearly than posited before this time.

Feldhusen (2001) credits Francois Gagne with explicitly setting the stage for a focus in the field on the development of talents as opposed to the prior focus on identification of superior general intelligence. Gagne's talent development model describes talents that progressively emerge from transforming high aptitudes across multiple domains into well-developed skills as a result of influence by multiple catalysts. Nurturance, support, and stimulation of gifts by motivation, developmental processes, and environmental catalysts are critical to the manifestation of talent in Gagne's theory. Among these catalysts noted in Gagne's model are the students' geographic,

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demographic, sociological environments as well as parents, family parenting styles, and socioeconomic status.

Consistent with the need to bring clarity to the field of gifted education, Piirto describes another talent development model, the 'pyramid of talent development' (1995). Piirto provides an analysis of the field's use of the term 'gifted' and 'talent' and recommends an expansion of the giftedness construct that can be instrumental in the development of talents where individual talents and gifts can be realized. The pyramid framework consists of three areas or domains (personality, general ability, and specific talent) that are influenced by what the author describes as 'suns'. Among the 'suns' are those of home and family. Piirto notes that the 'sun' of home and family are key to the development of student talent. She concurs with other researchers and theorists that families nurture talent based on their own propensities or interests. Support from the family thus can be instrumental in the realization of talent (Piirto, 1995).

The research on talent development also describes different kinds of family dynamics that yield different outcomes for children (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2002; Feldman & Piirto, 1995). Olszewski-Kubilius describes multiple personality types in gifted learners. She suggests from a review of previously conducted research that high achievers generally originate from families that are cohesive and child-centered, where parent-child identification is stronger. Creatively gifted students have reported parent-child relationships wherein there is more independence, and relationships are less child-centered.

In a comprehensive review of research and theoretical constructs related to parenting the gifted, Feldman and Piirto (1995) discuss a full range of topics from

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parental role in development of highly gifted (or extreme gifted) to parenting styles that influence success of gifted learners. Their analysis cites Goertzel & Goertzel (1962 & 1978) who discuss the effects of nontraditional families on the development of eminence. Goertzel and Goertzel (as cited in Feldman & Piirto, 1995) described parents of eminent individuals who were active in causes, highly opinionated, and sometimes unstable. Their results differed from Bloom's study of 120 families of 'world class' athletes, musicians, and mathematicians whose family life was more stable and focused on the development of the gifted learner's talent (as cited by Feldman & Piirto). Another important family environment factor is the degree to which the family creates an atmosphere promoting the development of unique personality traits among children, allowing for the expression of individual thoughts. Individuals from families encouraging this type of independence have been found to be more competent, less competitive, and more risk-taking (Feldman & Piirto, 1995).

In a 12-year longitudinal study of nontraditional families of gifted learners (Weisner & Garnier, 1992 as cited by Feldman & Piirto), it was found that the family makeup did not negatively affect the child's achievement when consistency and family closeness was maintained even in the midst of what appeared to be difficult circumstances (e.g., one-parent family, low income family, frequent changes in mates or in household composition). Feldman & Piirto (1995) further discuss the application of family systems theory to talent development. The child's talent is viewed as an adaptation of the child to the family's interactions. The authors propose based on this theory, that the environment and the family's interactions influence the child's responses, thus affecting the development of their gifts.

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Home influences on talent development are further described through a discussion of family values and parents' direct role as initiators of instruction in area of talent development (Sloane, 1985). Interview responses from parents and other family members are delineated that describe and define how parents of gifted and talented students share their values, work ethic, and modeling of behaviors that eventually lead to success in their children's area of talent. As described in this analysis, parents and family members deliberately and consistently organize their time to ensure maximum productivity and accomplishment of priority goals. The role of parents in early initiation of instruction (either as provider of funds/support, coach, or direct instruction) is also described as critical to full development of student potential. Relatives, family members, neighbors, older siblings are among the persons listed who serve in crucial roles assisting parents with what can sometimes be a daunting task-the development of talent potential.

Summary

The research and theories examined reveals thematic concepts that have potential for expanding our understanding of the origins of learning and achievement of African American learners from varied backgrounds. As the theoretical constructs of giftedness and the role of family in talent development were examined, it is important to note that much of the research was completed with students and families of Anglo American backgrounds. The research reviewed also highlights that multiple conceptual underpinnings interface which impact student learning and achievement. These underpinnings, characterized in multiple studies as family values, family strengths, social capital, differentially utilized all have positive impact on the home environment,

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regardless of ethnicity or income.

Defining the complexity and nature of interactions between families and students are key to any conclusions that can be made from the information gathered during this study. Additional research noting student internal characteristics (e.g., resiliency, intrinsic motivation, self-confidence) and the impact of early and sustained exposure to high-level curriculum have also revealed potential influences on the success of students participating in this study.

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Chapter Three

Methodology

This study employed a socio-cultural approach to grounded theory and case study research. These qualitative approaches enabled the researcher to collect in-depth data from – students and parents/legal guardians. This collective case study process was used to examine personal and family aspirations; differential behaviors at home and school; intensity of faith-based involvement; amount of parental monitoring and direct involvement with school; family communication patterns and the role of the extended family. Examining perceptions of families and students as they occurred in the natural setting allowed for rich, complex findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

To gather data, a pool of students was selected who met initial criteria (3.5 grade point average, African American, identified as gifted, and originating from Title I feeder schools). Collecting all students meeting these criteria developed an initial participant list of 29 students. In subsequent contacts with school level staff, it was determined that initial grade point average information for five students was incorrect, thus limiting the candidate pool to 24. A letter was mailed to this first group of students requesting parental permission for participation and asking students to complete the family and home environment questionnaire.

Student meetings were held at two schools to encourage students to participate in the study. These schools had the larger groups of students (14 at one school, 6 at the second). To further encourage participation, the researcher also placed phone calls to all families. Two weeks after the mailing, a second contact was made by telephone and a second package containing the permission form and questionnaire was sent to each

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prospective participant's school. During these conversations, parents of five students

requested a second package, indicating that the first may have been misplaced. Two

parents shared that the student was 'not interested' in participating the study. One

questionnaire was returned with the completed demographic profile information and

responses to the open-ended questions; however, the family indicated that they were not

interested in participating in the second phase of the study.

One parent (who was selected as a case study) shared insight into the reason why

the return rate was lower than expected. (This family was the first to be selected as a case

family). This single mother shared her 'suspicion' about the study and expressed that

other families may have felt the same. She indicated that her fears were alleviated after

she went to the school division website to confirm information in the letter (i.e., name,

title and association with school division). Later, the family who indicated no interest in

the second phase was contacted by telephone. The researcher spoke with the grandmother

who expressed that the student was very busy over the next couple of months and that

'maybe another time' would be better. Other families did not respond to telephone calls.

Overall, the return rate from initial mailings was 37%.

After family questionnaires and permission forms were received, all

questionnaires were reviewed and five cases selected. Criteria for selection of cases was:

1) Participation in two or more advanced courses, 2) grade point average of 3.5

or higher, 3) elaborate responses on open ended questions, indicating potential

for student to be willing to provide specific responses during second phase of

study, and 4) the uniqueness of each family's demographic traits and student

interests.

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After cases were selected, appointments were made by telephone to visit each home to complete interviews and the Family Environment Scale (FES). The mother of one family was scheduled to take a trip by bus, however, she wanted to participate (rather than her husband) and she completed the FES and returned it to the researcher. Her daughter did the same. The mother later participated in an interview by telephone while traveling, the daughter also completed a telephone interview from home. All other interviews and FES forms were completed in the home, as planned. The case student and the participating parent were interviewed separately to ascertain their responses to the same indicators. Each interview concluded by allowing the interviewee to provide any other information that they believed may be important in evaluating the family's level of influence on the student's academic achievement. In-home interviews gave 'voice' to the study results, enabling the researcher to gather information that held deeper meaning for each participating family. The interview questions were developed to provide responses related to parent-student interaction patterns, discipline strategies, role of family in development of racial identity, teaching of values, and guidance for future education and career direction.

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework developed for examination of the varied constructs is a social capital framework. This framework is based on the work of a number of researchers who have examined the resources inherent within the African American community over generations that have been beneficial in their success within the confines

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of numerous economic, racial, and political restrictions. In 1988, Coleman referred to these resources as 'social capital'. Traditionally, the term 'capital' was used by economists to define the worth and monetary value of a resource to be used for a specific purpose. Coleman and others converted the use of the term capital from referring specifically to monetary resources to social resources by the addition of the word 'social'. This revolutionary conversion enabled social scientists and later, educators to look more deeply into the lives of persons with limited monetary resources that appeared to be equally successful as those with resources (Yan, 1999).

Coleman, thusly defined the behaviors and environment of these families that allowed them to successfully support, monitor, supervise, and provide leadership for their youth as 'social capital'. Across generations of black families with limited financial means, individuals and groups have creatively developed this 'capital' to allow them to survive and even thrive within a society for whom economic means provides certain advantages. Yan (1999) used longitudinal data to capture four specific social capital constructs to examine the relationship between family characteristics as defined by the specific social capital and academic achievement of youth across different ethnic groups.

In three social capital areas- family norms, home discussion, and school contact, Yan found that black families had higher levels of social capital than their white counterparts. Similarly, across studies examining traditions, values, and strengths of black families certain behavioral, environmental and cultural characteristics are noted. McAdoo (1991) noted that such values and strengths are consistent with positive child rearing practices. The concept 'social capital', thus, may be used to capture the complex array of resources inherently available to and utilized by these families to their own

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advantage.

The social capital conceptual framework offered here is a comprehensive, flexible paradigm to capture the multiple resources and behaviors developed within the black community over generations that continue to add value to their ability to positively impact the lives of their children and youth, including contributing to their successful academic achievement, even under economically depressed circumstances. Figure I shows a diagram of the social capital conceptual framework as described here.

The selected processes mentioned are supported by previous research and theoretical constructs developed as others have examined the complex and often, enigmatic nature of life within the African American community. The specific constructs to be examined are:

- **Family traditions**: The values, mores, practices and routines, principles held and practiced by families that influence character development (Gibbs, 1989; Kitano & Lewis, 2005; Kulieke & Olszewski-Kubilius, 1989; Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993; and McAdoo, 1991).

- **Extended family support**: Other adult family members, grandmothers, and aunts, in particular, serving in roles that are traditionally ascribed to the nuclear family. These family members are often noted as having provided additional support (financial and human) to extend that provided by custodial parents. Some studies have cited the particular role of the grandmother (Baytops, 1994; Fordham, 1988; Hale-Benson, 1986; Hatchett, 1991; VanTassel-Baska, 1989 and Wilson & Tolson, 1990.)

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- **Family to student discussions**: Parent to child relationships that are characterized frequent conversations about school and school related matters contribute to family cohesion and increase the overall level of student success (Clark, 1983; Olszewski-Kubilius, 2002; Taylor, Hinton & Wilson, 1995 and Yan, 1999).

- **Social-emotional encouragement**: The encouragement of at least one parent or family member is noted throughout the literature as contributory to student academic success. (Barnes, 1980; Floyd, 1996; Ford, 1996; Fordham, 1988; Kulieke & Olszewski-Kubilius, 2002; Parham & Parham, 1988 and Reis, Colbert & Hebert, 2005).

- **Family norms and disciplinary practices:** Parenting styles, rules and discipline practiced in the home. (Mandara, 2006; Sloane, 1985; Olszewski-Kubilius, 2002 and Yan, 1999)

- **Religious and spiritual development:** Family discussion and active participation in organized or family led religious experiences. (Baytops, 1994; Gibbs, 1984)

- **Racial identity development:** Discussions, engagement in activities, and support provided to enable an understanding of individual and group identification and encourage a sense of black consciousness or pride. (Barnes, 1980; Boykin & Bailey, 2000; Ford, 1996; Patton & Baytops, 1995)

- **Positive Achievement Orientation:** Consistent focus on benefits accrued through high achievement in school, expressing value of and desire for

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children to be well educated. (Baytops, 1994; Clark, 1983; Ford, 1996; Halle, Costes & Mahoney, 1997; Parham & Parham, 1989; Slaughter & Epps, 1987; and VanTassel-Baska, 1989)

Sample

Students participating in the study were enrolled in high schools in a mid-size southeastern Virginia school district. The total school division enrollment was 23,102 students. Approximately 63% of the student population is black, 32% white, the remaining 5% is comprised of Hispanic and other ethnic groups. Of the total population, 8% of the students are identified as intellectually gifted, grades 2-12. Of the total population of gifted students, 55% are white, 38% black and 7% of other ethnic groups. This data indicated that black students are underrepresented in the school division's gifted programs by approximately 25%.

Using purposeful sampling, students selected for the study met the same initial criteria- they were a) members of African American families; b) had a cumulative grade point average of 3.5; c) were identified as gifted according to school division criteria or have ability and/or achievement scores one standard deviation above the norm, and d) originated from a Title I feeder school based on their mailing address. Students were also current juniors or seniors at one of four high schools in the district. Students were also be current juniors or seniors at one of four high schools in the district. Cases selected from the first group were based on willingness to participate in an in-home interview and family willingness to complete the Moos scale, uniqueness of each case, ability of student to articulate in responses to open-ended questions on the questionnaire and level of advanced coursework student has taken in high school.

The following data collection procedures were employed to collect data for five case studies:

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- Researcher-developed student questionnaire (see Appendix A.)

- Researcher developed Family interview protocol (see Appendix B).

- Researcher developed Student interview protocol (see Appendix B)

- Family Environment Scale (*Moos & Moos, 2002)*

Table I shows the timeframe for data collection; Table II shows informants for each data

source.

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Table I. Estimated timeframe for data collection

Informant	*1ˢᵗ month* (March)	*2ⁿᵈ month* (April)	*3ʳᵈ month* (May)	*4ᵗʰ month* (June-July)
Selected students (25)	Select students based on gpas and Title I feeder school based on home address; Students to complete questionnaire, return w/in 2 wks	Analyze results of questionnaires; invite families to participate / schedule home visits of selected cases	Begin coding	Write results
Selected families	Mail letter w/ permission form	Receive returned permissions	Begin coding	Write results
Case students		Use results to select cases/invite families to participate Begin interviews	Complete interviews/ begin coding	Coding/write analysis
Case Family		Interviews/completion of Moos scale	Begin coding	Coding/write analysis

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Table 2. Informants/type of data to be collected

Informant	Records review/ demographic data (to include GPA and Standardized test data)	Permission to participate	Questionnaire	Interview	Moos & Moos FES scale
Targeted students	√	√	√		
Case students (5)	√	√	√	√	√
Targeted families		√		√	
Case families				√	√

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Instrumentation

The study employed a questionnaire, interview protocols, and a Family

Environment Scale (Moos & Moos, 2002).

Questionnaire-

The initial twenty-five students and parents were informed of the study by letter

to parents or legal guardians describing the study and requesting their permission to

participate. Within the first mailing a questionnaire to be completed by parents/legal

guardians and students was sent to give initial demographic data related to family

income, students' previous elementary and middle schools (whether school was labeled

as Title One or not in local division), number of siblings and extended family living

within the home, parental educational level, current academic schedule, and students'

post high school intentions. The questionnaire was piloted with three students and their

parents by telephone . Two of the students participating in the pilot were junior level

females, one student was a senior level male. All three students were high achievers in

their schools. After receiving and reviewing their responses, questions were adjusted for

clarity and for better understanding by potential respondents.

The revised questionnaire asked the respondent to provide open-ended responses

to three questions regarding their perceptions of the influence of the home environment

on their achievement. These data were used to select cases for the second phase of the

study. Cases were selected based on student advanced course experiences, details and

elaboration in their responses and the family willingness to allow an in-home interview

and complete the Moos Family environment scale.

Interview protocol-

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The in-home interview protocol was designed to ascertain student and family perceptions regarding student to family interaction patterns and practices within the home that may have impacted on student academic achievement. The interview questions were developed to provide responses related to parent-student interaction patterns, discipline strategies, role of family in development of racial identity, teaching of values, and guidance for future education and career direction. Interviews concluded by having students and family members provide any other information that they felt was pertinent to the study issues being examined. Separate family and student interviews were

Moos Family Environment Scale, form R-

The Moos scale, form R is self-reporting instrument designed to measure social and environmental characteristics of families (Moos & Moos, 2002). The Real Form (Form R) measures people's perceptions of their actual family environments. The test measures 10 different dimensions of family environmental conditions: Cohesion, Expressiveness, Conflict, Independence, Achievement Orientation, Intellectual-Cultural Orientation, Active-Recreational Orientation, Moral-Religious emphasis, organization and control measures. The FES is indicated as a viable instrument in the study of family systems. Based on these scale scores, families are then grouped into one of three family environment typologies.

Internal reliability estimates for the Form R subscales range from .61 to .78. Intercorrelations among these 10 subscales range from -.53 to .45. The scales, thus, measure distinct characteristics of family environment and with reasonable consistency. Evidence also exists that the test-retest reliabilities for the Form R subscales are

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reasonably stable across varied time intervals (2-month, 3-month, and 12-month).

The face and content validity of the FES are supported by clear statements about family situations that relate to the subscale domains. Comparisons of varied groups, distressed and normal families; parent responses with those of their adolescent children; descriptions of families with two to six or more members, minority group families, minority adults, and minority adolescents provide evidence of construct validity.

Data reduction plan

Initially, open coding was employed to detect themes or categories of responses within each data set (questionnaires and interview responses from students and parents). Next axial coding was used to make generalizations from the data sources based on themes that emerged from the open coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Selective coding was used to compare data across data sources (FES responses and interviews). Themes generated were then compared across cases to generate common themes that appeared in at least 50% of findings (e.g., regular family discussion about the student's future; attendance/participation in church activities).

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Research questions

The following questions were developed to shape this research study. Key

constructs of family and student perceptions of family influence and patterns of

behaviors, including values and traditions that impact student's responses in the

educational context were elicited from question responses.

Research questions	Sample	Instrumentation	Data analysis
What are the demographic characteristics of high achieving low income African American students at junior and senior level in a Southeastern Virginia school district?	Junior and senior students who meet the criteria	Questionnaire (designed by researcher)	Descriptive statistics (mean and median) Content analysis
How do students describe their home environment and its influence on their achievement?	Same as above	Questionnaire Family Environment Scale	Content analysis
What family patterns and interactions do participants report?	Case students Case families	Interview protocol (parent and student) Family Environment Scale	Content analysis
What are the family traditions and values that influence/impact school achievement?	Case students Case families	Interview protocol (parent and student)	Content analysis
What are barriers and facilitators in the home environment that influence school achievement?	Case students Case families	Interview protocol (parent and student) Family Environment Scale	Content analysis

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Credibility problem

To contend with the problem of credibility, the researcher constantly refers back to the literature regarding similar studies. When 'outlying' information was noted, it was recorded and retained for final narrative summary. Creswell (1998, p. 205) suggests that verification is largely related to the researcher's interpretation and experience. He also suggests, however, that subjects review findings using informant feedback. Therefore, results of all individual interviews were shared with participants for their review and feedback. Results of the Family Environment Scale completed by students and parents were also shared prior to inclusion in final results.

Limitations and Delimitations of the study

The study design does not allow for a "control group", thus, the study analysis and replication of results to other populations will be limited to students who share similar demographics and achievement histories as students in this study. The results are also limited in that conclusions cannot be drawn relative to a definitive impact of families on student achievement without consideration of individual internal psychological traits (e.g., inner locus of control, confidence, achievement motivation) and the influence of other achievement-related factors (quality of school programs, early enrichment experiences) which have also been shown to have positive affects on student achievement. Due to the limited number of initial cases, generalizability of the results of this study are limited.

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Chapter Four

Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine what, if any, impact families have on the successful achievement of gifted high school African American students in a southeastern division in Virginia. Twenty-four students met the initial criteria, questionnaires were mailed to each of these students and their parents, After several attempts to increase the response rate, the researcher began the evaluation of responses received. The results of the questionnaires from nine respondents (37% return rate) are analyzed here. Following the questionnaire responses are the personal interview and the Family Environment Scale results completed by the five selected case study families.

Questionnaire Results: Part I. Family demographics and Student academic data

Student demographics are delineated on the first half of the questionnaire. Tables I and II provide all data. Five of the nine students reported living with their mothers only. Three students reported living with mother and father. One student reported living with a grandmother, an aunt and one younger sibling. The majority of the families were very small, reporting two or less siblings living in the home. One family was quite different, with the student reporting a much larger sibling group, indicating four brothers and four sisters living in the home, and one older sister who recently joined the military. Table I (or III?) shows the family demographic data.

Parents of the respondents reported a variety of educational backgrounds, four of

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nine reporting a high school education, with the majority of the parents reporting attending community college or a four year college. Parental occupations ranged from laborers, to skilled technicians and professionals. Four students reported having fathers in the military (one in the Air Force and three in the Navy), which is quite common in this area which houses two major military bases, two major shipyards and a nearby port for military ships. Three students reported educational level and occupation for fathers not living in the home. One student reported the educational level for the father not living in the home, but did not indicate an occupation. Student respondent #5 reported living with her grandmother and an aunt, but did not report any occupation or educational level for either adult in the home. Data reflecting parental occupations and educational levels appears in Table II. Information for parents not living in the home are marked with an asterisk.

Table I. Student Demographic Data/living arrangements/siblings

Respondent #	Gender (G)	Living with	#Siblings
1	F	Mother Only	0
2	F	Mother Only	1 brother & 1 sister
3	M	Mother & Father	4 brothers & 4 sisters
4	F	Mother & Father	1 brother
5	F	Grandmother& 1 aunt	1 sister
6	F	Mother Only	1 sister
7	F	Mother Only	0
8	M	Mother Only	1 brother
9	F	Mother & Father	2 brothers

Table II. Parent Occupations and Educational Level

Respondent #	G	Mother's occupation	Father's occupation	Mother's educational level	Father's educational level
1	F	Librarian	N/A	Comm College	N/A
2	F	Technical writer	Loss recovery specialist*	High school	High school*
3	M	None indicated	Food sales representative	High School	4 yr college
4	F	Secretary	USAir Force	Comm College	Comm College
5	F	Lives w/Grandmother and aunt– none indicated	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	F	Property Manager	Navy*	4 yr college	4 yr college*
7	F	Navy exchange accountant	Navy*	4 yr college	4 yr college*
8	M	Electrician	N/A	High School	High School*
9	F	Customer Service Supervisor	Materials Management	High School	High School

* indicates parent not living in the home

Student academic data

Student academic data revealed a mean grade point average for the group of 3.63.
Grade point averages of all students ranged from 3.1 to 4.12. (All students in the initial
pool had grade point averages of 3.5 and above. Due to the time lapse, just prior to the
first mailing, new grade point averages were obtained. One student's grade point average
was lower. To maintain the pool, it was decided to send invite all students to participate
who were in the initial pool of 24 students). All students were listed in the division
databases as identified gifted students. Advanced course offerings reported by students
ranged from one student who was not taking any advanced course offerings to one who
was taking six advanced courses. Table III details the number of advanced course

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offerings, grade point averages, college choices, and anticipated majors of all respondents. Five of the nine students were participants in the division's International Baccalaureate program. One student attends the regional Governor's School for Science and Technology. Other students were enrolled in Advanced Placement courses. Appendix F delineates all advanced course offerings for each respondent.

Student choices for majors were in the areas of the arts and the sciences. Two students indicated interests in engineering, one in chemistry and one in pre-med. Three students expressed interests in majors in pre-law, business, and merchandising. Two students expressed interest in athletic training. Most of the colleges selected by students were in-state public and private universities. Out-of-state universities were named as choices by two students- Howard University in Washington, D.C. and the United States Air Force Academy located in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Two of the colleges named are traditional historically black colleges and universities (Howard University and Hampton University in Hampton, VA).

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TABLE III. Student academic data

#	Grade	# Adv*	Grade Point Avg.	Col**	Potential major(s)	Potential careers
1	11	3	4.12	1,6,3	Visual or Performing Arts	Vocalist, Artist
2	12	3	3.75	U	Athletic Training	Athletic Trainer
3	11	5	3.75	1	Fashion Design; Merchandising	Fashion Designer; Business
4	11	4	4.03	U	Pre-Med	Neo-natal nursing
5	11	5	3.58	7	AeroEngineering	AeroSpace Engineering
6	11	4	3.8	6	Fashion Merchandising	Business; Media
7	11	4	3.4	1	Psychology; PreLaw	Corporate Law; Psychology
8	12	1	3.1	5	Acctg/Finance; Prelaw	None indicated
9	11	0	3.45	4	Chemistry	

*Advanced courses defined by one or more criteria: weighted credit; labeled advanced or honors; Level IV or higher; Gov's School for Science & Technology-State & local funded regional program for gifted/high ability or International Baccalaureate Diploma Program.

**Colleges: 1:Va Commonwealth Uni; 2: Uni of VA; 3: George Mason Uni; 4: Old Dominion Uni; 5; Howard Uni; 6:Hampton Uni; 7:United States Air Force Academy; U:Undecided

Questionnaire results:Part II. Results of open-ended questions

Part II of the student questionnaire on family/home environment contained four open-ended questions. An analysis of the responses from the ten initial student respondents appears here. Appendix G provides a summary of all comments from respondents to the four questions in Part II.

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Question one asked '*How does the home environment contribute to your sense of achievement?* Four students described their home environments as supportive, dependable, loving. Three students spoke specifically of their parents being encouraging, supporting and 'pushing' them. One student stated: "My parents always push for above average work and if it's not above average, they help me find solutions to get it there". One student elaborated about her environment not being as lavish as some of her peers. She noted that ;"When people see my home and the surroundings, they'd expect me to be of low education or incapable of educational success, because let's face it, that's the unavoidable stereotype. Therefore, for me to be doing so well in school is an extreme achievement". One student noted that high expectations in the home are a reason for the student to strive to do his best.

Question two asked '*Are there any factors that inhibit achievement?*'. Five of the nine students said that their home had no distractions. Two students described their home environment as having many distractions. One of these students noted that 'There are common distractions of neighbors (talking or blasting music) but I've adjusted and learned to ignore it'. Regarding distractions, one student said "No it's totally the opposite. All the factors increase my achievement". One student indicated that financial resources was a distractor, noting that there were some programs he couldn't attend because "the cost was too high for my parents to pay". One student described family expectations as a distraction.

Question three asked '*Which family member plays the strongest role in encouraging your achievement?*'. Five of the students named their mother as the family member who plays the strongest role. One student remarked: "My mother is definitely

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my rock....when my performance starts to digress, she knows the right things to say and do to motivate me. She never stops offering help in any way she can". Four students said that the mother and father encouraged them, in different ways. One student describes her father; "My father teaches me a great deal about dealing with commitment. It is important that he stays on me about commitment because it is hard for me to juggle schoolwork with social life and my lessons learned from him have kept me prioritized". Another student named a younger sister, stating "I want to do well so that she will be proud of me and so that she'll work hard now and in the future". One of the students for whom the mother was an encouragment, notes that the mother "has always told me to do better than she did and to encourage my children to do better than I did and so on and so forth".

Question four asked *'Is there anything else you'd like to tell about your success?'*. All students responded by elaborating on family support, high expectations, and encouragement. One student noted that "No matter what decision I choose, they are always behind me rooting me on like my own cheerleading team". One student alluded to helping her family through her own success. "I want to do better for my family.. to be one of the few members who goes to college and is successful". One student described his older brother's academic success as a first year college student in UVA.

Results of Case Study Interviews

Five families were selected as cases to participate in the second phase of the study. These five students and their families were selected, based on student responses to the open-ended questions on the family/home environment questionnaire, willingness to be interviewed and uniqueness of each student's profile. Among the five cases were two single parent families and three families with both mother and father in the home. The one male among the group has eight siblings living in the home and one sister who recently enlisted in the military. Table IV provides a demographic overview of each family.

Table IV. Case study student and family demographics.

Case #	Student gender	Student GPA/area of interest	Family type	Occupation of parent interviewed	# of siblings living in the home
One	Female	4.12/Visual & Perf Arts	Single parent	Librarian	none
Two	Male	3.75/Fashion Des; Merchan	Two parent	Unemployed	eight
Three	Female	3.4/Psych;Pre-Law	Single parent	Accountant	none
Four	Female	3.45/Chemistry	Two parent	Customer Service Supervisor	two
Five	Female	4.03/Pre-Med	Two parent	Secretary	one

Four of the five interviews were conducted in the home; in one case, the mother and the daughter were interviewed by telephone at separate times. An appointment time

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convenient to the family was set for each interview. While in the home, interviews were conducted with the mother and the case student separately. The Family Environment Scale was also completed during the same appointment time. In four cases, to provide privacy during the interview, while the parent was being interviewed, the student would complete the Family Environment Scale in another room and vice versa. For the case family that was interviewed by phone, the mother and daughter completed the FES at separate times and returned the form to me (mother- via school mail; daughter- by hand delivery to my office). Home visits lasted between sixty to seventy five minutes. Families were very welcoming, easily engaging in the interview process. Three of the five mothers expressed appreciation. One mother specifically mentioned being grateful for the opportunity to "tell my story and talk about my daughter" in this manner.

Demographic overviews of case families

Case study family one is composed of the target student and her mother. They live in an apartment complex in a public housing development. The mother works as a librarian in a local community college. There are currently no other siblings living in the home. The daughter indicated in her interview that she was raised by her mother without the assistance of her natural father. During the interview, the mother spoke of an older son who no longer lives in the home.

Case study family two is composed of the target student, a male, his mother and father. This is a very large family, with eight siblings living in the home, one older than the target student and seven younger. One additional sibling has previously graduated from high school and is no longer living at home. They reside in a single family home in a relatively new development. Neighbors' homes are similar in design. The mother, who

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does not work outside of the home, participated in the interview and completed the Family Environment Scale. The father is employed as a sales representative for a major food company.

Case study family three is composed of the target student and her mother. No additional siblings are currently living in the home. They live in a single family home in an older neighborhood. The mother is employed with the Navy as an accountant. The mother and father have separated, and the father is no longer living in the home.

Case study family four is composed of the target student, her twin brother, a younger brother and her mother and father. They live in a single family home in an older neighborhood. The mother is employed as a customer service supervisor. The father is employed as a materials manager. The mother participated in the interview and completed the Family Environment Scale.

Case study family five is composed of the target student, her younger brother, mother and father. They live in a single family home in the same neighborhood as case student number two. The mother is employed as a secretary, the father is active military. The mother participated in the interview and completed the FES.

<center>Responses to interview questions</center>

Question one of the interview protocol asked the students to tell how they arrived at the point of being a successful student. Social emotional encouragement for students from parents and teachers was a theme throughout the responses (Kulieke & Olszewski-Kubilius, 2002; Reis, Colbert & Hebert, 2005). Four students noted that family support was important, some noting that they pushed themselves, tried their hardest, and prioritized. Other students noted that parents pushed them. One student stated: "I just

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always strive to push myself as well so if no one else is going to push me I had to because I liked being successful and making myself feel like I did something and accomplished something". Another student noted that parents made it clear that "school is not something to play with". Still another student noted that "my mom is my idol" as she shared reasons for her success.

In responding to this question about their child, parents' responses were quite similar. Three of the five parents noted that the child was motivated and did not need to be pushed. One parent mentioned her child's testing for the gifted program as a youngster and "not making it at first", but later was recommended to participate based on her potential in language arts. One parent alluded to her child being gifted and that it was "definitely not all of me and her father, it is God-given too". In describing her son, one mother gave credit to her son and his teachers, she reflected "Going back, I think it's the teachers, the teacher have taught well, he absorbed it and ran with it".

Question two asked students to describe specific experiences that have positively contributed to their success. Three of the five students did not mention any specific experience, but continued to elaborate about family, participating in gifted programs and certain teachers who pushed and encouraged them. The one student who mentioned a specific experience described her recent experience at an alternative school for the gifted: "Going to New Horizons Governor's school was the biggest hump that I had to get over in my life, because I've never had to study prior to this year....every day for two hours, not knowing how to correctly study, I got a C, I had to push through, it changed my views on studying, changed my life". The one male student spoke about being in a big family and the father's role as a motivator, mentioning that his father's going to work

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each day to take care of the large family was motivation for him. He specifically noted that his "father had instilled in the children the value of hard work".

Parents' responses to question two were different across the group. Two parents spoke about the "value of education". One mother spoke again about her daughter's range of gifts, which includes academics and the arts. Another mother noted "She gets a lot of encouragement from all her family, what do we call it? Yeah, it's like a village, all my nieces and nephews, my children, they are raised like in a village..they are surrounded by everyone supporting them, pushing them". This response is reflective of the theme of extended family support as seen in the research, particularly relevant to African American families (Wilson & Tolson, 1990). One mother described her Christian values as important and said that her son's teachers "always liked having him as a student".

Question three asked about the students' and parents' concerns, fears, and issues about the student going off to college. Two of the four students mentioned safety as a primary concern, noting a recent tragedy on a state university campus. One student mentioned that being away from her mother was a concern because they are "close and spend a lot of time together". This same student, however, elaborated about attending a state residential Governor's School program last summer that was her first time away from home that gave her a better idea of what college would be like. Two of the students expressed concerns about prioritizing, making decisions, keeping focused, and managing time. One student spoke about meeting new people and "adapting to different ways of living in a new environment" as being a concern.

One of the parents of the students for whom safety was a concern, expressed the same concern for her child's safety. She noted thast being away from home when

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something would happen is a concern,. However, this same mother expressed a "lot of faith" in her daughter. Both mothers raising their daughters alone expressed concern that the daughter would get lonely because they spend a lot of time together. One mother noted "My biggest concern is that she's going to get lonely because this is the first time on her own. I may have to go get her so I don't want her to go too far". The mother of the male student expressed concern about her son's quietness, that his tendency 'not to speak up' may be a problem for him. One mother noted two things- time management and her daughter's lack of street smarts as concerns. This parent indicated that "My daughter tries to get everything in: academics, social life, and often "survives off of very little sleep".

Question four asked students and parents to talk about family traditions and beliefs that have influenced the student's intentions as a college bound student. Two of the students spoke immediately about religious beliefs having influence on them. One said: "The one thing is that education is top priority, and also, another belief would be the fact that we believe in God". One student noted that principles like those in the Bible, influenced him, he stated "No matter what you do - do it as unto God" as a belief that guided him. Another student spoke about regularly attending church, she noted: "We go to church regularly, the people at my church they help encourage me". Two other students noted that education is a priority and having high standards in relationship to school were family beliefs that were very important to them (Clark, 1983; Halle, Costes & Mahoney, 1997; Parham & Parham, 1989). Another student mentioned social traditions, such as going out together being an influence. Parents responded in a similar manner. Three of the five parents spoke about their family ties as guiding their child's belief system, in particular they mentioned that they spent lots of time with family and

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had good relationships within the family structure, which included extended family members. One mother elaborated on this point when she said: "At Christmas, we spend it at my mother's house, thanksgiving at my house..we spend a lot of family time on holidays..just family...it's tradition to be with family on the holidays". In addition to family cohesion, four of the parents specifically mentioned going to church, teaching about God, and "living according to their Christian values" as guiding their child's belief system. These types of family discussions and activities are noted in the literature as contributory to students' religious and spiritual development (Baytops, 1994; Gibbs, 1984).

Question five asked students what specific experiences may have negatively impacted their life and to share which, if any, came about as a result of the family. Three of the five students quickly noted that they had no negative experiences. One of the students from the single parent home spoke about not having a father figure. She stated: "Not having a father figure around has affected me, but not really ..it was more at the beginning of my life, I had friends who would ask questions about why I don't have a father, I'm like..I know as much as you know..but (sighing) I learned that I don't need one, because when you have strong people around you, you don't need weak ones to drag you down". One student spoke of her siblings who "picked on her" because she was smart. She described this experience as discouraging, though not so much that it would affect her grades.

When parents responded to question five, their answers were more elaborate. The parent of the student who mentioned not having a father figure, shared their family's experience with a natural disaster, Hurricane Isabel. She stated "She never experienced

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anything like that, but I had..it's an eye opener... but things happen and you have to adapt to it..and she learned to adapt". The mother indicated that this was her daughter's first experience living under these type of conditions and that it was important to "Be able to adapt to work with what you have". The parent of one of the students who said that he had no negative experiences spoke about the difficulty her son had with not being chosen for the basketball team and later receiving a low grade in a high level math class. This mother elaborated about the math's teacher's lack of understanding and how this may have negatively impacted her son.

One of the single mothers spoke about the physical and emotional stress her daughter experienced when she and her husband separated. (It is important to note that the student in the family did not share this as an example of a negative experience). The parent of one other student who reported no negative experiences said that her daughter was "traumatized" when she went to the Governor's School where "she had to work harder to get good grades than she had in the past". She noted that her daughter wasn't used to that level of work, thus, the experience was difficult.

Question six asked students and parents to discuss family routines and regular interactions that occur in the household. Three of the students noted that their families spent a lot of time in different activities, including eating together, talking together, going out together, watching television and going to the movies together. Describing his family's strong sense of togetherness, one student stated: "We talk a lot together, we eat dinner together, most of the places we go we go together, more than likely if I go with someone else, a family member is there. We do a lot of stuff together". One daughter described how she and her mother go running together each morning. Two of the students

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noted that one of their family routines was "going to church together regularly". One student described her family's day starting with her father going to work early each day, the mother taking her and her brother to school, their church experiences together, and their time spent participating in the band, including her mother as a leader of the band booster's club.

Parent responses were similar. Three of the parents described spending a lot of time with their child at home eating meals together, talking, sharing books, volunteering together, praying together. One mother started by stating: "Well, there on the refrigerator we have 'house rules' they have to do chores,... I personally make sure we teach them responsibility". The mother who is a leader in the band booster group focused her comments primarily on extra curricular activities that the family participated in together, noting that they try to get in entertainment time on weekends. Themes related to family to student discussions, reinforcement of family rules, social emotional encouragement, and emphasis on religious development appear throughout the literature as sources of support and positive resources for these families (Clark, 1983; Mandara, 2006; Reis,Colbert, & Hebert, 2005; Taylor, Hinton, & Wilson, 1995; Yan, 1999).

Question seven asked students to characterize their parents' style of interacting with them. Four of the five students easily began their responses speaking about their mother being understanding, encouraging, like "a best friend". One student characterized her mother as more straightforward, persuasive, yet firm. This student noted that her "father is the more sympathetic parent" in the household, being a listener, she said "it's kind of like a circle". Another student who mentioned the father noted that he has high expectations. One student described her mother: "It's not like she's our girlfriend, she

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tries to understand us better..taking our side, understand us as a parent, and still have certain rules that she needs to enforce". This same student characterized her father as "old school", noting that sometimes he lets things go, but a lot of times he has to "put his foot down" when certain things need to be dealt with.

As noted in responses to interview question three, relationships between students and their parents (particularly encouragement from the mothers) were clearly a theme throughout these responses. This type of social-emotional support is reflected in the research literature and noted as important to the development of students' gifts and talents (Ford, 1996; Fordham, 1988; Kulieke & Olszewski-Kubilius, 2002; Reis, Colbert & Hebert, 2005). Research also notes that frequent conversations between students and parents related to school matters also lend support to the student's positive academic achievement and development (Taylor, Hinton & Wilson, 1995; Yan, 1999).

Parents' responses to this question were in consonance with those of the children. The four mothers characterized as 'understanding, encouraging' by their children, also described themselves as "a listener, flexible" and wanting to "have a relationship with the children" so that they'll open up and want to talk to their mother. One mother whose daughter described her as understanding, noted: "My style of parenting is not to be their friend, I understand that I'm not their friend, I'm their parent, I'm their mom, but I also want to have a relationship. It's a difference between being their friend and being an understanding parent and having a relationship with them so they'll want to open up to you, want to talk to you". One mother described her reasoning for being understanding as "picking my battles". She also noted that her relationship with her daughter was based on a "trust factor". The one mother whose daughter considered her straightforward, said that

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she tries to be open, but knows that she and her daughter are not equals. She elaborated on comments from her daughter describing her as more strict than her friends' parents, even imposing a curfew when other parents may not.

Question eight asked students and parent if there are other family members who have had an impact on the student's school success. Four of the students named extended family members: particularly aunts and cousins. One student referred to his own siblings here, the older sibling who had already graduated and the younger siblings for whom he serves as an example. In serving as an example, he believes his younger siblings also motivate him. One of the students who named her aunt stated: "My aunt B…makes sure I'm doing what I'm doing well in school and she'll help me in any kind of way. She comes around here often (laughing) and she'll check up on me..she's just been here, she's like a second mother". The other student's aunt was closer in age and lives out of state. The aunt is currently in college and will graduate next year. The student said "she is kind of like me academically and socially.. we talk a lot. She gives me ideas about school..she encourages me".

Close supportive relationships with extended family members, in particular cousins and aunts, is reflected here and notable as a source of valuable support to these students (Baytops,1994; Hale-Benson, 1986; Hatchett, 1991; VanTassel-Baska, 1989; Wilson & Tolson, 1990). The two students who noted their cousins as influencing them had two very different experiences with cousins. One student's cousin had come to live with the family for a period of time to "get her life together", and returned to her home state and went back to college. The student indicated that this cousin had taught her high level math which was very helpful when she got into more advanced courses. The other

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student's cousin is currently in college, they are very close, she noted that this cousin influences her and encourages her.

When the parents responded to this question, two of them named the same influential family member as their child had named. One mother named her sister, (the student's aunt who was 'always here'). She noted: "She's always been around, she's had an impact on all their lives, she was always there for them. There were times when I couldn't pay for books or whatever and she was there. She's been my backup, my backbone'. She mentioned that her sister had been financially successful and helped her when she wasn't able to provide for her daughter. The other parent who mentioned the same influential family member, went into more detail about her niece, the student's cousin who had come to live with them one summer. She noted that the niece was struggling, but was able to get herself together after spending some time with them that summer and return to college, graduating recently. This mother also mentioned a successful sister who has been a "good example" to her daughter. One mother mentioned the father as having an influence on her son. Another mother noted that all of her daughter's cousins were influential, in that they were close and stayed in contact regarding school, encouraging and advising each other. One mother mentioned that because they were a military family they had never lived around family.

Question nine asked students to tell how their family provided guidance to assist with development of racial identity and religious beliefs. Interestingly, while racial identity development responses varied among the students, there was more consistency related to religious and spiritual development. One student stated that she doesn't think much about racism. She also noted that no one in the family pushes her to go to church,

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citing that as long as she believed in a higher power she'd be okay. All four of the other students had more elaborate responses to this question. Two of the four noted that their family has taught them that black people are strong, and that they should be proud and "not let anyone tell us different". One student described her multiracial background and conversations held with her parents to assist her with being proud of her black, Mexican and Italian heritage.

The one male student stated: "Racially, my parents they discuss with us the way we live, talk about racism, black males and how people judge you just because of what you look like, but that doesn't really matter, if you are a hard worker, then your performance is going to outweigh it- they can't deny you". Four of the five students also discussed in detail their family's guidance regarding religion. They told about attending church, their parents' teachings about the Bible, providing an example by going to church with them. One student spoke of her father's guidance to assist her in maintaining her values in the social environment. She stated that her father's religious guidance, stating: "Dad doesn't like music that is too explicit or violent..my father reminds me to 'guard your heart and that my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit". Thus, in a majority of the responses, students are clear in discussing their family involvement with religious activities and the impact of this involvement on their development.

Parent responses as to how they provided guidance for development of racial identity and religious beliefs were similar to those of the students. The parent of the student who said that she didn't think much about racism also noted that her daughter is not concerned about people's races, citing that she had many friends of different races. In the area of religion, she simply stated that they did have a not specific preference. The

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other four parents were more specific regarding discussions with their children about racial identity. Two of the five parents described how they told stories to their children of history and experiences of people from the past, those who came before. One of these mothers noted: "I try to take them to see my aunt (she's about 74 yrs old) so that she can tell them what she went through..her great grandparents were slaves..we're about fourth generation since slavery".

One parent stated that she believed her daughter "likes being black". This same parent noted that racism is taught and that as a Christian family, they would never encourage it at all. The mother of the multiracial student mentioned being multiracial as a 'plus' for her daughter. She noted that her daughter has never been out of place for being 'mixed'. Regarding religious beliefs, three of the five families mentioned that they go to church and that they live as Christians. One mother stated one of her house rules, "if you live in this house, you're going to church".

Question ten asked students and parents if there was anything else that they would like to share about their family's impact on the student's school success. Four of the five students reiterated comments about their family being close knit, very supportive, caring about what they do, and that everyone sticks together. The student from the large family commented: "Being from a big family motivates you". One student noted that her mother was very involved in school activities and was always there to talk to and to listen. Only one student noted that there was nothing else she wanted to share.

Parents took this time to elaborate on their previous responses. One parent spoke in more detail about her daughter being motivated, very bright and noted that there was "more to come in her future'. Similarly, another mother spoke of her daughter, saying

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that she was noticing her more lately and that she was a lot like her (e.g., the mother). This same mother also stated that she felt that she is more involved than other parents. One mother stated that she always wants the best for her son and that she was there to "Exalt and encourage him and to let him know that he was special". The mother who was recently separated, noted that even though she and her daughter's father were separated, "he did not disappear". She noted that her daughter had developed a good relationship with her father and that this had helped her. One mother concluded by stating that "All parents always want their kids to do better than them, to get an education and have an easier life". This same mother noted the importance of a two parent family to provide balance and structure in the household, thus, she noted that her husband had helped a lot with raising all of their children.

Results of the Family Environment Scales (FES)

Each parent and student completed a Family Environment Scale (FES) (Moos & Moos, 2002). The FES is a social climate scale which can be 'used to describe family social environments, to contrast parents' and children's perceptions, and to compare actual and preferred family climates' (Moos & Moos, p. 5). According to Moos & Moos, supportive families are high on Cohesion (Coh), Expression (Exp) and low on Conflict (Con). High socioeconomic families were also found to be high on Independence and Intellectual Cultural Orientation (ICO). Families measuring higher on Organization (Org) and Control (Ctrl) generally provide more structure. As a sub-group, African American and Latino adults in the norm group (see Table VII) were found to be high on Cohesion (Coh), Independence (Ind), Achievement Orientation (AO), and Organization (Org). They were also found to be low on Expressiveness (Exp), Active Recreational

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Orientation (ARO), and conflict (Conf). It is important to note that the African

Americans among the sample group were middle class families.

The first score yielded for each scale was a raw score. Raw scores could then be

converted to standard scores. The mid-range standard score is fifty (50). In calculating

the difference between each subscale rating, an incongruence score could be determined.

The family incongruence score indicates the amount of difference in perception across all

subscales between the student and the parent. Table V displays each family's raw scores

and the mean parent and mean student scores across all subcategories of the Family

Environment Scale. Charts 1-5 show a graphic representation of each case's profile using

their standard scores.

Table V. Family Environment Scale Raw Scores across all cases.

Subscale	Case #1	Case #2	Case #3	Case #4	Case #5	M:P	M:S
Cohesion	P:9 S:8	P:7 S:9	P:5 S:9	P:8 S:7	P:8 S:8	7.4	8.2
Expression	P:6 S:6	P:3 S:4	P:5 S:8	P:6 S:6	P:6 S:7	5.2	6.2
Conflict	P:1 S:0	P:0 S:2	P:1 S:2	P:2 S:3	P:4 S:1	1.6	1.6
Independence	P:7 S:6	P:6 S:4	P:6 S:8	P:8 S:4	P:6 S:8	6.6	6
Achievement Orientation	P:6 S:6	P:6 S:8	P:7 S:6	P:7 S:7	P:8 S:7	6.8	6.8
Intell-Cult.Orientation	P:8 S:7	P:5 S:8	P:8 S:8	P:6 S:6	P:7 S:6	6.8	7
Act-Recreat Orientation	P:5 S:4	P:7 S:7	P:7 S:8	P:7 S:7	P:9 S:9	7	7
Moral Relig Orientation	P:5 S:2	P:7 S:9	P:9 S:7	P:8 S:9	P:9 S:9	7.6	7.2
Organization	P:8 S:4	P:7 S:9	P:3 S:6	P:4 S:7	P:2 S:7	4.8	6.6
Control	P:5 S:0	P:7 S:9	P:4 S:4	P:5 S:6	P:8 S:5	5.8	4.8
Family Incongruence	*8.5*	*9*	*8.5*	*5.5*	*5*	*Overall M:7.9*	*Overall M:6.1*

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Family Case One

Case one is a single parent family with the student and no siblings living in the home. They reside in a public housing apartment complex in one of the older sections of their city. The parent is employed as a librarian at a local community college. The scale shows that the family is high in cohesion and intellectual-cultural orientation. In the categories of achievement orientation and expression, both mother and student yielded a standard score of 3. The family's incongruence score is 8.5. The greatest difference between student and parent perceptions are shown in the areas of moral religious orientation, organization, and control with the mother scoring higher in each of these categories. Both the mother and daughter scored low in the area of conflict.

Chart 1. Case #1 Family Scale Standard Scores – Parent and Student

FES Profile Case #1

	Coh	Ex	Con	Ind	AO	ICO	ARO	MRE	Org	Ctrl
student	59	53	33	45	53	58	43	36	42	27
parent	65	53	39	53	53	63	48	51	63	54

FES constructs

78
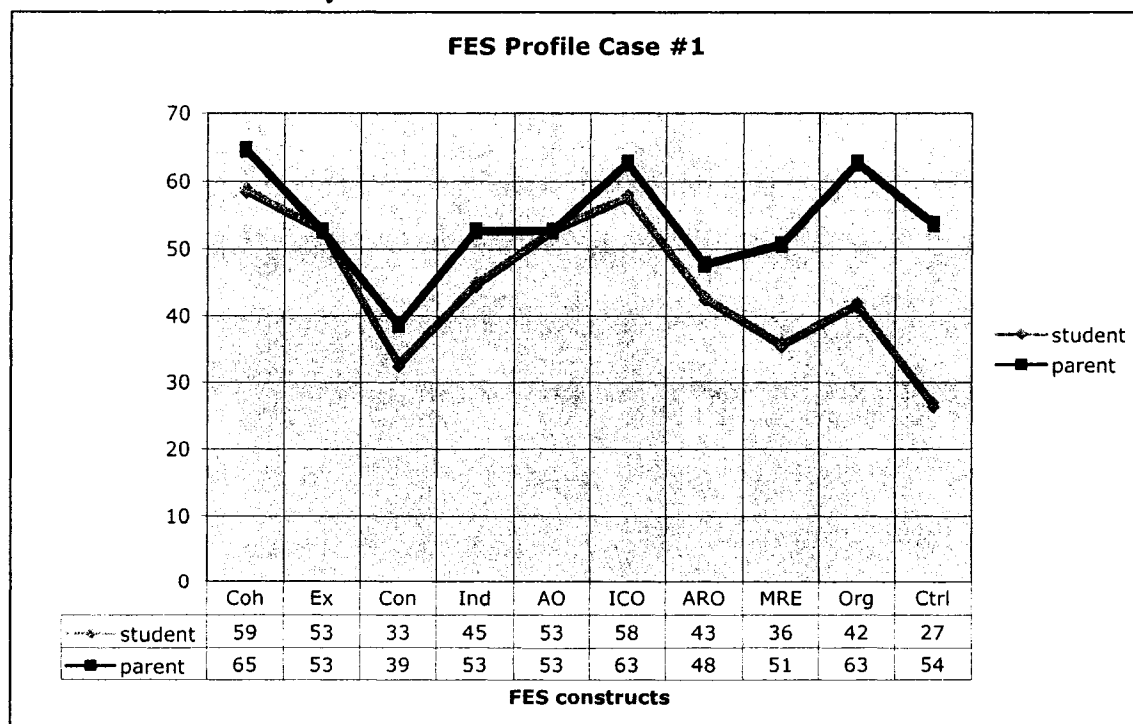
Family Case Two

Family two is a two parent family, with the male student participant and eight siblings living in the home. The mother does not work outside of the home. The father is employed as a sales representative for a major food company. The family lives in a single family home in a relatively new development. The FES indicates a high level of cohesion, achievement orientation, active recreational orientation, moral religious orientation, organization, and control. The mother and student's scores on the active recreational orientation subcategory were identical. The greatest difference between parent and student perceptions are seen in the areas of independence and intellectual cultural orientation. The areas yielding the lowest scores for the parent are conflict and expression and for the student, independence. The family incongruence score is 9.

Chart 2. Case #2 Family Scale Standard Scores – Parent and Student

FES Profile Case #2

	Coh	Ex	Con	Ind	AO	ICO	ARO	MRE	Org	Ctrl
student	65	40	44	29	66	63	59	71	69	76
parent	52	34	33	45	53	47	59	61	58	65

FES constructs

79
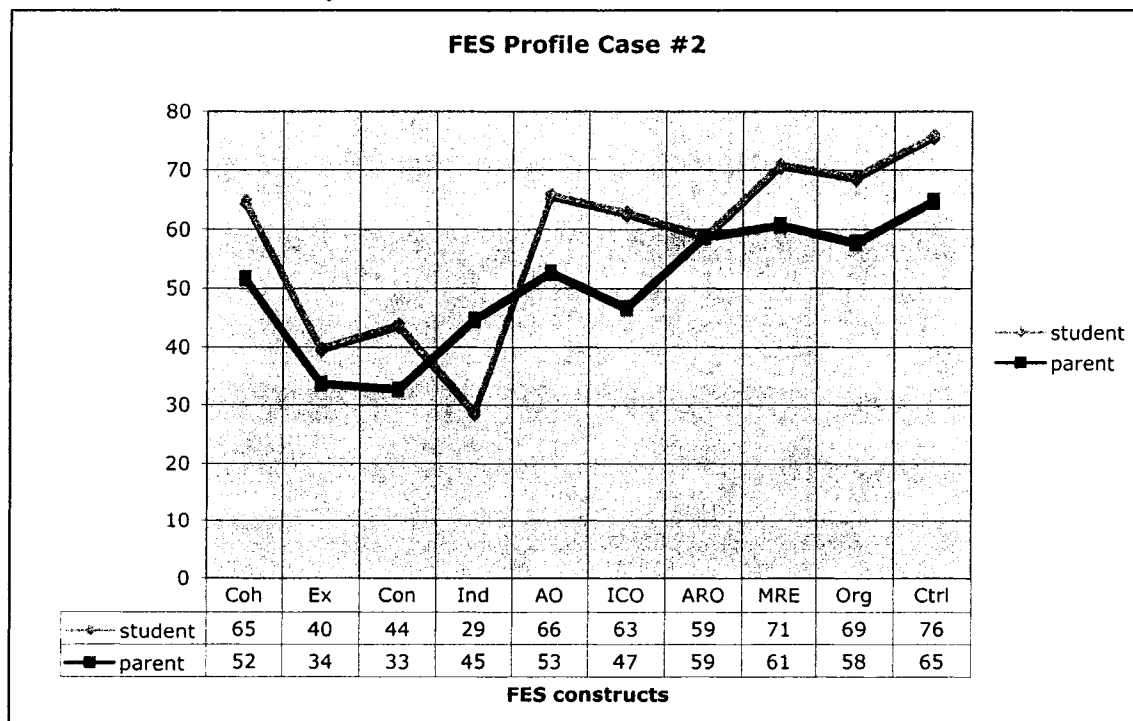
Family Case Three

Family three is a single parent family with the student and mother living alone in a single family home in an older neighborhood. The mother works as an accountant in the Navy exchange on an area military base. This family identical scores on the FES subscales of intellectual cultural orientation and control. In the area of conflict, both mother and daughter scored low. The mother also scored low in the areas of cohesion and organization. The areas of greatest difference in perception between mother and student (10 or more points) are cohesion, expression, independence, moral religious orientation, and organization. This family's incongruence score is 8.5.

Chart 3. Case #3 Family Scale Standard Scores – Parent and Student

FES Profile Case #3

	Coh	Ex	Con	Ind	AO	ICO	ARO	MRE	Org	Ctrl
student	65	65	44	61	50	63	64	61	53	49
parent	38	47	39	45	59	63	59	71	37	49

FES constructs

80
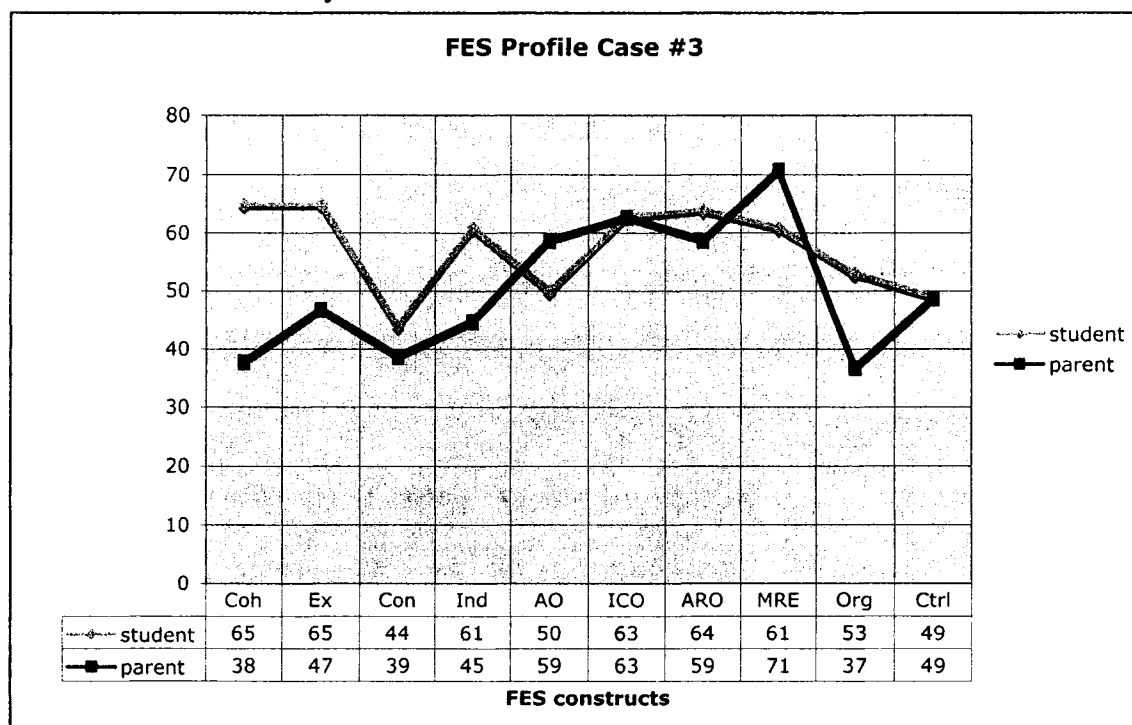
Family Case Four

This family is composed of mother, father, participant student, her twin brother

and a younger brother. The family resides in a single family home. The mother is

employed as a customer service supervisor and the father as materials manager at a local

hospital. This family's highest scores are in the areas of cohesion, achievement

orientation, intellectual cultural orientation, moral religious orientation, and active

recreational orientation. The mother also scored high in the area of control. The greatest

difference in perceptions are seen in the areas of independence and organization. This

family's incongruence score is 5.5.

Chart 4. Case #4 Family Scale Standard Scores – Parent and Student

FES Profile Case #4

FES constructs	Coh	Ex	Con	Ind	AO	ICO	ARO	MRE	Org	Ctrl
student	52	53	49	29	59	52	59	71	58	59
parent	59	53	54	45	66	58	69	71	32	70

81
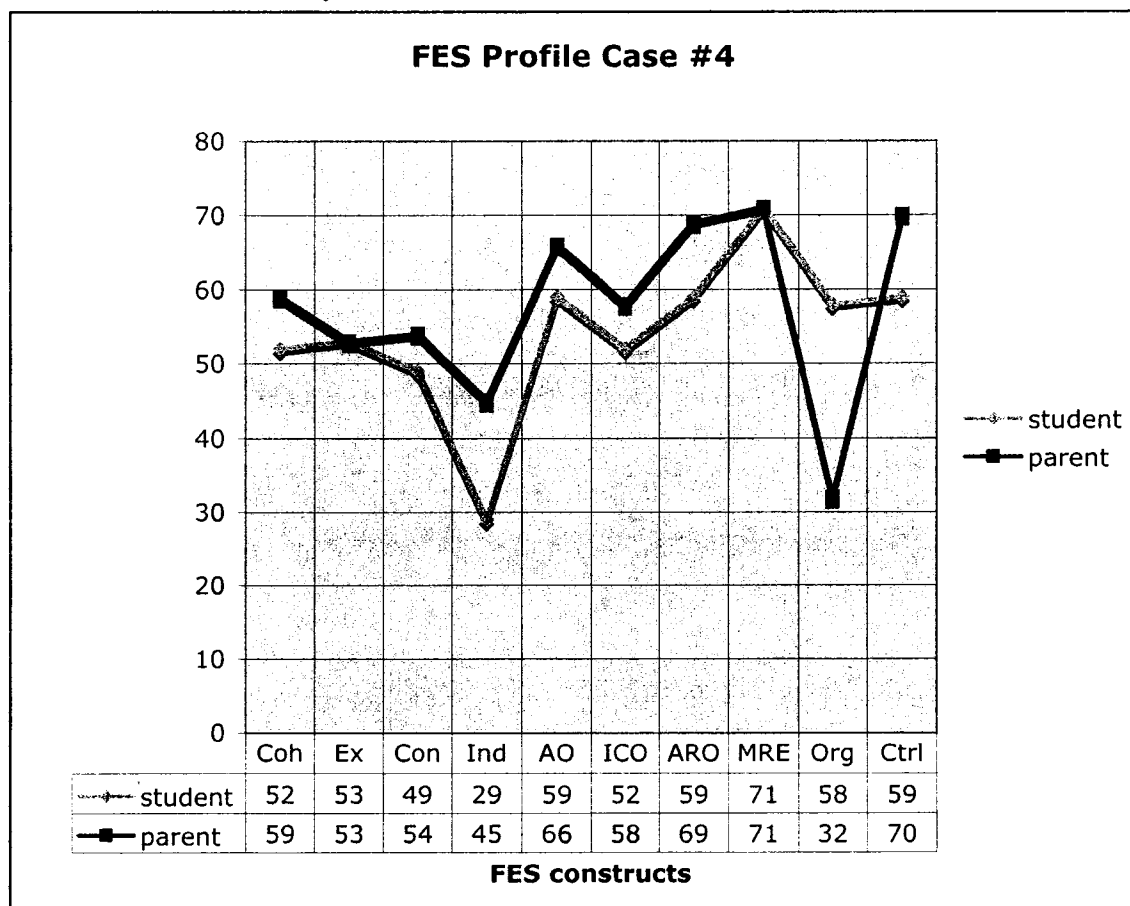
Family Case Five

Case five is a two parent family, with the participant student and one younger

brother. They reside in a single family home in a relatively new development. The

mother is employed as a secretary and the father is active military. This family's scores

were high in the areas of cohesion, achievement orientation, active recreational

orientation, and moral religious orientation. The parent and student yielded identical

scores on three subscales- cohesion, active recreational orientation and moral religious

emphasis. The area of conflict was lowest for the student and the area of organization was

lowest for the parent. The mother and daughter received identical scores in the areas of

cohesion, active recreational orientation and moral religious orientation. There were four

areas indicating a ten point (or more) difference in perception- they were conflict,

idependence, organization and control. This family's incongruence score is 8.

Chart 5. Case #5 Family Scale Standard Scores – Parent and Student

FES Profile Case #5

	Coh	Ex	Con	Ind	AO	ICO	ARO	MRE	Org	Ctrl
student	59	59	39	61	59	52	69	71	58	54
parent	59	53	54	45	66	58	69	71	32	70

FES constructs

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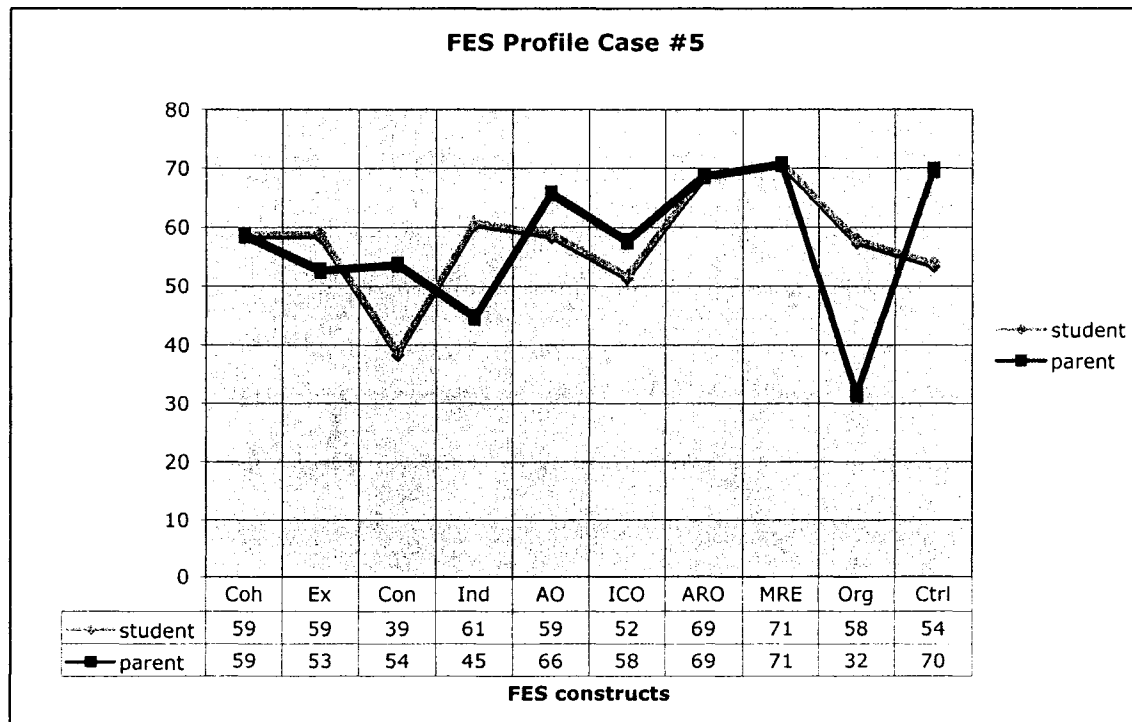
Summary of FES results

To facilitate the analysis of FES results, Moos and Moos (2002) developed a typology of family environments (p. 13). Seven family types are identified: 1) independence oriented; 2) achievement oriented; 3) intellectual-cultural oriented; 4) moral religious oriented; 5) support oriented; 6) conflict oriented; and 7) disorganized. Ninety percent of families participating in earlier research were classified into one of the seven types. The researchers also systematically developed clusters of types sharing similar characteristics to develop three typologies based on subscale scores within categories. The following typologies were created: personal growth-oriented (including families with raw scores equal to or greater than sixty in the subscales of independence, achievement, intellectual-cultural and moral religious); relationship-oriented; and disorganized families. Based on the study findings, all case study families fit best into the 'personal growth-oriented' family typology.

The cohesion and moral religious emphasis subscales yielded the highest mean scales scores for all families and conflict yielded the lowest mean score across all families. For three families the cohesion scores between parent and student were within one point. Based on prior research, subscales scores of case study families can be shown in comparison to other family groups; and adults and adolescents of similar demographic groups. Table VI shows a comparison of case study families with a group of norm-reference families (Moos & Moos, 2002). The normative family group displays raw scores from a research population of 1,432 families 'from all areas of the country, single parent and multigenerational families...racial minority groups, and family of all age groups, including preschool, adolescent and children who had left home, and families of

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retired adults' (p. 20).

The size and breadth of the normative group as compared to the case study families make generalizations about similarities or differences between the two groups difficult. However, the standard deviations of each group across the subscales as displayed in Table VI shows a smaller variance across all scores for the case study families as compared to the normal family group. Standard deviations ranged from .15 for organization to .175 for conflict, and .377 for control. The largest standard deviation for the cases studied was .90 for moral-religious emphasis. Means for the perceptions of cohesion, achievement orientation, intellectual cultural orientation, active recreational, moral religious emphasis, and control were higher for case study families. A remarkable discrepancy is noted in the subscale scores of Moral Religious Emphasis (MRE) and Conflict, with the case study families scoring two points higher on MRE and 2 points lower on Conflict than the normative family groups.

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Table VI. Raw scores of Norm-reference families compared to case study families.

Subscales	Norm-reference families (n: 1,432) Mean	Norm-reference families (n:1432) SD	Case study families (n: 5) Mean	Case study families (n:5) SD
Cohesion	6.73	1,47	7.8	.55
Expressiveness	5.54	1.61	5.6	.857
Conflict	3.18	1.91	1.45	.175
Independence	6.66	1.26	6.3	.735
Achievement Orientation	5.47	1.62	6.8	.635
Intellectual-Cultural Orientation	5.56	1.82	6.9	.676
Active-Recreational Orientation	5.33	1.96	7.0	.433
Moral-Religious Emphasis	4.75	2.03	7.4	.90
Organization	5.47	1.90	5.7	.15
Control	4.26	1.84	5.3	.377

Comparison of normed and case study families

FES subscales — Coh, Exp, Con, Ind, AchOr, ICO, ARO, MRE, Org, Contr

Legend: Normal Families; Case Study Families
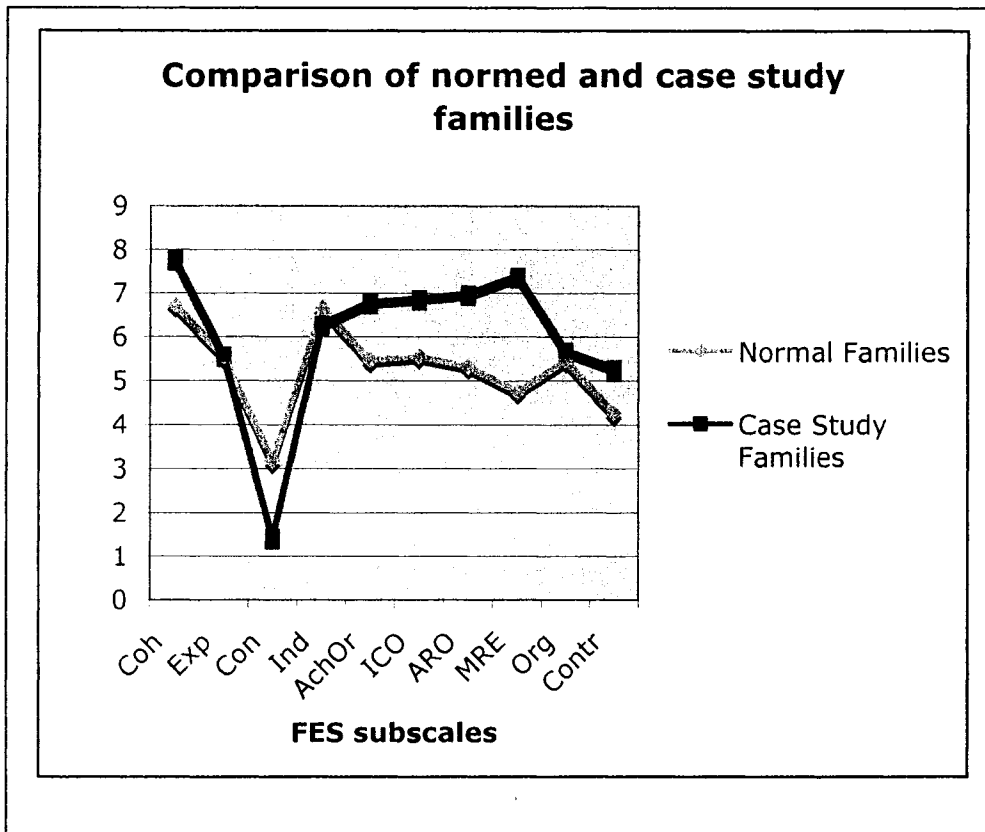
Chart 6. Comparison of raw scores of norm-referenced and case study families.

Chart 6 shows a comparison of the raw scores for each group. A remarkable difference is

noted in the subscale scores in the Moral Religious Emphasis category between both groups with

the case study families scoring 2.65 points higher than the normative family group. Subscale

scores in the categories of Cohesion, Independence, Achievement Orientation, Intellectual

Cultural Orientation, and Active Recreational Orientation were also higher for the case study

families. The lowest score for both groups was in the area of Conflict.

Other related groups participating in previous research are those of African American and

Latino adults and African American adolescents (Moos & Moos, 2002). Table VII shows

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comparative mean scores and standard deviations between case study adults, case study students and African American/Latino adults and African American adolescents. The mean subscale scores for case study adults were higher than the normative African American and Latino adult group in all categories with the exception of Conflict and Organization. The highest scores for the case study adults were in the categories of Moral Religious emphasis (MRE) and Cohesion (Coh). The lowest scores for the normative adult group was in the subscale of conflict.

Standard deviations for the case study adults were low in Cohesion, Conflict, and Active Recreational Orientation (ARO), indicating similar perceptions among the case study adults in these particular areas. There is a wider variation in subscale scores for the adults in the case study group in the areas of Expression, Achievement Orientation, Organization and Control. The normative African American and Latino adults' subscale standard deviations were high across all categories. A marked difference is shown in the mean scores in categories of Conflict and Moral Religious emphasis between the case study students and the African American normative sample adolescents and between case study adults and African American and Latino adults in the normative sample. It is important to note that the norm-referenced groups were middle class adults and adolescents. Mean scores in the subscale category of Achievement orientation (6.44 – African American and 6.8 – case study students) indicate a similar perception of achievement orientation for both groups of adolescents.

A comparison of adult results within the case study group to those of the case study students indicates identical mean scores in the categories of Achievement Orientation and Active Recreational Orientation, and Conflict. The standard deviation noted for each score category is also low, indicating a low variance among scores of both the case study adults and students for these indicators. The highest mean scores between both adult and student groups are recorded in

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the areas of Cohesion, Moral Religious emphasis, and Active Recreational Orientation (all yielding mean scores of 6.8 to 7 or more points). The category yielding scores with the widest difference in mean scores is Organization. In this subscale category, the adult mean score is 4.8 and the student mean score is 6.6. Among the adult group, the standard deviation is high (1.12), indicating a wide variance among the scores of parents within the case study group, however, the standard deviation of scores from case study students for this same category is very low (.28) indicating more similar perceptions of Organization within the household, as indicated by the case study students.

Table VII. Mean scores and standard deviations of African American & Latino Adults, African American Adolescents and Case Study Adults and Adolescents.

Subscales	African American & Latino Adults (n:454) MEAN	African American & Latino Adults (n:454) SD	Case Study Adults (n:5) MEAN	Case Study Adults (n:5) SD	AfAm Adoles. (n:568) MEAN	AfAm Adoles. (n:568) SD	Case Study Students (n:5) MEAN	Case Study Students (n:5) SD
Coh	6.90	1.94	7.4	.24	6.27	2.14	8.2	.69
Exp	4.97	1.73	5.2	.85	4.13	1.58	6.2	1.39
Conf	3.26	1.23	1.6	.28	3.53	2.11	1.6	.65
Indep	6.04	1.72	6.6	.65	5.59	1.66	6	0
AchOrien	6.49	1.50	6.8	.85	6.44	1.47	6.8	.66
IntCult Orien	5.45	2.04	6.8	.75	5.17	1.90	7	.71
ActRecOr	5.01	2.33	7	0	5.49	1.90	7	.5
MRE	5.71	2.24	7.6	.76	6.35	1.52	7.2	1.23
Org	6.02	2.28	4.8	1.12	5.84	1.94	6.6	.28
Cont	4.99	2.07	5.8	.98	5.23	1.64	4.8	1.55

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Responses to Research Questions

Research Question number one

Research questions were designed to elicit responses from the initial ten student participants, their families, and later, from the case study students and families. The questions are designed to determine what impact, if any, families have on student achievement. Responses to Question Number One are gleaned from the questionnaire completed by the ten initial respondents. Responses to questions two through five are found in data collected from the questionnaire, interviews of the five selected cases, and the Family Environment Scale measuring student and parent perceptions of the home environment.

Question number one states: *What are the demographic characteristics of the high achieving low income African American students at junior and senior level in a southeastern Virginia school district?* Tables I, II, and III on pages 59 and 61 provides student and family demographics for all nine participant families. Seven of the nine students are female and two are male. Four of the nine students live in single parent homes with their mother only. One student lives with her grandmother and an aunt with one sibling. The remaining four students living with both parents. The numbers of siblings vary. Most families are small. Two single parent families have no other siblings living in the home except the participating student. Two additional single parent families have only one sibling in the home. One single parent family has two siblings, a brother and a sister living in the home. The family with the grandmother and aunt has one additional sibling in the home. Two of the two parent families have one additional sibling in the home; one participant has two brothers; and one has four brothers and four sisters currently living in the home.

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Parent educational level and occupations are noted in Table II. Single parent mothers' occupations are: librarian, technical writer, property manager, navy exchange accountant, and electrician. The grandmother raising one participant does not indicate any occupation. In the two parent homes, three mothers are employed, and one is currently not working. Occupations of those two mothers are: secretary and customer service supervisor. Father occupations in the two parent homes are: food sales representative (his wife is currently not working- they are the parents of ten children), United States Air Force, and materials management. Three students in the single parent homes also noted occupations of fathers not living in the home: two are active military, and one a loss and recovery specialist.

The level of parental education ranges from high school education to community college and four year college. Three mothers have a high school education, three mothers attended community college, two mothers have attended a four-year institution. Three fathers have high school educations (two of these fathers live outside the home). One father living in the home has attended community college and the other has attended a four year college. There is no educational level data provided for two of the fathers.

Student academic data are shown in Table III. Two of the participating students were seniors when the data was collected, and seven were juniors. Students were enrolled in a variety of advanced course offerings including honors, Advanced Placement, a regional Governor's School for Science and Technology and the local International Baccalaureate Diploma program. In these programs, students were enrolled in as many as six advanced courses during the academic year. The minimum number of advanced courses that any one student was enrolled in was none. Student grade point averages ranged from 3.4 to 4.12, with a mean grade point average of 3.63. Student interests range from science (pre-med and chemistry) to the arts (visual and performing and

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fashion design). One student is interested in psychology and pre-law.

Research Question number two

Research question number two states: *How do students describe their home environment and its influence on their achievement?* During interviews, students consistently noted that family members, specifically the parents, were very supportive and encouraged their school achievement. Two of the students who lived with their mother and father described the father as firmer and stricter than the mother. The comments of these two students reflects research notable of African American families' unique and firm style of discipline (Mandara, 2006). The mother of four of the five cases was described as an encourager, a listener, more understanding. The student who lives in the apartment complex noted that the while the environment had distracters, noise, loud music, inside of the home she has a great deal of support and has a good relationship with her mother. All of the students noted that their home environment assisted them with time management, providing a quiet place to study, and support when they had difficulty in classes. Case study students spoke of situations when they were discouraged because of school related matters (difficult classes, assignments, etc.) when the home support was critical in helping them not to 'give up". Discussions with family members about the importance of education were a clear theme throughout all interviews (Yan, 1999). One student noted: "In my home, hard work and success is expected and comes before any extracurricular activity".

Results of the Family Environment Scale (Moos & Moos, 2002) also provide a deeper look into the home environment and its perceived influence on achievement. Across the case study families, the subscales of Cohesion, Moral Religious Emphasis, Active Recreational Orientation, Intellectual Cultural Orientation and Achievement Orientation yielded the highest scores of all ten

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categories (mean scores are: 7.8, 7.4, 7, 6.9, and 6.8 respectively). These scores reflect a high level of family togetherness, family participation in recreational activities, emphasis in intellectual development and moral religious development. Research reflective of family influence on talent development describe the role of families in nurturing and emphasizing the gifted student's development through intellectual activities and discussions related to achievement (Gagne, 2000; Piirto, 1995; Sloane, 1985; Yan, 1999).

Research Question number three

Research Question number three states: *What family patterns and interactions do participants report?* In response to interview questions regarding routines, interactions, and traditions, participants reported a wide range of family patterns and interactions. One that emerged as a theme was that families spent a lot of time together. This theme is also supported with the Cohesion score on the FES being the highest of all subscale scores. Family togetherness and the consistent support of at least one adult family member is noted in literature as sources of positive influence in the lives of gifted learners (Reis, Colbert & Hebert, 2005). Students reported spending time talking to their mother, in particular, discussing school related matters, social matters and having conversations about religion. In response to the interview question regarding which family member plays the strongest role in encouraging your achievement, one student noted: "My mother plays the strongest role because she always tells me to push myself and not let anyone or anything keep me from succeeding".

The student from the large family noted that whenever he goes out someone from the family is always with him. One student described getting her mother up each morning so they could run together. All of the students mentioned having meals together at home. One student

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mentioned their family's routine prayers, led by his mother and prayers at mealtime. One mother noted: "Number one, we're Christians we go to church every Sunday, also go to prayer on Tuesday nights. We do family things, we go to dinner as a family...honestly, ain't nobody perfect, but we do try to do family things, like go to dinner, play games together, just be together as a family". One student discussed close relationships with cousins around her own age that provided extra support and assistance for her. This student's mother also mentioned the extended family as a source of support. Three mothers mentioned 'house rules' relating to chores, behavior, attending church.

One mother specifically mentioned teaching her children responsibility through teaching them how to take care of their money made from their part time jobs. The mother of the large family described her husband's teaching the children about volunteering to give them a sense of "giving back" and helping others without being paid. She described how all of the family volunteered to clean up the neighbor's yards recently. Regarding interactions with fathers, three of the students whose fathers lived in the home, described their father's style as distinctly different from the mother. Two of the students described their father as firm, strict, the mother as more understanding, 'taking their side' in discussions. One of the students whose mother she described as more straightforward, said that her father had a 'listening ear'. She spoke of how her father often reminded her of their Christian values to help guide her behavior in her social world. Two students described their mother as their best friend, because they could talk with her and tell her things.

Research Question number four

Research Question four states: *What are family traditions and values that influence your*

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school achievement? As mentioned earlier, family traditions include spending time together. Among the family traditions mentioned by participants was each family's emphasis on the value of education. Three of the mothers mentioned that they encouraged their children so that they could be more successful than they were. Throughout the interviews, mothers periodically mentioned their own family history by describing their own upbringing, family members who had become successful, the fact that they did not have the same opportunities and would like for their child to take advantage of opportunities to get an education and be successful. One mother shared details regarding she and her husband's upbringing: '"We try to educate them as to what we went through, how we grew up, me and her dad is from New York. We got out by the grace of God, it was a blessing that we both came out...no drugs, craziness, jail, we were very blessed. We did not want to raise our kids in New York, we did not want them to have to go through the struggles we went through, we wanted them to have a better education, a better life, that's one of the reasons we came here".

The value of religion was a theme throughout the interviews with four of the five families (Baytops,1994; Gibbs, 1989). One student and her mother did not share much in response to the development of religious beliefs. Their lack of response was different from the other four families. Each of the other families (students and mothers) repeatedly mentioned Christian values and principles guiding their development and impacting their success. Students spoke of going to church with their parents and actively participating in services. The students were very candid in describing the influence of religion and spirituality on their life. One student noted: "We are a Christian family, I guess principles in the Bible..such as *'do everything as you were doing it unto God'*, so it's basically like no matter what you do try your hardest. I guess that's something that transfers from religion".

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Research Question number five

Research Question five states: *What are barriers and facilitators in the home environment that influence school achievement?* During interviews students did not describe many barriers in the home environment that negatively impact school achievement. One student mentioned neighborhood distracters, noise and loud music but that inside of the home the mother provided a quiet place to study and do her work. This same student mentioned not having a father figure as affecting the beginning of her life. This student noted: 'Not having a father figure has affected me, but not really, it was more at the beginning of my life. I had friends who would ask questions about why I don't have a father, I'm like I know as much as you know, But I learned that I don't need one, because when you have strong people around you, you don't need weak ones to drag you down.' The only other barrier mentioned was from the male student who indicated that sometimes his father's strictness was discouraging, but it was also be a motivator for him to do well.

Regarding facilitators in the home environment, as noted earlier, students spoke frequently about encouragement from their parents, mothers in particular. Another facilitator was family closeness and cohesiveness as noted in responses to the FES. The support of extended family members is also recognized as a facilitator of achievement (McAdoo, 1991; Kitano & Lewis, 2005, Wilson & Tolson, 1990). Two students recognized their aunts as another family member who was supportive and encouraging their success as students. One student noted: 'we are a very close-knit family. My brother provides me with ideas, my mom is very involved in things. Mom and brother keep me on my toes. My mom is always there to talk to, to listen.' Three mothers specifically mentioned the role of the father as important. For one of the three families the father

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was no longer in the home, however, the mother described his relationship as helpful. When asked if there is anything else you'd like to say about your impact on your child's achievement, she noted: 'The other thing I can is about her father, one thing I can say about him- he did not disappear, even though we separated, he did not disappear. In the beginning, once he found out that we were not getting back together, he started spending time with her, not as much as I would like, but he did. She has developed a good relationship with her father; I encouraged her to know that he loves her just like I do. I think that has helped her, too.'

One mother noted that her daughter watching an older cousin was encouragement. When asked about other family members who may have helped her daughter she noted: two people come to mind…. my niece, she's in New York now, she struggled in school a bit and kind of dropped out, but then she came down here to Virginia to get herself together, she went to Community College and ended up going back to New York and now she's gone to college and graduated. I believe that my daughter watching her cousin struggle helped her'. Responses on the Family Environment Scale shed some insight into this question as well. Scores on the Active Recreational, Intellectual Cultural Orientation and Achievement Orientation were among the highest of the subscale scores. These high scores indicate that the case families spend time in activities related to recreation, cultural activities and also emphasized intellectual development and student achievement. Such family activities may also serve as facilitators to the student's achievement (Bloom, 1985; Boykin & Bailey, 2000).

Summary of major findings

The following are the major findings of the study on the impact of family on the achievement of African American gifted learners from low income environments:

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1. Family Demographics. The demographics of the initial respondent families varied. The majority of the families were single parent families with the mother as the head of household. Three families were traditional families with mother and father within the home. One family was headed by a grandmother. With the exception of one family of ten children, other families were small with three or less children within the home, including the participant student. Parent occupations ranged from skilled positions (i.e., librarian, accountant, technical writer, secretary, food sales representative) to military or managerial positions. The level of parental education also varied. Most parents reported receiving a high school or community college education. Three parents reported attending a four year college, with one father reporting earning his bachelor's degree.

2. Student academic profiles and aspirations. Students participating in the study were enrolled in the highest courses and programs being offered in their school division. Five of the students were participants in the International Baccalaureate Diploma program, one student was a new student to a regional Governor's school for students gifted in the areas of math and science. Other students were taking Advanced Placement courses. The mean grade point average was 3.5. All students were listed in the division's database as identified gifted students. The majority of the students had also attended the division's elementary and middle school centers for gifted students. Student aspirations included chemistry, pre-med, engineering, pre-law, fine arts, finance, and athletic training. Colleges selected by the students included in-state universities and one out of state university. Two students selected historically black universities as their college of choice, one selected the United States Air Force Academy. Career and college choices indicated students' willingness to continue seeking high level challenges in their post secondary educational programs.

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3. Barriers and facilitators in the home. The majority of the students did not indicate any barriers to their achievement within the home. Two students who mentioned noise and distractors within the neighborhood, indicated that the noise did not negatively affect their ability to get their work done. Overwhelmingly, all students cited their mother's support and encouragement as a facilitator of their achievement. A majority of the students mentioned family togetherness and cohesion as a facilitator. Each of case study students described specific times and activities wherein the family spent a great deal of time together, discussing school-related issues, their values and their futures. Four of five of the case study students also mentioned church related activities, praying, and applying religious principles as a facilitator to their commitment to learning and being successful as a student.

4. Patterns and interactions. Patterns and interactions cited by students and parents were having family meals together, spending time together in recreational and extra curricular activities; participating in church-related activities. Family discussions regarding school work, grades, and the value of education were noted by all case study families. Students and parents also discussed the pattern of household rules and expectations for high grades and behaviors within the rules as set by parents. Families also mentioned their regular involvment with church attendance, discujssion of religion, family prayers, and application of biblical principles in everyday life.

Family discussions regarding racial identity were noted by three students. The male student participating in the case study shared his experience with family discussions regarding race and his future as a black male. The FES results on the subscales of Active Recreational, Intellectual-Cultural orientation, Achievement Orientation and Moral

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Religious Emphasis yielded the highest scores across the families while Conflict was rated low.

5. Values and Traditions. Values and traditions noted across the case families were similar. The value of education and for achievement orientation are traditions of family (to include extended family), religious values and the value of teaching children to be responsible were in evidence. Family values and traditions were supported by high scores on the Family Environment Scale categories of Achievement Orientation, Moral Religious Emphasis and Intellectual Cultural orientation.

Chapter Five

Discussions, Conclusions, and Implications

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the results presented in Chapter IV; draw conclusions based on

the data, and explore implications for future research and practice. A thorough review of all data

reveals, in most cases, common themes across responses. There are also data that reveal different

responses among the groups of students and families. Strategies employed enabled the researcher

to delve deeply into the parent-to-student relationships, explore influences of other individuals

within the family structure, and to extract the types of settings within the home that provided the

venue for the relationships described.

Discussion

This study was designed to determine and describe, what if, any influence parents and

families have on the successful achievement of gifted African American low-income high

achieving students. A framework based on research reviewed was developed to guide the

questions and to shape this analysis. The components of the social capital conceptual framework

(Coleman, 1990; Yan, 1999) will be used to discuss the findings across all data sources. This

model, created from a complex set of overlapping constructs, was a more coherent framework for

understanding and delineating the characteristics inherent within the home environment of

achieving students. These constructs have been defined through the participants in this study as

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having influence on their academic success. The framework constructs are defined as 1) family traditions, 2) extended family support, 3) family to student discussions, 4) family support and social-emotional encouragement, 5) family norms and disciplinary practices, 6) religious and spiritual development, 7) racial identity development, and 8) positive achievement orientation. In the discussion that follows, narrative excerpts from the study results will be used to provide examples of the specific construct being described. The discussion will also provide data presented by families that differed from that of the majority of participants.

Family traditions

African American family traditions are noted frequently in a literature base which provides evidence that these traditions contribute positively to the growth and development of their children (Boykin & Bailey, 2000; Clark, 1983; Huff, Houskamp,Watkins, Stanton, & Tavegia, 2004, VanTassel-Baska, 1989). An examination of student and parent responses revealed traditions across cases that have been mentioned in the literature as influential to character development of children and youth. Sharing family meals together, spending time together in other recreational and entertainment activities, and attending church together are all traditions mentioned by case families as valued and practiced on a regular basis.

The students especially valued these traditions as they spoke of having discussions with their parents that taught them the value of an education. Each of the case students gave examples of conversations with family members (parents and/or extended family members) emphasizing doing their best, valuing their education, encouraging them to work hard. Another family tradition mentioned by four of five of the cases was discussions about their religion and practicing their faith in daily living as well as through attending and participating in church activities. The four

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students whose families held this as a valued tradition candidly spoke of 'being a Christian family' and the positive impact they felt this would have on their future. In one case, both the mother and student indicated little participation in church related activities. In previous research, religious orientation has been noted as one of the greatest historic strengths of African American families (Baytops, 1995; Billingsley, 1992; McAdoo, 1991).

These students also appeared to value the tradition of spending time together. In particular, each of the students spoke of the special relationship they had with their mothers, who were described as encouraging and understanding. Even the one student who described her father as more understanding and the mother more straightforward, earlier in the interview called her mother 'her idol'. It is important to note that this mother also spoke of this daughter of being like her, confident and sure of what she wanted. In three cases, the females spoke of their mothers as 'like their best friend'. The support role of at least one parent has been noted in the research as critical to the success of the gifted learner and instrument in the development of their talent (Reis, Colbert & Hebert, 2005; VanTassel-Baska, 1989). Family routines included prayer, reading together, running together, going out together, and family gatherings.

Family togetherness or cohesion was also identified as a perceived strength through the Family Environment Scale (Moos & Moos, 2002). The cohesion subscale yielded the highest score across all families (see Chart 6, page 89). The perception of Moral-religious emphasis (MRE) yielded the second highest score across all families on the FES. This perception was validated through the interviews with four of the five families. In this area, however, one family differed from the other four, yielding the lowest MRE raw scores across the group (parent- 5; student-2). During the interviews, both mother and daughter made only limited comments regarding their faith, indicating that they did not participate in religious activities regularly.

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Extended family support

The extended family as a source of social capital has long been noted as valued within the African American community (Gibbs, 1989; Hatchett, Cochran & Jackson, 1991; McAdoo, 1991; Wilson & Tolson, 1990). Four of the five families described the support of extended family members. This support was beneficial to the students' academic achievement. In two cases, Aunts were mentioned as support and models of success for case students. One aunt was a regular visitor in the home, sharing, supporting, checking up on the student and providing financial assistance when needed. The student referred to her aunt as 'a second mother' and the mother referred to her sister as her 'backbone'. This type of reference is indicative of the value placed by this family on the support of the extended family. In particular the financial assistance was valued, according to the mother, when she was unable to provide sufficiently for her highly able daughter when she was in need of additional school supplies and resources. The student expressed her appreciation for the aunt who was 'always there' watching over them, indicating a sense of security provided by the aunt's presence in their lives. This type of financial and psychological support provided by an extended family member is cited by Hatchett et al, 1991. The range of classes and achievement levels of aunts and cousins are also previously noted in research (Prom-Jackson, Johnson & Wallace, 1987; Wilson & Tolson, 1990). Two families mentioned the common support provided by and to cousins with similar interests, needs, abilities of the case students. Phone conversations, comparing report cards, assisting each other, being role models younger siblings and cousins were all mentioned as practiced and valued.

None of the families mentioned grandparents as providing particular support. However, two mothers noted that encouragement provided by elders of the family were beneficial to the students, particularly to emphasize education and the historical challenges faced by blacks to

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obtain equal educational rights in this country. One mother cited an elderly relative who shared 'stories' with family children of the struggles of African Americans to get an education.

Family to student discussions

In a groundbreaking study examining longitudinal data of adolescents and their families, Yan (1999) found that the discussions between African American students and their parents were more contributory to their achievement than those of their white peers. As mentioned earlier, all five students cited discussions with parents related to education, encouragement to do their best work and other school-related matters. Three also noted specific conversations with extended family also related to education. These types of frequent conversations had been practiced within the homes of all cases since students were in primary school. Parents noted their advocacy efforts to get their children identified as gifted. Students also shared their experiences with 'gifted programs' and how their parents always encouraged them once they 'got in' to do their best, despite challenges. One student cited a recent experience with high-level coursework at a Governor's School as being the most challenging she had ever experienced. She mentioned that her mother encouraged her to study more and not give up.

Family cohesion of all cases is very high as measured by the FES. This cohesion is impacted by the type of conversations held within the family related to achievement, school success and the students' futures. High levels of discussions are also noted in the high raw scores achievement orientation and active-recreational orientation subscales for case families. This type of togetherness and cohesion is noted in previous research regarding families of achieving gifted learners (Feldman & Piirto, 1995; Huff et al, 2004). Perceptions of conflict across all cases is very low, indicating good relationships within all cases families, creating environments conducive to

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productive and rich family to student discussions.

Social emotional encouragement

The encouragement provided by mothers is a strong theme throughout all respondents' interviews. The role of at least one supportive adult in the talent development of gifted learners is cited in the research as positive and important to their success (Bloom, 1985; Floyd, 1996; Gagne, 2000; Reis et al, 2005). This supportive relationship is also cited in the literature as contributing to the resiliency of students in at risk circumstances (Kitano & Lewis, 2005). Remarkably, the mothers' descriptions of their relationships with the students mirrored those provided by the students. Mothers in all five cases noted specific character traits of their children which contributed to their success. These mothers clearly had positive perceptions of their childrens' future success. In an earlier study, research noted that parents' expectations for their students' future success was positively correlated with student achievement scores (Halle, Costes, & Mahoney, 1997).

In addition to the support of mothers and fathers, students reported the support of an extended family member and a 'church family'. Therefore, for all of these students, there was at least one parent or family member (and in some cases two) who served to provide regular social emotional support and encouragement to influence their continuing academic success. Across each case support is provided as follows: Case 1- mother and aunt; Case two- mother and father; Case three- mother and father (who lives outside the home), cousins, and the church family; Case four- mother , father, cousin, and an aunt; Case five- mother and father. Interestingly, the impact of living in a single family home also does not appear to have a negative impact on the two students in them. Earlier research by Weisner and Gardner also note that single parent homes had no negative effect on the talent development of gifted learners (as cited by Feldman & Piirto, 1995).

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Family norms and disciplinary practices

Family rules and discipline practices were noted in four of the five cases. Case students described parent rules regarding grades ('Cs are not acceptable in this house'); responsibility; chores; doing homework; and rules for younger siblings to read each day for 30 minutes after school. One mother pointed out a 'household rules' list posted on the refrigerator for all of her children. Two students spoke of their father's disciplinary practices as being strict. Both cases reflect the research regarding the unique disciplinary styles of African American families as noted by Mandara (2006).

The male student, who described his father as having high expectations and being difficult sometimes, also stated that he valued his father and respected him for taking care of his large family. He noted that his father's style of parenting was motivating to him. The one mother whose moral religious emphasis score was low, was not clear about any particular rules within the household. The student also did not describe any. This household was much more lenient than the other four. In one house, the single parent mother stated a rule regarding church attendance, 'if you're in this house, you go to church'. This same case family noted that the church family was a source of support and encouragement for the student.

Religious and spiritual development

As noted in the description of family traditions, a remarkable theme throughout responses in interviews and the family environment scales for four of the five families (noting above average scores) was the Moral Religious Emphasis. This theme is reflected in the literature as one of the strengths of African American families (Baytops,1995; Billingsley, 1992; McAdoo, 1991). In a

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description of ten exemplary churches, Billingsley (1992) cites the social, economic and other nonreligious outreach services provided by black churches, including educational programs. These descriptions make it clear that the church within the black community is an extension of the resources available to families when their own personal means may be limited.

Throughout responses from both students and parents in at least four families it was clear that the family's religious practices were deeply embedded in their day-to-day interactions. Students mentioned being from a 'Christian family' and described how their belief system guided their behaviors academically and socially. When discussing his academic work and other responsibilities, the male student noted that one should practice 'whatever you do, do it as unto God' describing the standard to which he aims to completes his tasks. Other students described church services, prayer at home, engaging in prayer services, participating in other religious activities. Students were open and candid, and very confident in their belief that their religious development was important to their success for the future. Once again, it is important to note that one case family did not provide any description when this question was posed during the interview and this category yielded the lowest FES score across all families.

Racial identity development

Responses in this category were less elaborate than across all components of the conceptual framework. In three cases, student responses indicated that parents encouraged them to be proud of their racial heritage through discussions and 'stories' of the challenges faced by the race in across history. The literature cites the importance of family discussions regarding racial heritage as important to the confidence and character development of black students (Ford, 1994; Fordham, 1988). One mother specifically noted that she lets her children know that many people

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sacrificed for the opportunities that students have today to get a good education. One student who is multiracial (father African American; mother Mexican-Italian) and her mother shared an experience the student had in a predominately black school as an elementary student when students thought she was white and her father came to visit to confirm what the student told her peers. The challenge of being called white was difficult, the parent and student noted that it did not interfere with her academic achievement. This student noted that her father coming to school was very helpful.

One parent appeared to equate racial development with teaching racism and quickly pointed out that they did not believe in racism and one stated that as a Christian, she would never teach it to her children. The male students' comments were perhaps the most elaborate. His parents he noted had told him that people would judge him because he was black and male, but that he believed his parents when they told him that if he performs well and works hard, he would not be denied opportunities. He appeared confident in his response and thus, in his ability to be successful despite his gender and race. These comments were reflective of findings in literature regarding the unique psychological challenges of gifted African American males and females (Grantham & Ford, 1998; Grantham, 2002).

Parent to student discussions related to race are linked to positive racial identity development (McAdoo, 1991; McKay, Atkins, Hawkins, Brown, & Lynn, 2002). According to other researchers, the very act of conversation with children regarding their race and heritage influenced their development of a positive racial identity (Boykin & Bailey, 2000; Ford, 1966; Patton & Baytops, 1995). One student said her parents told her black people are strong and that she should not allow anyone to tell her any different, this student's mother said that she thinks her daughter 'likes being black'. This comment suggests that the parents do indeed encourage a

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positive racial identity, even though she discourages a belief in racism.

Positive achievement orientation

Talent development research speaks strongly to the role of parents in the nurturance and development of their child's gifts over time (Goertzel & Goertzel, 1962 & 1978, as cited by Feldman & Piirto, 1995; Olszewski-Kubilius, 2002; Sloane, 1985). All parents in their comments during interviews expressed a high regard for their child's ability to be successful and to obtain a higher education through college. Each parent spoke of the students' abilities, past successes, and future potential. The mother of the male student said that she thought it was her job to 'exalt' her son, to let him know that he is special, and capable of doing well.

Discussions regarding school and schoolwork were described as traditional and routine in the households. Encouragement from parents, extended family, and church family were provided in multiple forms on a consistent basis to all case study students. Two mothers described the success of their sisters (the students' aunts) who had earned degrees, had high paying jobs and were living well. One aunt had recently retired young and was able to continue with a high quality life, which the mother said was an inspiration to her daughter. The value of education was consistently expressed throughout interview responses. Achievement orientation as measured by the Family Environment Scale received the second highest score for the case families as a group (see Table VII). Table VII shows results of the study categorized by the social capital constructs.

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Table VII. Findings by Social Capital constructs and Theme.

Social Capital construct	Thematic Findings	Re: Research Question #
Family traditions	Close relationships with mothers 5/5 Sharing meals 5/5 Spending time together in recreational and entertainment activities 5/5 Spending time together in other activities 5/5 Attending church together 4/5	2, 3, 4
Extended family support	Support, emotional encouragement from aunts, cousins and 'church family' 4/5 Spending time with extend family 3/5	2, 3, 5
Family to student discussion	Conversations re: value of education 5/5 Conversations with extended family re: school related activities; encouragement 3/5 Discussions re: challenging experiences 3/5 High level of cohesion/ family togetherness 5/5	2, 3, 5
Family support and social-emotional encouragement	Social emotional support of mothers 5/5 Support of extended family 4/5 Father's encouragement, guidance 3/5 High cohesion, low conflict 5/5	2, 3, 4, 5
Family norms and disciplinary practices	Mother described as more understanding 3/5 'Family rules' posted/other rules specified in daily conversations 4/5	2, 3
Religious/spiritual development	Religious practices imbedded in daily living 3/5 Church attendance part of normal routine 4/5 Use of biblical themes to guide decisions 3/5	3, 4, 5
Racial identity development	Encouraging students to be 'proud of their heritage' 3/5 Family sharing historical experiences in relationship to value of education 3/5	4, 5
Positive achievement orientation	Discussion with family re: achievement 5/5 Comments from mothers re: students' giftedness and how they encourage their students 5/5 Providing assistance with time management, studying 5/5 Above average Achievement orientation 5/5	2, 3, 4, 5

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Alternative explanation of findings

During the collection of data, other factors beyond the social capital framework of families were revealed to have impact on the student's academic achievement. These factors are supported by previous research related to the achievement of African American gifted learners, particularly those from low income or at-risk backgrounds. Among these variables are: the impact of early and sustained involvement in gifted education or other specialized programs and internal psychosocial behaviors displayed by the gifted learners, particularly self-efficacy, resiliency, and self motivation. It is important to present these findings here as evidence that other factors may, in fact, have had influence on the achievement of these students, not just the family constructs as mentioned in the study findings and results sections. These variables will be described here with reference to previous literature that supports the variable as instrumental in the successful achievement of these particular learners.

Early and sustained involvement in specialized programs

As previous literature has noted, the early exposure to advanced programming for gifted and high ability learners has been shown to positively affect their achievement. Recent Javits grants studies linking Title I students to high level curriculum have provided positive results when these students from previously low performing schools were exposed for extended periods to advanced curriculum (Clasen, 2006; Tomlinson, Callahan & Lelli,1997). When exposed to gifted education programs, gifted learners from minority backgrounds show significant gains in achievement results over time (Bracken, VanTassel-Baska, Brown & Feng, 2007)). Providing alternative educational opportunities for gifted minority children was shown to have positive effects according to parents and students participating in a specialized program in depressed

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schools in New York City (Borland, Schnur & Wright, 2000). The students and parents in this study remarked frequently about the nature of the gifted program in which students were involved. Parents spoke about the special elementary school for the gifted (3 of 5 case study students attended this school as youngsters). Parents also spoke about the rigor and challenge their students were exposed to as middle schoolers and in their current programs. One student attributed her ability to accept a challenge to participating in a very rigorous Governor's School program for math and science students. Parents and students also spoke about the challenge and expectations of the IB program and their child's success despite the difficulty of classes and assignments.

Internal traits

The study also revealed evidence of the internal traits of the students which may also have contributed to their ability to maintain academic success. Parents spoke of their children as being able to 'make it' without help from others. One mother described her daughter as being the 'one who helps her friends'. Another mother noted that her student's abilities were 'God-given' and that her success was a combination of the student, her abilities, and the family's support. In the detailed description of one student's challenge with a rigorous program, the mother said that her daughter worked hard to be successful after receiving a grade lower than expected. Internal motivation, self-efficacy and self confidence are described in other studies as traits that enable the success of students from at-risk environments (Floyd, 1996; Grantham, 2002; Kitano & Lewis, 2005; Reis, Colbert, & Hebert, 2005).

These findings, which relate to the impact of advanced instructional programs and the internal traits of high achieving African American students, may also have contributed to the success these students have sustained throughout their elementary and secondary careers. This

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explanation, thus, may temper the conclusion that family role is the defining impact on student achievement. However, using Gagne's view of talent development, all three factors may contribute significantly to the development of each student's giftedness and thus the manifestation of their talent is realized with the interactions of all three catalysts: the family, special educational opportunities, and internal traits (Gagne, 2000).

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine what, if any, impact families have on the academic achievement of a subgroup of African American gifted learners, those originating from low income environments. Based on the findings, certain 'social capital' resources within the home environment of the students in the study are consistently noted by participants as having positive impact on their achievement. It is also important to note that each of the mothers spoke about her child's participation in special programs for gifted learners as being important to them. These mothers described specific challenges, teachers, and programs that were influential in their child's development over time.

Across all five cases, the social capital noted as influential were family togetherness; relationships with their mothers; family to student discussions (particularly regarding the value of education, religious development and racial heritage); the role of the extended family (particularly aunts and cousins); and family norms and traditions. Another notable source of capital was the intrinsic motivation toward success and resilience of each of the case study students based on perceptions of their parents and their own self-reports.

The research has thus revealed that, even within what appear to be challenging circumstances (i.e., being members of a racial minority group, limited financial means, single

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parent homes), parents and students are able to maintain effective and positive relationships. A high level of family cohesion and togetherness is indicated in interview responses and results of the Family Environment Scales (four of five families had above average cohesion scores). In some cases, support provided by others outside of the nuclear family (i.e. extended family members) also contribute to maintaining these effective relationships. As noted by previous research, these relationships are borne of intergenerational traditions that value the power of an education to change the course of an individual's life and to positively impact their family and the community at large. This new knowledge also has the power to raise the level of respect and value for a group of people who have been too long misunderstood, disregarded, and overlooked: families of gifted learners from culturally diverse and low income communities.

Design of an emergent model

In Chapter One, a conceptual model of social capital is described based on earlier research related to African American families and inherent resources available within the home and family context that could have a positive influence on the academic success of their children (Coleman, 1988, Yan, 1999). As a result of this study, the framework has been reconfigured to depict a new emergent model. This model is an interactive depiction of the key social capital constructs that impact high achieving students from culturally diverse, low income backgrounds.. Figure 1 shows the emergent model. This model depicts five key interactive themes –extended family support; family to student discussions; family norms and traditions; the role of the mother; and family cohesion that were found to consistently have the most impact on student academic success across the five case studies. Imbedded within these interactive constructs are subthemes inherent within each theme that contribute to their value as 'social capital' for these students.

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The subthemes as noted in the new model will be described here. Within the theme of extended family support are the subthemes of social emotional support and racial identity development. Mothers and students shared experiences with aunts, cousins and other relatives who provide additional support and encouragement for the achieving student. In particular, conversations regarding the value of education and the family's racial heritage are shared to encouraged and motivate the student. Contact with the extended family occurred in the home of the student, during traditional family holiday visits, on the telephone, and at church.

Within the theme of the role of the mother, three subthemes are noted: recognition of giftedness, listening to concerns; and assistance with time management. Students described their mothers as good listeners and being like a 'best friend'. Mothers shared stories of their childrens' experiences being identified as gifted and how the recognition influenced their encouragement during their childs' school careers. Students and mothers also spoke of the assistance provided for time management, staying on task, and help with getting their work done.

Within the theme of family to student discussions are the subthemes emphasizing the value of education and sharing challenging experiences. All respondents shared the importance of family discussions focused on the importance of education to their future. Conversations during mealtime, participating in recreational and other activities also focused on achievement and encouraging the student to do their best work at all times. Parents also shared conversations with their children regarding challenging school experiences. While high achievement was emphasized, students spoke openly about parents' understanding and ability to encourage them when they faced difficulties.
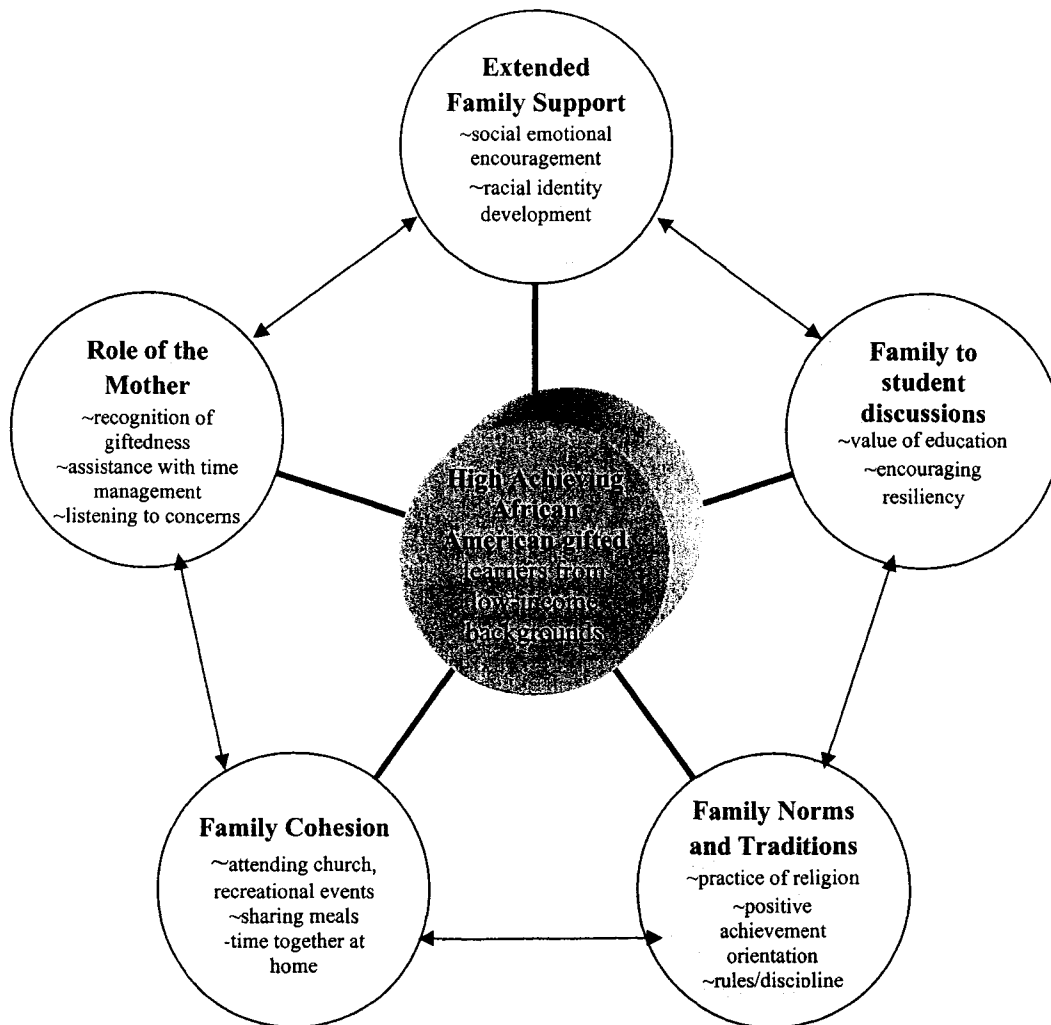
Subthemes inherent within the theme of family norms and traditions are the belief and practice of religion; positive achievement orientation; and family rules and discipline. The

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majority of the students and their mothers (four of the five case studies) consistently shared experiences regarding their spiritual beliefs and how those beliefs guided their daily experiences. Mothers and children spoke about family prayer, active participation in church activities, and their strong belief in a higher being.

Families also mentioned family rules and discipline practices. Two students spoke about their father's discipline style as 'more strict' than that of the mother. The other family norm was positive achievement orientation. Students spoke about their family's emphasis on achievement since they were young students in school and how even extended family members were concerned about their achievement, asking about grades and special programs students are involved in.

The last theme noted consistently throughout responses from the case study families was that of family cohesion. All families provided evidence of their family togetherness, noting numerous examples of the family spending a great deal of time together in extra curricular activities, recreation, volunteering, church, eating meals together, sharing books, watching television, and discussing school related matters within the home. Students shared the positive effects of being together, noting that they were comfortable talking with the mother about social and educational matters. As indicated, this interactive model provides a visual picture of the nature of family social capital that has the potential to impact the student's intellectual as well as affective development, thus, leading to their positive academic achievement.

Figure 1. Emergent model : 'Social Capital' of high achieving African American gifted learners.

Extended Family Support
~social emotional encouragement
~racial identity development

Role of the Mother
~recognition of giftedness
~assistance with time management
~listening to concerns

Family to student discussions
~value of education
~encouraging resiliency

High Achieving African American gifted learners from low-income backgrounds

Family Cohesion
~attending church, recreational events
~sharing meals
-time together at home

Family Norms and Traditions
~practice of religion
~positive achievement orientation
~rules/discipline

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Implications for future research and practice

This study has implications for research and practice in the fields of gifted education, general education, family and parent education, and guidance and counseling. The recommendations made here offer opportunities to extend the results of this study and perhaps open new doors of discovery regarding the impact of the family-home context on the psychological and intellectual development of gifted learners. Based on the results of this study, a few recommendations are made for future research and practice.

The first implication for research is the need for the design of a controlled study of African American families of gifted students and their perceptions of the family environment utilizing the Moos & Moos Family Environment Scale. The use of the FES with a larger group of African American families will provide a better comparison to the norm-referenced groups used in previous Moos & Moos samples. Such a comparison will provide results of family environment perceptions with broader implications and potential for the development of a gifted learner home environment framework (with specific demographic characteristics) based on the scale results.

A second implication for research is the development of a qualitative study of the support structure provided by mothers of at-risk culturally diverse gifted learners. This study would be conducted across a variety of cultural contexts. Using field notes from observations, interviews of students, family members and school personnel, researchers could determine the nature of relationships between gifted learners and their mothers across cultures. A closer examination of this phenomenon across cultures would serve to inform school personnel and others working with other at-risk students. A better understanding of how mothers support and encourage within different cultures would also help practitioners broaden their knowledge of culture-specific child rearing practices.

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Intrinsic motivation and resilience appeared in the study as traits that may have contributed to student success. Parents and students described situations wherein student motivation to succeed was the influential character trait. Resiliency as a character trait was also revealed in descriptions by both students and parents of challenging situations which students were able to overcome. A fourth implication for research is the development of a study of the intrinsic motivation of at-risk African American gifted learners to further examine these traits and how they influence student academic achievement and affective development.

Finally, a research study using the same protocol as used in this study with other ethnic groups would also contribute greatly to the research literature regarding families and their influence on student achievement. As this nation's population of diverse cultures continues to expand and the needs of these students are addressed in public schools, educators will need a much stronger knowledge base (than now exists) regarding the home environment of culturally diverse gifted learners. Such a study using the questionnaire, interview protocol and Family Environment Scale would enable researchers to delve deeply into the family constructs across cultures and define commonalities and differences across groups. This research will expand the understandings of the field related to African American gifted learners, in particular, those from economically limited backgrounds as well as other culture groups.

Implications for practice

The knowledge gained from this study may lead others to the development of affective support models available in elementary and secondary level institutions and specialized programs for gifted learners. Recommendations for practice in the fields of gifted education, counseling education and general education are noted here. In the area of parent and family education

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programming, workshops may be designed to enhance family understanding of their gifted students' intellectual and affective needs. These sessions should also include components for community members who may be involved with students in other settings, including churches and recreational settings. Based on the results of this study, professional development models for educators can be developed to enhance their understanding of the strengths and the power of African American families. Additional professional development for counselors and teachers should be developed to enhance their understandings of intrinsic motivation, resiliency and self efficacy as related to this population of gifted learners. Case study profiles of these learners may be used to guide discussions during the professional development sessions.

An examination of case study student course choices, aspirations and intended college majors indicates that these students would benefit from career counseling. The goal of career counseling should be to create a plan of studies for gifted learners that matches closely with their strengths, interests and aspirations for the future. Providing opportunities for all gifted learners to participate in 'college planning sessions' as early as middle school would greatly benefit these learners as their high school course of study is designed. The course of study should be designed to match with their goals, the requirements of their intended college majors and the colleges they are most interested in attending.

Summary

This research study offers the field of education a glimpse into the world of a group of students and their families seldom visited by educators and other professionals who make day-to-day decisions about how best to serve the needs of these students in our schools and other institutions. When we do not visit within the home environment, very little is known about the reality of how individuals interact with one other and how provisions are made to ensure the success of high achieving students like those participating in this study. This study has provided a glimpse into the lives of these gifted adolescents and their families. This glimpse has the potential to change minds and create new understandings about how families are able to capitalize on the abilities and compassions they have to share, support, instill, and reinforce the gifts and talents of their children. These types of social capital resources, while often not quantifiable, are certainly worthy of studying, valuing and respecting.

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Appendix A: Letter to Parent for Informed Consent

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Joy L. Davis

One Franklin St.

Hampton, Va 23669

Dear Parents/Guardian of:

I am conducting a research study to explore the impact of family on the achievement of successful African American gifted students. I am writing to you because your son/daughter is a high achieving student in Hampton City Schools. To help find out details of how your family impacts your student's achievement, I would like to have you and your student participate in this study. If you agree to participate, your student should complete the enclosed questionnaire to provide basic information to be reviewed as the study begins. Later, five students and their families will be selected for an interview and completion of a standardized family scale. If you give your permission to participate, please complete the form on the next page, have your student complete the questionnaire and return both in the self-addressed stamped envelope. Once I review responses to the questionnaire, five families will be selected to participate as case studies. To gather additional information from the case study families and students, an in-home interview will be scheduled.

In the written report at the end of the study, names of students and family members, school names and addresses will not be used. **All information used will be completely anonymous.** During the study, you and your student can withdraw from participation at any time. At the conclusion of the study, a copy of the study results will be available for review by all participating families. Thank you for considering this offer to participate, Your decision to participate or not will in no way affect your student at school. **Please return both forms in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope by May 18th.** If you have questions, please feel free to contact me at jldavis@sbo.hampton.k12.va.us or (757) 727-2160. I truly appreciate your support and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Joy L. Davis

THIS PROJECT WAS FOUND TO COMPLY WITH APPROPRIATE ETHICAL STANDARDS AND WAS EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED FOR FORMAL REVIEW BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2007-05-01 AND EXPIRES ON 2008-05-01.

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Study Response and Parent Permission Form

Parent or Legal Guardian, please fill in each blank as requested. Thank you.

Your Name_____phone_____

Student name_____

Mailing Address:

_____I give permission for my student and my family to participate in this study and if selected, I agree to participate in a home interview at a later date. I also give permission for you to access my student's school records for purposes of this study. (If my family is selected for a home interview, I understand that you will call ahead for an interview time that is convenient to our family.)

_____I give permission for my student to participate in this study and complete the enclosed questionnaire, however, do not agree to participate in a family home interview.

Signature:_____

Please return this form and the enclosed student questionnaire in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope or to:

Joy L. Davis

Hampton City Schools

Dept of Academic Advancement and Enrichment

One Franklin St.

Hampton, VA 23669

Thank you for your cooperation!!

THIS PROJECT WAS FOUND TO COMPLY WITH APPROPRIATE ETHICAL STANDARDS AND WAS EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED FOR FORMAL REVIEW BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2007-05-01 AND EXPIRES ON 2008-05-01.

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Appendix B: Student Family/Home Environment Questionnaire

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Student questionnaire

On family/home environment

Name_____Grade_____School_____

Previous schools attended

Elementary_____Middle_____

List courses you are currently taking: _____   _____

_____   _____   _____   _____

Your Future:

Career aspirations (name one or two careers that you are considering)

_____   _____

College most likely to attend   Major most likely to choose

_____   _____

Describe your current home environment (check any that apply)

I currently live with both parents_____ OR one parent -- father_____ mother _____

I live with my siblings   # brothers_____   # sisters_____

Other adults in the home   grandmother_____   grandfather____ aunt_____ uncle____

Mother's Occupation_____Father's Occupation_____

Mother's Educational level (check one)

___high school   ____4 year college   ____graduate level (PhD or EdD)

___community college   ____graduate level (master's level)

Father's Educational level (check one)

___high school   ____4 year college   ____graduate level (PhD or EdD)

___community college   ____graduate level (master's level)

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Write your responses to the following questions below, if you need extra space, feel free to use another sheet of paper.

1. How does your home environment contribute to your sense of being an achieving student?

2. Are there any factors within the home environment that inhibit your achievement? If so please describe.

3. Which family member (s) plays the strongest role in encouraging your achievement? Please elaborate here.

4. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about you and your family's role in your academic success?

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Family interview protocol (to be completed by either mother, father or guardian)
(approximate time: 45 minutes)

1- Your son or daughter has been a very successful student, tell me how he/she arrived at this point?

2- What specific experiences has your child had throughout his/her life that have positively contributed to his/her success today? Of those experiences, which ones emerged as a result of the role of the family?

3- What comes to your mind as concerns, issues, and fears about your child about to go off to college?

4- What family traditions and beliefs have influenced your interactions with your child?

5- What specific experiences has your child had that have negatively impacted his/her life and of those, which ones emerged as a result of the family?

6- What are some family routines and regular interactions that occur in your household?

7- How would you characterize your style of parenting?

8- Are there other family members who have had an impact on your child's school success? If yes, please describe specifically how they have had an influence on your child's achievement?

9- How do you provide guidance for your child to assist with development of their racial identity and their religious beliefs?

10- What else would you like to share about your impact on your child's school success?

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Student interview protocol (to be completed by case student)
(approximate time: 45 minutes)

1- You've been a very successful student, tell me how you got here/arrived at this point/achieved such success?

2- What specific experiences have you had throughout your life that have positively contributed to your success today? Of those experiences, which ones emerged as a result of the role of the family?

3- What comes to your mind as concerns, issues and fears about going off to college?

4- What family traditions and beliefs have your influenced your intentions as a college bound student?

5- What specific experiences have you had that have negatively impacted your life and of those, which ones came about up result of the family?

6- What are some family routines and regular interactions occur in your household?

7- How would you characterize your parents' style of interacting with you? Give an example. (words would you use to describe their style of interacting ..) patient, encouraging, like to talk to me a lot and direct me in the right path. Very encouraging..

8- Are there other family members who have had an impact on your school success? If yes, please describe specifically how they have influenced you.

9- How does your family provide guidance for you to assist with development of your racial identity and your religious beliefs?

10- What else would you like to share about your family's impact on your school success?

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Appendix D: Academic interests and courses taken by initial respondents

Student academic interests and courses taken, 2006-07

#	G	Gr	Interests	Courses taken during 06-07 school year
1	F	11	Visual/Perf Arts	IB Eng, IB Math, Theory of Knowledge, IB Visual Arts, Chemistry I, Spanish V, History of the Americas
2	F	12	Athletic Training	Honors Eng 12, ORACLE, AP Gov't, Business Mgm't, Adv Health
3	M	11	Fashion Design/Merchandising	Math Studies, IB Visual Arts, Business Design, Theory of Knowledge, IB Eng 11, History of the Americas
4	F	11	Neo Natal Nursing	AP US History, AP Eng 11, Gov's School: AP Bio Chemistry (Dual Enrollment), AP Pre-Calc (Dual Enrollment), Printing I, Independent Study Art
5	F	11	Aeronautical Engineering	IB Eng 11, IB Chem HL-I, AFJROTC III, Theory of Knowledge, IB Math SL-I, History of the Americas, Spanish V, IB Psychology
6	F	11	Business/Media	IB Biology, IB Psychology, Theory of Knowledge, IB English II, Spanish V, History of the Americas, Math Studies, Communication Systems
7	F	11	Psychology	IB Math Studies, IB Biology, History, Psychology; Spanish V, IB English II
8	M	12	Corporate Law	AP Environmental Science, Earth Science English 11 & 12, US History, Government
9	F	11	Physical Therapy/Nursing	Animation, Computer Math, Chemistry, English 11, Web page Design, US/VA History

Appendix E: Open-Ended Questionnaire Responses

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How does home environment contribute to sense of achievement?	Are there any factors that inhibit achievement?	Which family member plays strongest role in encouraging your achievement?	Is there anything else you'd like to tell about your success?
Being that my home environment is not as lavish as that of some of my peers, I feel that it keeps my self-image as an achieving student alive. When people see my home and the surroundings, they'd expect me to be of low education or incapable of educational success, because let's face it, that the unavoidable stereotype. Therefore, for me to be doing so well in school, the IB program at that, is an extreme achievement. My environment encourages me to be successful in school in order to prove the stereotypes wrong.	Of course, there are common distractions of neighbors (talking or blasting music) but I've adjusted and learned to ignore it. It's hard feeling a secure sense of privacy in an apartmt bldg, but I won't let anything keep me from achieving my goals. But in the larger scope, there aren't really any major factors that inhibit my success.	My mother is definitely my rock. Ever since I began studying in gifted education or just began school in general, she's supported and pushed me. When my performance starts to digress, she know the rights things to say and do to motivate me. She never stops offering to help in any way she can. It feels wonderful to have such an inspiring and supportive figure, because I know some don't have that.	Although not all my family members are supportive and accepting of my educational success, I am motivated by the love of those who do. I do so well in school to prove to myself and others that I can do anything I put my mind to. I love challenges and accept them openly. My mother keeps me going with constant appraisal. I love her and the rest of my family with all my heart and if it weren't for them I don't think I'd be this far. I want to do better for my family. I want to be one of the few members who goes to college and is successful. My drive and inspirations will propel me forward to that success.
My home environment is very dependable and	No, it is totally the opposite. All the factors	My mother plays the strongest role because	That no matter what decision that I choose,

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loving. Everyone encourages the others to succeed and do great things. With this environment, it adds to my goal to go farther in my education & life.	increase my achievement	she always tells me to push myself and not let anyone or anything keep me from succeeding	they are always behind me rooting me on like my own cheerleading team.
In my home hard work and success in school is expected and comes before any extracurricular activity. Expectations are high therefore I strive to do my best.	No	My father and mother. My father expects perfection basically. Trying to be perfect in school drives me not to perfection but, in my opinion, to at least get the best possible grades I can. I guess his strictness about grades is motivation to do well because if I don't have grade I can't do anything else. My mother is more encouraging than anyone else in my life She realizes no one is perfect at everything but stresses the importance of overcoming obstacles in life and the importance of making good grades and learning	No response
My home environment has contributed and still does to my sense of	No.	Both my mother and my father play a strong role in encouraging my	My parents expect nothing but the best from me. Cs and below

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being an achieving student in two manners; the actual home itself and the people living within it. My home tends to be a place that is not extremely organized, but organized enough that it presents a comfortable and calm environment. It is a place where I can sit and quietly complete my homework and at the same time still have fun. The people that live within my home are my mother, my father and my brother. Everyone of my family member support and encourage me 100% of the way in all of my academic endeavors. Even though thing vary within my home, the comfort, support and necessities to continually succeed help with my achievements.		achievements. My mom and I share the same optimistic perspective and paradigms on life which allows room for accurate interpretation of a lot of my academic reasoning. She is also the one who pushes me to challenge my academic levels and helps me through it. My father teachers me a great deal dealing with commitment. It is important to me that he stays on me about commitment because it is hard for me to juggle schoolwork with social life and my lessons learned from him have kept me prioritized. He also has more of the listening ear in my family and is always there to talk to.	are not acceptable. There have been exceptions and there have been consequences. Everyone in my family is always on the go, including me, but once we all get home, the hectic roar dies down and it is a place of purely family. They have always made me feel loved and appreciated whish is one of the main reasons why I have always had a strong initiative, optimistic and charismatic outlook on life; especially school.
My family is proud of me when I achieve so I am encouraged to do well	No	My younger sister. I want to do well so that she will be proud of me and so that she'll work hard now and in the	No response

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		future	
My mother is extremely supportive, she encourages me to do the best that I can. She helps me manage my time by enforcing rules. My home environment helps me by providing me with a safe and secure place to study and do homework	Sometimes my home environment is noisy and there are many distractions	My mother plays the strongest role in encouraging my achievement. She's supportive and helps me to manage my time in an efficient manner	No response
Sometime they help encourage me when I want to give up. When I become frustrated they help me through it.	My family sometimes expects too much from me & when I do not reach their expectations	Mom, because when I feel like giving up she says I can do it. If I type something us she checks it and tells me my strengths & flaws	
My parents always push for above average work, and if it's not above average they help me find solutions to get it there	No	My mother, she has always told me to do better than she did and to encourage my children to do better than I did and so on and so forth	My family is very big on education and encouraging the youth in our family to become successful.
My parents have always emphasized higher education and recognized the achievements of my brother and myself. Their guidance and support gear me toward doing well in school in order to be successful in	No	Both my parents. My father sets up the opportunities for me while my mother monitors me during the journey toward academic achievement	My older brother has and still is doing very well in academics. He also pursued AP and IB coursework in school and is currently attending UVA. He did very well on the AP tests and earned his IB diploma

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life			
My parents are very supportive in what I chose to do, and help me out by helping me study when I need it. My home is also a very quiet place to concentrate at times	Financial resources- some other programs I couldn't attend because the cost was too high for my parents to pay.	I would have to be my mom and dad. They take me wherever need to go. If it will help improve and they support me in all that I do	They do all that they can to make me as achieving as I can be.

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Appendix F: Case Study Interview Responses

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Case #1-Family (mother – single parent; housing – public housing complex. Has lived there since the student was a little girl- two older brothers who live outside the home)	Student/female
1- My daughter is the type of person that she sees something that she wants and she will go to it, she likes competition, its just what she does, basically. She studies a lot, she's an avid studier, and I did not have to push her. She absorbs everything-that's something I want to do and she goes for it…that's how she gets to be successful.	Well, I've had a lot of support from my family. I remember ever since like kindergarten, I was always complain that the class wasn't moving as fast as I could go. And I just had to take my time and make sure that I was doing what I had to do and if I felt like could go more then, do more. I just always strived to push myself as well so if no one else is going to push me I had to because I liked being successful and making myself feel like I did something and accomplished something
2- Gosh, she's an artist, she likes to draw, from elem school that's all she did since she's become a teenager - she's moved away from it a bit, but she's going back to it. She likes to write always said she'd like to be a journalist, likes reading somewhat..not to a great extent She gets this from my mother's side, Alyssa likes to sing and act, perform. She is one that has an idea and will go for it. That's about it…it's more of her she doesn't have an idol or anybody that she sees and she says that who I want to be, that's what I want to do..it's more in her; it's what she wants to do.	I had so many positive experiences I can't really think of just one because so many good thing come out of my family, especially when it comes to my success and my achievements at school and just in general. One thing -when it comes to cheerleading because I didn't want to do it all and my mother said why don't you try it and see how it works…and I ended up doing it for 8 years. That pushed me to join dance line at my school and that's very important to me because it shows me that I can do something outside of all the rigorous work that I have to do.
3- Well she went off to college for a summer program this past year, I believe I was the one who was devastated…we couldn't have any contact with the students. I was all .. I just couldn't take it	Being away from my mom is one…because I'm so dependent on her and I've been with her for all of my life. Probably being away from home because last year I was away at VCU at the Governor's School for

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basically. I think this year I'll be more prepared for it. When she came back she said ' you fretted for nothing' … it was like we all got along together, and it was just that they couldn't have contact w/ us, so I think that 's the biggest part. If I know that my child is ok, if I can hear from my child, I'm fine. Daily contact, wkly contact, but it's not knowing what going on, that the biggest thing that a parent fears when a child goes off into the world. We've always been a close knit family so that was a big experience for me (referring to the previous summer program)	Foreign Languages I was so worried and homesick for the first couple of days and then, after a while I'm such a people person I attract others to me and I form my own friends. So I'm not really concerned about making new friends, but it's mores about being away from my mother and my home.
4- We are a close-knit family because we are close knit we all depend on each other. We're there for anything that happens, we joke a lot we talk a lot we understand each other..We don't have any animosity that other families have..you know little squabbles and so forth, we don't seem to have that, because we're upbeat, we're a joking family… always we're the type, if another person is down, especially Alyssa, why the glooming looking face… let's get together gang. ..She's that way at school. We're just a happy family that's all I can say. There's a lot going on around us, but we don't let that get us down. We're the type that try to help people, not just ourselves, it's just a part of it.	We watch a lot of TV together, because I'm a TV person…it teaches me a lot of things, some people think that you don't learn anything from just watching TV, but it depends on what you watch. I try to force my mom to watch movies that she may not want to watch that I like to watch like 'rent', and other musical I learned a lot from that about things that were considered in the movies. And then sometimes we go out; I'll go out w/ my friends, to parties and things.
5- Negative impact…gosh….I can't think of anything. The only thing that I can remember is when Isabel came around. It sort of got her down, in a way..we all pulled together. No lights, no anything we've never been without in that way…you don't know what it like until you've	Not having a father figure around has affected me, but not really it was more at the beginning of my life, I had friends who would ask questions about why I don't' have a father figure, I'm like I know as much as you know. But, um I learned that I don't need one, because when you have strong people around you,

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experiences. She had never experienced it but I had. It's an eye opener; she said I've never ate so many hotdogs. But things happen and you have to adapt to it..and she learned to adapt. I told her that when you go off to college you'll have some things here that you won't have there. I schooled her on that. You know you can't take home with you when up and go. I guess not having certain things. Being able to adapt to work with what you have.	you don't need weak ones to drag you down.
6- Once in a while we will have a mother and daughter go out to dinner night…or her brothers we will take each other out. We like bingo. The dance line that she's in a lot of the games and other things that she participates in. I'm there. When she was in cheerleading, every single time, I was there. We watch TV a lot, she goes to movies I don't We go out to eat every now and then. Don't have much of a social life	Like I said earlier TV. Going out. I love when we do …we do very seldom, but when we do have family gatherings, when we go out. I love being around family and entertaining people because I love being the center of attention,
7- I believe in listening to the child…I have rules and they have second thoughts about the rules sometimes they can bring insight into it that didn't occur to me, which I may not have thought of…my two sons it was the same way 'you didn't hear me when I say such and such …and I'd say oh you're right. I was only listening to what I was I was saying and not looking at their side. And then, I'd say ok, well we can come to a medium somewhere along the line. That's what I think has gotten me to raising three kids, (pauses to think of ages of sons in thirties)…but, they all appreciate what I've done throughout the years. They say they wouldn't have gotten to where they are now if it wasn't for me…we got along very well. As teenagers I don't remember any of my children arguing or slamming	She's always like just do as much as you can don't overwork yourself..because I tend to work so hard and I may push myself a little too much and stress out and she's very encouraging. She's not strict about it because she knows I can do my work on my own and I don't need somebody behind me to get me to do it because that stresses me even more …so when I do have a problem I come to her, but she lets me just go on my own until I do come to a road bump and I do come to her.

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the doors, because we all have compassion …we understand each other, other people. I always tell them, just put your self in the other person's shoes.	
8- My (counting) fourth sister, B…she's always been around she's know as the 'sitter' she's had an impact on all their lives, she was always there for them. There were times when I couldn't pay for books or whatever and she was there. She's been my backup, my backbone. And they appreciate her for that I have 6 sisters and 2 brothers and she's the best out all of them. She does what she can and she's still doing it. We just had to push her out a minute ago. She's about the best one; she played sports when she was in school. …She's a good person.	My aunt B, she's like only one of the only aunts or relatives I have that makes sure I'm doing what I'm doing well in school and she'll help me in any kind of way whether it's equipment or things that just need in general she'll try to supply. She comes around here often (laughing)…and she'll check up on me and watch me and sometimes even though she doesn't know really know much about what we're doing now, she'll find things for me for school and information, she's just been here, she's like a second mother..,
9-For her there is no racial identity. She says to me, I'm from the old school and when things happen at school, I say was the person black or white and she says 'mom, we don't go through that .. what difference does it make, the color or status of the person. It's just what we've always …she doesn't look at people as different races, it's just them. And I've learned to do that. She has no separation between people. When she talks about people everybody is the same. To me…I can tell with her we're all the same. As far as religion, we don't um…we're not against any type of religion. I was brought up Baptist. But if this person has this religion that's what they do I can't say what they do is wrong it's what's they believe in. I don't think that she has any separation with that either	As far as race goes, I don't really think much about it, because I have so many friends that are all kinds of races and ethnicities, my family doesn't really discriminate anyone either and make sure that I'm open minded , because in this world you have no choice but to be. And as far as religion, we're not hard core set believers in just one religion I guess as long as you believe in I guess a higher spirit you're ok..you just need some sort of guidance. My mom or the rest of my family is not going to pressure me to go to church or to be religious, but they know that I need to set my morals and get my beliefs straight.
10- Um, the only thing that I can say is I'm so proud of her what she's done in the past and what she'll do in the future. I always ask do you need	I've told you everything…(referring to extended family) they are all very supportive ... I only keep in touch with them every now and then, but when I do,

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any help. She says no, I got it I got it. I can't do a lot , but it doesn't hurt to ask. So, I'm proud of her, for what she has done…what she has done for others. She has a lot of friends, every night , every day..they call , I need help, she's the type who will get others together and help them - we're going to do this, that... She's more like my father in that way, because he was always a helper. Always there to help somebody, she's a good person, and I'm proud of her for that. It's better than what I could do. When I was in school, I was bright, but not as bright. She's very talented, and there's more in her yet to come. So, we just need to pull it out, she's a bright person.	one of the first things they do is ask me is how's my school going because they know that is something that is very important to me and it's just that they are supportive.

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#2- Family (mother & father; housing – Single family home/two story in relatively new development. Nine siblings; two previously graduated from high school; one to graduate this wk)	Student/male
1- He has always been smart and I know that some say that a child's first teachers are his parents, but he's had good teachers also,. When he was in the program Mary Peake, they taught him, he was one of those students who absorb whatever you put in front of him…and he just went on it's been the teachers that he has. As a matter of fact, when he was having problems in Alg II class I told his teacher that he is the type of student who if he's taught well, he will do well. But if he's not taught properly and that's anything if you don't get the foundation, you can't learn well…you ='re going to struggle. Going back, I think it's the teachers, the teachers have taught well, he absorbed it and he ran on with it.	Uh..mainly never giving up I guess. Because sometimes he work can gets kind of hard. Even though you're supposed to be smart it's still hard to get your work done and be sure you learn what you're supposed to learn…so I'd say the most important thing in getting to this point right now is never giving up and trying my hardest.
2- His parents have always been Christians, he's always been taught to respect obey. And I think those characteristics have made him the person that he is people like him, teachers are very willing to work with him, they like having him as a student	(long pause) like a specific experience?? (Just describe day-to-day experiences that impact your success..needed more prompts) Being in a big family in that my dad goes out every day to provide for us is motivation for me to go out an try my hardest…that's just what he's instilled in us –he sets an example for us as far a working, it's not easy taking care of a big family
3-He is a quiet child…being quiet in college, his quietness , he's social person, he's not one to go out there and say 'hey, I'm here.' If someone comes too him he will make friends, I'm not worried about that part.. Just his quietness in a college atmosphere. Mom and dad are not there to say.	College? I'm concerned about what I'm deciding what I'm going to do and being focused on that one thing. I just what to do well. I think I will do well in college I think high school has prepared me for that, But, yeah just hopin gi can stay focused when I get there…its' a lot different I guess from being in a

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	home w/ your family...the difference is being focused on one thing
4-I would have to say my belief that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, we live it, we teach it and we apply it to our children, it works here. When my oldest daughter left home, we told her don't forget if you remember how you were raised, if you take that with you you're going to be okay. We've made it this far believing, using it and we haven't' had any problems. Now if you get out there and do something contrary to what we've taught you, you will probably have some problems	We are a Christian family...I guess principles in the bible..Such as 'do everything as you were doing it unto God' so it's basically like no matter what you do try your hardest. I guess that 's something that transfers from religion. My mother really reinforces in us to read. I know she does it with the younger kids now they read when they come from school for 30 minutes. No matter what they're doing they have to stop whatever they're doing grab a book and read for that time . Do your homework when you get home from school..
5-He went out for basketball, went to all practices, he went to practice on a Sunday evening—we had agreed that he didn't have to go to a class that he had to go to.... then, he did everything he was supposed to do. Then, (I'm not saying he's all that talented in basketball—I don't know, I don't know what talent is..) but to be cut, to be cut from the team..it didn't affect.. I think it did ...he did all those hard things he was supposed to do, so it was like ' why me?' he had done all the things that he was supposed to do. Listening to him, I don't know if they really saw him play...you know if didn't ever get that opportunity. He looked at it as.they already knew whom they wanted to play—and as a mother, that was hard...but what can you say, what can you do. And another thing in Alg, not making the grades that he normally makes,. But I really believe that if he had been taught well..she said that this was material that he should have learned prior to getting to my class. But having known that what provisions are you going to make (referring to the Alg II teacher)..i think that was something that was new to	I can't really think of anything negative that affected me negatively

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him making those kinds of grades. It didn't affect him in the sense of he isolated himself..he was still Isaiah...but you could see that it was something that bothered him. Everybody is not going to make As ...and there are things that he will find when he goes off to college...the harder I work, the better my grades will be. Again, if you are taught the material...it's one thing to have that grade if you haven't done your homework, but it's another thing to have that grade—I tried to do my homework, but I didn't understand the material....that's different	
6- We go to church every Sunday, I pray for them every day before they go to school... We do a lot of volunteering...my husband teaches the kids about volunteering. One day not too long ago, we got the kids together and cleaned up the neighbors yard..we wanted them to learn that you don't have to get paid for everything. Some things you do to 'give back' to the community. We eat meals together...	We talk a lot to each other , we eat dinner together, most of the places we go we go together, more than likely if I go with someone else, a family member is with there. We do a lot of stuff together..
7- My style of parenting I'm a listener...I don't look at my family as I'm an adult and I'm always right..I grew up in a household like that and I know what's it like..	They're kind of different..My dad is strict , more demanding of us not just in school, but in everything; so his style is more like, that...still an approachable person, but he has high expectations. Its easier to approach as my mom, she's more, not that she doesn't care..she's more understanding— their styles are different, but ,They both know what's best.
8-I think that his dad has influence on his success...no matter He has taught them that what you do now will have an impact on your quality of life later. If you waste time now....	My older sister and older brother...both have already graduated from high school..not that its' the end of it , but I'm looking forward to graduating Two of my younger brothers who are actually kind of smart.It's always like a joke...I was the first one

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I think also encourages them...do the bests at what you do. And when you have done your best.. I think his dad has had a big in part in who he is...	who was identified as gifted and then, they came up to me and said' we're going to be smarter than you. That motivates me. I don't want to be better than my brothers but I still want to set an example for them.
9- We watched a couple of movies and there are things I try to tell the kids, I learned a lot from the past. You have to look at the past and learn from it.. it's not just history I always try to tell them..if my kids are not doing well in something. I'll say to them, you know there was a time when we couldn't get an education, we had to do something else...and there were people who have died for us to get an education. And then, there were People who wanted us to have not just an education but the same education as everyone else in the United States. We could show we appreciate that by what we do with that opportunity. We can go to school and just be in attendance OR we could go to school and be the best at what we do. We can be in the school but we don't hae to be a part of everything that goes on Why am I here? To get an education...that's the only reason. That's the only reason we send our kids to school- to get an education By chance if they're talented in basketball, and they make it great...We send our kids to school to get an education, we're not sending you there to be the most popular or like the most...that's what school is for. Let 's get back to the basics- that's what school is for whatever, socializing so in that...you guys are going to school ...to get an education. To make you respect others...treat others like you want to be treated. That's the biblical perspective. Let's make a difference. This Christian life is one day at a time. If you want to go down there and change the world...	Racially, my parents they discuss with us the way we live, talk about racism, black males how people judge you just because of what you look like. But that doesn't really matter, if you are a hard worker, then, your performance is going to outweigh - they can't deny you. If you are trying to get a job, trying to get in college.,they can't deny you if you have the right regardless of what your race is. Racism, race is not really an issue. We don't see it as an issue

We go to church a lot..it's not like your parents dropping you off at church, our parents go with us the church and discuss things with us Sit down and discuss openly make sure that we are living accordingly. |

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10- I would say that, whatever he decides to do . I always want the best for him. I encourage him. I feel that if I don't exalt him..nobody else will,...so, in growing up in life people want to be accepted (in tears)..I always try to exalt my kids in whatever they do. And let them know that if you did your best...at least you know That you are special. I've been to a lot of workshops where you sh9uild be positive..they didn't have to tell me that ...I always remain positive. I tell my kids since they were two years old up until today ..if somebody spills milk..I'm not like 'YELLING—GET THE MILK UP'..I don't raise my voice. I tell my husband that only one thing is going to make the situation better.. clean it up ..hollering is not going to do it, smacking a child is not going to do it. As a matter of fact I look at those things as making the situation worse...I don't know, because I but it could bring a negative effect. I don't know and I'm not going to try it...my kids are great kids. My positiveness about things ...works	No, like I said before, being in a big family motivates you to do better, especially being one of the oldest you want to set an example for the younger ones to follow.

#3- Family (single mother/father involved; housing – modest Single family home/older neighborhood. Two older siblings)	**Student/female**

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1-It was funny, she was tested at Machen, and they said that she couldn't do it..so she tested on the literature part, so her English teacher recommended her anyway asked them to put her in there...she accelerated once she got in there, that 's how she go into the gifted program. She didn't test well on all of the it, but she did on the literature/reading part...I was excited so that's how she got into the gifted program	Well my mom and my dad pushing me and because I knew I that wanted to become something, I want to become a lawyer, so I knew I had to do well in school in order to ..to become well land become a lawyer and get into a top college
2-Different family members watching over her...she's had a lot of push, a whole lot of people supporting her...she says nobody says anything but everybody is always excited about her grades and everything..she gets a lot of encouragement from all her family, what do we call it/...yeah, its like a village, all my nieces and nephews, my children, they are raised like in a village...they are surrounded by everyone supporting them, pushing them.	First getting into the gifted program and mary peake then into jones then the IB program...and my teachers pushing me when I tried to give up.. How family contributes--when I get really mad, when I'm doing work if it's not coming together, my mom calms me down and tell me that even if I struggle, I'll still be able to finish it... and then my dad he encourages me , especially when I get good grades—he makes me feel like 'that's the best thing ever' that encourage me to do it over again.
3- My biggest concern is that she's going to get lonely because this is the first time on her own. I may have to go get her And I don't want her to go too far.. but that's my only concern,other than that she should stay on 'cue' ...I'm not concerned about her getting off cue because she's not doing it now..even though she's dating, she has her mind focused.. when she has a goal, she has something that she wants ... has a cousin that has done the same thing...he's done four years and will graduate next year, she wants to do the same thing... so they are like working together... they're already talking about how they will set up to work together after she graduates..I don't see her getting off her goal. She's focused.	I really don't have any issues, concerns or fears. Well, one may be meeting new people and adapting to their way of living, because they grew up different from me it won't necessarily be like the environment that I'm used to,

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4- On Christmas, we spend it at my mother's house…thanksgiving..at my house, we spend a lot of family time on holidays.,.just FAMILY, tradition is lot of family time, we go to church..the holidays. They know gramma house -Christmas, momma's house thanksgiving, uncle Billy's house- fourth of july..memorial day….it's a tradition to be w./family on holidays …	Church, we go to church regularly…the people at my church they help encourage me…
5- When me and my husband separated ,..we didn't know that she started losing her hair, we didn't know it but it was around that time but once she started accepting the fact that we were separated—it started growing back, we didn't know it we just figured that out maybe two or three months ago.. I asked her is it bothering you that we are separated, but she never showed anything outwardly, it just showed up in her hair loss. But now, she 's happier more cheerful and her hair is growing back…she accepted the fact that we are not going to get back together,..and her hair is growing back…I can tell her happiness in her hair., because now it is growing back and she's glad. There's less stress..you couldn't see it before , she appeared to be happy go lucky. And she started telling me about times she had with her father and I told her that those times would continue..but she was always under me…concerned also about me, I guess now that she sees me not stressing, she's better…	Mostly because I was the smart smart child, that did everything she was supposed to do, always making good grades, my brother and my sister would pick on me because I would keep making good grades, I used to love going to school, and run home with my report card and show them, they used to get 'not so good grades' and that would discourage me (referring to the picking on her) not so much that I would make bad grades
6-We started a new one last week..running, oh my God.she's teaching me how to run..I get up every morning and we go running. We go to church together, we look at movies together..movies that I don't like…we share books, I love that , that's exciting to me just getting in the car together riding, we'll be dancing while were riding, we do a lot of	Me and mom go running together…we watch tv together on her bed, my dad comes over and we go out to the movies together and we just talk

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things together. I cook, she eats,,.other than that,. I tell people that its' like a roommate thing.. but I'm the momma. She'll keep things straight for me..sometimes, I come home and she'll say momma your room is cool., she sleeps in my room anyway when I'm not here.. gets out of my bed when I get home..yeah, it's like a roommate thing	
7- Um..not traditional..I have rules and regulations they know when I'm angry...I don't consider myself a traditional parent they say sometimes I'm not strict enough on them..I say I'm strict enough,..I pick my own battles. There are some things that I don't need to fight w;/ them about—like their clothing, as long as she aint naked, you know those little shorty short things. She know that I don't pick fights like that. They know the rules, go to school, go to church,..that's her room...I wouldn't advise anybody to go in there...other things they know there are certain things that they have to do..and certain things that they don't do. mostly though, I pick my fights..if there are certain things that may hurt her...other than that..we talk about it..it's a trust factor.	My mom is like one of my best friends, I can tell her anything, she might get mad because she's a mother but she won't try to kill me or anything. My dad I can go to him, he gets mad but then he becomes understanding because he knows that I'm a teenager and I'm still going through it....
8-Oh goodness--I have 3 sisters, 2 brothers , grandmother , grandfather ,all her cousins they all have an impact.. and her cousins..i didn't know that but they all talk to each other about their grades and if someone or the other is failing they will get on that person and encourage them and make them pull up their grades and then thy threaten them..so they will not fail. They call each other on the phone, they support each other I like that .. she has the support of a whole lot of family	My cousin Cory he's in his last year in college, he influences me by telling me if I make good grades, I can do anything I want, he also influences me by telling me that if I don't make good grades, he's going to 'beat me'...(lovingly),..he's an older cousin and I love him for that, for encouraging me.
9-I try to take them to see my aunt (she's about 74	Well...I'm not really sure we've grown up around a

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years old) so that she can tell them what she went through.. her great grandparents were slaves...we are about fourth generation since slavery. I try to sit them down and here about it...black history month I try not focus on that but if they don't understand something, I explain it to them, I break it down to them...this is what really happened..and don't let anyone tell you that you;'re not AAmerican , that you're not black..don't let anyone call you 'out your name' and I work w/them on that... As far as her religion goes, we go to church and then,.I try to live it..she's surrounded by a lot of people who influence her I keep try to keep her in church to teach them, keep them in school and give them example...they know the rule: if you're in this house, you 're going to church --they can go first service, second service, as long as they show up in church –I don't force them into the choir, usher board, nothing else—I found that way they will participate more without the fight.. if something comes up, we'll talk about it. Discussing what's right and what's wrong. So we do a lot of discussing--	lot of black and white people but we're a strong black family and I just it's that they've always told us that black people are strong. My family is really religious, we love going to church. it's come down from my grandparents on my mothers sides...it just shows that if you stay religious,then, good things will happen.
10- My impact on my child --the other thing I can say is about her father one thing I can say about him, he did not disappear, even though we separated, he did not disappear- in the beginning—once he found out that we were not getting back together, he started spending time w/ her, not as much as I would like but he did she knows that he's there...first I tried to beat him down, but then I stopped. She has developed a good relationship with her father, I encouraged her to know that he loves her just like I do. I think that has helped her too.	No, not really.....

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#4- Family (mother & father; housing – modest Single family home/older neighborhood. One male twin, and one male younger sibling)	Student/female
1-Well, honestly she has always been very gifted, almost from kindergarten, she has always been at the highest status of her classes. All her grades, I believe when she first got introduced to the gifted program, it may have been the third grade—it was very early on, she has been in gifted classes since. She's always been on the honor roll. I've been very proud of her, honestly,,,it's by the grace of God I feel that all my kids are very gifted. It's definitely not all me and her father, it's God-given, too.	First off, my parents making it clear that school is something not to play with and that you need it in your life if you want to go somewhere,and that just having good support of my family
2-I would say me and her dad both feel very strongly about getting an education. They know that we don't play when it comes to school. We also have drilled how important is …especially nowadays for young black people.. education is very important I know for a fact that if you're going on a job interview and if you have two black students,…,the interviewer is going to pick the person with that piece of paper even if they don't feel that they have the experience. It is very important these days to have an education.	It would have to be certain teachers that push me to do more and being in certain gifted classes where you need to do more than expected of you and believing that I could do it, so I pushed myself to do it.
3- My concerns are probably being ….i would like for her to remain close at home if at all possible as mother and daughter we have a close relationship. I encourage her all the time whatever she chooses to do and can do it,. I'm behind her one hundred percent. If she wants to go away to college she can do it. But my fears would be that I wouldn't be close to her when something would happen. For example this thing that happened a few wks ago, for the most part though, I have a lot of faith in her.	A concern would be how safe the schools are, especially after everything that has been happening, but other than that , nothing else, I'm ready to go.

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She's a very smart girl, she's a good girl I think it would be a good experience for her actually (re: going away to college)	
4- Number one, we're Christians we go to church every Sunday, also go to prayer on Tuesday nights. We do family things, we go to dinner as a family honestly aint' nobody perfect..but we do try to do family things, like go to dinner play games together, just be together as a family. We also try to just encourage them as much as possible. We try to educate them as to what we went through, how we grew up, me and her dad is from New York, we got out by the grace of God, it was a blessing that we both came out ..no drugs, craziness, jail, we were very blessed…we did not want to raise our kids inNew York, we did not want to have them go through the struggles that we went through, we wanted them to have a better education a better life, that's one of the reasons we came here.	The one thing is that education is a top priority and also, another belief would be that fact that we believe in God.
5- No nothing negative, thank God	Nothing that I can think of
6- Well, there on the refrigerator, we have house rules, they have to do chores..I personally make sure that I teach them responsibility. They have been working since they were fourteen years old. I teach them about money, how to handle their money, saving, that's very important. They have to start early. I encourage them with books, I bought books, encyclopedias, educational tools that they use.	Going to church, outside of school, me and brother go to work…our parents going to school. Sometimes we discuss the day after school.
7- My style of parenting is not too be their friend, I understand that I'm not their friend, I'm their parent, I'm their mom, but I also want to have a relationship... a lot of parents say I'm not your friend,,..,I'm not your friend, which is true. It's a difference between being their friend and being an	Personally, I prefer my mom's style..it's not like she's our girlfriend, she tries to understand us better..take our side, understand us as a parent, and still have certain rules that she needs to enforce. My dad's way is good,also…cause he lets things go sometimes, but a lot of times he puts his foot down

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understanding parent and having a relationship with them so they'll want to open up to you, want to talk to you..and I feel like that's the type of relationship that I have.	when certain things need to be dealt with
8- I want to say, two people that come to mind, I'm sure she may come up with something different..my niece, she'a in New York now she struggled a bit in school and kind of dropped out a bit, but then she came down here to Virginia to get herself together, she went to Thomas nelson Community College and she ended up going back to new york and now she's gone to college and graduated , she's going to be a technician (urology). I believe that my daughter watching her struggle a bit and our encouraging her to go back to finish and everything. Also, I have a sister who's been very successful in encouraging her,..she sees all the nice things that she has at a young age, she's 42 and a retired police officer from New York City—she's married and has a child, very successful that's a good example.	At the top of my head, I think of one person...she was a cousin I had and she came down one summer and she would teach us math and other things that we didn't know at the time and that helped me when I got to higher math courses.
9-I believe that she is very confident in who she is...I think she likes being black and I don't think she has a problem with that at all. Racism is taught, you're not born with it and it definitely taught and it starts with the parents so we have never, ever, encouraged that at all. As a matter of fact we several friends of other races. She is very comfortable with who she is..and with other races. We are Christian—so we definitely do not believe in any type of racism, or discrimination or that matter.	They tell us that ...obviously that since we are black that we should be proud of who we are and not to let anyone tell us different. Also, to recognize other races not be racist at all and appreciate everyone for who they are They guide us in our religious beliefs by taking us to church since we were younger, teaching us the bible that we are Christian and how we Jesus died for us
10-The main thing is that you always want your kids to do better than you, you always want them to have more than you...a better education, an easier	That they're very supportive and they care about what we do and that whatever we choose to do, they are there to support us. And that everyone pretty

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life. You try to teach them and tell them things...but, I can only do the best that I can do as far as raising them and teaching them the right things, teaching them what my values are, and hopefully instilling some good values in them and I think I've done a good job so far...just having a close relationship with them so that they are able to express their feelings with them still knowing I'm the parent and I have the final say. But, I listen to them, you have to listen to your kids come to some type of compromise..and when they get a certain age you have to let them make their own choices to a certain extent. They know how I feel about education, I didn't go to college but I have my high school diploma, one of the reasons that I didn't go is because I graduated June 24, 1988 and got married June 25th. So I had a different route to go, but I wouldn't change anything right now for the world. You always want your kids to be more successful than you are and right now I really think they're going in the right direction....

Another thing that I really believe, is honestly I really truly believe that both parents need to be in the house, I didn't talk about my husband enough, I spoke more about myself. But having both parents in the house especially in a black family really makes a big difference because you need that structure, you need that balance. Now , me personally, I'm sure you can tell I'm real easy going..you know they know when I'm strict on certain things, I don't play, but my husband is a little bit more stricter than I am...I mean we're both Christians, but he's really old school, he don't play, but again you can't be too strict either you can't

much sticks together...

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shelter them from the world, we have that structure where he's a little more strict, I'm a little bit more lenient and we meet in the middle, so we definitely have that structure of a two parent family home..he and I have been together for 22 years, but we've been married 19 and so it's just been a blessing raising the twins and I have an 11 year younger son..I just believe that I'm really blessed and I know I owe a lot to my husband and God because it's really hard, it's been a struggle..	

#5- Family (mother and father-biracial couple); housing –Single family home in a relatively new neighborhood. One younger brother	Student/female
1- She was young we always made priorities..we knew what she was capable of,...we required as..in middle schools a & b....by now she handles it herself...no cs or below.	Well..I had to prioritize a lot & focus myself putting what is important first , minimize my personal life a lot ...my mom has been my idol.. my friends encouraged me. I personally love school..I have to study , study, study and have fun....
2- Education is always important...she is one who reacts to rewards...if she's recognized she responds well...I've always stressed that to get into We've always told her if she does well, we'll buy her a car—so far it seems to be working	Going to New Horizons governors school this year was this biggest hump that I had to get over in my life, because I've never had to study prior to this year, my classes were'nt anything like at NHGS, they don't take any slack, they're very anal...every day for 2 hours, not knowing how to correctly study...I got a C...never had to study ...had to push through , changed my views on studying ...changed my life.
3- Mostly ...2 things..time management...she is the kind of child of who can survive off of little sleep, she sometimes devises ways to stay up late or get up early...so she can get everything done. I'm concerned about her trying to do all...work , social life and all to get it all in ...and disregard sleep)	-My concern is about my safety..just like at va tech...I like to over think things, I'm concerned about prioritizing, what am I going to do on the campus, managing my free time, friends Keeping my major, don't know what I want to do –

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She's not as street wise as I was growing up, had a very privileged life...never having to work or walk anywhere...don't think that she all the street smarts	go into the medical or design field...I don't want classes to go to waste
(No response to this question)	Aren't any traditions..our family is isolated from other family....we have high standards. We look down upon anything below a C...
4- She's had a pretty good life... had asthma, but not really been affected by it... She was traumatize when she went to Gov's school, she had to work harder to get a good grade..it was difficult because she wasn't used to the level of work (it was like college)..	Can't think of anything negative right now.
5- family routines: school, go to extra curricular activities...band activities (all the time) more time at school than at home. Try to get in entertainment	Dad goes to work ..early,,,(goes to gym first, then work) mom, brother & I all wake up at same time.. mom dropped my brother off and then return then I'd go to school..my brother and I are in the band...Wednesdays we go to bible study..now I'm involved in soft ball...
6 - try to be open..but they know that we are not equals..they know that parents are authority over them..we're very open..they talk about ...things..But, we're more strict than their friends' parents. We're not like their friends parents..we imposed a curfew..friends say that your parents are strict...we allowed her to stay out until 10 in the 10th grade, 11 in the 11th grade...We re much more strict than other parents.	mom is more straight forward..//she tells me how she sees things ..more comfortable talking about anything, is firmer ...tends to be more persuasive— doesn't take excuses at all dad he's more sympathetic, listens more, I'm daddy's girl...he not as straightforward..asks mom to reconsider her .....more detailed oriented...its kind of like a circle
7- no because we're military ...we've never lived around family...	one family member, aunt who lives in Arkansas dad's sister...we talk a lot , graduates from college this year..kind of like me in academics and socially., gives me ideas...

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8- Racial identity is another plus ..never been out of place for being mixed..Black, Mexican and Italian..went to a majority black school ...we've always told them...when they see their family...never had trouble identifying who they are..they don't want to be considered white... once in a majority black school in maryland, kids teased her saying she was white, her father went to school with her to show who she really was..we encourage them to tell people that they are multiracial... we are non-denominational Christians...have no trouble expressing that ...once her friends did not want to sign her yearbook because they said they knew that she was a good girl ...they are very outspoken. Do not hide the fact that they are Christians..we've been in church all their lives...she is on praise dancing group works in the nursery at church.	since we're military I've always been around diverse people..(only moved twice Colorado to Maryland,...md to Virginia, always lived in a diverse community , been around a lot of multiracial kids...once in Md, I went to a majority aa school, remember getting teased a few times, mom told me to never mind it...tried to tell kids that I wasn't white, it didn't get to the core of my heart...the community in Hampton is very diverse..neighborhood is diverse...my parents help me to be accepting of others re: my religious beliefs, we are christian...once I hung around some kids, who I later found out were atheists, I told my mom, she told me to just to watch for signs of anything they might say or do.. dad doesn't like music that is too explicit or violent..my father reminds me to 'guard your heart, and that my body is a temple of the holy spirit..
9- sometimes I'm just more involved in their lives than other parents..& I think if its' too much, I can tell...some parents say they have to make mistakes.. I'm comfortable in the way I'm doing it. 10-I've been noticing a lot about her lately, she is very self-motivated. She is a quick thinker. She's more like me she'll do what she'll have to do.. she's extremely artistic. Ties it in w/ academic. She wants to go the extra mile...she gets a lot of credit – she doesn't have to be prodded so much. She may overlook things because so busy...has her hands in so many things. Really, there's nothing she wants to give up.	we are a very close knit family...my brother sometimes provides me ideas, my mom is very involved in things...mom and brother keep me on my toes. My mom is always there to talk to , to listen.

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