AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

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Title: Relationships and Expectations for Educational Achievement of Foster Youth

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Youth in foster care often perform at lower levels academically than those not in
foster care. Prior research on the nature of the relationships that affect former foster
youth's educational path has been inconclusive. Though it is widely believed that positive
relationships with faculty, staff and peers is beneficial for this group, further inquiry into
the former foster youth's experience of relationships within the context of education
could help to better facilitate improvements for this vulnerable population. The purpose
of this study was to examine the perceived effect of relationships on former foster youth's
post-secondary educational expectations. Seven community college students who were in
foster care for at least two years and were enrolled in courses for credit at the community
college were interviewed. The data was coded thematically and the interview was
modified based on the emerging themes expressed in the interviews. From this analysis
three themes emerged: (a) influential relationships are based on sense of connection; (b)
compulsion to perform academic tasks was later identified as supportive to educational
success; (c) relationships with those with academic knowledge were seen as beneficial.
The major findings of this study were established through the framework of social
learning theory and the existing literature relating to the topic. Three insights emerged
from analysis of the interview transcripts: (a) Compulsion benefited former foster youth

after enrolling in college when it provided a structure that was seen as achievable, provided the opportunity for connection with other students with similar background and experiences, and facilitated the navigation of bureaucratic systems; (b) influential relationships with former foster youth often began with the concurrence of the former foster youth being in a position of receptivity to the kindness of the partner in the relationship, and the partner in the relationship's recognition of need and willingness to commit above and beyond what would be called for by their position or connection to the former foster youth; (c) due to often difficult experiences, former foster youth had difficulty investing in others and receiving help from others, even those with the best of intentions, and this provided an opportunity for those who interacted with them to provide evidence contrary to their low expectations.

Relationships and Expectations for Educational Achievement of Foster Youth

by

Robert C. Calvert

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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

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Robert C. Calvert, Author

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Chapter 1: Focus and Significance

Foster care children are consistently disadvantaged in comparison to those children who are not in foster care, despite extensive services provided for their benefit (Blome, 1997; O'Hare, 2008). Though these differences in societal advancement are somewhat mitigated when the analysis controls for variables such as socioeconomic status or parental education, the disadvantages associated with foster care remain (Blome, 1997; Loring, 2010). Foster children are more likely to be homeless, drop out of school, change schools, and be arrested (Massinga & Pecora, 2004; McGuinness & Schneider, 2007; Zetlin, Wielberg, & Kimm, 2004). They are less likely to attend college and receive college prep classes, even when the analysis controlled for academic ability (Blome, 1997; Loring 2010; McMillen, Auslander, Elze, White, & Thompson, 2003). Foster children perform academically at a lower level than those who have not experienced foster care. This lack of performance is reflected both in academic test scores and in the highest level of education attained (Unrau, Font & Rawls, 2012).

Problem Statement

The transition between adolescence and adulthood is a critical developmental step for all youth. Erikson's developmental theory states that in this time the developing individual attempts to answer the question "Who am I and what can I be?" For many youth this question involves choice of vocation, and with it, the question of college attendance (Munley, 1975). The decision

to attend college can be influenced by factors in the economy, demands for education in a chosen field, and the costs of attendance in higher education (Spence, 2002) As children leave foster care they, like other children, are faced with the daunting task of deciding who they are and what they wish to become. The transition from adolescence to adulthood, for those who leave the foster care system, presents challenges that are not generally experienced by those who were never in foster care (Scannapieco, Connell-Carrick, & Painter, 2007) Children who leave foster care due to the restrictions for age in foster care are less likely to have had the academic preparation necessary to succeed in college than those who were never in the foster care system (Sullivan, Jones & Mathiesen, 2010). Furthermore, those who do begin college are substantially less academically prepared than freshmen at the same college who were not previously in foster care (Unrau, Font & Rawls, 2012). These challenges contribute to the decreased rate of participation by former foster youth in higher education (Salazar, 2012). Those former foster youth who do pursue higher education may differ from foster youth who do not pursue education in both their experiences and their interpretation of those experiences. A possible explanation for this difference is the presence of meaningful relationships for those former foster youth who do attend college. Those former foster youth who experienced strong meaningful relationships with peers and adults are more likely to enroll in college than those who did not have those experiences (Lemon, Hines, & Merdinger 2005). These strong personal relationships both develop and demonstrate social self-efficacy. Social self-efficacy is inversely related to negative

self-statements (Rudy, May & Matthews, 2013). Negative self statements may extend to beliefs about the feasibility of attending college. Foster youth have consistently lower educational aspirations (the level of education that they would like to achieve) and lower educational expectations (the level of education they think is likely that they will achieve) when compared with non-foster youth (Kim & Shin, 2003). Relationship quality has been shown to be an important factor in the development of higher educational aspirations and expectations. A better understanding of the impact of relationships could inform foster parent training and college student services for former foster youth.

Purpose of Study

Though literature concerning foster care and college participation is prevalent, studies that examine the impact of relationships on former foster youth's educational expectations for higher education are sparse, especially in regards to community colleges. This study examined the connection between positive relationships and changes in educational expectations of former foster youth. According to Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, positive relationships may increase self-efficacy, which in turn is likely to increase educational expectations. This study examined the perceived effect of relationships on former foster youth's post-secondary educational expectations. Bandura and the work that followed him suggests that positive relationships can have positive effects on self-efficacy. Likewise, those with greater self-efficacy are more likely to maintain positive relationships (Lemon, Hines, & Merdinger, 2005). Self-efficacy has also

been linked with higher educational expectation (Ali, McWhirter & Chronister, 2005). The values associated with specific attributes of relationships have been shown to be influenced in part by society and the social context of the relationship (Levinger, 1994). Thus, what is needed by one social group could differ dramatically from another, based on the group's environment and experiences. Though foster care is not a homogeneous experience, an inquiry into the nature of the relationships that former foster youth identify as having influenced their educational expectations could assist the many efforts currently in progress to benefit this group. Research suggests that relationships play a pivotal role in the development of self-efficacy, which in turn has been shown to positively relate to educational expectations. The exploration and understanding of factors that appear to facilitate success in higher education, for a group that does not historically experience high levels of success, may empower stakeholders to make decisions more likely to promote outcomes aligned to the institution's aims. A community college student services department, specifically a counseling and support program, is one such stakeholder. The exploration of those relationships could lead to a more focused approach when planning interventions for this population. Further analysis of the relationships that foster these changes could reveal similarities in those relationships which might act as catalysts for changes in academic expectations.

Scope and Limitations

This study examined the experiences of subjects enrolled in one California community college system. These experiences are not necessarily indicative of the larger population of foster children for several reasons. First, the subjects were enrolled in college, which is not typical for this population. Secondly, the sample was drawn from a single urban region and district, and thus the experiences of the sample are unlikely to match the experiences of foster children in different regions or those who live in rural areas. Further, the study made no effort to validate the experiences reported by the sample. Therefore, the scope of this study was exclusively based in the reported experiences of the sample.

Significance

Further research into the relationships that are associated with changes in educational expectations contributes to a larger body of literature that explores the interactions between an individual's relationships and educational outcomes. A further understanding of this topic could help inform interactions between academic faculty or counseling personnel and former foster youth. It is well established that positive relationships with teachers, peers and parents lead to more desirable educational outcomes (Ryan, Stiller, & Lynch, 1994; Vygotsky, Rieber & Carton, 1987; Wentzel, 2003). A deeper understanding of those relationships further identifies specifics that may then be used to inform decisions regarding foster youth.

Definitions of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, "former foster youth" will mean those children who were in the foster care system for a period of at least two years. According to Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data, approximately forty-five percent of those who entered foster care remained in foster care for longer than two years (2010). For the purposes of this study, "educational expectations" will mean the level of education that a person believes is reasonable given environment, experience, talent, and financial restraints (Kirk, Lewis, Nilsen & Colvin., 2013). Regan defined a relationship as "a state of interdependence that arises from ongoing interactions, and two people are 'in a relationship' or 'have a relationship' to the extent that they interact and mutually influence each other—how one partner behaves (i.e., acts, thinks, or feels) influences how the other partner behaves (i.e., acts, thinks, or feels), and vice versa." (Regan, 2011). For the purposes of this study, Regan's definition of relationship is used.

Summary. This study examined the relationships that former foster youth believe impacted their post-secondary educational expectations. As a theoretical framework, self-efficacy supports relationship quality as an underlying force that elicits change in educational expectations. The relationships that subjects identified as important were explored, and the responses were categorized and coded in line with the tenets of qualitative research.

This study is significant because it contributes to work that connects relationships with

increases in self-efficacy and specifically addresses the nature of this connection for former foster youth. A deeper understanding of the nature of relationships that bring about changes in foster care former foster youth's educational expectations may inform further potential interventions for this population, and may assist educators and policymakers in choosing more effective interventions for this population.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Foster care children have long been recognized as a marginalized group in society. Research into the inequities associated with foster care has yielded an extensive body of literature relating to the experience of foster children. One of the inequities that has received attention in the academic community is the gap in educational achievement of foster youth and non-foster youth. This gap can be explained in part by an examination of the differences between the educational expectations of former foster youth and the educational expectations of those not formerly in foster-care.

Foster Care Experience

Children in foster care have different experiences than children who are not in foster care. Children in foster care were more likely to have experienced neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, or loss of relationships, and were more likely to have witnessed acts of violence (AFCARS, 2003-2015; Unrau, Seita & Putney, 2008). Often, these experiences were also the direct precursor to placement in the foster care system. Once placed in foster care, however, these children could again be exposed to situations drastically different from those of children not in foster care. Children in foster care were more likely to live in poverty, live in a home that had fewer adults per child, and live with adults who were not married (O'Hare, 2008). Likewise, children in foster care were more likely to change living situations and change schools than children who were not in foster care.

Violence. The experiences of foster children often included violence (Litrownik, Newton, Mitchell & Richardson, 2003). Approximately 85% of children in a study on children in foster care reported having witnessed physical violence, and 51% of those children reported having been the victim of violence. Of those who experienced physical abuse 41% stated they had experienced that abuse within the last six months (Stein, Zima, Elliot, Burnham, Shaninfar, Fox, & Leavitt, 2001). This violence could have been a part of the environment while in foster care or experienced prior to entering foster care.

Of those children who were removed from their parents and placed into foster care, 21% had experienced physical abuse drastic enough to warrant removal from the home (Connell, Vanderploeg, Flashpohler, Katz, Saunders, & Tebes, 2006). Since it is one of the primary aims of the foster care system to reunite children with biological parents, and the goal of on average 49% of cases in child welfare systems, it is likely that, if a child is removed from his parent's home due to physical violence, the child's case goal will be reunification with the biological parents (AFCARS 2003-2010; Terling, 1999). Children who were reunited with their biological parents were significantly more likely to witness and experience violence than those children who were not reunited with their parents (Litrownik, Newton, Mitchell & Richardson, 2003). Violent experiences have been associated with psychological disorders such as post traumatic stress disorder (Brewin, Andrews, Valentine, & Kendall, 2000). Furthermore, exposure to violence when coupled with placement instability was linked to increased reports of both

internalizing and externalizing problems as measured by the child behavioral checklist (CBCL; Garrido, Culhane, Petrenko, & Taussig, 2011). Foster youth were also more likely to experience dating violence and to perpetrate dating violence than those youth who had not experienced foster care (Jonson-Reid, Scott, McMillen, & Edmond, 2007). Furthermore, having experienced dating violence increased the likelihood of later perpetrating dating violence (Jonson-Reid, Scott, McMillen, & Edmond, 2007).

Relationships. The experience of foster care was associated with difficulty forming relationships with caregivers (Unrau, Seita & Putney, 2008). This difficulty was connected with the often unstable living situations of foster children (Hochfilzer, & Mayring, 2010). Foster care children move often; studies showed that the average number of placements for a child over a one-year period ranged from 1.6 to 2.77 with an average of 2.4 times per year (James, 2004; Leathers, 2005; Newton, Litrownik, & Landsverk, 2000). These placements can have a direct effect on school placements. Approximately 33% of children in foster care attended five or more different elementary schools (Pecora, Williams, Kessler, Hiripi, O'Brien, Emerson &Torres, 2006). This was not necessarily all due to foster care, as some of the changes could have occurred prior to placement (Pecora, et al. 2006).

An aspect of the struggle associated with multiple placements was a desire to hold on to the past and past relationships (Butler & Charles, 1999). The child's desire to hold onto past relationships often conflicted with the foster parents' intention to give the child a fresh start in a

new home (Butler & Charles, 1999). By accepting something new the child must then experience the loss of the old (Butler & Charles, 1999). Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012), found one of the major themes to develop with respect to multiple placements was loss. This loss came in part from loss of control over destiny, as well as loss of friends and loss of connections to school. This continued experience of loss was connected to difficulties in attaching to new people and environments.

Attachment of infants toward caregivers appeared to improve when the children were placed in foster care instead of in an institution. A study of Romanian children found that randomly assigned homogeneous children, which is to say children of similar backgrounds and health, exhibited healthier attachment behavior in a foster care setting than in an institutionalized setting (Zeanah, Smyke, Guthrie, Nelson, & Fox, 2010). Thus, foster care may be preferable to institutions in terms of attachment for infants. However, foster care may inhibit attachment in adolescents (Unrau, Seita & Putney, 2008).

Poverty. According to data from the U.S. Census, foster children were more likely to live in poverty than those children who are not in foster care (O'Hare, 2008). Poverty has been linked with an increased risk of low educational achievement (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn & Klebanov, 1994; Kao & Thompson, 2003). Children living in poverty were less likely to be physically healthy and more likely to have mental illnesses (Keya, 2001). Specifically, the early childhood development of children living in poverty predisposed them to depression on a biological level

(Fraser, 2007). The formation of processes that control the creation and maintenance of serotonin levels were permanently affected and resulted in multiple psychological problems, including depression (Fraser, 2007). Children in foster care have been shown to need more medical attention than those children not in foster care; in addition they have been shown to require more attention than those children who lived in poverty and were not in foster care (Justin, 2003).

The connection between poverty and increased risk of psychological trauma is well documented (Keya, 2001; Murali, 2004; Rutter, 2003). The Child Behavioral Checklist is commonly used to document internalizing and externalizing psychological problems of foster children (Le Prohn, 2002). Though most of these studies examined the effects of certain variables on foster children, such as the number of placements, the overall data for foster care children suggested an elevated level of psychological problems (Barber & Delfabbro 2003; Lloyd & Barth, 2011; Newton, Litrownik, & Lansdverk, 2000; Rubin, O'Reilly, Luan, & Localio, 2007). Research has not found a significant relationship between the type of abuse experienced and the child's CBCL score. (Lloyd & Barth, 2011; Rubin, O'Reilly, Luan, & Localio, 2007).

Caregivers. Caregivers can have significant influence on the development of children in their care. Steinberg found that the attributes of the caregiver influenced the child's educational achievement, adult socioeconomic status, psychological well-being, and health (2001). For instance, the educational attainment of the caregiving female, if present, was strongly related to

the educational achievement of the child (Fomby & Cherlin, 2007).

Caregivers of foster children had a lower level of education than caregivers for non-foster children (O'Hare, 2008). When parents did not value education, children were less likely to excel in school (Kirchsteiger & Sebald, 2010). Those foster children whose caregivers had a higher education levels were more likely to value education (Kirchsteiger & Sebald,, 2010). The amount of schooling of the parent had a positive relationship with the amount of warmth shown in the home, the child's educational expectations, time spent in play, and time spent reading (Davis-Kean, 2005). An assessment of foster care parenting used by Casey Family Institute gathered data about the education level of the parent and found it to be a valid predictor of foster care parenting success (Orme, Cuddeback, Buehler, Cox, & Prohn, 2007).

Summary. The foster care environment is filled with factors that have been associated with undesirable outcomes for children. The foster child is likely to be raised in a home that has a lower level of education, income, and parental support. Children in foster care will change schools more often and experience associated losses of friends and connections to staff. These youth are more likely to experience violence and to develop psychological problems. These experiences have been shown to dramatically reduce the likelihood of foster youth achieving academic and financial success in their adult lives.

Educational Expectations

Educational expectation is the amount of education an individual believes that he or she

is likely to achieve, while educational aspirations reflect what the individual would like to

achieve. Educational expectations are developed in large part by 8th grade and remain relatively

stable (Andrew & Hauser, 2011).

　　　　Predictive value. Sewell and Duncan in the 1960s established a strong correlation

between educational expectations and eventual educational attainment. More recent literature

suggests that educational expectations are still a strong predictor for actual attainment (Andrew

& Hauser, 2011). Jacob and Wilder suggested that the gap between educational expectations and

achievement has decreased in the years following Sewell and Duncan's research (2010).

Educational expectations were a stronger predictor of actual achievement than educational

aspirations when measured prior to exiting high school (Jacob & Wilder, 2010). Thus what a

student says he or she would like to achieve in terms of post-secondary education is less

predictive of educational success than what the student believes is the most likely path for their

post-secondary education.

　　　　Lee, Hill and Hawkins examined the economic status of families over a 20-year period

and found that in large part, academic educational expectations predicted high school graduation,

which in turn predicted earning capacity (2012). Though this study will not be directly interested

in the high school graduation of foster children, Lee's study argued for a connection between the

educational expectation of students and their eventual academic attainment. Napolitano,

Pacholok and Furstenberg found that sometimes, for middle class families, a conflict existed

between the educational aspiration of the child and the economic viability of the family's position (2014). In this situation, the educational expectation of the child was pushed away from his or her aspirations due to financial constraints. Foster children, however, often do not have the financial or emotional support afforded to the children mentioned in this study. The government attempts to support this population with financial aid and services. However, this aid has not brought former foster youth to the same level of participation in higher education (Blome, 1997).

Individual characteristics of the student, characteristics of the family, and characteristics of the environment have been shown to influence educational expectations. The following section addresses each of these.

Student. A child's cognitive ability is correlated to his or her educational aspirations. Di Giunta, Alessandri, Gerbino, Kanacri, Zuffiano, & Caprara, (2013) examined the relationship of cognitive ability and self-esteem with academic aspirations. The results suggested that even for those in a lower socioeconomic position, cognitive ability had a positive relationship with educational aspirations. Changes in GPA predicted changes in expectations.

Lower socioeconomic status weakens the relationship between increased GPA and increased educational expectations. Those students in the bottom two quintiles of socioeconomic status did not appear to increase their expectations based on increases in GPA (Jacob & Wilder, 2010). Furthermore, children whose aspirations differed from their expectations were more likely to perform poorly in school (Boxer, Goldstein, DeLorenzoa, Savoya & Mercado, 2011).

Academic expectations change based on life events and can predict the type of behavior a student will engage in while at school. Having a child tended to decrease academic expectations (Jacob and Wilder, 2010). Those children whose aspirations differed from their expectations were more likely to exhibit behavioral problems and to report greater levels of test anxiety (Boxer, Goldstein, DeLorenzoa, Savoya & Mercado, 2011). Children who were motivated to "do the best they can" reported significantly higher expectations than those who "did enough to get by" (Walkey, McClure, Meyer & Weir, 2013).

Family. Those children whose aspirations differed from their expectations were more likely to be from low income families (Boxer, Goldstein, DeLorenzoa, Savoya & Mercado, 2011). Jacob and Wilder found that students from a lower socioeconomic background updated their academic expectations more often than their peers (2010). Furthermore, when children with low socioeconomic position updated their expectations, they generally decreased those expectations. When students with lower socioeconomic status experienced improved socioeconomic status, no corresponding change in academic expectations appeared. Students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds have stable high academic expectations. Students with stable high academic expectations were more likely to attend college when compared with students who expected to attend college in their junior year of high school but had not held consistently high expectations throughout their adolescence (Bozick, Alexander, Entwisle, Dauber & Kerr, 2010).

Family expectations were related to the amount of time that a child spent studying, the child's levels of academic stress, and the child's eventual educational expectations (Ang & Huan, 2006). When parents expected children to behave well at school, there was a small but positive correlation to academic performance after a period of three years (Bowen, Hopsen, Rose & Glennie, 2012).

Educational expectations are correlated with the mother's level of education. Furthermore when children of mothers who dropped out of high school were compared with children of mothers who had earned their GED, those whose mother had earned the GED had significantly higher educational expectations than those whose mothers had not earned their GED (Kim, Zakharkin & Allison, 2010).

Environment. Those children whose aspirations differed from their expectations were more likely to feel disconnected from their school or to have a negative association with school (Boxer, Goldstein, DeLorenzoa, Savoya & Mercado & 2011). Adolescents acquired and developed their beliefs and values within the context of a peer group (Rubin, Bukowski, Laursen & Paul, 2009). Because of this, the peers with which a student chooses to associate may predict his or her academic expectations. However, when this position was examined, only female peer groups were homogeneous in terms of both academic achievement and academic expectation (Wells, S. & Saunders, T., 2013).

Teachers' assessments of the child's academic ability have long reaching effects on the

child's academic career. The predictive power of teacher assessment for future attainment exceeded the predictive value of the student's actual academic performance on standardized tests (Zhang, 2008).

The academic rigor of a student's high school experience is predictive of higher academic expectations. Moreover, high levels of academic rigor predicted graduation for students who originally did not expect to graduate from college (Messersmith & Schulenberg, 2010). This finding is specifically relevant to this study because it isolated the population this study was interested in, namely those who changed their educational expectations and in this case achieved the new goal. The student's GPA, which is a stand in for many other factors, also predicted membership in the group of people who did not expect to graduate but did so anyway (Messersmith & Schulenberg, 2010).

Summary. This section discussed research relating to educational expectations. The research suggests that the level of educational expectation is a significant predictor of eventual academic achievement. The research further suggests that a child's educational aspirations are consistently greater than his or her educational expectations. Students who lower their educational expectations are commonly poorer and perform at a lower level in school. Both academic preparation and GPA are significant predictors of higher expectations, but a stronger predictor is teacher expectation, specifically the expectation of teachers of younger students.

Relationships

Youth that leave foster care because they have reached an age no longer supported by the foster care system have less social support upon exiting foster care than those youth in the general population have when they leave home (Greeson, 2013). This lack of support poses a threat to the smoothness of transition into adulthood for the former foster youth. Relationships and the social support they entail assist many youth in the transition to adulthood. For foster youth, the aging out process was often difficult, and the relationships experienced during the foster care experience influenced the outcome (Cashmore & Paxman, 2006). A lack of relationships with caring adults during this transition was linked with severely restricted options, amplified environmental adversity, and strained coping/social support systems for foster youth (Greeson, 2013). Because relationships have been shown to have these positive effects, an effort has been made to promote positive relationships for foster children who are making this transition. Though these interventions have been seen to be partially effective, a less choreographed approach appeared to lead to more desirable results (Spencer, Collins, Ward & Smashmaya, 2010). Relationships that foster youth develop on their own appear to provide greater benefits than mentoring programs or other forms of structured interactions.

Social Learning Theory. Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory extends from the base tenet of behaviorism which states that actions that are rewarded will be reinforced while

those that are punished will be deterred (1977). However, it allows for this reinforcement to exist even in cases in which the subject does not engage in an observable behavior and instead says that the learning is a change in expectation not dependent on action. Bandura posited that actions are governed by anticipated outcomes. One source of anticipated outcomes discussed originated in the observation of others actions and outcomes. The hypothesis formed from such observations is then strengthened or weakened by additional observations. Social learning theory assumes that modeling actions, that is to say the actions of others which an individual emulates, serve an informative function when developing both beliefs and behaviors. Bandura argued that the people with which an individual associates create a strong influence on the individuals behavior as a function of the actions and effects that are likely presented. He quips that one is likely to experience very different views of violence when associating with Quakers as compared to gangsters. Bandura suggested that the attributes of the person which an individual modeled his or her behavior affect the likeliness that the modeled action will influence behavior. Bandura suggested that when an individual with positively viewed and consistent in his or her assessments and actions, then the likelihood of modeled behavior influencing further actions is considerably greater than when either the individual is not positively viewed or is inconsistent.

Attachment Theory. Bowlby posited that humans naturally attach themselves to their caregivers. This attachment has fundamental biological roots in the evolutionary benefits of the young staying near their elders (1969). The genesis of this theory was supported by the work of

Arling and Harlow (1967) as well as Lorenz and Leyhausen (1952). Lorenz and Leyhausen studied the attachment of ducks, and Harlow's experiments dealt with the need for physical contact with a caregiver, among other factors. Both of these studies support the underlying concept of a possible biological imperative for connection among humans.

Bowlby's research identified a potential risk to children that were deprived of close relationships. His study examined the effects of long hospitalizations, foster care, and the early death of a parental figure (1952). Further inquiry suggested that individuals may have different attachment patterns. Bowlby posited that these differences arose from the inherent variation in the response of the caregiver to the child's behavior. Some caregivers are consistently responsive, others inconsistently responsive, and still others unresponsive. Bowlby identified the resulting forms of attachment as secure, insecure/resistant, and insecure/avoidant. The quality of these early attachment patterns influenced the child's quality of relationships later in life (Bowlby, 1969; Repetti, Taylor, Seeman & Eisenberg, 2002). Low quality attachment patterns are more common for those raised in institutions such as orphanages, and result in unhealthy physical outcomes. These unhealthy outcomes were mitigated by increased physical, auditory and visual interactions between an adult and the infant (Kim & Shin, 2003).

Choosing Relationships. As humans come into contact with others they are faced with a fundamental choice which relies on a estimation of the potential costs and benefits of pursuing a relationship. This decision involves multiple factors. Pamela Regan (2011) identified

appropriateness, familiarity, similarity, and responsiveness as important factors for the assessment of others as potential partners in relationships.

Appropriateness is a complex value-laden concept. Society, in one respect, influences expectations for appropriate behavior, and since different societies may enforce drastically different concepts, what is appropriate within one society may be taboo in another. These societal rules are sometimes called social and cultural scripts. Those people who appeared to conform with the role assigned by the social script were more likely to be embraced than those who did not (Simon & Gagnon, 1969). Each participant in the relationship brings their own particular values and experiences into their assessment of the costs and benefits of entering into a relationship. Thibaut and Kelley found that individuals brought certain skills, needs, values and predispositions to anxiety to the calculation of cost and benefit of a relationship (1959).

Familiarity, or the frequency of repeated interactions, increased an individual's positive predisposition toward the object or person to whom they were exposed more often (Zajonc, 1968). Zajonc's study, posing as a test of memory, showed participants pictures of college age males with varying frequency and then asked about the participants "liking" of the male. Those pictures that the subjects saw more frequently received higher levels of "liking" than those that appeared less frequently. This effect has been replicated more recently outside of the laboratory. Moreland and Beach (1992) conducted an experiment in which four female confederates of comparable attractiveness acted as students in a college class. The confederates walked into class

slowly and sat at the front of the room. They did not speak or interact with the other students in any way. The confederates differed in their level of attendance to the class. At the end of the course, the instructor showed pictures of the four confederates and inquired as to the subjects' assessment of the confederates. Those confederates that attended the class more often received more favorable ratings than those that did not.

Similarity in terms of interests, demographics, values, attitudes, personality, and disposition have been shown to increase favorable responses in the laboratory as well as field. Festinger (1962), in his work on cognitive dissonance, posited that individuals are likely to seek out others of similar beliefs and values as a method of decreasing the dissonance resulting from perceived differences between individuals and those they associate with. Where no similar persons are available, an individual is inclined to change so as to increase his or her similarity to the group.

Responsiveness increases attraction. When an individual perceives that another person is interested and invested in him or her, attraction will increase (Lemay & Clark, 2008). Inversely, those individuals that are found to be distant and uninterested are more likely to be found less attractive. Within a relationship, the nature and change of responsiveness over time is based in part on the cohesiveness of goals for the parties within a relationship. Crocker and Canavello (2008) found that over time, relationships with "compassionate" goals continued to grow in a positive feedback loop which originated in each party acting in a responsive way to the other.

Each of these responsive actions then generally leads to more responsive actions from the other member of the dyad.

       Helping Relationships. Ellerman (2009), in a report for the World Bank, considered this dilemma and established five themes of helping relationships based on works in varied fields. Ellerman's five themes were:

1. Starting from where the doers are.

2. Seeing through the doer's eyes.

3. Avoiding imposition of change on the doer.

4. Avoiding imposition of help on the doer.

5. Placing the doer in the driver's seat.

      The first point requires an accurate assessment of the individual's capabilities and situation, and thereby an avoidance of unrealistic expectations. Instead of imposing a clean slate from which to build the desired outcome, this point requires an accommodation for the particular truths of the individual and their experiences and surroundings. This point is subtly distinct from empathy because it requires a perspective by which the 'helper' can set aside their desires for what 'should' be and instead embrace all of the complexities involved in what is. In effect, it is the choice to forgo the ideal of Kant's tabula rasa in exchange for the messiness of the current situation.

      The second point addresses a system of empathy and understanding. Lamm, Batson and

Decety (2007) defined empathy in three parts: "1) an affective response to another person, which some believe entails sharing that person's emotional state; 2) a cognitive capacity to take the perspective of the other person; and 3) some monitoring mechanisms that keep track of the origins (self vs. other) of the expected feelings (42)."

In romantic relationships, empathy predicts relationship satisfaction and effective coping strategies (Levesque, Lafontainea, Caron, Flescha, & Bjornsona, 2014). Empathy has also been associated with effective leadership and also selection for leadership (Bell, 1954; Thompson, 2011). Within education, empathy has long been identified as a salient factor in effective teaching (Coffman, 1954; Lindquist 2004). Thus, within each of these spheres, evidence exists suggesting that empathy is a component of 'good' relationships.

For those that wish to help and also seek to foster autonomy, a fundamental difficulty quickly arises. This difficulty is addressed by Freire, Dewey, Kierkegaard and others. Put simply, by helping, or more accurately attempting to help, it is easy to remove the autonomy of those toward whom the 'help' is directed. Freire addresses this when discussing the relationship between benevolence and dependency. Dewey considers this difficulty when establishing that the value of an aim is necessarily derived from the origin of the aim within the learner. However, it is the "helping" mentality, which prescribes an individual's aim rather than honoring an individual's aims, that serves as the foundation for many of the interventions ostensibly intended to benefit the population of foster youth.

The final point, "placing the doer in the driver seat", is a corollary to points three and four. If the helper is not imposing change or providing help, then change that leads to a better position for the "doer" must be implemented by the "doer." Some of the vanguards for this position include Dewey and Freire. For Dewey, the eventual aim of education is to promote the ability to develop and willfully pursue aims. Likewise, Freire requires that any revolution (change) maintain the people's active participation, be fully in the people's hands, and be earned by them.

Teachers. A separate relationship that may affect the goals of foster youth is relationships with teachers. Strong relationships between students and teachers have been shown to affect the academic goals of students (Boxer, Goldstein, DeLorenzoa, Savoya & Mercado, 2011). Investment in the relationship from both participants as well as a mutual respect between teacher and student has been shown to positively relate to educational outcomes (Giles, Smythe & Space, 2012).

Goal Contagion. Humans modify their actions and values based in part on the perceived goals of those around them. From observed goals, individuals often infer the motivations of others around them and may subsequently modify their own motivations to better align with those held by their peers. This effect was especially pronounced within peer-groups (Festinger, 1961). These goals may be conveyed both explicitly and subconsciously, and the adoption of these goals is modified by social acceptability of both the goal and method by which it was

communicated (Aarts, Hussin & Gollwitzer, 2004). The communication and eventual adoption of goals agrees with research that suggests that, within a given population, individuals tend to observe the opinions of their peers and then either engage or cease engaging in an activity based on the prevalence of participation among their peers.

Within the population of foster youth, the goals of the peer-group are likely lower than those children in the general population (Kirk, Lewis, Nilsen & Colvin, 2013). Thus the likelihood of adopting goals that lead to higher education are likely diminished. However, those foster youth that established healthy peer relationships and experienced social support were more likely to achieve higher levels of education and reported greater life satisfaction (Yates & Grey, 2012). This finding can be explained in part by the differences in the population with which the former foster choose to emulate.

Summary

This section discussed 'helping relationships' from the viewpoint of Freire and Dewey and used the definition of helping relationships as put forth by Ellerman. First, this section defined the helping relationship as one that, in short, provides support and guidance while maintaining the 'doer' as the person for which the help is intended. Second, this section briefly addressed relationships with teachers as potentially meaningful catalysts for changes in educational performance, aspiration, and expectation. Finally, this section discussed goal contagion, which provides a framework by which goals are shared and modified by a group.

Gaps in the literature. Additional research is needed regarding changes in educational expectations of adults. The factors that contribute to changes in adult expectations have not been clearly established. Longitudinal studies exist examining eventual outcomes relative to initial expectations, but an examination of factors that act to enable individuals to change their expectations is lacking. Such studies would be of considerable worth when considering potential methods of intervention for members of the population who originally did not expect to attend college and have the capacity to succeed.

Chapter Three: Methods

This study examined the perceived effect of relationships on former foster youth's post-secondary educational expectations. To this purpose interviews were conducted with former foster youth who identified at least one individual who had a significant effect on his or her educational expectations. A former foster youth was eligible for the interview if he or she was in foster care for at least two years and he or she could identify at least one relationship that contributed to a change in his or her educational expectations. Interviews were conducted with those who identified at least one person as contributing to a change in the participant's educational expectations. The interview was semi-structured and continually revised as new data emerged that was relevant to the underlying research question.

The following sections describe the researcher's position as it relates to the topic, philosophical position, theoretical backing for this research, methods of data collection, and methods of data analysis.

Positionality

Any research necessarily omits, generalizes, and simplifies that which it studies. The complexity of a social phenomenon makes identifying all of the factors that contribute to its formation untenable. Thus, this study examined a piece of the larger and more complex question of educational expectations with a focus on relationships. The researcher does not maintain that relationships are the only factor or even that relationships are the most important factor.

The researcher has no specific experience with foster youth. As an instructor he has interacted with foster youth occasionally, but only within the context of the classroom. Thus it is the researcher's experience as an instructor that most directly threatens to bias this research. The researcher's experience of close relationships with students leading to changes in students' educational expectations could potentially bias the interview process to overestimate the impact of faculty on changes in educational expectations.

The researcher has come to believe that relationships are particularly important to foster youth educational expectations and, therefore, hopes to learn more about these relationships and how they can impact foster youth expectations for higher education.

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective guiding this research is social learning theory. Social learning theory, as advanced by Bandura (1986), posited that "What people think, believe, and feel affects how they behave. The natural and extrinsic effects of their actions, in turn, partly determine their thought patterns and affective reactions (25)." This basic assumption guided the research by establishing a necessary connection between experiences and beliefs. It follows that the experiences of the subject's interactions with others in relationships may then influence the subject's beliefs which in turn influences further actions by the subject. With this in mind, the interviews gave special attention to changes in subjects' beliefs about their own capabilities. This allowed further exploration of the connection between those changes and those relationships

which the subjects identified as having a significant impact on their educational expectations.

The philosophical basis of this research whas phenomenology. Phenomenology asserts that there is a fundamental essence of shared experiences and that these essences are mutually understood thoughout a relevant group (Merriam 1998). Within this reaserch the group was former foster youth and the essence was the experience of relationships while in foster care which had a positive relationship on the former foster youth's beliefs about his or her ability to succeed in college. In order to understand the underlying phenomon the experiences of the former foster youth were sought and then compared to identify those components which make up some of the shared experience or essence of this phenomenon. The process of phenomenological inquiry encourages the researcher to set aside his or her beliefs about the phenomenon so as to be open to the emerging essence as shared by the participants. This suggestion aligns with the constant comparative model.

Data Sources and Description of Data

Merriam (1998) suggested that a sample should be "purposefully" selected so as to facilitate the process of answering qualitative questions such as what occurs and how those occurrences are linked to other occurrences. Purposeful sampling relies on the assertion that the researcher wants to know about a particular phenomenon and therefore should select those participants that are most able to assist in achieving further understanding of said phenomenon. Merriam prescribed a three step model for selecting a sample:

- The strategy should be consistent with the theoretical framework of the study.

- The selection criteria of the sample should be established and justified.

- Sampling should continue to a point of saturation, the point at which no new information is acquired from interviews.

Sampling protocols. The data for this study was collected at American River Community College and Sierra College. Both colleges are located in the Sacramento metropolitan area in northern California. American River College has approximately twenty thousand students, and Sierra College has an approximate population of fifteen thousand students. Interviews were conducted at the college campuses.

For this study, the unit of analysis was a former foster student who was enrolled in classes for college credit at one of these colleges. Participants were recruited by asking for volunteers from the foster care student groups on campuses.

The researcher interviewed to the saturation point. The saturation point was reached when the interviews consistently presented information that was already included in the study.

Participants were recruited from American River College via the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOP&S), and from Sierra College via the Former Foster Youth Support Program. Participants were sent an email, if an email was on file for them, and or were contacted via text with the invitation. Fliers were also set out at the help desk for EOP&S. This sample followed the precepts of purposeful sampling as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Invitations were presented to approximately two hundred students enrolled in the EOP&S program. Because EOP&S is a program designed to support disadvantaged students there was an expectation that a greater number of former foster youth would be present in this population, but the actual number of former foster youth was unknown.

Lincoln and Guba recommend sampling until a point of saturation when using a purposeful sample. The point of saturaion is reached when continued interviews provide no new information. Within this research the researcher contined to evaluate and code the data throughout the research process. At the fifth interview no substantive new information was gathered. The researcher decided to interview a sixth to verifiy that no new substantive information would be forthcoming. The sixth interview also did not produce new substantive information. At this point the researcher considered ceasing the interview process. There were at this time no more participants. A week passed and the researcher was contacted by a seventh participant. Having two consecutive interviews withouth additional substantive information was not considered sufficient by the researcher. The seventh interview was therefore scheduled and again led to no new substanitve information. At this point the researcher established that the saturation point had been reached and ceased conducting interviews.

Data Collection

The data for this study was collected during interviews of former foster children currently enrolled in Sierra Community College and American River Community College. The interview

focused on the identified relationships and how they affected the respondent's self-efficacy as well as educational expectations.

Interviews. The interviews were approximately an hour long and the entirety of the interview was recorded. In consideration of Merriam's suggestion, the interview protocol was developed in stages, and the questions were initially used with small pilot groups and modified based off of feedback from those interviews. Because the interview was semi-structured, the interviews were each adjusted to the responses of the previous subjects, and as such only broad categories of questions were established prior to the interview. The interview followed a semi-structured format and focused initially on three points.

1. Establishing reference points for the subject's educational expectation,

2. Exploring the subject's explanation for the changes in expectation,

3. Self-efficacy of participant with respect to ability to attend and succeed in college.

Reference points for the subject's educational expectations were used to identify points at which the subject's educational expectations changed. These changes prompted further inquiry into the reasons for the change in expectations. The nature and circumstances surrounding relationships associated with this change were explored through the interview in order to better understand the effect of the relationships on the subject's educational expectations. Changes in educational self-efficacy were also explored. In order to explore these changes, questions relating to the subject's belief about his or her likelihood of attending college were asked retrospectively

about points in the subject's educational career.

Special attention was given to the nature of the relationships which led to the identified change in educational expectation. The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Philosophy of Data Collection. The theoretical framework which informed the analysis of the data in this study was grounded theory. Though the study was not intended to create new theory as is the case with grounded theory, a process suggested by grounded theory, constant comparative model, was used to interpret the data. The constant comparative model was selected because it encourages the researcher to follow the data and continue to adjust to data as it is collected. The constant comparative model may be used for qualitative data analysis separate from grounded theory (Merriam, 1998). The constant comparative model requires the data be analyzed from the moment it is gathered and should then be used to develop different categories and relationships between the existing data. Strauss suggested that this process be repeated until all meaningful data has been placed in a category (1990). In this study, the analysis of the data began at the moment the data was collected. When the response to a question by an interviewee appeared to overlap with a previous statement, or the statement of another interviewee, clarification and connections were sought, by the interviewer, in order to further elaborate on the connection between the two points of data. For example, after the third interviewee mentioned a feeling of support for their education coming from being forced to do something, future interviewees were asked questions that related to feelings of force after the interviewee brought

up an instance in which they felt compelled to act by another and later identified that action as supportive of their journey to college.

Question Protocol

The interview began with a brief introduction that addressed the purpose of the study and thanked the participant for agreeing to be a part of the study. The interview protocol was designed to adjust which questions were asked in response to the participant's responses. The following section is intended to communicate the flow of the interview.

Introduction. Hello and thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to examine the perceived effect of relationships on former foster youth's post-secondary educational expectations. Along those lines I will be asking you a few questions about your path toward college and some of the people that have influenced you on your journey here. With your permission this interview will be recorded. I will change any names you use in your account and will not use your name in the paper. Do I have your permission to record this interview? (Wait for response and start recording.) With all of that said, do you have any questions or shall we proceed? (Answer any follow-up questions prior to starting the interview.) The full interview protocol may be found in Appendix A.

Interview techniques. Techniques from Carl Rogers' client-centered psychology were used for the interviews in order to both check for clarity and to validate, in a psychological sense, the subjects' response. After a short period of time the interviewer responded with statements

like, "I understand that what you felt at the time was that Jill was there as a supportive parent figure and that her support made you feel safe enough to start planning your future, and that college was part of that plan. Is that what you meant?" Assuming that the subject responded in the affirmative, a follow-up question was asked and the cycle continued. In accordance with Merriam's work on qualitative studies, care was taken to include questions that focused on the subject's experiences and feelings about those experiences. Interspersed with the Rogerian follow-up questions were interpretative questions as suggested by Merriam. The interpretive question asks the interviewee a question that represents the interviewer's understanding of the question and looks for validation. Using the same example as above, an interpretive question could be phrased as "Would you say that Jill's support made you feel safe enough to start planning your future, and that college was part of that future?" Both of these question types have the same aim but differ in their style. In order to keep the interview less repetitive both styles were used.

The flow of the interview questions (figure 3.1) shows the contingent nature of the questions asked. Some of the questions (marked in pink and underlined) were always asked. While other questions were contingent on answers (green standard font) or contingent on combinations of answers (blue italicized).

☐ Figure *3*.1 Interview Protocol

1) Did you want to attend college when you began high school?

— Yes → **When you started high school, how likely did you think it was that you would attend college?** — Not Likely → **What were some of the things that made you think that you may not be able to attend college?**

— No → **Was there anyone in specific who you felt wanted to see you attend college?**

If so, please tell me a little about your interactions with (him or her) and what specifically (he or she) did that expressed to you a desire to see you attend college?

2) Prior to high school was there anyone in specific that you felt influenced your desire to attend college? If so, please tell me a little about how your interactions with (him or her) influenced your desire to attend college.

What were some of the things that made you think that you may not be able to attend college?

3) Did you want to attend college when you left high school?

— Yes → **When you left high school, how likely did you think it was that you would attend college?** — Unlikely →

Did anyone in specific influence your desire to attend college between the time when you left high school and when you started college? If so, please tell me a little more about how he or she did that.

— No →

The likelihood of attending college changed between starting and finishing high school.

↓

When you left high school you were (more or less) sure that you would be attending college. What influenced that change?

The interviewee did not want to attend college when he or she left high school.

→ **Was there anyone in specific who you felt influenced your desire to attend college between when you started high school and when you left high school? This may be a person you have already discussed with me or it may be someone new. If you can think of someone please tell me a little about how your interactions with him or her influenced your desire to attend college.**

4) Some people enroll in college and plan to earn a certificate or perhaps transfer to a university. What was your educational plan when you entered college?

5) Has your plan changed since you enrolled in college?

— Yes → **What are your current plans for higher education?** → **Did anyone in specific influence your change in goal from when you enrolled in college and now? If so, please tell me a little more about how he or she did that?**

6) Did anyone in specific influence your belief in your ability to succeed in college, who you have not mentioned yet in this interview? If so, please tell me a little more about how he or she did that.

Key

| This question was always included in the interview. | This question is contingent on previous answers. | *This question was only asked when the condition was met.* |

Limitations

This study is not meant to be generalized to the population of foster youth, but rather to explore the experiences of a sample drawn from one urban community college system. This study is limited to a geographic region, and within that geographic region it sampled only those former foster youth attending local community colleges which were also involved in that college's former foster youth support group. This sample is potentially significantly different from the population of former foster youth.

Summary

In summary, the interviews used techniques from Carl Rogers and Sharan Merriam to investigate the underlying question of this study. The interview was semi-structured and was consistently modified as the interviews presented different concepts that related to the underlying question. Merriam's requirement that the strategy should be consistent with the theoretical framework of the study was met by the use of purposeful sampling and a semi-structured survey format. Merriam's requirement that the selection criteria of the sample should be established and justified was met by the establishment of the two criteria for participation in the interview and their accompanying justifications. The first criteria was the identification of at least one relationship which affected the respondents post-secondary educational expectations. The second requirement was that the respondent had been in the foster care system for at least two years. Finally, in line with Merriam's suggestion, sampling continued to the point of saturation, the

point at which there was no new data presented in interviews. This study examined the perceived

effect of relationships on former foster youth's post-secondary educational expectations. To this

purpose, former foster youth were qualified for an interview by meeting the two requirements

laid out in the invitation to participate. Interviews were conducted with those participants who

identified at least one person as contributing to a change in the participant's educational

expectations.

Chapter Four: Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived effect of relationships on former foster youth's post-secondary educational expectations. To this purpose, interviews were conducted with those participants who identified at least one person who contributed to a change in the participant's educational expectations.

Interview Protocol

The interviews were conducted at two colleges of the Los Rios College District. The interviews were semi-structured and additional questions were added to the protocol based off of the initial data collected. The interview asked about people who influenced the interviewee's desire to attend college and belief that he or she could succeed in college. These questions were separated into three stages: before high school, after the end of high school, and after enrolling in college.

Follow-up Questions. The follow-up questions arose from previous responses and centered around tentative categories that emerged throughout the interviews. Though the questions were not asked to all interviewees in the same way, the questions were intended to connect the meanings of one interviewee with another and to clarify differences between experiences. The following are example questions. Each instance was addressed slightly differently based on the flow of the interview.

1. Some of the other people I have interviewed have mentioned the idea that some people go above and beyond what they have to do for their job, while others are just doing their

job. You were telling me about _____ and how he or she supported you in your journey to college. Did he or she do more than what was required by the job and can you talk for a little while about how?

2. It sounds like you didn't want to do that at the time, but now looking back on it you are glad that you had to do it. How did your relationship with ----- affect your willingness to do ----- even though you didn't want to?

Data Collection

The unit of analysis for this study was the individual former foster youth. At the time of the research all of the participants were students at a local community college and had been in foster care for at least two years.

Participants were recruited through the EOP&S program at the community college. The program director agreed to send an invitation to the EOP&S listserv which included approximately eighty students. Nine individuals responded to the invitation, but two did not respond to frequent requests to establish an interview time. Thus, seven former foster youth were interviewed in June of 2015. The interviews were conducted on two campuses of Los Rios College District. Each interviewee was given a consent form describing the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of the research, the compensation for the research, permission to record the interviewee and permission to use the recording for other potential research projects. Interviews were conducted primarily on park benches outside the library and in one instance within the library. The interviews lasted between 30 and 80 minutes each. The interviews used a

semi-structured format (as described in Chapter 3). Audio recordings were taken with an iPad. The recordings were then transcribed by the researcher.

Selected excerpts from the recordings, which were identified by the researcher to be relevant to the research area, were emailed to interviewees along with generalized themes that then influenced the following interviews. Three of the interviewees responded to the follow-up emails and all stated that the themes and excerpts appeared to be consistent with their experiences. No revisions were suggested, and none were made. This member checking process was intended to assure trustworthiness of the data collected and afford an opportunity to correct any misunderstandings or to identify statements that were perceived as being taken out of context.

Of the seven former foster youth who participated in the study, six were female and one was male. Though ages were not specifically sought, volunteered ages suggested a range of twenty to forty. The experiences which led the interviewee to be placed in foster care and their subsequent experiences in foster care were varied, but within the scope of reviewed research (see Chapter 2). Many interviewees referenced the difficulties they had experienced in life as a part of their story.

Themes

Three primary themes emerged through analysis of the transcripts:

1. **Every participant identified compulsion within the context of a relationship as a contributing factor to his or her academic expectation**: this compulsion ranged from

threats to continual "nagging" but was most often expressed through autocratic directives by figures in authority.

2. **Every participant identified connections with people as a contributing factor to his or her academic expectations:** these connections were often described as stable, available, non-judgmental, encouraging, and instilling a sense of belonging.

3. **Most participants identified the academic guidance of an individual with knowledge of higher education as a contributing factor to their academic expectation:** in addition, this guidance was consistently coupled with feelings of connection, awareness, and investment outside of the academic sphere.

The following section will discuss each theme. The themes will be broken into smaller components and quotes will be provided to support the creation of the larger theme.

Theme 1. Every participant identified compulsion within the context of a relationship as a contributing factor to his or her academic expectation: this compulsion ranged from threats to continual "nagging" but was most often expressed through autocratic directives by figures in authority.

Before delving into the actual data, I would like to discuss briefly the process of arriving at this first theme and some of the difficulties I experienced in framing it, both to myself as well as when asking questions in the interview. The aim of this research was to better understand the effect of relationships on the educational outcomes of foster youth. I expected to hear about

supportive foster-families, teachers and friends. Instead, in large part, I heard stories of very hard lives punctuated by situations in which the interviewee felt that he or she did not have much of a choice. Again and again interviewees talked about people making them do something which was later identified as helpful to their academic journey.

The origin of this compulsion varied, which added further complexity. A relationship with an institution or a society is not the same thing as a relationship with an individual. When a policeman tells someone to do something, he does not rely on his relationship with the individual to garner compliance but rather on the force implicit to his position. Yet it would not be unfair to say that some people have better relationships with police than others. Furthermore, it is reasonable to suggest that an employee could have a relationship with his or her boss, and, as such, when asked by the boss to perform a certain task, he or she may do so from a position of relationship, a position of following authority, or a combination of the two. This view of relationship is wide and does not lend itself in my mind well to rigorous study. As an operational definition of relationship I chose to use the term in whatever way the interviewee did. I asked questions about how individual people supported their enrollment in college and if they wanted to talk about someone, I would consider that person as having some relationship with the interviewee.

The nature of both education and foster care include levels of compulsion, telling a person what he or she must do. Furthermore, the nature of parenting holds with it the position of establishing parameters of acceptable action which may also be seen as compulsory. Attempting

to separate out what could reasonably be called compulsion from something like encouragement or guidance was difficult.

Some people feel that they must do things when the threat of non-compliance is so great as to leave them the option of something that they don't want or something they really don't want, and the person or entity that set up the decision made them choose the option that was less offensive. By contrast, a feeling of compulsion can also be derived from relationship and investment. This kind of compulsion relies less on threats and more on a desire to act in accordance with the other person's desires and aims. To be clear, a threat to the relationship unless the other person's desires are met would fit into the first type of compulsion discussed, not the type of compulsion arising from investment in a relationship.

The following section will rely largely on the quotes of the interviewees. The order of the quotes was determined so as to best allow the reader to see the parallels between the responses. Many quotes were omitted which expressed similar sentiments to the ones included,that were passing comments, or that were contextually shallow. For copies of the full transcripts, contact the primary author.

> Question: Some of these times that people forced you to do things were good and others were bad. Is that fair?

> Answer: I didn't want to sit down and do homework at 15. I mean, what teenager does? But right now, looking back, it was a good forced. Back then, no I didn't like it. I graduated at 17 so it helped me. There was no caring. It was just follow the guidelines. Follow the rules. Do what you are supposed to do.

> Often, interviewees reported a lack of caring from those that demanded compliance:

She drove us, me and my other family members, to get good grades. A B grade was unacceptable and a C was unheard of. She sent me to some of the best schools. I don't know if it was because she didn't have my paperwork. I went to private schools. She would tell us you have to go to college. No one can take college from you. She was kind of over my shoulder, but not really in a supportive way. It wasn't supportive it was authoritative, basically like a military thing. It wasn't the love and encouragement. There wasn't a good balance. If you were to say would you rather that, or someone who never ever talked about your school work, never cared, that might be better, but you know, in a perfect world you would want someone who would give you love as well.

For this interviewee, love and support were missing in her home. She reported that later she would seek love and relationships instead of academics to fill needs that were not met in childhood. Though the academic compulsion was present, and seen as beneficial, it was also missing something which, in the end, stunted academic pursuits.

Another interviewee reflected that his foster parent instilled a desire for a better life. Even though she was hard on him, he felt that it was based in compassion:

She is a black foster mom. I guess it is different with their mentality. It is more of that tough love. You get punished. You get privileges taken away if you get bad grades. She came from the South. So you have to do school in school to be rewarded. She went to college. She went to high school. She got her stuff together and that is what I want. I don't want to be sitting on the couch, broke, living off welfare, that is not the life I want. It was caring and compassion.

Other interviewees were compelled by threat of force and a desire to escape an abusive situation:

Well, I came from a very abusive background, so in my mind college was my only option. You know you can go anywhere when you go to college. My whole plan was to go somewhere, to get good grades so I could transfer out of state or something. I was very scared. I was hit all the time so it was a lot easier to get good grades and go

somewhere. In 7th grade my sister was researching colleges and I found out there are colleges everywhere. It definitely motivated me. I thought I could go to Julliard or somewhere that they could never touch me again. It was something that kept my strength up and kept me motivated to survive in that current situation. Honestly, no one supported me before high school. My parents, even though they were abusive, expected me to get good grades. They were like, get good grades or you are gonna get your ass whooped. If I came home with C's they weren't gonna care as long as I passed my classes. The abuse led to get out of there and the only way I saw I could was to go to college.

Another interviewee reported,

She had good intentions but she wasn't really a good good person... a good parent. She was never physically abusive but she was abusive in other ways. She did instill some good things and one of them was that school and education was important. So from an early age I was always taught that I would go to college.

During high school, often the compulsion shifted from the completion of assignments, though still present, to attendance of programs, often remedial, in order to accomplish the task of exiting high school either by test or graduation. The following three interviewees all mentioned similar compulsion toward program attendance:

There was a group home which forced us to go to a specific independent study school, which I didn't like, but I am glad I went, because it kept my credits current. Without it, I would have been a little behind.

School was very important in a group home. They never let you miss days. Even if you were sick, they forced you to go. I don't know what the reason was. Whether they didn't want you there or... We had to sit down after school and do homework. We ate and then did homework but no one there was there to help us academically. I wouldn't say that they cared. It was just forced. I didn't want to sit down and do homework at 15. I mean what teenager does? But right now, looking back, it was a good forced. Back then, no I didn't like it. I graduated at 17 so it helped me. There was no caring. It was just follow the guidelines. Follow the rules. Do what you are supposed to do.

No support of education in group homes. In fact very difficult to do homework. Executive director let me use his private conference room to let me do my homework in. He said okay, here.

Though policy was in large part a contributing force to placement in these programs, caregivers

also compelled the interviewees to attend programs against the interviewee's wishes and in some

cases to attend school at all:

> Granny didn't give me an option and that ended up being good for me. One time this
> teacher asked me why are you even here? I said I have to be here cause my Papa makes
> me be here.

> When looking back on people that helped the interviewee in his or her path toward

college, each interviewee identified some particular program or intervention that was

instrumental in their finishing high school or earning a GED. Though compulsion for homework

and grades was present during high school, placement in a particular program, generally against

the desires of the interviewee, was identified as helping the interviewees to advance toward

college in most cases. In addition to placement, the actual attendance of the program began to be

compelled, and at times when the compulsion was absent the subjects would not attend school.

> Once papa got arrested nobody cared so I didn't go to high school. Until I went to college,
> I thought I could just go, and they said I had to get my GED or graduate so I went back. I
> thought I could just skip over that part.

This interviewee mentions a few different influences on her. First, she identifies, as stated above,

that her guardians made her attend high school and that without that compulsion she in fact

would not attend. Furthermore, when she attempted to enroll in college, policy required her to

return to a system which she had thought she could simply skip past. In one instance she was

forced by her adopted parents to go to school and stopped going as soon as that force was

removed, while in the second instance, force was based in policy and was thus was not backed

up by a relationship with the person enforcing it. However, the relationships that this interviewee

had developed that made her want to attend college contributed to the effectiveness and in the

end, the compulsory power of the policy. Put differently, because the interviewee wanted to

attend college she was compelled to meet the requirements of the college. If she did not want to

attend the college then the policy would have had no effect on her. The relationships she had

developed, most notably with her social worker, had developed within her a desire to attend

college. Thus the relationship is in a way connected to the outcome of the policy.

After high school and before college, often a significant other pushed the interviewees to

attend college.

> My boyfriend pushed me into what major to go into. He knew my likes and dislikes, so
> he helped me. He said I should go for nursing so I did. I didn't like it and changed my
> major to business.

For other interviewees the threat of being kicked out of their home was an impetus to enroll in

college. Curiously, interviewees that reported this type of compulsion later identified it as a good

thing:

> I have always wanted to go college. It was about five months after having my daughter
> when the semester was about to start, and I was teetering with it. Should I go? Should I
> not? My mom said that if I didn't, that she was going to kick me out (laughs). Which she
> really wasn't going to. She was just threatening. She kind of pushed me in the direction I
> needed to go.

Another interviewee said,

> She kicked me out. I used to be so mad that she kicked me out, but she did it right after I
> graduated high school. I had to grow up. I didn't know how to cook, clean, grocery shop,
> but I had to learn all this stuff cause I had to survive. She pushed me out of the nest, but I
> am grateful for it today.

Sometimes seeing a loved one make decisions and then observing the outcome influenced the interviewee's decision to pursue college, with an aim of avoiding the mistakes of the family member. When this happens, sometimes the interviewee reported compelling his or her family member toward a different path:

> I have seen my sister sleep out on the street. It broke my heart. I don't want that to happen to me. I tell her she needs to go back to school and get her life together. I got my motivation from my elders and now she looks up to me and I can do that with her.

Another interviewee, when seeing her sister living in poverty, both attempted to push the sister out of her position and was motivated by seeing that way of life and wanting to avoid it:

> She was another motivator. I was like, I don't want to live like this. I asked, how can you live on welfare? She is still living off of it. I just can't do that.

Social workers also contributed to the interviewee's changes in academic expectation. Though these actions are well within the scope expected of social workers, the nature of the interaction suggests a lack of direct choice on the part of the interviewee. In most cases, the interviewee reported that the social worker said "we are going to do this" and then did it with the interviewee:

> I didn't know how much of an option college really was. It felt like a really overwhelming task. I mean people do it, so I guess I should do it, but it wasn't something I wanted to do. Until actually there was a ILP coordinator and she was like "Hey this is how you fill out a FAFSA," and the next thing I know my FAFSA is filled out. We did it together. Then she was like "hey look at all these classes you can take and all these different things you can do."

The amount of time between leaving high school and entering college varied widely among

interviewees. Some entered college at the age of 17, while others have left and returned to college numerous times over the last ten years. However, many expressed both a fear of college and subsequently identified an individual that facilitated the transition to college. One of the methods of facilitation was simply telling the interviewee what he or she was going to do, as expressed by this response:

> EOP&S will email me outside of my work. They will bug and bug and bug you to do the things that you have to do in their workshop in order to continue returning to them. Which is good to return to them.

After enrolling in college, many interviewees reported continued expressions of the expectation that they would attend college and were "pushed" to continue by those same people that "pushed" them to finish high school.

> She got pregnant too young and she regrets it. She tells me every day you need to stay in school. I don't care. I am pushing you to do this because I didn't go to college.

Or, as another respondent said with reference to his aunt: "She wants me to be in school full time. It is a little controlling but I understand."

After enrolling in college, support staff at the college were reported to direct the interviewees to take the necessary steps to gain financial aid and sign up for classes. Though this is obviously within the expected behavior of student services, the manner in which the interviewees reported the interaction suggested again that the interactions were perceived as autocratic directives.

> Kara really helped keep me in line. She was like we are meeting this day and this time to figure out your classes.

My kids are getting older, I constantly tell them, the same things that were told to me. You have to get your education, especially being black in America. You must do this because there is already a preconceived notion that you are ignorant, that you are less than, that you may not be capable. With an education you will have different experiences, you have a broader perception of the world, and you will be able to say regardless of what you think of the color of my skin, I have gone and completed, mastered, the same classes that you have. So I am telling my kids this, yet I don't have one. I am telling my kids this, but for the first time I broke down and told my kids that I have a GED. It was so emotional. It was like crazy emotional because I had never told them that because, that could make them feel like, okay, well you did okay, so maybe we don't have to get an education.

The feeling of compulsion without caring reported earlier in the academic careers of those interviewed was contrasted by other people's heartfelt compassion and dedication to improving the lives of the former foster youth. In these cases, though the individual may have been enacting policy or other forms of motivation for the student, it was taken as an act of caring and compassion:

I see a lot of people who are just doing their jobs, and then I see a lot of people who wish they could do more but they can't because of all these regulations and things, and then I see people who put their heart and soul into what they are doing, at their own expense to be honest.

Summary. Every participant identified compulsion within the context of a relationship as a contributing factor to his or her academic expectation: this compulsion ranged from threats to continual "nagging" but was most often expressed through autocratic directives by figures in authority.

Punishment for poor performance in school was seen as an act of care and compassion when coupled with knowledge of academics (having finished college) and being a role-model (the interviewee wishing for the other person's life to be his or her own). Interviewees clearly

identified acts of compulsion (threats of punishment) as positive influences on their academic careers. Based on the accompanying relationship with those that were threatening the punishment, interviewees disposition toward the source of the threat and their identification with the aims being promoted varied. For some interviewees the threat of punishment was seen as originating from place of caring and compassion. While others saw the threat, as well as the person giving the threat, as products of policy and devoid of caring or actively abusive and yet still demanding of "good" grades.

When abused and completely lacking support, interviewees still reported that their parents or guardians required "good grades." With this abuse, the push to go to college was a push to escape from abuse. The relationship in question here is unquestionably abusive and yet the interviewee identified her abusers as being instrumental in her academic journey to college. Further, she identified her sister, in passing, as a colleague in her attempt to escape by identifying a time in which they were searching for colleges together and jointly discovered that there are colleges all over. She said later that another sister encouraged her to not run away on days she would miss school, suggesting, at least for younger children, an investment in education as a path out of their abusive environment. This joint understanding and identification of education as a path of escape appears to have been transmitted through the children in this family in a similar way that an escape plan may circulate through a prison. The camaraderie developed through mutual suffering appears to be a component of relationship and also a source of motivation and direction. Separate from overt abuse, compulsion without care or compassion

was identified as positive by some respondents.

One interviewee reflected on the group home she stayed in this way: "There was no caring. It was just follow the guidelines." Despite this lack of caring, the interviewee still identified the group home's requirement for school work as a good thing for her later on. Another interviewee identified her grandmother as an authoritarian figure who did not demonstrate love or compassion but demanded excellence in school work. Though this interviewee lamented the lack of care and compassion, she granted that she was glad that her grandmother "drove" her to succeed in school and that, in retrospect, she preferred the situation in which her caregivers lacked in emotional support but provided academic guidelines than the opposite case. Another interviewee reflected that though her adopted guardian was not supportive of her, the adopted guardian did make the interviewee go to school and that this enabled her to eventually pursue higher education. The reason for the guardian's insistence was linked in the interviewee's mind to the financial incentives that would be withheld if the interviewee did not attend school. This motivation, though quickly disclosed by the interviewee, seemed to affect her view of the guardian but not the outcome of the compulsion.

Many of the interviewees identified someone in their family or a significant other as a source of compulsion and support. In some cases the family seemed to make demands of the interviewee that were based on limited knowledge of the higher education system. One interviewee described how her dad really wanted her to minor in music because he wanted a family band. The apparent disconnect between what it means to minor in music and acquiring the

skills necessary for a family band was not recognized by the father. The same interviewee chose to transfer from a university to a community college and was ridiculed by her parents for making a terrible decision, though neither of the parents had any college experience. Continuing along the same lines, the father really wanted the interviewee to attend UC Davis because the father had wanted to attend UC Davis when he was a kid and did not end up attending there. The disconnect between the reality of higher education and reasons to choose a college and field of study presented the interviewee with difficulties in choosing what she felt was right for her.

A second interviewee mentioned that her boyfriend "pushed" her to pick her major because he knew her "likes and dislikes." The interviewee did end up starting the major that she was pushed into, but changed majors after one semester. Though changing majors is not terribly uncommon, the outcome could have been different if the interviewee had been encouraged to explore and choose her own path. In some cases, the threat of eviction was used to push the interviewees into enrolling in college.

One interviewee identified a time when she was wobbling between attending and not attending college. She had just had a child and was unsure if she should start college then or wait another semester. The interviewee lived with her mother at the time. The mother of the interviewee threatened to kick the interviewee out if she did not enroll in college. Upon considering the situation, the interviewee commented that her mother really was not going to kick her out and that it was a good thing that the mother had threatened to do so because it pushed the interviewee into enrolling in classes that semester.

Advice and pressure from family with respect to specific areas of study or colleges did not appear to be well suited to the interviewees, though they still identified the interaction as contributing to their path toward college. The general push to attend college, however, was present in the the three examples given and may have contributed to the interviewee's eventual enrollment in college. In a separate fashion, interviewees reported that seeing their family members' poor choices and difficult lifestyle affected their decision to pursue higher education. The drive to not be like these family members pushed the interviewees to enroll in college.

Interviewees sometimes compelled others to follow their lead in education and to change their way of life. These instances occurred when family members were living in poverty or homeless. Having accepted college as a means of advancement and desiring that advancement for family members, the interviewee continued the cycle of compulsion. This compulsion was passed from the interviewee who was compelled to seek education on to their family members. In addition to the expansion of compulsion from the origin to the interviewee to the relative, the interviewees also reported a greater drive to not be like their relatives and to continue through and succeed with college.

 Interactions between the interviewees and those programs that were meant to encourage enrollment and success in college consistently pushed the interviewees. The interviewees generally reported appreciating this direction and felt that it was supportive of their college efforts. In a few instances, interviewees reported that they were told rather than asked to complete paperwork, register at a certain time, and to register for certain classes. These efforts

were uniformly seen as helpful to the interviewee's aims.

Compulsion, as reflected by words such as "drive" and "push," was present in all of the interviews. In cases of abuse, compulsion had two major facets. The first was a threat of bodily harm if academic demands were not met. The second was an increased desire to succeed in school as a method of escape from the abuse. Compulsion from institutions, such as group homes, though unappreciated at the time, were looked back on with favor as being supportive of the interviewee's preparation for college. When family was not abusive, sometimes they gave advice and pressured the interviewees into academic decisions without sufficient knowledge of the workings of higher education. This pressure, however misapplied in specifics, was a contributing factor to college enrollment. The compulsion by family members and significant others led to choices of majors, minors and schools that were later changed once the interviewee gained more experience with the realities of higher education. In some cases, the interviewees passed on the compulsion they received to family members living in poverty. Meanwhile, seeing their relatives' state of poverty further resolved the interviewees to pursue education as a means to attain an increased standard of living. Finally, when student services personnel or social workers took charge of a situation and dictated the actions of the interviewee, the interviewees perceived this direction as supportive.

In summary, compulsion was mentioned at every stage asked about in the interview. The nature of that compulsion varied widely but was universally viewed as "a good thing" in retrospect. Compulsion without apparent investment or encouragement was more common in the

earlier stages of education. The sources of the compulsion identified included the following: policies of group homes and colleges, parents, guardians, teachers, social workers, and student services, specifically EOP&S. The tools of this compulsion varied from threats of violence to imperatives without explicit consequences. The targets of this compulsion changed with age. Earlier experiences of compulsion were focused on finishing homework and "getting good grades." By contrast, later experiences were more focused on placement in specific, often remedial programs, and attendance of college.

Theme 2. Every participant identified connections with people as a contributing factor to his or her academic expectations: these connections were often described as stable, available, non-judgmental, encouraging, and instilling a sense of belonging.

Interviewees identified people's willingness to make time for the interviewee in the past as a contributing factor to changes in educational expectation. Phrases such as "took the time" or "made the time" were used by five of the seven interviewees:

> It is one of those things you can't explain. I know she has been the one who stood out to me, who I feel comfortable going to, who asks me about my everyday life situations, who I can talk to on a very personal level and who is still very professional about all of it. I was having an issue at work and I needed some guidance at work and she sat down with me. She didn't have to do that. She was on her lunch. She helps above and beyond what she should be doing. Like the editing and the scholarship editing she didn't have to do that but she took the time out.

For this interviewee, support was associated strongly with a personal connection between herself and the EOP&S staff member. It is evident that support for education, according to this interviewee, expands into many areas of life rather than simply education.

According to other interviewees, availability was not necessarily separate from work but was often expressed as an investment in work that led to a feeling of support in the interviewee:

> She set aside the time for me to show me what that (FAFSA) looked like. We would just talk about it and she would take the time to do that.

> I was in IEP. She was that one teacher that would take you aside and make sure that everything is correct. I struggled with math, history and science.

> There was a time that I was stranded at school. She said if they can not pick you up, you call me. So I knew that at the same time not only was she making herself available to me but she was being an advocate for me.

Across many of the interviews, those who were seen as supportive, were the ones who took the time to help outside of what was required by a job. Although investment from support services or teachers, above what was required by the job, was seen as supportive, some interviewees recognized and appreciated the support of those that were not acting within the scope of their profession:

> It is really nice to have somebody involved in your life, who can help you navigate through that system that isn't being paid to be there.

Sometimes a feeling of connection and support arose from a professional relationship in which continuous availability and dedication to the interviewee were demonstrated. This relationship influenced the interviewees desires for her future and her chosen career path:

> Really it was one main person. Granny I wanted to prove wrong, and the one who like built me up was my social worker. She was like a counselor. She is like an aunt to me. She has been with me since I was five. She has taken our case and moved with us, asked to be with us. She was my foster counselor and now I am going to school to be a foster child counselor. It was always nice to have her to talk to.

Many times interviewees would identify as familial those who were not related by blood or legal

guardians. This identification of family was often discussed with the supportive person, who was identified as family. The act of discussing with, or gaining permission for the use of familial terms seemed to be a significant step for the interviewees.

When connection was developed over an extended period of time, the interviewees were more likely to believe that the support would continue in the future and as such had no specific scope:

> She is a good friend. I can depend on her. I know that if I needed her she would be right out here. I could tell she cared because she still is in contact with me after high school. She has always been there for me. When my mother died she was there and grieved with me.

Some suggested that a connection that develops over extended periods of evidenced availability leads to trust in the future actions of a person and builds a feeling of stability in the relationship:

> She is like a mom to me she has been there since I was 12 or 13. She has always been there to really support me. She is not my biological mom and she is not my adopted mom, but I view her as my mom. My brother liked this little girl so I would take him over there to play. We just built a relationship. I was with my adopted family and they stayed in contact with me after I was taken away and they are still in my life. I am very fortunate and she still to this day supports me. If she finds out that I get bad grades on a test she will be like what are you doing? Study better.

In addition to simply "being there", some interviewees suggested that an individual took on a parental position and as such provided an "anchor" to build a life around:

> Honestly just being there for me. I mean not even just with school but I think just her being there and being maternal and having someone who was stable in my life definitely gave me an anchor, because in foster care it is hard to find that stability. She just really motivated me to be successful.
> showed me that anything is possible regardless of what anybody says, regardless of what anybody does, you make your choices and you make your future and that is where you have to go. She is fricking awesome.

Some interviewees expressed a feeling of relationship that was less parental and more friendly,

though still based in availability and stability, as well as an investment in the future:

> We started hanging out after that. I have known her now for three years. I can talk to her about anything. She is always calling me or texting me to make sure I am okay. When we are in class together she is always helping me out, making sure I am doing what I am supposed to be doing. She will send me notes when I miss class to make sure I have them. She knows a lot about me. Stuff that I haven't even told my biological sister. I feel that I have a deep trust with this person and that I could tell her anything and she wouldn't throw me under the bus. She has never brought my name up in anything. We have never gotten into an argument. I could call her right now and she would probably be here. If I have kids, I told her she would be my kid's godmother.

As with the relationship above, the chance meeting of a person often led to meaningful

supportive relationships, generally due in large part to the effort and awareness of the non-foster

youth:

> At that point, for a small period of time, there was a science teacher, she wasn't even my teacher, I don't know how I ended up hanging out in her room. She has always been a cheer-leader in the background. She visited me in a few group homes. At that point, I knew what a mandated reporter was and she never pried. I think she just knew. She never pried and I never offered up information. I think she just knew that I needed somebody. Whether it was somebody to look forward to seeing when I get to school. If I made it to school. The smallest gesture like. I never had lunch. I never had lunch money. Uhm. She was like, hey look what I brought. Here's some cheese and crackers. Do you want to try this. You know she knew. When I went back into care, she stayed in touch and was kinda like a cheerleader. She was always positive. It was somebody shed that light on me, the positive light, not the you are doing everything wrong light.

People that consistently were positive about the interviewee and perceived to be on his or her

side of an issue were often identified as supportive of higher academic ambitions:

> My independent study teacher was amazing. I don't know what I would have done without her. She was always supportive and she always helped and answered. She was always there when I called. She helped when I didn't understand. She would bring stuff

up when I couldn't. She would never say you are not getting this but she would say, "here is this website that talks about this a little differently." I knew what she was doing but it made me feel a lot more comfortable. I feel like I should be able to do it myself. She led me. She was way more than a teacher. She showed up at my graduation and took pictures with me. They brought me flowers. They showed me that with hard work and dedication I can do anything if I try.

This positive outlook was often coupled with a perceived lack of judgment of the interviewee's

abilities and goals:

> She has always thought of me like a smart angel. Like, I have had some problems but I am strong. I am very independent. She would say, "As a young girl you have always been so smart. You are so beautiful. You can do it." Never anything negative. Like Granny's "You are just like your mom neh na neh." I would argue and she would be like, "Oh you should be a lawyer." Any talent I had and she would say I should do that. She was always encouraging me and giving me suggestions. She has paid for my books and fees I have had here. She has paid for my bus pass. She will give me rides. She will bring me lunch. I see her at least twice a week. She has always influenced me positively to go to school. She would never criticize me. Any failing I did she would come out and shed some positive light on it.

The foster youth interviewed repeated the value of not being judged:

> Last summer I got arrested. A year ago for ten days. I basically disappeared for ten days. They were like what happened where did you go? I had been honest with them in the beginning. I told them I have this DUI and I let them know what happened. A letter went to my Granny's house and Granny did tell me, "anything that comes here I am throwing it away. Change your address." I never changed my address. I guess you have to go to the places to change them. I never went to court to tell them I changed my address. So the letter said I had to come into court. They issued a bench warrant for me. My friend ran a stop sign and they ran his name cause he is on parole and by law they have to see who you are with. My name popped up. I didn't know I had a warrant. That was the first time I have been arrested sober. I have been arrested plenty of times when drunk. I came back and told them what happened and they were very understanding. They asked what I learned out of it and I was like, change your address. They gave me the benefit of the doubt.

Many interviewees mentioned relationships in which the partner was non-judgmental of

appearance as being supportive of their educational expectations:

> She was very objective. Keep in mind it was back when I was 16. I had my piercings in and my clothes were punk. I wasn't judged based on that. She just encouraged my abilities.

Rarely were teachers mentioned in a positive light but when they were it was not only for their

academic support but also for the expressing faith in the student's dreams and not judging them.

> Teachers were supportive. When I say supportive I mean non-judgmental and encouraging. They didn't doubt my ability to do anything. They were supportive of anything I wanted to do and willing to work with me.

Relationships were often said to engender a sense of belonging in the interviewee. This

belonging was not always the product of deep personal relationships but rather, in some cases, a

result of being in a cohort.

> We study together. A lot of people in this cohort are returning students, so people who have been out of the academic world for quite a while so there is a lot of fear. Sometimes you feel like you may not be able to rise to the occasion because things have changed and you know you are maybe in classes with younger people. Being in a cohort with people that are around the same age as you. Some may be younger some may be older. That allows you to feel like I am not in this alone. Whereas if you were just thrown into a classroom with younger people, like 18, 19. You would feel like they all get it I don't I am in the wrong place.

Sometimes, rather than a sense of belonging, simply the lack of feeling like an outcast was

reported to leave a lasting positive impression:

> The boarding school wasn't bad for me. Coming from where I was coming from, I never got my birthday acknowledged, I never was told I love you. The boarding school I didn't get that either, but I also didn't have somebody making me feel like a horrible person, making me feel like an outcast all the time. Like we were almost all outcasts. It wasn't me being isolated or singled out.

Some expressed a period of time in which there was a stress on the relationship or a falling out.

In these cases, the availability to mend the relationship appeared to reinforce investment in the

relationship:

> Over a year and half I didn't talk to them, but when I came back she has always been there. She has never given up on me. She was really sad to see me go. She tried to contact me again and again. When I came back, no judgment or anything we were picking up right where we left off. She knows the most about me. I am always honest and she never judges me. She never talks about it or tells anybody. I feel comfortable with her.

Even though some admitted to being difficult or to "push others away", when relationships

remained stable and the other participants continued to be available and invested in the

interviewee, the interviewee perceived it as a supportive relationship:

> At the beginning when I first started there, I guess I had this attitude. I didn't see it. Deer used the analogy of the stray kitten. When you go to try and pet it, it hisses at you. They were trying to be helpful and show me how to have work ethics. Not negative, just like helpful criticism and I was getting all defensive. They said I was acting like I was going to get thrown away. I felt disposable. Right now I am at a good place with them but it took a while. Whenever I had an issue, or like got into a disagreement with a coworker it would be brought to Deer's attention and she would talk to me about it, about my actions, or if I was disrespectful, like correct me. I didn't know I was acting that way. Also they are very understanding. As you can see I have got anxiety. My first year of sobriety my emotions were new to me. Something at work would happen and I would feel overwhelmed. If a student came to the counter and was being rude, I would ask to step out and they would be like, "okay go on out." They didn't give up on me and they didn't let me go. All this time I felt like I didn't belong. I was the newbie and I just had the front counter. I felt like I was being picked on and then we got a new person and it was my job to show her what to do.

Often interviewees reported that the people they were close to would hold them accountable

academically. This accountability is sometimes offered by classmates, friends, children, cohort

members or bosses:

> This year I took math. I hate math. Every week Fargo, one of my bosses, would, every

week, ask "are you going to tutoring? You know you need to go to tutoring. You need help with math. Don't get pushed behind." She would always remind me to go to tutoring. Cause I tested into the lowest math too. When it got into fractions I hated it, but she was a daily reminder that resources were there.

My kids are a huge reason why I have gone back to school and stuck with it because now they are watching.

Sometimes the interviewee identified that accountability could feel like an attack but the interviewees were quick to identify the motives as less than malicious:

My friend holds me accountable. Not just with smoking, but with school and stuff. Every time he finds out I got a bad grade he is like, "Oh really? You got bad grades, oh whatever." He jokes, "oh oh really, did you not study? Did you stay up watching Netflix? Yah I bet you did huh?" It is more of a joke. He always offer to help. He took my psychology book and he was like did you know...? And I was like, Yes I read the whole book.

My child's father had a lot to do with me going to college. He took me to college every day and he pushed me.

This accountability with trust stood in stark contrast to consistent reports of misuse and abuse also motivating an increase in academic expectations. Often these abusive actions were perpetrated by romantic partners:

I was in a bad relationship. He was kind of emotionally abusive and mentally abusive. He almost used your weakness to try and control or put you down. One of the things that he would use against me was the fact that I didn't have my degree and his ex-wife had hers and was making good money. Although he tried to use it as a tool against me to make me feel less than, it actually encouraged me to go and take that away as something that someone could use against me.

I guess my boyfriend helped. He said I would never finish. I was like, I will show you.

Sometimes the abuse was from the caregiver or foster parent:

She made me want to prove her wrong, because I know my capabilities and others around

me they know. She (Granny) is a really negative person. She is very pessimistic. She has a fixed mindset. Like she just... ugh. I haven't talked to her in nearly a year. We don't have a relationship at all.

Summary. Every participant identified connections with people as a contributing factor to his or her academic expectations: this connection was often described as stable, available, non-judgmental, encouraging, and instilling a sense of belonging. This finding is consistent with research relating to educational success and motivation (Schunk, 1991). Though former foster youth reported difficulty creating and maintaining relationships, those relationships that were seen as positive went against the expectations of the former foster youth. The expectation for short relationships coupled with disappointing outcomes was reported by five of the seven participants in the study.

Interviewees mentioned the time that another set aside as being both meaningful in the moment as well as foundational for the development of trust and relationship. The action of setting aside time was seen generally as above and beyond the duty of employment. Time given after school or during lunch hours were commonly perceived as more meaningful than time given that was clearly within the bounds of occupational obligation. This could be due to the relative frequency with which children in the foster care system interact with people whose job it is to support them. Having been told that the system was going to help them, and then, in many cases, feeling lost in the system, foster youth may be resistant to interactions in which the former foster youth is supposed to receive help from someone whose job it is to help.

When others set aside time for the interviewee they often perceived the time as an

indication of investment in the interviewee. This connection often extended to areas outside of the scope of the initial professional interaction. Interviewees repeated the importance of being accepted and that those that they felt a connection with were not judgmental of them.

The interviewees reported a desire for stability in their relationships. When individuals continued to support and connect with the interviewees after their initial obligation had ended the interviewees felt more sure of the relationship. In one case, an interviewee reported feeling support from a science teacher that she did not have a class with. The teacher stayed in contact with the interviewee and was described as a "cheerleader." For another interviewee, her social worker continued to follow her case throughout counties and moves. The interviewee felt that the social worker had invested specifically in her and was open to encouragement by the social worker as a result. Though stability of relationship was highly valued, sometimes small kind actions left lasting impressions.

The origin of the relationships was varied. Some of the initial interactions or reasons for interaction were easily predicted such as a position as a interviewee's teacher or a social worker. Others, however, were less expected and seemed to have a sense of serendipity about them to the interviewees. One interviewee connected to a teacher at school who she did not have a class with. Upon reflecting on this the interviewee said "she wasn't even my teacher, I don't know how I ended up hanging out in her room." Another interviewee built a long-lasting relationship with the mother of her brother's friend. In many of these relationships it was apparent that the other party, not the foster youth, reached out and was available to the foster youth. Often, those who

forged a relationship with their social worker were pursuing education in order to become social workers as well.

Relationships with social workers were sometimes described as familial and other times described as totally lacking. Those that were described as familial were seen as taking an active interest in the well-being of the interviewer and were reliable. Those that did not connect well with social workers continued to receive new social workers either because the interviewee moved or for bureaucratic reasons.

The connection that developed from someone reaching out to the interviewee often was described in parental terms. These family-like relationships were developed most often with people a generation ahead of the interviewee though descriptions of brotherly and sisterly attachment were also present. One interviewee experienced a sense of family at work. She worked for EOP&S and the atmosphere of family was shared by the entire workplace. This could be because the staff is trained in and considerate of the needs of their student employees. The sense of family was coupled with a sense of stability which was prized by some of the interviewees; "her being there and being maternal and having someone who was stable in my life definitely gave me an anchor, because in foster care it is hard to find that stability." Though connection to a generation above the interviewee provided a sense of family, cohort programs also provided a sense of belonging and connection for one interviewee who returned to college after working for approximately fifteen years.

Theme 3: Most participants identified the academic guidance of an individual with

knowledge of higher education as a contributing factor to their academic expectation: in addition, this guidance was consistently coupled with feelings of connection, awareness, and investment outside of the academic sphere.

This theme is similar in some respects to the previous theme. In general this section will discuss those relationships that developed after enrolling in college with EOP&S. Some mention of social workers and other secondary school personnel are included as well. Because the sample was taken from those the EOP&S email list, many of the respondents mention EOP&S.

Often interviewees connected personal relationship with academic supervisors, as discussed in theme two above, to later assistance in determining an academic path.

> It is one of those things you can't explain. I know she has been one who stood out to me, who I feel comfortable going to, who asks me about my everyday life situations, who I can talk to on a very personal level and who is still very professional about all of it. I was having an issue at work and I needed some guidance at work and she sat down with me. She didn't have to do that. She was on her lunch. You can just tell when someone is genuine.

Once an interviewee established a feeling of comfort with a counselor or academic adviser, the interviewee would rather return later to speak with the person that he or she had developed a relationship with if that person was not initially available: "I came in and she wasn't available and I came back when she was because I wanted to talk to her." Once these connections were formed, the interviewees reported receiving substantial assistance navigating the college bureaucracy:

> Well it was scary at first, trying to figure everything out, but there are programs like EOP&S that have helped tremendously and have kind of guided me in the right direction.

They are probably the hugest reason why I am still here. I would like to point out Adella she has helped a lot. She takes her time to help me with my student education plan. She has helped me with scholarships. She has been someone I go to when I need help. I work on campus so any type of guidance I need I am comfortable going to her. I tell her my interests and she will sit down with me to plan it all out. She helps above and beyond what she should be doing. Like the scholarship editing she didn't have to do that but she took the time out.

Interviewees reported feeling intimidated or lost at college and had difficulty determining the appropriate classes to take. Additional financial stresses also contributed to the students' difficulties with college. After feeling frustrated they would seek help and in retrospect spoke highly of those individuals that assisted them in the process:

I was so lost on how to even change majors, but recently I got into the EOP&S program, which, thank goodness I finally stepped up and was like, look I really need some help. The counselor really talked to me and he was like these are the classes you need. Now I am on the right track. I thought I was really behind. It was very confusing. I was lost. I think if I had somebody to guide me it would have been a lot better. Financially, they give me book vouchers, meal vouchers. They pay for most of my books. I could never do that by myself. They provide tutoring and I am going to take advantage of that. The counseling is amazing, obviously. I didn't want to do my first APR but I am glad I did. I got to talk to the teachers and that was good. They are a group of people who I think really try. They definitely do the best they can. They got me in contact with the foster youth liaison. My counselor is amazing. He is like look I know what you are going through. He doesn't talk to me like a statistic. He doesn't talk to me like I am just someone else. He talks to me like an individual. I appreciate that.

For one interviewee the academic guidance created the environment for the development of relationships with people her own age. Her program was cohort based and though she did not mention the counselors specifically, she felt like the program helped her to succeed and in large part due to the relationships it helped to develop:

I have connected with people in my cohort. We just had a get together for the end of the semester just last week. One of my class mates had everybody over to his house and he

and his wife hosted us all. It was beautiful. We study together. A lot of people in this cohort are returning students, so people who have been out of the academic world for quite a while so there is a lot of fear. The people in that class that sign up, you all move together. So doing these blocks of classes together that kind of is the support system. Sometimes you feel like you may not be able to rise to the occasion because things have changed and you know you are maybe in classes with younger people. Being in a cohort with people that are around the same age as you. Some may be younger some may be older. That allows you to feel like I am not in this alone. Whereas if you were just thrown into a classroom with younger people, like 18, 19, you would feel like they all get it, I don't, I am in the wrong place. The support system is kind of built in, in the sense that you move as a cohort.

One interviewee felt she needed permission from a counselor in order to leave a university and transfer to a community college. Throughout the interview she repeated needing permission from people that were in academics prior to acting against the wishes of her family:

I explained to her how I was feeling and she said if you are not happy here then it is perfectly fine for you to go somewhere else and go the community college route. It doesn't mean anything less of you if you don't spend four years in a four year university. If you spend two it is fine. She was a big part of the reason why I decided to leave. I felt like if I didn't get approval from somebody who worked there, then I wouldn't feel comfortable leaving. Because I have kind of a perfectionist like complex where I feel like a failure, like I didn't stick it out. Whereas if I told someone how I was feeling and they understood, then I was able to feel better about my choice and to feel more encouraged and not discouraged.

They are only interested in me. Where my dad is interested in him and his ideas. He never went to Davis so he was, of course stay, whereas someone who has no bias can give better advice.

One interviewee worked with EOP&S while attending school. She had not performed well academically and was going to be removed from the school. The EOP&S staff wrote a letter of support for the interviewee and she was reinstated:

Here I tested into the lowest English college has to offer. I enrolled in those classes thinking I could do it. Failed them. I didn't do what I shoulda done as a student my first

year of college, so the last two years I have been trying to catch up. I had just got this job and the end of the semester I did poorly and they wanted to dismiss me from college. I had a chance to petition and I wrote this petition letter about how much college means to me. I mean like being here in a safe place, I can get my mind away from the outside world. When school is in session I try to block everything out. Except for my mom which just happened. Deer, the coordinator, wrote a letter of recommendation saying that I "should stay in school. I believe that if she were to be dismissed it would threaten her sobriety. We are such a huge support system for her." I actually just got accepted to the EOP&S program. They were like if you give her a chance we will make sure she follows through with all of her assignments and that she will pass. My petition got accepted. So I was able to stay. I was also facing losing my job because you have to be enrolled in at least six units, so I was facing losing my school and my job.

One interviewee reported that the support of EOP&S feels like family and has helped her

to see herself being able to graduate from college:

I can talk to them about anything. Anything that happens outside I will run to them. We call each other family. The EOP&S family. Sometimes I think college isn't for me. They tell me there is this boy who had learning disabilities and he just graduated with two AA's and Fargo told me I can be like him. If he can do it you can do it. I believe in you. You are strong. I admire you a lot. You have been through a lot and you can do it. Fargo is like the main person. I talk to her about my mom. They always say I care about you just like I care about my daughter. One of these days we are going to be at your graduation. One day this is gonna be you. I was like, I can't wait. I just love them.

Summary. Most participants identified the academic guidance of an individual, with

knowledge of higher education, as a contributing factor to their academic expectation: however,

this guidance was consistently coupled with feelings of connection, awareness, and investment

outside of the academic sphere.

The encouragement or academic advice given by friends, significant others and family,

though often perceived as having good intentions by the interviewees, was less credible than that

given by individuals working within the academic arena. The process of enrolling in college was

daunting to some of the interviewees. Feelings of being lost or scared were coupled with a impression of not fitting in. Many of the interviewees were the first in their families to attend college and this may have added to their sense of disquiet. Relationships formed with people within the education system helped to bridge this gap and establish a sense of direction and accountability.

The relationships that were developed with individuals who had a knowledge of the academic sphere often were accompanied with a system of accountability. This accountability took different forms. However, accountability was combined with a sense of trust that the partner knew what was needed to succeed in college. In some cases this was simply a friendly reminder that math tutoring was available and that it is important, especially for people who struggle with math, that the math concepts be practiced throughout the semester. In other cases the accountability took the form of students within a cohort checking on each other and confirming study groups and assignments.

A major function of these relationships was that they provided direction for the interviewees. This direction was more credible to the interviewee and helped ensure that the educational plan was going to end in a degree. These meetings were often the product of the professional reaching out to the interviewee, though in one case the interviewee said that she proactively sought out the counselors consistently in order to confirm that she was on the right track. These meetings involved a time in which the interviewees felt listened to with respect to their goals and then responded to with the appropriate information, class schedule and

educational plan. For one interviewee, the meeting with her academic adviser helped her to be

able to transfer from a four year university to a community college without feeling like she was

making a bad choice. She did not feel like she fit in well with the college and liked the idea of

being at a smaller school much better. The interviewee was fearful that her parents would

strongly object and chose to take the advice of the counselor over her parents because she felt

that her parents did not know anything about college and the counselor did.

The support of those with knowledge of academics was perceived differently than that

provided by others. Statements of faith or belief in the interviewee's abilities by friends and

family, though appreciated, did not carry the same weight as that given by those with knowledge

of the higher education system. The same could be said for the advice given by those with said

knowledge. For some, the comfort afforded by the acceptance of those who should know seemed

to relieve some of the anxiety of feeling like the interviewees did not belong. For the interviewee

in the cohort group, her feeling of support was based partially in the consistency of the cohort.

The knowledge component of this was that the program director established the system by which

the interviewee felt supported. Thus, though the relationships that were developed were not made

directly with the individual with academic knowledge, the support was a product of the system.

Furthermore, the knowledge of individuals in the cohort could be readily shared and as such

magnified the impact of supportive interactions across the group.

For one interviewee, the support of her employers (EOP&S) helped to protect her from

another branch of the academic institution. The employers vouched for the interviewee and wrote

a letter of support stating that they would take responsibility for the interviewee and make sure that she passed her classes, which she did. The same interviewee was later arrested and after release explained the circumstances and was given her job back. To the interviewee this showed that the EOP&S family had not given up on her.

Academic support overlapped with the support associated with connection discussed in theme two. Some of the interviewees felt lost in college and that they did not belong. In different ways they identified their interactions with academic professionals as helpful to navigating the college system. In many cases relationships with academic professionals were said to assist the interviewee. For others the policies set in place, such as a cohort system for returning college students, were instrumental in developing supportive relationships within education.

Interaction of Themes

The complexity of relationships and of the interactions leading to the formation of relationships was in many ways simplified and abbreviated throughout the course of the interviews. The following sections will discuss how the themes, when combined, can offer further insight into the research question.

Knowledge and connection. When knowledge of higher education and a sense of connection was present in a relationship, interviewees began to envision a future that included higher education. For some interviewees this vision included a specific field of work; for others it was more generally a life in which they would not walk the same path as their parents. As this interviewee put it with regard to her foster counselor:

> She is like an aunt to me. She has been with me since I was five. She has taken our case and moved with us, asked to be with us. She was my foster counselor and now I am going to school to be a foster child counselor. She had actually attended here that is why I chose here. I chose here because she has always talked about this school. I look up to her. I admire her. I think about all the other kids she must help. I used to say I wish you were my mom.

The connection to her "aunt," who as a foster counselor has experience with higher education, helped this interviewee to establish a position in the world for herself and gave her a vision of a life of service to a foster children. This vision of a future place in the world is a direct motivation for attending college but does not necessarily ensure that the interviewee will take the correct classes, develop appropriate study skills, or continue in college at all. Thus, for this interviewee, this relationship contributed to a vision for her life but not necessarily the tools necessary to achieve this vision.

Connection and compulsion. Relationships that provided connection and compulsion often led to compliance with demands or encouragement. Because the person providing the compulsion had developed a sense of connection with the interviewee, their demands were generally met without reluctance. However, when demands beyond the general aim of attending college were made by those who lacked knowledge of higher education, these demands often led to missteps in the interviewee's educational path. These missteps included choosing a college and then later deciding it was not a good fit and, for another interviewee, choosing a major that was not a good fit based on the insistence of a significant other:

> She encouraged me to go to UC Davis or to pick a school. One thing that I really regret is that no one ever asked me if I wanted to go and see other colleges. The only colleges I ever saw were in Idaho. When I came to California no one ever invited me. I saw

everyone else doing that but no one ever wanted to do that with me. That is why I went to Davis. Because other people said it was a good school.

In other instances, compulsion combined with connection established obligations to aims that did not match the desires of the interviewee:

Yeah, my expectations as a child weren't fulfilled. What kind of family I wanted and what I needed in life when I was growing up. I don't like to let people down because I have been let down. When people have expectations of me I like to fulfill them because it is their presumption of my ability. If I am not able to do that, what good am I?

Though the aims assigned to this interviewee may have been laudable, they were not hers and were laden with external sources of self-esteem and self-worth. These expectations then set the interviewee up to either fail at the demands that were established or to fail at the demands of her own aims and preferences. The weight of these external demands were lifted for this interviewee when she sought the advice of an academic counselor. "I felt like if I didn't get approval from somebody who worked there, then I wouldn't feel comfortable leaving. If I was able to get permission, I would be able to satisfy my family."

Compulsion and knowledge. Relationships combining the themes of compulsion and knowledge led to acquiescence. Interviewees described more feelings of resistance in these types of relationships than when compulsion accompanied connection. However, these relationships were also more likely to result in academic decisions that were more in line with the aims of the interviewee. Because this subcategory lacks the component of connection, it was more often demonstrated by school personnel or group home staff. The term "relationship" is more tenuous here since these interactions often arose from professional interactions. The interactions

continued to be described in terms of control:

- Kim really helped keep me in line.

- Forced to go to a program.

- I didn't want to do my first APR but I am glad I did.

However, the interactions led the interviewees to academic paths that they felt would help them succeed:

- Now I am on the right track.

- It kept my credits current.

- I got to talk to teachers and that was really good.

Compulsion, connection, and knowledge. Relationships in which compulsion was combined both with knowledge of higher education and a feeling of connection corresponded with interviewees reporting an increased drive for achievement in higher education. The interviewees received information that was generally viewed as valid because the person providing the information had knowledge of higher education. The interviewee received direction based on this knowledge and had an underlying relationship with the person giving the direction.

Because of the connection the interviewee's desires were given more weight. "I tell her my interests and she will sit down with me to plan it all out." Through this type of connection, a relationship with someone who was invested in higher education encouraged the interviewees to value higher education more. "She is so set in her ways and she is so passionate about education.

That I felt that if I did not go back to school then I would go to hell." These relationships often involved small actions that ensured compliance, like giving the interviewee a ride to adult education when the interviewee did not want to go. "This one time I was afraid to start the adult education. She gave me a ride there and picked me up." Knowledge and connection, when combined with explicit direction like "go to math tutoring," helped interviewees to both know what to do next and feel that they were being led in the right direction. "Starting here, I didn't know what to do and she showed me."

Though many of these relationships were with academic personnel, one was with a foster parent who had graduated from college. When reflecting on this relationship, the interviewee said that his foster parent provided "tough love" but that she also helped him to know what he wanted out of life. "She went to college. She went to high school. She got her stuff together and that is what I want. I don't want to be sitting on the couch, broke, living off welfare, that is not the life I want."

Summary

The interviews were semi-structured follow-up questions relating to the themes that others had discussed were used.

1. **Every participant identified compulsion within the context of a relationship as a contributing factor to his or her academic expectation**: this compulsion ranged from threats to continual "nagging" but was most often expressed through autocratic directives by figures in authority.

2. **Every participant identified connections with people as a contributing factor to his or her academic expectations:** these connections were often described as stable, available, non-judgmental, encouraging, and instilling a sense of belonging.

3. **Most participants identified the academic guidance of an individual with knowledge of higher education as a contributing factor to their academic expectation:** in addition, this guidance was consistently coupled with feelings of connection, awareness, and investment outside of the academic sphere.

The interview protocol was modified to allow for further exploration of compulsion as an aspect of relationships and as a contributing factor to the development of educational expectations. Relationships which were in retrospect beneficial were most often supportive and caring; however, some were abusive. In the abusive cases the interviewee often wanted to prove the abusive person wrong, and this motivated the interviewee to pursue college. Once in college, many of the interviewees reported feeling lost and subsequently sought help through college services. In the process of receiving this help, some of the interviewees developed a relationship with a college employee which laid the groundwork for effective future interactions.

Chapter Five: Discussion of Insights

This chapter includes a discussion of insights derived from this research, an application of those insights to actions within the community college, possible actions that are aligned with the themes discussed in Chapter 4, and suggested changes to faculty training based on the themes and insights. The applications and insights are discussed within the theoretical framework of Bandura's social learning theory and are also placed within the context of existing literature.

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived effect of relationships on former foster youth's post-secondary educational expectations. To this purpose, interviews were conducted with those participants who identified at least one person who contributed to a change in the participant's educational expectations. Though the change was not specifically designated as positive, none of the participants chose to identify a relationship that they felt negatively affected their beliefs in their ability to succeed in college. The underlying question of this research was not the positive effects of relationships on former foster youth's post-secondary expectations. However, since this study purposefully sampled those former foster youth who were currently enrolled in college there was an undelying bias toward positive relationships as any that successfully undemined a former foster youth's academic expectations would necessarily not have been within the sample for the study.

Discussion of Major Insights

The following section discusses the insights gained from this research. The key insights gained from this research will be discussed within the context of the themes developed in Chapter 4. Potential actions that follow from the insights will be proposed and the insights will

be framed within the context of existing literature and social learning theory.

From this research three major insights were developed:

1. Compulsion benefited former foster youth after enrolling in college when it provided a structure that was seen as achievable, provided the opportunity for connection with other students with similar background and experiences, and facilitated the navigation of bureaucratic systems.

2. Influential relationships with former foster youth often began with the concurrence of the former foster youth being in a position of receptivity to the kindness of the partner in the relationship, and the partner in the relationship's recognition of need and willingness to commit above and beyond what would be called for by their position or connection to the former foster youth.

3. Due to often difficult experiences, former foster youth had difficulty investing in others and receiving help from others, even those with the best of intentions, and this provided an opportunity for those who interacted with them to provide evidence contrary to their low expectations.

Compulsion and Structure. Compulsion provides structure and promotes success. Every participant identified compulsion within the context of a relationship as a contributing factor to his or her academic expectation. The structure ensured that they stayed on the right track to be able to enter college. At the youngest ages discussed the participants were forced to finish their homework and get 'good' grades. As one participant said, "I didn't want to sit down and do homework at 15. I mean, what teenager does? But right now, looking back, it was a good forced.

Back then, no I didn't like it." As the participants continued through schooling, the target of the compulsion switched from completion of assignments and grades to attendance of programs or school in order to stay on track for graduation. For example, one participant reflected that her social worker would drive her to an after school program to ensure that she would attend. When the participants reached college they again reported being pushed to do things that they did not want to do or were unsure about by support staff. As one participant reflected, "EOP&S...will bug and bug and bug you to do the things that you have to do in their workshop in order to continue returning to them." In each of these stages of education the participant's reported benefiting from the structure provided through compulsion.

This sample reported that compulsion, in retrospect, was helpful for their educational advancement. Compulsion benefited former foster youth after enrolling in college when it provided a structure that was seen as achievable, provided the opportunity for connection with other students with similar background and experiences, and facilitated the navigation of bureaucratic systems. Foster parent training may include suggestions for methods of compulsion and the direction of that compulsion in academic areas. This training should destigmatize compulsion and focus on domains in which compulsion has been shown to produce desirable outcomes.

Compulsion in academics is often applied toward achievable, system friendly goals, such as compelling homework completion, program registration, and attendance. Participants reported all of these to be beneficial. By increasing the likelihood that a former foster youth interacts with an educational system in the way that the educational system intends, odds of that former foster

youth succeeding in achieving his or her educational aims increase. With continued success, a former foster youth may start to increase self-efficacy, especially in academic areas. Though the programs which the former foster youth were compelled to complete were remedial, success, even in a remedial program, may be constructive to further developing academic self-efficacy (Bahr, 2008).

A factor in compulsion was the introduction and prescription of academic steps, classes, meetings, and support services. This structure was in some cases applied at the community college level by increasing the interaction between academic counselors and former foster youth which prescribed the next action in the former foster youth's educational path. For example, one interviewee stated, "The counselor really talked to me and he was like these are the classes you need. Now I am on the right track."

Decisions are cumulative. Failure at one step of education can cause difficulties for the next step and may foster potential negative effects on self-efficacy (Hardy, 2014). The interactions that foster youth in this study looked back on and reported as supportive were often situations in which others forced them to complete educational milestones, like graduating high school. Systematic creation of structure through compulsion may be provided by foster parents, school staff, and social workers. Compulsion from a person in authority, however, is not always a sufficient motivation, as the power to compel is a product of relationship. If a person is not important to us, we are not going to care about what he or she says we have to do, unless there is a power dynamic such as is the case with police or a boss at work. Granting that a relationship exists which will allow for the faculty member or staff to help guide the student, training staff on

appropriate methods and aims of this compulsion, as well as destigmatization of the act of

compulsion, could lead to better outcomes for this population. These positive outcomes further

increase the likelihood of later positive outcomes as well as a likely increase in the academic

self-efficacy of the student (Davidson, Feldman & Margalit, 2012).

A component of structure may be provided by increasing the prevalence of former foster

youth cohort programs with prescribed classes (Bista & Cox, 2014). This may be especially

helpful for former foster youth who often feel invisible and different from their peers (Tadrissi &

Russel, 2016). The respondent who was in a cohort based system appreciated the structure it

provided as well as the sense of belonging. The structure provided by former foster youth cohorts

sometimes includes limited class choices and times, different enrollment procedures, and the

possibility of more specialized academic counseling.

Self-efficacy affects motivation and motivation leads to actions that later affect self-

efficacy (Bandura, 1997). When students feel they belong, they are more motivated to continue

to perform the actions needed in order to continue in their academic path (Rees & Freeman,

2007). Cohorts were said to provide a sense of belonging by the participants in this study. This

sense of belonging may be tied to self-efficacy. If a person feels he or she belongs, it is difficult

not to perform the actions needed to remain in the place that he or she belongs (Inzlieht, & Good,

2006). Furthermore, it may be equally difficult to believe that one's abilities are inadequate to the

task at hand, namely succeeding in higher education, while simultaneously feeling a sense of

belonging in the higher education arena. Bandura suggests that self-efficacy may be developed

by seeing "people similar to you succeed" (1997). Successful cohorts of people seen as similar to

the former foster youth would then, according to Bandura, likely lead to increased success for former foster youth. This sentiment was reflected by one of the participants in the study who recounted a story of seeing a peer graduate and having her mentors point out that if he could do it, so could she. She reflected that this was a very encouraging experience in her educational journey.

In summary, compulsion in academics is often applied toward achievable, system friendly goals. By increasing the likelihood that a former foster youth interacts with an educational system in the way that the educational system intends, odds of that former foster youth achieving his or her educational aims increase. Inversely, failure at one step of education can cause difficulties for the next step and may foster potential negative effects on self-efficacy. The introduction and prescription of academic steps, classes, meetings, and support services by compulsion led to positive experiences for those interviewed. In addition, increases in self-efficacy may be promoted by increasing the prevalence of cohort programs with prescribed classes.

Receptivity. Relationships develop based on receptivity of former foster youth. Influential relationships with former foster youth often began with the concurrence of the former foster youth being receptive to the kindness of the partner in the relationship, and the partner in the relationship's willingness to commit above and beyond what would be called for by their position or connection to the former foster youth.

Former foster youth reported knowing that a person cared by the fact that he or she would "make time" for the former foster youth. As one participant said, "So I knew that at the

same time not only was she making herself available to me but she was being an advocate for me." Though it is possible that many people made time for the former foster youth, for those potential relationships that developed, the act of making time was noticed. Granting that a former foster youth recognized time as an investment, social workers, school counselors, and professors could be encouraged to "make time" for these students. This could be done systematically, as a voluntary program intended to increase connection and investment of former foster youth in college, or merely be encouraged through messages reminding faculty and staff that making time matters and students notice.

Self-efficacy and social support affect one another. When the partner in a relationship provides support for a plan or a pursuit, the supported person in many cases feels that the aim is more achievable (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1972). This is potentially even more applicable when the person providing the support is knowledgeable about the proposed aim. In many cases the former foster youth in this study were not looking for a relationship but rather were simply seeking help with a discrete issue in academics or merely going about business as usual. The development of these relationships provided a source of support for academic pursuits and as a byproduct may have increased the self-efficacy of the former foster youth.

Former foster youth developed relationships with people who went above and beyond what they needed to do. Participants identified availability as an indication of investment. One participant said when reflecting on a counselor that she felt strongly connected to, "I know she has been the one who stood out to me, who I feel comfortable going to, who asks me about my everyday life situations." Though the former foster youth realized in retrospect that these specific

people were acting with extraordinary care, compassion or investment, it is possible that some others were also acting in a similar way but were not noticed. Granting that in some places faculty and staff are already worked past their capacity, the aim of going above and beyond duty should be encouraged in colleges. Systems and decisions that allow, encourage, recognize, and, where appropriate, fund these actions could yield positive changes in the lives of students who are at risk. Some research suggests that funded, facilitated mentorship is less effective than spontaneously generated relationships (Ahrens, Dubois, Garrison, Spencer, Richardson & Lozano, 2011). However, when considering calls to action, it is difficult to consider a plan that spontaneously generates meaningful relationships.

Actions that make individuals feel that they are special and that others believe in them affect those individuals' future actions as well as their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). In addition, these relationships often influence the future actions and decisions of those individuals, which in turn continue to affect beliefs about the self (Bean & Kroth, 2010). One may think, "If this person thinks I am special and believes in me, perhaps I am capable of doing this thing or the other."

Former foster youth may not always be in a position of receptivity to help. Similarly these points of receptivity may appear and then disappear (Ahrens, Dubois, Garrison, Spencer, Richardson, & Lozano, 2011). In addition, the former foster youth may not even know that he or she is or is not receptive to assistance, as was the case with one participant in this study. When this participant looked back on her experiences, she remarked that she did not realize how guarded she was to everyone around her. An employee's awareness of the efforts and advances of

former foster youth, however slight, and a willingness to engage when there appears to be an opportunity, even when it is outside of the normal scope of action of that employee, could lead to academic developments considerably farther reaching than the objective of the initial interaction.

Faculty members' beliefs about the effectiveness of their actions affect the actions that faculty members are willing to make. By identifying times in which an investment is likely to pay off and then evaluating the results, a faculty member is continually revising the algorithm by which he or she allocates time. If success is more likely when a former foster youth is receptive, then it behooves the faculty to be aware of the moments of openness put forward by the former foster youth.

Influential relationships with former foster youth often began with the concurrence of the former foster youth being in a position of receptivity to the kindness of the partner in the relationship, and the partner in the relationship's recognition of need and willingness to commit above and beyond what would be called for by their position or connection to the former foster youth. As was the case with one participant and a teacher, "I don't know how I ended up hanging out in her room. She has always been a cheerleader in the background. I think she just knew that I needed somebody." These relationships, in many cases, overcame the low expectations of the participants in this study.

In summary, former foster youth developed relationships with people who went above and beyond what they needed to do. Former foster youth reported knowing that a person cared by the fact that he or she would "make time" for the former foster youth. Actions such as making time or going above and beyond the call of duty make individuals feel special and believed in.

This feeling of being special affects the individual's future actions as well as self-efficacy. Often the supportive partner in the relationship was affiliated with higher education and expressed belief in the former foster youth's ability to succeed. This belief, expressed by the supportive party to the former foster youth, helped to establish an increase in academic self-efficacy as the estimated likelihood of success increased in the mind of the former foster youth as a product of the belief and support of the informed supportive party.

Opportunity. There is an opportunity to change beliefs about relationships. The path of many foster youth is fraught with heartache. As a product of this, many reflected that they had difficulty connecting with people and, in general, did not allow others to become close. Due to the general distrust and cynicism of potential benefactors, those who were eventually allowed in were presented with the opportunity of proving the former foster youth's perceptions false. The violation of expectations provides a powerful learning experience and encourages the formation of beliefs and assessments that may not have been present without both the initial belief and the subsequent violation.

Disappointment caused by those who are supposed to be supportive is a common experience in foster care. Once established, these beliefs may be difficult to overcome, but the opportunity to present counter evidence to the former foster youth's expectation of disappointment may yield long term positive benefits (Burgoon, 1993). The participants in this study came into college or returned to college with varying expectations. None reported forming significant connections with professors and they expressed low expectations for professors as anything other than as a distant lecturer. Equally low were expectations of student services,

though many of those interviewed eventually developed supportive relationships with someone from student services. As one respondent explained, "I see a lot of people who are just doing their jobs, and then I see a lot of people who wish they could do more but they can't because of all these regulations and things." Another interviewee expressed his relief at interacting with someone whose job was not interacting with him. He said, "It is really nice to have somebody involved in your life, who can help you navigate through that system that isn't being paid to be there." Though there was some distrust of student services, many of the interviewee's did form positive relationships with staff from student services.

The prevalence of meaningful relationships with someone from student services may be a product of sampling bias, as the studies invitation to participate was issued through the EOP&S. It is possible that the staff which connected more effectively has a different mindset about interacting with the students than the general lecture faculty. Thus, attempts to educate staff as to the experiences of former foster youth and their likely expectations of those working in the system, as well as an emphasis on actions that run counter to these expectations, could have positive effects on the academic achievement of former foster youth.

Expectations compose an integral part of Bandura's theory. Self-efficacy is in short a belief about the likelihood of success. This belief holds the same meaning as expectation in this sense. Given repeated experiences of disappointment, it is common to develop a low level of belief regarding the likelihood of future success in the relevant sphere (Hardy, 2014). Similarly, a series of successes in developing meaningful, constructive, supportive relationships would likely lead to the inverse conclusion (Ormrod, 2000). Because the foster youth interviewed had,

in large part, disappointing interactions with those who should have been supportive, it stands to reason they would develop a low sense of self-efficacy when it comes to developing these types of relationships and would therefore find the likelihood of success in their ventures to be low.

Constant change leads to difficulties in establishing new relationships for former foster youth (Unrau, Font & Rawls, 2012). The belief, or rather, expectation, that a relationship will be short-lived likely affects the way that the former foster youth interprets the actions within the relationship (Ahrens, Dubois, Garrison, Spencer, Richardson, & Lozano, 2011). Those relationships that were stable and of relatively long duration were highly valued by the respondents. One interviewee when explaining why she knew a particular social worker was invested in her said, "She has been with me since I was five. She has taken our case and moved with us, asked to be with us." Where possible, procedures which promote stability of interaction between the former foster youth and the college staff, when coupled with investment by the staff, may lead to improved educational outcomes for former foster youth.

Because more resilient self-efficacy is developed when people overcome adversity to accomplish their aim, it stands to reason that former foster youth who believe relationships are generally of short duration would interpret the maintenance of a meaningful relationship over an extended period of time as a success (Bandura 1986), and thereby reap the added benefits of overcoming adversity. As success, in Bandura's theory, breeds success, it is consistent with his position to believe that the promotion and maintenance of steady, meaningful relationships would disproportionately benefit those who saw them as incredibly difficult to achieve.

Consistent disappointing dealings with a bureaucratic system lead former foster youth to

have low expectations for interactions with people whose job it is to help them (Salazar, Jones, Emerson & Mucha, 2016). The opportunity to upset these expectations provides those working within the bureaucracy an opportunity to build former foster youth's expectations of success. A factor in these lowered expectations may be a belief that the system is not built for them. The respondents in this research did not feel that the college effectively incorporated them initially and were for the large part relieved and surprised to find support from faculty or staff. An interviewee who found work with EOP&S stated, "They didn't give up on me and they didn't let me go. All this time I felt like I didn't belong." By creating, testing, and modifying paths by which former foster youth successfully navigate higher education, the former foster youth may be able to identify more closely with the system of higher education and thereby feel more fully that he or she belongs in college.

Self-efficacy is benefited by feeling a sense of belonging (Uwah, McMahon & Furlow, 2008). A sense of belonging stems, in part, from the belief that a system is compatible with, or preferably, designed for the individual evaluating it (Ostrove, Stewart & Curtin, 2011). The system of higher education in many ways may not feel like it is designed for the former foster youth (Kirk & Day, 2011). Actions and policies that counter that impression could have a positive effect on the self-efficacy of the former foster youth. Furthermore, self-efficacy is built in part by the observation of people similar to oneself succeeding at a task (Bandura, 1977). Systems within higher education that promote the recognition of success for those similar to former foster youth would encourage the belief that the system was in fact, if not built for, at least, compatible with the former foster youth.

In summary, the path of many foster youth is fraught with heartache. As a product of this, many reflected that they had difficulty connecting with people and in general did not allow others to become close. This may be, in part, because disappointment by those who are supposed to be supportive is a common experience in foster care. Once established, these beliefs may be difficulty to overcome, but the opportunity to present counter evidence to the former foster youth's expectations of disappointment may yield long term positive benefits. Aside from difficulty with bureaucracy, constant change earlier in the former foster youth's experiences was reported to lead to difficulties in establishing new relationships for former foster youth. The belief, or rather, expectation, that a relationship will be short-lived likely affects the way that the former foster youth interprets the actions within the relationship. System-wide changes that increase the former foster youth's sense of belonging, stability and interpersonal connection with others similar to themselves who also succeed may help to support this at-risk group.

Actions from Themes

The following sections provide suggestions for faculty, foster youth parents, and student services based on the themes established in Chapter 4. The actions are connected both to the themes individually as well as the combination of themes.

Because connection coupled with knowledge and compulsion often accompanied feelings of progress and "being on the right track" for the interviewees, community colleges may consider specific actions that could promote these aims. From the data the following actions may promote feelings of connection between at risk populations and those employees of the institution who presumably have knowledge of higher education and the potential of acting in a

compulsive manner:

- Listen to the aims and struggles of the student rather than merely prescribing an action, course, or major.

- Take time, outside of what is expected, to make students feel important. Actions such as returning phone calls or meeting with a student on lunch hour were seen as meaningful and fostered a sense of connection.

- Because of the value placed on stability by the interviewees, institutional policy that favors matching counselors with students on a more permanent basis, for those that may be at risk, could support academic success for those students.

From a structural standpoint, foster youth may benefit from systems in which students are given fewer choices, receive explicit instructions on the next steps and, when those steps are not met, are continually "nagged" until the students accomplish the tasks necessary in order to successfully navigate higher education. The following suggestions may promote these aims:

- Create more cohort systems. Cohort systems provided a sense of direction and support without necessarily adding significant workload to school staff.

- Counsel broadly. Counseling surrounding the choice of major, though difficult, may help to avoid problems arising from students being pressured into a specific major.

- Stay on top of the students to ensure compliance. Systems by which students are perpetually nagged to make decisions which further their educational aims may be appreciated and effective.

Suggestions for Training

Unlike the previous section some of the data can be applied more generally to institutional policy and training. Where the previous section examined specific actions that could be taken, this section will discuss, more generally, possible goals which come from the data.

- Provide a sense of stability for students. By providing a sense of stability to students, especially those who were in foster care, the school employee can help develop a sense of connection. Though policy decisions can work to this aim, the individual actions of staff could be modified to promote feelings of stability in at risk students.

- Reframe "nagging" for staff. Nagging is often viewed negatively, and yet was viewed as supportive by the interviewees. An environment in which staff are trained and encouraged to continually check in with students and to "push" them to finish each small step toward completion may support student success.

- Walk the students through each step. "Hand-holding" is often viewed negatively, but when coupled with the nagging, mentioned above, it may remove feelings of being "lost" or "out of place" and replace these feelings with confidence that the student is now "on the right track."

- Decrease the number of choices in a major. Balancing the aims of listening, discussed earlier, with a limitation on the number of choices may promote a feeling of surmountableness for students who previously felt lost or confused.

Recommendations for Further Research

Recommendations for research are intended to point out the areas of inquiry that this research touched on superficially or areas that were borne out as interesting possible directions for other researchers. These recommendations admit that this research did not adequately address these questions and attempt to frame them so that other researchers may more fully explore these themes or interactions.

As is often the case with research, upon its conclusion more questions are present than when this research was begun. Some of the data gathered in this study was predictable based on previous studies, such as the positive effects of stable relationships for foster youth. Other findings were less predictable, like the motivating effects of abusive romantic partners on female former foster youth's tenacity in college. The following section will briefly mention some of the areas that were briefly touched on in this research and could be addressed more fully with future research.

The data suggests that feelings of stability were present in those relationships that provided a feeling of connection. Because stability is a relative term, additional research which established types or categories of stability in relationships with academic personnel could add to knowledge of this component of these relationships. Since different interactions may rely on stability in varied amounts, an analysis of the conditions in which a student benefits from a feeling of stability may be warranted. Finally, because stability is linked with the concept of time, an analysis of the amount of time needed to establish a feeling of stability and possible actions which increase or decrease the amount of time needed could also be beneficial to student

services personnel.

The data suggests that relationships with caring, compassionate and invested people led to a desire to emulate those people. The concept of developing role models for people who grow up in difficult situations, as many in foster care do, is not new. The role models in this study were social workers, but further research into the methods of development of role models for foster youth outside of social work may be warranted. Three types of role models were seen in this research: lifestyle, career choice, and counter role model. Some of these role model types may be more fitting for use in higher education than others. Secondly, research into the importance of role models' active awareness as to his or her status as a role model and specific actions taken to develop this relationship could produce useful data to inform practice.

Interestingly, relationships with abusive significant others were taken as challenges by the interviewees, who reported increased motivation to "prove them wrong." This motivation is not surprising, but further inquiry into the process by which the abuse was transformed into motivation could inform counseling techniques for those in this situation. Presumably not all responses to this kind of abuse are positive, so a better understanding of the process by which the abuse was transformed into motivation could assist some in overcoming abuse and transforming it into motivation.

The nature of compulsion in relationships, especially academic relationships, was discussed but perhaps not fully explored. An examination of the methods of compulsion in association with the type of relationship and eventual compliance were outside of the scope of this study. Furthermore, the tendency of those who were compelled to academic pursuit later

compelling others toward academics presents an interesting possibility for longitudinal study. Furthermore, though compulsion was viewed positively in the interviews, it is possible that others who would not respond as favorably to compulsion were absent from the sample due to selection bias. Further research could establish the extent to which compulsion is viewed positively, albeit in retrospect by a larger and more representative sample. Lastly, compulsion may affect the ability of a student to succeed in cases where the compulsion is absent. Research that followed the students who reacted positively to compulsion into later positions where compulsion may not be as commonly exercised may also be warranted.

The ways in which relationships, especially those outside of the academic sphere, began was often seen as serendipitous. Research into the perceptions of the other party could help to identify the actions or traits that increased the likelihood of these unlikely connections becoming relationships. In short, by further examining the relationship from the point of view of the non-foster youth, additional information about methods of developing positive relationships with this population could be gathered which may have more general merit.

Feelings of being "lost" and "out of place" were commonly expressed during some of the interviews. These feeling were also commonly removed with the creation of a relationship. Further examination into the process by which the fear was removed and a feeling of belonging created could inform practices in academic counseling and student services. Though these points were covered loosely in the research, further examination into the change in perception of the college may be warranted.

The relationships developed in a cohort system may play a critical role in the success of

the members of the cohort. The information exchanged between members of the cohort may act to extend the effect of the knowledge component discussed earlier. Examination of the accuracy, origin, and speed of transmission, as well as possible exclusion of members within the cohort may be warranted. Furthermore, examination of traits and activities of cohorts which are more or less supportive the members could inform design of such cohorts and the prescribed activities outside of courses.

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Appendix A

1) Did you want to attend college when you began high school?

If the subject wanted to attend college when he or she began high school,

  1b) When you started high school, how likely did you think it was that you would attend college?

  If the subject did not think it likely that he or she would be able to attend college,

      1c) What were some of the things that made you think that you may not be able to attend college?

  1d) Prior to high school was there anyone in specific that you felt influenced your desire to attend college? If so, please tell me a little about how your interactions with (him or her) influenced your desire to attend college?

If, when starting high school, the subject did not want to attend college,

  1e) Was there anyone in specific that you felt wanted to see you attend college? If so, please tell me a little about your interactions with (him or her) and what specifically (he or she) did that expressed to you a desire to see you attend college?

2) Did you want to attend college when you left high school?

If the subject wanted to attend college when he or she left high school,

  2a) When you left high school, how likely did you think it was that you would attend college?

If the subject wanted to attend college but did not think it likely that he or she would be able to attend college,

> 2b) What were some of the things that made you think that you may not be able to attend college?

If the subject did not intend to attend college at the beginning of high school but did at the end of high school,

> 2c) Was there anyone in specific that you felt influenced your desire to attend college between when you started high school and when you left high school? This may be a person you have already discussed with me or it may be someone new. If you can think of someone, please tell me a little about how your interactions with him or her influenced your desire to attend college.

If the likelihood of attending college changed between starting and finishing high school,

> 2d) When you left high school you were (more or less) sure that you would be attending college. What influenced that change?

If the subject did not want to attend college upon leaving high school,

> 3) Did anyone in specific influence your desire to attend college between the time when you left high school and when you started college? If so, please tell me a little more about how (s)he did that.

4) Some people enroll in college and plan to earn a certificate or perhaps transfer to a university. What was your educational plan when you entered college?

5) Has your plan changed since you enrolled in college?

If the subject's educational plan has changed since enrolling in college

      5a) What are your current plans for higher education?

      5b) Did anyone in specific influence your change in goal from when you enrolled in

      college and now? If so, please tell me a little more about how (s)he did that?

6) Did anyone in specific influence your belief in your ability to succeed in college that you have

      not mentioned yet in this interview? If so, please tell me a little more about how (s)he did

      that.